The concept is to provide Pedestrian Bridges over Cascade Avenue so pedestrians are physically separated from vehicles. This concept has been used in a number of locations with varied success.

If pedestrians can be routed to a bridge physically separating them from vehicular traffic when crossing a street, the conflicts and potential accidents will be eliminated. Vehicles will not need to stop, reducing delays to motorists. Pedestrians similarly will not need to stop and seek a gap in traffic or if at a crosswalk, hope to have motorists yield right of way to them as required by law.

In some locations, pedestrian bridges have succeeded in reducing conflicts by providing a convenient route for pedestrians. These are most frequently located at fenced, access controlled roadways. Other well used bridges occur at high volume, high speed roadways or where there is a very convenient path to the bridge.

Unfortunately, many pedestrian bridges are ignored and frequently pedestrians will cross at grade near or even under the bridge. Many pedestrians will not walk up a ramp or stairs, even if it is directly in their path. Even fewer will walk out of their way to reach the bridge. Observations at selected pedestrian bridges show limited use if there is an option to simply cross the street. Teenagers and young adults are the age groups least likely to use a bridge.

Complicating the potential success of a bridge in the Cascade Avenue corridor is the large number of origins and destinations of pedestrians. Pedestrians cross at every intersection in the corridor, at mid block locations near North Hall and from parked vehicles both on-street and in adjacent parking lots.

To be successful, a bridge in the Cascade Avenue corridor would need to attract pedestrians from a one or two block area and offer an alternate route that is more convenient than crossing the street at grade. If a bridge is built and attracts only a portion of the pedestrians from the area, the pedestrians who continue to cross at grade are at an even greater risk, since they are less anticipated by motorists. Warning signs and markings near a pedestrian bridge would give mixed messages to both motorists and pedestrians.

A successful variation of pedestrian bridges is the “skyway” systems in large downtown areas, such as St. Paul and Minneapolis. Bridges connect buildings at the second floor level, but the success is the convenience of walking in and between buildings all at one level (second floor). Access to other floors or street level is via elevator or escalator as well as stairs. Century College and a few other locations have developed a system of “in-building” access to get pedestrians to the pedestrian bridge level. Some development areas have expanded buildings over streets, such as the Hennepin County Government Center in Minneapolis, which also serve to cross pedestrians.