The concept is to provide Pedestrian Tunnels under Cascade Avenue so pedestrians are physically separated from vehicles. This concept has been used in different locations with varied success.

If pedestrians can be routed to a tunnel 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 a few locations, pedestrian tunnels have succeeded in reducing conflicts by providing a convenient route for pedestrians. Many of the successful tunnels connect buildings on either side of the street. Others are located at fenced, access controlled roadways or at high volume, high speed roadways.

Unfortunately, many pedestrian tunnels are ignored and frequently pedestrians will cross at grade near the tunnel. Many pedestrians will not walk down a ramp or stairs, even if it is directly in their path. Even fewer will walk out of their way to reach the tunnel. Observations at selected pedestrian bridges and tunnels show limited use if there is an option to simply cross the street.

Some pedestrians are reluctant to use tunnels, even if convenient, because of safety concerns. Pedestrians are out of sight of traffic while in the tunnel, unlike bridges where they are in view crossing the street. Several law enforcement agencies want easy, convenient vehicle access to both ends of the tunnel for surveillance and if needed, response. Loitering, graffiti, and other “out-of-site” activities are of concern.

Complicating the potential success of a tunnel 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 tunnel 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 tunnel 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.

Storm water management is a design concern as pedestrians will avoid standing water or even wet conditions. Snow removal at the entrances, litter and debris, sweeping, and lighting are maintenance concerns. Relocation and protection of utilities and lighting and ventilation are design concerns.