

USH 151 Multimodal Crossing Study and Design for Central Sun Prairie – City of Sun Prairie, Wisconsin

FY 2024-2026 Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Discretionary Grant Program



Application for Funding

Project Name: USH151 Multimodal Crossing Study and Design for Central Sun Prairie – City of Sun Prairie, Wisconsin
Application Track: Planning

Total Project Cost: \$398,881.21

FY 2024 RCP Funds Requested: \$319,104.97

Contact Information:

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Supporting Information can be found at: <https://www.srfconsulting.com/sun-prairie-rdp/>

Key Information Table	
Question	Answer
Lead Applicant Name	City of Sun Prairie
Lead Applicant State	Wisconsin
Lead Applicant Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)	D9CNEADD4Q68
Points of Contact	David Salmon, Transportation Coordinator dsalmon@cityofsunprairie.com
2020 Census Tract 11-digit geographic identifiers	5502511504; 5502511505
Grant Type	Community Planning Grant
Project Title	Highway 151 Multimodal Crossing Study for Central Sun Prairie
Project Description	<p>This project will consist of a feasibility study, public engagement, environmental impact study, and 30% design of the preferred alternative of a bicycle and pedestrian crossing connecting Census Tracts 115.05 and 115.04 in the City of Sun Prairie. The establishment of the modern U.S. Highway 151 bisected the City of Sun Prairie and cut off communities experiencing persistent poverty in Central Sun Prairie from essential areas of the city, including middle and high schools, and grocery stores. The feasibility study will examine multiple options for an active transportation crossing of USH 151 to determine the most realistic alternative from a constructability and a community preference standpoint; conduct the necessary environmental impact study of the alternatives; and take the preferred alternative to 30% design. As a result of this project, the City of Sun Prairie anticipates pursuing either a future USDOT discretionary grant opportunity or future STBG or TAP solicitation from the Greater Madison MPO to complete construction of the preferred alternative</p>
Match Question	80-20 Match
What is the preferred federal fiscal year to implement the grant?	No Preference
If the lead applicant the Facility Owner?	No

Key Information Table	
Question	Answer
Name of the Facility Owner(s) of the eligible facility creating the barrier, if not the lead applicant.	Wisconsin Department of Transportation
If the lead applicant is not the Eligible Facility Owner, does the application include a Facility Owner endorsement?	Yes
If a joint application, please provide organizational names of sub-recipients that will receive funds and other key partners	N/A
What is/are the Eligible Facility Type(s) that create(s) a barrier, that your application intends to address?	U.S. Highway
Is the project located in an economically disadvantaged community?	Yes (Census Tract 115.05 is a designated "Area of Persistent Poverty")
Is the project located in a rural area?	No.
Does the project directly benefit a federally recognized tribe?	No.
Is the Eligible Facility aged and likely to need replacement or significant reconstruction within 20 years?	No.
What is the primary proposed solution for the transportation barrier facility?	Bridge or Tunnel
What are the additional proposed solutions for the transportation barrier facility?	Pedestrian & Bicycle Accommodations
Does the project expand roadway lane capacity or is a lane capacity expansion planned within the vicinity of the project?	No.
Is the project included in a Climate Action Plan?	No.
Total RCP Program grant request amount	\$319,104.97
Total Project Cost.	\$398,881.21

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Overview

The City of Sun Prairie is submitting this FY 2024-2026 Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Program application requesting \$319,105 in community planning funds to plan and design a multimodal connection across a half mile of U.S. Highway (USH) 151 between W Main Street and Windsor Street. The Highway 151 Multimodal Crossing Study for Central Sun Prairie and subsequent design (herein known as the ‘Project’) aims to take a comprehensive approach to recreating the connection between neighborhoods across USH 151, complete with public involvement, engineering, planning, environmental documentation, and cost estimating. The concept of reconnecting neighborhoods in central Sun Prairie is an established goal for the community, and multiple city and regional plans call for such a facility connection.

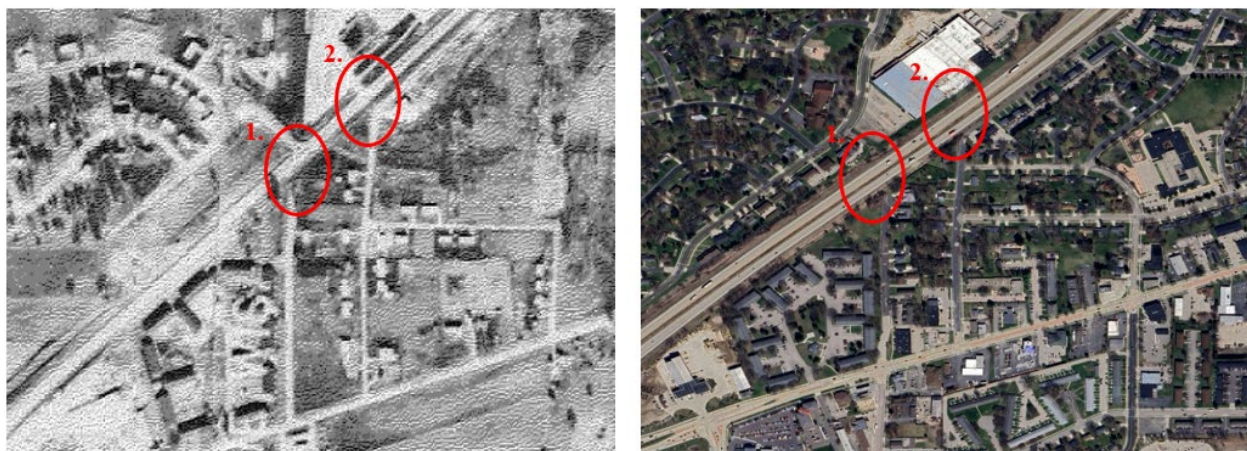


Figure 1: A 1965 orthographic photo of the project area (left) and existing conditions (right). "1" depicts a historical connection of USH 151 at Bond Road; "2" depicts a former connection at the Cheeseman building.

If awarded, the Project would restore a level of connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists not experienced since the 1960s. As referenced in the figure above, Bond Road and the Wisconsin Cheeseman facility ([a site of a former major Sun Prairie employer](#)) were both connected to USH 151 during Sun Prairie’s early days as an incorporated City, with Hart Road well on its way to connect. Making this Project reality not only reconnects, but greatly enhances the connection between central Sun Prairie and the Royal Oaks neighborhood to the north of USH 151.

Barriers posed by USH 151

According to the U.S. Census Bureau and Wisconsin Department of Transportation’s (WisDOT) [Non-Driver Interactive Mapping Tool](#), between 30-40 percent of the City of Sun Prairie’s residents are non-drivers. This section of USH 151 acts as a barrier between 19,777 residents and multiple neighborhoods within a mile of the study area. While Metro Transit provides service just south of the corridor along W Main Street, neighborhoods immediately north of USH 151 must walk as far as 1.5 miles to access the nearest bus stop, as referenced in the [Merit Criteria](#). Since the construction of USH 151 in its current form in the 1960s, this highway has severed residents and neighborhoods from one another, resulting in negative social, economic, and public health impacts.

USH 151 is a four-lane, divided freeway that hinders community access and continuity. The design of any roadway affects development and accessibility, including what types of businesses locate to a corridor; access to amenities such as parks and schools; whether people choose to walk, bike, or take public transit; and whether the area is considered desirable to live, work, invest, and visit. Moving vehicular traffic should not be prioritized to the detriment of residents and businesses. Creating an active transportation connection that reconnects the neighborhoods around USH 151 will correct a historic injustice, reconnect neighborhoods, and continue building trust between the diverse and historically disadvantaged communities in central Sun Prairie, and the broader community.

Location & Map

The Project area lies within the Madison Urbanized Area, comprising the majority of Dane County, with a population of 450,305 per the 2020 Decennial Census. The geospatial location of the project is 43.181507° N, -89.241531°.

USH 151 is a 70 mph freeway that bisects the City and has an average annual daily traffic (AADT) of 41,1000 in this segment, increasing to 63,700 as the highway approaches Madison to the southwest. Recorded AADT along W Main Street (at the southern terminus of the study area) is 24,300, with ramp volumes as high as 9,700 (NB off ramp) and 7,900 (SB on ramp), and 14,900 at State Trunk Highway (STH) 19, with ramp volumes reaching 5,200 at the northbound off-ramp and southbound on-ramp.

Diverting pedestrians and bicyclists to these roadways is a hazardous option due to heavy volumes, numerous conflict points, traffic speeds, and the [crash history](#) of both areas.

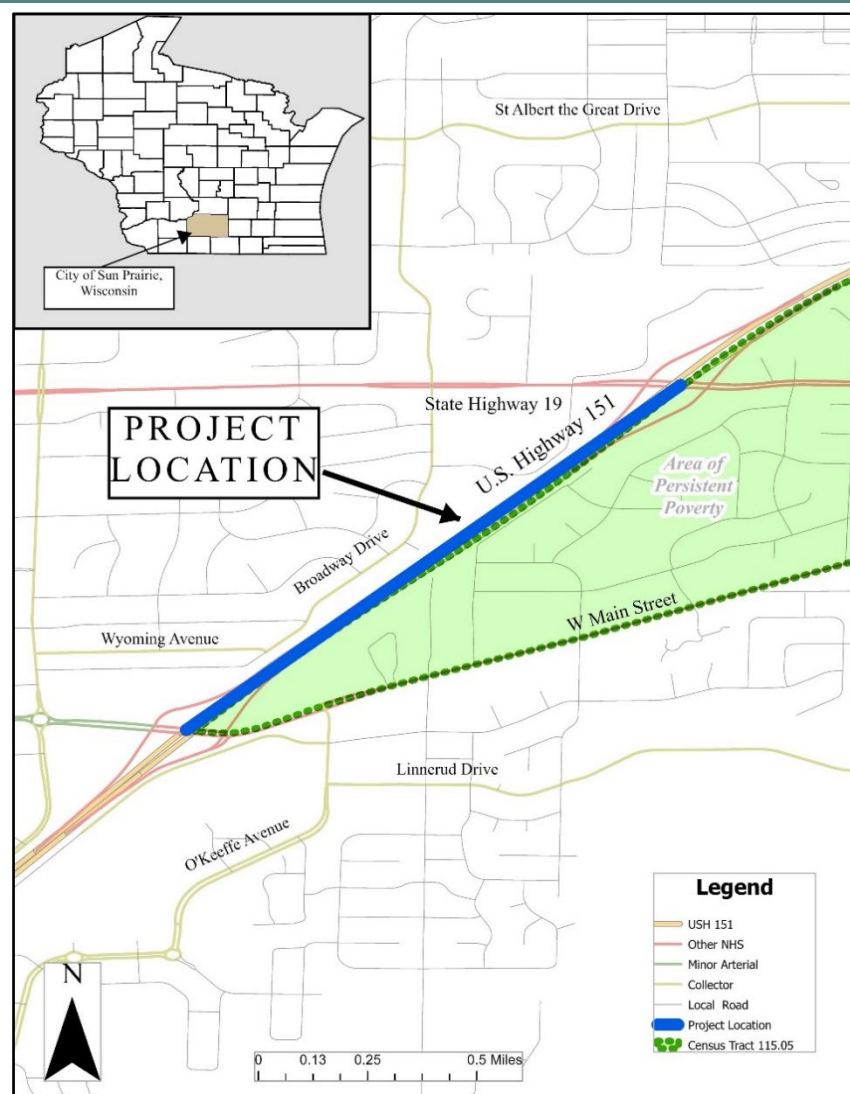


Figure 2: Project Location Map

The USH 151 corridor stretches through many Sun Prairie neighborhoods and subdivisions, with only seven roadway crossings each located on average [0.8 miles apart](#). Within a mile of the USH 151 centerline, there are 19,777 residents per the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s \(EPA\) EJScreen](#), of which 5,344 (27 percent) are people of color. Nine percent of the population (1,702 residents) speak a language other than English at home. There are 8,355 households within this area and population density of 3,444 people per square mile.

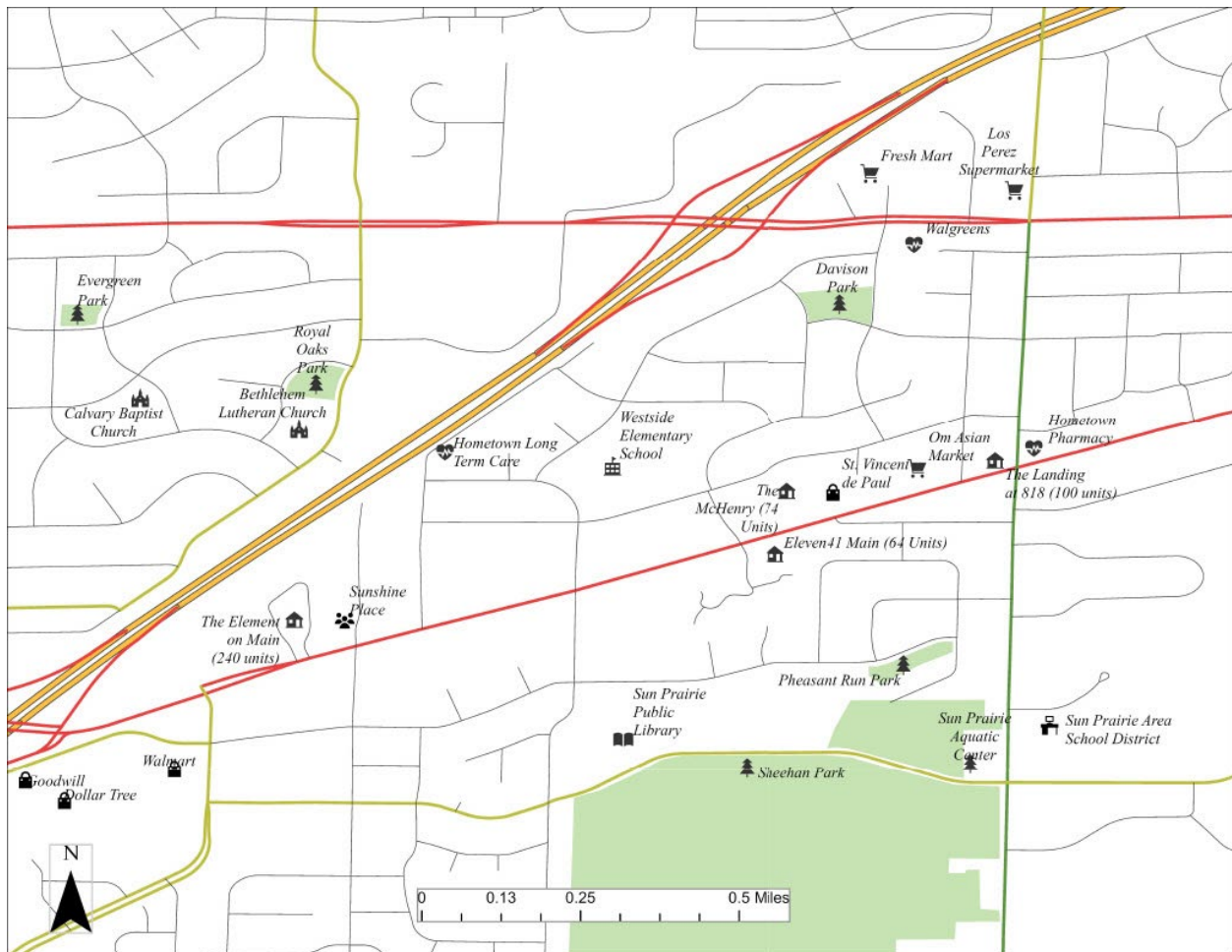


Figure 3: Key Destinations in Central Sun Prairie.

According to the [EJScreen 2022 Demographic Report](#), of the 25 and older population, 27 percent of the population had a registered high school graduation as their highest educational attainment or did not graduate high school. Forty-seven percent of households within the one-mile area are renter occupied, while 25 percent of household incomes made less than \$50,000 per year. Importantly, most of Sun Prairie’s legally restricted affordable housing units lie within the Project area and would be the most direct beneficiaries of the Project.

Considering the high numbers of non-driving populations, households without access to vehicle, individuals living below the poverty line, with a disability, and senior populations, it is vital to

integrate multimodal transportation options. There are existing Metro Transit bus routes along W Main Street, O’Keeffe Avenue, Grand Avenue, Windsor Street, Bird Street, and Tower Drive. While most City residents are theoretically a walkable distance from bus routes as the crow flies, the barrier USH 151 imposes puts a great number of residents well above the ¼- to ½- mile distance that the Federal Transit Administration generally defines as a walkable distance to a local transit stop. Recreating connections across USH 151 would vastly shorten this service gap for residents, and have positive benefits to transit ridership, which was introduced to the City in June 2023.

Fulfilling a crossing of USH 151 will also bring beneficial impacts for the bicycling and pedestrian communities. The neighborhoods south of USH 151 are bordered by arterial roadways inhospitable for active transportation crossings (W Main Street, N Bird Street, and STH 19) – providing these neighborhoods a low-stress bicycle and pedestrian crossing will aid residents in safely and comfortably reaching other recreational and utilitarian destinations in Sun Prairie and beyond.




Key Sites in Project Area

Sunshine Place

Sunshine Place is the primary 501(c)(3) organization in Sun Prairie that provides food, clothing, health care, and other vital social services for Sun Prairie citizens experiencing crisis. Their facility is within walking distance of all potential sites for a USH 151 crossing. The in-house services provided by the Sunshine Place include an active and stocked emergency food pantry, a free legal clinic, emergency housing assistance, holiday gift drives, free beds for children in need, free clothing, and other services.

Sunshine Place serves as a hub for the following organizations that provide crucial services for Sun Prairie residents facing transportation vulnerabilities:

Table 1: Other social services organizations providing crucial services with Sunshine Place.

<u>Centro Hispano of Dane County</u>		Centro Hispano provides over 2,000 families and 6,000 individuals with bilingual programs and services, connecting Spanish-speaking Sun Prairie residents with housing and employment help, food, clothes, and school support.
<u>Joining Forces for Families</u>		Joining Forces for Families is an initiative by the Dane County Department of Human Services to connect Sun Prairie residents with community resources.
<u>Early Childhood Initiative (ECI)</u>		ECI is part of the Dane County social services organization RISE Wisconsin, helps pregnant women and families with children zero-to-four years of age get access to jobs, educational opportunities, housing, childcare, and provide community.

<u>Public Health Madison & Dane County (PHMDC)</u>		<p>PHMDC offers an on-site community Public Health nurse connecting Sun Prairie residents to PHMDC services and health referrals, with a focus on education, facilitation, assessment, and action.</p>
<u>Tenant Resource Center</u>		<p>The Tenant Resource Center is a non-profit organization offering eviction prevention and housing mediation services serving to education tenants, landlords, and service providers with questions and concerns about rental rights and responsibilities.</p>

Health Care

There are several healthcare facilities located within a short distance of the Project area including:

- [Crossroads Care Center](#) provides skilled nursing care, as well as short-term rehabilitation and wound care, and hosts a facility just off W Main Street.
- [Access Community Health Centers \(ACHS\): Sun Prairie Dental Clinic](#) is a non-profit provider that aims to provide affordable, high quality health care to populations that face financial, cultural, and language obstacles. ACHS hosts a dental office on W Main Street.
- [Prairie Ridge Health](#) (PRH) recently opened a 23,000-square foot outpatient clinic. PRH is an acute care hospital in Columbus WI, approximately 15 minutes northeast of Sun Prairie.
- Multiple pharmacy locations from major retail pharmacies including Walgreens and the Walmart Supercenter, to community health care facilities such as [Hometown Pharmacy](#) and its [long-term care office](#).

Retail & Essential Goods

There are several commercial businesses near the Project area that provide access to groceries and other essential amenities, including the following locations:

- Aside from being a major employer (100-250 employees per Wisconsin's Job Center of Wisconsin), the [Wal-Mart Supercenter](#) is a primary department store and transit destination in Sun Prairie, and within a walkable distance from potential USH 151 crossings.
- The [Society of Saint Vincent de Paul](#), a Catholic lay organization, provides charitable services to Dane County residents, including this thrift store walkable from potential USH 151 crossings.
- Other Grocery Stores include ethnic grocers [Los Perez Supermarket](#) and [Om Asian Market](#), [Fresh Mart International Supermarket](#), and gas stations.
- Other important locations include a [Dollar Tree](#) Convenience Store and a [Goodwill Sun Prairie](#) convenience store are also located near the Project site and transit.

Schools, Parks, and Places of Worship

Other essential places near the Project area include the following locations:

- Schools with attendance areas that include or abut the Project area include the following: [Westside Elementary School](#), [Royal Oaks Elementary School](#), and [Prairie View Middle School](#).

- Parks within a mile of the Project include [Davison Park](#), [Royal Oaks Park](#), [Evergreen Park](#), [Oakridge Park](#), and [Oakview Park](#). The Project also would vastly shorten walking/biking travel times to the [Sun Prairie Public Library](#), a popular community space that hosts many community events and meetings as well as the nearby Sun Prairie Aquatic Center and Sheehan Park.
- Churches including [Bethlehem Lutheran Church](#), [Calvary Baptist Church](#), and [Focus Church](#).

Merit Criteria 1: Equity & Justice 40

The USDOT’s [Equitable Transportation Community \(ETC\) Explorer](#) highlights the access burden experienced by central Sun Prairie residents. About 25.8 percent of residents in Census Tract 115.05 live at 200 percent or less of the federal poverty level; per the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, this formally classifies this community in central Sun Prairie as an “[Area of Persistent Poverty](#).” Residents are at least a 15-minute walk to grocery stores and adult education; traffic fatalities in the tract are estimated to be at 14.4 per 100,000 residents between 2016 and 2020. Overall, Tract 115.05 is listed in an overall disadvantage in one category per the ETC Explorer – in Climate and Disaster Risk Burden.

For the purpose of the EPA’s [Environmental and Climate Justice Program](#), the agency classified **Census Tract 115.05, Block 2 as an Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) [Disadvantaged Community](#)** on account of being in the 90th percentile nationally for drinking water noncompliance. Additionally, Census Tract 115.05 is one of Wisconsin’s 120 [opportunity zones](#). The City of Sun Prairie is also a participant in the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s [Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Program](#), which helps local governments in coordinating housing and infrastructure development with four focus areas: utilizing vacant/underused land; preserving housing and preventing displacement; removing regulatory and process barriers; and improving coordination and community engagement.

While Westside Elementary School is easily the closest school to the project area, the attendance areas for Prairie View Middle School [most closely overlaps the Project area](#). Most of the student body at both Prairie View Middle School and Westside Elementary School is majority-minority in terms of race and ethnicity, and a significant amount of the population of all three schools are “economically disadvantaged” per the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI).

Table 2: Key WI DPI enrollment statistics on schools in the Project Area.

	Westside Elementary	Royal Oaks Elementary	Prairie View Middle
BIPOC	320 (72%)	159 (38%)	344 (53%)
Students with a disability	87 (20%)	61 (14%)	69 (11%)
Economically Disadvantaged	296 (67%)	86 (20%)	232 (36%)
Not proficient in English	61 (14%)	38 (9%)	46 (7%)
Total Enrollment	443	422	651

Merit Criteria 2: Access

Construction of the Project's preferred alternative will provide low-stress bike routes for neighborhoods north of USH 151 in accessing essential amenities along W Main Street in and out of the area synonymous with Census Tract 115.05, Block Group 2. This Block Group is

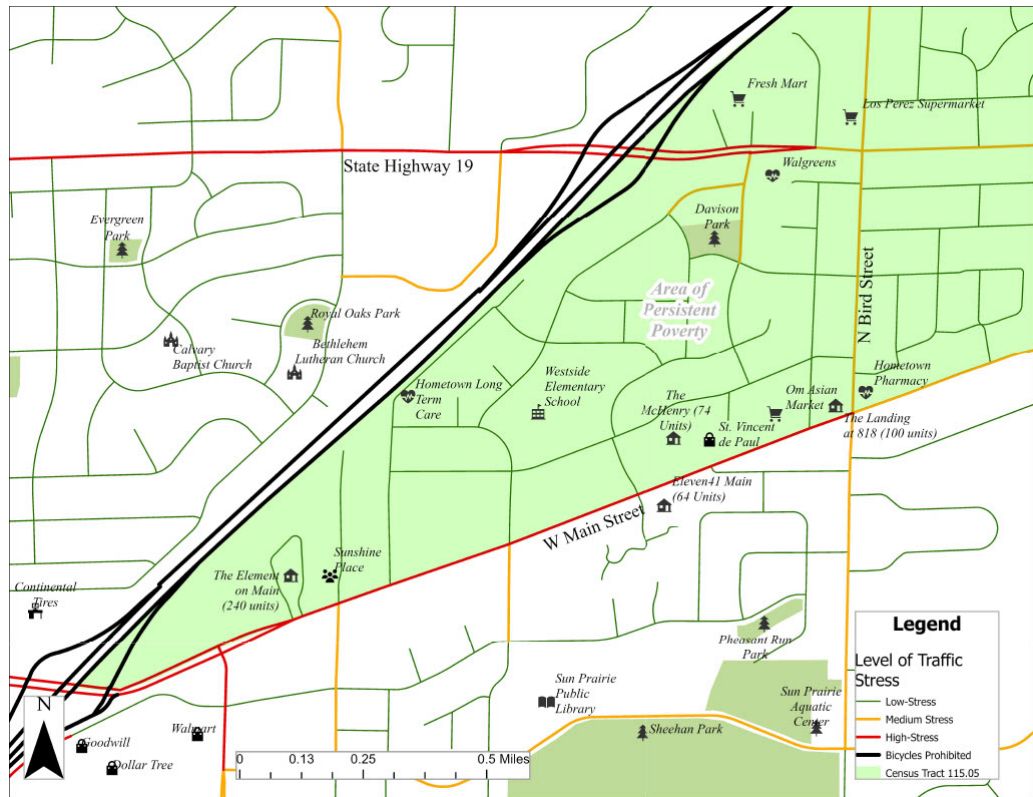


Figure 4: LTS for bicyclists on Sun Prairie roads as defined by the Greater Madison MPO.

bordered on the northwest by the uncrossable (for active transportation users) USH 151, to the south by the high-stress W Main Street/Business 151, to the north by high-stress. The MPO conducted a complete [Level of Traffic Stress Analysis](#) for bicyclists across the urbanized area in 2021, which includes the City of Sun Prairie. STH 19, and to the east by medium-stress N Bird Street. Three of four of these segments are part of the [National Highway System \(NHS\)](#).

Safety

The mile diameter around the Project area has the dubious distinction of being hazardous to travel, especially for bicyclists and pedestrians. Between 2019 and 2023, 24 accidents involving a bicyclist, or

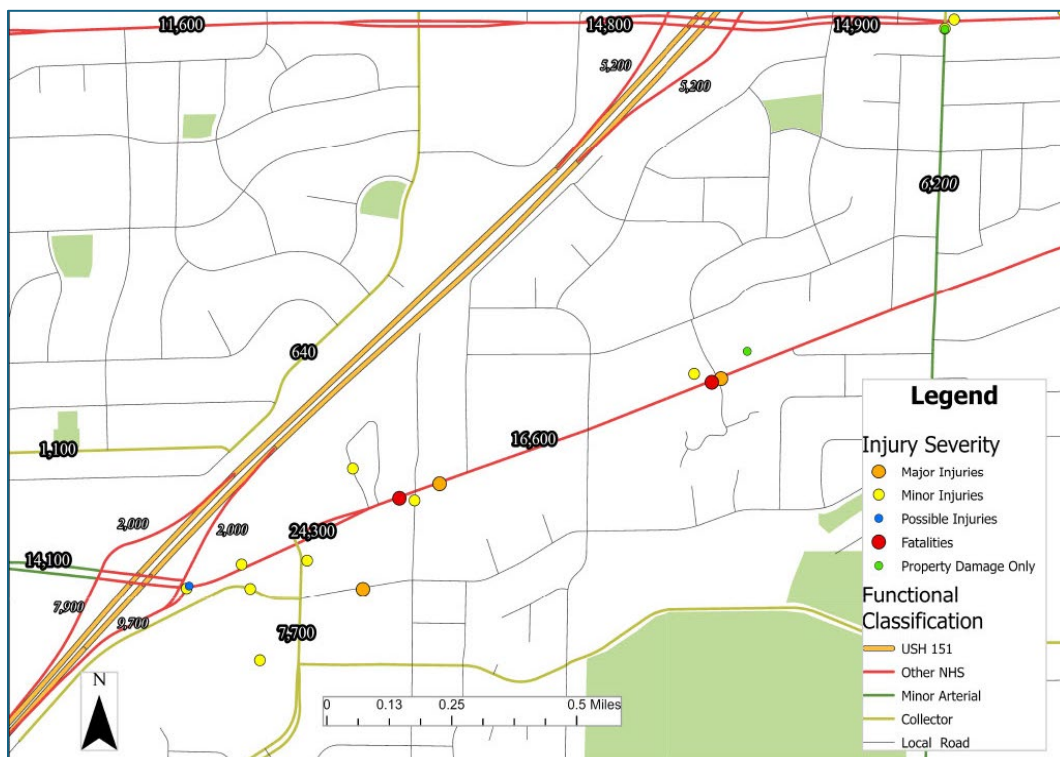


Figure 5: Depiction of bike and pedestrian crashes between 2019 and 2023, as well as the most recently recorded AADT figures from WisDOT.

a pedestrian took place – the vast majority took place along W Main Street, especially close the Project area. Two Sun Prairie residents – both pedestrians – were killed in these crashes, and an additional 20 others suffered injuries – six of whom suffered life-threatening injuries. Sun Prairie is currently in the process of completing a [Vision Zero Action Plan](#), which was partially instigated by an unfortunate series of pedestrian and bicyclist injuries and fatalities that took place along W Main Street in 2020 and 2021. The City utilizes [UrbanSDK](#) for reputable and timely speed and traffic data – the stretch of W Main Street travelling through the Project area experiences an [85th percentile speed of 35mph](#), despite being a 25mph roadway. FHWA research shows that that likelihood of pedestrian fatality [increases nearly threefold](#) with a 10 percent change in speed.

Merit Criteria 3: Facility Suitability

USH 151 physically divides not only the project area, but the entirety of the City of Sun Prairie. In the project area, over [1.1 miles lie between the two nearest crossings of 151](#), and both lie along inhospitable segments (for bicyclists and pedestrians) of the NHS (i.e., W Main Street/Business 151 and STH 19). On average, about 0.8 miles lie between crossings of USH 151 in the city. As such, the automobile is currently the only realistic way for residents to consistently reach areas of employment and recreation.

The associated figure demonstrates how severely the barrier USH 151 presents for accessibility to public transit for residents north of USH 151. W Main Street is the primary transit corridor (and the corridor serving most essential destinations)

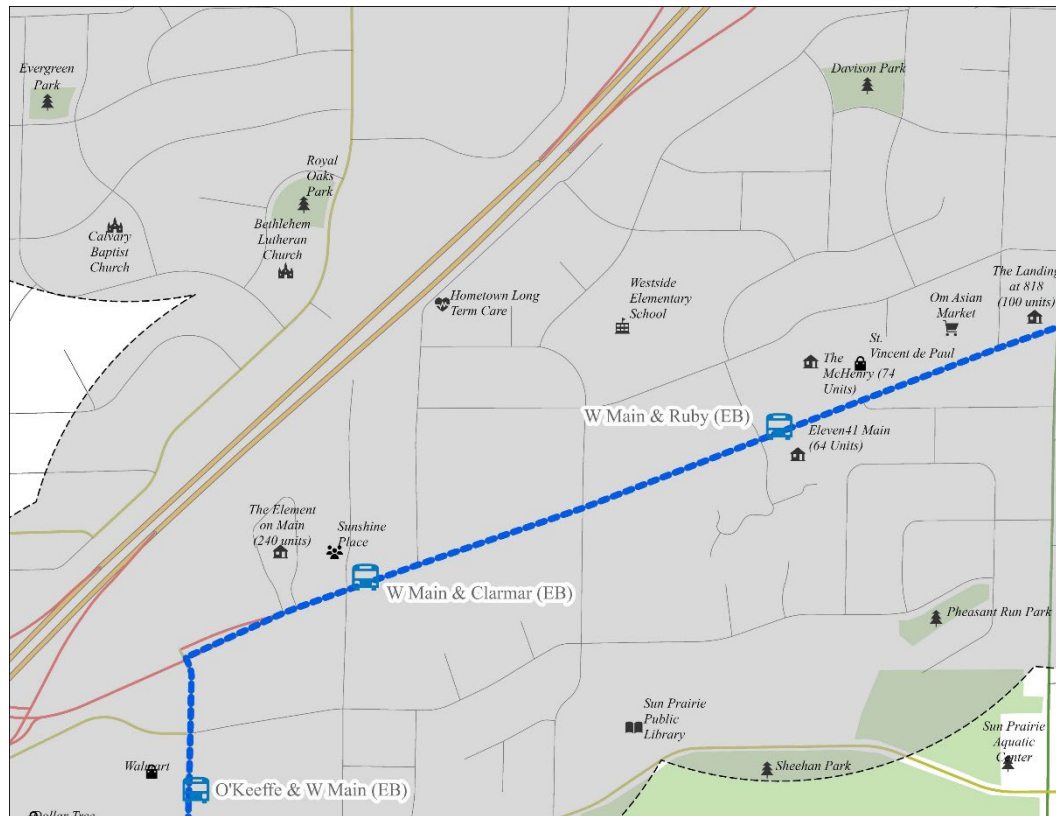


Figure 6: Half-mile distance (in grey) from bus stops to key destinations.

for Sun Prairie. While residents in houses and apartments along Broadway Drive to the north are very close to Metro Transit Route S “as the crow flies,” in practice they face a long and inhospitable walk to transit services that can surpass a mile in distance, one-way. A physical crossing of USH 151 in any location in the project area would drastically shorten these walking times to this new transit corridor, which would have the added benefit of increased transit ridership over time for some of the Madison area’s newest public transit routes.

The Project will mitigate the physical barrier USH 151 presents by creating a multimodal, active transportation crossing(s) between neighborhoods for the City’s most vulnerable residents. Most of Sun Prairie’s legally restricted affordable housing opportunities lie well within the project area, including all of the priority geographies for affordable housing as identified in the [Sun Prairie Housing Study](#) (2022). The include the Element on Main (240 units); Crosstown Apartments (98 units); Rolling Prairie Apartments (84); the McHenry (74); Vandenburg Heights (68 Units); Eleven 41 on Main (64 units); among others.

Merit Criteria 4: Community Engagement & Community-based Stewardship

Beyond the necessary environmental impact study of determined alternatives and bringing the preferred alternative up to 30 percent design, the Project will involve an extensive public and stakeholder engagement process that will inform the feasibility study. The Project proposes a

public process reliant on focus groups that will inform the character, function, and aesthetics of the crossing, and take care to integrate concerns from Sun Prairie’s justice communities so this crossing becomes an essential feature of central Sun Prairie and a cherished asset for all.

Momentum for this project arose from the ATP planning process itself, where focus groups made up of residents in the Project area consistently expressed a desire for more and safer crossings of USH 151. Accordingly, the *Plan* prioritizes this crossing as among the [top ten infrastructure improvements to be made in the near term](#). Building upon the momentum created during the ATP planning process, numerous stakeholders in the Project area have submitted [letters of support](#) for the Project. [Sunshine Place](#) and [area schools](#) will be key partners in engaging minority and youth residents, a key constituency group for the public engagement plan.

Merit Criteria 5: Equitable Development

A fundamental component of the planning of this project is to ensure connections across USH 151 are not just a transportation asset, but a community asset. While the primary foundation of the Project is to reconnect communities; an aspect of equal importance is also “placemaking.” During past engagements efforts with the City’s recently adopted Active Transportation Plan (ATP), Sun Prairie residents expressed a significant desire for bicycle and pedestrian spaces that not only allow for efficient multimodal travel, but that support community building and serve as a recreational destination. The Project includes a focus on ensuring that its deliverables incorporate elements that will make this USH 151 connection both an active transportation corridor, and a defining community feature of central Sun Prairie. Features such as art, benches, trees, and natural plantings are design elements considered to help deliver the community’s desire for creating a welcoming space.

The Project, when constructed, will meet and exceed ADA regulations so that the USH 151 connection is accessible and enjoyable for all users, people with disabilities, older adults, and younger children at all skill and comfort levels. While this is a planning and not a construction project, the design elements will promote equitable development through Universal Design whenever possible. Examples of Universal Design that are easily applicable to the Project include, but are not limited to, the following: (1) clear and consistent wayfinding signage that follows the [Dane County Bicycling Wayfinding Manual](#) (the standards of which Sun Prairie formally adopted); (2) barriers such as guard railings in elevated areas; (3) low-grade or level slopes on paths; and (4) opportunities for seating, among others.

Merit Criteria 6.1: Climate Change Mitigation and/or Adaptation and Resilience

The Project furthers the goals established in the [Wisconsin Emissions Reduction Roadmap](#) (WERR), the guiding strategy of the Wisconsin Office of Sustainability & Clean Energy (OSCE). Priority Action 4.1 of this roadmap is to “*enable mode shifting to alternative forms of transportation and expand public transit*,” which is a strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

by 100,000 metric tons in Wisconsin by 2050. The Sun Prairie [Task Force on Sustainability Report](#) (2021) provides a community-adopted vision and goals on driving sustainability in the Community in all areas, including transportation. The Report establishes a strategic recommendation to “link local bike facilities to regional commuter routes,” a goal this Project helps to fulfill by providing a contiguous path for those neighborhoods south of USH 151 to reach arterial shared-use paths and bike lanes to the north along STH 19, Thompson Road, and Grand Avenue.

The Project will create a shovel-ready, future reconnection across USH 151, a prime opportunity for modal shift in Sun Prairie. As a planning exercise, the Project includes funding for the entirety of the National Environmental Policy Act process to ensure maximum possible avoidance of adverse environmental impacts to air and water quality, wetlands, and endangered species. The WERR identifies “Transportation Access” as one of six metrics used to measure the impacts of countermeasures to Climate Change regarding low-income and disadvantaged communities. The Project will increase resident mobility, access to essential services, and economic opportunities without needing a car.

Merit Criteria 6.2: Workforce Development & Economic Opportunity

The Project will seek to further local, inclusive economic development and entrepreneurship by conducting targeted outreach to local disadvantaged business enterprises (DBEs), minority-owned businesses, women-owned businesses, and 8(a) firms to inform them about the Project and upcoming contracting opportunities. This will involve connecting with the Black Chamber of Commerce, Black Business Hub, Veterans Chamber of Commerce, the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation DBE Director, the Wisconsin Women’s Business Initiative Corporation, and other business support organizations – encouraging them to provide training opportunities in responding to the RFP for the Project.

The completion of the Project will create a foundation for furthering local inclusive economic development and entrepreneurship by increasing accessibility and foot traffic, enhancing property values, and attracting additional investment, and encouraging businesses to create sustainable practices – all of which could create opportunities to target DBE’s, minority-owned businesses, women-owned business, or 8(a) firms to grow their businesses in proximity to the Project when constructed.

Merit Criteria 6.3: Planning Integration

The 2023 [Sun Prairie in Motion](#) Active Transportation Plan (ATP) identifies a feasibility study of a crossing of USH 151 in central Sun Prairie as a near term priority, due to 1) predicted impacts of increasing trip potential; 2) a stated goal and expressed public desire for prioritizing equity in transportation infrastructure;

and 3) frequent public comment during the planning process for more safe and low-stress crossings of USH 151. The ATP ranks infrastructure recommendations by priority and finds crossings of USH 151 to be in the top ten most critical active transportation improvements for the community to invest in in the next decade. The MPO was an active participant in the steering committee for the ATP and has included [a letter of support](#) with this grant application.

The Sun Prairie ATP is not the first planning exercise to document the community's need and desire for more safe crossings of USH 151. In 2017, the City adopted its first [Parks & Open Space Plan](#) which first established a desired network of multi-use paths and on-street bike lanes that included this crossing. This was later incorporated into the more formal recommendations of the Sun Prairie 2019 [Comprehensive Plan](#). The Transportation element of the Comprehensive Plan (as required by [State Statute 66.1001](#)) has a stated objective to “[reach out to WisDOT to seek funding support for a USH 151 pedestrian bridge overpass connecting Bond Road and Hart Road](#)”.

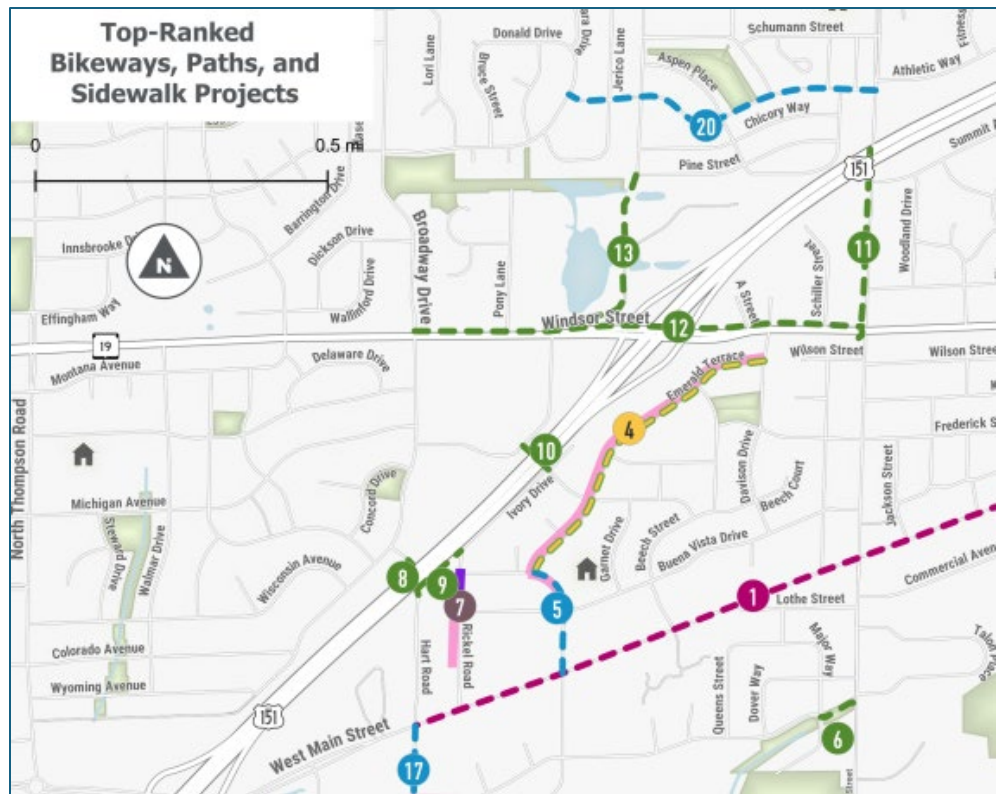


Figure 7: The Sun Prairie Active Transportation Plan ranks potential overpasses or underpasses of USH 151 as among the Top 20 short-term infrastructure improvements to be made in the City.