

SPARKING NEW LIFE INTO MAINE’S STAR CITY PROJECT

MERIT CRITERIA

The *Sparkling New Life into Maine’s Star City Project* (“Project”) consists of numerous transportation safety and mobility improvements in the rural city of Presque Isle, Maine (Aroostook County). The primary Project purposes align with BUILD program merit criteria and objectives and help the City of Presque Isle (“City”) achieve its transportation goals outlined in their [2022 Comprehensive Plan](#) which consist of maintaining and developing a safe and efficient transportation system that meets the broad interests and needs of the community and fosters economic prosperity.

Safety—Improving *Safety* is a primary Project purpose.

Current Safety Challenges

In 2022, Maine suffered its highest traffic fatality rate in 15 years.² Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) has increased messaging to bring public awareness to this trend and combat unsafe driving while simultaneously redesigning and modernizing roads throughout the state to increase safety.

As a part of the *Route 1 Main Street Downtown Transportation Feasibility Study* (“Feasibility Study,” Attachment D), project engineers evaluated the existing Main St./U.S. Route 1 (US 1) corridor infrastructure and conducted a safety audit to inform short- and long-term improvement recommendations. Existing safety issues the Project will remedy stem from current infrastructure and travel conditions including:

- High traffic volumes in a regional service center;
- Four travel lanes through town that encourage high speeds due to a lack of traffic calming measures;
- Narrow on-street parking lanes (7–7.5 feet wide);
- Poor visibility approaching intersections and numerous business entrances;
- Limited and deteriorating pedestrian facilities, including few designated crosswalks throughout the Project area; and
- Increased rates of alternative transportation, including horse-and-buggy, ATVs, and snowmobiles.

Residents and individuals passing through the Project area have expressed concerns about safety and the dangers and barriers posed by current street design (see [Partnership and Collaboration](#)). The Project area contains several segments of concern, some of which are designated as [High Crash Locations](#) (HCL). MaineDOT has established criteria for establishing HCLs where an intersection or road segment has eight or more crashes and a Critical Rate Factor (CRF) greater than or equal to 1.0 over a three-year period. The CRF is a comparison of the study locations with other comparable locations in the

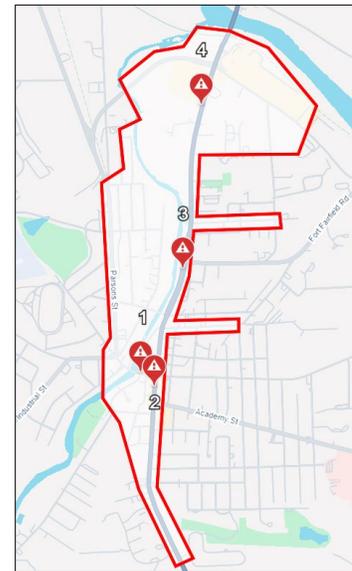


Figure 4. High Crash Locations 2019–2021, as outlined in Table 5.

Table 5. High Crash Locations 2019–2021, as illustrated in Figure 4.

Map	Location	# of Crashes	CRF
1	State St./Riverside Dr.	8	1.94
2	Main St./State St. to Academy St.	14	1.59
3	Main St./Summer St. to North St.	11	1.56
4	Main St./Shop & Save to Walmart	15	1.37

² <https://www.mainepublic.org/maine/2022-12-28/maine-highway-fatalities-reach-15-year-high>

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state. During an analysis from crash data for the three-year period between 2019 and 2021, MaineDOT identified four HCLs in the study area, as included in the Feasibility Study (Figure 4, Table 5). As a part of the Feasibility Study, project engineers performed another review of the most recent available crash data from 2021 to 2023, where one of these locations continued to meet the HCL criteria—the Main St. roadway segment between State St. and Academy St.

US 1 serves as the gateway to Presque Isle and is also currently the primary freight route in the region. These factors contribute to high traffic volumes in the small, rural city. As a State-designated regional service center, the city experiences increased traffic during business hours from county residents drawn to the regional hub for healthcare, employment, community services, and grocery stores. Estimates in the City’s *Comprehensive Plan* indicate that the population of Presque Isle increases by 75 to 100 percent during daytime hours due to this influx of regional residents seeking services unavailable closer to their homes. Table 6 shows the Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) for US 1 and other key roads in the Project area which reflect the volume of non-Presque Isle travelers. The related bypass project is expected to impact traffic volumes in Presque Isle. In traffic modeling for the Feasibility Study, project engineers performed a future analysis assuming 10 percent growth for non-US 1 movements and a 15 percent reduction associated with routing changes due to the bypass over a 10-to-30-year analysis period.

Table 6. Annual Average Daily Traffic³

Location	AADT
US 1 (Main St.) at SR 163 (Maysville St.)	16,310
US 1 (Main St.) at SR 10 (Academy St.)	16,630
US 1 (Main St.) at Cedar St.	10,820
State St.	8,950
Riverside Dr. N.	1,930
Riverside Dr. S	2,250
Chapman Rd.	2,060

Among the regional populations frequenting Presque Isle for critical services is the growing Amish population. According to the [Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown College](#), Maine has 11 Amish settlements statewide, four of those are in Aroostook County. The closest community in Fort Fairfield/Easton—10 miles northeast of Presque Isle—is also the state’s oldest and largest settlement with 285 residents as of 2024. Hitching posts are available in Presque Isle to accommodate horse-and-buggy, and MaineDOT has worked with the City to place “Share the Road” signage at strategic locations within the community, oftentimes along routes to and from Easton. Slow horse-and-buggy travel speeds and limited visibility, especially at night, are two conditions that pose safety risks for all roadway users (Figure 5). The Amish population and corresponding horse-and-buggy use in the region is increasing—with [growth trends](#) estimating Amish populations double roughly every 20 years.

Anticipated Volume Changes

In 2025, MaineDOT begins construction on Phase II of a related Presque Isle freight bypass project. The project will reroute most freight traffic around the city instead of through downtown. The project is expected to



Figure 5. A horse-and-buggy traveling south on US 1 near Ryan St.

³ <https://mainedottrafficdata.drakewell.com/publicmultinodemap.asp>

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reduce traffic on US 1 by as much as 15 percent, according to the Feasibility Study. The bypass project creates a situation where the US 1 roadway through downtown will be too large for the anticipated reduced traffic, but the remaining infrastructure will still pose safety risks for nonmotorized travelers. Upon completion of the bypass, drivers may be tempted to drive faster through town without the project since heavy freight traffic will largely be eliminated.

In addition to the anticipated changes in freight traffic, downtown redevelopment efforts are expected to stimulate growth and drive the need for increased mobility to downtown as a destination. Further, the City hopes to create favorable conditions for visitors coming to Presque Isle for all-season tourism to not need a car to navigate the small city footprint.

Project Benefits

Project planners have designed Project components with priorities to mitigate risks and improve safety. The numerous safety improvements support the [USDOT's Strategic Goals](#) of making the transportation system safer for all and advancing a future without transportation-related serious injuries and fatalities. The Project improvements also support the State's goal to reduce roadway fatalities. Safety improvements include:

- Intersection design that provides clearly marked and highly visible facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists;
- Three new crossings featuring/upgraded to Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons [RRFB];
- Crosswalks, medians, and bike lanes compliant with USDOT's [National Roadway Safety Strategy](#) plan and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA);
- Reconfigured intersection and travel lane design to slow vehicle traffic and improve visibility; and
- Separated shared-used paths reconfigured *within* the existing right-of-way (more than 7,500 linear feet).

The Project includes numerous improvements that will create cohesive transportation safety benefits. It will result in significant safety benefits. Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA) calculations estimate discounted safety benefits of **\$8,096,938** over the analysis period.

Protecting non-motorized travelers from safety risks

Advancing street design and access to the standards set forth by the State's [Complete Streets policy](#) will expand safety for Presque Isle residents and visitors. Similarly, affordable transportation infrastructure improvements will make walking and biking to and through downtown a safer and more viable option.

Project improvements result in several non-motorized transportation safety benefits, including:

- Addition of more than 5.5 miles—an increase of more than 125 percent—of paths, sidewalks, and protected crossings;
- Separation between vehicles and pedestrians/bicycles on US 1, State St., and Riverside Dr. with esplanade-buffered sidewalks and shared-use pathways (Crash Modification Factor [CMF] ID: [9250](#); CMF: 0.75; Crash Reduction Factor [CRF]: 25%);
- Improved crossing visibility and signaling at the US 1–State St., State St.–Riverside Dr., and 5-Fingers intersections (CMF ID: [4123-4](#); CMF: 0.6–0.81; CRF: 19–40%);
- Enhanced crosswalks with three new RRFBs for pedestrians (CMF ID: [11158, 11168-9](#); CMF: 0.27–0.31; CRF: 69–73%); and

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- Reduced speeds through the Project area, benefiting additional transportation mode users, such as horse-and-buggy.

Incorporating actions identified in the *National Roadway Safety Strategy Plan (NRSS Plan)*

Maine has already made significant progress reducing motor vehicle traffic fatalities through incorporation of many actions identified in USDOT’s NRSS Plan. According to the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s Traffic Safety Facts](#), Maine led the nation with a 25-percent traffic fatality reduction between 2022 and 2023. Maine’s commitment to safety improvements and strategies has proven results and demonstrates the State’s efficacy in expending Federal, State, and local infrastructure investment dollars. MaineDOT has been an early adopter of many safety-related practices including rumble strips, roundabouts, road diets, flashing pedestrian beacons, and road safety audits. To continuously improve safety, MaineDOT monitors national highway safety practices and programs, including [Toward Zero Deaths](#) and the [Safe System Approach](#), to identify, test, and implement new measures that can make a real difference in Maine.

Inspired from these and other sources, MaineDOT has [updated various initiatives](#) aimed at improving the safety of all users of its highway system. These include a new roadway context classification system, a new speed limit setting methodology, and an updated Complete Streets policy. Project improvements will continue advancing this important goal and positively impact safety in Maine.

MaineDOT has adopted and recently updated a [Complete Streets policy](#) in alignment with the [National Roadway Safety Strategy](#). The Complete Streets policy intends to ensure safe and efficient access to the street and highway system for users of passenger and commercial vehicles, transit riders, bicyclists, and pedestrians—for people of all ages and abilities that use any transportation mode. In developing Project components and plans, Project planners have considered the varied needs of all transportation system users, including the specialized needs of the Amish and Mi’kmaq Nation communities and users of ATVs and snowmobiles. Project improvements result in several roadway safety benefits for all users, including:

- Converting four-lane roadways to three-lane roadways with center turn lane (CMF ID: [2841](#), [5553-4](#); CMF: 0.53–0.812; CRF: 18.8–47%) – See Figure 6;
- Upgrading traffic signals to adaptive signal control technology (CMF ID [10269-70](#), CMF: 0.96–1.04, CRF: 4-33%); and

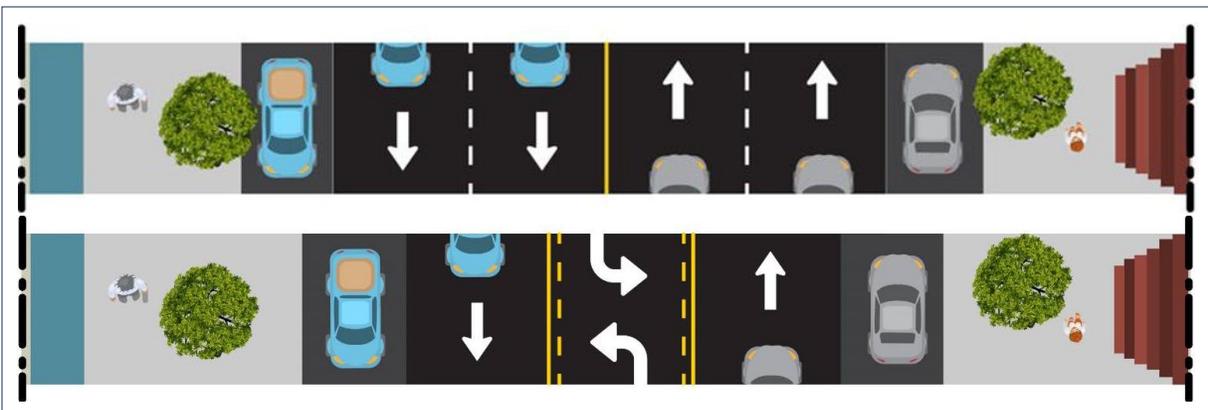


Figure 6. Top: Existing conditions on Main Street through downtown include two travel lanes and on-street parking with narrow sidewalks. **Bottom:** The Project will reduce travel lanes, allowing for wider sidewalks and on-street parking in the downtown retail/business district.

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- Increasing the length of new and improving the condition of existing sidewalks and multiuse paths, including separation between vehicles and nonmotorized travelers through the use of greenways (more than 7,500 linear feet of new separated paths as a part of road diets; more than 27,000 linear feet of new/improved sidewalks).

Environmental Sustainability—Improving Environmental Sustainability is a primary Project purpose. The Project will improve environmental sustainability in a rural Area of Persistent Poverty (APP) and Empowerment Zone while supporting Maine’s sustainability strategies.

Current Environmental Sustainability Issues

As the region grew through the 1940s and 1950s and became a hub for agriculture, lumber, and military development, US 1 became a freight thoroughfare through the heart of Presque Isle. The roadway was redesigned from a village main street to a principal arterial that serves vehicles as a priority and remains as such today. This design has created several Environmental Sustainability concerns, such as:

- The four travel lanes and additional road width for on-street parking along US 1 offer more capacity—and require more maintenance—than the anticipated traffic reductions will necessitate;
- Travelers currently require a vehicle to safely visit downtown businesses, despite the city’s small, walkable footprint; and
- The pavement-heavy design provides little resiliency or environmental benefits.

When the new bypass freight route is completed, conditions in Presque Isle will become more favorable for right-sizing the transportation infrastructure and increasing multimodal facilities.

Environmental Barriers

Presque Isle and the Project span three Census Tracts—9518, 9519, and 9520. The Tracts consist of areas designated [APP](#), [Transportation Disadvantaged](#), and a [Rural Empowerment Zone](#) (Table 7). According to the [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#) (CEJST), the area faces challenges due to residents’ low income and the inclusion of a Federal Tribe in the tract paired with additional burdens in Energy and Health (Tracts 9518 and 9520) as well as Legacy Pollution (Tract 9520). The Equitable Transportation Community (ETC) Explorer highlights Environmental Burdens residents in the Project area experience such as pre-1980s housing (65th to 75th percentile) and impaired surface water (69th percentile).

Table 7. Disadvantaged Status by Census Tract

	Tract 9518	Tract 9519	Tract 9520
<i>Area of Persistent Poverty</i>	Yes	No	Yes
<i>Rural Empowerment Zone</i>	No	Yes	No

Project Benefits

The Project provides numerous environmental sustainability benefits that will help mitigate the effects of these burdens. MaineDOT is methodically focusing on statewide environmental improvements of significant importance. Maine’s climate action plan, [Maine Won’t Wait](#), illustrates the Pine Tree State’s statutory goal to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045, reduce emissions 45 percent by 2030 and 80 percent by 2050, and transition to 80 percent renewable energy by 2030 with a goal of 100 percent by 2050. Maine recognizes the importance of reducing transportation emissions and includes investing in alternative transportation among the actions it intends to take to meet goals. The Project directly supports this strategy to offer low-carbon transportation alternatives.

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Implementing transportation-efficient land use and design by drawing on the features of a historic village that make it convenient to take fewer or shorter trips

The Project area has been negatively affected and burdened by current and historic environmental-related challenges. The Project will help mitigate additional adverse environmental impacts to air quality by improving and increasing facilities for affordable transportation so residents and visitors do not have to rely on personal vehicles to reach daily destinations. The new pedestrian bridge will reduce a 1.4-mile commute to a 0.7-mile commute and connect residents who do not own a personal vehicle.⁴

The City intends to revitalize the downtown core commercial area by concentrating retail trade, civic and social outlets, and services within a more consolidated area. This revitalization effort will use public resources wisely and make public infrastructure and services more affordable. The Project directly supports this initiative by making it safer to move within downtown without a personal vehicle. The Project's road diet and alternative transportation facility improvements are expected to result in increased pedestrian and bicyclist volumes due to the addition of at least 10 designated crossings across fewer travel lanes on US 1 (UMPI to Blake St.) and State St.

Incorporating nature-based solutions or natural infrastructure with the use of native plants

Surface transportation faces a persistent threat due to more regular severe weather events, and cities must continue to develop and implement infrastructure improvements that can reliably withstand weather extremes. Project engineers have considered such challenges by designing the infrastructure to withstand extreme weather events and increase resiliency.

The Project includes resiliency improvements through the reduction of impervious surfaces in lieu of greenspace. Because the related bypass project will reduce traffic volumes, Project engineers propose reducing the number of travel lanes on some sections of US 1. The proposed concept repurposes the portion of the roadway currently occupied by outer travel lanes into a vegetated esplanade and greenway (Figure 7). Not only does the vegetated esplanade provide separation between vehicles and multiuse path users, but the greenway will also encourage more people to walk and bike and will greatly improve the aesthetics and ecology of the area. Green infrastructure will be integrated into the greenway to mitigate stormwater impacts and increase biodiversity. These measures will increase the resiliency of the area during periods of heavy rain and snow as well as provide better conditions for healthy trees and plants. Additionally, the added greenspace and native vegetation throughout the Project area will contribute to cleaner air and serve as a natural stormwater filter in an area already burdened by impaired surface water. The Project includes adding 125,000 square feet of landscaped esplanades/greenways in the existing right-of-way as part

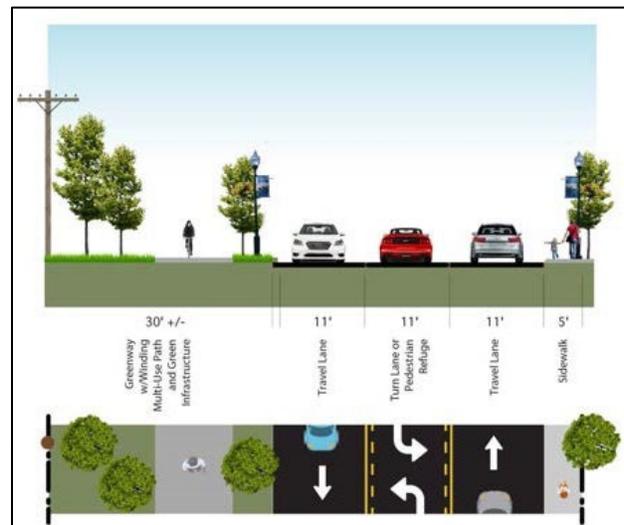


Figure 7. Main Street South Project improvements include a separated shared-use path and greenway within the existing right-of-way.

⁴ Census blockgroup 230039518002 (west side of pedestrian bridge): 8% of residents do not own a personal vehicle

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of retrofitting and reconfiguring the roadway—significantly reducing impervious surfaces.

Project components on Riverside Drive North will improve resiliency. The current street configuration consists of two 12-foot travel lanes, 5-foot paved shoulders, and a 50-foot-wide paved area that is currently used for commercial trailer parking. The Project calls for reducing the roadway to a single one-way travel lane to improve safety and repurposing the remaining surface to a 22,300 square foot greenspace with a shared-use path. This expansion of Riverside Park to north of State St. will create a new riverfront park extending to Main St. and will enhance the ecological health of the Presque Isle Stream. Additionally, this component will introduce more trees and greenspace downtown, mitigating stormwater impacts, and increasing biodiversity and the natural habitat.

MaineDOT has previously received Federal funding for numerous projects that required various levels of environmental consideration and is very experienced performing environmental due diligence and adhering to all National Environmental Policy Act requirements. Most Project work will take place in locations where similar infrastructure already exists. Few components are in areas that may require additional environmental review (see *Project Readiness*)

Quality of Life—Improving *Quality of Life* is a primary Project purpose.

Community Burdens and Challenges

Many residents struggle to achieve a valuable quality of life due to the deteriorating infrastructure in a very remote city. The Project spans three Census tracts that experience several burdens due to low income, high energy costs, health and social vulnerabilities, and transportation insecurity. CEJST highlights how residents in Tract 9518 face low income (67th percentile) while Tract 9520 includes a Federal Tribe. The tool also identifies high rates of asthma prevalence⁵ as well as the high energy costs.⁶ According to the ETC Explorer, Tracts 9518 and 9519 are identified as Transportation Disadvantaged due to high Health and Social Vulnerabilities as well as Transportation Insecurity. Health vulnerabilities in Tracts 9518 (87th percentile) and 9519 (86th percentile) include high prevalences of asthma, cancer, high blood pressure, diabetes, and low mental health.

Table 8 outlines select socioeconomic burdens that negatively impact quality of life for residents in the Project area. Residents in this area face barriers due to transportation access and cost, indicating the need for affordable, convenient alternative transportation options. The city experiences high rates of disabled residents and, like much of Maine, the number of elderly residents in

Table 8. Burdens by Census Tract from ETC Explorer

	Tract 9518	Tract 9519	Tract 9520
<i>Population at 200% or less of federal poverty level</i>	39.5%	19.2%	35.4%
<i>Median Household Income</i>	\$39,783	\$51,719	\$40,000
<i>Average percentage of income spent on transportation</i>	23.13%	17.87%	22.98%
<i>Average percentage of income spent on housing</i>	21.87%	21.25%	20.01%
<i>Endemic Inequality</i>	69 th percentile	86 th percentile	
<i>Lack of Internet Access</i>	91 st percentile	67 th percentile	85 th percentile
<i>Disability</i>	93 rd percentile	86 th percentile	92 nd percentile
<i>65 or Older</i>		92 nd percentile	78 th percentile
<i>Mobile Homes</i>	75 th percentile	66 th percentile	76 th percentile
<i>Transportation Access</i>	72 nd percentile	81 st percentile	90 th percentile
<i>Transportation Cost Burden</i>	82 nd percentile		82 nd percentile
<i>Transportation Safety</i>	77 th percentile	68 th percentile	

⁵ 93rd and 94th percentiles in Tracts 9518 and 9520, respectively

⁶ 92nd and 96th percentiles in Tracts 9518 and 9520, respectively

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Presque Isle is on the rise—two conditions that demand improved access to ADA-compliant infrastructure. To combat these burdens and vulnerabilities, residents in and near the Project area need a safe, accessible, and affordable transportation network that improves access to necessary services like education, healthcare, and employment. The Project will address these needs by creating a more livable community with expanded travel choices.

Project Benefits

The Project generates Quality of Life benefits for community transportation as well as recreation and tourism. The Project will address safety concerns and affordable alternative transportation limitations allowing renewed opportunities to access employment, workforce development, and critical points of interest. BCA calculations estimate significantly discounted amenity benefits of **\$35,741,329** as well as **\$4,897,801** of health benefits over the analysis period.

Increasing affordable transportation choices

The Project adds more than 5.5 miles of dedicated shared-use pathways to, through, and around downtown Presque Isle. This is more than a 125 percent increase compared to the existing 4.25 miles of pathways. Project planners have carefully studied movement patterns and volume to identify optimal locations and connections for pathways, sidewalks, and crossings. Additionally, the Project addresses gaps in accessibility and will bring all new infrastructure into ADA compliance. These actions will ensure all residents and visitors, regardless of age, ability, or socioeconomic status, have equitable and safe access to daily destinations using affordable and well-connected alternative transportation facilities. The Project improvements reduce reliance on personal vehicles and the associated transportation cost burdens. Project planners expect the pathways will be used by snowmobiles and ATVs during winter months, making the pathways usable year round.

Additionally, the reconfiguration of Riverside Dr. North includes a 22,300-square foot park/esplanade that will connect to existing recreation facilities on Riverside Dr. South including a farmer's market, splash pad, and sports fields. The Project completes a shared-use path loop allowing residents to reach numerous destinations by using affordable transportation modes.

Improving access to daily destinations like jobs, healthcare, schools, grocery stores, recreation

As a regional service center for Aroostook County, Presque Isle requires safe, multimodal transportation infrastructure that not only accommodates, but welcomes diverse models of travel such as pedestrians, bicycles, ATVs, snowmobiles, horse-and-buggies, as well as personal and commercial vehicles. Additionally, City leaders envision a redeveloped downtown transportation system that will promote vehicle users to park once then conduct business at all downtown locations instead of driving and parking at each, which is the typical behavior at this time.

Project improvements that will realize this benefit include:

- Road diets along approximately 1.5 miles of US 1 and State St. that will foster safer multimodal access and slower vehicle speeds;
- A pedestrian bridge across the Presque Isle Stream to more directly connect residential areas to supermarkets (approximately 120-foot span);
- Adaptive signal control technology at seven intersections to promote the efficient flow of vehicular traffic on the most frequently traveled roads; and
- ADA-compliant pedestrian and bicycle accommodations that connect residential areas, the university and schools, medical facilities, retail locations, and recreation.

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Mobility and Community Connectivity—Improving *Mobility and Community Connectivity* is a primary Project purpose.

Barriers

US 1 has been a barrier to safe multimodal transport to and through Presque Isle for decades. The wide, freight-heavy highway and limited ADA-compliant sidewalks have been sources of concern for residents and visitors alike. Many residents in the area face difficult financial decisions due to low income and high costs of energy, transportation, and housing. The median household income in the Project area ranges from \$39,783 to \$51,719. The cost of transportation is a significant burden for these low-income families, with estimated household transportation costs accounting for more than \$10,000 each year. Such factors may contribute to the high rates of households with no personal vehicle—8.1 percent in Tract 9518, 8.9 percent in Tract 9520, and 15.8 percent in Tract 9519, according to the ETC Explorer. The city's low-income housing development is one-quarter mile east of US 1 (in Tract 9518), and many residents rely on the deteriorating or nonexistent pedestrian facilities to cross US 1 to access grocery stores and work.

Project Benefits

The Project will significantly improve access to and the time it takes to access everyday destinations like employment centers, schools, grocery stores, medical facilities, pharmacies, restaurants, entertainment, and recreation. The Project creates better and more convenient affordable transportation connections to essential needs and economic opportunities. It will enhance and encourage transportation options that do not require an automobile.

Implementing plans, based on community participation/data, that addresses gaps identified in the existing network

As detailed in [*Partnership and Collaboration*](#), the community has been formally engaged in conversations regarding downtown Presque Isle redevelopment for nearly two decades. Residents have expressed the need for improved connections to the city's few supermarkets and grocery stores and other daily destinations and how US 1 serves as an impediment to reaching these destinations today. Additionally, as the city has grown west across the Presque Isle Stream, residents without access to a personal vehicle have indicated the need for more improved nonmotorized access to the city's primary retail area, including grocery stores. The Project addresses the gaps and lack of a comprehensive multimodal system by:

- Implementing road diets along US 1 and State St., which reduces the number of travel lanes and increases the facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists; and
- Constructing a pedestrian bridge over the Presque Isle Stream to provide more direct access to employment, healthcare, and supermarkets (1.4 mile to 0.7 mile commute)

Including transportation features that increase the accessibility for non-motorized travelers

The Project consists of numerous improvements to facilities that serve nonmotorized travelers. In alignment with the State's Complete Streets policy, the needs of all transportation systems users have been considered at all phases of planning and design. Existing pedestrian facilities will be upgraded to meet ADA standards, and new shared-use pathways will expand the city's affordable transportation facilities by more than 125 percent. High-visibility crosswalks, additional crossing opportunities across US 1, and a completed loop of shared-use paths are Project improvements that increase the accessibility for non-motorized travelers in this rural city burdened by low income and high costs of living. BCA calculations estimate discounted travel time savings benefits of **\$4,744,211** over the analysis period.

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Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity—Improving *Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity* is a primary Project purpose.

Barriers

Presque Isle and Aroostook County have experienced significant population decline since the 1990s when the last military installation in the region ended operations. Since 1980, the City's population has declined 13 percent, according to Census counts. According to the ETC Explorer, the area faces several social vulnerabilities that can negatively impact the region's economic competitiveness. In Tract 9518, residents face high rates of unemployment (77th percentile) and are also uninsured at high levels (70th percentile). Stimulating the economy by reinvigorating the existing historic footprint of the city's downtown district is a primary goal of City leaders and community members. In their *2020 Downtown Redevelopment Plan*, the Presque Isle Downtown Revitalization Committee (PIDRC) outlined their vision and strategies for restoring the downtown "as the heart and soul of community life." The plan assesses existing conditions and actions needed to realize the committee's goals. Additionally, Tract 9519 is a designated Rural Empowerment Zone, a program established by the U.S. Congress in 1993 to reduce unemployment and stimulate economic growth. Aroostook County is a [rural renewal county](#) because it is a rural area that lost population from 1990 to 1994 and from 1995 to 1999.

Project Benefits

The Project will improve access to employment, tourism activities, healthcare, education, and critical services along the US 1 corridor for users of all transportation modes. It aligns with the City's goal to maintain and develop a safe and efficient transportation system that meets the broad interests and needs of the community and fosters economic prosperity, as stated in the *Comprehensive Plan*.

Facilitating tourism opportunities

Presque Isle is an all-season tourism destination (Figures 8 and 9). Preserved logging roads, railroad rights-of-way, and trails serve as cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and snowmobile trails in the winter and hiking and nature trails during the non-winter months. According to the City's *Comprehensive Plan*, the area hosts approximately 125 miles of State-supported snowmobile trails, and the City recognizes the overlap of tourism and recreation for these transportation modes. Pedestrian, snowmobile, and ATV access to businesses and services have significant economic value, and the City has established objectives to enable riders to access business establishments located on US 1 as well as enabling people to park their vehicles at these same establishments and access the trail system. The 5.5 miles of new shared-use paths are a significant portion of the Project and will provide more direct connections between these routes and city businesses. Additionally, City leaders aim to provide visitors with a compact, walkable downtown experience where a vehicle is not required to visit shops, restaurants, and entertainment venues. Project improvements focused on pedestrian safety, such as new and restored sidewalks,



Figures 8 and 9. Events and activities in Presque Isle include the Crown of Maine Balloon Festival in the summer (top) and snowmobiling on local trails (bottom). Photo Credit: combf.org; Down East Mag.

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high-visibility crosswalks, and upgraded accessible crossing technology will create a more welcoming and vibrant tourist experience.

Promoting long-term economic growth and other broader economic and fiscal benefits

Agriculture is a critical economic component of Aroostook County where small family farms are prevalent and account for nearly 95 percent of the county's 720 farms, according to the [USDA](#). Improved infrastructure that supports the movement of the county's agricultural products is beneficial to these family farms and helps them remain competitive. The Project will ensure local farmers can continue to move farm equipment and products to, through, and around the city.

Promoting greater public and private investments in land-use productivity for rural main street revitalization

Leaders recognize the importance of US 1 as the gateway to the city and the main corridor for traffic and commerce. According to the City's *Comprehensive Plan*, "Presque Isle is a regional economic hub and contains a variety of retail and service establishments. The City has seen a resurgence of interest in its downtown area and new businesses have opened, previously vacant buildings have been purchased, and there is a general level of 'excitement' in the downtown."

The City anticipates the Project will produce improved safety, aesthetic, and multimodal access conditions that will encourage commercial and industrial growth. The \$33 million in estimated amenity benefits, included in BCA calculations, demonstrates the significant positive impact the Project will have on the City. Safer multimodal access through downtown will make the City more attractive to employers and employees looking to move their business or family to the northern Maine city, potentially giving the area a competitive edge in recruiting companies looking for vibrant, walkable communities for their workforce. Such business and industry growth will stimulate a range of income opportunities which may lead to further population growth.

State of Good Repair—Addressing *State of Good Repair* is a primary Project purpose.

Existing Conditions and Barriers

Presque Isle's transportation infrastructure has been largely unmodified since the 1950s when it was designed to move large volumes of traffic to and through the city to nearby farms, sawmills, and military bases. The heavy freight traffic which bisected the historic footprint of the neighborhood, crippled streets and thoroughfares—which must now be retrofitted to Complete Streets design principles. The Project will improve some of the most heavily traveled roads of Presque Isle to these standards by improving safety for drivers and nonmotorized transportation users, as described in the *Safety* section.

Years of heavy freight traffic has left much of US 1 in a deteriorating condition. As a part of the 2024 feasibility study, Project planners evaluated the Customer Service Level (CSL) measurements in the Project area. The CSL uses customer-focused engineering measures to track highway safety, condition and serviceability, and grades them similar to a report card (A to

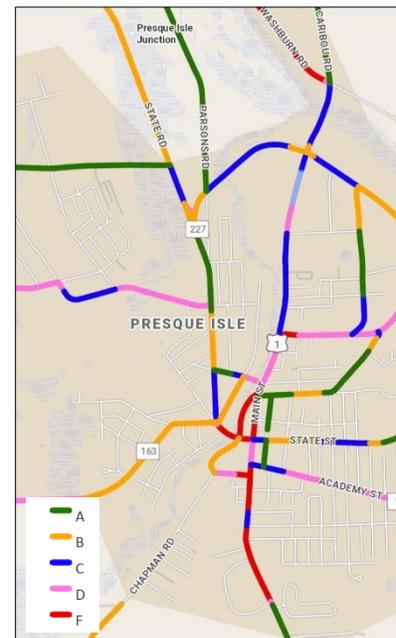


Figure 10. Customer Service Level conditions on A–F scale.

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F). Condition ratings of D or F are noted for much of US 1 within the study area and are likely related to pavement condition (Figure 10).

More than 12,000 feet of sidewalks along US 1 in the Project area are not ADA-compliant and are not connected with accessible crosswalks or signals. The limited pedestrian and bicycle facilities throughout the Project area pose system vulnerabilities in this rural city designated as an APP. Safe access to affordable transportation options, like walking and biking, are significant gaps in the city.

Project Benefits

The Project will bring more than two miles of roads and more than 5.5 miles of pathways to a state of good repair. This will increase capacity and use without sacrificing safety. The Project's Complete Street retrofitting, intersection reconfiguration, and general infrastructure improvements will address many safety issues for users of all transportation modes.

Restoring and modernizing (such as through road diets and Complete Street approaches) existing core infrastructure that is meeting its useful life

US 1 will receive a road diet treatment as a part of the Project. The sections of three and four travel lanes for the length of US 1 will be reduced to more appropriately accommodate the volume of vehicles while increasing nonmotorized transportation options. The Project will modernize the existing infrastructure, largely in the existing footprint, and bring this critical transportation area to a state of good repair. Road diet components (design drawings in Feasibility Study, Attachment D) include:

- **Main St. South from UMPI to Maple St.:**
 - **Existing:** Three travel lanes (two southbound, one northbound) and a sidewalk
 - **Improvements:** Two travel lanes and an esplanade-separated multiuse path
- **Main St. South from Maple St. to Chapman St.:**
 - **Existing:** Four travel lanes (two southbound, two northbound), on-street shoulder for parking (both sides), sidewalks (both sides)
 - **Improvements:** Two travel lanes with a center two-way turn lane/pedestrian refuge, greenway-separated multiuse path, and a sidewalk
- **Main St. South from Chapman St. to Blake St.:**
 - **Existing:** Four travel lanes (two southbound, two northbound), on-street parking (both sides), sidewalks (both sides)
 - **Improvements:** Two travel lanes with a center turn lane, widened sidewalks
- **Riverside Dr. North:**
 - **Existing:** Two travel lanes with 5-foot shoulders and a 50-foot truck parking area
 - **Improvements:** One travel lane (southbound), 50-foot flex space (parking), greenway/park-separated multiuse path
- **State St. from Main St. to 5-Fingers Intersection:**
 - **Existing:** Four travel lanes (two eastbound, two westbound), sidewalk
 - **Improvements:** Two travel lanes, separated overlook park/ path, sidewalk

Partnership and Collaboration—Creating strong *Partnerships and Collaboration* is a primary Project purpose. MaineDOT and the City recognize the value of collaboration between the Department, City, residents, and local organizations to create transportation connections that meets the broad interests and needs of the community and will continue to leverage the existing outreach efforts.

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Project Benefits

Using related project analyses, state and local data, and community feedback, Project planners have carefully integrated components that address community needs, interests, and concerns. The Project is born of several related projects, visions, and plans, each of which has engaged the small community and surrounding region during development, to include:

- Presque Isle Downtown Transportation Planning Study (2012)
- Downtown Redevelopment Plan (2020)
- City of Presque Isle Comprehensive Plan (2022)
- Village Partnership Initiative (VPI) - Planning Phase: Route 1 Main Street Downtown Transportation Feasibility Study (2024)
- Phase II of the Presque Isle Bypass (2025)

Coordinating with other types of projects, such as economic development and commercial projects

Since the early 2000s, Presque Isle residents, business owners, and leaders have discussed downtown redevelopment barriers, visions, and action plans. In the 2012 *Presque Isle Downtown Transportation Planning Study*, the City established three key transportation objectives:

1. Improve the pedestrian experience
2. Enhance the value of existing businesses and attractions
3. Alter land-use patterns to attract and support new investment

The PIDRC, formed in 2006, has spearheaded efforts to realize economic growth, which include producing the *Downtown Redevelopment Plan* in 2020 and contributing to the City's most recent *Comprehensive Plan*. In their *Downtown Redevelopment Plan*, the citizen-led group recognizes the relationship between safe, multimodal transportation infrastructure and a vibrant downtown district. The plan also cites the existing barriers an infrastructure project would need to address such as deteriorating road conditions, limited and unsafe pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and high crash locations. Similarly, the City of Presque Isle *Comprehensive Plan* from 2022 illustrates how a safe, welcoming, and vibrant Main Street corridor is vital to boosting the city and region's economy through retail, business, and tourism.

Preparing the Comprehensive Plan consisted of a multi-year process led by the City's Planning Board. The plan includes research, policies, and strategies for accomplishing the City vision within this decade. The Board and City Council held multiple public meetings in 2020 and 2021 to garner citizens input in the planning process.

In developing the Project's 2024 Village Partnership Initiative planning study, the *Route 1 Main Street Downtown Transportation Feasibility Study*, Project planners engaged the public through outreach efforts which included public meetings and additional opportunities to present comments. Two public meetings were held on the UMPI campus in 2023 (June 8 and October 11). Each elicited numerous citizen questions and comments. Two additional meetings were held in September 2024. Feedback included the following comments:

- Walking areas around town should be connected, more crosswalks north of downtown
- Too many lanes on Main Street
- Separated bike facilities considered favorable
- Better snow removal options are needed
- Sidewalks and crosswalks needed in retail area around Walmart, Shop and Save, etc.

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- Consider pedestrian bridge from Walmart across stream to westerly neighborhoods
- Promote the use of biking and electric bikes
- Concerns were raised about raised islands for pedestrian refuge and vegetation of refuge islands. Could present maintenance issues.
- Questions were raised about signal timing on Main Street. Signal improvements needed.
- Positive comments regarding traffic calming effects and anticipated slower speeds associated with three-lane section.

MaineDOT's previous and future community outreach is consistent with its [Public Involvement Plans](#), which outline the Department's efforts to ensure all populations are afforded meaningful opportunities for public involvement. Throughout the Project's lifecycle, MaineDOT and Project partners have a commitment to continue dialogue in accordance with the Plans. The Project team will engage the public and City to ensure Project impacts will not disproportionately impact people of color, low-income, or disadvantaged populations, including the region's Tribal and Amish communities. Community members have been provided numerous opportunities to voice input, both in person and online. The City will provide updates on the Project via its website, social media, and through council meetings, and workshops.

Performance Measures

MaineDOT welcomes working with USDOT to identify and measure metrics that assess Project benefits. MaineDOT is very experienced, with systems in place, to gather baseline data and establish ongoing measurements that ensure Project intentions are realized. Given MaineDOT's experience administering numerous Federal grant applications with a variety of partners, the Department will collaborate with the City to measure Project success under numerous categories, including injuries (vehicle and pedestrian), traffic volume at specific intersections, and affordable transportation use.

Additional Project Support

In addition to the MaineDOT and City of Presque Isle partnership that is the foundation of this application, numerous other parties have provided critical Project insight. The application includes numerous letters of support from a wide range of city services, lawmakers, civic organizations, and more, that recognize the transformational value the Project will bring the city.

Innovation—Fostering *Innovation* is a primary Project purpose.

Project Benefits

The existing infrastructure restricts the safe movement for pedestrians and bicyclists in the Project area. Through community engagement efforts, local residents have expressed concerns and described dangers and limitations they face navigating intersections in Presque Isle. Through innovative technologies and project delivery methods, residents and visitors in the Project area will benefit from safe, efficient, and modern transportation improvements.

Installing technology systems not typically used in the rural City of Presque Isle

Innovative traffic control signaling and signage is a critical aspect of the Project for all roadway users to reach their destinations safely. Intersection safety features such as raised islands and traffic signals which provide vehicle detection, fiber interconnectivity, and coordination of signals for optimal efficiency—which currently do not exist in the Project area—are included in improvement designs. Project components will adhere to the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways, 11th Edition* to ensure all improvements and additions reflect

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the most recent safety measures for users of all transportation types.⁷

Using practices that facilitate accelerated project delivery: Delegated Authority and Programmatic Agreements for NEPA and permitting

MaineDOT anticipates utilizing its delegated authority for Categorical Exclusions on portions of the Project. Further, MaineDOT is applying an innovative means with respect to NEPA and permitting for this project through Programmatic Agreements to ensure timely and consistent reviews and accelerate project delivery.

MaineDOT and various other State and Federal departments have executed agreements to expeditiously but thoroughly review environmental impacts from projects. MaineDOT will take advantage of the following up-to-date agreements, where applicable, to streamline the environmental review and approval process:

1. Programmatic Agreement between the Federal Highway Administration, Maine Division and the Maine Department of Transportation Regarding the Processing of Actions Classified as Categorical Exclusions for Federal-Aid Highway Projects;
2. Programmatic Agreement among Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the Maine State Historic Preservation Officer, and Maine Department of Transportation Regarding Implementation of the Federal Aid Highway and Federal Transit Programs in Maine;
3. Cooperative Agreement between U.S. Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), FHWA and the MaineDOT for State Transportation Reviews by the USFWS in Maine;
4. Programmatic Agreement for the State of Maine concerning identification of listed and proposed species and designation of non-Federal representative under the Federal Endangered Species Act between FHWA, Maine Division USACE, and MaineDOT
5. Programmatic Agreement for the State of Maine concerning identification of listed and proposed species and designation of non-Federal representative under the Federal Endangered Species Act between FHWA, Maine Division USACE, and MaineDOT.
6. Memorandum of Agreement for Stormwater Management Between the MaineDOT, MTA and Maine Department of Environmental Protection.
7. Memorandum of Agreement between United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), New England District and MaineDOT for Expediting Permit Application Evaluations under Section 214 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000, as amended, and Section 139(j) of Title 23, United States Code, Assistance to Affected State and Federal Agencies, July 2022.

⁷ <https://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/>

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ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment A Map of Project Components
- Attachment B Detailed Statement of Work
- Attachment C Census Tract Map
- Attachment D *Route 1 Main Street Downtown Transportation Feasibility Study* (includes Concept Drawings and Cost Estimates)