Wells Route 1 Community Gateway: Beautification and Safety Project in Wells, Maine

Wells is a rural, historic coastal town in York County, Maine with a population of approximately 11,855. Covering 57.66 square miles situated along the southern coast of Maine and bordering the Atlantic Ocean, Wells has experienced significant population growth over the past decade, increasing by 18% from 2010 to 2020 and an additional increase of 5% to 2023. During peak summer tourism season, population increases to 48,409 with over 6,600 lodging and seasonal units, most along Route 1, placing increased burdens on this rural Transportation network.

The Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) requests $25,000,000 in FY2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Program funds for the "*Wells Route 1 Community Gateway Beautification and Safety Project Wells, Maine*" (Project), a project that will reimagine this congested, dangerous roadway into a safer, more attractive, more effective, and context-appropriate multimodal corridor that supports a vibrant community and a classic American summer tourist destination.

Key elements of the project include:

- Deployment of new adaptive signal technology to address congestion and safety;
- Improvements that will facilitate reliable emergency access to and from the Wells Public Safety Building – the combined fire and police facility for the town;
- Paving of 5.6 miles of U.S. Route 1 to bring the highway into a state of good repair, improve customer service levels, and reduce long-term maintenance costs;
- Construction of 5.0 miles of new sidewalk and reconstruction and/or rehabilitation of 3.2 miles of existing sidewalks and up to 11.2 miles of consistent bike lanes along the corridor to create safe, affordable alternatives to vehicle travel, improve safety for all modes by reducing conflict with vehicles, and improve access to daily destinations for residents and visitors travelling along Route 1;
- Implementation of several safety measures including enhancement of crosswalks, two new signalized intersections, and improved pedestrian lighting along the corridor that will increase visibility of pedestrians for drivers and improve safety for all travelers;
- Design to accommodate future transit stops (not included in this application); and
- Aligning the layout of the corridor to improve functionality, better define the transition into the town, and enhance the aesthetic appeal of this classic New England tourist destination.

These improvements align closely with the priorities and goals of the BUILD program, will mitigate several high crash locations, and will transform Route 1 into a more continuous, connected multimodal transportation network that provides expanded travel choices for roadway users in Wells while supporting economic growth and tourism, and improving safety and quality of life in this rural community.

The Project supports the *Maine State Active Transportation Plan* (AT Plan) vision to improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety; expand mobility; support economic development; reduce air pollution; and enhance community vibrancy, quality of life, and public health for Maine residents and visitors alike. The Project also supports the State of Maine *Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP)* goals to improve safety, reduce vehicle speeds, address intersection crashes, and enhance the safety of first responders.

1.1 Statement of Work

Technical and Engineering Aspects of the Project

This application includes construction, associated traffic control, temporary soil erosion, water and pollution control, construction inspection, and the contractor's mobilization.
The Project will completely reimagine 5.6 miles of Route 1 in Wells, from the Ogunquit River to Bypass Road to create a safer and more effective multimodal transportation corridor and bring the corridor into a state of good repair. The Project will tie into existing sidewalk and bicycle lanes that extend an additional two miles south through Ogunquit. As illustrated in the attached conceptual plans, the technical aspects of the Project include:
State of Good Repair: completing a heavy paving treatment along 5.6 miles of U.S. Route 1 to bring the entire corridor into a state of good repair, improve customer service levels, and reduce long-term maintenance costs;
Signalization and Mobility Improvements: installation of two new traffic signals at the intersections of Route 1 with Chapel Road and Route 1 at South Street; upgrades to all signals along the corridor to meet existing MaineDOT specifications and deployment of adaptive traffic signal control to manage current and future congestion; implementation of new signal technology with emergency preemption to improve emergency response times; improved signal phasing for the Wells Public Safety Building at the intersection of Route 1/Route 109; and installation of overhead lane use signage through the Project Area;
Safety Improvements: Convert a section of Harbor Road from a two-way road to a one-way road in the eastbound direction to improve safety at this high crash location. Implement policy recommendations to improve access management along the corridor including curb cut reductions and the installation of raised median island at select location;
Stormwater Infrastructure Improvements: installation of a new drainage system to treat stormwater and improve water quality along the corridor;
Pedestrian Facilities: Expansion of the sidewalk network to address existing gaps and improve access, including construction or reconstruction of an ADA complaint sidewalk along approximately 8 miles, where practical; installing 10 new Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs) at new or existing crossing locations along the corridor; and improving lighting at pedestrian crossings to enhance safety;
Bicycle Facilities: Installation of approximately 11 miles of bicycle lanes, where practical along Route 1 to reduce conflict with vehicular traffic by removing bicyclists from the travel lane;
Transit Facilities: Design to accommodate future transit service improvements (not included in this project), which in a future project could include the addition and improvement of six bus stops, with pull-offs and shelters along the roadway and improved signage.

Current Design Status
MaineDOT and the Town of Wells completed the *Route 1 Corridor DRAFT Transportation Feasibility Study* in August of 2024 which resulted in a set of Draft Concept Plans. The team kicked off the Preliminary Engineering phase of the project in August 2025, with survey work ongoing. Permitting and design is expected to be completed in April 2028 should BUILD funds be awarded. The grant funding would be used to complete the construction and associated inspection costs for prioritized elements of the project, as described in this application.

Transportation Challenges and Solutions
As part of the *Route 1 Corridor DRAFT Feasibility Study*, a Road Safety Assessment (RSA) was performed in November of 2022 to evaluate and document the safety challenges and High Crash Locations (HCLs) within the study area. Several challenges and proposed mitigation strategies were identified and are described in Table 1.

Table 1: Transportation Challenges and Proposed Mitigation Strategies

Challenge #1: Safe Mobility

Unsafe and Improperly Controlled Intersections: Several permissive left-turns are not exclusive, which creates confusion for drivers unfamiliar with the area and results in unsafe conditions. Signal timings create gridlock along the corridor during peak tourism seasons. Concerns about reliable emergency services access to the Wells Public Safety Building, housing the community's fire and police stations.	•Upgrade to exclusive left-turn phasing. • Install adaptive signal technology throughout corridor. • Signalize two intersections: Route 1 at Chapel Road and Route 1 at South Street. • Convert a section of Harbor Road to one way eastbound to improve traffic operations, including unsignalized approach of public safety building.
Lack of Safe and Consistent Pedestrian Crossings: While the Project Area contains several existing pedestrian crossings, they are inconsistent and inadequately lit in many places, creating a safety risk for pedestrians and confusing conditions for motorists. Additionally, crossings are missing at several critical intersections to connect to popular origins and destinations.	• Enhance lighting, particularly at pedestrian crossing locations to improve safety for pedestrians, particularly during night conditions. • Install or upgrade RRFBs at crossing locations without signals. • Install additional crosswalks at existing traffic signal locations to improve safety for pedestrians at critical locations.

Challenge #2: Contextually-Inappropriate Facilities

Lack of adequate pedestrian infrastructure: The Study Area is missing sidewalks in several critical segments along the corridor, despite its popularity as a tourist destination and many seasonal workers who rely on walking or biking to work. As a result, pedestrians are using shoulders adjacent to the vehicular travel lane where sidewalks are not present, posing safety issues for pedestrians and motorists. Existing sidewalks do not always meet ADA compliance and are generally 5 feet or less in width.	• Provide continuous sidewalk on the east side of Route 1 for the length of the Project and expand sidewalk on the west side, where practical. • Ensure that future projects meet ADA standards and create a plan for upgrading deficient facilities to bring them up to current standards. • Providing accessible routes ensures that all pedestrians are able to use the facilities as intended and also provides a benefit to the greater community – such as families with children in strollers
Lack of Consistent Bicycle Infrastructure: Wells ranks 11th in the state for bicycle crashes; bicycle amenities along Route 1 are narrow, and striping and signage is inconsistent, resulting in some cyclists using narrow sidewalks or the roadway to travel the corridor and conflicting with vehicular traffic. and signage is inconsistent, resulting in some cyclists using narrow sidewalks or the roadway to travel the corridor and conflicting with vehicular traffic	• Provide consistent 5-foot bicycle lanes throughout the Route 1 corridor to reduce conflicts with motor vehicles and improve safety for all users. • Provide consistent 5-foot bicycle lanes throughout the Route 1 corridor to reduce conflicts with motor vehicles and improve safety for all users.
Lack of Sufficient Transit Stops: Transit stops along the corridor are difficult with limited signage to identify them and lack basic amenities such as shelters and pull-offs.	• This design will provide for future safe transit stops (not included in the Project) when more regular transit service is restored to the corridor.

Challenge #3: Roadway Configuration

Inconsistent Lane and Shoulder Widths Along the Corridor: Varying lane and shoulder widths along Route 1 inhibit the ability to accommodate multimodal infrastructure and impede traffic operations during peak tourism season.	• Provide consistent travel lane widths of 11' with shoulders/bike lanes. • Add sidewalk throughout the corridor and fill in existing gaps so that walkers are safely accommodated outside of the roadway area.

Project History

The Town of Wells has been focused on the transportation challenges and opportunities along the Route 1 corridor for decades, completing several studies focused on improving the transportation network along Route 1 and nearby roadways.

Transportation Network and Investment Context

This project will advance the goals of several state, local and county public plans, including:

Maine State Active Transportation Plan

Town of Wells Comprehensive Plan

Wells Sidewalk Development Plan

Wells Traffic Inventory and Research for Future Bypass Feasibility

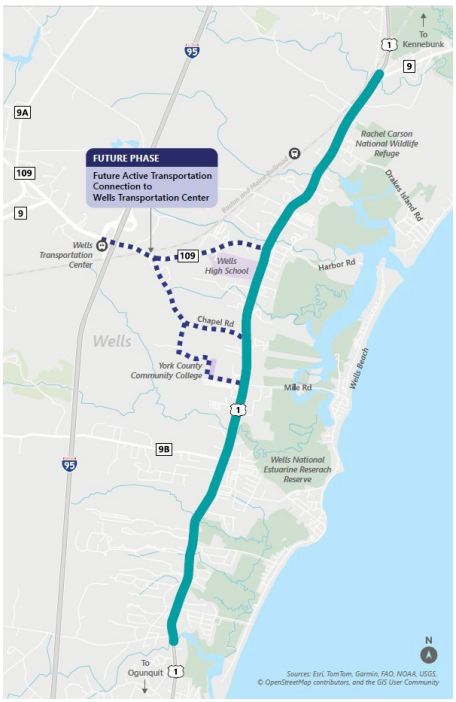
Central York County Connections Study

Strategic Highway Safety Plan

Project Location

The Project study area comprises of a corridor along Route 1 that extends 5.6 miles from the Ogunquit River to Bypass Road running parallel to the Atlantic Ocean to the east and I-95 to the west, as shown in Figure 1: Project Location Map. Route 1 is an urban minor arterial roadway and carries an average daily traffic volume of 20,000 vehicles per day, ranging from nearly 17,500 (south of Wells) to 25,500 (north of Mile Road) during summer months. Traffic volumes in the off-season are much lower, averaging around 7,300 vehicles per day (per data from the MaineDOT Continuous Count Station at the Wells/Ogunquit town line in January 2022). Lacking a downtown village, Route 1 serves as a linear downtown providing commercial and retail services throughout. Sanford Road (Route 109) connects the Route 1 corridor with points north and south via I-95 and points west and leads to the Wells Transportation Center which offers Downeaster Amtrak Service to Boston, Massachusetts and Portland, Maine and beyond, as well as regional bus service. Chapel Road provides a connection between I-95 from Sanford Road (Route 109) to Route 1 and provides access to York County Community College via College Drive.

The median household income in Wells was $83,900 and around 8.3% of the town's population was in poverty in 2023. Wells, located on the east coast of Southern Maine, has access to the Atlantic Ocean, making summer tourism an essential part of the town's economic vitality. Within the Maine Beaches region, which includes Chamber of Commerce from the Greater York Region, summer visitors spent



$2,630,443,700 in 2023. This Project will enhance transportation amenities along the project corridor and help bolster the critical tourism economy in Wells.

Wells is in the Kittery Area Comprehensive Transportation System (KACTS), a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and a member of the Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission (SMPDC), a nonpartisan council that assists member municipalities with transportation planning, environmental sustainability, resource management, smart growth, and land use.

Figure 1 identifies the limits of improvements within the Project Area.

The Project is located in York County, Maine in Census Tracts 340.05, 340.04 and 340.03. The Project is in Maine's 1st Congressional District, represented by Chellie Pingree (D-ME). The state is represented by U.S Senators Susan Collins and Angus King.

Rural Project: The project is not located in a *Census-Designated Urbanized Area*

The Project is not located in an *Area of Persistent Poverty*.

The Project is not located in a *Historically Disadvantaged Community*.