

Brewer Connects: Improving Local and Regional Mobility Project
Maine Department of Transportation

U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT)
FY 2026 Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program
Funding Opportunity Number: DTOS59-26-RA-BUILD

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The *Brewer Connects: Improving Local and Regional Mobility Project* (Project), created by the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT, Department) and the City of Brewer (City), Maine, consists of making significant improvements to downtown transportation infrastructure. Project components will enhance safety, improve connectivity and accessibility, expand active transportation options, increase tourism, and strengthen economic development for residents and businesses throughout the rural region. It is the outcome of MaineDOT's Village Partnership Initiative which fosters collaboration between the Department and cities to develop shared revitalization and reinvestment opportunities in the state's iconic downtown centers.

Brewer is a service center for neighboring rural communities — a place where residents throughout the region can go to meet their everyday needs. It is located across the Penobscot River from Bangor and is the primary gateway from the interstate highway system to Acadia National Park and the larger Downeast region. It's a place where people live, work, conduct business, entertain, and go to enjoy the renowned Brewer Riverwalk. However, parts of the City, including some of its busiest intersections, suffer from old and outdated transportation infrastructure that is experiencing significant deterioration and a wide range of unsafe conditions. There are three high crash locations in the Project area.

Numerous public meetings and open houses have reinforced the need to replace outdated pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular infrastructure with a modern foundation that will create a safer, more welcoming, and economically vibrant downtown.

The Project consists of:

- redesigning unsafe intersections to reduce vehicle crashes and increase safety
- incorporating modern safety features for pedestrians and active transportation users
- installing and/or improving sidewalks, crosswalks, and multi-use pathways that are safe and attractive
- reconstructing infrastructure to address structural and drainage deficiencies



Two faded and outdated crosswalks without modern safety features located at Holyoke Street and North Main Street.

The Project has been thoughtfully designed to provide new and upgraded safe multimodal connectivity features while also maintaining the historic character of the community. Improvements will create an incentive for residents and businesses to locate downtown and for tourists to visit those businesses — fostering economic development throughout the region. A detailed Statement of Work for the Project has been completed.¹ Project components are grouped into three geographic focus areas and consist of the following specific safety and connectivity improvements:



Drainage issues affect the street and sidewalk located at the southeast corner of State St and North Main Street.

Focus Area 1: North Main Street Corridor from State Street to Chamberlain Street

Focus Area 1 covers North Main Street from State Street to the Chamberlain Street intersection, excluding the busy State Street intersection itself. This focus area is a high crash corridor. The intersection of North Main Street and Holyoke Street includes a crosswalk connecting a residential neighborhood to a popular area convenience store. The crosswalk, located at the crest of a hill, traverses three lanes of traffic. Residents and City officials have cited numerous safety concerns here.

Focus Area 1 - Project Improvements
Channeling traffic on North Main Street to slow vehicles
Installing a raised crosswalk with a Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) and pedestrian scale lighting across North Main Street near Holyoke Street
Installing overhead and pole-mounted safety signage
Developing a signalized right turn at North Main Street southbound onto State Street westbound towards Bangor with blank out LED signs to prohibit right turns on red while pedestrians are utilizing the pedestrian crossing
Updating street and pedestrian lighting to utilize current MaineDOT lighting standards
Expand drainage infrastructure at streets and intersections

Focus Area 1 - Project Benefits
Creating a safer pedestrian crossing at Holyoke Street
Improving safety for drivers and pedestrians at the right turn from North Main Street westbound onto State Street northbound towards Bangor
Improving safety by adding left turn guidelines on the pavement through intersections
Eliminating lane entrapment on North Main Street for drivers turning right onto Chamberlain Street
Improving drainage conditions will reduce street flooding

Focus Area 2: Center Street Corridor from North Main Street to the end of Center Street

Center Street is a primary corridor through downtown and houses the historic commercial section of the City. It connects the Brewer Riverwalk on the north side of North Main Street to residential neighborhoods and the City’s recreational facilities located at the south end of Center Street. Improving Center Street for active transportation was a priority heard at public meetings.

¹ Statement of Work, *Brewer Connects: Improving Local and Regional Mobility Project*, Maine Department of Transportation, <https://www.maine.gov/dot/about/funding/grants/build>

There is no formal pedestrian crossing at Center Street and North Main Street despite numerous sightings of people crossing the street here. The Project includes constructing a safe active transportation pedestrian crosswalk across North Main Street immediately northeast of Center Street to better connect the riverwalk to neighborhoods and recreational facilities. Center Street in the middle of the focus area suffers from significant drainage problems and floods frequently.

Focus Area 2 - Project Improvements
Constructing a raised midblock pedestrian crossing across North Main Street immediately northeast of Center Street with a Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon (PHB) that is electronically connected to the State Street intersection traffic signal
Constructing a 10-foot-wide shared-use pathway on the east side of Center Street from North Main Street to the end of Center Street
Improving pavement and stormwater drainage efficiency throughout the Center Street corridor

Focus Area 2 - Project Benefits
Improving vehicular traffic safety at the intersection of Center Street and North Main Street
Creating a safe active transportation connection across North Main Street
Creating a shared-use pathway along Center Street

Focus Area 3: Wilson Street Corridor from the Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain Bridge to State Street

The signalized intersection at Wilson Street and North Main Street/South Main Street is a High Crash Location. The geometry of the intersection makes it particularly challenging because none of the four streets comprising the intersection connect at right angles. Although sidewalks are somewhat wide, lighting is poor, crosswalks are long, and traffic moves rapidly through the intersection. There is a connection to the Brewer Riverwalk located here, but crossing the intersection to get to it is a very uncomfortable experience for pedestrians and cyclists. Project planners thoughtfully designed a comprehensive remedy that will improve the intersection alignment, reduce crosswalk lengths, and make the area more accessible to cyclists.

Focus Area 3 - Project Improvements
Closing the driveway that exits into the middle of the intersection of Wilson Street and North Main Street/South Main Street and provide street access for the properties via Union Street
Constructing a 10-foot-wide shared-use pathway along Wilson Street throughout the focus area
Updating lighting throughout the focus area to current MaineDOT standards

Focus Area 3 - Project Benefits
Creating shorter pedestrian crossings to improve safety
Maintaining existing curb lines
Improving safety by adding left turn guidelines on the pavement through intersections
Improving access management to properties near the intersection of Wilson Street and North Main Street/South Main Street

Transportation Challenges

The more convenient and visually appealing a downtown area is, the more likely tourists are to visit and reward the community by spending money. The Project area suffers from old, outdated, and deteriorating streets, sidewalks, and curbs that lack modern safety and accessibility features and are visually unappealing. Streets in the Project area flood frequently which creates additional transportation challenges. This is burdensome for tourists who must seek out other more

appealing and accommodating communities than Brewer to visit while on the way to Acadia National Park and other parts of Maine’s scenic coastline. Project funding will allow Brewer to create more appealing and inviting streets and sidewalks — welcoming tourists and reducing their hardship of searching elsewhere for dining and shopping.

Village Partnership Initiative

In 2022, MaineDOT and the City implemented a Village Partnership Initiative (VPI) agreement. Under MaineDOT’s VPI program, a city and the Department join forces to create shared opportunities for reinvestment and revitalization of the state’s iconic downtowns by making once-in-a-lifetime investments in them. Brewer recognized the value that a VPI partnership could create — a financial investment to improve multimodal safety and connectivity while thoughtfully maintaining the historic character of downtown. The resulting improvements would create an incentive for businesses to locate, people to live, and tourists to visit downtown Brewer, stimulating economic development throughout the region. The VPI partnership led to the creation of the study document containing Project alternatives including the selected Project components: *City of Brewer Village Partnership Initiative Study, Final Report, February 2025*.²

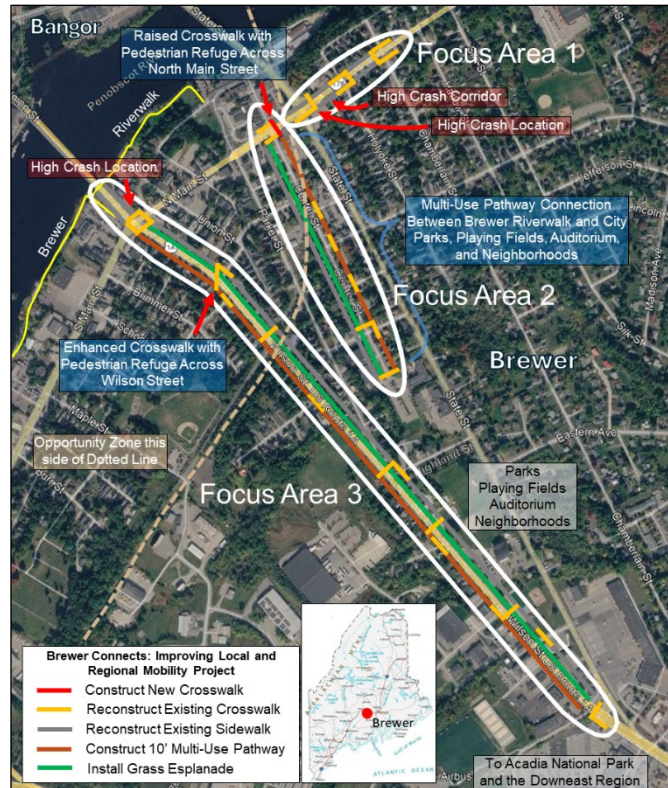
Bangor Area Comprehensive Transportation System (BACTS)

Created in 1982, BACTS is the organization designated by the Federal and state governments to perform transportation planning in the region. The Bangor Area Comprehensive Transportation System (BACTS) covers the 10 municipalities and the Penobscot Tribal Nation that make up the 2020 census-designated Greater Bangor Urbanized Area. The 2020 Census indicates 65,585 people live in the Urbanized Area, making it the third largest urban center in Maine.

BACTS was awarded a 2023 Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Planning and Demonstration Grant for \$500,000. Funding assistance was also provided by MaineDOT and BACTS region members. The safety action plans to be developed under the grant will align with Maine’s *Strategic Highway Safety Plan* and be a catalyst to assist in applying for implementation grant funding through the SS4A program.³

Project Design and Consistency with BUILD and USDOT Goals

Preliminary engineering will begin in Spring of 2026 and be completed by the end of 2027.



² *City of Brewer Village Partnership Initiative Study, Final Report, February 2025*, <https://www.maine.gov/dot/about/funding/grants/build>

³ Additional information about the project is available here: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/f24b059735684d81afcf433a1d587188>

There are no previously completed Project components. A Statement of Work has been completed for the Project. During the VPI process, Project planners approved the following Project goals: Improve safety and accessibility for all users (walkers, bikers, drivers, and transit riders); Expand active transportation connections and facilities; Support future growth and economic development by enhancing the look, feel, and character of the streetscape.

These goals are anticipated to be consistent with USDOT goals expected in a forthcoming updated *U.S. Department of Transportation Strategic Plan*. The Project also aligns with **all** BUILD Merit Criteria. Each criterion has clear, direct, data-driven, and significant benefits that target known, documented, and long-standing problems.

Project Location

The Project is located in a Rural area; it is not designated as an Urban project. It spans three Census Tracts: 23019004100 (41); 23019004200 (42); 23019004300 (43). The

Census Tract	Amount of Spend	Percent of Funds
23019004100 (41) (Qualifying Opportunity Zone)	\$5,840,384	50%
23019004200 (42)	\$4,547,066	39%
23019004300 (43)	\$1,217,514	11%
Total:	\$11,604,964	100%

City is part of Census-Designated Urban Area (UACE) 04951, which has a total population of 61,539 — significantly less than the BUILD Urban Area population threshold of 200,000. A portion of the Project is located in a Qualifying Opportunity Zone (Census Tract 23019004100 (41)) and Project spending in this zone will be \$5,840,384.⁴ The Project is not located in an Area of Persistent Poverty (APP) Census Tract or APP county.

Located in Penobscot County, Brewer is in the south central part of the state and has a population of 9,600 residents. It is separated from Bangor by the Penobscot River. It is mostly a residential community but does not serve as a suburb of Bangor because, unlike other ‘bedroom communities’ around Bangor, Brewer has its own downtown with shops, restaurants, grocery stores, banking centers, and convenient access to other everyday services. As a state-designated service center, the City experiences increased traffic during business hours from county residents arriving for employment, healthcare, area services, and groceries. Aside from the regular population of 9,600 residents, City officials estimate the daily number of visitors, or those simply passing through the City, at more than 50,000 in the summer and more than 40,000 in the winter.

The Project covers a one-mile diameter, from Wilson Street to Chamberlain Street and southeast along Wilson Street to State Street. It includes one street classified as a ‘Non-National Highway System Federal Aid’ roadway (North Main Street) and one street classified as an ‘Other Principal Arterial’ roadway (Wilson Street). The other Project street, Center Street, is classified as a ‘Local’ roadway. The scenic Brewer Riverwalk is very popular and important locally and regionally. Brewer officials note that 70 percent of individuals using the riverwalk are from out of town. Tourists, as well as residents living in nearby rural towns and communities, frequently use the pathway to walk, run, and bike because surrounding rural towns don’t have sidewalks or multi-use pathways to exercise on — let alone a pathway with a beautiful river view.

Improvements to Brewer would create more options for tourists visiting the entire region while simultaneously opening the region to a greater share of Main’s \$8.6 billion tourism industry. Acadia National Park is only an hour-and-a-half south of Brewer. With so many tourists passing through Brewer to visit the park, the City is working hard to become a ‘destination on the way’.

⁴ IRS Internal Revenue Bulletin: 2018-28, July 9, 2018, https://www.irs.gov/irb/2018-28_IRB#NOT-2018-48