

Franklin Street Redesign Planning Project in Portland, Maine

Maine Department of Transportation City of Portland, Maine

FY24-26 Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program (RCP)
U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT)

Funding Opportunity Number: DOT-RCP-FY24-01
CFDA Number: 20.940

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OVERVIEW

Introduction

Maine Department of Transportation (“MaineDOT”), with applicant partner the City of Portland (“City”), is requesting \$2,000,000 from the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program (RCP) to fund Planning activities for the **Franklin Street Redesign Planning Project in Portland, Maine** (“Project”). This will be matched by \$250,000 from MaineDOT and an additional \$250,000 from the City in non-Federal funds.

The Project consists of completing the necessary elements to advance the results of the City’s Enhanced Project Scoping study to the Preliminary Design Report (PDR) for the reconstruction of Franklin Street, an urban renewal-era roadway in Portland, Maine (Figure 1). Tasks proposed in this request include acquiring existing condition information, initial environmental screenings, the Final Horizontal and Vertical Alignment Report, and public engagement and input.

MaineDOT and the City are committed to improving safety and multimodal accessibility throughout Portland. In the past decade, this has meant reevaluating vehicle-focused infrastructure in vital transportation corridors, such as Franklin Street. The Project addresses a long-standing transportation barrier that bisects Portland’s most populous neighborhoods and creates safety, mobility, access, and land use challenges for residents spanning three Census Tracts—3, 5, and 6—that are all designated Areas of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Communities. Tract 3 is also a Low-Income Community Opportunity Zone. The Project will build upon previous studies that proposed concepts for redesigning Franklin Street to restore lost connections between Portland’s neighborhoods and more effectively meet the multimodal transportation and land use needs of the impacted neighborhoods today.

The Project will engage the public and consider design that:

- Promotes safe active transportation and improved accessibility for all users;
- Reduces impacts from vehicles, including greenhouse gas emissions;
- Rescales the street to the urban context and reorients buildings to the street to activate street frontages;
- Reconnects adjacent neighborhoods by restoring east-west street access;
- Increases opportunities for affordable housing and economic development; and
- Promotes a transit-friendly environment for future bus rapid transit.

The Project area includes and borders five Portland neighborhoods: East Bayside, Bayside, Old Port, India Street, and Downtown. The larger capital project that this Planning Project will support is intended to eliminate an existing physical barrier between these neighborhoods and to create a space that knits them together and reestablishes a walkable, bikeable, transit-friendly, thriving, mixed-use community. These goals align with MaineDOT’s [Village Partnership Initiative \(VPI\)](#). The City and MaineDOT have entered into a two-party agreement to conduct an [Enhanced Project Scoping \(EPS\)](#) study for this Project area, which is currently underway.



Figure 1. The Project area (red) demonstrates how Franklin Street spans the length of the Portland peninsula.

Project History

Present-day Portland, particularly the area known as “the Peninsula” where Downtown and the Project area are located, has been the site of human settlement for centuries. During the 17th and 18th centuries, Portland grew as a port town. The Great Fire of 1866 left 10,000 Portland residents homeless and led to a migration off the peninsula. Upon electrification and extension of streetcar lines in the late 1800s, the commute to downtown became easier and off-peninsula neighborhoods continued to grow. By the 1930s, the neighborhoods on the peninsula were densely populated by thriving immigrant communities, namely Polish, Italian, Jewish, and Irish. At that time, Franklin Street was a north-south two-lane city street among these densely populated neighborhoods. Discriminatory redlining in Portland, as seen on a 1935 [Home Owners’ Loan Corporation \(HOLC\) map](#) (Figure 2), shows these diverse neighborhoods were identified as “Hazardous” and “Definitely Declining,” while the typically more affluent neighborhoods on the outskirts and off-peninsula were considered “Still Desirable” and “Best.”

Portland’s Slum Clearance and Redevelopment Administration (“Administration”) was created in 1951 and began selecting neighborhoods for “urban renewal.” In 1955, the first project—the [Vine–Deer–Chatham Project](#)—displaced 100 residents and 25 businesses from six acres of land in today’s India Street neighborhood. Franklin Street formed the western border of this project. The Administration took on the Bayside West project in 1958, which included demolishing the homes of 85 residents between Lancaster, Pearl, Somerset, and Franklin Streets. Additional housing units were razed across Franklin Street for the “Bayside Park” project. In 1967, the city hired architect Victor Gruen to create an Urban Renewal plan, *Patterns for Progress*. Gruen recommended several redevelopment projects for improved parking and traffic circulation and identified Franklin Street as the preferred route to move traffic from the new Interstate 295 (I-295) to Downtown. The razing of Franklin Street began soon after, resulting in the demolition of 100 structures and displacement of families and businesses along the entire three-quarter-mile corridor to accommodate Franklin Arterial’s wider right-of-way (Figure 3). East-west through streets, including at Lancaster, Oxford, Federal, and Newbury Streets, were truncated at the new roadway.

In all, hundreds of homes, businesses, and trees were cleared for the mid-twentieth-century urban renewal efforts, dramatically impacting the appearance, connectivity, and character of the surrounding neighborhoods (Figure 4). Once a thriving, diverse residential and commercial area, the Franklin Street corridor became a vehicle-focused thoroughfare—somewhere to drive through and not to.

Transportation Needs

The Project will evaluate how to adequately address numerous transportation needs, barriers,

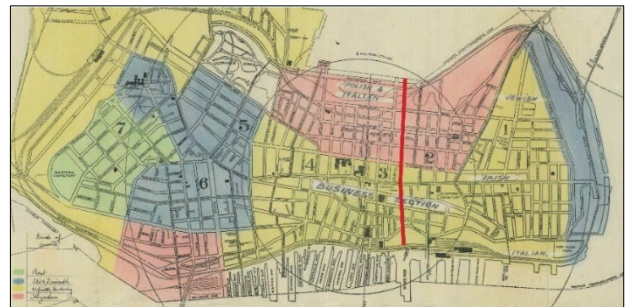


Figure 2. A redlining map from 1935 shows the “Grade of Security” for Portland. The original Franklin Street alignment is indicated with the red line. Photo Source: Maine Memory Network



Figure 3. Franklin Street looking north from Congress near the Cathedral (right) circa 1963. All structures on left were demolished—as seen in [today’s street view](#). Photo Source: Portland Press Herald Evening Express Staff Photo

and harms for the Franklin Street corridor. Project components will include modern pedestrian and bicyclist facilities, traffic calming features, cross-street restoration, right-of-way width reduction, climate resiliency, and green street infrastructure.

Accessibility

Franklin Arterial construction widened the right-of-way and eliminated several existing opportunities for neighborhood connectivity and pedestrian crossings for more than one-half mile between Middle Street and Marginal Way. The Project will explore rescaling Franklin Street to the urban context and moving closer to the historic level of connectivity. Safe and convenient access to and through this critical transportation corridor are a primary Project need. According to the Equitable Transportation Community (ETC) Explorer, residents in the Project area face transportation cost and access burdens that impact their ability to move freely, safely, conveniently, and affordably to meet their daily needs. Approximately 50 percent of residents in these Census tracts are at 200 percent or less of the Federal poverty level¹ and spend 20 to 30 percent of their household income on transportation.² Between 18 and 37 percent of households within the Project area do not own personal vehicles, indicating the need for better active transportation solutions and public transportation.³ Sidewalks exist at cross streets and along portions of Franklin Street; however, expansive gaps between intersections leave pedestrians and bicyclists with few options to cross safely and access points of interest. [Drone photographs, captured in September 2024](#), illustrates the accessibility burden Franklin Street poses for community members between daily destinations, such as residences, parks, schools, employers, green spaces, and retail (Figure 5).

In May 2023, the region's Federal Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System (PACTS), part of the Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG), published [Vision Zero Greater Portland: A Safe Systems Approach](#). In this report, PACTS outlines the region's plan for eliminating fatalities and serious injuries resulting from crashes. Through its data-driven analysis, PACTS identified Critical Safety Corridors and Intersections to focus its efforts to reach the goal of zero serious injuries and fatalities and improve safe, healthy, equitable transportation for all. Five of the seven intersections on Franklin Street in the Project area are included as Critical Safety Intersections (Franklin at Marginal Way, and Fox, Congress, Fore, and Commercial Streets).

According to the [Maine Public Crash Query Tool](#), the Project area saw more than 50 crashes with injuries between 2021 and 2023. Complicated configurations at Cumberland Avenue and

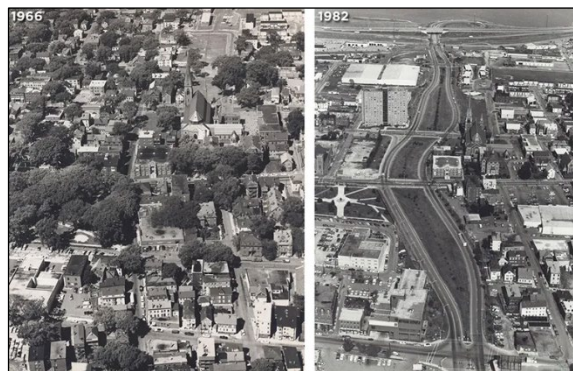


Figure 4. The Project area looking north to Back Cove in 1966 (left) and again in 1982 (right) after Franklin Arterial was constructed. Photo Source: Portland Press Herald.



Figure 5. Franklin Street, looking south, creates physical accessibility barriers between numerous daily destinations on each side of the corridor.

¹ Source ETC Explorer, Poverty Level: Tract 3 – 48%; Tract 5 – 55%; Tract 6 – 51%

² Source ETC Explorer, Transportation Cost Burden: Tract 3 – 30%; Tract 5 – 19%; Tract 6 – 18%

³ Source ETC Explorer, Households with no personal vehicle: Tract 3 – 37%; Tract 5 – 18%; Tract 6 – 35%

Congress Street each consist of four traffic signals, often leaving vehicles stopped at the signals in the median and resulting in movement conflicts for all travel modes. Pedestrians are unable to cross both legs of Franklin Street in one traffic signal cycle at these locations. These intersections accounted for a total of five and twelve injury crashes between 2021 and 2023, respectively, which does not account for unrecorded near misses. Table 1 details the available [Annual Average Daily Traffic](#) (AADT) volumes for the Project area as well as recent daily pedestrian volumes, and demonstrates that the need for safe, well-connected facilities exists. The Project will design for vehicle, pedestrian, and bicyclist needs to appropriately serve the demand while also eliminating and mitigating barriers that limit affordable active transportation opportunities.

Table 1. AADT on Franklin Street

Junction with Franklin St.	AADT SE (2022)	AADT NW (2022)	Daily Ped. Volume (2022-23)
Marginal Way	11,240	12,730	365
Somerset/Fox St.	N/A	9,940	344
Cumberland Ave.	8,320	8,640	387
Congress St.	5,570	5,820	735
Middle St.	N/A	N/A	3202
Fore St.	4,190	3,810	3001
Commercial St.	2,810	2,440	5517



Figure 6. Flooding on Somerset Street near the northwest terminus. Photo Source: *Portland Press Herald*

Additionally, as a coastal city, Portland is cognizant of the importance of infrastructure that reduces greenhouse gas emissions, improves resilience, and mitigates flooding and other effects of climate change. Currently, surrounding neighborhoods, primarily at the northern section of the Project area, are prone to frequent and significant flooding during heavy rainfall and extreme tidal events (Figure 6). The City continues to improve its Combined Sewer overflows (CSO) Long Term Control Plan, being administered by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, and has identified stormwater and sewer separation of the Franklin Street corridor as a key goal to help further reduce CSO occurrences. It is anticipated that a new storm drain system, designed in conjunction with the new roadway, will significantly increase the stormwater flooding resiliency of the corridor and surrounding neighborhoods once implemented. The Project will inform these design decisions as the Project nears final design and readies for construction.

Proposed Improvements

The Project will build on previous studies that identified options for redesigning Franklin Street to better connect Portland's neighborhoods and more effectively meet the multimodal transportation needs of the community today. The most recent effort, the [Franklin Street Feasibility Study](#), was completed in 2015 after extensive public outreach. It recommended a design concept that would realign the road, remove barriers, and reestablish cross streets to reconnect adjacent neighborhoods long separated by the current arterial roadway. The concept was unanimously adopted as a Transportation Master Plan by the City Council on July 20, 2015.

Recognizing the evolution of best practices in multimodal transportation design and the pace of surrounding development since 2015, the City and MaineDOT are currently launching an [EPS](#) effort to update this plan by considering the best features from the 2015 study and applying today's contemporary standards and elements. These include improved active transportation facilities and infrastructure that have proven effective and popular in the region, such as roundabouts and curb-separated bicycle facilities (Figure 7).

The EPS will align with the [Gorham-Westbrook-Portland Rapid Transit Conceptual Design](#) study, also planned for 2025, which will refine plans for the region's first bus rapid transit route and includes portions of Franklin Street.⁴ Planners will integrate the ongoing update of the City's land use code, [ReCode Portland](#), with the goal of better aligning improvements to the transportation system with land use policy for the Project area which supports its growth as a high density, mixed-use zone. The design will also coordinate and integrate with City water resource work (sewer and stormwater, including green stormwater infrastructure) that is being planned for the Project area. Once completed, the EPS study will have advanced the Franklin Street construction project to approximately 25 percent design.

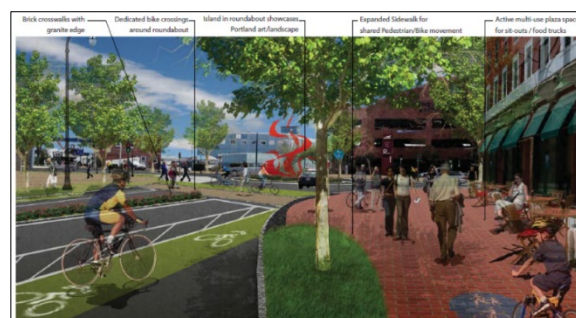


Figure 7. Features to be considered include urban roundabouts.

The Project consists of completing the necessary elements to advance the results of the City's EPS study to the PDR. Tasks proposed in this application are scheduled to begin in Fall 2027 and include acquiring existing condition information, initial environmental screenings, the Final Horizontal and Vertical Alignment Report, and public engagement efforts. The Planning Project tasks will bring the design to the 50–60 percent level and will inform final design decisions, such as stormwater system inclusion and right of way. Project tasks are expected to be completed by Fall 2029. A Proposed Project Schedule is included as Attachment A.

MaineDOT and the City will select design features that reconnect adjacent neighborhoods by restoring east-west street connections; promote non-motorized travel; improve access to green spaces, pathway networks, and public transit; integrate green street features that reintroduce natural vegetation and help reduce pollutants; and increase traffic calming features and countermeasures to reduce roadway fatalities and injuries. MaineDOT and the City have consulted, and will continue to utilize, the Crash Modification Factors (CMF) Clearinghouse to analyze the effectiveness of countermeasures proposed in past studies and will select features that are proven to reduce crashes and improve safety, such as: converting signalized intersections to roundabouts (CMF: 0.81; Crash Reduction Factor [CRF]: 19⁵), raised crosswalks (CMF: 0.55–0.7 ; CRF: 20–46⁶), and raised cycle tracks (CMF: 0.06–0.92; CMR: 8–94⁷), among others.

Technical Capacity

MaineDOT is an accomplished, experienced, and responsible recipient of past successful USDOT grants, including, but not limited to, BUILD, INFRA, RURAL, RAISE, RCN, and CFI program awards with decades of experience delivering Federally funded transportation projects. MaineDOT and the City can be relied upon to fully obligate and commence the Project with the City well in advance of the obligation deadline of September 30, 2027. Funding commitment letters from MaineDOT and the City are included as Attachment B. Employing approximately 1,600 personnel, MaineDOT expends and disperses more than \$1 billion annually, including Federal-aid highway program funds as well as State and local funds. MaineDOT and the City adhere to Administrative and National Policy Requirements during all phases of all projects. MaineDOT's Federal grant and formula fund experience includes the management of numerous

⁴ Rapid Transit Study, p. 41.

⁵ CMF ID: 4194

⁶ CMF ID: 135, 136, 137

⁷ CMF ID: 4094-4103.

infrastructure projects and the associated Federal requirements and regulations, such as compliance with Critical Infrastructure Security, Cybersecurity and Resilience; Domestic Preference Requirements; Civil Rights and Title VI, including the Public Rights-of Way Accessibility Guidelines; Americans with Disabilities Act, Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act, and Davis Bacon Act.

LOCATION AND MAP

Portland, located in southern Maine, is the state’s most populous city with 68,408 residents and 203,914 residents in the surrounding metropolitan area as of the 2020 Census. Between [2010 and 2020 Census counts](#), Portland’s population grew 3.3 percent despite the state’s overall declining population. The Project area spans three Census Tracts—3, 5, and 6—all designated [Areas of Persistent Poverty](#) and [Historically Disadvantaged Communities](#) (Table 2, Figure 8). Tract 3 is also a [Low-Income Community Opportunity Zone](#).

Portland is the region’s commercial, workforce, and residential center. The Project area includes five neighborhoods on Portland’s peninsula: Bayside, East Bayside, Downtown, India Street, and Old Port. Franklin Street bisects the peninsula, leaving the neighborhoods detached from daily destinations on the opposite side of the corridor. The neighborhoods vary widely in character and are home, not only to some of the city’s most disadvantaged communities, but also to some of its highest end housing markets, a thriving tourism sector, a healthy downtown, a bustling creative industrial economy, and a working waterfront. East Bayside (Tract 5) forms the northeastern border of the Project area and is home to many immigrants and refugees, making it one of the most diverse communities in Maine. The area boasts Kennedy Park, a recreation facility that provides surrounding residents, especially youth, community building opportunities.⁸ Nearby India Street is a historic neighborhood known for its rich immigrant history and proximity to the Old Port district, which serves as the city’s economic and cultural hub.

The Project will address Franklin Street, also known as U.S. Route 1A, a four-lane divided highway classified as a “minor arterial” and “intermodal connector” under the National Highway System, from Marginal Way to Commercial Street (Attachment C). It runs 0.80 miles across the Portland peninsula. At the northwest terminus, it interchanges with I-295 along Back Cove at

Table 2. Project Location Details

Location	Borders Bayside, East Bayside, Downtown, India Street, and Old Port Neighborhoods City of Portland; Cumberland County, Maine
GPS coordinates	Northwest terminus: 43.66537, -70.26023 Southeast terminus: 43.65811, -70.24947
Census Tracts (2010 and 2020)	Tract 23005000300 (3) Tract 23005000500 (5) Tract 23005000600 (6)
Census-Designated Urban Area	Portland Urban Area UACE: 71263 Population: 203,914 (2020)
Congressional Representation	ME’s 1 st District Chellie Pingree (D) U.S. Senators Susan Collins (R) and Angus King (I)

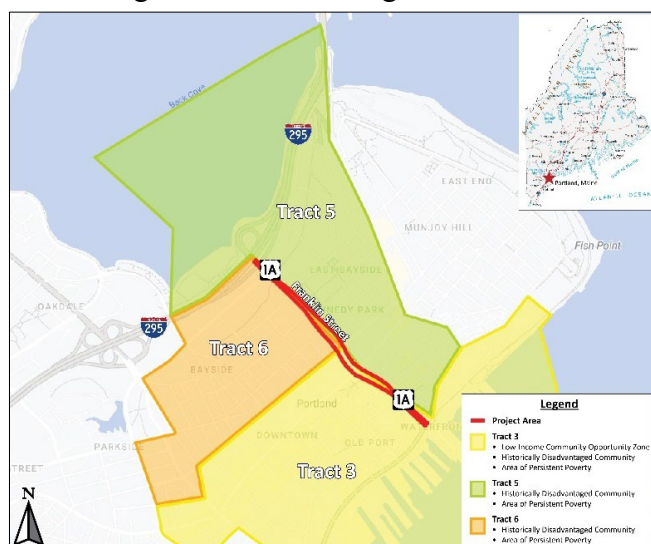


Figure 8. The Project area (red) includes and includes three disadvantaged Census Tracts. Also included as Attachment C.

⁸ As highlighted in University of Maine student Santiago Tijerina’s documentary [Courts of Belonging](#).

Residents in the area need affordable, safe, and environmentally friendly multimodal transportation options. Table 3 outlines many of the burdens residents in the Project area face, according to CEJST, ETC Explorer, Environmental Justice (EJ) Screen, and the Screening Tool for Equity Analysis of Projects (STEAP), as well as the positive impacts the Project will have to mitigate each. In alignment with the Justice40 Initiative, 100 percent of Project outcomes benefit the three disadvantaged Census Tracts.

Table 3. Project impacts to the burdens residents in the Project area face, as indicated by CEJST, ETC Explorer, EJ Screen, and STEAP.

Barrier/Burden	Project Impact
Transportation – High-Volume Roads	Traffic-calming features, such as roundabouts, will reduce speeding and make the area safer, more pedestrian-oriented, and mitigate the negative effects of vehicular traffic
Transportation – Cost	Safer, more convenient active transportation and public transit options mean residents do not need to rely on a personal vehicle and the associated costs
Transportation – Access	Restored connections and improved facilities reduce physical barriers to points-of-interest and transit
Social – Low Income	Access to safe, convenient, affordable transportation options reduces household costs and mitigates income burdens
Social – Housing Cost	
Social – Endemic Inequality	
Social – Limited English Proficiency	Diverse populations gain safer access to education and community service facilities through improved multimodal transportation infrastructure (transit access, active transportation)
Health – Lack of Green Space Access	Improved active transportation systems and restored east-west connections provide more direct access to existing green spaces (Lincoln Park, Kennedy Park, community gardens)
Health – Asthma	Reduced greenhouse gas emissions through mode shift and lower idle times at traffic signals (roundabouts) results in cleaner air in Project area
Environmental – Diesel PM emissions	
Environmental – Impaired Surface Water	Coordination with sewer/stormwater system improvements will reduce pollutants in water and mitigate sewer overflow events
Environmental – Impervious Surfaces	Green street infrastructure will restore natural vegetation, help reduce pollutants from stormwater, and increase flooding resiliency

2. Access

Although crosswalks are available at each signalized intersection along the southeastern Franklin Street terminus, much of the remaining corridor experiences long stretches between crosswalks. The longest gap between designated crosswalks spans nearly one-quarter mile between Cumberland Avenue and Somerset Street/Fox Street. It is in these gaps that frequent pedestrian use has led to “desire line” footpaths across the grassy median (Figure 10). From aerial images, the most prominent desire lines are visible where cross streets used to exist, namely at Lancaster, Oxford, and Federal Streets (Figure 11). These footpaths connect residential streets and multifamily housing to nearby grocery stores, food pantries, employers, parks, and government buildings. Pedestrians who use these footpaths to cross the expansive right-of-way—211 feet at its widest—risk dangerous collisions with vehicles driving at or above the posted speed limit of 35 miles per hour.

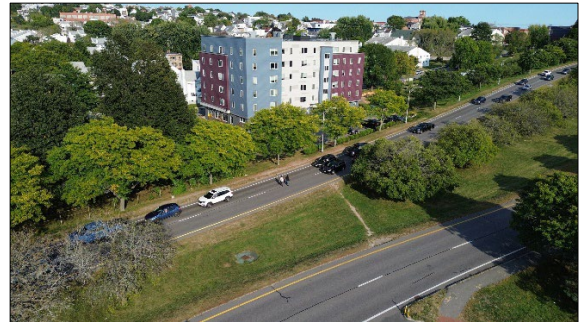


Figure 10. Pedestrians crossing Franklin Street using the median where “desire lines” indicate frequent pedestrian use.

The Project will integrate designs that address the existing accessibility issues and the evident need for more frequent and higher quality pedestrian crossings of Franklin Street. MaineDOT and the City will integrate plans that adhere to the [National Roadway Safety Strategy](#) (NRSS) to incorporate USDOT safety countermeasures and ensure the Project is designed to prevent roadway deaths and serious injuries through the Safe Systems Approach. MaineDOT and the

City will also employ the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards Adopted by the U.S. Department of Justice (2010) and the U.S. Department of Transportation (2006)* to ensure all plans and the subsequent capital construction project follow all safety requirements and comply with ADA and other national standards.

Additionally, the City is nearing the end of a years-long effort to rewrite its land use code through an initiative called **ReCode Portland** (“ReCode”). This multiphase project builds on the City’s most recent comprehensive plan, *Portland’s Plan 2030*, which foregrounds housing creation, economic development, multimodal transportation, and climate resilience among its many goals and identifies the East Bayside and Bayside neighborhoods as Priority Nodes “appropriate for new development to provide needed housing, businesses, and services.”¹⁵ ReCode has involved significant public engagement, technical analysis, and a review of best practices, and includes a wide-ranging suite of changes to base zones, dimensional standards, use permissions, development standards, and the zoning map that, collectively, are intended to bring the City closer to the vision of *Portland’s Plan 2030*.

At the north end of the Project area, including Bayside and East Bayside, ReCode proposes high density, mixed-use zoning with use permissions and dimensional standards to support significant residential and commercial redevelopment. Under ReCode, a wide variety of uses consistent with the area’s downtown-adjacent location would be permitted on both sides of Franklin Street, and dimensional standards would support a height and scale consistent with a high-volume city street. Through dimensional and design standards, an active, urban street wall with high degrees of transparency would be required along Franklin Street, encouraging buildings to turn toward this public space, rather than away. The proposed zoning would also continue to support an existing affordable housing development east of the roadway, by allowing the Portland Housing Authority to redesign this complex to support additional housing and better integrate with the street.

To the south, where Franklin bisects the Old Port and India Street neighborhoods, the proposed zoning would continue to support the wide variety of commercial and residential uses that make these areas some of the City’s most vibrant. Dimensional standards would require design that more directly interfaces with Franklin Street, activating this frontage and encouraging non-motorized transportation and the use of multimodal infrastructure.

Collectively, these changes in land use regulation, when coupled with a 21st-century street design, have the potential to transform Franklin Street into a place where buildings and people come together. The Project will integrate the new land use code and street design concepts proposed through the EPS when evaluating expected capacity requirements presented by the redesigned urban alignment. This will include the necessary multimodal transportation facilities to connect the new mixed-use areas with the existing residential and commercial zones.

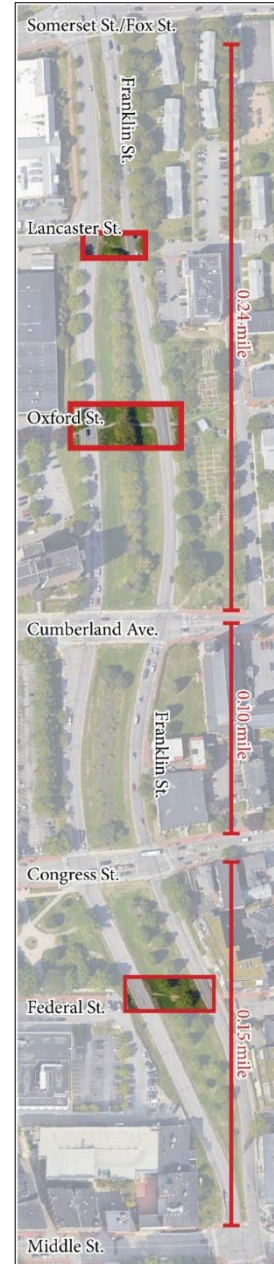


Figure 11. Desire lines across medians.

¹⁵ Source: *Portland’s Plan 2030*, pgs. 88, 92.

3. Facility Suitability

The reconstruction of Franklin Street, also known as U.S. Route 1A, into a 0.8 mile-long four-lane divided highway designated as a “minor arterial” and “intermodal connector” under the National Highway System in the 1970s led to several through streets being truncated which limited east-west connections for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers, alike. The right-of-way was expanded significantly—from approximately 38 feet to more than 200 feet at its widest.¹⁶ For the 0.6 miles of Franklin Street between Marginal Way and Middle Street, there is no current street frontage for commercial or residential use, and a sidewalk exists on only the southbound lane for the 0.25 miles between Marginal Way and Cumberland Avenue. A missing section of sidewalk between Congress and Middle Streets on the southbound side of Franklin Street also imposes challenges. While there are paved shoulders for some stretches of the Project area, no dedicated bicycle lanes exist. Visible desire lines in the medians resulting from non-protected, mid-block crossings, as shown in Figure 11, indicate the need for additional access between origins and destinations and highlight the significant barrier the existing roadway creates to accessibility, mobility, and safety to the community.

Without the Project, the current obstructions will continue to negatively impact connectivity, safety, and economic growth in the surrounding disadvantaged communities. As the City implements its new land use code and additional mixed-use capacity is introduced in the Project area, the existing obstructions will continue to serve as a dangerous barrier to all. The Project consists of retrofitting and mitigating Franklin Street with a new multimodal transportation facility that reactivates street frontages; rescales the area to the urban context; and reestablishes east-west connections for people to live, play, and move freely and safely. Based on recommendations from the EPS and land-use concept planning, the Project will prepare designs that integrate pedestrian, bicycling, and transit facilities; traffic-calming features; green street infrastructure; and necessary water and sewer separation work to produce a corridor reflective of the coastal city’s 21st-century needs.

4. Community Engagement and Community-Based Stewardship, Management, and Partnerships

MaineDOT and the City recognize the value of collaboration between residents, businesses, and local organizations to create safe and accessible transportation connections that were not considered decades ago. The Project follows nearly two decades of robust public engagement regarding Franklin Street. Engagement during the 2009 [Reclaiming Franklin Street](#) study and the 2015 [Franklin Street Feasibility Study](#) included numerous public meetings and workshops. Most recently, [updates were presented](#) to the Portland City Council and sub-committee on Sustainability and Transportation in 2023 and 2024. The EPS effort, to be completed in 2025, will include a robust hybrid approach to community engagement utilizing an active project website, workshops, and presentations, including multilingual and multicultural outreach.

As part of the Project to prepare the PDR, the City and MaineDOT will continue robust public outreach and hold a PDR Preliminary meeting to engage residents and community organizations to ensure equity considerations for underserved communities are meaningfully integrated throughout the Project. Design decisions will prioritize community feedback and the needs communicated by stakeholders in the surrounding neighborhoods. Numerous Letters of Support from community organizations, including the regional MPO (PACTS), are included in this application as Attachment D.

¹⁶ See 2015 [Franklin Street Feasibility Study](#), pg. 11

5. Equitable Development

In its current configuration, Franklin Street is a vehicle mobility–focused transportation corridor made possible by historic displacement policies from the 1950s to 1970s. As a result, today, the surrounding neighborhoods face disproportional inequities due to numerous social, health, environmental, and transportation burdens, as outlined in the [Equity and Justice40 Initiative](#) section. For much of Franklin Street, the corridor is a boulevard to drive through with no cross-street connections or street-level activation. Recent development has been limited, and where there is development, it is generally designed to face away from Franklin Street.

The City is nearing completion in 2024 of a land use code update which proposes rezoning much of the Franklin Street corridor. For the sections of Franklin Street overwhelmed by a wide right-of-way, few safe pedestrian and bicycle crossings, and heavy traffic, ReCode proposes new high density, mixed-use zoning to support significant residential and commercial redevelopment. Under ReCode, and building off the momentum of a new street design, buildings would be oriented more fully towards Franklin Street, reactivating the street front for commercial, residential, and active transportation uses. The proposed zoning, when coupled with a new street design, would allow the Portland Housing Authority to redesign their existing affordable housing development east of the roadway to support additional housing and better integrate with the street, and support the creation of new affordable housing through the City’s existing inclusionary zoning ordinance. The future footprint of the roadway is anticipated to be dramatically reduced in some locations, which will also create opportunities for new development parcels for much of Franklin’s extent.

Transportation infrastructure in the Project area will allow for safer non-motorized travel, providing the large percentage of residents who do not own a personal vehicle more equitable access to active transportation, the public transit system, and nearby points of interest.¹⁷ Additionally, the Project will integrate improved multimodal access to new and existing greenspaces such as Lincoln Park—which the Project would restore close to its original extent—Kennedy Park recreation fields, and nearby community gardens. This [dynamic Project Map](#) illustrates the proximity of daily destinations, such as medical facilities, parks, schools, grocery stores, and places of worship, to the surrounding residences. MaineDOT and the City also expect to include sustainable green street infrastructure, which includes the creation of green streets and shaded sidewalks through vegetation that utilize green stormwater management techniques.

6.1. Climate Change Mitigation and/or Adaptation and Resilience

MaineDOT is methodically focusing on statewide environmental improvements, and the City has placed climate change mitigation and adaptation high on its list of priorities, as well. Maine’s climate action plan, [Maine Won’t Wait](#), outlines actions 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. Similarly, the region’s long-range transportation plan, [Connect 2045](#), has a goal to reduce emissions by 70 percent by 2045. These overarching state and regional goals are expanded in the City’s climate action plan, [One Climate Future](#), which sets local emissions reduction benchmarks, mode shift targets, and adaptation goals. Together, these plans align with USDOT’s focus on climate and sustainability. In accord with this strategic goal, the Project will “help tackle the climate crisis by ensuring that transportation plays a central role in the solution.”¹⁸

¹⁷ Source ETC Explorer, Households with no personal vehicle: Tract 3 – 37%; Tract 5 – 18%; Tract 6 – 35%

¹⁸ USDOT Strategic Plan: FY 2022-2026, pg. IV, 24

The Project will reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions by creating plans that will encourage and improve active transportation and public transit use, reduce vehicle miles traveled, and mitigate congestion delays. Approximately 4,000 residents who live in the Project area will benefit from the updated land use code that will allow Franklin Street to become a community center where fewer and shorter vehicle trips are necessary. Additionally, as part of ReCode, the City has an [initiative for zoning for climate resiliency](#). Further, the Project will consider the necessary stormwater infrastructure improvements, including integrating green stormwater infrastructure that will increase the area's resilience to flooding and reduce impervious surfaces that currently burden the Project Census Tracts.¹⁹ The Project will inform these design decisions.

6.2. Workforce Development and Economic Opportunity

The Project, and subsequent capital construction tasks, will create good-paying jobs that include strong labor standards guided by MaineDOT's EEO Policy and Affirmative Action. MaineDOT will ensure Project contracts will adhere to Federal and state law. MaineDOT maintains a strong focus on workforce development with an on-the-job-training program that provides meaningful training opportunities for Women, Minorities, and Disadvantaged individuals on Federal-aid highway projects. The Project contractor is responsible for demonstrating to MaineDOT the steps taken to ensure training and recruitment includes disadvantaged populations.

6.3. Planning Integration

For nearly two decades, local, regional, and state organizations have included Franklin Street and the surrounding community in transportation and economic development discussions. The Project or impacted neighborhoods are included in the following studies and plans:

- [Reclaiming Franklin Street](#) (2009) by City of Portland
- [Franklin Street Feasibility Study](#) (2015) by City of Portland
- [Portland's Plan 2030](#) (2017) by City of Portland
- [Connect 2045: A Long-Range Transportation Plan for Greater Portland, Maine](#) (December 2022) by PACTS
- [Vision Zero Greater Portland](#) (2023) by PACTS
- [PACTS Title VI Program and Limited English Proficiency Plan](#) (2023) and [Civil Rights Dashboard](#) by PACTS
- [One Climate Future](#) (2020) by Cities of Portland and South Portland

The PACTS [Title VI Plan](#) and accompanying [Civil Rights Dashboard](#) identifies the three Census Tracts in the Project area as "Very High Equity Target Areas." Each tract qualified for this designation with six disadvantaged categories, including indicators for Limited English Proficiency, Poverty, Disabled, and No Personal Vehicle. Additionally, the region's long-range transportation plan, [Connect 2045](#), has a goal to *Provide Equitable Access and Investing More Equitably* by prioritizing traditionally underserved communities in planning and investment for communities identified in the PACTS Civil Rights Plan. The Franklin Street construction project is included in [Connect 2045](#) as a Roadway/Multimodal Fiscally Constrained Project.

Project planning has received input and consultation from MaineDOT, PACTS, and the City of Portland. MaineDOT and the City have provided endorsements of their support in their respective funding commitment letters that accompany this application. PACTS has indicated their endorsement in an attached letter of support (Attachment D).

¹⁹ ETC Explorer, Impervious Surfaces: Tract 3 – 82nd percentile; Tract 5 – 65th percentile; Tract 6 – 98th percentile

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

- A. Project Schedule
- B. Funding Commitment Letters – MaineDOT and City of Portland
- C. Project Maps
- D. Letters of Support