

CITY OF OMAHA NORTH FREEWAY

RECONNECTING COMMUNITIES PILOT (RCP)
COMMUNITY PLANNING GRANT APPLICATION

SEPTEMBER 2024



Omaha - Council Bluffs
Metropolitan Area
Planning Agency



NEBRASKA

Good Life. Great Journey.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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Key Information Table

Lead Applicant Name	Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area Planning Agency
Organization Type	Metropolitan Planning Organization
Lead Applicant State	Nebraska
Lead Applicant Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)	KXGPJGCT8F23
Points of Contact	<p>Michael Helgerson, Executive Director</p> <p>Email: mhelgerson@mapacog.org</p> <p>Phone: 402-444-6866</p> <p>Address: 2222 Cuming Street, Omaha, Nebraska 68102</p>
2020 Census Tract 11-digit geographic identifier(s)	31055000700, 31055001600, 31055001100, 31055000600
Grant Type	Community Planning Grant
Project Title	City of Omaha North Freeway Community Planning
Project Description	MAPA is seeking \$1.516 million in grant funding to utilize community and stakeholder engagement to identify potential cap, bicycle and pedestrian bridges, infill development, and complete streets in proximity to the North Freeway. The Project will advance conceptual and preliminary engineering and design and planning studies to improve access to daily destinations and reduce environmental, social, and economic burdens for disadvantaged communities.
Match Question	80-20 match
What is the preferred federal fiscal year to implement the grant?	2026
Is the lead applicant the Facility Owner?	No
Name of the Facility Owner(s) of the eligible facility creating the barrier, if not the Lead Applicant	Nebraska Department of Transportation
If the lead applicant is not the Eligible Facility Owner, does the application include a Facility Owner endorsement?	Yes

If a joint application, please provide organizational names of sub-recipients that will receive funds and other key partners	The Nebraska Department of Transportation and The City of Omaha
What is/are the Eligible Facility Type(s) that create(s) a barrier, that your application intends to address?	State Highway
Is the project located in an economically disadvantaged community?	Yes
Is the project located in a rural area?	No
Does the project directly benefit a federally recognized tribe?	No
Is the Eligible Facility aged and likely to need replacement or significant reconstruction within 20 years?	Yes
What is the primary proposed solution for the transportation barrier facility?	Complete Streets
What are the additional proposed solutions for the transportation barrier facility?	Cap, Deck, or Lid; Eligible Facility Removal
Does the project expand roadway lane capacity or is a lane capacity expansion planned within the vicinity of the project?	No
Is the project included in a Climate Action Plan.	Yes
Total RCP Program grant request amount	\$1,516,000
Total Project Cost	\$1,895,000

1. Overview

Introduction

The Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA) is seeking \$1.516 million in Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Discretionary Grant Program funding to reconnect the communities surrounding the North Freeway, a 6-lane divided access-controlled freeway. MAPA is seeking grant funding to advance conceptual and preliminary engineering and design, planning studies that support the environmental review for a construction project, and community engagement. The Project's goal is to reconnect the community and reduce barriers to community resources, jobs, educational institutions, and daily destinations.

Project History

MAPA is the designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for transportation planning in the Omaha-Council Bluffs area. MAPA receives federal funding from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and other state and federal agencies related to metropolitan planning and regional planning.

The North Freeway is one of the most controversial street projects in Omaha history. Originally envisioned as an interstate highway to connect I-480 with I-680, the North Freeway is a major highway through the heart of North Omaha. The highway physically slices Omaha's historically African American neighborhood in half, leaving a legacy of controversy and discrimination continuing today¹. Figure 1 shows redlined neighborhoods in historic Omaha compared to the project's location and Figure 2 highlights current demographic trends in the city as a result of redlining. The construction of the North Freeway bisected a previously redlined, predominantly black neighborhood, displacing thousands of residents through right-of-way acquisition activities. This created a dividing facility for these communities physically, socially, economically, and culturally. The majority of the proposed project corridor neighborhoods are disadvantaged communities. One out of six households do not have access to a vehicle and those nearest the freeway spend 29-41% of their household income on transportation. Further, car centric street design has made walkability not only difficult, but dangerous as seven of

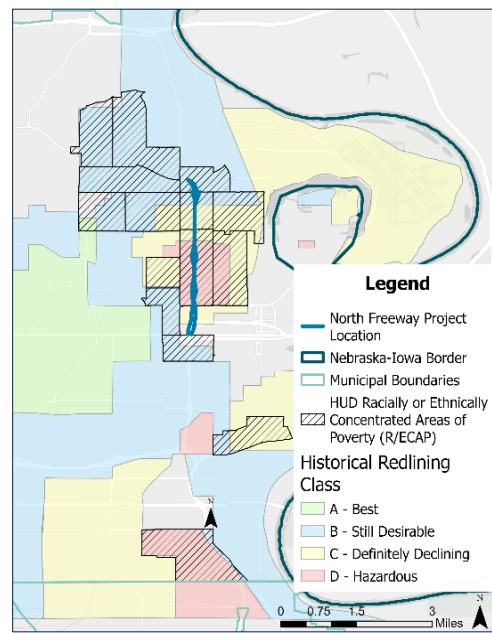


Figure 1 - Redlining near project location.

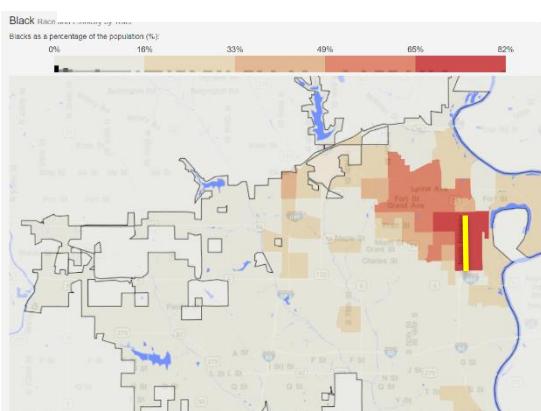


Figure 2 - Percent of African American population by census tract compared to project location (yellow line).

¹ [History of the North Freeway in Omaha – NorthOmahaHistory.com](http://NorthOmahaHistory.com)

twenty (35%) fatal crashes between 2017-2021 resulted in a pedestrian death. To address these deficiencies, the Project proposes planning for seamless integration into the surrounding land use with consideration of affordable housing, transit-oriented development, public health, and the local economy.

Transportation Needs

MAPA and other community stakeholder groups have identified the North Freeway as a continuing and harmful barrier to residents' quality of life within the North Omaha community. As the future of this corridor is considered, there are significant opportunities for future development and repopulation. The North Freeway has enabled an over reliance on personal vehicles, which has arguably contributed to underinvestment in alternative transportation infrastructure such as bus, rail, pedestrian, and biking options. There is significant stakeholder desire for redesign of this corridor to better serve community needs. Notably, the Omaha Municipal Land Bank has purchased numerous vacant properties within the neighborhood with the intent of eventually having these properties reactivated and returned to the property tax rolls. Numerous public agencies, such as City of Omaha, Nebraska Department of Transportation, Metro Transit, as well as community groups, such as [Spark CDI](#) and [One Omaha](#), partnering on this effort, hope that the reconnecting communities grant funds for the North Freeway will provide a framework to finally address the inequities and barriers created by the construction and existence of this facility for over 60 years. This planning process and subsequent action steps will be designed and implemented with a vision of improving lives of people currently living in the adjacent neighborhoods and provide an equitable and prosperous vision for an area of the MAPA region which has seen numerous instances of disinvestment, segregation, and systemic racism for more than a century.

Proposed Improvements

Investment in the North Freeway corridor will allow NDOT and MAPA to prioritize community needs and connections, while building a foundation for future economic and housing investments. The proposed project represents a vital investment in a primary regional freight corridor and will significantly help address the burdens of job access and safety faced by disadvantaged and underserved communities in Omaha. Numerous repurposing efforts will be studied including a study that looks at options such as a cap and cover, additional bridges, and/or activation/placemaking/infill development in proximity to the freeway. The following planning activities will be conducted through this project:

- » Crash Analysis and safety analysis to include specific segment and intersection results to inform design treatments for the alternatives analysis,
- » Update origin-destination traffic projections and proposed future land uses to model the distribution of the traffic,
- » Develop lane configuration alternatives that consider various modes (transit, biking, walking, etc.) and parking considerations,
- » Conduct conceptual and preliminary engineering and design with estimated cost to convert the facility to a different design and use, and
- » Continue stakeholder and community engagement.

2. Location and Map

The Project location is the North Freeway from I-480 in the south to Sorensen Parkway in the north. This segment is located in northeastern Omaha, Nebraska. The Project location is 3 miles total in length and crosses nine roads, in addition to two pedestrian bridges. The North Freeway separates 11 distinct neighborhoods on either side of it and breaks the traditional urban grid street layout. There are 7 bridges over the North Freeway and 2 roads under it that link the east and west sides. However, these roads have narrow sidewalks and unsafe walking conditions from vehicles speeding on and off the freeway. To help pedestrians and cyclists cross the freeway, there are 2 pedestrian bridges.

3. Merit Criteria Response

Criteria #1: Equity and Justice 40 Initiative

The project is located in four census tracts, three of which are considered disadvantaged (See Figure 4). These three tracts rank high in climate and disaster risk and environmental burden, and very high in health and social vulnerability (See Figure 3), according to the USDOT². While the area is ranked in a lower percentile for transportation insecurity overall, these census tracts rank in the 95th percentile for transportation cost burden. The neighborhoods near the Project experience much higher poverty compared to other areas of Omaha. According to the US Census Bureau, the median household income in the Project census tracts is on average \$26,827 while the overall median household income in Omaha is \$70,202. The average unemployment rate near the Project location is 9.4 percent while unemployment in Omaha is 3.5 percent. The average poverty rate is 38 percent in these census tracts while the City has a rate of 12.5 percent³.

Overall Disadvantage Component Score - Percentile Ranked

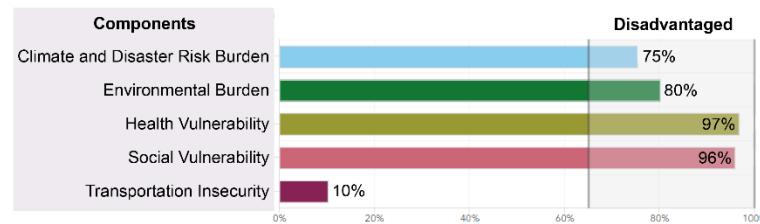


Figure 4 - USDOT Equitable Community Transportation Explorer national results for disadvantaged census tracts in the project area.

² [USDOT Equitable Transportation Community \(ETC\) Explorer](#)

³ [US Census Bureau 2020 Decennial data](#)



Figure 3 - Project location map.

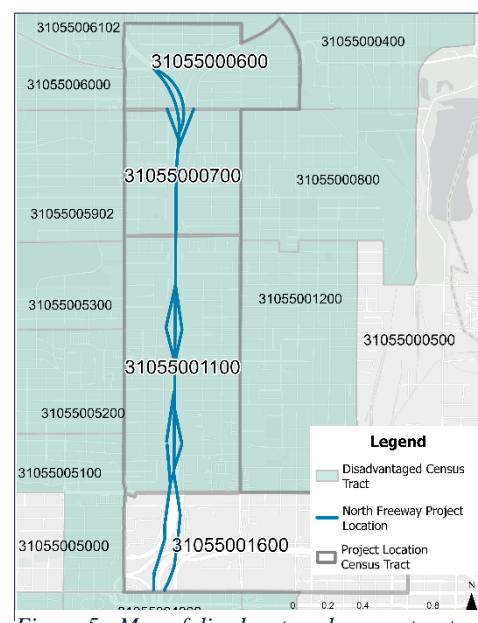


Figure 5 - Map of disadvantaged census tracts in project area.

In addition to high rates of poverty, the Project's surrounding neighborhoods also have a very high non-white population. While 71 percent of Omaha's population is white, approximately 5-15 percent of households surrounding the Project are white. Figure 1 shows the correlation between historically redlined neighborhoods and the census tracts in the MAPA region with the highest concentration of both minority and impoverished populations⁴.

Criteria #2: Access

Construction of the North Freeway has exacerbated reliance on automobiles by disrupting the standard street grid pattern, which was the framework of neighborhood development, movement, and everyday life for residents of North Omaha. Based on 2022 American Community Survey data, one in every four households do not own a vehicle within the project census tracts⁵. For more than one-third of Omaha

residents that rely on public transportation, it takes more than 45 minutes to commute to work⁶. Further, pedestrian access is not only severely restricted in this area, but highly dangerous. Within the project area, 35% of fatal crashes between 2017-2021 a pedestrian death compared to 19% citywide⁷. Access previously made at one-block intervals was converted to infrequent three-to-five block *Figure 7 - Project Disadvantaged Communities* intervals

across viaducts with varying degrees of pedestrian comfort and safety. It is difficult for residents to access important daily destinations on either side of the freeway, as shown in Figure 5. Repurposing of the North Freeway will allow for reinvestment in vital transit and active transportation infrastructure and services that are necessary to make mobility accessible for those without a car. The Planning Project will help MAPA evaluate how to seamlessly integrate transit services, bike and pedestrian infrastructure, connections to affordable housing, and general safety accommodations to meet community mobility needs which are currently bifurcated by the barrier facility and being planned in silos.



Figure 5 - Daily destinations within a mile of the project corridor.

In addition to safety projects on major corridors, safe access will be improved by local road safety projects through Vision Zero or Safe Streets and Roads for All projects. The 24th Street transit improvements will increase access to employment, education, and other needs throughout the neighborhood. Improvements in access and traffic safety contribute to neighborhood revitalization and reinvestment by local businesses.

⁴ [University of Richmond](#)

⁵ [ACS 2023 Physical Housing Characteristics for Occupied Housing Units](#)

⁶ [Transportation - Omaha Community Foundation \(omahafoundation.org\)](#)

⁷ [City of Omaha Fatal Crash Dashboard](#)

Criteria #3: Facility Suitability

The proposed Planning Project will facilitate deconstruction or repurposing of the North Freeway, facilitating the development of walkable infrastructure, transit services, and bike pathways, as well as supporting efforts to increase economic opportunity and reconnect the urban fabric of Omaha. Through the [Forever North Plan](#), which developed a community-driven corridor and land use plan for the North 24th Street corridor, identified the North Freeway as one of the key barriers to future growth and prosperity within these neighborhoods of North Omaha. Important aspects of the plan included the re-establishment of a strong local economy within the neighborhood, focusing development at unique and connected nodes, and preserving existing affordable housing options while providing more through revitalization and infill development. Recommendations from the plan related to connectivity included many enhanced pedestrian and walkability features, enhancing bicycle connectivity, and providing a “critical mass” of development and resources within the community that has slowly diminished since the 1950s.

In addition to instigating community division, the North Freeway is an aged facility which the Nebraska Department of Transportation assesses will require replacement or significant reconstruction of the paved portions within the next 20 years. The seven overhead structures carrying automobile traffic were constructed between 1977 and 1986, and from the latest inspections meet the following bridge conditions (1 - Poor, 2 - Fair, 4 - Good). A current federally funded project (CN 22647) to improve Highway 75 and eight bridges is ongoing and will be completed in 2024. Notably, public outreach for this project recognized the need for an ADA accessible shuttle to provide services from 6:00 am to 8:00 pm during the 160-calendar day closure of the Hamilton Street bridge.

As it stands now, the North Freeway is a symbol of a past era, enabling and perpetuating automobile centricity and community fragmentation. If left unimproved, the North Freeway will continue to act as a barrier to reconnection, threatening future transit development and active transportation infrastructure. Numerous alternative options will be reviewed in planning for the repurposing of the North Freeway that will provide public health, climate, mobility, safety, and economic benefits to the City of Omaha and the surrounding region, and the proposed planning project will serve as the catalyst for this effort.

Criteria #4: Community Engagement and Community Based Stewardship, Management, and Partnerships

MAPA was selected to participate in the [Thriving Communities](#) Program in early 2023 in support of this work. MAPA has identified a series of focus groups and community conversations that will be facilitated through Spark’s Fabric Lab project—a Black led, multimodal, intergenerational urban design lab and community development hub that centers and supports Black spatial practitioners (architects, planners, creatives, and cultural entrepreneurs). This engagement will precede the proposed RCP planning work and will shape the questions asked during the North Freeway study. The planning Project will expand upon the Thriving Communities public engagement and will have its own Public Information Plan developed.

MAPA’s transportation planning process implements the three C’s of transportation planning—Continuing, Cooperative, and Comprehensive planning to involve residents in the planning process in an ongoing and inclusive manner. MAPA will create a project-specific Public Information Plan with a particular focus on reaching historically disadvantaged populations through the following:

- » Ensure full and fair participation by all communities affected potentially in the transportation decision-making process.

- » Avoid, minimize or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects, including social and economic effects, of programs, policies and activities on minority populations and low-income populations
- » Prevent the denial of, reduction of, or significant delay in the receipt of transportation benefits by minority and low-income populations.
- » MAPA targets low-income and limited-English proficient populations with specific outreach in community centers, schools, faith-based institutions and businesses that are located in census tracts that have a high concentration of minority and/or low-income populations.
- » As a supplement to general public announcements in newspapers and online posts, MAPA contacts persons/agencies representing low-income and minority populations via telephone and/or email.
- » MAPA asks these contacts to present and inform their communities of ways to be involved in the planning process.

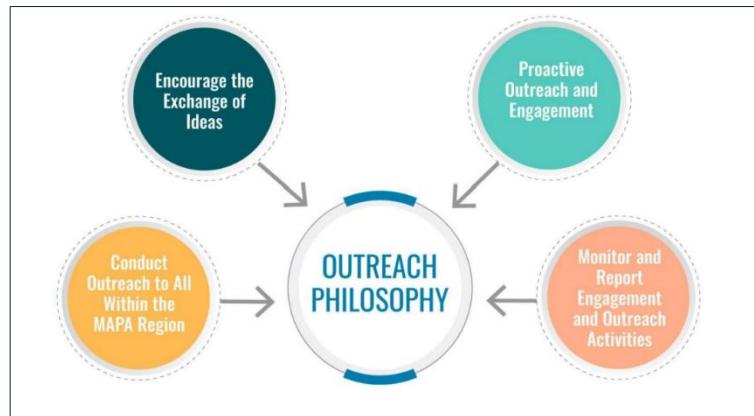


Figure 6 - MAPA's outreach philosophy.

Additional planning studies within the study area have also led toward robust public engagement and partnership within the area:

- » [Heartland 2050 Equity & Engagement Committee](#): MAPA has continued to facilitate the Equity and Engagement Committee developed as part of the Heartland 2050 Regional Visioning process. The committee meets bi-monthly and includes representatives from advocacy organizations, economic development corporations, social service organizations, and public agencies.
- » [Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing \(AFFH\)](#): MAPA led public outreach efforts for the three entitlement communities in the Omaha-Council Bluffs region as part of the HUD AFFH regulations. The outreach focused on populations with housing and transportation needs and identified strategies to improve opportunities for residents in these areas.
- » [Regional Equitable Growth Profile](#): MAPA recently completed an update to the Regional Equitable Growth Profile. This document highlights disparities present in the Omaha-Council Bluffs region in areas of income, educational attainment, and social mobility and has specific recommendations for policies and programs to address these needs.
- » [2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan \(LRTP\)](#): MAPA targeted public meetings in North and South Omaha, with an emphasis on reaching the Black and Hispanic/Latino populations of our region. Additionally, stakeholder meetings were held with organizations representing individuals with disabilities, social service organizations, and public agencies which provide housing and transportation services to members of the community. These efforts were intended to broaden participation among these groups in the regional transportation planning process.
- » [Coordinated Transit Plan](#): MAPA's Coordinated Transit Committee has expanded to include additional representatives from advocacy organizations and public housing representatives. The latest plan update resulted in additional strategies about raising awareness in the community about the mobility needs of

individuals with disabilities, low-income populations and the elderly. This work has led to new partnerships and increased interest in pursuing new projects.

- » [Heartland Connections Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan](#): During the development of the pedestrian element of the plan, representatives of the Omaha Association of the Blind and the Mayor's Commission for Citizens with Disabilities (MCCD) regarding barriers and needs related to pedestrian infrastructure in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metropolitan area.
- » [ConnectOmaha: Active Mobility Plan](#): The plan to create a more connected network for walking, bicycling, and other active mobility travel modes collected views, opinions, and desires gathered from the public regarding active mobility needs and input from broad and diverse groups that represent all areas of the Omaha community.
- » [MetroNext: Better Transit for More Connected Region](#): MetroNEXT was a yearlong effort to engage the community and identify specific short- and long-term transit improvements to guide Metro to 2030. Eighteen public meetings were offered throughout the process, as a combination of in-person and virtually hosted opportunities for community participation. More than 1,500 comments were received through a variety of channels including virtual engagement tools, written comments, and survey responses.
- » [Transportation Improvement Programs](#): Continued to evaluate the Environmental Justice analysis and communicate the benefits and burdens of the transportation system in the Omaha metro.
- » [Transit Return on Investment Study](#): Through this study MAPA worked with the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce to examine the long-term benefits of transit investment on the regional economy. Stakeholders from diverse communities were interviewed and mobility and access to transit for historically marginalized communities were main aspects of the analysis and findings.

MAPA has numerous formal partnerships as demonstrated through signed commitment letters. Partners include community-based organizations such as Metro Transit, ONE Omaha, and Spark CDI, as well as State and local government. Additionally, MAPA's Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC) passed a recommendation and the Board of Directors signed a Resolution in support of the project application.

Criteria #5: Equitable Development

Various studies on the project area have reviewed the existing zoning, existing land use, and future land use within the study area as it relates to housing. The study area land use is a large area of high-density single family residential, and some commercial, educational, and recreational land uses all divided by 30th Street, designated Highway 75. Property impacts aren't known at this current planning level, but potential impacts were identified in the study and will be a focus of consideration under this planning grant. Preservation and rehabilitation will be the core efforts where possible, and in alternative situations where not possible, redevelopment of affordable housing and mixed-income, mixed-use development, and affordable commercial spaces will be considered. The land uses along the corridor including retail, places of worship, parks, schools, and homes are all conducive to creating places for people to live, work and play in the region. Essentially, the land use supports a neighborhood-oriented atmosphere with mobility and access via short walk and bike trips.

The North Freeway Reconnecting Neighborhoods Grant will provide a planning framework to address the systemic disparities caused by the construction and 60-year life of the North Freeway in Omaha, Nebraska. This planning effort will also develop a strategy to ensure that future development along the corridor is done equitably and not as a mechanism to promote gentrification and further displacement within the area. The City of Omaha recently developed a Housing Affordability Action Plan (HAAP) which builds on more

than a decade worth of work to implement three [HUD Choice Neighborhoods](#) projects—two of which fall within our proposed study area boundaries. Outside of the Choice Neighborhood boundaries, partners such as Front Porch Investments—a transformative, local housing philanthropy—are focusing on affordable housing development, housing justice and racial equity, ending homelessness, and advocacy, policy and organizing through efforts such as their Greenlining Fund and Development & Preservation Fund.

The Project will include community-supported approaches for placemaking through public art and signs, addition of bicycle facilities, wider sidewalks, outdoor activity areas, additional parking, enhanced landscaping, and improved pedestrian crossing. This could potentially include street furniture, plantings, and signage.

Criteria #6.1: Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation and Resilience

The Project aligns with EPA's [U.S. National Blueprint for Transportation Decarbonization](#) by supporting reduction in citywide emissions by decreasing annual Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT). Per the City of Omaha's [Climate Action and Resiliency Plan](#) (CARP), in 2022, citywide VMT in Omaha was 4.419 billion miles, and the average commute for Omaha's workforce is approximately 12 miles. Reduction in total citywide VMT by 5 percent, or 220.9 million miles, will reduce citywide GHG emissions by over 110,490 metric tons annually. In support of the City's CARP goal of decreasing citywide Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) by 10 percent by 2035, repurposing of the North Freeway will allow for increased investment in public and active transit opportunities needed to reduce over reliance on personal automobiles for mobility, contributing to city emissions reduction goals. In line with the CARP, the proposed Planning Project will evaluate options to promote safe, convenient walking, bicycling and transit and build such infrastructure with a focus on prioritizing disadvantaged areas and vulnerable populations, which will support reduced vehicle use for daily trips. Additionally, Nebraska has published a statewide [Preliminary Climate Action Plan](#) (PCAP), which highlights further goals and strategies for emissions reductions. The PCAP identifies engagement with low-income and disadvantaged communities to remediate inequities as a key statewide goal. Planning activities will continue stakeholder and community engagement efforts to consider options for protected bike facilities, mobility alternatives in high-density areas to reduce single occupancy vehicle traffic, universally accessible street environments, and transit connections to regional transportation hubs. Per the CARP, climate action and resilience plan implementation progress will be reviewed on a 1–2-year cycle. Review will include development of an updated GHG inventory. Emissions reductions associated with the proposed project will be accounted for in this review.

Throughout the proposed Planning Project, MAPA will coordinate with NDOT to ensure use of sustainable and low carbon materials are prioritized in the North Freeway repurposing and community reconnection effort. As part of Nebraska Department of Transportation's (NDOT) 2023 Carbon Reduction Strategy, use of sustainable construction materials and methods is an identified strategy for reducing transportation sector emissions. In order to decrease VMT, the Carbon Reduction Strategy focuses on increasing active transportation, transit, and density. NDOT follows industry standards in utilizing sustainable materials for infrastructure projects and has shown commitment to minimizing the carbon footprint of its construction program through long-term use of Supplementary Cementitious Materials (SCMs), which are proven to not only increase durability of concrete but also substantially reduce the carbon emissions associated with cement production.

Criteria #6.2: Workforce Development and Economic Opportunity

RCP funding for this effort will help to increase opportunities for local communities which include workforce development and developable land to enhance the economic outcomes. Recent initiatives, such as North End Teleservices, LLC and the Airport Business Park and Enterprise Industrial Park are designed

to bring new employment and commercial opportunities to North Omaha. In the early conversations through MAPA's Thriving Communities project, economic inclusion has been a central theme—highlighting concerns about the sustainability and inclusivity of economic development projects in North Omaha. These issues will continue to be central to our community conversations during this stage of the project. Additionally, a central goal of this planning effort is to enhance local hiring practices, furthering commitments to job opportunities for surrounding neighborhoods. Practices such as these are crucial to upholding MAPA's anti-displacement goals and preventing gentrification.

In addition to workforce development opportunities that will be furthered by the proposed planning project, MAPA has set general requirements that uphold Federal standards for workforce development and hiring practices. See MAPA's [Civil Rights Policy](#) for details.

In June 2020, the MAPA Board of Directors adopted an [Equity Resolution](#) in order to increase equitable outcomes in our region through MAPA's work. This resolution reaffirms the agency's commitment to an equitable and just region, and ensures that the issues of disparities, justice and racism are at the forefront as we work to do more with greater intensity and focus to realize the goal of expanding true opportunity to all residents.

MAPA has worked with the North 24th Street Business Improvement District (BID) and Latino Economic Development Council to secure a fellow through the Economic Recovery Corps (ERC) and technical assistance through Equity Impact Investments (EII) programs to build the capacity of local economic development organizations and will continue to do so through this Project.

The City of Omaha maintains an Economic Equity and Inclusion Program (EEIP) which aims to create opportunities for small and emerging businesses, the local workforce, and youth. The program's goal is to expand employment opportunities and improve workforce development to help drive economic prosperity. Other resources for workforce development in Omaha include the Greater Omaha American Job Center which provides information on programs and services, the Greater Omaha Workforce Development Board which convenes local, regional, and state workforce systems and partners to improve the workforce development system.

Criteria #6.3: Planning Integration

Several planning studies have been released in recent years by the City of Omaha, Omaha Metro, and NDOT to document citywide and statewide goals. A through line of these plans is to ensure investment in equity, resilience, sustainability, and mobility within the region by improving multimodal transportation options and efficiency. The repurposing of the North Freeway is a critical component needed to reach the combined vision of these documents. The proposed Planning Project is synergistic with goals of several statewide planning documents:

- » [Highway 75 Corridor and Freight study](#) (2022): The Highway 75 Corridor & Freight Strategy study is a high-level analysis that identified feasible, planning-level concepts that meet study mobility, safety, and community goals.
- » [MetroNEXT](#) (2022): MetroNEXT serves as Omaha Metro's plan to address equity, improve connectivity, enhance travel experiences, promote environmental stewardship, and lead responsibly. As Omaha Metro is the planner, builder, and operator of public transit services in the City of Omaha, their commitment to transit investment is indicative of the citywide prioritization of accessible mobility options.

- » [City of Omaha Housing Affordability Action Plan](#) (2022): The City of Omaha Housing Affordability Action Plan explored, evaluated, and identified strategies to addressing housing issues in Omaha and surrounding jurisdictions. Based off public engagement and a market assessment, initiatives and best practices were recommended for long-term impact.
- » [24th Street Transit Corridor Study- Metro Transit](#) (2021): Supported by RAISE grant funding, this study is working to provide valuable information to help Omaha Metro expand transit options along 24th Street, improve connections to employment and education, and complement investments in infrastructure and development.
- » [Forever North](#) (2020): Forever North is a strategic, action-oriented approach to enhance the on-going community development efforts and to provide guidance for future development along the North 24th Street corridor.
- » [Landscape Listening Report](#) (2020): The Landscape Listening sessions engaged with over 1,700 residents during Fall 2019, to better understand their lived experiences in the Omaha-Council Bluffs region. In the process of sharing stories and views, key themes emerged that broadly demonstrate opportunities for improvement, as well as existing strengths and assets that provide pathways for residents to thrive.
- » [Close the Gap](#) (2018): The Close the Gap Plan recommends strategies for creating vibrant places that are more livable and walkable and are better connected through a robust regional transit network that connects residents to jobs, education, and other destinations. Experiences from other regions indicate that such an investment has the potential to yield a transformative impact on development patterns and opportunities for economic growth.
- » [Metro Travel Improvement Study](#) (2017): The Metro Area Travel Improvement Study (MTIS) is a collaborative effort between the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) and the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA). MTIS is a comprehensive transportation study that recognizes future interstate and freeway system needs are linked intrinsically with arterial, local roads and transit system needs and investment decisions in the MAPA region.
- » [Connect Omaha: Active Mobility Plan](#): The plan to create a more connected network for walking, bicycling, and other active mobility travel modes in the City of Omaha
- » [City of Omaha Comprehensive Plan](#) (On-going): The City of Omaha Comprehensive Plan represents a current ongoing effort to develop an updated city master plan. The proposed Planning Project will be closely coordinated with the development of the new Comprehensive Plan.
- » [2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan \(LRTP\)](#): MAPA targeted public meetings in North and South Omaha, with an emphasis on reaching the Black and Hispanic/Latino populations of our region. Additionally, stakeholder meetings were held with organizations representing individuals with disabilities, social service organizations, and public agencies which provide housing and transportation services to members of the community. These efforts were intended to broaden participation among these groups in the regional transportation planning process.
- » [Omaha Climate Action and Resilience Plan](#): The Omaha Climate Action and Resilience Plan identified clear strategies and detailed actions across eight sectors to reduce citywide greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2050 and increase resilience to climate change.

- » [NDOT 2023 Carbon Reduction Strategy](#): NDOT utilized funding from the IIJA Carbon Reduction Program to create a Carbon Reduction Strategy plan, identifying actions and goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Expanding Affordable Transportation Options

Omaha Metro Transit offers discounted fares and passes for several people, including:

- » Seniors: Seniors over 65 years old can get half-fare rides. A 10-ride half-fare pass costs \$6, and a 30-day half-fare pass costs \$27.50 plus \$1.50 for shipping and handling,
- » Disabled: People with disabilities can get half-fare rides,
- » Medicare card holders: Medicare card holders can get half-fare rides, and
- » K-12 students: K-12 students can ride for free.

Selection Considerations

Safety

Per the [Comprehensive Safety Action Plan](#), from 2017-2021 the MAPA region experienced a higher rate of non-motorist fatalities than either the Nebraska or Iowa state averages, and a disproportionately high impact on disadvantaged communities. Disadvantaged communities make up 22% of the region's population and experience 33% of the total traffic fatalities on all roads and 47% of the pedestrian fatalities on local roads.

MAPA is committed to advancing safe, efficient, and equitable transportation, including through the RCP Program and in alignment with the [National Roadway Safety Strategy](#) (NRSS). The RCP Planning grant will include [Safe System Approach](#) design considerations to mitigate serious and fatal injuries in the region, particularly for vulnerable road users. As design progresses, project planning will incorporate safety elements to mitigate the severity of crashes, reduce pedestrian crossing distance and exposure, and increase pedestrian visibility. The Project will also align with the City of Omaha's [Vision Zero](#) Action Plan approach to traffic safety with the goal of eliminating all fatal and serious injury traffic crashes.

Transformation

The Project will include transformative solutions such as [Complete Streets](#) for planning, design, and operation to enable safe mobility and access for all road users including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders.

Thriving Communities

MAPA was awarded technical assistance under [USDOT's Thriving Communities Initiative](#), Complete Neighborhoods category. The award helps MAPA with community engagement, build capacity for future grants, proposal concept refinement, among other options. MAPA will utilize the technical assistance to include further coalition-strengthening and community engagement activities which guide the design of the North Freeway outcomes.

Technical Assessment

MAPA has historically delivered grant projects successfully, complying with all federal USDOT regulations, including STBG, TAP and CRP funding and the [SS4A](#) discretionary award. MAPA has technical expertise and dedicated resources available to complete the Project. MAPA has fully federally compliant procedures for Title VI, DBE, ADA, Procurement, and Grants

Management. MAPA has completed projects of similar scope and size to include the [I-80 Interchange PEL](#), [Council Bluffs Linkages PEL](#), and [Highway 75 Study](#).

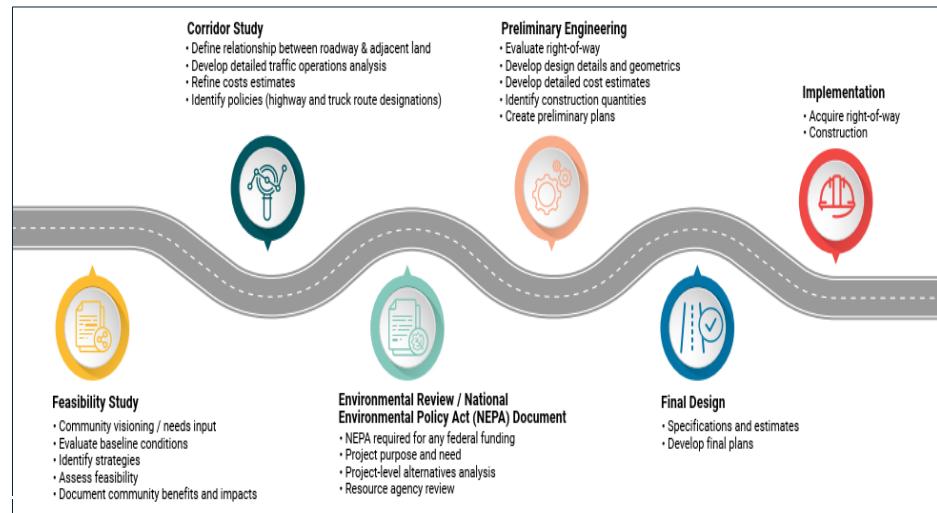


Figure 7 - MAPA's project planning and implementation process.

Financial Completeness

The Project has confirmed an equal funding match that equates to 20 percent as demonstrated in the Letter of Funding Commitment from the City of Omaha. The cost estimates are based on projects of similar scope and size and are escalated per year of expenditure. MAPA will cover any potential cost overruns.