

WILLIAMS ROAD

Multimodal Corridor Planning

RAISE Discretionary Grant Application | Submitted February 28, 2023

Merit Criteria Narrative



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Project narrative, appendices, and letters of support are available online:

<http://www.morpc.org/williamsroadcorridor>

I. Merit Criteria

A. Safety

There are two distinct sets of safety concerns located within the Williams Road Corridor. The first set stem from the roadway itself, and how the roadway facilities impact motor vehicles, transit users, pedestrians, and bicyclists. The second set stem from the two at-grade rail crossings that are less than 250 feet apart, and how these crossings impact corridor users.

I. This project will study significant roadway safety concerns, including a fatality rate that is 6 times the general MPO fatality rate and 3 times the general MPO serious injury rate.

Compared to the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) area, **the Williams Road corridor exhibits a significantly higher fatality rate (6x) and serious injury rate (3x).** This is based on ADT data from the mid-point of the 2016-2020 crash data period (2018). This data is shown in the table in **Figure 1**. The corridor between High Street / US23 and Hamilton Road / SR317 was identified as a High Injury Corridor in MORPC’s 2019 Central Ohio Transportation Safety Plan; and portions of the corridor were also identified on Columbus’ High Injury Network.

The majority of Williams Road is a curb-less cross-section with no dedicated facilities for pedestrians or bicyclists. A short segment of the corridor (less than a half-mile) near the intersection with Alum Creek Drive has sidewalks installed as part of a recent intersection improvement project. Pedestrian and bicycle related crashes along Williams Road accounted for only about 3% of all crashes, but approximately 16% of all fatal and

Measure	MPO Area	Williams Road
Fatality Rate per 100 Million Vehicle Miles Travelled (MVMT)	.84	5.03
Serious Injury Rate per 100 MVMT	6.01	25.16
Number of Fatalities*	110	1
Number of Serious Injuries*	849	4
Number of Non-Motorized Fatalities and Serious Injuries*	148	1

**5-year rolling averages*

serious injuries reported during this time period. This represents a fatal and serious injury (FSI) rate of more than 30%, which is significantly higher than the rate for Central Ohio (around 17%).¹ Williams Road was also identified as a high-stress corridor for bicyclists (Level of Traffic Stress 4) in the 2020-2050 Central Ohio Active Transportation Plan.² There have been two fatalities near Williams Road intersections since 2022: a fatal crash on Williams Road near its Groveport Road intersection,³ and a fatal crash on High Street just north of its intersection with Williams Road.⁴

559 crashes were reported along the Williams Road corridor from 2016 through 2020. The majority (63.5%) of these reported crashes resulted in property damage only (PDO); however there was at least one injury in 36.5% of crashes; including 5 fatalities and 26 serious injuries. Injury crashes along this corridor were more frequent than for similar corridors throughout the state of Ohio during the same time period. The statewide average for PDO crashes on similar corridors is 73.4%.

As shown in **Figure 2**, rear end and angle crashes were the two most prevalent crash types along the corridor during this time period. Together they accounted for more than 50% of all crashes. Rear end crashes on a primarily two-lane corridor such as Williams Road can often be attributed to a lack of dedicated lanes for turning movements. These crashes are often a result of one motorist

¹ “Transportation Safety,” MORPC, <https://www.morpc.org/safety>.
² “Active Transportation Plan,” MORP, <https://www.morpc.org/atp>.
³ “1 person killed in southeast Columbus crash,” ABC 6, Jan. 12, 2022, <https://abc6onyourside.com/news/local/fatal-crash-williams-road-southeast-columbus-1-12-2022>.
⁴ “Police: 1 dead after crashing into south Columbus utility pole,” 10 WBNS, Mar. 31, 2022, <https://www.10tv.com/article/news/local/police-1-dead-after-crashing-south-columbus-utility-pole/530-b3e5d46d-8448-4dc3-b4ee-95a7de1f6d64>.

stopping to make a turn, and a second motorist following behind not stopping in time. Widening Williams Road to accommodate a left-turn lane where necessary will help to mitigate this crash type. Installing a two-way left turn lane (TWLTL) on a two-lane road has a Crash Modification Factor (CMF) of 0.613 for rear end crashes, 0.797 for all crash types, and 0.739 for all fatal, serious injury, and minor injury crashes.⁵

FHWA guidance indicates the most appropriate bicycle facility for this corridor is a separated bike lane or shared use path.⁶ A shared use path (SUP) will provide needed accommodations for people walking and bicycling and require less right-of-way than separate facilities for each user type. Walkways such as SUPs are a Proven Safety Countermeasure for pedestrians, resulting in a 65-89% reduction in pedestrian-involved crashes.⁷

2. This project will identify a plan to separate two at-grade rail crossings that are in the top 15 percent most hazardous crossings in Ohio.

This project will address significant safety challenges created by two at-grade rail crossings on Williams Road that are less than 250 feet apart. According to data from the Ohio Rail Development Commission (ORDC), the eastern crossing (481445B) is owned by Norfolk Southern, and it has a current hazard ranking of #577 out of 5,700 crossings in Ohio.⁸ Its Safety Hazard Score from the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) is 3.6 out of 5.⁹ The western crossing (228919S) is owned by CSX, and it has a current hazard ranking of #850 out of 5,700. Its Safety Hazard Score from PUCO is 3.49.¹⁰ Complicating the hazard is the frequency and length of delays at these crossings for Williams Road travelers. Additional information provided by the ORDC indicates that Norfolk Southern’s crossing (481445B) had 123 reported instances of stopped trains in 2021, with only 25 (20.33%) of these delays lasting less than 30 minutes duration; and that CSX’s crossing (228919S) had 26 reported instance times in 2021, with only 6 (23.08%) lasting less than 30 minutes duration.¹¹ These lengthy and unpredictable delays create additional unsafe conditions as motorists execute U-turns and other unsafe maneuvers to avoid congestion. Grade-separating these two crossings will positively impact safety.

Most Prevalent Fatal and Serious Injury Crash Types				
Crash Type	Fatal	Serious Injury	Total Crashes	Total %
Rear End	0	1	174	31.1%
Angle	0	3	125	22.4%
Left Turn	0	5	60	10.7%
Fixed Object	2	3	53	9.5%
Right Turn	1	1	28	5.0%
Head On	1	3	18	3.2%
Pedestrian	0	3	10	1.8%
Parked Vehicle	0	1	9	1.6%
Pedalcycles	0	2	6	1.1%
Sideswipe Meeting	1	0	1	0.2%
Grand Total	5	22	559	

Figure 2 - Williams Road Crashes by Type and Severity 2016-2020, full crash data table available in [Appendix 3 – Corridor Crash Data](#).



⁵ “Safety Evaluation of Installing Center Two-Way Left-Turn Lanes on Two-Lane Roads,” Crash Modification Factors Clearinghouse, http://www.cmfclearinghouse.org/study_detail.cfm?stid=141

⁶ “Bikeway Selection Guide,” FHWA, https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/tools_solve/docs/fhwas18077.pdf.

⁷ “Walkways,” Proven Safety Countermeasures, FHWA, <https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/provencountermeasures/walkways.cfm>

⁸ ORDC information provided by email included in [Appendix 3 - ORDC Information](#).

⁹ According to information provided by ORDC, PUCO’s safety scores range from 0 to 5, with 5 being the highest importance. Please see ORDC email provided in [Appendix 3 - ORDC Information](#).

¹⁰ Please see ORDC email provided in [Appendix 3 - ORDC Information](#).

¹¹ Please see ORDC email provided in [Appendix 3 - ORDC Information](#).

B. Environmental Sustainability

The project will plan corridor improvements that (1) support Columbus' Climate Action Plan; (2) incorporate a strong environmental justice process; (3) examine the feasibility of demand management strategies; (4) improve corridor resiliency; (5) minimize adverse environmental impacts, encourage recycling, and incorporate new materials with lower carbon footprints; and (6) encourage energy efficiency and mode shift.

I. This project supports the City of Columbus' Climate Action Plan.

Columbus recently released its first Climate Action Plan (CAP).¹² The CAP commits to a 45% greenhouse gas emissions reduction by 2030, and a 100% greenhouse gas emissions reduction by 2050. The Williams Road project will help advance several key goals from the CAP, including: (1) Goal 5.3 – increasing equitable access to green space; (2) Goal 6.2 - reduce urban heat with tree canopy cover, and (3) Goal 11.4 - support active transportation infrastructure.¹³

The project supports the CAP's goal to increasing equitable access to green space by providing improved bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout the corridor. There are two parks on Williams Road: Great Southern Metro Park (formerly Heer Park), and Three Creeks Metro Park; and four additional parks within a mile buffer around the corridor: Scioto Southland Park, Stockbridge Park, Williams Creek Park, and Elk Run Park. Both Great Southern Metro Park and Scioto Southland Park are in an area of persistent poverty (CT 88.22).¹⁴ This project will not only develop a plan to connect corridor residents to these parks, but also develop a plan to significantly improve access to greenspace and parkland by planning corridor connections to three major regional trails: the planned Scioto Trail extension at Great Southern Metro Park; the Alum Creek Trail in Three Creeks Metro Park; and the planned Big Walnut Trail extension at Three Creeks Metro Park.¹⁵

The project also supports the CAP's goal to reduce urban heat with tree canopy cover. As part of EO 2015-01, Columbus has committed to preserving street trees when possible, and planting new street trees as part of all street reconstruction projects.¹⁶ This is particularly significant because Williams Road, west of Alum Creek Drive, is an area with a medium to high social equity index and low canopy percentage.¹⁷ Trees planted during construction will (1) meet a significant urban forestry need, and (2) support the CAP's increased tree canopy goal.

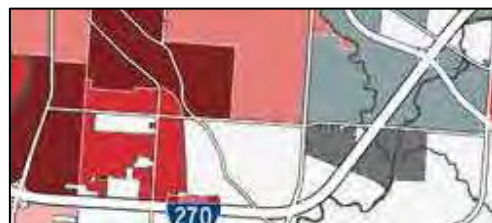


Figure 4 - The darker the red, the lower the canopy percentage and higher social equity index.

The project also supports the Climate Action Plan's goal to support active transportation infrastructure within one mile of mass transit. Williams Road is an east-west corridor that intersects multiple roads with transit lines: High Street, Parsons Avenue, and Alum Creek Drive. The Central Ohio Transit Authority's (COTA's) Line 8 serves both High Street and Parsons Avenue; and COTA's Lines 4 and 22 serve Alum Creek Drive. All three streets have residential communities and/or employment destinations that will benefit from improved active transportation infrastructure.¹⁸

In addition to these specific action items, the project will commit to further reviewing the CAP to study the feasibility of including other goals and benchmarks that include, but are not limited to, setting walkability goals, charging stations within the corridor, and mobility hubs.

¹² Additional information on the CAP, and the plan itself, can be found at <https://www.columbus.gov/sustainable/cap/>.

¹³ See Columbus Climate Action Plan, pages 60, 89, & 64. Available at <https://www.columbus.gov/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=2147522706>

¹⁴ Map showing park and greenway locations is provided in [Appendix 4 - Corridor Parks and Greenways Map](#).

¹⁵ Please see [Appendix 4 - Corridor Parks and Greenways Map](#).

¹⁶ "EO 2015-01 Tree Protection and Mitigation," <https://staging.columbus.gov/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=85008>

¹⁷ "Columbus Urban Forestry Master Plan: Prioritizing Social Equity Factors," Columbus Recreation and Parks Dept., https://www.columbusufmp.org/uploads/2/6/0/6/26062495/columbus_ufmp_final_low_res.pdf, p. XIII.

¹⁸ A bus line and stop map is provided in [Appendix 4 - COTA Lines and Stops Map](#).

2. The planning and design process is an opportunity to incorporate and commit to a strong environmental justice process.

The project corridor includes multiple census tracts that have been designated as either an area of persistent poverty or a historically disadvantaged community. The project will use tools like EJSCREEN to minimize adverse impacts as the formal environmental justice review process begins. The project will also look to incorporate equity tools developed for Vision Zero Columbus to help minimize any adverse impacts. The community has voiced its concerns about the roadway over the years, and Columbus will use both established and new relationships to actively engage the surrounding community and stakeholders throughout the planning and design process.

3. The project will explore the feasibility of using demand management strategies to reduce corridor congestion.

The project will not add additional travel lanes to Williams Road due to right of way challenges along much of the corridor. Demand management strategies are necessary to ensure that one travel lane in each direction will be sufficient to handle current use and the area's projected growth. The planning process will explore the feasibility of connecting all the corridor's signals into the Columbus Traffic Signal System, and expand the existing freight signal priority system along the Williams Road corridor. These technologies will help reduce emissions and congestion by allowing traffic to move more efficiently through the corridor. Please see Section IV(H)(1)(b) for additional information.

4. The project will help improve corridor resiliency.

Williams Road is one of the few east-west corridors on Columbus' south side that extends all the way between US-23 and US-33. As such, it is an important corridor. However, there are two areas involving rail crossings that create significant travel uncertainty. The first area is a grade-separated rail crossing (228608R) involving a bridge carrying rail tracks over Williams Road. This location has seen frequent flooding in the past, and a pump station has been installed at the location to help address the issue. However, flooding remains a concern and permanently installed roadway flooding signs and lights warn motorists of high water. This project will explore ways to permanently resolve the flooding concerns. The second area is two at-grade rail crossings that are situated within 250 feet of one another. As discussed in Section D(2), these crossings create significant, unpredictable delays that significantly impact emergency response efforts in the corridor, as documented by the Columbus Division of Fire in [Appendix 4 - CFD Train Delay Concerns](#).¹⁹ Addressing the flooding and rail crossing delays will improve the corridor's resiliency and ability to move people, freight, and first responders, regardless of weather or trains.



Figure 5 – Flood warning signs.

5. The project will incorporate designs and materials that minimize adverse environmental impacts, encourage recycling, and incorporate new materials with lower carbon footprints.

Columbus follows design standards that minimize adverse environmental impacts and meet or exceed standards for stormwater quality and quantity. Its Department of Public Utilities (DPU) requires transportation projects meet all state and federal stormwater quality requirements; and its own stormwater quantity requirements exceed federal and state requirements. The standards exceed other local requirements, and are among the most rigorous in the state.²⁰

Columbus promotes the use of recycled materials in its projects, especially recycled asphalt pavement (RAP). Contractors can currently use 50% RAP in the base course of asphalt, and 20% in the surface course of asphalt. Columbus is currently piloting 50% RAP in the surface course, but those

¹⁹ See, also, Columbus Division of Fire Memorandum provided in [Appendix 4 - CFD Train Delay Concerns](#).

²⁰ Manual available at <https://www.columbus.gov/utilities/publications/2021-Columbus-Stormwater-Drainage-Manual/>

pilots are still being monitored and cannot yet be included as a common bid. The overall RAP percentage in the surface course will be increased as permitted based on pilot area data updates.²¹ While the RAP that will be used in the new asphalt for Williams Road may not come from its own old roadway asphalt, it will have been recycled from other roadways in the region; and the old asphalt from Williams Road will be collected and used as RAP in new asphalt for other roadway projects.

Columbus is using new materials that will reduce air pollutants and carbon emissions from projects. It is currently planning to pilot the use of a new asphalt sealant, PlusTi A.R.A.-1 Ti, which removes nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, and other airborne pollutants.²² If successful, Columbus intends to expand the use of this sealant as part of its commitment to reduce harmful emissions. In addition, concrete suppliers in Central Ohio have shifted to Portland Limestone Cement, which is projected to reduce carbon emissions for concrete by 10%.²³ The roadway will ultimately incorporate the new concrete and, hopefully, the new sealant.

The FCEO also plans to incorporate two new materials into the concrete bridge decks that will ultimately be replaced as part of the corridor's planned improvements. The first material is E5 Liquid Fly Ash (LFA). The manufacturer estimates that for every 100 yards of E5 LFA concrete with this product, up to 10,000 pounds of carbon monoxide is eliminated.²⁴ The second material is E5 Internal Cure. The manufacturer estimates that for every 100k square foot pour, up to 880 pounds of carbon dioxide is eliminated.²⁵ These materials will allow the FCEO to replace the existing bridges with new materials that have a lower carbon footprint.

6. The planning process will identify ways to decrease transportation related energy expenditures, incorporate energy efficient components, and encourage modal shift.

MORPC's 2018 Rickenbacker Area Study included an energy study that identified transportation use as one of the most energy intense uses in the area.²⁶ This project will evaluate multiple ways to reduce this intense level of energy use. First, any capital projects constructed as a result of the corridor planning process will use energy efficient LED lighting for street lights and traffic signals. Second, the planning process is an opportunity to examine the feasibility of extending the freight signal priority system down Williams Road, which would allow trucks to traverse the corridor more efficiently and use less fuel stopping and idling. Third, it is also an opportunity to examine the feasibility of deploying electric vehicle charging infrastructure in the corridor; which could encourage residents and companies to switch to more energy efficient vehicles. Fourth, the planning process will evaluate the best way to construct multimodal mobility options throughout the corridor; which will provide residents and employees opportunities to shift to more energy efficient modes. This project is an opportunity to identify ways to address reduce one of the largest areas of energy use in the Rickenbacker area

C. Quality of Life

Developing multimodal options for the Williams Road corridor will significantly improve the quality of life for residents, employees, and others who travel through the corridor. The planning process is an opportunity to (1) incorporate an equity analysis into the planning and design process, (2) use these analyses to help guide multimodal investments in the corridor, and (3) use existing equity

²¹ Please see [Appendix 4 - RAP Pilot Presentation](#) for more information about the City's RAP pilot.

²² Please see [Appendix 4 - PlusTi information](#) for more information about the new asphalt sealant.

²³ Please see letter from Anderson Concrete Corporation provided in [Appendix 4 - Limestone Concrete Information](#).

²⁴ Please see "E5 Liquid Fly Ash: Carbon Reduction Advantage," Specification Products, <https://www.specificationproducts.com/rcsproducts/e5-liquid-fly-ash/#1627951457005-e9a9981d-3492>.

²⁵ Please see "E5 Internal Cure: Carbon Reduction Advantage," Specification Products, <https://www.specificationproducts.com/rcsproducts/rcs-internalcure/#1549641804892-23ffceaf-63fe>.

²⁶ "The 2018 Rickenbacker Area Study," MORPC, <https://www.morpc.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/RICKENBACKER-AREA-STUDY-FINAL-PDF-Reduced-Size.pdf>, p. 51.

inclusion programs to ensure an equity-focused project delivery and implementation process.

I. All agencies involved in the project are committed to incorporating equity analyses in their development process for all projects, including Williams Road.

All agencies are committed to incorporating and supporting an equity impact analysis as part of the planning and design process. This analysis is particularly important for ensuring the appropriate multi-modal mobility investments are made through the corridor, particularly in the western half of the corridor which has multiple census tracts (CTs 8.11, 88.12, 88.13, and 88.22) identified as either Persistent Poverty Areas or Historically Disadvantaged Communities. This is an opportunity to use an equity process that builds on federal guidance and existing city, county, and regional efforts.

Columbus is already using data to identify Communities of Interest (COI) as part of its Vision Zero initiative. COI are block groups where people may have fewer choices about how, when, and where they travel, putting them at higher risk as they travel. The methodology uses American Community Survey (ACS) block group data for: (1) minority groups, (2) youth, (3) older adults, (4) poverty, (5) limited English proficiency, (6) zero vehicle households, and (7) persons with disabilities. Williams Road has multiple COI: CT 88.12, BG 1; CT 88.13, BG 1; CT 88.22, BG 2.²⁷ Engaging residents in CT 88.22 is particularly important due to the high level of zero-vehicle households.

As part of its Antiracism and Equity Program, the Franklin County Engineer's Office uses equity considerations in both its outreach and project development process.²⁸ The FCEO has adopted a diverse outreach program to identify areas where it can make impactful and meaningful contributions to Franklin County communities.²⁹ It has committed to focusing on projects that have first mile/last mile elements in areas that need to provide transportation systems in underrepresented communities.

MORPC has long been a leader in Environmental Justice analysis with regard to their MTP and Transportation Improvement Program. These techniques can be applied to corridors like Williams Road. Furthermore, MORPC has also included an equity analysis as part of its selection criteria for projects awarded the federal formula funding that is allocated by MORPC as part of its metropolitan planning organization process. Applicants are required to provide a description of how the project helps address the unmet needs of the population groups – with a focus on minority, low-income, elderly, disabled, or other historically underrepresented population groups – within the project area. The goal is for a project in a specific community to benefit that community and not just commuters.³⁰

The planning process is an opportunity for Columbus, FCEO, and MORPC to build upon their own equity analyses by incorporating relevant guidance from USDOT and the Justice40 initiative.

2. Significant multimodal mobility investments are needed through the entire corridor.

A significant portion of the planning process will be focused on planning multimodal mobility investments throughout the corridor to connect the residents to transit, recreational, employment, and commercial opportunities that are within the corridor, as well as beyond it. Existing facilities are extremely limited, and do not extend towards the employment opportunities in the corridor's center.³¹ While the planning process has not yet commenced, separated facilities on both sides of the roadway are anticipated, with a shared use path on one side and sidewalk or shared use path on the other side. Multimodal facilities are particularly important for residents in CT 88.22. It is an area of persistent poverty with a no-vehicle household rate of 26.6% according to 2020 ACS 5-year estimates. This average is significantly higher than Ohio's 7.8%, Franklin County's 7.2%, and Columbus' 8.5% overall.

²⁷ Map showing COI locations provided in [Appendix 5 - VZ Communities of Interest Map](#).

²⁸ See, generally, "Franklin County Engineer's Antiracism & Equity Program: June 30, 2020," Franklin County Engineer's Office. Provided in [Appendix 5 - FCE Antiracism and Equity Program](#).

²⁹ "Franklin County Engineer's Antiracism & Equity Program: June 30, 2020." See [Appendix 5 - FCE EBE Program](#).

³⁰ "Policies for Managing MORPC-Attributable Funds," MORPC, Feb. 2022, <https://www.morpc.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/FINAL-Policies-for-Managing-MORPC-Attributable-Funds.pdf>, p. 18.

³¹ Maps of existing and planned facilities are provided in [Appendix 5 - Existing Facilities and Planned Sidewalk](#).

Adding bicycle and pedestrian facilities will improve community placemaking and access to employment centers, including ODW Logistics in Census Tract 88.13 and other employment centers in Census Tract 88.12. The project will also provide multimodal options to residents living in Census Tract 88.12 and Census Tract 88.22, and connect them with transit stops on High Street, Parsons Avenue, and Alum Creek Drive; as well as to recreational facilities in the corridor and beyond via the planned Central Ohio Greenway trail network. The transit connection is important for providing residents and employees meaningful commuting opportunities throughout the city. The recreational connection is important because access to greenspace is important for health and quality of life reasons. As mentioned previously, there are six parks that are on or within a mile of Williams Road, including two in an areas of persistent poverty. Multimodal facilities on Williams Road would also connect to the Alum Creek Trail at Three Creeks Metro Park and planned trail extensions along Big Walnut Creek at Three Creeks Metro Park and the Scioto River at the Great Southern Metro Park. The Scioto Trail extension will provide residents with trail access north to Lou Berliner Sports Park, Scioto Audubon Metro Park, and Downtown Columbus.³²

These multi-modal mobility investments are consistent with MORPC's 2018 Rickenbacker Area Study recommendations. This study revealed significant Housing & Transportation Cost Burdens, with a combined cost burden ranging from 45% to 89% of income in each census block group within the Williams Road corridor.³³ Offering effective multimodal transportation options is one way to significantly reduce this burden. This study also identified Williams Road as a high stress corridor for pedestrians and bicyclists, and it proposed constructing multimodal facilities to provide a low-stress bicycle-pedestrian route along Williams Road.³⁴ The study also recommended improving transit options. Providing multimodal facilities will improve the first mile/last mile connections along Williams Road, and help more people in the area benefit from transit.

Investing in multi-modal mobility is an essential factor in the corridor's success, and the region's ability to lower the corridor's combined housing and transportation burden. The corridor is an important freight corridor, and the roadway needs to be improved for safety reasons. But additional through-lanes should not be needed to make a significant, positive impact on the quality of life for residents and others who rely upon the corridor for travel and access. Making a significant multi-modal investment will allow Williams Road to carry freight and vehicles more safely and efficiently without adding additional lanes, while also providing a low-stress bicycle and pedestrian route.

3. The City of Columbus, Franklin County Engineer, and Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission have adopted Equity Inclusion Programs.

Columbus, the Franklin County Engineer, and MORPC have all adopted equity and inclusion programs/plans or has otherwise instituted equity-focused policies related to project procurement, material sourcing, construction, inspection, hiring, or other activities designed to ensure racial equity in the overall project delivery and implementation.

Columbus is committed to ensuring meaningful opportunities for Minority-Owned and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MBE/WBEs) and Small Local Business Enterprises (SLBEs) to participate in its construction, professional services, and goods and services contracts. In administering this Supplier Diversity Policy, Columbus takes all necessary and reasonable steps to ensure business enterprises certified as MBE/WBEs have an equal opportunity to participate in city contracts. It is Columbus' policy to create contracting opportunities for MBE/WBEs and SLBEs in its construction, professional services, and goods and services contracts. The MBE/WBE and SLBE Programs ensure contracts are awarded in a manner that promote economic inclusion. Administration of the MBE/WBE Program is afforded the same priority as compliance with all other legal obligations.

³² Map of greenspace and parks provided in [Appendix 4 - Corridor Parks and Greenways Map](#).

³³ "The 2018 Rickenbacker Area Study," p. 61.

³⁴ "The 2018 Rickenbacker Area Study," p. 36-37.

Free gender and race-based certification is offered to make it easier to identify those ready, willing, and able to perform on contracts.³⁵ Local preference is shown when awarding construction contracts.³⁶

The FCE also has an Equitable Business Enterprise (EBE) Program for Locally Funded Projects.³⁷ This program has three primary goals: (1) foster nondiscrimination in the award of and administration of FCE locally funded projects; (2) help remove barriers to the participation of disadvantaged businesses in FCE locally funded projects; and (3) assist the development of firms that can compete successfully in the marketplace outside of the FCE EBE program. The FCE has established a minimum ten percent (10%) EBE participation goal for engineering and design related services agreements that have sub-consulting opportunities, as deemed appropriate by the FCE.³⁸

MORPC also has a well-established diversity and inclusion program, in addition to its Title VI plan. Its Title VI plan is publicly available on its website.³⁹ It also has adopted a Diversity and Inclusion work plan, which was partially developed based on the recommendations of a diversity in local government working group.⁴⁰ MORPC has also published a statement on racism.

D. Mobility and Community Connectivity

Developing a plan for the entire Williams Road corridor is difficult due to the fact the corridor includes multiple, independent political subdivisions and serves a wide variety of land uses. Using a collaborative process will create a significant opportunity to use the planning process to improve (1) the corridor's walkability and accessibility, and (2) improve the movement of people, EMS, and freight through the corridor by separating two at-grade rail crossings that create significant obstacles.

I. The planning process will improve the corridor's walkability and accessibility.

The corridor's current lack of meaningful non-motorized connectivity is recognized by the surrounding community as well as the jurisdictions and regional stakeholders involved along the corridor. Addressing the lack of pedestrian and bicycle facilities along Williams Road is one of the primary goals for developing a Williams Road corridor plan. The Central Ohio Greenways (COG) has identified the corridor as one of its vision trails to connect the Scioto Trail, the Alum Creek Trail, and Big Walnut Trail.⁴¹ This project will connect the entire corridor by planning an ADA accessible trail on one side of Williams Road, and a complimentary bicycle and/or pedestrian facility on the opposite side. The corridor has significant residential, commercial, and logistics developments on both sides; and the planning process will confirm where complimentary facilities are required.

Providing separated, accessible facilities for pedestrians and bicycles along the corridor will significantly expand access to transit options. Williams Road intersects multiple north-south transit lines running along High Street, Parsons Avenue, and Alum Creek Drive.⁴² Providing east-west multi-modal facilities will allow residents and employees to safely access and use public transit, including a possible future Southeast Corridor rapid transit route. This conceptual corridor is part of the region's LinkUS Mobility Initiative.⁴³ The route will go from Downtown Columbus to the Rickenbacker Airport area, and it will intersect Williams Road. Adding multi-modal options to Williams Road will

³⁵ "Minority, Women, and Veteran Business Enterprise Certification: Policy" City of Columbus, <https://www.columbus.gov/odi/supplier-diversity/Business-Certifications/>

³⁶ See Columbus City Code § 329.212

³⁷ See, generally, "Franklin County Engineer's Equitable Business Enterprise Program for Locally Funded Projects," Franklin County Engineer's Office. Provided in [Appendix 5 - FCE EBE Program](#).

³⁸ See, generally, "Franklin County Engineer's Equitable Business Enterprise Program for Locally Funded Projects," p. 5. Provided in [Appendix 5 - FCE EBE Program](#).

³⁹ "Title VI," MORPC, <https://www.morpc.org/title-vi/>.

⁴⁰ "Recommendations of the Diversity in Local Government Working Group," MORPC, <https://www.morpc.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/30-18-Diversity-Inclusion-Recommendations.pdf>.

⁴¹ See, generally, "Proposed Trails," COG <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/2511b9e96c30435b9a272ec986de3f4d>.

⁴² See [Appendix 4 - COTA Lines and Stops Map](#).

⁴³ "Corridors" LinkUS Columbus, <https://linkuscolumbus.com/corridors/>.

make this rapid transit corridor accessible to residents, employees, and other travelers.

The addition of these facilities will help connect a historically disjointed corridor. Even though the corridor plan will not shift corporate boundaries along the corridor, it will help create a collaborative, common vision for the entire corridor. This process, combined with multimodal improvements that are walkable and accessible, will help the communities and businesses throughout the corridor feel more connected with one another.

2. Separating two at-grade rail crossings will remove a significant mobility barrier in the corridor, and allow people, first responders, and freight to move more efficiently.

Williams Road’s two at-grade rail crossings, which are less than 250 feet apart, create significant and unpredictable barriers to mobility. The eastern crossing (481445B) involves two tracks owned by Norfolk Southern, while the western crossing (228919S) involves one track owned by CSX. ORDC data shows a significant number of stopped trains at both crossings. Reports indicate 123 reported stopped trains on Norfolk Southern’s at-grade rail crossing in 2021. Of these 123 trains, 25 trains (20.33%) were stopped for 30 minutes or less; 42 trains (34.15%) were stopped between 31 minutes and 60 minutes; and 56 trains (45.53%) were stopped more than 60 minutes.⁴⁴ Reports indicate 26 reported stopped trains on CSX’s at-grade rail crossing in 2021. Of these 26 trains, 6 trains (23.08%) were stopped for 30 minutes or less; 15 trains (57.69%) were stopped between 31 minutes and 60 minutes; and 5 trains (19.23%) were stopped more than 60 minutes.



Figure 6 - Aerial view showing the two crossings.

These stopped trains create significant and unpredictable barriers that impede emergency services. The Columbus Division of Fire (CDF) has provided information describing the difficulty created by the at-grade rail crossings.⁴⁵ Taking alternative routes can add at least 10-15 minutes to a response. Time is precious when responding to an emergency, and responding 10-15 minutes earlier/later to an emergency can significantly impact outcomes. CDF noted stopped trains also impact Hamilton Township’s ability to respond in a timely manner. Developing a plan to separate the crossings will be a significant step forward in connecting the two sides of Williams Road and allowing emergency personnel to access the entire corridor without the need for significant detours.

Separating the crossings will significantly improve the corridor’s reliability, and increase truck freight’s ability to move efficiently to destinations throughout the corridor and Midwest (See **Figure 7**). Separating the crossings also provides an opportunity to explore deploying a freight signal priority system. As discussed in Section H.1, there is an opportunity to improve and extend the current freight signal priority system on Alum Creek Drive from its current terminus to I-270 north to at least Williams Road, as well as east-west on Williams Road. ODW Logistics is already one company making use of the existing corridor on Alum Creek Drive, and they have a major logistics center on Williams Road. Extending the system would benefit their operations and the general movement of freight through the corridor once trains stopped blocking the road.



Figure 7 - StreetLight Data origin/destination analysis of trucks moving through the Williams Road corridor.

Separating the crossings should also improve the efficiency of rail operations at both railyards. Both companies will no longer be limited by when or how long trains were blocking the at-grade rail

⁴⁴ Please see ORDC email in [Appendix 3 - ORDC Information](#).
⁴⁵ See CFD documentation provided in [Appendix 4 - CFD Train Delay Concerns](#).

crossings, and freight and yard operations could be planned with a focus on maximizing rail efficiency. This should improve the mobility of freight through these yards, which will have a regional and national impact. Watkins Yard, which is less than 250 feet north of Williams Road, helps handle freight moving through Ohio and Norfolk Southern's Rickenbacker Intermodal Terminal; while Parsons Yard helps handle freight moving through Ohio and CSX's Columbus Ohio Intermodal Terminal.

E. Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity

Reliable system operations is an important factor for supporting the current businesses and attracting redevelopment in the area. Developing a consistent corridor plan will (1) improve system operations within the corridor, (2) provide timely access to employment centers/job opportunities at logistics centers within the corridor and improve transit access for commuters, (3) improve economic productivity, (4) create opportunities for regional tourism by adding a regional trail connection, and (5) support affordable housing and transportation needs by providing multimodal travel options.



Figure 8 - The at-grade rail crossings with XPO Logistics (left) and ODW Logistics (right) in background.

1. This planning project will improve system operations by focusing on areas of congestion and travel unreliability within the corridor.

Congestion and at-grade rail crossings create significant delay and travel time unreliability on Williams Road. MORPC's 2018 Rickenbacker Study showed significant AM and PM peak hour congestion in the corridor, and this congestion negatively impacts system operations.⁴⁶ This project is an opportunity to look at the corridor and how the entire corridor is used in a holistic way to develop an approach to manage and improve system operations without assuming additional lane capacity is required. It is also an opportunity to identify the



Figure 9 - Drivers waiting for the crossing to clear.

best way to address the significant and unpredictable delays caused by stopped trains. The current unreliability makes it hard to accurately schedule or plan shipments or business activities, and it creates additional business costs for operating a business or moving a freight through the corridor. Separating the at-grade rail crossings will significantly improve system operations and lower operating costs for businesses. Improving the movement of freight through the corridor will make it easier for Columbus to pursue an intermodal corridor designation for Williams Road. Improving system operations may also create opportunities to extend transit on Williams Roads. The corridor is currently too unreliable for transit, but improving travel reliability creates an opportunity to evaluate transit on Williams Road.

2. Improving reliability and system operations will provide timely access to employment centers/job opportunities both within the corridor and beyond it.

Improving reliability and system operations will also provide timely access to employment centers/job opportunities within the corridor and beyond it. There are a significant number of employers and job opportunities on Williams Road, particularly between Lockbourne Road and Alum Creek Drive. However, this is the same section with the at-grade rail crossings. Separating the crossings will allow timely and reliable motor vehicle access to the employment centers in this area. Constructing separated bicycle and pedestrian facilities will further expand timely access to these locations for workers who rely upon transit, walking, or bicycling to commute; and it will also expand timely access to regional employment by providing safe, efficient first mile/last mile connections to transit.

⁴⁶ ["The 2018 Rickenbacker Area Study,"](#) pp. 39-40.

3. Improving Williams Road's reliability and system operations will also improve short term and long term economic productivity within the corridor.

Improving reliability and system operations will also improve business productivity within the Williams Road corridor. Right now, there are approximately 584 businesses employing approximately 10,706 people within a mile of the Williams Road corridor.⁴⁷ Approximately 10% of all employees in this area work in transportation businesses. Addressing travel delays and uncertainty will improve productivity by allowing all businesses within the corridor – particularly transportation businesses – to plan routes and deliveries more efficiently. It will encourage existing businesses to remain in the corridor by addressing current concerns regarding reliability, system operations, and access. The improvements could also encourage commercial redevelopment, particularly between Groveport Road and Alum Creek Drive. Industrial vacancy is extremely low within Columbus – approximately 1.5% – and the costs for this space continue to rise. High demand for industrial space, combined with continued rising costs for the space, is creating strong incentives for companies to redevelop existing sites. Williams Road offers businesses a unique opportunity to lease existing space not readily available elsewhere in the city – industrial vacancy rates are slightly higher than the city average, at approximately 3.3% – or redevelop some of the corridor's underutilized properties. In either scenario, improving safety and system reliability will incentivize businesses looking to operate in a corridor that can support their logistical needs in addition to being easily accessible to employees, regardless of travel mode.

4. Improving system reliability and connectivity will create opportunities for local tourism.

Improving the Williams Road corridor could also help support local tourism, particularly within the City of Obetz. Once the pedestrian and bicycle facilities are complete, Williams Road will become an essential east-west connection for the Central Ohio Greenways network, linking the Scioto Trail, Alum Creek Trail, and Big Walnut Trail. This regional trail connection will be an opportunity to access local businesses and destinations in and around the corridor, including Fortress Obetz and the former Columbus Motor Speedway. Improving multimodal options on Williams Road will make it easier for trail users to also access these events, in addition to other events and areas along the corridor.

5. Extending multimodal travel options through the corridor will support the development of affordable housing and transportation options.

The ability to develop affordable housing on Williams Road is significantly limited by the lack of affordable transportation options. Adding multimodal transportation throughout the corridor will address this limitation and provide opportunities for developing affordable housing options.

F. State of Good Repair

The Williams Road project will restore and modernize the physical infrastructure within the corridor. This includes the following: the roadway; one bridge carrying railroad traffic over Williams Road; a culvert carrying the roadway; and two bridges carrying the roadway over Alum Creek and Big Walnut Creek. The project may also impact ODOT's bridge carrying Williams Road across I-270.

This project will modernize Williams Road, and incorporate modern safety features. The corridor is primarily one travel lane in either direction, separated by a double yellow line; and a majority of the corridor is uncurbed and lacks bicycle or pedestrian facilities. These characteristics are not sufficient to safely carry the number of vehicles that use the road, and they cannot meet the demand for bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Additionally, the roadway has significant structural issues requiring an in-depth rehabilitation strategy to provide the structure needed to handle the anticipated traffic mix, including significant truck usage. The roadway's structural issues create a ride quality that is poor and outside of the Federal levels of acceptable ride quality which also is a safety concern. A rehabilitation strategy is required to fix the distress issues and improve the roadway's ride quality to

⁴⁷ Business and employment information, along with map showing relevant area for which the data was collected, is provided in [Appendix 6 - Business and Jobs Information](#).

provide a safer ride for users. Current and projected traffic information indicate a two to three lane section with separated bicycle and pedestrian facilities should be sufficient to move people and freight. The third lane would be a center turn lane in areas where dedicated turn lanes were not sufficient.

The roadway's at-grade rail crossings are legacies of an older, less-travelled roadway. Modernizing and separating these crossings will significantly improve the overall transportation network efficiency and reliability. The other piece of physical infrastructure in need of modernizing is the bridge (228608R) carrying the CSX railroad lines over Williams Road. CSX has reported the bridge has the capacity to safely carry rail traffic,⁴⁸ but Columbus bridge inspectors are concerned about the bridge's overall condition, particularly its substructure. The most recent inspection rated the overall general appraisal as a 3 on a 10 point scale, and noted significant damage and deterioration to the abutment walls.⁴⁹ The project will evaluate and modernize the bridge as necessary.



Figure 10 - Google Street view picture of 228608R. Additional inspection pictures in [Appendix Z](#).

The other pieces of physical infrastructure in the corridor are in relatively good condition. Columbus maintains a culvert carrying the roadway that is in good condition. ODOT is independently planning repairs to its bridge over I-270, with construction starting within two years. Franklin County maintains two bridges carrying the roadway over Alum Creek and Big Walnut Creek that are also in relatively good condition – the Alum Creek Bridge has a general appraisal rating of 8, and the Big Walnut Creek Bridge has a general appraisal rating of 7. Despite their relative condition, these facilities will need to be evaluated as part of the planning process to determine whether the current structures need to be replaced or widened in order to support the corridor's planned roadway improvements.

The plan to rehabilitate the roadway structure will renew the life of the pavement section allowing for a normal life cycle including preventive and corrective maintenance schedules that will extend the roadway to its most optimal life. Not adequately rehabilitating the roadway will ensure a shorter life cycle costing more money, disrupting vehicle flow, and exponentially increasing the cost to fully rehabilitate the roadway. With Columbus' Asset Management program, the life cycle of the roadway will be significantly improved due to the management of the whole life with considerations for preservation strategies which are predictable, and will keep the roadway in a state of good repair.

Once constructed, the facilities will be maintained primarily by Columbus and FCEO, with ODOT responsible for its bridge over I-270. Updated Maintenance agreements will be executed as needed to clearly establish each entity's roles and responsibilities. These agreements will ensure that all parties understand what funds or services they are obligated to provide. All entities have significant experience coordinating maintenance and preservation tasks, individually and jointly; and all three have established processes and guidelines for maintaining assets. All have sufficient funding for the maintenance and preservation needs: Columbus can draw funds from multiple sources, including its Street and Highways Bond Fund; FCEO can draw funds from multiple sources, including Franklin County Motor Vehicle Registration and Gas User Fees; and ODOT can draw funds from multiple sources, including its State Surface Transportation Preservation funds.

G. Partnership and Collaboration

The sheer size of the project and its challenges provides multiple opportunities for partnership and collaboration, including: (1) multiple agency collaboration, (2) private stakeholder collaboration, (3) community engagement and equity input, and (4) integration of MBE's and WBE's in the planning and construction process.

⁴⁸ See CSX inspection report provided in [Appendix 7 - CSX Inspection Report](#).

⁴⁹ See City of Columbus inspection report provided in [Appendix 7 - Columbus Bridge Inspection Report](#).

1. The corridor project will require significant collaboration by multiple public agencies.

Developing a successful corridor plan for Williams Road will require significant regional coordination and collaboration. The Williams Road corridor impacts multiple local agencies and jurisdictions, including Franklin County; the cities of Columbus, Groveport, and Obetz; Hamilton Township and Madison Township; Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks; and Columbus City Schools, Hamilton Local School District, and Groveport Madison School District. The project also anticipates close coordination with MORPC, ODOT, and ORDC. In addition its regulatory oversight of federally funded projects in Ohio, ODOT also owns and maintains the bridge that carries Williams Road across I-270. Columbus anticipates working with ORDC during the planning process to identify the most effective ways to address the corridor's rail crossings, and for help engaging Norfolk Southern and CSX. A consistent corridor plan will be a benefit for all. However, the scale and scope of the corridor's challenges are such that no single agency can pursue a solution on its own. A RAISE planning grant will provide the opportunity and venue for significant regional collaboration.

2. The project requires significant collaboration with private stakeholders.

The planning process will also require close collaboration with private stakeholders throughout the corridor, particularly between Lockbourne Road and Alum Creek Drive. This area includes the three rail crossings, two rail yards, and numerous commercial businesses. Separating the at-grade rail crossings will directly impact and benefit not just rail freight operations, but also companies such as ODW Logistics, XPO Logistics, and Honeywell Intelligrated. Close stakeholder coordination is anticipated as the project develops a corridor plan for a multimodal freight corridor that can reliably move freight, employees, residents, and others regardless of travel mode.

3. The project requires significant community engagement and input to ensure the project removes existing transportation barriers and invests equitably in effective multimodal mobility options and opportunities for the entire corridor.

Directly engaging residents is particularly important to ensure an equity-focused community outreach and public engagement in underserved communities. The western half of Williams Road in Columbus includes two census tracts (CTs 88.12, 88.13) that USDOT has designated as HDC; three census tracts (CTs 88.11, 88.13, and 88.22) that USDOT has designated as Persistent Poverty Areas, and three block groups that Columbus has identified as Communities of Interest (CT 88.12, BG 1; CT 88.13, BG 1; CT 88.22, BG 2). Columbus has significant experience with community outreach and public engagement in underserved communities, and it will use that experience during the corridor planning process.⁵⁰ It has already received numerous requests and comments from citizens and the Far South Columbus Area Commission regarding Williams Road, and it plans to continue this engagement throughout the corridor planning process.⁵¹ Officials from Obetz and the FCEO have also shared local complaints and concerns. Columbus, the FCE, MORPC, and other political subdivision will also reach out to residents and other community groups in the corridor.

4. The City of Columbus' contract process for planning and construction contracts already integrates MBE/WBE Program participation.

Columbus will review all contracts that it advertises related to the Williams Road corridor planning initiative and its ultimate construction and set contract specific MBE/WBE Program participation goals. The City's Office of Diversity and Inclusion sets specific target goals for the participation of women-owned and minority owned business enterprises. These goals generally range from 11 percent to 25 percent.⁵² This process will ensure MBE/WBE Program participation is

⁵⁰ The City's engagement for its Mt. Vernon Avenue corridor is an example of a recent stakeholder engagement process to guide a significant city investment in new multimodal infrastructure: <https://bronzvillemoves.com/>.

⁵¹ Area commissions are advisory bodies representing local communities, and composed of local residents and stakeholders.

⁵² Erica Thompson, "An Ohio entrepreneur's guide to certification for women- and minority-owned businesses," *The Columbus Dispatch*, Mar. 29, 2022, <https://www.dispatch.com/story/business/2022/03/29/guide-certification-obios->

integrated in both the planning and ultimate construction of the corridor improvements. ODOT named Columbus its LPA of the Year in part of the city's commitment to MBE/WBE participation.⁵³

H. Innovation

The Williams Road Corridor planning process offers an opportunity for Columbus, the Franklin County Engineer, MORPC, and their partners to explore incorporating (1) Innovative Technologies, (2) Innovative Project Delivery, and (3) Innovative Financing.

I. Innovative Technologies

The Williams Road corridor plan presents an opportunity to study the feasibility of deploying multiple innovative technologies: (1) extending the Columbus Traffic Signal System (CTSS) through the entire Williams Road corridor; (2) extending the Freight Signal Priority System up Alum Creek Drive and through the Williams Road corridor; (3) deploying smart lighting on Williams Road; and (4) incorporating lower-carbon construction materials in bridge decks.

First, this project is an opportunity to study the feasibility of connecting the corridor's signal infrastructure to the CTSS. The system allows for monitoring and operating more than 1,000 signalized intersections, co-existence/operation of traffic surveillance cameras, and emergency pre-emption. Columbus is implementing infrastructure changes to migrate the CTSS to an open architecture that can serve central Ohio stakeholders with system connectivity and interoperability. The corridor already has an aerial fiber cable on Williams Road from Parsons Avenue to Groveport Road; and it will use this project to plan for installing additional fiber cable through the entire corridor. Extending fiber through the entire corridor will provide the fiber infrastructure necessary to coordinate corridor signals and deploy additional technology to improve safety and travel reliability.

Second, the planning process will also look at the feasibility and benefit of extending Alum Creek Drive's Freight Signal Priority (FSP) technology north on Alum Creek Drive to Williams Road, and then down the Williams Road corridor, using the new fiber that could be installed as part of this project. As part of the Smart Columbus Connected Vehicle project, Columbus demonstrated FSP using V2I wireless communications to allow freight vehicles to request signal priority at equipped intersections. The system can then adjust signal phase and timing as allowed by signal priority settings (set by each jurisdiction, respectively), with the intent of smoothing traffic flows for freight and reducing stop/start cycles, which reduces emissions. Trucks are given priority where feasible and only if there is no other overriding priority or preemption. The demonstration project showed the distribution of average vehicle approach speeds along Alum Creek drive when priority was granted versus not granted passes peaked at the five percent significance level – an indication that the observed speed distributions are very likely not to be the result of random chance. Extending the project north on Alum Creek Drive to Williams Road, and then Williams Road would significantly expand the system and its ability to positively impact freight movement. FSP would improve the flow of truck freight on both corridors, and benefit freight companies operating along Williams Road and in the Rickenbacker area. ODW Logistics is a freight company with the ability to utilize FSP, and it is one of the largest businesses and employers on Williams Road. XPO Logistics is another freight company with a large center of operations on Williams Road. Extending FSP capabilities would offer make it easier to move freight through the corridors, while reducing the time trucks spend idling.

Third, this project presents an opportunity to deploy smart street lighting on Williams Road from at least High Street to Alum Creek Drive. Columbus' DPU recently piloted upgrading existing streetlights with LED smart street lights;⁵⁴ and it is moving forward with a plan to upgrade all existing

[women-and-minority-owned-businesses/6795146001/](https://www.columbus.gov/office-of-economic-development/women-and-minority-owned-businesses/6795146001/).

⁵³ See [Appendix 1 - LPA of the Year](#).

⁵⁴ For information about the initial pilot, please see Bill Bush, "New 'smart' LED streetlights in Linden to be wired to the internet." *The Columbus Dispatch*, Mar. 29, 2021, <https://www.dispatch.com/story/news/2021/03/29/columbus-city-council-consider-proposal-new-linden-lighting/7004914002/>.

street lights and street light electrical circuits with LED smart street-lights in the City. Smart lighting allows the implementation of automated controls to the city street lighting network. The smart lighting control system may also be used as a platform to connect other smart technologies.

Fourth, as described previously in Section B.5, both Columbus and the FCEO are currently planning to incorporate lower carbon materials in the ultimate roadway and bridge construction.

2. Innovative Project Delivery

The Williams Road corridor will benefit from two innovative approaches to project delivery and long-term operations and maintenance: (1) ODOT NEPA assignment, and (2) Columbus' Asset Information Management System (AIMS).

First, the Williams Road Corridor Plan anticipates clearing the NEPA process as part of the proposed project, and benefiting from ODOT's NEPA assignment. ODOT is one of a handful of states nationwide that has the authority to assume the FHWA's NEPA responsibilities. ODOT's NEPA Assignment ensures a single point of contact that understands both project details and the regulatory process. This innovative delivery method allows ODOT to streamline the environmental approval process for this project. Since implementation of NEPA Assignment in Ohio, ODOT has saved more than 8,550 days of review time and approximately \$32.42 million dollars. This assignment should allow the project to clear the NEPA process more efficiently in terms of time and money.

Second, asset management is another area of innovative project delivery that Columbus is developing. Its Asset Information Management System (AIMS) provides access to foundational data and analytics needed to perform asset life cycle planning to support decision making. AIMS provides cross asset planning supporting trade-off analysis needed to determine what mix of infrastructure investments will provide the greatest return on the life of the assets. It is being developed by Assistant Director Andrew Williams, who helped develop and manage ODOT's asset management program. This system is expected to significantly improve Columbus' ability to manage its assets; and it will be used to maintain the Williams Road corridor improvements once they are ultimately constructed.

3. Innovative Financing

State and local governments have been working diligently to implement innovative funding and financing for future projects, including (1) gas tax increases at the state level, and (2) transportation improvement districts at the regional level. These funding sources are helping Columbus, Franklin County, and other partners to raise significant new revenue for transportation investment.

At the state level, Ohio has prioritized raising additional non-federal revenue for transportation infrastructure investment. Governor DeWine was instrumental in guiding a significant fuel tax increase through the state legislature in 2019. The increase was projected to generate an additional \$865 million in gas tax revenue, with 55% of the funds going to the state **and 45% going to local government entities**.⁵⁵ Columbus anticipates some of its increased gas tax share will directly support either the initial reconstruction of Williams Road or its subsequent maintenance.

At the local level, Franklin County recently created a Transportation Improvement District (TID). A TID is an innovative and collaborative government body authorized by Ohio Revised Code 5540, and it is able to provide funds to be leveraged with other resources to complete larger, more impactful projects on a shorter timeframe. TIDs are able to raise their own funds, and are also eligible for up to \$500,000 per year from the State of Ohio.⁵⁶ The TID's revenue helps improve the safety, efficiency, and reliability of the movement of freight and people throughout Franklin County. As the corridor plan proceeds, it is anticipated that at least portions of the corridor will be eligible for state funding provided to the Franklin County TID.

⁵⁵ Jim Siegel, "10.5 cent gas-tax increase, 19 cents for diesel," *The Columbus Dispatch*, last updated Apr. 3, 2019, <https://www.dispatch.com/story/news/politics/state/2019/04/02/10-5-cent-gas-tax/5542926007/>.

⁵⁶ "TID" <https://www.transportation.ohio.gov/programs/jobs-commerce/03-transportation-improvement-districts>.
