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Morgantown Monongalia MPO

Safe Streets for All Grant

Sept. 2, 2022

Introduction and Background

Morgantown West Virginia is the home of West Virginia University (WVU) a major land grant institution with membership in the Big 12 Athletic Conference. The area is one of the few communities in West Virginia that is growing. With the recent location of a new manufacturing plant as well as the ongoing activities of the private sector and public agencies including the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, the National Energy Laboratory, and WVU Medicine, Morgantown is a vibrant community that is crucial to the economic success of the entire state. In addition to these commercial and governmental activities the area is focusing on improving all of its transportation infrastructure.

While the area is blessed with a strong off street network of facilities with the Deckers Creek Rail Trail and the Mon River/Caperton Trail these fine facilities cannot meet the transportation needs of the area's residents by themselves. The necessary ingredient missing in the area is safe connectivity to the street network serving the area. Key to this effort is safety for all users of the transportation network but particularly pedestrians.

Pedestrian safety has long been an issue in our area. During the periods spring 2014, fall of 2014 and the spring 2015 semester a WVU professor had students conduct surveys in the WVU Hospital emergency room, and WVU urgent care to gather pedestrian data-whether they had been hit or near misses concerning items such as which areas felt safe or unsafe to walk in and other items related to pedestrian activity. Of 500 respondents 13 (2.6%) reported having been hit by a vehicle while walking. Of 495 respondents, 188, 76.8% reported being in a crosswalk when almost hit and 20.4% reported being while ON a sidewalk when almost hit. (Abildso, WVU).

Currently the issue of safe streets in the Morgantown MMPO's region are being addressed by the West Virginia Department of Transportation, the MMMPO and its' member jurisdictions on several levels. The MMMPO adopted a complete streets policy in 2008 which the MMMPO has been working to implement as the West Virginia Department of Transportation moves forward to implement transportation improvements such as street widenings, intersection improvements and the construction of facilities on new location.

In accordance with the program outlined by FHWA this grant application for implementation of specific projects brings together several activities that have been ongoing in the Morgantown area for several years. Following is a list of MPO Plans developed strictly for Bicycle and Pedestrian initiatives. MMMPO Regional Bicycle Plan 2014, Westover-Granville Pedestrian Study 2015, Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (Alta Planning and Engineering) 2019. In addition to these mode specific plans the MMMPO's Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) updates all have strong non-motorized transportation sections. The most recently MTP updated adopted in 2022 incorporates the 2019 Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan to include regionally significant projects into the regional prioritization process.

Given the large number of planning studies performed on this topic in our small area, with little discernable construction, the MMMPO Policy Board Members and staff welcomed the opportunity to combine the work previously done into an action plan for the implementation of projects needed in our area. This was the deciding factor in applying for an Implementation grant rather than a planning grant as provided for by the SS4A program.

This proposal for our area is built on the 2019 Regional Plan to focus on non-motorized safety and equity issues.

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You may access the 2019 Regional Bicycle Plan at this link:

https://www.planttogether.org/files/ugd/613794_033102a655c74ed3b1d53e18ae075b9e.pdf

In addition to the formally adopted plans the MPO Area has standing committees that address these issues on an ongoing basis. The City of Morgantown has a Traffic Commission, a Pedestrian Safety Committee, and a Bicycle Safety Committee. Both committees allow residents outside of Morgantown to be members of the committee. The MMMPO works with these committees instead creating duplicate committees for our small region.

Also, since 2018 the MMMPO has been working with the West Virginia Department of Transportation's Highway Safety Engineer to develop a Pedestrian Safety Plan for the urban core of the area around West Virginia University (WVU). This effort has been coordinated by an ad-hoc committee consisting of representatives of WVU, the City of Morgantown including the City's Mayor and engineering staff, a member of the Monongalia County Commission, the MMMPO and the West Virginia Local Transportation Assistance Program (WVLTAP) housed at West Virginia University. The impetus for this effort was a student pedestrian fatality that was almost immediately followed by two other pedestrian incidents one including a student. These incidents galvanized the community leading to the creation of the ad-hoc local committee. It also led to a WVDOH Pedestrian Safety Audit and a broader Study which focused on the urban core around West Virginia University and downtown Morgantown. The analysis of crash data for this study is the primary source of pedestrian safety analysis for this proposal. The recommendations of this Study are being implemented by the WVDOH.

You can access a summary of WVDOH's work on crash data at the link below:

https://www.planttogether.org/files/ugd/613794_9c77731352844ebda71fc0bac5b69e99.pdf

In addition to the WVDOH program noted above WVU and the members of the Pedestrian Safety working group are improving pedestrian facilities on and adjacent to campus. Successful projects implemented by this group include two RRFB's on University Avenue. You may view one of the RRFB's at this (link). As a result of the ad-hoc committee work WVU also includes pedestrian safety messages in their regular media outreach to all students and faculty. More information on the incidents that led to the community effort for pedestrian safety can be found at these links:

<https://www.dominionpost.com/2018/02/03/pedestrian-killed-pq/>

<https://www.dominionpost.com/2018/03/16/woman-struck-by-vehicle-on-patteson-drive/>

The Federal Highway Administration's Safe Streets for All grant program has been a catalyst for bringing together the greater Morgantown urban areas local governments to address pedestrian safety and complete streets implementation in an unprecedented fashion. All of these local governments have expressed an interest in participating in the grant project though one of them was unable to suggest a project for inclusion in the application due to time constraints. A key factor in the local interest in the SS4A process is the provision that projects funded in the process need to be completed within 5 years. Currently the largest ongoing local transportation construction project the Mileground widening project has took 10 years to begin and is anticipated to be completed sometime near the end of this year.

Some of the key items discussed in FHWA's Safe Streets for All (SS4A) grant program is that a proposed grant should be comprised by a large number of partners and be transformative for the community. SS4A creates an opportunity for the MMMPO to expand the relatively small scale ongoing efforts to create a coordinated program that includes other ongoing initiatives within the community as well as the number of local partners participating in safety efforts.

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Please find below a discussion identifying partners the MMMPO is working with on developing and implementing this Safe Streets for All grant proposal.

-West Virginia Department of Transportation-The West Virginia Department of Transportation-Division of Highways (WVDOH) is a key partner in this project since the vast majority of the construction work proposed in this grant is proposed for state owned roads. One WVDOH focus will be their construction efforts on implementing the recommendations of their pedestrian safety initiative around the WVU Campus. This initiative includes major corridors in the central portion of the urban area. The WVDOH project is not included in the SS4A grant application but it is an important part of making this project transformative for the whole community. WVDOH Traffic Engineering and WVDOH Planning will also provide guidance to the SS4A grant oversight committee as partners in the project.

It is anticipated that WVDOH in Charleston will take the lead as a subcontractor to the MMMPO on the projects in this proposal. These projects are all on Federal funding eligible WVDOH facilities and the design and construction is of high importance to WVDOH.

-Monongalia County-Participant in pedestrian safety initiative and partner for the Willey Street Project through the Morgantown Area Partnership/Monongalia County Economic Development Authority.

-City of Morgantown-Participant in pedestrian safety initiative, partner in economic development oriented complete street project, proposes several major pedestrian crossing and sidewalk projects, contributor to traffic safety and active transportation public education program.

-West Virginia University-Participant in pedestrian safety initiative and potentially the Willey Street Project being led by the MAP/MCEDA

-Morgantown Area Partnership/Monongalia County Economic Development Authority-This agency is a part of the Morgantown Area Partnership performing economic development activities for Monongalia County. The Economic Development Authority is the lead proponent of the economic development complete street project included in this application.

-Town of Granville-proposes construction of four pedestrian crossings and approximately 1.27 miles of sidewalk on Dents Run. Has agreed to participate in the project.

-Town of Star City-proposes two pedestrian crossings and has agreed to participate in the project.

Project Selection Process

As noted above pedestrian safety and transportation improvements in general have been high priority issues for the greater Morgantown Area since prior to the inception of the MMMPO. Having just completed a Bicycle and Pedestrian Study in 2019, which included a very extensive outreach program including outreach to the underserved community. The MMMPO revisited the 2019 projects with the Metropolitan Transportation Plan update in which the majority of the urban area's local elected officials participated. At the beginning of determining if the MPO would apply for this grant the MMMPO Staff suggested to the MPO Policy Board members, that connectivity should be a key component of any grant application. The logic of this recommendation was that this grant would provide the backbone of the area's on-street network for non-motorized facilities. MMMPO staff reached out to the MPO's Policy Board with a slate of five potential projects from Tier One of the 2022 Metropolitan Transportation Plan update that would address both connectivity issues as well equity issues. The purpose of this discussion was to determine which projects their municipalities, agencies and constituents supported. The recommendations of the Policy Board members, who consulted their

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respective boards, were brought forward to be included in this grant application. After deciding on the primary major corridor to be addressed, the Willey Street Project, MPO staff provided the Policy Board Members for the smaller jurisdictions with a list of projects from the 2019 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan within their jurisdiction and asked them to identify with their Boards any projects they would like to see included in the grant application. For the City of Morgantown City Engineering staff coordinated with their elected officials to determine the projects the City wanted included in the grant application. The remainder of the projects in this grant application were submitted for inclusion by municipalities using this process. Most importantly to this process the municipalities and participating agencies assented to working to provide a portion the match required for the grant at the end of the process. Letters of support from the interested entities are including in the supplemental information provided with this document.

To confirm that the projects proposed in this grant application are representative of the community's needs the MMMPO brought the projects forward to the Traffic Commission as well as the Pedestrian Safety Committee. The MMMPO also presented the proposed projects to a meeting held by all of the area's urban municipalities and Monongalia County at a joint public meeting held to review the County's and the municipalities draft comprehensive plans.

Following is a description of the major construction projects and the educational project included in the SS4A grant. Please note that with the exception of the Willey Street Project all construction projects in this proposal have been identified as being able to be constructed within the existing roadway's rights of way minimizing the possibility of delays in implementation:

-Willey Street (US 119) Reconstruction/Relocation Project-Willey Street is an urban arterial street designated as US 119. Willey Street designated as US 119, is a narrow winding substandard arterial street with narrow sidewalks (where they exist) and no accommodation for bicycle traffic. According to the MMMPO's traffic count program in 2019 the AADT on Willey Street was 10,800 vehicles per day. This project was identified in the MMMPO's recently adopted (2022) Metropolitan Transportation Plan as a high priority project. The State's Pedestrian Safety Study also identified Willey Street as a roadway of concern. In addition to being a roadway of concern for pedestrian safety improvements to Willey Street are an integral part of a plan to redevelop the Richwood neighborhood in the vicinity of WVU's downtown campus. The project is being developed and implemented by the Monongalia County Development Authority (MCDA). The proposed project would include improved sidewalks as well as accommodation of cyclists and standard lane widths for vehicular traffic. The alternatives under consideration for this project include upgrading the existing roadway to include improved sidewalk and accommodations for bicycles or utilizing land purchased by MCDA as right of way for the relocation of Willey Street. The estimated cost of this project including the preparation of environmental documents through construction is approximately \$19.7 million. A recent news story on the economic development project may be found here:

<https://www.dominionpost.com/2022/08/27/richwood-redevelopment-project-moving-forward-at-its-own-pace/>

A video of existing Willey Street can be found here: (LINK to WILLEY Street Video)

-Granville Sidewalk Project and Crosswalk Project Dents Run Road (CR 49)-North Dents Run Road/Blvd. connects WV 100 in Granville to US 19 in close proximity to I-79 Exit 152. The most recent traffic count available from WVDOH (2011) has a volume of approximately 3200 vpd. This project focuses on providing connectivity for the residents of Granville and Westover to access commercial and recreational opportunities. The sidewalk project approximately one mile project connects neighborhoods in Westover to the Granville Ballpark and Mainstreet Granville along North Dents Run Road (CR 49). Estimated cost approximately \$2.4 million including design through construction.

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In addition to the sidewalk project Granville is requesting the installation of crosswalks at the following locations:

Main and Town Hall Street Estimated Cost \$3,000

Main and Arkwright Prep Plant Estimated Cost \$20,000

Dents Run Boulevard and Dent Avenue Estimated Cost \$3,000

Main and Broad Street Estimated Cost \$3,000

You can view Main Street Granville and Dents Run Road at these [LINKS](#)

-City of Morgantown-WV 705 Multi-Purpose Path-WV 705 is a four lane divided arterial street providing connectivity to most of the urban areas major employers. In 2019 the MMMPO's traffic count report identified that the three year average traffic on WV 705 was 23,900 vpd. The proposed path provides an alternative to the high speed four lane WV 705 for non-motorized vehicles and pedestrians. The proposed path serves WVU Hospital, the WVU Stadium and a wide variety of retail and commercial ventures along the high volume corridor. The path runs from Maple Drive to the Mileground. WVDOH has completed a concept report including 30% design drawings for this project with cost ranging from \$2.8 million to \$3.5 million. After review by the MPO's engineering consultant we estimate the project at \$3.6 million. Given that this project is proposed for existing right of way it is anticipated that the environmental review needed to implement it would be a categorical exclusion.

A video drive through of the corridor is available at this [\(Link\)](#)

-City of Morgantown-South High Street/Dorsey Avenue Corridor Improvement Projects-This is a complex set of projects to improve a minor arterial corridor consisting of two streets serving the neighborhoods south and west of downtown Morgantown. Safety projects included in this category include intersection redesign, sidewalk installation (with drainage improvements), installation of crosswalks some with beacons, and other safety improvements along the corridor. The installation of sidewalk in the vicinity of Luckey Lane proposed in this project is consistent with outreach the MPO had with the residents of the Marjorie Gardens Section 8 housing adjacent to the corridor. The total cost of this group of projects is approximately \$4.4 million. A complete list of proposed improvements for this project is included in the appendix. Given that this project is proposed for existing right of way it is anticipated that the environmental review needed to implement it would be a categorical exclusion.

A video drive through of the corridor is available at this [link \(LINK\)](#)

-Star City Crosswalk Project- Star City has requested two cross walk with RRFB projects these projects would be located at University Avenue and Springdale Avenue and University Avenue and Congress Avenue. Estimated cost for these projects is approximately \$20,000 each for a total cost of \$40,000.

You can view this segment of University Avenue at this [\(LINK\)](#).

-Areawide Traffic Safety and Active Transportation Educational Program-While implementing construction projects is a well understood method of promoting safety. Assisting area residents in understanding how to properly use them is the best strategy to ensure that users of constructed projects ARE safe. Promoting traffic safety while educating our area's residents on the benefits of active transportation as they use these facilities is a way to address unsafe use of our facilities while also attacking our states most pressing health issue obesity. This program is to assist us in changing the culture of our community to a healthier and safer model as we implement

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improved infrastructure. It is anticipated that this program will include a multi-faceted outreach strategy including but not limited to public meetings, online meetings and advertisements, radio and television and other online media. Much of this outreach will be oriented to ensuring underserved communities are reached by the program.

The program will also be used to measure the success of the SS4A project. Measuring the community's attitudes and knowledge of traffic safety and active transportation concepts with "before and after" surveys will be a key metric for measuring the success of the program. Budget \$500,000. It is anticipated that the MMMPO will be the project manager for this project.

Complementary Projects

All of the projects proposed for this grant work as individual improvements for the safety and connectivity of the transportation network of the greater Morgantown area. More importantly these projects work together with each other as well as with other projects. The mapping of our proposed projects demonstrates that the WV 705 Sidepath Project and the Willey Street Project work to provide bicycle and pedestrian connectivity for the Richwood and Woodburn neighborhoods to the commercial sites along WV 705 such as Krogers grocery store and the business in Suncrest Town Center as well as WVU's campus, major employers and WVU Medicine's and Monongalia General Hospitals facilities directly adjacent to WV 705. These projects also connect to an ongoing project to widen the Mileground (US119) to 5 lanes which also includes the installation of sidewalk on one side of the road. It is anticipated that the design process for the Willey Street project will identify the process for connecting these projects together.

The South High Street/Dorsey Avenue Project connects directly to the MMMPO's Greenbag Road Project at Luckey Lane. The Greenbag Road project is designed to provide an alternative route for heavy truck traffic which currently travels through the low/moderate income Greenmont Neighborhood and downtown Morgantown. A portion of the Greenbag Road Project (between Luckey Lane and Mississippi Street) is currently funded for construction in FY 2025 Federal funds. This project includes the installation of sidewalk on Luckey Lane to connect Mountaineer Elementary School. In addition to the ongoing Greenbag Road project which is scheduled for construction in 2025, the MMMPO was recently notified that the Federal Highway Administration has selected its RAISE grant application for the design of the remainder of the Greenbag Road Corridor (segments from the signal at the Giant Eagle traffic signal to US 119, and from Luckey Lane to Deckers Creek Boulevard). The Greenbag Road RAISE grant also provides for a feasibility study for the construction of an off-road multi-purpose path to connect Luckey Lane to the Deckers Creek Rail Trail. As demonstrated by the attached mapping this connection combined with the South High Street/Dorsey Avenue Project in this grant would complete a circuit of bicycle and pedestrian friendly facilities connecting important Morgantown neighborhoods with downtown Morgantown with the Sabraton area of Morgantown.

Equity Analysis of Proposed Projects

All but one of the proposed projects, the Star City Crossing Project, in this grant proposal directly borders or is inside a Census Tract identified by the USDOT as being Historically Transportation Disadvantaged. Below please find a listing of the Census Tracts identified as historically transportation disadvantaged by project. A map of showing these Tracts and the projects is included in the attachments to the projects:

- Willey Street Project-Tract 101.02
- South High Street/Dorsey Avenue Corridor Project-Tract 110
- WV 705-Tract 106
- Granville Pedestrian Crossing and Sidewalk projects-Tract 112

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In keeping with previous work MMMPO staff also looked at Census data on percentages of the persons of color and low income persons located within the area served by the proposed projects. Staff prepared this data analysis using the EPA's Environmental Justice Tool to identify areas with a high percentage of low income or persons of color when compared with the rest of the State of West Virginia (a traditionally low income state with a low percentage of persons of color). A quick summary of the highest percentage findings is below. There is also a map of the finding included in the additional attachments to this grant.

-Wiley Street Project-All of the census block groups for this project exceed the 50th percentile for persons of color when compared to the State of WV. There are five block groups between the 72nd percentile and the 97th percentile with two of those groups exceeding the 90th percentile and two block groups at the 52nd and 62nd percentile respectively. In regard to low income residents served by this project-five census block groups range between the 60th and 86th percentile when compared to the state average.

-Star City Crossings-One block group served by this project is in the 65th percentile for low income residents.

-South High Street/Dorsey Avenue Project- Three block groups served by this project are between the 74th and 97th percentile for persons of color. One block group is at the 83 percentile for low income in the area served by this project.

-WV 705 Sidepath-Three block groups served by this project are at between the 78th and 94th percentile for persons of color. Four block groups are between the 57th and 83rd percentile for low income residents in the area served by this project.

-Granville Projects-Granville and the surrounding area is in one block group that is at the 56th percentile for persons of color when compared to the rest of the state. The Town and the and surrounding area is at the 97th percentile for low income residents when compared to the rest of the state.

A map illustrating these results is included in the attachments to this application.

Given the results noted above for both the USDOT Transportation Disadvantaged Tool and the analysis performed utilizing the EPA Environmental Justice tool we believe it is fair to say that the projects in this proposal, if implemented, will have a positive impact on the transportation of individuals in underserved communities.

Proposed Steering Committee

The MMMPO is proposing to expand on the leadership team that has already been addressing pedestrian safety for the urban area to oversee the proposed SS4A grant. As discussed above the existing membership of the Pedestrian Safety initiative are in bold case proposed new members are not in bold:

City of Morgantown-Mayor, Engineering staff

Monongalia County-County Commissioner

West Virginia University-Representatives of Government Relations and Administration

WV Local Transportation Assistance Program-Engineer

Morgantown Monongalia MPO-Executive Director

We would propose to add the following members to the Committee:

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WVDOH-Planning Division Representative, WVDOH District 4 representative, WVDOH-Traffic Safety Engineer

Granville-Mayor or Town Manager

Star City-MPO Representative (elected official)

Monongalia County Economic Development Authority-designated representative

WVU Medicine-designated representative

If this grant application is successful this expanded Committee would become a standing subcommittee of the MPO Policy Board.

Summary of Proposed Efforts Included in the MMMPO's Safe Streets for All Grant Application

It is the intent of the applicant to complete ALL of the tasks identified within this proposal within the five (5) year timeframe identified in the Notice of Funding Opportunity the following identifies the primary steps needed to accomplish this goal.

-Upon notification of the grant award

- 1) Expansion of the existing Pedestrian Safety Ad-Hoc Committee to a Safe Streets for all Oversight Committee
- 2) Negotiation of Memorandum of Understanding with West Virginia Department of Transportation for implementation of SS4A grant program
- 3) Negotiation of Memorandum of Understanding with the Federal Highway Administration
- 4) Preparation of RFQ(s) as required by MOU's with State and FHWA for the following tasks:
 - a) Perform Educational Outreach effort
 - b) Environmental/Design Study for Willey Street Project
 - c) Design of small intersection projects for Granville and Star City
 - d) Finalize design and conduct needed environmental review of WV 705 sidepath
 - e) Design S. High Street/Dorsey Avenue Corridor Improvements
- 5) Selection of consultant(s) for tasks noted above

-Upon notice to proceed:

- 1) MMMPO enters into contracts for required services consisting of:
 - a) MOU with FHWA on funding
 - b) MOU with WVDOH for Project management and construction
 - c) Contract with consultant for educational/community outreach process
- 2) Begin implementation of the proposed public outreach/educational effort. The first step in this program would be to identify community awareness of traffic safety and active transportation concepts including Share the Road,

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shared lanes, dedicated bike lanes and the use of shoulders by pedestrians through a survey. Special attention would be given to ensuring that underserved communities are represented in the survey. After the survey there would be educational efforts guided by the survey results to raise public awareness of these concepts in coordination with active infrastructure projects. This project is to run the life of Project.

3) Process for small projects-Star City and Granville crossing projects (Categorical Exclusion)

- a) Enter into contract for design/construct with WVDOH/Consultant for small projects first quarter of year one
- b) Design complete at end of year one
- b) Construct Small projects in year two

4) Process for Medium Projects-WV 705, Granville Sidewalk (All of these projects anticipated to be Categorical Exclusions)

- a) Enter into contract for environmental study WVDOH/Consultant
- b) Environmental Study complete at two years
- d) Select firm(s) to construct projects at two and a half years
- e) Construct Projects year three through five

5) Environmental process, Design/Build Willey Street Project (Anticipated EA or EIS)

- a) Contract for environmental study first quarter of year one
- b) Environmental Study complete in two and half years
- c) Advertise project for design/build construction prior to beginning of year 3
- d) Enter into contract by 3 and a half years
- d) Construction complete by end of year 5.

It is recognized that this outline represents an ambitious schedule and set of projects The identified timeline allows the incremental implementation of all of the projects proposed in this application. If this timeline is observed the public will see that the program is succeeding within a timeframe they can support rather than facing the current stop and go process that has typified many projects creating dissatisfaction with transportation agencies.

Conclusion

The Morgantown Monongalia Metropolitan Planning Organization and our partners appreciate the opportunity to submit this narrative for our Safe Streets for All grant application. We recognize that this is an ambitious application but our area has a long history of unmet needs when it comes to non-motorized transportation facilities and safety. We have long advocated a complete streets approach to our area's transportation needs and we understand that the Safe Streets for All program can provide the backbone of a strong multi-modal network that will foster a healthier more prosperous Morgantown and Monongalia County through the implementation of the projects proposed in this grant. We hope the reviewers of this proposal will agree with this conclusion and support the funding of this grant application. Thank you for your consideration.