THE CITY OF
COLUMBUS
ANDREW J. GINTHER, MAYOR

2023 GRANT APPLICATION

BRONZEVILLE/MT. VERNON AVENUE SAFE STREETS FOR ALL (SS4A) APPLICATION

BRONZEVILLE/MT. VERNON AVE.
MOBILITY AND SAFETY ACTION PLAN

THE CITY OF
COLUMBUS
ANDREW J. GINTHER, MAYOR

DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC SERVICE

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Application materials, including letters of support, are available online at:
https://bronzevillemoves.com

I. Overview

Columbus is committed to building a safe, equitable transportation system that values all travel modes and all communities. This application seeks Safe Streets for All ("SS4A") funding for five complementary projects: two implementation projects (requesting a combined $ $4,618,642.00), and three demonstration components (requesting a combined $1,383,750.00). The total project costs are approximately $9.6 million, of which approximately $8 million would be future eligible costs. This application addresses significant traffic violence and safety concerns in its Near East communities, while reinvesting in disadvantaged communities that were divided and heavily, adversely impacted by I-71's construction. The projects work together to provide a complementary, holistic safety solution within the Near East, while also supporting citywide safety improvements. Each project has independent utility and value; and Columbus would welcome funding for all the projects or a portion of the projects. The two projects requesting implementation funding are (a) the Bronzeville/Mt. Vernon Avenue Corridor Improvements; and (b) the Near East LED Smart Street Light Upgrades. The three supplemental planning and demonstration activities are (a) the Broad Street Lane Reallocation Demonstration Project (b) the Neighborhood Slow Zones Near East Pilot; and (c) Vision Zero Communications Surveys and Focus Groups.

A. Project Introductions

The Bronzeville/Mt. Vernon Avenue Mobility and Safety Action Plan[1] is a response to frequently raised concerns about the overall safety and walkability of the Mt. Vernon Avenue corridor, from Hamilton Avenue to Taylor Avenue ("**project corridor**").[2] Residents and other stakeholders regularly share concerns about speeding, lighting, and other safety issues. Geospatial data analysis shows that despite being a 25 mph collector street, a significant portion of the project corridor is on the High Injury Network (HIN).[3]

City staff began collaborating with the community in 2020 to identify ways to improve corridor safety and walkability. This process included surveys, public meetings, and tactical urbanism to gain qualitative and quantitative data for evaluating options for improving safety and walkability. According to the initial survey completed in early 2021, 93% of respondents currently complete some trips by driving a vehicle, 58% of respondents complete some trips by walking, and 36% of respondents complete some trips by riding a bike or scooter. The survey also asked respondents to indicate thoughts about future travel on Mt. Vernon Avenue: 57% of respondents wanted to walk more; 55% of people wanted to bike/scooter more; 47% of respondents said they do not feel safe biking on Mt. Vernon Ave; and more than half of respondents said slower traffic, bike lanes/paths, more street lighting and improved crosswalks/sidewalks would make Mt. Vernon Ave. better to travel.[4] The community wanted to make the corridor safer for all modes and users.

Local residents, businesses, and other stakeholders continued to express these desires during the planning process.[5] During a community Co-Create Session, community members stressed the importance of creating a walkable corridor, and making the corridor safer for bicyclists and pedestrians. Vehicular speeding and crashes were identified as a significant community concern. Participants in the session also expressed a desire for improved street lighting for safer travel at night.[6] Because there were significant issues beyond the initial project corridor, a broader

[1] The Bronzeville/Mt. Vernon Avenue Safety Plan website is available at https://bronzevillemoves.com/
[2] See **Appendix – Project Corridor Map and Appendix – Project Area Map** for a map of the project corridor and project area. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard is the primary corridor for the brief section between Hamilton AVE and St. Clair AVE. Mt. Vernon VE was severed by I-71, and MLK Jr. Boulevard was used to connect Mt. Vernon AVE to the Spring Street Bridge across I-71.
[3] See **Appendix – VZ Columbus HIN Map** for a map of the HIN
[4] "Bronzeville/Mt. Vernon Avenue Mobility and Safety Action Plan: Public Engagement Report," ("Public Engagement Report") p. 13, available at: https://bronzevillemoves.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Final-Public-Engagement-Report-2022.pdf
[5] See, generally, Public Engagement Report, for summaries from additional events and surveys.
[6] Public Engagement Report, p. 6.

project area ("**project area**") was developed to address them through the lighting implementation project and the demonstration projects. This project area is bounded by I-71 to the west, I-670 to the north, Alum Creek to the east, and Broad Street to the south.

1. Implementation grant projects[7]

a. Bronzeville/Mt. Vernon Avenue Corridor Improvements

The Bronzeville/Mt. Vernon Avenue Mobility and Safety Action Plan identified the preferred alternative as a separated, on-road side path from Hamilton Avenue to Phillips Street.[8] No preferred alternative was identified for the shorter and narrower section of Mt. Vernon Avenue, from Phillips Street to Taylor Avenue, and potential alternatives include a shared use-path, shared lanes with bike sharrows, or simply replacing curbs and sidewalks. Phase 1 of the corridor project would design and construct the separated, on-road side path from Hamilton Avenue to Champion Avenue. Phase 2 of the corridor project would (a) finish the side path to Phillips Street, and (b) identify the preferred alternative from Phillips Street to Taylor Avenue, design it, and construct it to Taylor Avenue. The Bronzeville/Mt. Vernon Avenue Corridor Improvements support 2023-2028 Action Plan strategies and action items to reduce vehicle speeds, construct Safe Routes to School[9] capital improvement projects, and create protected bike facilities.[10]

b. Near East LED Smart Street Light Upgrades

Street lighting has been a common concern raised during the engagement process, and this SS4A application presents an opportunity to address this concern. Columbus' Department of Public Utilities (DPU) is in the process of a multi-phase project to replace and upgrade all existing street lights in the entire city. The upgraded LED Smart Street Lights will significantly improve illumination within the entire right of way – including bicycle and pedestrian facilities. However, DPU must replace entire lighting circuits in order to gain the new lighting's full functionality, while maximizing construction efficiencies and operational benefits. DPU has already determined the street lights within the proposed SS4A project area should be upgraded as part of the same phase. Incorporating this lighting work will help Columbus dig just once on Mt. Vernon Avenue. It will also directly address the safety concerns raised by the community, and support the action plan strategy to explore smart street lighting capabilities to enhance roadway safety.[11]

2. Supplemental planning and demonstration activities[12]

a. Broad Street Lane Reallocation Demonstration Project

Broad Street is the southern boundary of the project area, as well as one of Columbus' primary east-west corridors; and it helps connect Downtown Columbus to Franklinton to the west, and the Near East Side to the east. Broad Street also intersects two major north-south regional trails: the Scioto Trail in Downtown Columbus, and the Alum Creek Trail on the Near East Side. However, despite its location and potential to provide important network connections, there are no bicycle facilities on Broad Street in either Downtown Columbus or the Near East Side. This segment of Broad Street was also identified as a very high-stress corridor for bicyclists (Level of Traffic Stress 4) in the 2020-2050 Central Ohio Active Transportation Plan[13].

Columbus is actively exploring options to address these safety concerns by providing separated facilities on Broad Street through Downtown Columbus and the Near East Side. These

[7] Please see **Appendix - SS4A Implementation Project Location Map.**
[8] A copy of the June 2022 Preferred Transportation Alternative Presentation is available at https://bronzevillemoves.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Bronzeville-Mt-Vernon-Preferred-Transportation-Alt-Slides-060722.pdf
[9] Constructing a bike facility on Mt. Vernon Avenue from I-71 to Taylor Avenue (Map ID L22) is a high priority SRTS Project. See Columbus City Schools District-Wide Travel Plan Update, p. 29, available at https://www.columbus.gov/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=2147525620.
[10] See 2023-2028 Action plan, p. 33.
[11] See 2023-2028 Action plan, p. 35.
[12] Please see **Appendix - SS4A Supplemental Planning and Demonstration Project Location Map**
[13] https://www.morpc.org/atp

facilities would improve safety, reduce speeds, and provide an east-west connection between the Scioto Trail and Alum Creek Trail. This demonstration project focuses on a portion of Broad Street in the Near East Side where lane reallocation could provide the space necessary for a separated facility for bicyclists and pedestrians. This portion of Broad Street is currently six lanes, plus turn lanes. On-street parking is permitted during non-peak hours. ODOT data indicates the corridor's AADT in 2022 ranged between 18,230 and 17,690.[14] This project will help staff evaluate the feasibility of permanent, separated facilities on Broad Street; and this would help staff determine the best way to implement the 2023-2028 Action Plan's action item that calls for creating 25 Miles of separated/protected bike facilities through capital improvement or lane reallocation projects.[15]

b. Neighborhood Slow Zones Near East Pilot

Neighborhood speed and safety concerns are not limited to Mt. Vernon Avenue or Broad Street. Neighborhood Slow Zones are a holistic approach to improving safety and mobility in residential areas. Community participation and support for proposed safety counter measures are essential for the program's long-term success and sustainability; which is why communities would need to request to participate in the program, and city staff would be required to collaborate with the community to identify the potential counter measures. This area has been selected for this pilot project for several reasons. First, Near East Side Area Commission (NEAC) identified a number of safety concerns during the planning process for the Bronzeville/Mt. Vernon Avenue corridor improvements. Second, this neighborhood has several roadway characteristics that are common to other urban core areas of Columbus: grid network streets, cut-through streets between arterials, varying use of on-street parking, varying street widths, and rapidly growing in population.

Demonstrating grant funding would provide the resources necessary to engage NEAC, residents, and other stakeholders to identify immediate safety needs within the project area. It would also help fund constructing those improvements, creating community engagement materials, providing community engagement support, and evaluating the pilot. This pilot project would help determine the best way to implement the 2023-2028 Action Plan's action item to replace the Residential Traffic Calming Program with a Neighborhood Slow Zones program.[16]

c. Vision Zero Communications Surveys and Focus Groups

It is not enough to simply transform the built environment. Community engagement is essential to building awareness of Vision Zero principles and achieving the goal to end crash deaths in Columbus. Engagement and education opportunities will help promote a culture of change for safe transportation. The Vision Zero Communications Surveys and Focus Groups will help Columbus evaluate and improve public awareness and messaging surrounding Vision Zero and roadway safety efforts.[17] This citywide supplemental planning project will help staff develop messaging and encourage a culture of change for safe transportation that will benefit residents and businesses within the project area and across the entire city.

B. Safety Context for Implementation Grant Projects

Safety is a significant concern within the entire project area, including the Mt. Vernon Avenue project corridor. Despite having a 25 mph posted speed limit, there are significant crash clusters throughout the project corridor, and a significant portion of the corridor is on Columbus' HIN. According to a MORPC analysis for 2017-2021 crash data, there was 1 fatality and 6 serious injuries reported on the segment of Mt. Vernon Avenue between I-71 and Alum Creek. **The project corridor's fatality rate is nearly 6x the fatality rate of the Metropolitan Planning**

[14] "Traffic Monitoring Management System," ODOT, https://odot.public.ms2soft.com/tcds/tsearch.asp?loc=odot.
[15] See 2023-2028 Action plan, p. 33.
[16] See 2023-2028 Action plan, p. 33.
[17] See 2023-2028 Action plan, p. 36.

Organization (MPO) area, and the corridor's serious injury rate is more than 5x the serious injury rate of the MPO area. This crash data is shown in the table in Figure 1. During this period, crashes involving **people walking and bicycling along this corridor accounted for only about 1.4% of all crashes, but approximately 25% of all fatal and serious injury *crashes* that were reported**. MORPC's 2020-2050 Central Ohio Active Transportation Plan Mt. Vernon Avenue that this segment is identified as a high-stress corridor for bicyclists (Level of Traffic Stress 3).[18]

There are other safety concerns on other streets throughout the project area, including Broad Street. As shown on the HIN map in Appendix A, there are numerous crash clusters throughout the project area, and most of Broad Street within the project area is on the HIN. On the approximately 1-mile segment of Broad Street between I-71 and Wolfe Park, there were 7 serious injuries reported over the 2017-2021 period. Compared to the overall MPO area, this corridor segment exhibited a much higher serious injury rate (3x). During this period, crashes involving people walking and bicycling along this corridor segment accounted for only about 3.4% of all crashes, but approximately 43% of all fatal and serious injury *crashes* that were reported. MORPC has identified this segment of Broad Street as a very high-stress corridor for bicyclists (Level of Traffic Stress 4).[19]

Figure 1 - Federal Performance Measures Comparison (2021)

Measure	MPO Area	Mt. Vernon Ave Corridor	Broad Street Corridor
Fatality Rate per 100 Million Vehicle Miles Travelled (MVMT)	1.20	7.03	0
Serious Injury Rate per 100 MVMT	7.56	42.15	23.12
Number of Fatalities*	131	0.2	0
Number of Serious Injuries*	850	1.2	1.4
Number of Non-Motorized Fatalities and Serious Injuries*	156	0.2	0.8

**5-year rolling averages*

Lighting plays a critical role in transportation safety within the project area, particularly for non-motorized road users. Between 2017 and 2021, crashes involving non-motorized road users – pedestrians and bicyclists – in the near east side were more severe in dark conditions. Only 34% of *crashes* involving non-motorized road users occurred after dark during this timeframe, while 60% of fatalities and serious injuries for those same users occurred after dark. In essence, while the majority of crashes involving non-motorized road users occurred during daylight hours, the ones that occurred in dark conditions were significantly more severe.

This discrepancy underscores the crucial importance of adequate and proper lighting in pedestrian- and bicyclist-rich environments, such as the near east side, where maximizing the visibility of non-motorized road users ensure that motorists are able to perceive and react to the presence of these users within critical time windows. Notably, all the non-motorized crashes, fatalities, and serious injuries that occurred in the near-east side were on roadways that were documented in the crash reports as "lighted roadways." This indicates that though lighting may be present on these roadways, it is not currently providing adequate visibility of non-motorized road users during after-dark hours.

C. Jurisdiction & Additional Background Information

The City of Columbus (pop. 907,971) is Ohio's largest city, and the fourteenth largest city in the nation.[20] It is the capital of Ohio, and the seat of Franklin County. Columbus' Department of Public Service is responsible for maintaining the right of way within its limits, including all the

[18] https://www.morpc.org/atp
[19] https://www.morpc.org/atp
[20] "Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for Incorporated Places of 50,000 or More, Ranked by July 1, 2022 Population: April 1, 2020 to July 1, 2022," Census Bureau, https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/tables/2020-2022/cities/totals/SUB-IP-EST2022-ANNRNK.xlsx.

Minor Collectors, Major Collectors, and Arterials.[21] It has significant experience planning, designing, and constructing significant and complex roadway projects. ODOT named Columbus the 2021 Local Public Agency of the Year. This award recognizes a local agency that "has excelled in upholding the requirements of the federal program and has a demonstrated track record of partnering with ODOT and DBE firms, while also encouraging the utilization of DBE firms on local-let, federally funded Department of Transportation (DOT) projects."[22]

This project, however, is more than just a safety project. The project corridor serves census tracts that were divided and adversely impacted by I-71's construction. It is difficult to overstate the negative impact of I-71's initial construction, which contributed to a precipitous decline of the physically unscathed areas within these census tracts, including the project corridor.[23] In Columbus, trenches were frequently used to take the interstates through established urban core neighborhoods, like King-Lincoln/Bronzeville. The trench construction devastated these neighborhoods, and the impact of the "Great Divide" is still felt and remembered today.[24] ODOT has acknowledged that it cannot undo the past, but it can work to mitigate it.[25]

King-Lincoln/Bronzeville bustled with 63,000 people before I-71 was built in the 1960s. It was the center of culture, commerce, civic, and church life in the African American community. By 2000, the neighborhood had dwindled down to just 16,000 residents: only 21 percent of the people in this area owned their homes, one in 5 were out of work, and nearly half lived in poverty. Phase 1 of ODOT's Columbus Crossroads project restored the connection across I-71 with the Long Street Bridge and Cultural Wall. [26] A bridge that was once a barrier to opportunities on the other side of I-71, reconnected the neighborhood and become one of the city's most revered pieces of infrastructure. It features park space; broad sidewalks; a bike lane; and a cultural wall featuring 139 images honoring 142 people, places and institutions, past and present, who have made a positive, lasting impact related to the surrounding communities. Then Secretary Anthony Foxx lauded the Long Street Bridge and Cultural Wall saying, "This effort to reconnect and revitalize a community divided by past transportation policies is a compelling example of how transportation can create or eliminate opportunity gaps in our Nation."[27]

The Great Divide also had a significant impact on Mt. Vernon Avenue itself; and, as the road declined, so did the businesses along it. These projects will move beyond the physical interstate trenches to improve the safety and accessibility of the entire project area, and the businesses and community assets within it. These community assets include Shiloh Baptist Church, the King Art Complex, Champion Middle School, Beatty Park and Community Center, the Franklin County East Community Opportunity Center, Ohio State East Hospital, and the planned location for the new Poindexter Village Museum & Cultural Center.[28]

II. Location

The project area is within the City of Columbus, in the federally designated Columbus, Ohio Urbanized Area.[29] Mt. Vernon Avenue is one of the city's older corridors, and it is part of

[21] See Appendix - Roadway Maintenance Responsibility Map
[22] See Appendix - LPA of the Year
[23] See, e.g., Andrew Kinsey, "The great divide: the rise and fall of a Black business mecca in Columbus," 10TV WBNS, February 16, 2021, https://www.10tv.com/article/news/local/the-rise-and-fall-of-a-black-business-mecca-in-columbus/530-feec17b8-b86a-41ab-a578-820c04408ede.
[24] Id.
[25] Id. video at 4 minutes and 33 seconds.
[26] For more information on the wall itself: "The Making of the Long Street Wall," ODOT, last access July 10, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hQlQANefmnQ
[27] "Transforming Communities in the 21st Century," USDOT, last access July 10, 2023, https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/docs/DOT_BH2017_508%5B2%5D.pdf, pg. 2
[28] Mark Ferenchik, "Work on Columbus' first Black history museum should start this summer," *The Columbus Dispatch*, December 3, 2020, https://www.dispatch.com/in-depth/lifestyle/2020/12/03/black-columbus-ohio-homes-impact-highways-east-side/36296850001/.
[29] Appendix 2 - Project Corridor and Urbanized Area Map

the urban core. It has been an important center of African-American culture in Columbus since before the Civil War, and the project area has a rich, vibrant artistic legacy: Elijah Pierce, Aminah Robinson, Kojo Kamau, Emerson Burkhart, and Roman Johnson all lived and worked within the project area. This legacy continues today, and the King Arts Complex is located within the project corridor, and the Lincoln Theater is in close proximity. The roadway is an urban collector street, running east-west with Downtown to the west, and Alum Creek to the east. [30] The surrounding communities are primarily residential, with a mix of single and multi-family homes and small businesses fronting the corridor. The posted speed limit is 25 mph, with the vehicles per day varies from approximately 3,795 to 6,651.[31] There is one travel lane in either direction, although the width varies and some sections have center turn lanes. Parking is generally permitted on both sides of the street with some restrictions at bus stops, for intersection sight distance, and during peak weekday traffic hours. Cobra-style overhead lighting provide some roadway illumination in the project corridor. The corridor has 3 signalized intersections, and multiple offset T-intersections. The Central Ohio Transit Authority's (COTA's) Line 7 serves bus stops every thirty minutes.[32]

III. Merit Criteria

A. Selection Criterion #1: Safety Impact

1. Historic crash data indicates safety problems exist throughout the entire project area, and significantly impact all travel modes and roadway users.

Columbus has used geospatial data to identify the need for safety improvements on Mt. Vernon Avenue and the entire project area. Compared to the overall MPO area, the project corridor exhibited nearly six times the fatality rate and more than five times the serious injury rate from 2017 to 2021. These crashes impact not only motor vehicle occupants, but bicyclists and pedestrians. Crashes involving bicyclists and pedestrians within the corridor accounted for only about 1.4% of all crashes, but approximately 25% of all fatal and serious injury crashes that were reported. A significant portion of Mt. Vernon Avenue – from St. Clair Avenue to east of 21st Street – as part of Columbus' HIN. This analysis also revealed crash hot spots spread throughout Mt. Vernon Avenue – including project corridor segments that are not on the HIN. The 2017-2021 crash data also indicates additional safety issues throughout the entire project area. The data shows that a majority (60%) of fatal and serious injury crashes involving non-motorized road users within the entire project area occurred after dark. Data shows there are crash hot spots on neighborhood streets throughout the entire project area; and data also indicates bicyclist or pedestrian involved crashes on Broad Street, from Parsons Avenue to Nelson Road, accounted for only about 3.4% of all crashes, but approximately 43% of all fatal and serious injury crashes. There are multiple areas of concern involving multiple types of roadway users, and the entire project area and all travel modes must be addressed in a holistic way through a bundle of related projects.

2. Tactical Urbanism Demonstration projects have identified countermeasures that align with – and address – the corridor's specific safety problems.

Columbus used community engagement and tactical urbanism to identify countermeasures that align with and address the corridors specific safety problems. The tactical urbanism demonstration project was an interim safety treatment on Mt. Vernon Avenue from 20th Street to Phillips Street in September 2021, and it was intended to calm traffic while improving pedestrian safety.[33] This treatment included the following: all-way STOP signs at two intersections; Type II

[30] See Appendix – Current Conditions
[31] "Transportation Data Management System," MORPC, https://morpc.public.ms2soft.com/tcds/tsearch.asp?loc=Morpc&mod=.
[32] "Line 7 Schedule," COTA, last accessed July 10, 2023, https://www.cota.com/timetables/7.pdf.
[33] See Figure 1, "Tactical Urbanism Results," p. 2. Available at https://bronzevillemoves.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Mt-Vernon-Ave-Tactical-Urbanism-Results-29Nov2022.pdf

(ladder-style) crosswalks at two intersections; and striped parking lanes with curb extensions delineated with flex posts along Mt. Vernon Avenue. A comparison of crash data indicates the tactical urbanism demonstration project was a success. Between October 2020 and September 2021, 27 crashes occurred between Ohio Ave and Phillips St. The majority of crashes (25) occurred at the intersection of Champion Ave and Mt. Vernon Ave. One fatal crash occurred at the intersection of Champion Ave and Mt. Vernon Ave in May of 2021 and 70% of all crashes occurred at this intersection. **From October 2021 through September 2022, there were 4 crashes within the installation area (20th St to Phillips St), and only 12 total crashes within the entire Mt. Vernon Avenue study corridor (Hamilton Ave to Taylor Ave).** The four crashes that occurred within the tactical urbanism project extent resulted in property damage only, with no injuries reported. Zero crashes were reported at the intersection of Champion Avenue and Mt. Vernon Avenue during this time period. This is a dramatic reduction in crashes, and a similar reduction can be achieved through the permanent improvements proposed in this application.

The demonstration project's success led to the selection of an on-street, separated side-path as the preferred alternative from Hamilton Avenue to Phillips Street.[34] The side-path dedicates and protects space for bicyclists and other non-motorized users, provides traffic calming effect for all roadway users, and reduces crashes and speeding. In addition to narrowing the travel lanes with the side-path, the project will provide an opportunity for to explore the use of bump-outs and public art for additional safety and traffic calming improvements. The permanent lighting upgrades, which directly address concerns raised by the community, will improve safety on not just Mt. Vernon Avenue, but throughout the entire project area.

The demonstration funding requested for the Broad Street Lane Reallocation Demonstration Project and Neighborhood Slow Zones Near East Pilot will allow Columbus to continue to engage with the Near East communities to identify and address safety concerns throughout the project area.

B. Selection Criterion #2: Equity, Engagement, and Collaboration

1. The project is an equitable transportation investment in communities that have been disadvantaged.

The Bronzeville/Mt. Vernon Avenue SS4A projects are an opportunity to make significant safety improvements, while also making a significant equitable investment in communities that have been underserved and disadvantaged. The entire project corridor and project area are entirely within census tracts that have been identified as disadvantaged by USDOT's Equitable Transportation Community (ETC) Explorer and the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ's) Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST).[35] These census tracts are 23, 25.20, 28, 29, and 36. The entire project corridor and project area are also within census tracts that are all Areas of Persistent Poverty.[36] These five census tracts represent some of the highest need areas in the entire city, and this project is a significant reinvestment in them.

The equity analysis for Columbus' Vision Zero program uses American Community Survey (ACS) data to identify Communities of Interest (COI). These communities 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 City's methodology for identifying Communities of Interest (COI) is based on one developed by the National Institute for Transportation and Communities

[34] Mt. Vernon Avenue narrows east of Phillips Street, and Columbus is continuing to work with the community to identify the preferred alternative from Phillips Street to Taylor Avenue.
[35] See Appendix – USDOT ETC Map and Appendix – CEQ CEJST Map
[36] See Appendix - Areas of Persistent Poverty Map

(NITC).[37] It examines seven equity indicators and corresponding ACS block group data. The project corridor and area are located within eleven different block groups, eight of which are COI.[38] The City's equity analysis for the corridor is consistent with the needs identified by other analyses.

COI Equity Indicator	Citywide Average	Project Area Average
Persons from racial and ethnic minority groups	44.12%	76.37%
Low-Income Populations	18.08%	30.98%
Limited-English Proficiency Households	3.12%	1.06%
Zero-Vehicle Households	9.47%	28.43%
Persons with Disabilities	12.25%	20.52%
Persons 65 and over	11.08%	11.40%
Persons under 18	21.29%	23.90%

The path of "Great Divide" created by the interstate system through Columbus demarcates many of Columbus' older urban core communities that have been disadvantaged. All five census tracts surrounding the project corridor (23, 25.20, 28, 29, and 36) had portions of their communities redlined in the 1930s and physically impacted by the creation of the interstate system.[39] Plans originally called for Shiloh Baptist Church to be demolished to make way for I-71, but the church refused to sell and ODOT slightly adjusted I-71's path. While the church was saved, many homes and businesses were not. Those that did survive were negatively impacted by the changes in the local transportation network – especially the connectivity across I-71. One resident told the *Columbus Dispatch*, "It got pretty clear for community folks that you're doing this to spite us. Why would you take an insignificant street like Spring Street and put a bridge over it and take a thoroughfare such as Mount Vernon Avenue and dead end it unless you were just intent on driving the East Side community under?"[40] Current city staff are keenly aware of the historical disadvantage these communities have suffered, and the legacy of mistrust within some of these communities. This is why Columbus is committed to a genuinely collaborative engagement process.

2. The project's engagement process is collaborative – not merely informative.

Columbus is committed to ensuring that the Bronzeville/Mt. Vernon Avenue SS4A projects continue to a collaborative process. Columbus has used a collaborative process throughout the Bronzeville/Mt. Vernon Avenue Mobility and Safety Action Plan.[41] This collaborative process was used to identify corridor safety concerns, deploy tactical urbanism demonstration projects, and select the preferred alternative. The Bronzeville/Mt. Vernon Avenue Mobility and Safety Action Plan stakeholder advisory committee includes a broad range of residents, faith leaders, area commission members, local non-profits, and local businesses, including representatives from: the Bronzeville Neighborhood Association, Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA), Champion Middle School, Columbus Library, Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority, Columbus New Gen Development, Columbus Urban League, Creole Kitchen, Cut Above Barber Shop, Ethiopian Tewahedo Social Services (ETSS), Homeport, King Arts Complex, Major Taylor Bike Club, Maroon Arts Group, McCormack Baron Salazar, Mt. Vernon AME, Nationwide Children's Hospital, Near East Area Commission, Ohio State University, Partners Achieving Community Transformation (PACT), Refuge Baptist Church, Steady Pedals, Trinity Baptist Church, Upper Cup, Urban Strategies at Legacy Pointe, Willobeez SoulVeg, and Yay Bikes!. City staff will

[37] "Evaluating the Distributional Effects of Regional Transportation Plans and Projects," NITC, Mar. 31, 2017, http://ppms.trec.pdx.edu/media/project_files/NITC_862_Distributional_Effects_of_Regional_Projects_qjqbDeE.pdf, at Table 15.
[38] See **Appendix – VZ COI Map**
[39] See **Appendix – Project Area HOLC Map.**
[40] Erica Thompson, "How highways destroyed Black neighborhoods in the '60s, as told by elders who were there," *The Columbus Dispatch*, December 3, 2020, https://www.dispatch.com/in-depth/lifestyle/2020/12/03/black-columbus-ohio-homes-impact-highways-east-side/3629685001/.
[41] The community engagement website is available at https://bronzevillemoves.com. See also Mark Ferenchik, "City creating plan to slow speeders on Mount Vernon Avenue as development brings residents," *The Columbus Dispatch*, April 4, 2021, https://www.dispatch.com/story/news/2021/04/04/columbus-creating-safety-plan-mount-vernon-avenue/7044561002/.

continue to actively engage the community and community stakeholders. This will ensure the projects meet the community's needs, keep the surrounding communities up to date on the project's progress, and help evaluate the projects' impacts once completed.

C. Selection Criterion #3: Effective Practices and Strategies

1. The proposed projects will create a safer, more accessible multimodal network that prioritizes the safety of all users.

Columbus's 2023-2028 Action Plan is committed to ensuring the city's transportation system is safe for all users, and all modes of transportation.[42] These projects are using a collaborative and data driven approach to identify the best way to provide a safe, multimodal network facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and micromobility users on Mount Vernon Avenue. These improvements will significantly improve accessibility throughout the corridor, and provide important network connections for people looking to access essential services and other points of interest via Mt. Vernon Avenue. The project corridor's new facilities will tie into existing bike network routes. The expanded network would also be accessible to all users, as these projects must comply with Columbus' ADA Rules and Regulations, which incorporate PROWAG.[43]

2. The project will adopt a Safe Systems Approach.

Human error happens and honest, equitable transportation systems must acknowledge this and take steps to mitigate human mistakes by changing the built environment so when people do make mistakes, the outcome is not fatal or life-altering.[44] The proposed projects will use a data-driven and collaborative process that is both human-centric and community-centric; and the projects will use multiple elements from USDOT's Safe System Approach. The proposed projects work together to promote Safer People and Safer Speeds. The Vision Zero Communications Surveys and Focus Groups project is intended to provide the information and data necessary to craft successful messaging that results in significant behavior changes. Context-appropriate roadway changes will be used to discourage speeding. Slower speeds will (1) provide more time for all roadway users to respond to the unexpected, and (2) lower the kinetic force involved in crashes. The projects will also work together to promote Safer Streets and change the built environment to ensure all users – even the most vulnerable – are able to reach their destination unharmed by providing a safer space for bicyclists and pedestrians and encouraging drivers to slow down and stop speeding. The lighting upgrades will make the streets safer, and make it easier to see and avoid pedestrians, bicyclists, and other motor vehicles at night.

3. The project will incorporate innovative practices and technologies.

Columbus is committed to delivering projects and managing its right of way as efficiently as possible. Columbus will coordinate internally to incorporate any necessary utility work into the project corridor. The area's need for improved lighting, combined with the desire to dig just once within the project area led to a decision to incorporate the DPU's LED Smart Street Light upgrades for the project area. Once the roadway improvements are complete, the City will manage the roadway using its Asset Information Management System (AIMS), which is currently under development and nearing its launch. This innovative system will provide access to foundational data and analytics needed to perform Asset Life Cycle Planning to support decision making at the Capital and Operational levels. Columbus is also incorporating innovative technologies that promote safety, including LED Smart Street Lighting. This project will ensure this innovative technology is installed within the project area, and that the technology's potential is maximized.

[42] See, e.g, "2023-2028 Action Plan," at pp. 9, 11, 18
[43] "ADA Rules and Regulations (2023)," Public Service Department, City of Columbus, last accessed July 7, 2023, https://www.columbus.gov/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=2147503533, at p. 4.
[44] See, e.g, "Vision Zero Action Plan 1.0," at p. 11.

D. Selection Criterion #4: Other DOT Strategic Goals

1. Climate and Sustainability

a. This project will support Columbus' Climate Action Plan, and improve the accessibility and safety of public transit, micromobility, and active transportation.

These projects will help advance goals in Columbus' Climate Action Plan, including Goal 11.4 - support active transportation infrastructure.[45] COTA's Line 7 serves Mt. Vernon Avenue with a thirty minute frequency, and COTA's Line 10 serves Broad Street with a fifteen minute frequency. The projects will provide permanent improvements that support safer, expanded micromobility and active transportation options; and they will demonstrate potential options for providing those same improvements on Broad Street. Riding e-scooters on sidewalks is illegal in Columbus due to pedestrian safety concerns,[46] while riding e-scooters on Mt. Vernon Avenue or Broad Street are not advisable due to speeding and other roadway safety concerns. Dedicated bicycle facilities will provide an area where micromobility options can be safely and legally used.

b. Construction standards promote the use of recycled materials and utilize new sealants and concrete intended to reduce air pollutants and carbon emissions.

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 pilots are still being monitored and cannot yet be included as a common bid. Staff will continue to monitor the data and will increase the overall percentage of RAP in the surface course as it is able based on the data provided in the pilot areas.[47] While the RAP that will be used in the new asphalt for Mt. Vernon Avenue may not come from the corridor's old roadway asphalt, it will have been recycled from other roadways in the region; and old asphalt from the project area will be collected and used as RAP in new asphalt for other roadway projects. Columbus is also using new materials that will reduce air pollutants and carbon emissions from projects. It is currently piloting the use of a new asphalt sealant, PlusTI A.R.A.-1 Ti, as part of its American Addition Phase 4 project.[48] This sealant removes nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds, and other airborne pollutants. If the pilot is successful, Columbus intends to significantly expand the use of this sealant as part of its commitment to reduce harmful emissions. In addition to this sealant, concrete suppliers in Central Ohio have shifted to Portland Limestone Cement. Using this limestone concrete is projected to reduce carbon emissions for concrete by 10%.[49] These projects will incorporate the limestone concrete and, hopefully, the new asphalt sealant.

c. The project will incorporate rigorous storm water management practices.

Columbus follows design standards that minimize adverse environmental impacts and meet or exceed standards for stormwater quality and quantity. All federal aid projects meet federal and state environmental requirements. Columbus, however, goes above and beyond state and federal requirements in its stormwater management practices. DPU requires transportation projects meet all state stormwater quality requirements; but it has also established stormwater quantity requirements that exceed federal and state requirements. The standards also exceed other local stormwater management requirements in Central Ohio, and are among the state's most rigorous.[50]

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[45] The full Columbus Climate Action Plan is available for download at https://www.columbus.gov/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=2147522706, pp 60, 64, and 89.
[46] See Columbus City Code § 2173.10
[47] Please see **Appendix – RAP Pilot Presentation** for more information about the City's RAP pilot.
[48] Please see **Appendix – PlusTi Information** for more information about the new sealant and its environmental benefits.
[49] Please see Feb. 16, 2022 letter from Anderson Concrete Corporation provided in **Appendix - Limestone Concrete Information**
[50] The 2021 Columbus Stormwater Drainage Manual is available at https://www.columbus.gov/utilities/publications/2021-Columbus-Stormwater-Drainage-Manual/

2. Economic Competitiveness

Feedback during the engagement process indicates business owners and stakeholders believe the safety improvements – including lighting – are necessary to make business in the corridor more accessible to the public. The HIN portion of Mt. Vernon Avenue is also the portion of the corridor that serves a majority of the businesses on Mt. Vernon Avenue. Safer, better facilities will encourage more people to travel through the corridor and feel comfortable visiting stores and other points of interest in the corridor. It will also encourage more people to walk to bus stops, and use transit to travel to work.

3. Workforce

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. Free gender and race-based certification is offered to more easily identify those ready, willing, and able to perform on contracts.[51] Local preference is shown when awarding construction contracts.[52]

E. Selection Criterion #5: Supplemental Planning and Demonstration Activities

In addition to the implementation grant funding, Columbus is also seeking supplemental and demonstration program grant funding for three additional projects.

1. Broad Street Lane Reallocation Demonstration Project

Columbus is seeking $375,000 for a demonstration project to evaluate the feasibility of a permanent lane reallocation on Broad Street, from Parsons Avenue to Nelson Road. The total cost is expected to be approximately $500,000.00. In addition to what has already been presented in Section I(A)(2)(a), this demonstration project will also help Columbus establish practices for evaluating lane reallocation options on arterials that lack separated facilities, but where the roadway must remain at least a four or five lane section. This demonstration will help Columbus achieve the expertise necessary to create 25 miles of separated/protected bike facilities by using capital improvement or lane reallocation projects to create protected facilities.

2. Neighborhood Slow Zones Near East Pilot

Columbus is seeking $750,000 for a pilot program to evaluate the feasibility of implementing a citywide Neighborhood Slow Zone Program. The total cost is expected to be approximately $1,000,000.00. In addition to what has already been presented in Section I(A)(2)(b), this pilot program will help Columbus implement the Neighborhood Slow Zones program as a citywide replacement for its current Residential Traffic Calming Program.

3. Vision Zero Communications Surveys and Focus Groups

Columbus is seeking $258,750.00 to fund focus group and survey research to better inform its ongoing Action Plan Strategy, "Continue multilingual outreach and education campaign."[53] This project will help shape and guide essential communication related action items on Columbus' new Vision Zero action plan, and the total cost is expected to be approximately $345,000.00. In particular, the project would inform and support two key action items for this strategy: (a) increase

[51] "Minority, Women, and Veteran Business Enterprise Certification: Policy" City of Columbus, https://www.columbus.gov/odi/supplier-diversity/Business-Certifications/
[52] See, e.g., Columbus City Code § 329.212
[53] Vision Zero Columbus 2023-2028 Action Plan, page 36.

public awareness of Vision Zero by 20%; and (b) continue paid and owned media strategies to encourage culture change and public involvement in Vision Zero, and document shifts in public opinion and drive communication strategies to engage residents on Vision Zero principles.

The demonstration project would consist of four general phases. The first phase would use exploratory focus groups to develop a deeper understanding of how residents view street safety and how they react to broad concepts surrounding the Vision Zero Action Plan. This would help city staff develop a framework for communicating with residents in a way that is rooted in real-life reactions and understanding of safety. Phase 1 cost is approximately $90,000.00. The second phase would use a quantitative baseline survey to validate and build upon the focus group findings to further refine messaging. Phase 2 cost is approximately $100,000.00. The third phase would use ad test focus groups to further refine and adjust communication and message materials and concepts. Phase 3 cost is approximately $75,000.00. The fourth phase would use tracking surveys to evaluate communication campaign effectiveness and adjust as needed. Phase 4 cost is approximately $80,000.00.

F. Consideration: Project Readiness

Columbus is committed to planning, designing, and constructing safety improvements within the project area. Design for the implementation projects is already underway. The regional MTP already includes unmapped projects that install countermeasures that improve safety and/or operations. The initial planning and community engagement process started in 2020, and Columbus believes the implementation projects will be substantially complete by June 30, 2029. Columbus also believes all the supplemental planning and demonstration projects will be underway within 6-12 months of grant agreement execution. The schedules for these three projects are flexible, and dates intended to illustrate total time to design, implement, and evaluate.

Schedules for projects requesting SS4A Implementation Funding	Bronzeville/Mt. Vernon Avenue Corridor Improvements				Near East LED Smart Street Light Upgrades	
	Phase 1		Phase 2			
	Start	End	Start	End	Start	End
Planning and Community Engagement	6/7/2023	9/11/2023	6/7/2023	11/30/2023	NA	
Preliminary Alignment	9/12/2023	11/30/2023	6/12/2025	9/19/2025	NA	
Stage 1 Design	12/5/2023	4/1/2024	9/22/2025	2/13/2026	12/4/2023	1/2/2024
Stage 2 Design	4/2/2024	7/1/2024	2/16/2026	7/10/2026	1/3/2024	4/30/2024
Obtain NEPA Clearance	10/1/2024		10/1/2026		10/2/2024	
Stage 3 Design	7/2/2024	3/28/2025	7/13/2026	3/19/2027	5/1/2024	10/2/2024
Final Plans	3/31/2025	6/6/2025	3/22/2027	4/23/2027	10/2/2024	
ROW Acquisition	12/13/2024	12/11/2025	1/18/2027	1/14/2028	NA	
Utilities Cleared	6/11/2024	12/10/2025	6/29/2026	4/19/2027	NA	
Submit plan package	12/18/2025		1/21/2028		10/2/2024	
Bid, Award, & Construction	1/27/2026	5/21/2027	2/1/2028	6/29/2029	10/9/2024	2/13/2026

Schedules for projects requesting SS4A Supplemental & Demonstration Funding	Broad Street Lane Reallocation Demonstration Project		Neighborhood Slow Zones Near East Pilot	
	Start	End	Start	End
Design:	1/1/2024	6/30/2024	1/1/2024	6/30/2024
Additional engagement:	1/1/2024	6/30/2024	NA	NA
Installation & Inspection:	7/1/2024	10/31/2024	7/1/2024	10/31/2024
Data Collection & Evaluation:	5/1/2024	12/31/2025	5/1/2024	12/31/2025

	VZ Communications Surveys and Focus Groups	
	Start	End
Phase 1	1/1/2024	6/30/2024
Phase 2	7/1/2024	9/30/2024
Phase 3	10/1/2024	12/31/2024
Phase 4	1/1/2025	Ongoing