Adopted September 2026



CITY OF MADISON
PEDESTRIAN PLAN

Acknowledgments

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Collaboration, cooperation, and engagement have played a critical role in the creation of the Pedestrian Plan. Thank you to all the community members, agency partners, and staff who have helped shape this document.

This plan was made possible through a Safe Streets and Roads for All grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation received and implemented by the City of Madison Mobility & Infrastructure Division.

Acronyms

AASHTO	American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
APS	Accessible Pedestrian Signals
BRT	Bus Rapid Transit
DUI	Driving Under the Influence
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
HIN	High Injury Network
HVE	High Visibility Enforcement
ITE	Institute of Transportation Engineers
MMSD	Madison Metropolitan School District
MMUCC	Model Minimum Uniform Crash Criteria
MPD	Madison Police Department
NACTO	National Association of City Transportation Officials
NPA	Neighborhood Priority Area
PROWAG	Public Rights-Of-Way Accessibility Guidelines
PSA	Public Safety Announcement
SRTS	Safe Routes to School
UW	University of Wisconsin
WisDOT	Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Contents

Vision and Goals 1
Introduction 1
Vision and Goals 4
Objectives 6
Measures, Targets, and Baselines 7
Relationship to Other Plans and Programs 10

Safety 12
Safety: Existing Conditions and Needs 13
Safety: Strategies and Actions 17

Comfort 23
Comfort: Existing Conditions and Needs 24
Comfort: Strategies and Actions 29

Convenience 37
Convenience: Existing Conditions and Needs 38
Convenience: Strategies and Actions 41

Enjoyment 48
Enjoyment: Existing Conditions and Needs 49
Enjoyment: Strategies and Actions 51

Moving Forward 55
Implementing the Plan 55

Companion Documents

The following documents were developed during the creation of this Pedestrian Plan. They are available on the City of Madison's Pedestrian Plan webpage.

- Summary of Existing Conditions and Issues
- Public Engagement Summary
- Network Analysis Methodologies

Figures

Figure 1 Goals of the Madison Pedestrian Plan....5
Figure 2 Measures, Targets and Baselines....7
Figure 3 Map of Neighborhood Priority Areas....9
Figure 4 Madison's Modal Hierarchy....10
Figure 5 Map of Pedestrian Crashes (2017 – 2023)....15
Figure 6 Map of High Injury Network (2022)....16
Figure 7 A temporary curb extension on Odana Road....19
Figure 8 Driver speed, stopping time, and likelihood of injury or fatality....19
Figure 9 Percent of Street Type Mileage by Sidewalk Presence....24
Figure 10 Mileage of Existing and Under-Construction Shared-Use Paths....24
Figure 11 Existing sidewalks and paths in 2025....25
Figure 12 Level of Traffic Stress Categories....26
Figure 13 Location of High-Stress Crossings....27
Figure 14 Minimum and Preferred Sidewalk Widths....29
Figure 15 Standard Crosswalk Markings....32
Figure 16 City of Madison Standard Details for Curb Ramps....33
Figure 17 Trip Potential Analysis Factors....38
Figure 18 Trip Potential Analysis....39
Figure 19 Example Map from the Pedestrian Access Analysis....40
Figure 20 Map of Crossing Project Areas....42
Figure 21 Map of Sidewalk Gaps....43
Figure 23 Walking Mode Split....49
Figure 22 Madison Residents Walking to Work....49

Information contained in this document is for planning purposes and should not be used for final design of any project. All results, recommendations, and commentary contained herein are based on limited data and information and on existing conditions that are subject to change. Existing conditions have not been field-verified. Further analysis and engineering design are necessary prior to implementing any of the recommendations contained herein.

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1 VISION AND GOALS

Introduction

Why Walk?

Walking and rolling—whether on foot, in a wheelchair, or using another mobility device—is the most essential form of transportation. For millennia, walking has been central to human movement, shaping how our species has thrived, connected, and explored the world. Today, it remains the simplest, most affordable, and most universal way to get from place to place.

Most of us walk or roll every day—sometimes just a few steps to our car, and sometimes the entire way to a bus stop, school, workplace, or favorite café. People walk for many reasons:



Transportation
Traveling to work, school, and errands

Health
Getting exercise and supporting physical and mental well-being

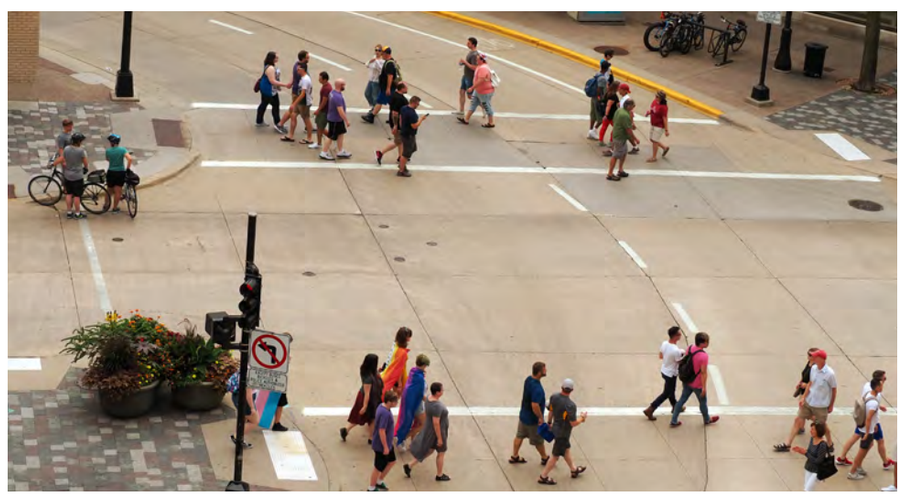
Connection
Meeting friends, engaging with neighbors, and participating in community life

Enjoyment
Experiencing Madison up close and accessing lakes, parks, and nature

Walking in Madison

Madison is already a great place to walk. Sidewalks line most streets, a robust network of paths spans the city, and our neighborhoods offer a mix of destinations against a beautiful backdrop of lakes, rivers, forests, and prairies. This combination of urban accessibility and natural beauty makes walking here both practical and inspiring.

Through our Complete Green Streets Guide, Madison has made a clear policy commitment: people walking and rolling come first. The City prioritizes safe, comfortable spaces to walk along and across streets, and when tradeoffs arise between driving and walking, pedestrian safety and comfort take precedence.



By the Numbers

98%
of Madison residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park

65%
of streets in Madison have sidewalks on both sides



180 MILES
of crossing gaps identified and prioritized in this Plan
(priority locations for adding low-stress crossings)



88 MILES
of new sidewalks recommended along arterial and collector streets in this Plan

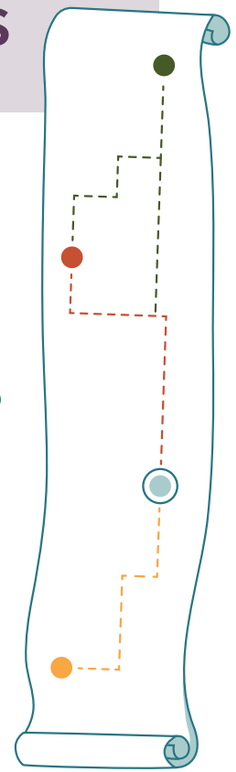


Share of traffic fatalities and serious injuries involving people walking (2017–2023):
22%



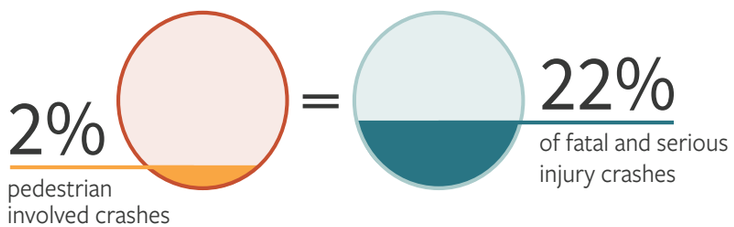
12%
of pedestrian crossings in Madison are high-stress

85%
of street blocks are within a 10-minute walk of transit



Challenges We Must Address

Even in a city with strong walking infrastructure, challenges remain. Across the nation, pedestrian fatalities are rising, and pedestrian fatalities make up a disproportionately high percentage of all traffic fatalities. In Madison, between 2017 and 2023, pedestrians were involved in only 2 percent of all crashes but accounted for 22 percent of fatal and serious injury crashes.[1]



Safety concerns take several forms. Some neighborhoods lack complete sidewalk connections.[2] Many streets—especially busy arterials—have crossings that are stressful or dangerous due to high vehicle speeds, multiple lanes, or a lack of pedestrian-friendly features. On top of traffic safety issues, personal security can be a barrier, with some people feeling unsafe walking at night or in isolated areas—especially women and people of color, according to surveys and focus group meetings completed during the development of this plan.

1 Analysis of Wisconsin DT4000 Crash Data (2017-2023) reveals a total of 32,320 crashes (all modes) within Madison. 604 of those crashes involved pedestrians. In total 655 crashes resulted in fatal or serious injuries (143 involved pedestrians). Approximately 2% of all mode crashes result in a fatal or serious injury.

2 Sidewalks can reduce pedestrian crashes involving people walking along roadways by 65 to 89 percent. Desktop Reference for Crash Reduction Factors, FHWA-SA-08-011, Table 11.

The result is that too many people cannot safely and comfortably walk or roll to daily destinations like schools, transit stops, workplaces, parks, and local shops.

What This Plan Will Do

Madison has the tools and the vision to overcome these challenges. This Plan lays out a clear path to:

- Make walking and rolling safer on every street, for everyone
- Improve the connectivity and convenience of the pedestrian network so every nearby destination is within easy reach
- Strengthen quality of life while advancing the City's sustainability goals
- Ensure every improvement serves people of all ages and abilities

This Plan is Madison's roadmap for creating safer, more connected, and more inviting walking and rolling environments. It uses a community-forward approach to:

- Set goals and measurable outcomes
- Present focused objectives for change
- Recommend targeted actions and policies
- Prioritize investments in pedestrian infrastructure

Together, these steps will help Madison protect what makes it a great walking city, address critical safety issues, and unlock new opportunities for people to walk, roll, and thrive.

What is Walking and Rolling? A Note about Terminology

Throughout this Plan, we use the phrase "walking and rolling" to be inclusive of the various forms of active transportation that fall within the "pedestrian" category. This includes wheelchair users and people using other assistive mobility devices, people walking or jogging, people pushing strollers or carts, and people (often children) using non-electric skateboards, roller skates, roller blades, unicycles, and scooters on sidewalks.

Other, higher-speed forms of active transportation—including bicycles, electric bicycles, electric skateboards, electric scooters, roller skis, and anything else that operates at a speed similar to that of a bicycle—are NOT part of this Plan.



Vision and Goals

Vision

This plan is grounded in the shared belief that Madison should be a place where everyone feels safe, welcome, and connected—whether they are walking, rolling, or simply enjoying our streets. This vision, shaped by community voices, guided the development of the Plan and will continue to guide planning, policy, design, and investment in walking and rolling moving forward.

2025 Pedestrian Plan Vision Statement

Madison will be a city where walking and rolling are easy, safe, and inviting for everyone—no matter their age, ability, identity, or neighborhood. Walking will be a common and valued way to get around, supported by well-connected walkways, safe crossings, and vibrant public spaces. Sidewalks and paths will link homes, schools, jobs, and the amenities we need for daily life, helping all communities thrive and stay connected.



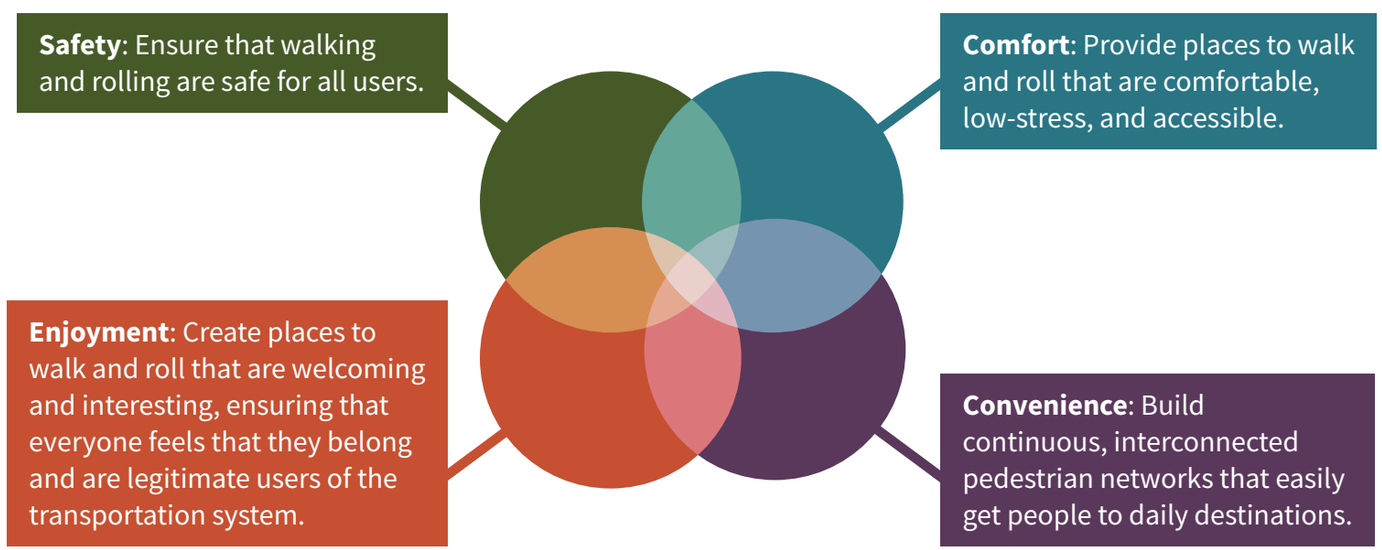
Goals

The Plan vision is expanded into four interrelated goals designed to support positive outcomes related to walking and rolling. This Plan is organized around these goals and outlines the steps the City will take to achieve each goal. Serving all residents is central to this Plan and remains the City's highest priority.

These goals are interdependent, and people relate to and understand them differently based on their lived experiences, identity, and daily travel needs. Community input shows that perceptions of what it means for Madison to be a great place to walk and roll vary widely across demographic groups. For some residents, "safety" means protection from high-speed traffic and dangerous intersections; for others, it also means freedom from harassment or crime. People with disabilities often frame safety through the lens of accessibility, such as whether curb ramps are usable year-round or if routes are consistently navigable. Likewise, "comfort" for some means shade, seating, and well-maintained sidewalks, while for others it hinges on minimizing stressful interactions with drivers or ensuring paths are well lit after dark.

Because of these varied perspectives, this Plan's goals function as a flexible but integrated framework that addresses multiple, overlapping needs at once. "Safe" cannot be separated from "comfortable" or "convenient," since inaccessible infrastructure or infrequent safe crossings make trips both more dangerous and less practical.

FIGURE 1 Goals of the Madison Pedestrian Plan



"Enjoyable" is not a luxury—survey input shows that feeling welcomed and having routes that are pleasant to use can be a decisive factor in whether someone chooses to walk or roll at all.

Variations in perceptions of safety, comfort, convenience, and enjoyment make clear that there is no single definition of a successful pedestrian network. Instead, we must apply the Plan's goals in combination, tailoring solutions to different user groups and contexts, so that improvements are effective, resonate with diverse experiences, and result in a citywide network that truly works for everyone.



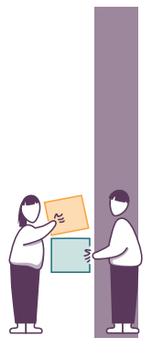
Objectives

Objectives are identified for each goal and explain how the City will put this Plan into action. Each chapter of the Plan builds upon these objectives and includes strategies and actions for each.



Safety

- Reduce the number of pedestrian crashes, reduce pedestrian crash severity, and eliminate pedestrian fatalities.
- Prioritize traffic safety for all modes in the design of streets.
- Reduce and eliminate safety disparities—including disparities in personal security and freedom from harassment.
- Strengthen the local culture of safety by targeting and addressing aggressive and distracted driving as a key safety issue.



Convenience

- Identify and proactively address gaps in the pedestrian network (missing sidewalks and high-stress crossings).
- Provide access to destinations for all individuals.
- Leverage street projects and land development projects to expand and enhance the pedestrian network.
- Prioritize projects that connect underserved parts of the city, demonstrate a need, and will continue to provide value.



Comfort

- Provide sidewalks and paths that have adequate space for all users and separation from motor vehicle traffic.
- Develop criteria and processes to implement comfortable street crossings.
- Increase accessibility and ease of use of sidewalks, paths, and crossings for people with disabilities.
- Define and achieve standards for pavement maintenance and snow/ice clearance on the pedestrian network so that sidewalks, crossings, and bus stops are easily used year-round.
- Be responsive to the various psychological and physical comfort needs of Madison's diverse population.



Enjoyment

- Encourage people to walk more often and for more of their daily needs by increasing access to new destinations and places.
- Enhance the look and feel of streets and paths to make walking and rolling enjoyable.
- Make places to walk visually attractive and reflective of community preferences and needs.

Measures, Targets, and Baselines

Quantitative measures and targets will help the City evaluate and measure progress. Because of the interrelatedness of the four Plan goals, each of these measures relates to each plan goal to some degree. For example, crash rates may primarily relate to the Safety goal, but also influence people's level of comfort and enjoyment, which in turn influences whether walking and rolling are seen as convenient and viable options.

Key measures, targets, and baselines relevant to each Plan goal are identified and repeated at the beginning of Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5.



FIGURE 2 Measures, Targets and Baselines

Measures	Target	Baseline (2026)
Serious and fatal pedestrian crashes	Zero by 2035	20 per year[2]
Pedestrian Crashes in Neighborhood Priority Areas (which contain or border 20% of streets in Madison)	<30% of serious/fatal crashes by 2035	39% of serious/fatal crashes[3]
Mileage of gaps between low-stress crossings	150 by 2035	180 miles
Percentage of reported sidewalk and crossing maintenance issues resolved each year (snow/ice and vegetation-related)	TBD	TBD
Walkability to schools, grocery stores, and transit stops[4] (citywide and in Neighborhood Priority Areas)	80% by 2035 (all categories)	Schools: 63% (52% in NPA) Transit: 61% (58% in NPA) Grocery: 55% (47% in NPA)
Mileage of missing sidewalks on collector and arterial streets (not including sidewalks to be built with new development)	60 by 2035	88 miles
Walking trips to work	Increasing	7.6% (2024)[5]

2 Wisconsin DT4000 Crash Data (2017-2023) reveals 604 pedestrian-involved crashes for the 7-year period, 143 of which resulted in fatal or serious injuries.

3 Wisconsin DT4000 Crash Data (2017-2023) reveals 211 pedestrian-involved crashes for the 7-year period (30 per year) occurred within or adjacent to Neighborhood Priority Areas. 55 resulted in fatal or serious injuries (8 per year).

4 Considers whether or not streets within walking distance (0.5 miles) of the destination have continuous low-stress access (continuous sidewalks and low-stress crossings) to the destination. Measures for schools, grocery stores, and transit stops should be calculated and reported separately.

5 U.S. Census Bureau, "Commuting Characteristics by Sex," *American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S0801*, accessed on February 10, 2026, https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2024.S0801?q=S0801++Madison,+WI.

How the Plan was Developed

The 2025 Madison Pedestrian Plan was developed through a multi-phase, community-informed process grounded in data, lived experience, and the City's existing policy framework. The planning team began by reviewing past plans, policies, and data sources to identify long-standing priorities and emerging trends, including disparities in pedestrian access and safety across the city. Building on this foundation, we worked closely with stakeholders to establish a vision and goals centered around making walking and rolling in Madison safe, comfortable, convenient, and enjoyable for all.

Public engagement was central to the Plan's development. Thousands of data points were gathered through digital and in-person outreach, including a citywide survey with over 550 respondents that allowed residents to share what helps or hinders their ability to walk and roll comfortably. These insights were paired with a comprehensive analysis of existing conditions, including sidewalk coverage, intersection safety, crossing gaps, and access to key destinations. This analysis confirmed both the strengths of Madison's existing network and the need to address missing or high-stress segments. These findings informed the final Plan's suite of policy and programmatic recommendations, as well as block-level infrastructure improvements aimed at closing sidewalk gaps and improving pedestrian crossings citywide.

What we Heard from the Community

Community feedback played a central role in identifying needs, shaping goals, and confirming priorities for the Madison Pedestrian Plan. Through a citywide survey, in-person events, and targeted outreach—including engagement with historically underrepresented communities—residents were asked about their walking and rolling habits, obstacles they face, and what changes would make these modes safer and more enjoyable. The survey revealed that while many residents feel confident walking or rolling in some areas, nearly half described themselves as moderate or cautious users of the pedestrian network.

The community emphasized safety, connectivity, and accessibility as top priorities. Aggressive car traffic (69 percent) and unsafe intersections (64 percent) were the most frequently cited concerns, and respondents called for more connected sidewalk networks and safer crossings. Disparities in experience were evident: women and under-represented populations reported significantly higher rates of harassment and personal safety concerns, while people with disabilities noted frequent issues with inaccessible routes. Overall, residents expressed strong support for a vision centered around walking that is safe, comfortable, convenient, and enjoyable—highlighting a desire for public spaces that foster belonging, reduce barriers, and support daily life for people of all ages, abilities, and identities.

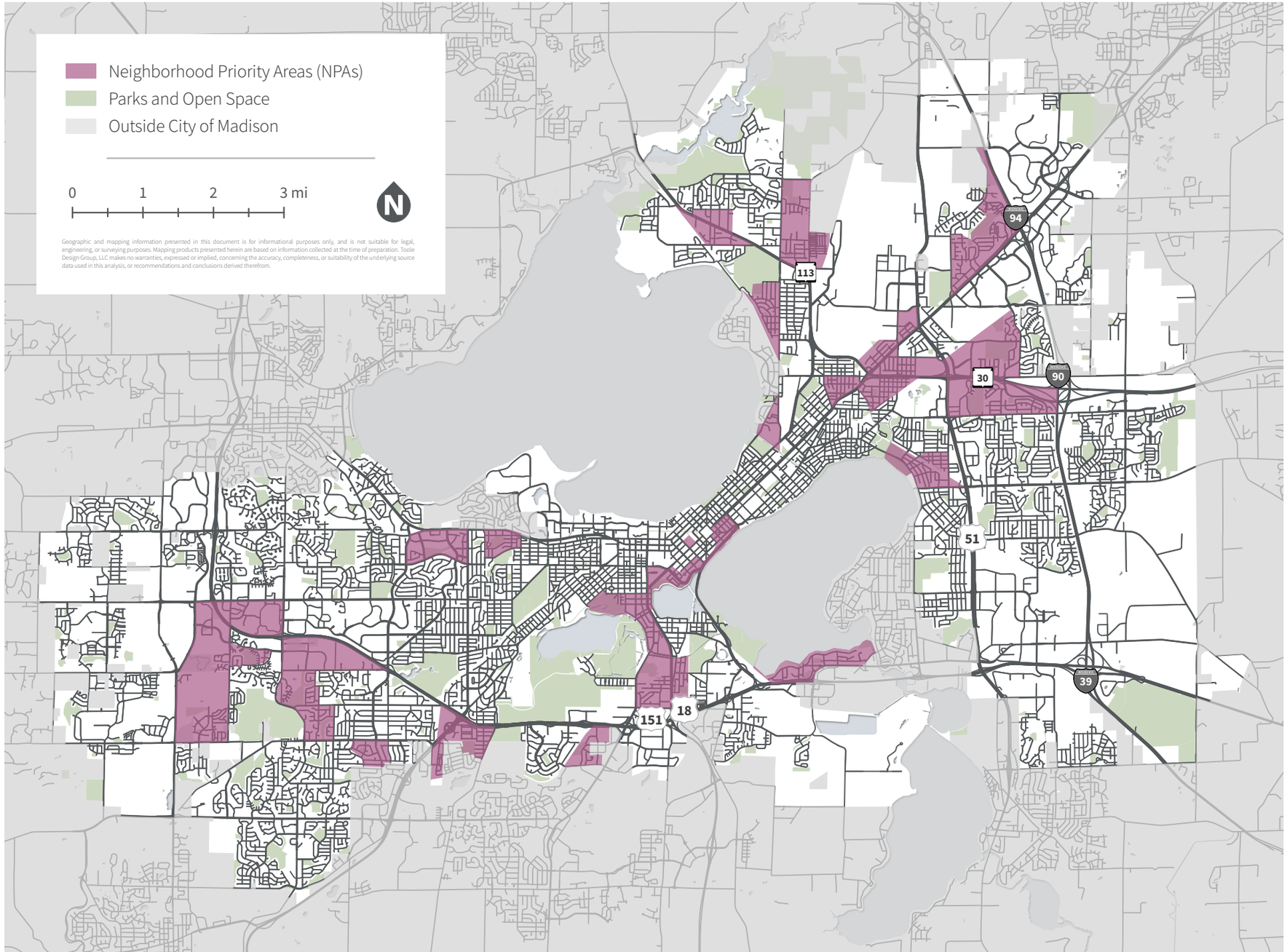
Neighborhood Priority Areas

This plan identifies Neighborhood Priority Areas (NPA), shown in Figure 3. NPAs integrate U.S. Census Bureau block group data on race/ethnicity and income to identify areas within the City of Madison where residents may face greater structural or systemic barriers to inclusion, access, or opportunity. This supports efficient investment by helping the City focus resources where additional support can have the greatest impact. NPAs are intended to be used in conjunction with users' experience, expertise, and other relevant data (both quantitative and qualitative) to inform resource allocation, inclusion strategies, and investment priorities across Madison.

This Plan identifies disparities in walking and rolling access between NPAs and other areas of the city. Many of the recommendations in this plan emphasize prioritizing investments in these NPAs.



FIGURE 3 Map of Neighborhood Priority Areas

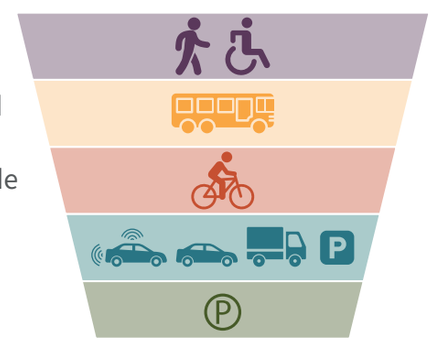


Relationship to Other Plans and Programs

This Plan builds upon a variety of adopted or published plans, policies, and programs related to pedestrian safety, comfort, convenience, and enjoyment.

- **Pedestrian Transportation Plan** (1997) – Madison's previous pedestrian plan guided planning, design, and decision making for walking and rolling for nearly 30 years. Many of the recommendations in the 1997 plan have been implemented and others have been carried over into this 2025 Pedestrian Plan, which replaces the 1997 plan.
- **Imagine Madison Comprehensive Plan** (2018, Amended 2023 and 2024) – The Imagine Madison Comprehensive Plan combines goals, strategies, and actions related to land use and transportation planning to plan for a safe, efficient, and affordable transportation system. Imagine Madison includes recommendations to upgrade the pedestrian network to improve safety, connectivity, and convenience, including filling sidewalk network gaps and integrating design treatments that improve safety.
- **Madison in Motion Transportation Plan** (2017) – Madison in Motion is the City of Madison's Sustainable Transportation Master Plan. The plan includes a framework for future transportation decisions and investments with an overarching goal of an improved multimodal transportation system, including recommendations for walkability, bikeability, and transit access.
- **Complete Green Streets Guide** (2023, Amended 2025) – The Complete Green Streets Guide aims to create streets that are safe, connected, and resilient to enhance the quality of life, health, and mobility in Madison. This Guide presents a modal hierarchy (Figure 4) that prioritizes walking and rolling above other modes on Madison streets, although the guide also recognizes context and the need for flexibility in street design.
- **Vision Zero Plan** (2020) – Madison has set a goal of achieving zero traffic deaths by 2035 under the Vision Zero campaign. Vision Zero is an approach—successfully implemented in multiple European countries and some American cities—that reduces and ultimately eliminates traffic deaths through proven safety strategies. Under Madison's Vision Zero plan, the City is implementing safety measures on the street segments with the most severe and fatal crashes.
- **Safe Streets Madison Program** – The Safe Streets Madison Program is an implementation program that combines the City's past traffic calming, neighborhood traffic management, and pedestrian and bicycle enhancements programs into a single program aligned with the Vision Zero goals. This program focuses on implementing traffic safety measures (such as speed humps, crossing treatments, mini traffic circles, pedestrian refuge islands, and more) to eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries on City streets. The program also focuses on improving connectivity by closing gaps in the pedestrian and bicycle networks throughout the city, ensuring they are accessible for all ages and abilities.
- **Park and Open Space Plan, 2025-2030** (2025) – Madison's Park and Open Space Plan includes recommendations relevant to walking and rolling in the city. These include creating a comprehensive system of green space connections by means of pedestrian, biking, and water trails through parks and increasing connectivity with and through parks to key neighborhood facilities and public transportation facilities.
- **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan** (2025) – The City adopted its ADA Transition Plan in December of 2025, with the goal of creating a working document that identifies barriers to access within public right-of-way in Madison and outlines a schedule and estimated cost for their removal. The Plan will monitor the removal of existing access to track progress towards compliance. New construction and alterations must meet the requirements of the United States Access Board Public Right of Way Access Guidelines (PROWAG).
- **Madison Code of Ordinances** (Updated 2025) – The Madison Code of Ordinances contains laws and regulations regarding the planning, design, and use of pedestrian infrastructure.

FIGURE 4
Madison's Modal Hierarchy adopted from Complete Green Streets Guide

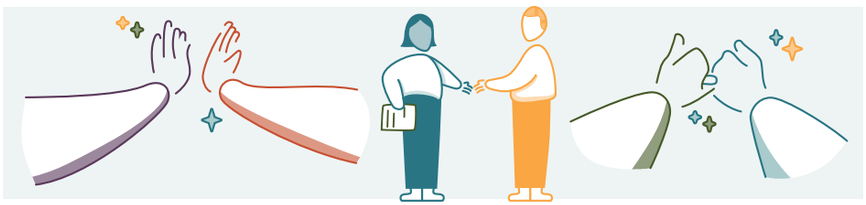


Relevant Themes from Other Plans

Madison's other relevant plans, policies, and programs contain four major themes related to walking and rolling:



Travel should feel safe, especially for historically marginalized groups and for active transportation users of all ages and abilities. Addressing disparities in safety and access, alongside ensuring investment in transportation infrastructure across the city, are key themes discussed in the plans and policies.



Intergovernmental collaboration is a prominent planning theme to ensure that transportation systems facilitate mobility and access across jurisdictional boundaries and are coordinated with land use. Regional integration and collaboration help ensure active transportation investments are fair, safe, timely, and fill both mobility and accessibility gaps.



Complete Streets and holistic approaches to active transportation planning, including connections to land use, is a common theme. The need for a balanced transportation system that provides safe access for all users is emphasized across the reviewed plans and policies. Multimodal connections, including integrating active transportation with other modes, and filling pedestrian and bicyclist network gaps are highlighted across the documents.



Minimizing bicycle and pedestrian conflicts on shared facilities is highlighted across documents with the goal of ensuring that all active transportation users feel safe and comfortable and are provided with high levels of mobility and access.

2 SAFETY

Goal: Ensure that walking and rolling are safe for all users.

Safety is the most prominent theme in public feedback about walking and rolling in Madison. Residents expressed concerns not only about traffic dangers but also about feeling safe from harassment and crime—issues reported more frequently among under-represented populations, women, and people with disabilities. These concerns point to a need for multifaceted safety solutions that go beyond traffic engineering to include human-centered design, personal security, and community engagement.

Through community engagement, people described a multifaceted definition of "safety" that includes:

- Protection from vehicle crashes (e.g., speed management, visibility, safe crossings).
- Separation from traffic (sidewalks, paths, and adequate buffers).
- Personal safety (freedom from harassment, crime, intimidation, or policing concerns).
- Lighting, sidewalk and path maintenance, and visibility.



Objectives

- Reduce the number of pedestrian crashes, reduce pedestrian crash severity, and eliminate pedestrian fatalities.
- Prioritize safety above all else in the design of streets.
- Reduce and eliminate safety disparities—including disparities in personal security and freedom from harassment.
- Strengthen the local culture of safety by targeting and addressing aggressive and distracted driving as a key safety issue.

Primary Measures, Targets and Baseline

Measure	Target	Baseline (2026)
Serious and fatal pedestrian crashes	Zero by 2035	20 per year
Pedestrian Crashes in Neighborhood Priority Areas	<30% of serious/fatal crashes by 2035	39% of serious/ fatal crashes
Mileage of gaps between low-stress crossings	150 miles by 2035	180 miles
Mileage of missing sidewalks on collector and arterial streets (not including sidewalks to be built with new development)	60 by 2035	88 miles

Safety: Existing Conditions and Needs

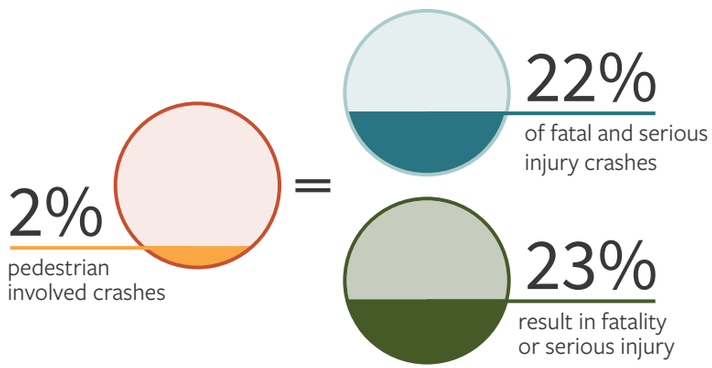
Madison's Vision Zero Action Plan and Progress Reports provide traffic safety statistics and trends, including information specific to pedestrian safety. This Pedestrian Plan does not attempt to fully evaluate the existing conditions for pedestrian safety, but rather identify key issues and insights to guide future improvements in the pedestrian system.

People walking and rolling are among the most vulnerable users of the transportation system. They do not have protection afforded by a vehicle (e.g., airbags, seat belts, crumple zones, etc.) and very few vehicles on the road include meaningful pedestrian safety features. People walking and rolling are also unable to quickly maneuver to avoid a collision and are not expected to wear protective equipment.



In Madison, pedestrians are involved in **less than 2 percent of reported crashes**, but they represent **22 percent of people killed or seriously injured in crashes**.[7] Furthermore, **23 percent of pedestrian-involved crashes resulted in a fatal or serious injury**.

These statistics are supported by public perception: 69 percent of survey respondents identified fast or aggressive car traffic as a major obstacle to walking and rolling, and 64 percent identified unsafe intersections as a key safety issue.



Crash Causes

A variety of law enforcement agencies respond to crashes in the City of Madison, including the Madison Police Department, Dane County Sheriff's Department, the Wisconsin State Patrol, and police departments from neighboring jurisdictions and state agencies. Each of these agencies completes a standardized crash report (DT4000) at the time of the initial crash investigation and may develop additional documentation based on the seriousness of the crash and investigative outcomes.

Based on a review of DT4000s for pedestrian-involved crashes from 2017 through 2023, a driver error was identified in 327 of 604 crashes. Of the 143 crashes resulting in a fatal or serious pedestrian injury, a driver error was identified in 73 crashes. Common driver errors included failure to yield, speeding, not looking for/seeing pedestrians, failure to control the vehicle, and aggressive driving. Specific pedestrian actions—including walking not facing traffic, disregarding signals, and sudden movement into traffic—were listed as contributing factors in 26 crashes.

This evaluation raises questions about the consistency and accuracy of initial crash reporting for pedestrian-involved crashes. Many DT4000 reports for crashes between drivers and pedestrians show no recorded fault for either party, although that may be documented in supplemental crash investigation materials. It is notable that in 65 crashes involving pedestrians using marked or unmarked crosswalks, no driver error was identified, nor was any improper action on the part of the pedestrian. 19 of those 65 crashes resulted in a fatal or serious injury. Furthermore, 16 crashes without identified driver error occurred when the pedestrian was on the sidewalk, in a driveway, or in a "non-trafficway area"—again with no improper action recorded for the pedestrian.

7 Analysis of Wisconsin DT4000 Crash Data (2017-2023) reveals a total of 32,320 crashes (all modes) within Madison. 604 of those crashes involved pedestrians. In total 655 crashes resulted in fatal or serious injuries (143 involved pedestrians). Approximately 2% of all mode crashes result in a fatal or serious injury.

What is a Crosswalk?

Crosswalks are areas of the street where pedestrians are intended to cross. In Wisconsin, drivers and bicyclists must yield for a person or mobility device in a non-signalized crosswalk and cannot pass another vehicle that has stopped at a crosswalk.

Crosswalks can be either marked or unmarked.

- A **marked crosswalk** is any place designated by signs or striping for crossing a street. Marked crosswalks are typically two parallel lines or a series of wide bars that are more visible to drivers than the parallel lines.
- An **unmarked crosswalk** exists where there are no signs or markings on the street designating it, but where a sidewalk or path exists. It is the area extending out from the sidewalk across the street.

Either type of crosswalk may exist at an intersection or mid-block.

Who May Use a Crosswalk?

Under Wisconsin law, pedestrians, persons in wheelchairs and disability scooters, bicycles, electric scooters, Segways, and personal delivery vehicles may all legally use a crosswalk.

In these cases, the pedestrian appears to have been acting properly, and the absence of any documented driver error is illogical and inconsistent with the facts of the crashes. It is drivers' responsibility to exercise due care and avoid collisions with pedestrians at all times, but particularly where pedestrians have the right of way.

Location of Pedestrian Crashes

An analysis of the location of pedestrian crashes in Madison from 2017 through 2023 reveals that hot spots for fatal and serious injury crashes include Downtown/the isthmus, the East Washington Avenue corridor, South Park Street/Badger Road, University Avenue area from Hilldale Mall to the University Hospital, and Northport Drive near Packers Avenue (Figure 5). This analysis reveals disparities in crash location: 39 percent of the fatal and serious injury pedestrian crashes occurred in or adjacent to Neighborhood Priority Areas, even though these areas include only 20 percent of Madison's streets and constitute only 12.3 percent of Madison's 86 square miles.

High Injury Network

The City of Madison created a High Injury Network (HIN) map, which identifies the streets where the likelihood of a serious or fatal crash is highest. In total, 16 percent of streets in Madison are part of the HIN. The HIN considers all crash types, so it is not exclusive to pedestrian-involved crashes. However, the patterns identified in the HIN (see Map of High Injury Network (2022)) align with the distribution of pedestrian-involved crashes shown previously. Madison's Vision Zero and Safe Streets Madison programs prioritize safety investments on streets that make up the HIN. Visit the Vision Zero Projects website for more information about the HIN.

Portions of the HIN are streets that the City does not have full jurisdiction over. This includes County, State, and US Highways, including Park Street, East Washington Avenue, Packers Avenue, Northport Drive, Stoughton Road, and others. City staff work with Dane County and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to address safety concerns on these streets, although the City's recommendations are not always accepted by the responsible agency.

Personal Security

Many people expressed concerns about their personal safety, including fear of harassment, throughout this planning effort. These concerns are greater among women, non-binary individuals, and under-represented populations. Under-represented populations reported fear of harassment or crime at 14 percent, nearly double the rate of white respondents (8 percent). This group was also 44 percent more likely to say that increased safety would improve their enjoyment of walking and biking. Women reported fear of harassment/crime at 12 percent, compared to 5 percent for men—a 125 percent higher rate. Facility design, lighting, and other environmental factors can all influence perceptions of personal security.

FIGURE 5 Map of Pedestrian Crashes (2017 – 2023)

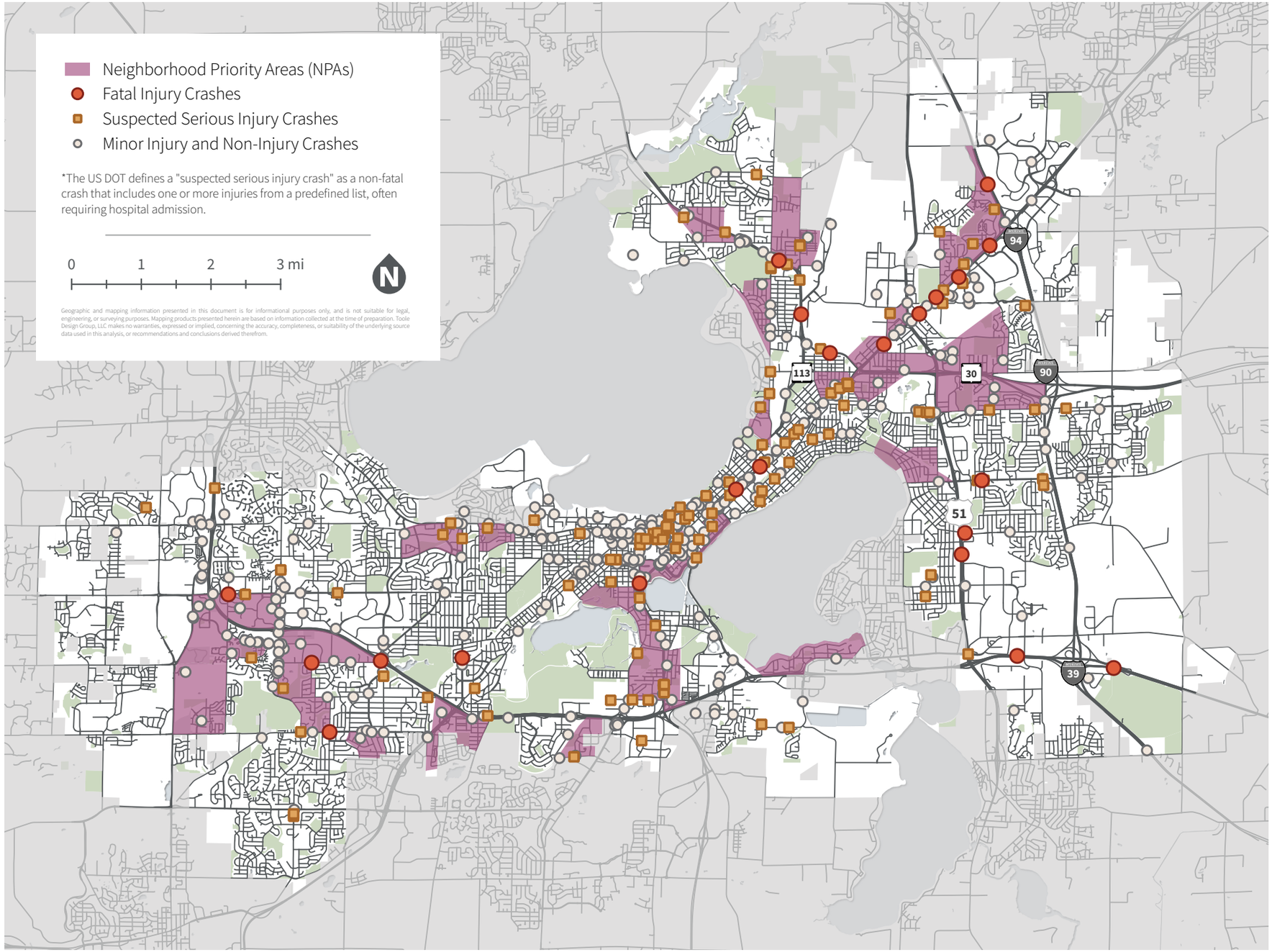
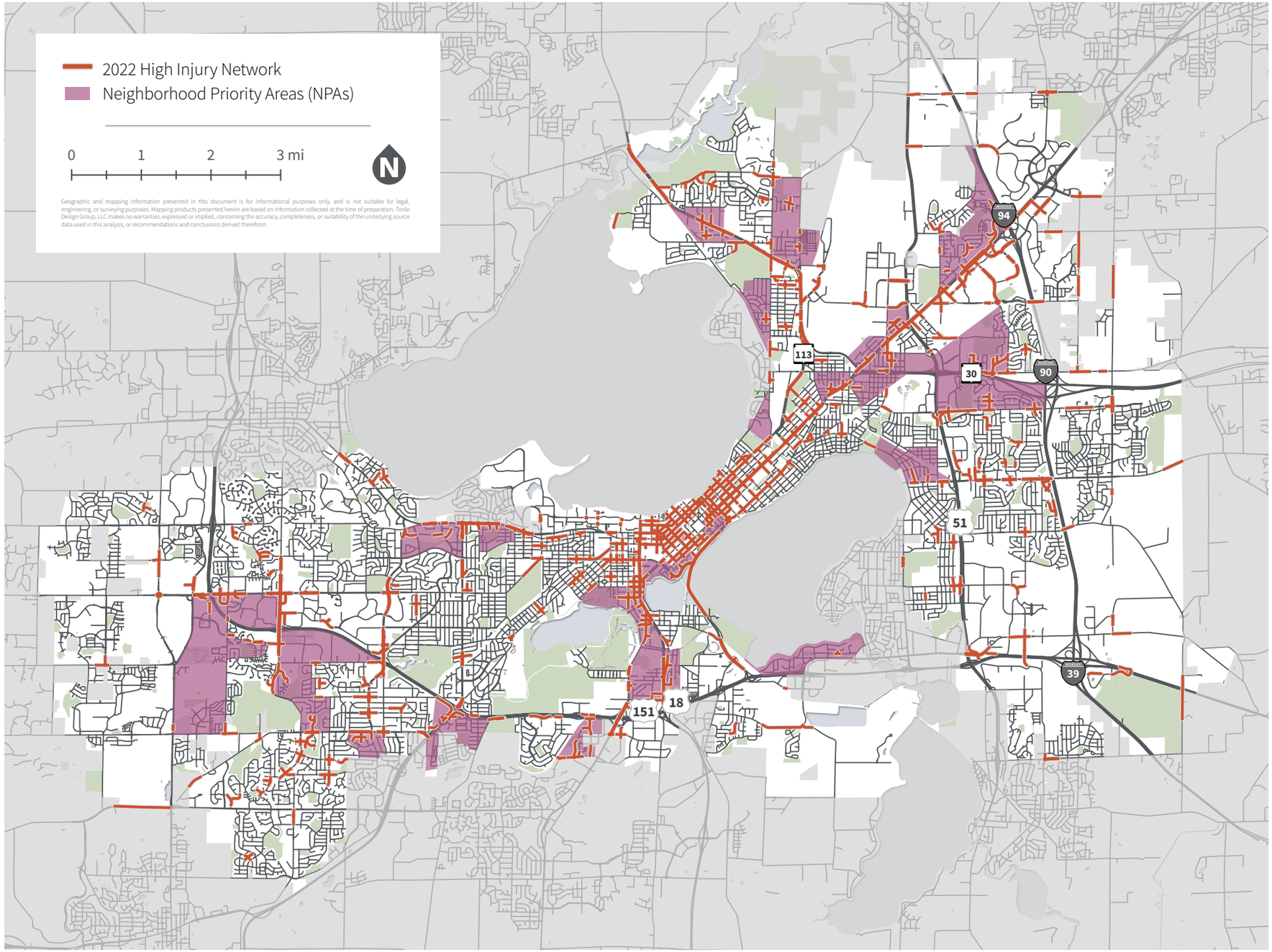


FIGURE 6 Map of High Injury Network (2022)



Safety: Strategies and Actions

This section lists strategies and actions to increase safety for people walking and rolling in Madison, organized by relevant objectives. For some strategies and actions, their relationship to other plan goals (comfort, convenience, and enjoyment) is identified.

Strategy 1: Reduce the number of pedestrian crashes, reduce pedestrian crash severity, and eliminate pedestrian fatalities

Action 1.1: Ensure streets in the City of Madison have sidewalks on both sides of the street. Exceptions to this policy will be well documented.

Providing a space to walk separate from motor vehicle travel is fundamental to pedestrian safety. This is especially true for people that use wheelchairs, are blind or low-vision, or have other mobility challenges. Sidewalks can reduce pedestrian crashes involving people walking along roadways by 65 to 89 percent.[8] Sidewalks are usually added to existing streets during street reconstruction projects, but may also be added as standalone projects. Every street in Madison will have sidewalks on both sides, with few exceptions. Any exceptions to this policy will be well-documented and explained.

Action 1.2: Continue to make pedestrian safety improvements systematically on High Injury Network (HIN) streets, including implementing spot treatments, quick build projects, and other retrofits.

The City's Safe Streets Madison funding program works to implement safety improvements by focusing on low-cost projects that improve traffic safety and fill gaps in the walking and biking network. The City selects projects for the program using a ranking system that considers project impact, geographic dispersion, cost, and whether the project is on the HIN. This program will be continued. Larger scale reconstruction and resurfacing projects that make improvements along the High Injury Network are completed by the Engineering Division. The City will continue to seek funding (grants and other sources) to proactively and aggressively make investments in larger projects.

Action 1.3: Develop a Pedestrian High Injury Network and update it annually to ensure pedestrian safety interventions are installed in areas of greatest need.

The City's current HIN considers all crash types heavily weighting fatal and injury crashes. It also merges two separate datasets—one that represents street segments, and one that represents intersections, both over a three-year time period: 2017-2019. The City will develop a HIN that looks at pedestrians and/or other vulnerable users only and uses data from the most recent five years. A pedestrian-specific HIN will help the City focus pedestrian-related safety improvements in the areas where changes would be most meaningful and beneficial for people walking and rolling.

Action 1.4: Enhance crossings (signalized and unsignalized) on the High Injury Network along transit routes.

Improving the safety of pedestrian crossings at bus stops is critical because it protects vulnerable road users—especially those with limited mobility—who frequently interact with traffic while accessing transit. Safer crossings also enhance overall transit accessibility and encourage public transportation use by making the experience more predictable and less risky.



8 Desktop Reference for Crash Reduction Factors, FHWA-SA-08-011, Table 11.

Integrating Safer Vehicles into City Policy and Practice

The size, speed, and operating characteristics of vehicles directly affect crash severity. Therefore, integrating vehicle-safety strategies into City policy is an essential complement to safer street design. While most aspects of vehicle design are set at the federal level, cities are not powerless when it comes to shaping a safer vehicle environment. In fact, municipal policy choices—what vehicles the City buys, what it requires of contractors, how it manages its fleet, and how it uses its influence—can meaningfully reduce risk for people walking and rolling.

Start with Our Own Fleet

The City owns and operates over 1,700 vehicles—from police cars and fire apparatus to buses, snowplows, dump trucks, and general-purpose fleet vehicles. Updating procurement standards to require key safety technologies is one of the clearest and easiest opportunities for the City to increase vehicle safety. These include requiring Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) technology packages. ADAS packages vary by manufacturer and often come standard, but may include features such as blind-spot detection, forward-collision warnings, automatic emergency braking (AEB), lane-departure warnings, and pedestrian-specific AEB.

Cities can also integrate Intelligent Speed Assistance (ISA) into fleet vehicles to help limit speeding. ISA systems—piloted in New York City and Washington, DC—can alert drivers when they exceed the speed limit or actively prevent speeding depending on settings.

For heavy duty municipal vehicles, the City can also explore adopting side-guard requirements to reduce the likelihood of pedestrians or bicyclists being pulled under the vehicle in a collision, an approach already implemented in Boston and surrounding communities.

Fire department vehicles are often the largest vehicles that need to commonly be accommodated on neighborhood streets. Some US cities have begun to purchase smaller fire vehicles that can better navigate narrower streets while also meeting the needs of the fire departments to respond to emergencies.

Set Standards for Contractors and Vendors

Many vehicles operating on city streets are not City-owned but City-contracted: waste haulers, construction contractors, maintenance providers, and service vendors. The City can extend fleet expectations by requiring contractors to meet minimum vehicle-safety standards that the City has implemented for its own fleet when bidding on City contracts. This broadens the reach of safer-vehicle practices well beyond municipal operations.

Improve Fleet Operations and Driver Behavior

Cities can reduce safety risk not only through vehicles themselves but also through how they are used. The City should continue to implement fleet safety training covering defensive driving, telematics functionality, incident reporting, and understanding safety principles. The City can also require post-crash reviews, strengthen maintenance monitoring and protocols, and track safety performance with telematics devices across departments.

Align Street Design with Realistic Design Vehicles

Vehicle procurement choices also influence the design of streets. Streets are designed around a selected design vehicle—the largest vehicle expected to frequently use the street—so that the design vehicle does not have to encroach upon other lanes while turning. Over-reliance on large design vehicles can lead to wider lanes, which in turn leads to higher speeds. Cities can intentionally review how design vehicles are selected and, where appropriate, prioritize vehicles that minimize turning radii and allow safer street geometry.

Use the City's Voice to Advocate for Stronger National Standards

Finally, the City can formally advocate for state and federal safety regulations—such as ISA installation requirements for drivers far exceeding the speed limit to adding bicyclist and motorcyclist detection ADAS—where local action alone is insufficient.

Action 1.5: Rapidly expand the use of paint, flexible delineators, and other inexpensive materials to install interim or trial pedestrian safety improvements.

The City has installed low-cost, temporary curb extensions at several crossing locations as part of the Safe Streets Madison program and will continue to do so. Trying different configurations and products will give staff more experience and understanding about the expense and durability of different types of materials. It also allows interventions to be implemented more quickly than traditional methods, potentially preventing additional crashes that might occur. These "temporary" projects may remain for several years before a more permanent (e.g., concrete) solution is installed.

Action 1.6: Continue to evaluate crash patterns, identify key issues, and address safety concerns with infrastructure interventions.

The City will not rely only on past HIN analysis to identify safety concerns and select infrastructure projects. There are a variety of methods to evaluate pedestrian safety concerns, including the use of "big data" or state-specific crash data sources that are updated on a more frequent basis. The City will ensure its staff have the flexibility to use different or innovative evaluation methods and integrate public feedback and reported concerns into decisions.

Strategy 2: Prioritize traffic safety for all modes in the design of streets

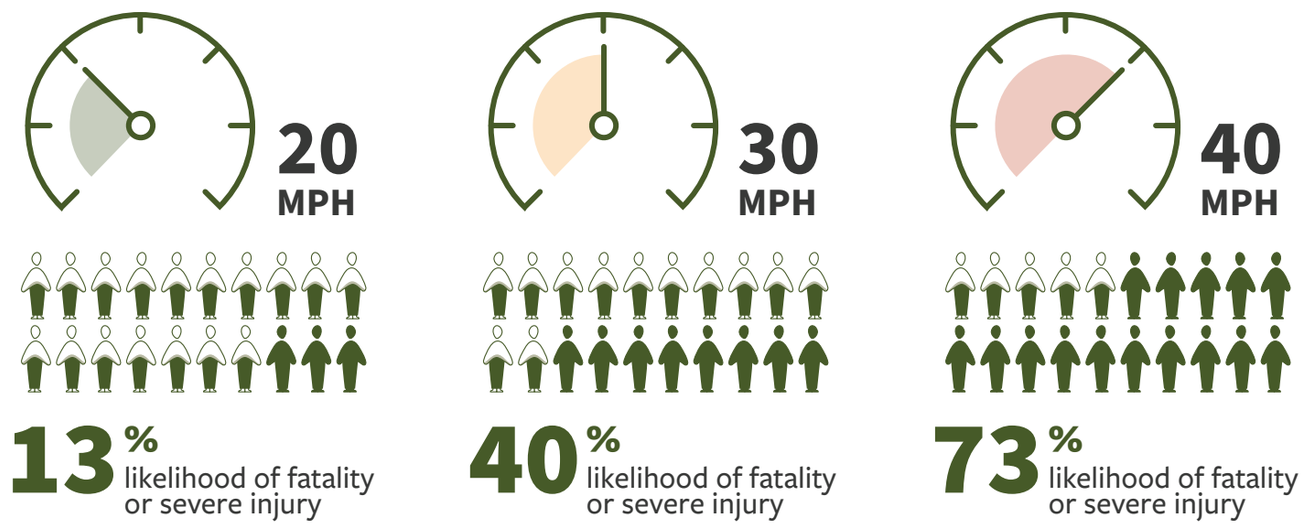
Action 2.1: Expand the use of low speed limits to create safer streets and reduce pedestrian crash occurrences and severity. (Also relates to comfort)

Madison has documented measurable reductions in vehicle speeds and crashes on streets where the City has lowered speed limits. Lower speeds significantly decrease the likelihood and severity of crashes, giving drivers more time to react and pedestrians a greater chance of survival if struck (see Figure 8). Lowering speeds is a critical strategy for reducing and eliminating pedestrian fatalities and serious injuries.

FIGURE 7 A temporary curb extension on Odana Road (Image credit: Bill Tishler)



FIGURE 8 Relationship between driver speed, stopping time, and likelihood of injury or fatality.

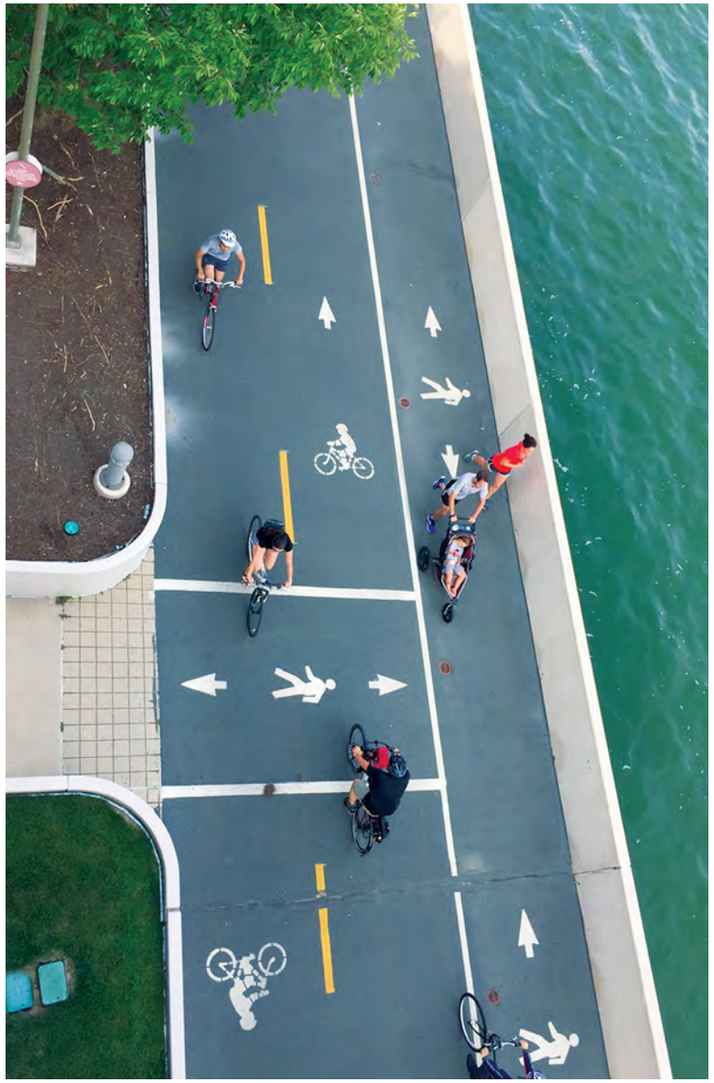


Tefft, B.C. (2011). Impact Speed and a Pedestrian's Risk of Severe Injury or Death (Technical Report). Washington, D.C.: AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.

Action 2.2: Ensure that City lighting standards meet best practices for the safety, security, and visibility of people walking. Evaluate lighting at street crossings and ensure crossings are adequately lit. (Also relates to comfort and enjoyment)

When adjusting for vehicle miles traveled, the nighttime fatality rate (crashes by all modes) is three times the daytime fatality rate in the United States.[9] This is primarily due to drivers being unable to react and respond to things they cannot see. Lighting is a valuable safety benefit for all users of Madison's streets and has the extra benefit of enhancing the feeling of personal security for people outside of motorized vehicles.

Madison General Ordinance 12.03(4)(b) specifies the provision of overhead streetlights at every intersection and includes provision for midblock placement where intersections are spaced more than 300 or 400 feet apart. However, criteria are based on older lighting technology, and do not reflect current best practices for streetlighting. Additionally, there are no City standards for lighting paths and sidewalks. The Federal Highway Administration provides standards and a process for determining lighting criteria for pedestrian safety[10] and the Illuminating Engineering Society (IES) provides best practice lighting standards applicable to a variety of locations. The City should ensure that its lighting standards meet or exceed best practices for areas where pedestrians are expected, including intersections, sidewalks, and shared use paths. The City should also strive to make its standards limit light pollution, in order to limit impacts on ecosystems.



Action 2.3: Revise or create internal standards and policies to improve pedestrian visibility and reduce crossing distance at intersections and crossings.

The City of Madison lacks consistent geometric design standards for a variety of pedestrian safety interventions. Having internal design standards can help streamline design and implementation of pedestrian safety infrastructure on both new and existing streets. Potential standards or policies to develop include:

- Curb extension design standards
- Accessible transit stop design standards
- Intersection design standards that minimize pedestrian crossing distance and slow turning traffic
- Curb ramp standards that include placement of perpendicular ramps at each end of crosswalks
- Standards for installing "Advance Yield Here for Pedestrian" signs and markings
- Policies to consistently daylight intersections[11]

9 Brumbelow, M. L. (2022). Light where it matters: IIHS headlight ratings are correlated with nighttime crash rates. Journal of Safety Research, 83, 379–387.

10 Federal Highway Administration. Pedestrian Lighting Primer. FHWA-SA-21-087. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Transportation, April 2022. https://highways.dot.gov/sites/fhwa.dot.gov/files/2022-09/Pedestrian_Lighting_Primer_Final.pdf

11 "Daylighting" refers to keeping the area near the corner of an intersection clear of visual obstructions—such as parked cars, tall landscaping, newspaper boxes, or utility poles—so that everyone using the street can see each other more easily. This often involves:

- Prohibiting parking within a set distance from the corner.
- Adding curb extensions (bulb-outs) or setting back bike racks, signage, or furniture.
- Using clear zones (no large shrubs, fences, or other visibility-blocking structures).

Action 2.4: Update City practices so that pedestrian needs are prioritized in all construction, reconstruction, and resurfacing projects.

Street construction, reconstruction, and resurfacing projects are major opportunities to enhance pedestrian safety and access. City processes will ensure that pedestrian circulation and safety are prioritized whenever these projects occur, and that enhancements (such as curb extensions, median islands, and crosswalks) are incorporated into projects whenever needed. Of particular concern for pedestrian safety is excessive speeding by drivers, especially on arterial and collector streets. Vertical deflection—such as raised intersections—can be effective at managing motor vehicle speed and is often easiest to incorporate during roadway construction projects. Considering these safety treatments as part of all new construction projects is an important way to close loopholes and leverage new construction projects to improve pedestrian safety.

Action 2.5: Provide regular staff training on adopted design guidance and current best practices for designing safe streets.

The City has a large and talented team of engineers who care deeply about safety. Large teams require substantial coordination and communication, especially when the City adopts new standards and guidance such as the Complete Green Streets Guide, new national guidance documents such as NACTO, AASHTO, or ITE manuals, and the recommended new policies listed above. Current and new employees will need regularly scheduled training to learn about the guidance and how to use it.

Strategy 3: Reduce and eliminate safety disparities—including disparities in personal security and freedom from harassment

Action 3.1: Continue tracking the number and percentage of safety projects in Neighborhood Priority Areas installed annually.

The Safe Streets Madison program is designed to consider projects citywide, but that program reflects only a portion of the safety projects the City builds on an annual basis. To track and make progress on addressing disparities, the City will continue to monitor whether it is making safety investments in the areas that need them most.

Action 3.2: Understand and learn more about personal safety, harassment, and crime concerns among women and under-represented populations and consider ways to address these issues.

Safety disparities extend beyond crash statistics. Madison respondents from under-represented populations who responded to the survey for this plan reported fear of harassment or crime at nearly double the rate of white respondents. These residents were also much more likely to say that increased safety would improve their enjoyment of walking/biking in Madison. Women reported fear of harassment/crime at more than double the rate of men. The City will treat personal safety as an integral part of planning and designing the public realm and perform follow up research to understand what kinds of interventions—such as lighting, activities to promote use, or site design—can best address the concerns of women and under-represented populations in our community.



Strategy 4: Strengthen the local culture of safety by targeting and addressing aggressive and distracted driving as a key safety issue

Action 4.1: Continue to create and promote a local culture of safety.

A local culture of safety is made up of the values, beliefs, and attitudes that influence the behaviors and actions of road users.[12] Building this culture involves establishing shared language and understanding around traffic safety—for example, using the term "crash" instead of "accident" to acknowledge that collisions are preventable.[13] It also includes educating the public on key safety issues and ways to improve safety together. The City's adoption of Vision Zero in 2022, with a goal of eliminating all fatal and serious injury crashes on city streets by 2035, reinforced efforts to create this local culture of safety.

Working to achieve Vision Zero requires a radical shift in how communities address their safety challenges. Communicating why these changes are needed and necessary, while enlisting the public's support and participation in the effort, is a key element of creating a local culture of safety and reaching the goal of zero fatalities and serious injuries. When deploying communications, it is important to leverage community partners to share these messages, such as Safe Communities, or faith-based or cultural organizations that have established, trusted relationships. With this campaign, the City will:

- Develop and distribute public safety messages about aggressive driving, districted driving, and red light running.
- Clarify driver responsibilities under state law, such as what to do when approaching a crosswalk with an activated Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB).
- Seek to influence social behavior through effective messaging.
- Continue to explore multifaceted strategies to combat aggressive and reckless driving.
- Educate the public on the importance of traffic safety of all street users through PSAs, earned media, and community events.

Over time, these messages can create positive social pressure and a shared sense of responsibility for traffic safety.



Action 4.2: Continue to prioritize traffic enforcement against aggressive and hazardous driving behaviors (i.e., red light running, speeding, and operating while intoxicated (OWI)) along high crash corridors throughout the city.

The Madison Police Department (MPD) will continue to conduct safety-focused enforcement on high-crash corridors to address the behavioral factors that are most related to serious and fatal crashes for pedestrians in Madison. Continuing to prioritize enforcement against hazardous driving behaviors means not prioritizing enforcement of minor, non-hazardous violations like expired registration or broken taillights. High Visibility Enforcement (HVE), which combines enforcement with coordinated messaging campaigns, has been proven to reduce traffic fatalities.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration manages a communications calendar and also makes national media buys for targeted behaviors that impact pedestrian safety. HVE efforts are most effective when they are accompanied by other safety changes, such as implementation of safety countermeasures.

12 How are Vision Zero, Safe System, and Traffic Safety Culture related? https://chsculture.org/how-are-vision-zero-safe-system-and-traffic-safety-culture-related/

13 Crash not accident pledge. https://crashnotaccident.com/

3 COMFORT

Goal: Provide places to walk and roll that are comfortable, low-stress, and accessible.

The concept of comfort is important to walking and rolling because it directly affects whether people choose to participate in these activities. Comfort encompasses more than physical ease—it also relates to safety, accessibility, and how stressful a route feels. Feeling unsafe is often related to comfort: wide streets, poor lighting, exposure to traffic noise, or the presence of harassment can make walking stressful, even when a route is technically "safe."

Comfort—or discomfort—is influenced by the speed and amount of car traffic, separation from vehicles, sidewalk maintenance, sidewalk width, and other similar factors. Designing for comfort can increase walking and rolling levels. This includes providing sidewalks that are wide enough, crossings that feel safe to use, and buffers between sidewalks and car traffic that increase comfort and provide space for tree canopy and other amenities. It also means ensuring that all sidewalks, paths, and crossings are accessible to people of all ages and abilities. This chapter focuses on design policies, principles, and practices that will make walking and rolling more comfortable.



Objectives

- Provide sidewalks and paths that have adequate space for all users and separation from motor vehicle traffic.
- Develop criteria and processes to implement comfortable street crossings.
- Increase accessibility and ease of use of sidewalks, paths, and crossings for people with disabilities.
- Define and achieve standards for pavement maintenance and snow/ice clearance on the pedestrian network so that sidewalks, crossings, and bus stops are easily used year-round.
- Be responsive to the various psychological and physical comfort needs of Madison's diverse population.

Primary Measures, Targets and Baseline

Measure	Target	Baseline (2025)
Mileage of gaps between low-stress crossings	150 miles by 2035	180 miles
Percentage of reported sidewalk and crossing maintenance issues resolved each year (snow/ice and vegetation-related)	TBD	TBD
Mileage of missing sidewalks on collector and arterial streets (not including sidewalks to be built with new development)	60 by 2035	88 miles
Walking trips to work	Increasing	7.6% (2024)[14]

14 U.S. Census Bureau, "Commuting Characteristics by Sex," *American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S0801*, accessed on February 10, 2026, https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2024.S0801?q=S0801++Madison,+WI.

Comfort: Existing Conditions and Needs

Comfort can be subjective and highly nuanced for different individuals based on their backgrounds and personal experiences. For this plan, comfort was evaluated in terms of sidewalk/path presence, the level of stress people experience when crossing streets, and evaluation of community input.

Sidewalk and Path Presence

The presence—or absence—of sidewalks along streets is a fundamental determinant of comfort. Madison benefits from sidewalks on both sides of most streets. The streets without continuous sidewalks on both sides are mostly in undeveloped areas, some neighborhoods that developed post-World War II, and neighborhoods built before annexation into the City (see Figure 9 and Figure 11).

Beyond simple sidewalk presence, the width of sidewalks and paths is an important factor determining comfort. While Madison does not have complete data on sidewalk width, most sidewalks in the city are at least five feet wide. The City's goal is for sidewalks that abut buildings, such as downtown or on shopping streets like Monroe Street, to be at least eight feet wide.

The importance of width is greater on shared-use paths, where people walking two to three miles per hour share space with people biking 12 to 20 miles per hour. Most shared-use paths in Madison are 10 to 12 feet wide.

Current best practices[15] recommend 12-foot-wide or wider paths in many instances, including areas with higher amounts of walking, biking, and rolling traffic and where the path is a regionally significant bicycle travel corridor. An example of best practices in action is the segment of the Capital City Path between Broom Street and Monona Terrace, which delineates separate spaces for people biking and people walking. Providing additional width on shared-use paths is important for encouraging more walking/rolling and more biking.

Areas around schools often have periods of very high pedestrian and bicycle traffic and are candidates for wider sidewalks and paths.

FIGURE 9 Percent of Street Type Mileage by Sidewalk Presence (Excludes Limited Access Roadways)

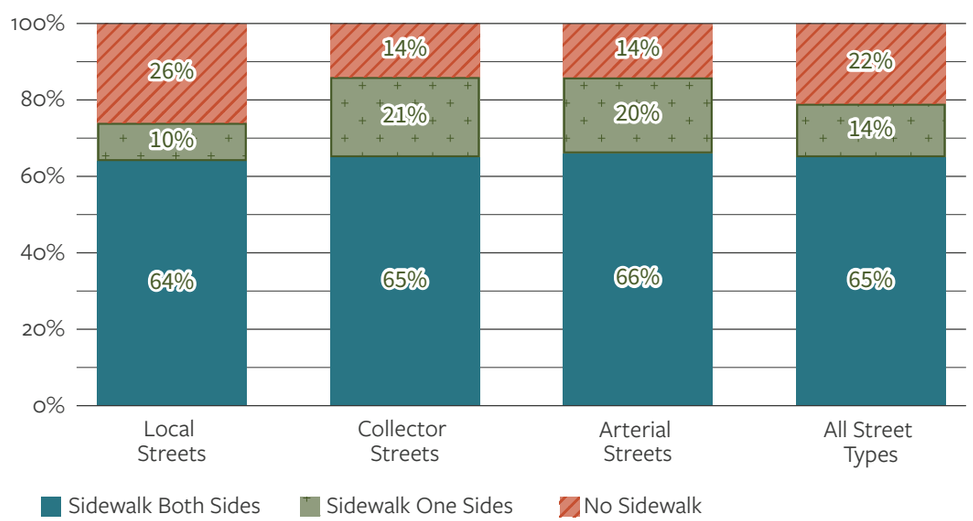
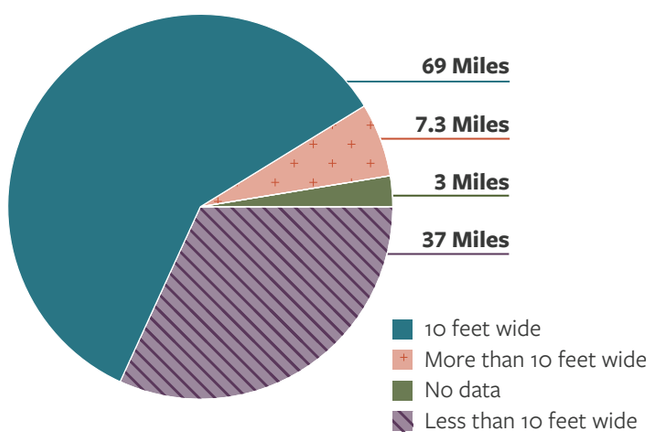
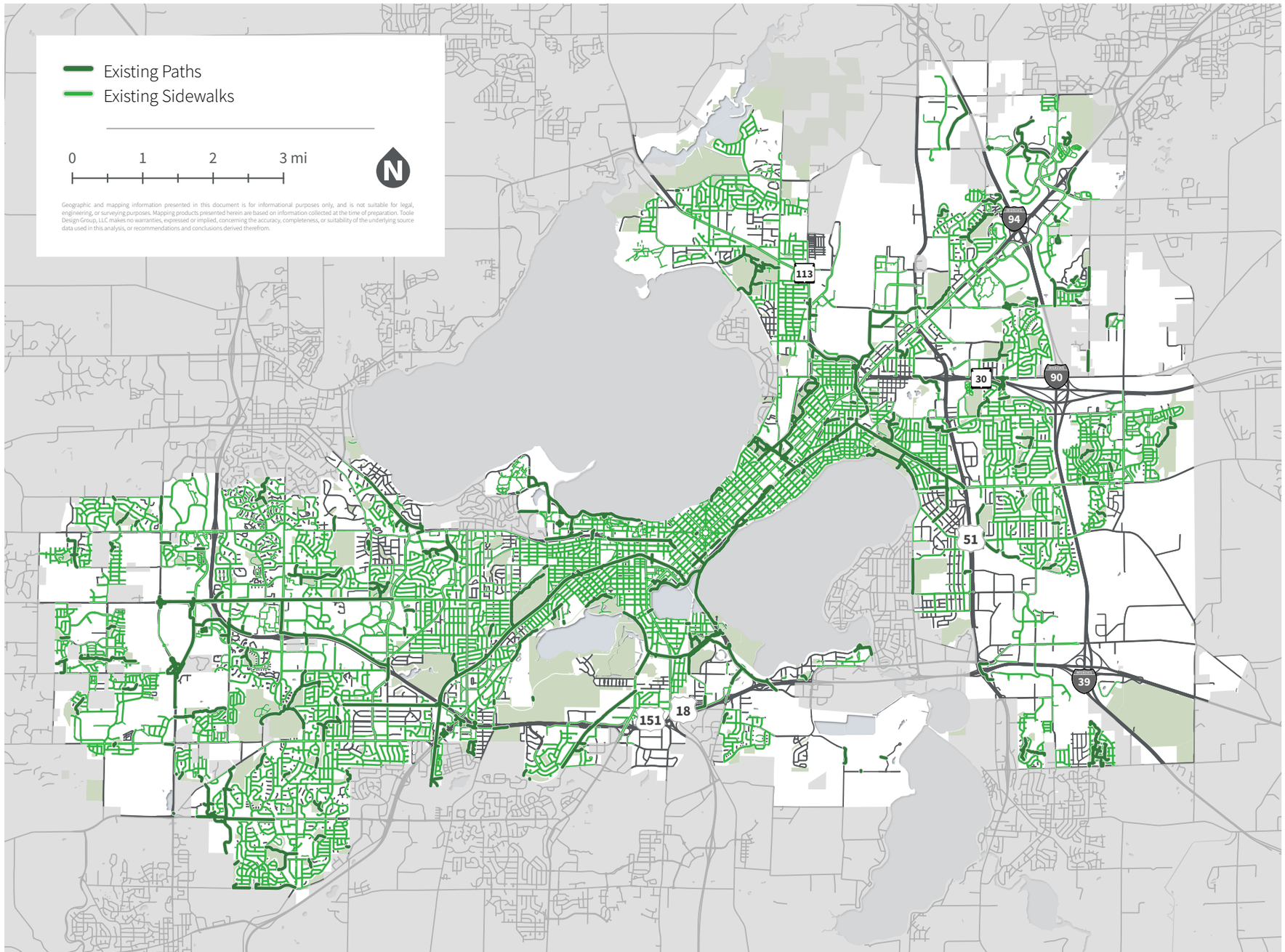


FIGURE 10 Mileage of Existing and Under-Construction Shared-Use Paths (as of April 2025)



15 American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) *Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities, 5th Edition*

FIGURE 11 Existing sidewalks and paths in 2025



Low-Stress and High-Stress Crossings

One way of evaluating comfort is to estimate the level of stress that most people are expected to experience when crossing a street. This is calculated using multiple factors—such as number of lanes, traffic volumes and speeds, presence of signals and stop signs, and presence of medians—to discern the expected comfort at intersections and along streets. Using this data, the comfort level of streets and crossings for Madison was analyzed and stress ratings of one through four were assigned (Figure 12).

Only about 12 percent of crossings in Madison are high stress. However, these high-stress crossings tend to occur near each other along a small subset of busier streets. Crossings of local streets and collector streets are typically low stress. Figure 13 shows the location of high-stress crossings in Madison.

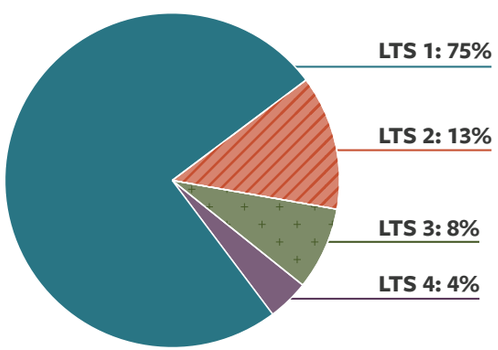
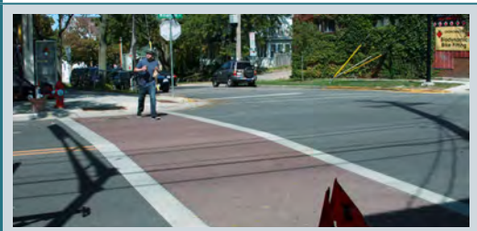
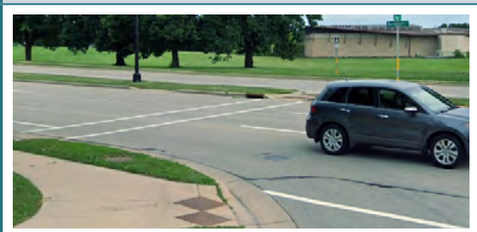
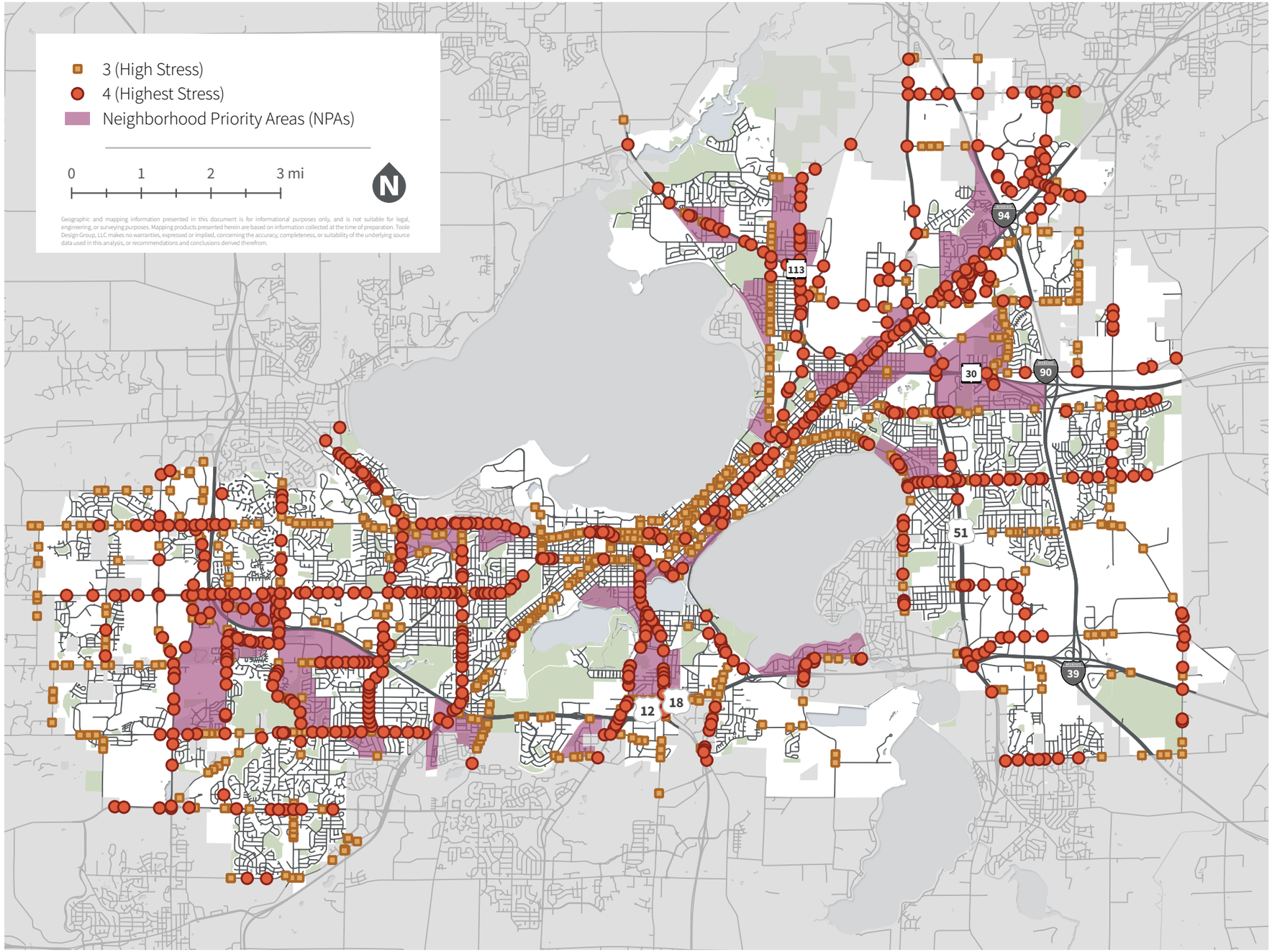


FIGURE 12 Level of Traffic Stress Categories

Stress Rating		Description	Examples	Common Attributes of this Stress Rating
Low Stress Crossings	1	Little to no traffic stress. Requires little attention by the pedestrian to the traffic situation.	 Photo: Ed Jepsen Way (Yahara River) at Main Street	• Narrow street crossing (typically one or two lanes total) • Low speed limit (20 mph) • Low traffic volumes • Median island or curb extensions common • Stop sign or other form of traffic control common
	2	Little traffic stress for most adults. Requires more attention to the traffic situation than young children (ages 10 and younger) may be capable of.	 Photo: N Fairchild Street at W Mifflin Street	• Typical width street crossing (often two lanes total, or two lanes on each side of a median) • Moderately low speed limit (25 mph) • Moderate traffic volumes (or moderately high traffic volumes when a traffic signal or user-activated beacons[16] are present)
High Stress Crossings	3	Moderate stress. A higher level of attention to traffic is needed, and adults may feel some discomfort using this facility.	 Photo: Williamson Street at Dickinson Street	• Wider street crossing (often three or four lanes total) • Moderate speed limits (25 to 30 mph) • Moderate to high traffic volumes • May include median island or curb extensions, but often lack signalization or user-activated beacons
	4	High traffic stress. Only pedestrians with limited route choices would use this crossing.	 Photo: Northport Avenue at Troy Drive	• Wide street crossing (often four or more lanes total) • Higher speed8 limits (30 mph or greater) • High traffic volumes • May include various treatments, but typically lack traffic signals or user-activated beacons.

16 Such as Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs; an example of which is present where W Mifflin Street crosses N Fairchild Street, as shown in the photo above) or Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons (PHBs, an example of which is present where the East Mifflin Bike Boulevard crosses Blair Street).

FIGURE 13 Location of High-Stress Crossings – This map shows all high-stress crossings in Madison which predominately exist on arterial streets.



Identifying High Stress Crossings

Crossing stress was determined using the Pedestrian Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) method, described in Figure 12. This is a systematic approach to evaluate many locations and does not include all possible factors that may influence stress, such as driver behavior, roadway slope, or visibility. Specific locations may vary slightly from the calculated rating. The rating for each intersection is determined by the most stressful crossing at that location.

Path crossings are included in the analysis. Those within 150 feet of a street intersection are evaluated as part of the intersection and the highest stress rating is applied.

Community Input

Because comfort is an experience and can be hard to fully measure, it's important to ask people how they experience comfort and discomfort and what would make it more comfortable to walk and roll in Madison. In an online survey conducted in June and July 2025 (557 responses), people were asked to describe their walking and rolling habits and what factors are important to them for comfort. Overall, the majority of people walk or roll at least a few times a week (85 percent) with more than half (54 percent) walking or rolling on a daily basis.

The primary issues identified—in terms of what limits or creates comfort for people walking and rolling—include interactions with motor vehicle traffic, gaps in the network, and interactions with other non-motorized users.

People feel uncomfortable around motor vehicle traffic because they feel that people drive too fast and too aggressively. To address this issue, people would like safer street crossings and traffic calming.

Gaps in the network create discomfort because they may require walking on the grass or in the street or crossing the street to access a sidewalk. Addressing these gaps and ensuring good maintenance of the facilities are high priorities for people.

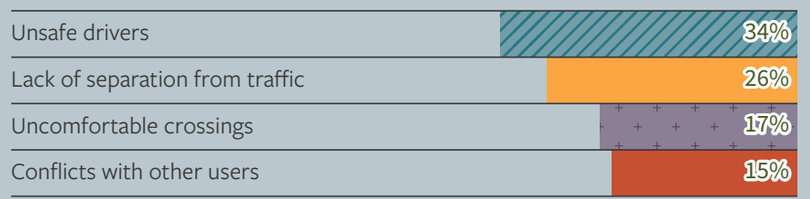
While fewer people identified this issue, conflicts with other users—which may include people riding bikes and e-bikes—is an important consideration.



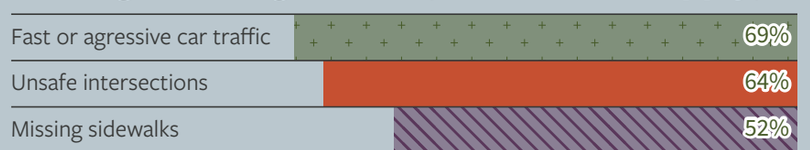
Key Survey Results

An online survey was conducted in June and July 2025 (557 responses) to understand people's walking and rolling habits and factors that shape comfort.

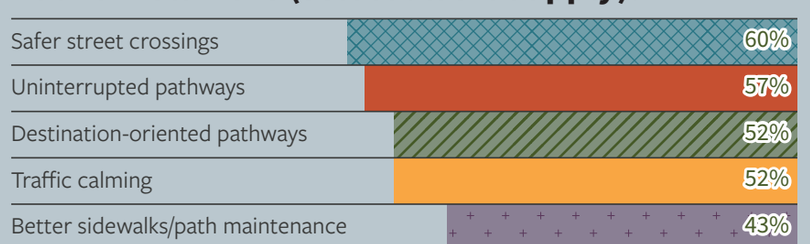
What makes walking uncomfortable for you? (select one)



The biggest obstacles people face when walking or rolling include (select all that apply):



Changes that would make people walk or roll more (select all that apply):



Comfort: Strategies and Actions

This section lists strategies and actions to increase comfort for people walking and rolling in Madison, organized by relevant objectives. For some strategies and actions, their relationship to other plan goals (safety, convenience, and enjoyment) is identified.

Strategy 5: Provide sidewalks and paths that have adequate space for all users and separation from motor vehicle traffic

Action 5.1: Amend the Madison Code of Ordinances to incorporate preferred and minimum sidewalk widths and other key design parameters from the Complete Green Streets Guide to ensure that new streets are constructed with appropriate pedestrian infrastructure.

Currently, new sidewalks on many streets are limited to 5 feet in width without permission from the City Engineer (§10.06). This corresponds to the minimum width laid out for most streets in the Complete Green Streets Guide. However, this width is narrower than the preferred width for several street types. This section of municipal code will be updated to refer to the Complete Green Streets Guide design parameters and this Plan, require the minimum sidewalk widths specified in the Complete Green Streets Guide (see Figure 14), and only require City Engineer approval for sidewalk widths below the minimum width or exceeding the preferred width.

Minimum and preferred sidewalk widths are included in the Complete Green Streets Guide "walk zone" parameters, which include the sidewalk and a 1-foot paved or unpaved buffer between the sidewalk and right-of-way line. Figure 14 is from the Complete Green Streets Guide but is adapted to clearly state the paved sidewalk and path width requirements for each street type.

FIGURE 14 Minimum and Preferred Sidewalk Widths (Modified from Complete Green Streets Guide)

Street Type	Total Walk Zone Width (per side) [A]		Sidewalk Paved Width (per side)		Sidepath Configuration
	Pref.	Min.	Pref.	Min.	
Urban Avenue	9'	6'	8'	5'	Optional [B]
Boulevard	7' if sidewalk	6'	6'	5'	Optional [B]
Parkway	14'	6'	6'	5'	Preferred; 12-14' sidepath on one or both sides [B]
Mixed-Use Connector	9'	6'	8'	5'	Optional [B]
Community Main Street	9'	6'	8'	5'	Optional [B]
Community Connector	7'	6'	6'	5'	Optional; adding a sidepath will usually require reducing the travelway [B]
Mixed-Use Neighborhood Street	9'	6'	8'	5'	Optional [B]
Neighborhood Street	6'	6'	5'	5'	Optional [B]
Neighborhood Yield Street	6' [C]	6' [C]	5'	5'	Optional [B]
Civic Space	13'	10'	12'	9'	N/A
Neighborhood Shared Street	7' [D]	6' [D]	6' [D]	5' [D]	N/A

A Includes 1' typical buffer between sidewalk and right-of-way line.

B If a sidepath is provided, the minimum pavement width is 8' and the preferred is 12-14' depending on volumes. At least 2' clear is required on each side of a sidepath.

C Neighborhood Yield Street could have a sidewalk on only one side in constrained conditions (e.g., "Court" streets).

D An accessible pedestrian space will be maintained year-round, but it might not be a traditional sidewalk.

Action 5.2: Evaluate the adequacy of existing sidewalks in areas of high demand.

In some areas, existing sidewalks may not be adequate for actual or potential demand. The Complete Green Streets Guide recommends sidewalks 10-15 feet wide (compared to the standard 5-foot width elsewhere) in areas with higher pedestrian volumes. The City will develop a policy and process to proactively identify and initiate sidewalk expansion projects. Generally, schools, civic facilities, and some commercial areas are the most likely to result in demand for pedestrian facilities, and higher demand should be met with wider facilities that can accommodate higher volumes of people walking. This process may refer to adjacent land use, or it may use set distances from certain types of land uses as thresholds for providing wider sidewalks.

Action 5.3: Develop a flowchart or table that clearly communicates how shared-use path width is determined, and when dual-track paths (separate paths for walking and biking) are provided.

Several popular paths in Madison can become quite crowded with a variety of users traveling at different speeds. The best practice for addressing user level of comfort on shared use paths is to provide enough width for all users. A standard 10-foot path can typically accommodate two pedestrians walking side by side with space for a bicyclist to pass. The AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities recommends a preferred path width of 12-14 feet, which accommodates higher speed differences between users and allows two or three people to walk together while still providing space for bicyclists to pass. In some very high-volume path sections, City guidance will establish when separate paths for walking and biking are necessary for user comfort.

Action 5.4: Develop a policy on where e-bikes, e-scooters, and other micromobility devices can be used and clearly communicate those regulations to residents.

Increases in the use of e-bikes, e-scooters, and other electrified devices have created positive mobility benefits for many but may also lead to conflicts with pedestrians. The City will evaluate where e-bikes, e-scooters, and other micromobility devices should be used and will develop solutions for managing speeds on shared-use paths and reducing conflicts between pedestrians and e-device users.

Strategy 6: Develop criteria and processes to implement comfortable street crossings

Action 6.1: Develop standards for the desired maximum spacing between low-stress crossings for each street type identified in the Complete Green Streets plan. (Also relates to safety and convenience)

The Complete Green Streets Guide established street types and design parameters for different street types. One of the design parameters left unaddressed in the Guide was the recommended and maximum spacing between low-stress crossings for each street type. The City will develop guidance for maximum spacing between low-stress pedestrian crossings and incorporate the guidance into the Complete Green Streets Guide. Potential distances to consider include:

- Transit routes: a low-stress crossing should be provided within 100 feet of transit stops
- Maximum 600 feet between low-stress crossings for:
  - Urban Avenues, Mixed-Use Connectors, Mixed-Use Neighborhood Streets
  - Boulevards, Community Main Streets, Community Connectors, Neighborhood Streets located **inside** the area bounded by Midvale Boulevard, the Beltline, John Nolen Drive, Starkweather Creek, and Aberg Avenue.
  - Any street type within the Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Overlay District.
- Maximum 1,200 feet between low-stress crossings for:
  - Boulevards, Community Main Streets, Community Connectors, Neighborhood Streets located **outside** the TOD Overlay District **and outside** the area bounded by Midvale Boulevard, the Beltline, John Nolen Drive, Starkweather Creek, and Aberg Avenue.
  - Parkways

Outside of the core and TOD Overlay District areas, crossing opportunities tend to be less frequent, which is part of the reason for setting a larger target maximum distance between low-stress crossings in those locations. Closer spacing between crossings will be considered where appropriate.

What makes a crossing stressful or comfortable?

Crossings can feel stressful when one or more of the following is present:

- Long crossing distance
- Multiple traffic lanes
- High traffic speeds
- Limited visibility
- Few crossing points
- Conflicting turns

Crossings can feel safer when they have:

- Shorter distance
- Fewer lanes
- Slower speeds
- Clear visibility
- Designated crosswalk
- Pedestrian priority

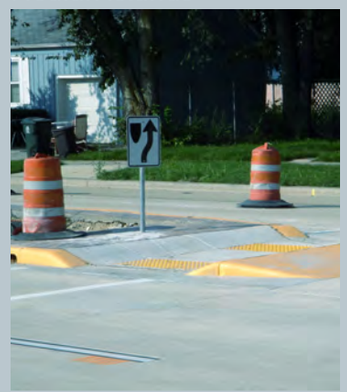
24-Hour Safety and Comfort

Madison's streets are dynamic places that can vary in their perceived safety of comfort throughout the day. Neighborhood streets near schools may have minimal traffic much of the day, but may be chaotic for 15 minutes around school arrival and dismissal. Other streets may have higher amounts of traffic that moves relatively slowly most of the day, but have much faster traffic speeds when there is less traffic on the street. And visibility on all of our streets becomes more challenging when it is dark, raining, or snowing.

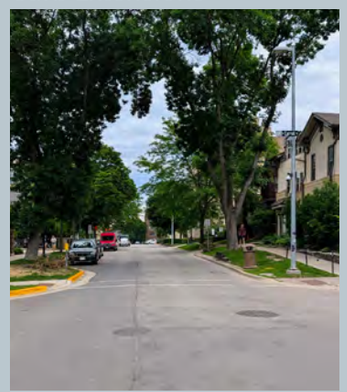
This dynamic nature should be accounted for in street design. Crossing visibility enhancements, street lighting, and other features can ensure that streets are safe and welcoming under constantly changing conditions.

Crossing improvements that can reduce stress include:

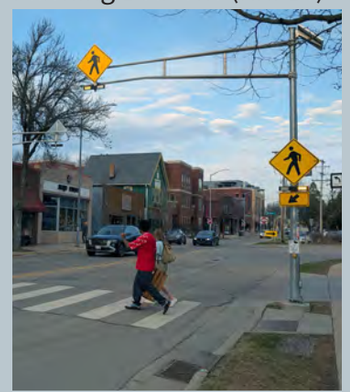
Median Islands



Curb Extensions



Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs)



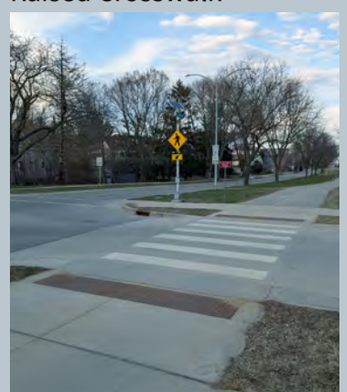
Pedestrian-activated Hybrid Beacon (PHBs)



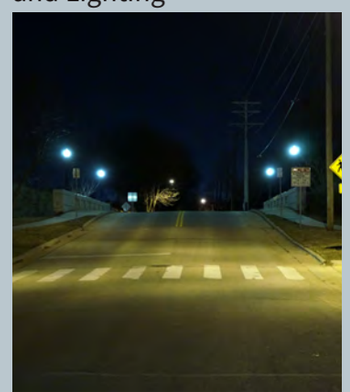
Road Diet



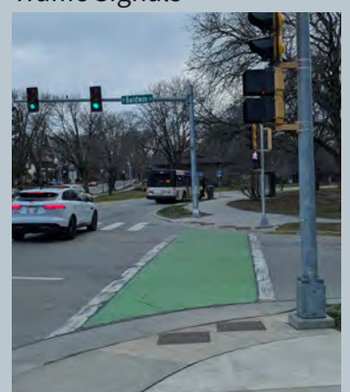
Raised Crosswalk



Improved Markings and Lighting



Traffic Signals



*While not every crossing can be made low stress, many can be enhanced to a certain extent. See Action 6.3.

Action 6.2: Develop a clear, context-based process for determining when various types of crosswalk markings will be installed at intersections and midblock crossings. (Also relates to safety and convenience)

The City of Madison Mobility & Infrastructure Division maintains over 5,000 pedestrian crossings. The City uses two standard crosswalk types, standard (transverse) and high visibility (longitudinal bar or "continental"), to help draw attention to areas where pedestrians cross. Mobility & Infrastructure generally selects crossings with high pedestrian and bicyclist activity for the higher visibility crosswalks, but does not use a systematic approach, which could mean that areas with historical or ongoing underinvestment are not being considered. The City will consider the use of continental markings for all crosswalks across arterial and collector streets and within school zones, particularly at non-signalized locations.

FIGURE 15 Standard Crosswalk Markings (Adapted from Figure 3C-1 from the 11th edition of the MUTCD[17])



17 Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). 2023. *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways*, 11th ed. Washington, DC: FHWA. [Link: https://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/pdfs/11th_Edition/mutcd11thedition.pdf]

Action 6.3: Develop a clear, context-based process for selecting appropriate crosswalk enhancements and countermeasures when implementing intersection and midblock crossing projects. (Also relates to safety and convenience)

Beyond crosswalk markings, the City installs curb extensions, pedestrian refuge islands, and various other safety countermeasures. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the engineering team lacks consistent geometric design standards for a variety of pedestrian safety interventions, including midblock crossings. The City also lacks a clear process for selecting countermeasures when designing a crossing improvement project. The City will develop a context-based process that identifies which locations are candidates for various treatments and outlines criteria and design standards for installing midblock crossings in areas with higher demand and/or long distances between intersections.



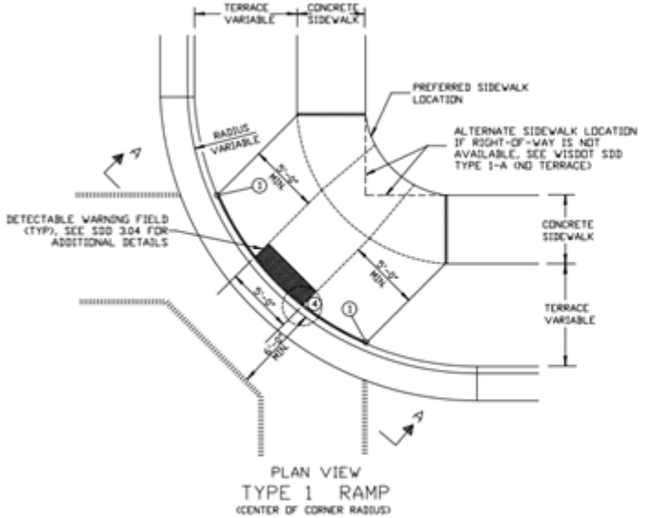
Strategy 7: Increase accessibility and ease of use of sidewalks, paths, and crossings for people with disabilities

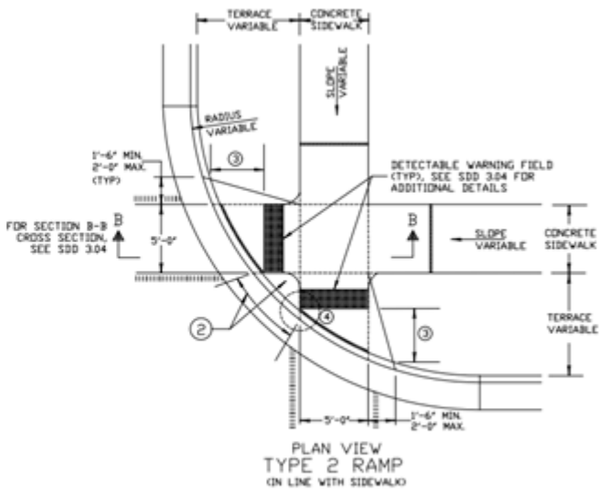
Action 7.1: Use perpendicular curb ramps as the standard ramp design and ensure that all exceptions are comprehensively documented for compliance with PROWAG R304, where existing conditions do not restrict feasibility.

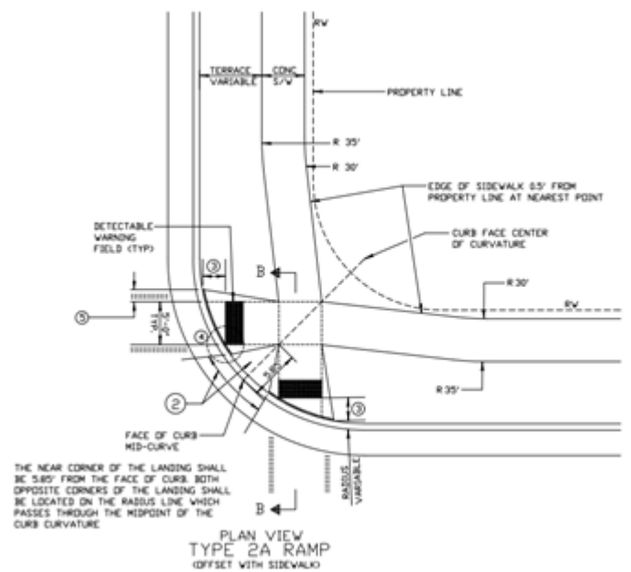
Using perpendicular curb ramps as the standard design is important because they provide a direct, aligned path of travel between the sidewalk and the street, reducing navigation complexity for people with mobility disability or are blind or low vision. Whenever feasible, perpendicular curb ramps will be installed any time curb ramps are reconstructed and exceptions will be documented.

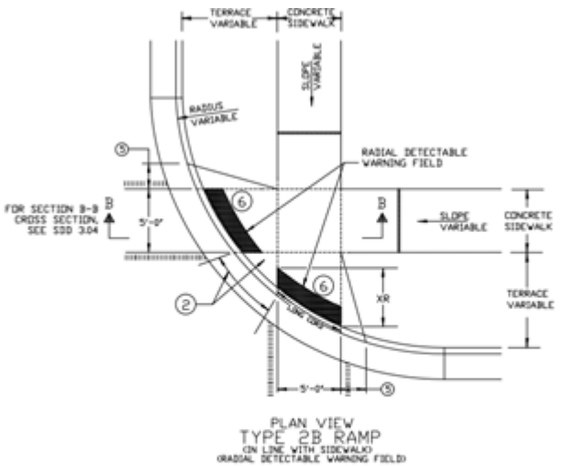
The City of Madison's existing standard details[18] describe two types of curb ramps: Type 1 Ramps are diagonal and point to the center of the intersection, while Type 2 Ramps are perpendicular (Figure 16). There are variants of Type 2 Ramps to address different types of physical constraints. These standard details were amended in 2025 to restrict the use of Type 1 Ramps except in limited spot replacement of existing Type 1 Ramps when no curb work is planned.

FIGURE 16 City of Madison Standard Details for Curb Ramps









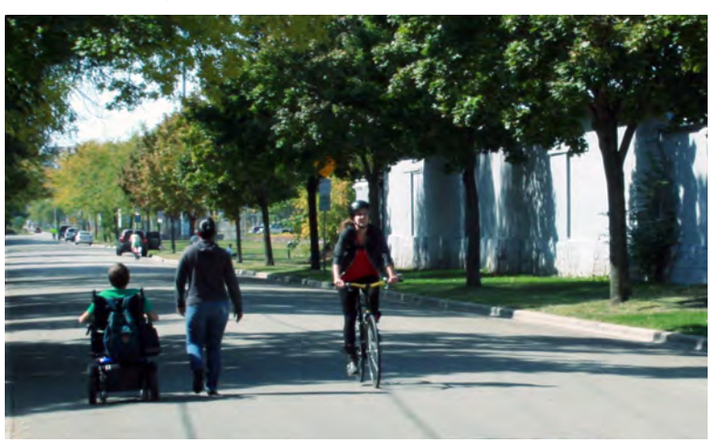
18 https://www.cityofmadison.com/business/pw/documents/StdSpecs/2025/Drawings/3_03.pdf and https://www.cityofmadison.com/business/pw/documents/StdSpecs/2025/Drawings/3_04.pdf

Action 7.2: Formally adopt Public Right of Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG) for all facilities. (Also relates to safety and convenience)

Formally adopting PROWAG ensures all pedestrian facilities—both those designed by the City and those designed by contractors or real estate developers—meet ADA obligations with a consistent, nationally recognized standard, reducing design ambiguity and rework. It also strengthens legal defensibility and funding eligibility by establishing clear, enforceable criteria for planning, design, construction, and maintenance across projects and jurisdictions.

Action 7.3: Continue to monitor progress in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan. (Also relates to safety and convenience)

The City adopted an update to the ADA Transition Plan in December 2025, which identifies barriers to access in all city programs, facilities, and the public right of way, and establishes a plan to address those barriers. The ADA Transition Plan is a thorough and comprehensive document, and the City will continue to monitor progress toward its implementation.



Action 7.4: Develop a prioritization tool for the installation of accessible pedestrian signals (APS)

Accessible Pedestrian Signals have audible and vibrotactile features that help pedestrians who are blind or low vision know when to cross the street. APS are required for all new signals as of January 2025. Typically, the City installs APS when new signals are installed, when significant upgrades are made to existing signals, and at the request of residents with a disability that APS would assist. While this process will eventually result in most signals including APS technology, it will take time, and may not address areas of Madison with the greatest need for APS in the near term. The City will work with local groups that advocate for people with disabilities to develop criteria for selecting future APS locations.

Action 7.5: Improve compliance with existing requirements for temporary pedestrian facilities and elements in the public right-of-way during construction projects.

PROWAG R204 Alternate Pedestrian Access Routes, Transit Stops, and Passenger Loading Zones requires that when a circulation path, transit stop, or loading zone is temporarily not accessible due to construction, maintenance operations, closure, or other similar conditions, an alternate pedestrian access route, transit stop, or loading zone with appropriate signage must be provided. If it is technically infeasible due to site conditions or existing physical constraints, an alternate means of providing access for pedestrians with disabilities is permitted. Alternate Pedestrian Access Routes must comply with PROWAG R303. Any construction or maintenance projects that impact the circulation path, transit stops, or loading zones must provide alternative accessible access for people with disabilities.

Strategy 8: Define and achieve standards for pavement maintenance and snow/ice clearance on the pedestrian network so that sidewalks, crossings, and bus stops are easily used year-round

Action 8.1: Promote reporting of damaged or inaccessible sidewalks using Report-a-Problem. (Also relates to safety)

The annual sidewalk replacement program is an example of a program where Madison excels. The City systematically hires contractors to identify and repair sidewalk defects (cracks, broken sections, and trip hazards), rotating through alder districts on a 10-year cycle. However, because the program occurs only once every 10 years, sidewalks can be damaged or broken and remain so for years unless a resident reports the issue. The City will use its communication channels to make more people aware of the tool and will ensure that funds are available annually to address damage that impacts the accessibility of pedestrian facilities.

Action 8.2: Evaluate the cost to conduct more proactive vegetation maintenance, such as annual drive-by evaluation and mailers, as well as traditional enforcement.

Vegetation along sidewalks and paths requires seasonal maintenance to prevent bushes, trees, and grasses from encroaching on the pedestrian zone. While the City maintains street trees planted in the terrace, it relies on residents to report other vegetation that obstructs pedestrian

facilities. The City will increase public awareness that it relies on people using the Report-a-Problem system to identify vegetation obstructions. Building Inspection will evaluate the potential cost to establish a system for annually evaluating vegetation encroachments during the peak growing season.



Action 8.3: Promote reporting of snow and ice issues, particularly at curb ramps, bus stops, and high-use crossings, using Report-a-Problem. (Also relates to safety)

Madison ordinances require sidewalks and curb ramps to crosswalks to be cleared of snow and ice by noon the day after a snowstorm. The City should work to make more people—especially those with mobility disabilities or are blind or low vision—aware of the Report-a-Problem system to address snow and ice concerns. The City will continue to promptly respond to concerns either by clearing the snow/ice on a city-maintained facility or citing the responsible property owner. The City should continue to maintain the Snow and Ice Removal webpage as a resource.

Action 8.4: Improve winter maintenance coordination and practices between City agencies.

Multiple City agencies maintain paths, sidewalks and bus stops in Madison, including the Streets, Engineering and Parks Divisions. In recent years, additional funding resources were authorized to ensure that primary paths—high volume commuter paths including the Southwest Path and the Capitol City Path—are cleared promptly following a snowfall, including on weekends and holidays. Secondary paths are plowed with sidewalks and bus stops in line with residential sidewalk clearing requirements. It is especially important to promptly clear paths in the TOD Overlay District, which often provide critical connections to transit. Larger snow events often require follow-up clearing for multiple days after snow and ice events despite initial passes being completed within 24 hours. Further, interior park paths that provide access to park spaces are not generally plowed during the winter due to resource constraints and other operational priorities.

Action 8.5: Enhance coordination and practices to better maintain pavement of park paths and short connector paths.

Due to the challenging conditions in which park paths are constructed, growing amounts of aging infrastructure, and competing funding priorities, park paths often have pavement issues such as potholes that may go unaddressed for several months or replacement of the pavement is delayed longer than desirable. While park paths and short neighborhood connector paths are not the main elements of the citywide path network, they are often critical connections for people walking and rolling to transit, schools, and other destinations and should be prioritized. Increasing the operational standards and infrastructure service levels will require additional funding resources. City agencies should continue to coordinate response efforts and adhere to established maintenance standards.

Action 8.6: Compile an annual report summarizing maintenance issues (snow/ice and vegetation-related) and responses to provide metrics that track how well the City is addressing these issues. (Also relates to safety)

For increased accountability and transparency, the City should measure and publicize how well it is addressing seasonal maintenance concerns through various programs, including Report-a-Problem and other more systematic programs the city may implement to address these concerns.

Strategy 9: Be responsive to the various psychological and physical comfort needs of Madison's diverse population

Action 9.1: Continue to allocate more time to engagement in areas of high need. (Also relates to safety and convenience)

In the United States, research consistently shows that many traditionally under-represented populations have higher rates of disability than white populations, often due to less access to healthcare, higher rates of hazardous employment, environmental exposures, and disparities in chronic disease prevention and treatment. [19,20,21] Areas of historic underinvestment in Madison may have similarly higher rates of disability. People with disabilities and members of under-represented populations face greater barriers to public participation and engagement; therefore, efforts to engage residents of these areas need to move slowly, deliberately, and allow for multiple points of engagement.

Action 9.2: Evaluate and track the condition and accessibility of sidewalks and crossings to ensure an adequate state of repair in Neighborhood Priority Areas.

Using the accessibility data of sidewalks and crossings developed for the ADA Transition Plan, the City will track whether there are disparities in accessibility in Neighborhood Priority Areas (described "Neighborhood Priority Areas" on page 8) and measure whether it is making accessibility investments in the areas that need it most.

Action 9.3: Explore demographic variations in how people experience and define comfort and use that knowledge to shape decisions and evaluate outcomes.

The survey conducted for this plan found that under-represented populations and women experience safety differently. These groups may also experience and define comfort differently. Future surveys and studies should collect necessary data to track more fine-grained demographic data, including age, gender, race, and ability, and what characteristics they think make a street or path comfortable. Input and information should also be gathered from youth of various ages and parents of young children about how they experience comfort and their unique needs.

19 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024, July 16). *CDC data shows over 70 million U.S. adults reported having a disability*. https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2024/s0716-Adult-disability.html

20 Smedley, B. D., Stith, A. Y., & Nelson, A. R. (Eds.). (2003). *Unequal treatment: Confronting racial and ethnic disparities in health care*. National Academies Press. https://www.nationalacademies.org/publications/12875

21 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. (2021, September 20). *Study finds exposure to air pollution higher for people of color regardless of region or income*. https://www.epa.gov/sciencematters/study-finds-exposure-air-pollution-higher-people-color-regardless-region-or-income

4 CONVENIENCE

Goal: Build continuous, interconnected pedestrian networks that easily get people to daily destinations.

A pedestrian network—consisting of sidewalks, paths, and crossings—is only useful if it offers people the opportunity to reach their destinations easily and directly. Gaps in the network, or long distances between low-stress crossings, severely degrade the network's quality, and may make some people more likely to use other modes of transportation, such as driving. Gaps can also result in people taking additional risks, often by necessity, when walking along or across a street. Convenience has two primary components: cohesion and directness, and the ideal pedestrian network is both cohesive and direct. Cohesion refers to a network that is continuous and interconnected, letting people reach as many destinations as possible from any point in the city. Directness refers to a network that people can easily use to get around, with low-stress passage and low-stress crossings available along and across every street. Together, cohesion and directness equal convenience.



Objectives

- Proactively address gaps in the pedestrian network (missing sidewalks and high-stress crossings).
- Provide access to destinations for all individuals.
- Leverage street projects and land development projects to expand and enhance the pedestrian network.
- Prioritize projects that connect underserved parts of the city, demonstrate a need, and will continue to provide value.

Primary Measures, Targets and Baseline

Measure	Target	Baseline (2025)
Mileage of gaps between low-stress crossings	150 by 2035	180 miles
Walkability to schools, grocery stores, and transit stops (citywide and in Neighborhood Priority Area)[22]	80% by 2035 (all categories)	Schools: 63% (52% in NPA) Transit: 61% (58% in NPA) Grocery: 55% (47% in NPA)
Mileage of missing sidewalks on collector and arterial streets (not including sidewalks built with new development)	60 by 2035	88 miles
Walking trips to work	Increasing	7.6% (2024)[23]

22 Considers whether or not streets within walking distance (0.5 miles) of the destination have continuous low-stress access (continuous sidewalks and low-stress crossings) to the destination. Measures for schools, grocery stores, and transit stops should be calculated and reported separately.

23 U.S. Census Bureau, "Commuting Characteristics by Sex," *American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables*, Table S0801, accessed on February 10, 2026, https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2024.S0801?q=S0801++Madison,+WI.

Convenience: Existing Conditions and Needs

Evaluating existing conditions for convenience entails identifying the underlying probability that people will walk and roll if given the opportunity (Trip Potential Analysis) and analyzing the amount of connectivity that exists around key daily destinations. Increasing the ability for people to walk and roll offers numerous benefits, including increasing health and supporting local businesses.

Trip Potential Analysis

This analysis identifies where people are more likely to walk or roll using destination data and population data to estimate current activity levels and to model opportunities for short trip mode shifts. The Trip Potential Analysis uses data to identify the areas where walking and biking activity is high—or would be high if more safe places to walk or bike were provided. The analysis includes seven layers, described in Figure 16, and a composite of the seven factors.

The results of the Trip Potential Analysis are shown in Figure 17. The composite trip potential map identifies the highest trip potential in areas already known as walkable:

- State Street, UW campus, eastern Regent Street, upper Monroe Street, and upper Park Street
- University Avenue near UW Hospital and VA Hospital
- Eastern Williamson Street, Schenk's Corners, Union Corners
- Hilldale Area

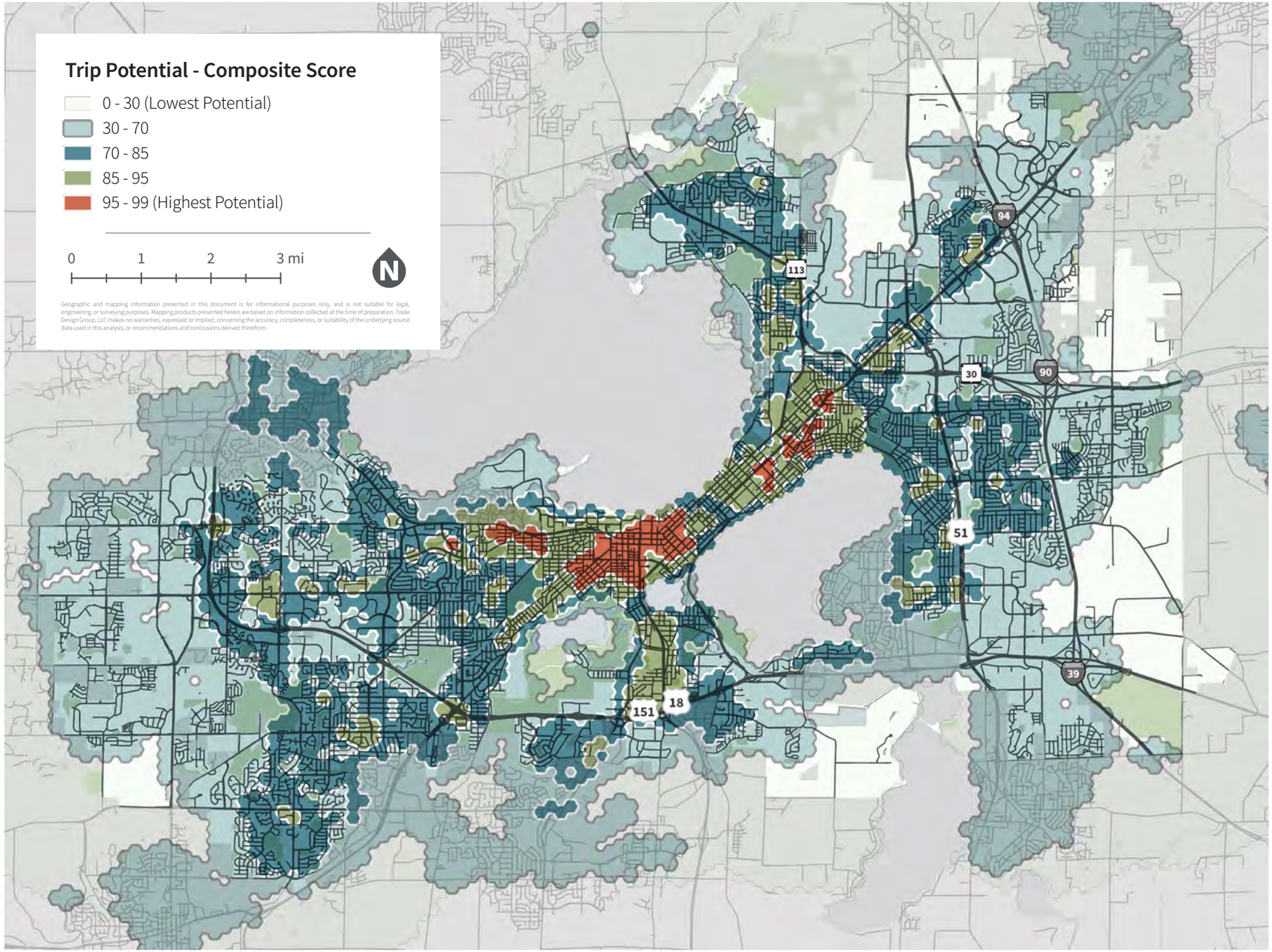
However, the analysis also identified several other areas with a high walk potential that have historically not been prioritized as areas for walking and rolling, including:

- West Towne Mall area
- Raymond Road at Whitney Way
- South Park Street
- North Sherman Avenue
- East Washington Avenue at Stoughton Road
- Sandberg Woods / Independence Lane
- Cottage Grove Road at Dempsey Road
- Pflaum Road

FIGURE 17 Trip Potential Analysis Factors

Factor	Description
Population	Where people live, measured as population density. People living in households without a car are counted twice to prioritize their reduced mobility options.
Jobs	Where people work, measured as employment density.
Urban Form	Where the built environment encourages more walking and biking, measured by the density of the street grid.
Transit	Where transit stop density is highest, with Bus Rapid Transit lines receiving extra weighting to reflect higher use than local routes.
Destinations	Where daily destinations are located. Includes grocery stores, retail stores, libraries, parks, restaurants, cafes, and bars.
Education	Where K-12 schools, colleges, and universities are located.
Mobility	Where trips under 2 miles in length (according to Replica, a Big Data traffic model) are most likely to occur. These are trips that could happen by walking or biking.
Composite	An equally weighted composite of the above factors.

FIGURE 18 Trip Potential Analysis



Pedestrian Access Analysis

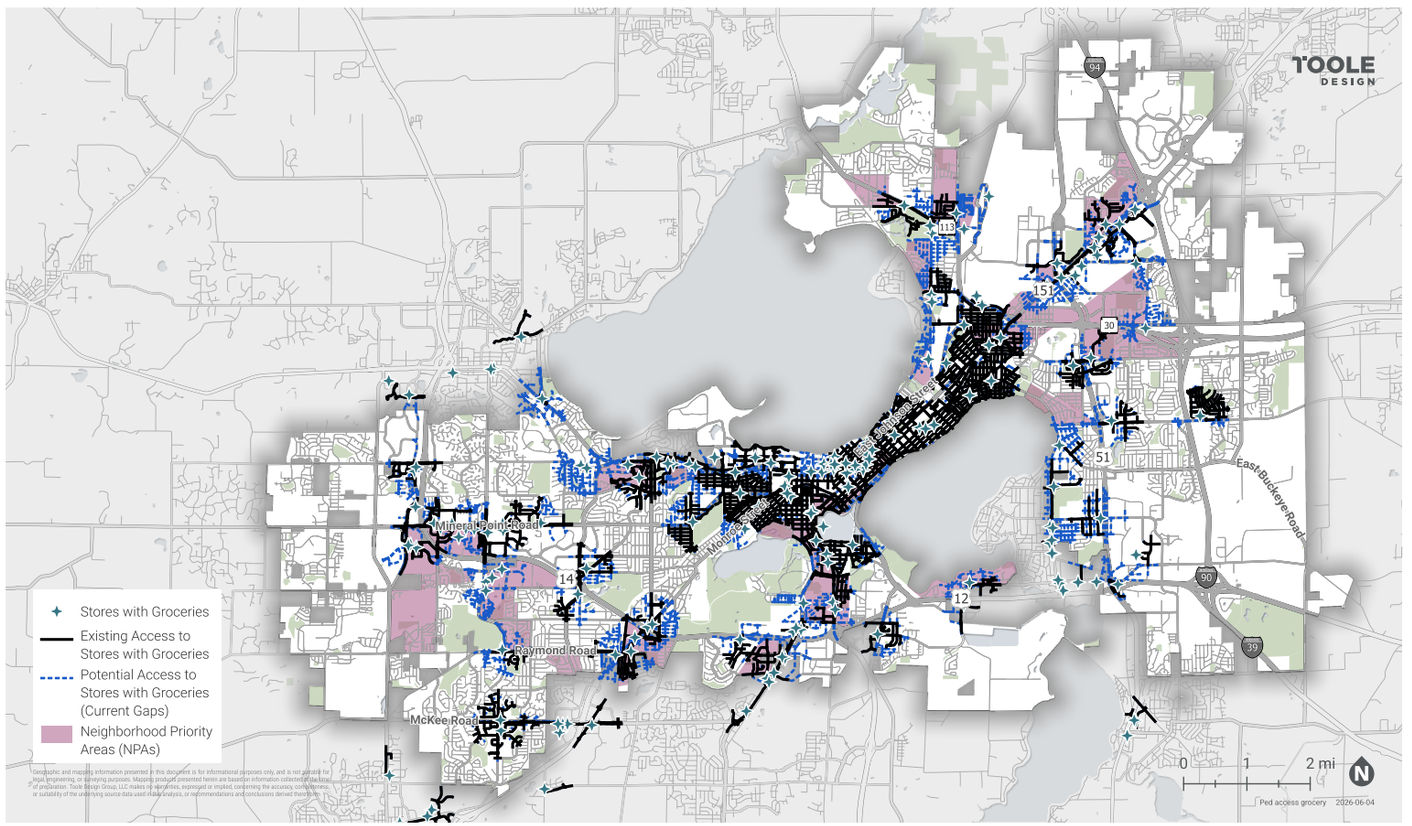
People walk for a variety of reasons, but some of the most common trips people take on a daily basis are to nearby schools, places to buy groceries (supermarkets, convenience stores, etc.), and transit stops. Additionally, the City has goals to improve pedestrian access, such as the Parks Division's goal that all residents be within a 10-minute walk of a park. This analysis identifies how well people can currently access these destinations by walking and rolling, based on the presence of high-stress crossings and sidewalks.

This analysis was performed for five destination types: elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, places to buy groceries (supermarkets, convenience stores), and transit stops. A series of maps was produced to show the current accessible areas (within one-half mile), and the potential access areas. The potential access areas identify places that would have access to the destination if sidewalks were complete and low-stress crossings were provided. These maps are provided in the separate Summary of Existing Conditions and Issues report.

Only about 12 percent of crossings in Madison are high stress. However, these high-stress crossings tend to occur near each other along a small subset of busier streets and transit routes. These result in gaps between comfortable crossings, thereby creating barriers that limit access to important daily destinations. The longest gaps between comfortable crossings are often in Neighborhood Priority Areas, along streets like Fish Hatchery Road, East Washington Avenue, and Northport Drive. These crossing gaps, combined with missing sidewalk segments, result in a lack of walkable access to daily destinations in many parts of Madison. Areas further from downtown tend to have worse access, in part because of the post-1940s development patterns that have large blocks and many neighborhoods without sidewalks.

This analysis revealed disparities in access. Overall, places within NPAs have worse walking access than areas outside of NPAs for all five destination types evaluated. Furthermore, people living within NPAs are less likely to have most of these destination types within walking distance. The exception is that NPAs are often closer to places to buy groceries (including supermarkets and convenience stores). That said, this analysis was performed on NPAs and the city as a whole. There are individual NPAs with markedly worse access, and non-NPA areas with significantly higher access to various individual destination types.

FIGURE 19 Example Map from the Pedestrian Access Analysis[24]



24 Note: Maps from the Pedestrian Access Analysis can be found in the Existing Conditions Summary document provided on the City's Pedestrian Plan webpage: https://www.cityofmadison.com/traffic-engineering/biking-walking/get-walking/pedestrian-plan

Convenience: Strategies and Actions

This section lists strategies and actions to increase convenience for people walking and rolling in Madison, organized by relevant objectives. For some strategies and actions, their relationship to other plan goals (safety, comfort, and enjoyment) is identified.

Strategy 10: Identify and proactively address gaps in the pedestrian network (missing sidewalks and high-stress crossings)

Action 10.1: Provide new or enhanced crossings in areas with significant gaps between low-stress crossings. (Also relates to safety and comfort)

Ideally, all crossings should be low-stress (see Figure 12), but to address crossing gaps, the City will focus on providing low-stress crossings in areas with significant distance between existing low-stress crossings. For the average person, a ¼-mile (1,320 feet) walk takes five minutes, although this may vary with age and ability. So, if the nearest low-stress crossing is 660 feet away, this can add 5 minutes and ¼ mile of distance to a person's walk.

Chapter 3 of this Plan recommends standards for maximum spacing between low-stress crossings (600 feet in the core of the city and 1,200 feet elsewhere). Gaps that exceed these distances are identified in Figure 20. The City will prioritize building new or enhanced crossings in these gap areas to provide low-stress pedestrian access.

Many of these crossing gaps also overlap with (or form the boundaries of) Neighborhood Priority Areas; addressing crossings in these areas will also promote balanced access to the pedestrian network throughout Madison.

Action 10.2: Complete the sidewalk network by building missing sidewalk segments along arterial and collector streets.

Madison has excellent sidewalk coverage, with 86 percent of busier streets (arterial and collector streets) having sidewalks on one or both sides. However, Madison's policy is to have sidewalks on both sides of all arterial and collector streets. Currently, only 66 percent of arterial streets and 65 percent of collector streets have sidewalks on both sides. There are approximately 88 miles of missing sidewalks on arterial streets, such as East Washington Avenue and Old Sauk Road, and on collector streets, like Old Middleton Road and Troy Drive. While some of these missing sidewalks will be added as part of roadway projects, the City will proactively address these gaps by installing sidewalks as standalone projects every year until all 88 miles of missing sidewalk have been constructed (see Figure 21).

Along major streets in areas of future development, sidewalks will be built by the developers as required by Madison's subdivision ordinance. The map in Figure 20 does not show gaps on those streets.

Although not included in the 88 mile total, there are numerous locations where local streets without sidewalks intersect arterial and collector streets. These locations should also be prioritized for retrofits.

Action 10.3: Clearly communicate how the pedestrian network will be expanded into neighborhoods without sidewalks, including areas that are newly attached and planned to be attached, via retrofitting sidewalks or other appropriate pedestrian accommodations onto these streets.

Not every neighborhood street has sidewalks. Some were built without sidewalks while part of the City of Madison, while others were developed as part of communities that have since been annexed into Madison. Residents should expect that all city streets will eventually have sidewalks on both sides. The City will clearly communicate the timing of sidewalk projects and how they will be implemented, such as including improvements with other infrastructure projects or undertaking standalone projects, which may be tied to available funding. Clear communication about the expansion of the pedestrian network into different areas of the city will make sidewalk network expansion more transparent and predictable to residents.

The City will continue to clearly communicate to residents that property owners are not assessed for new sidewalk construction.

FIGURE 20 Map of Crossing Project Areas

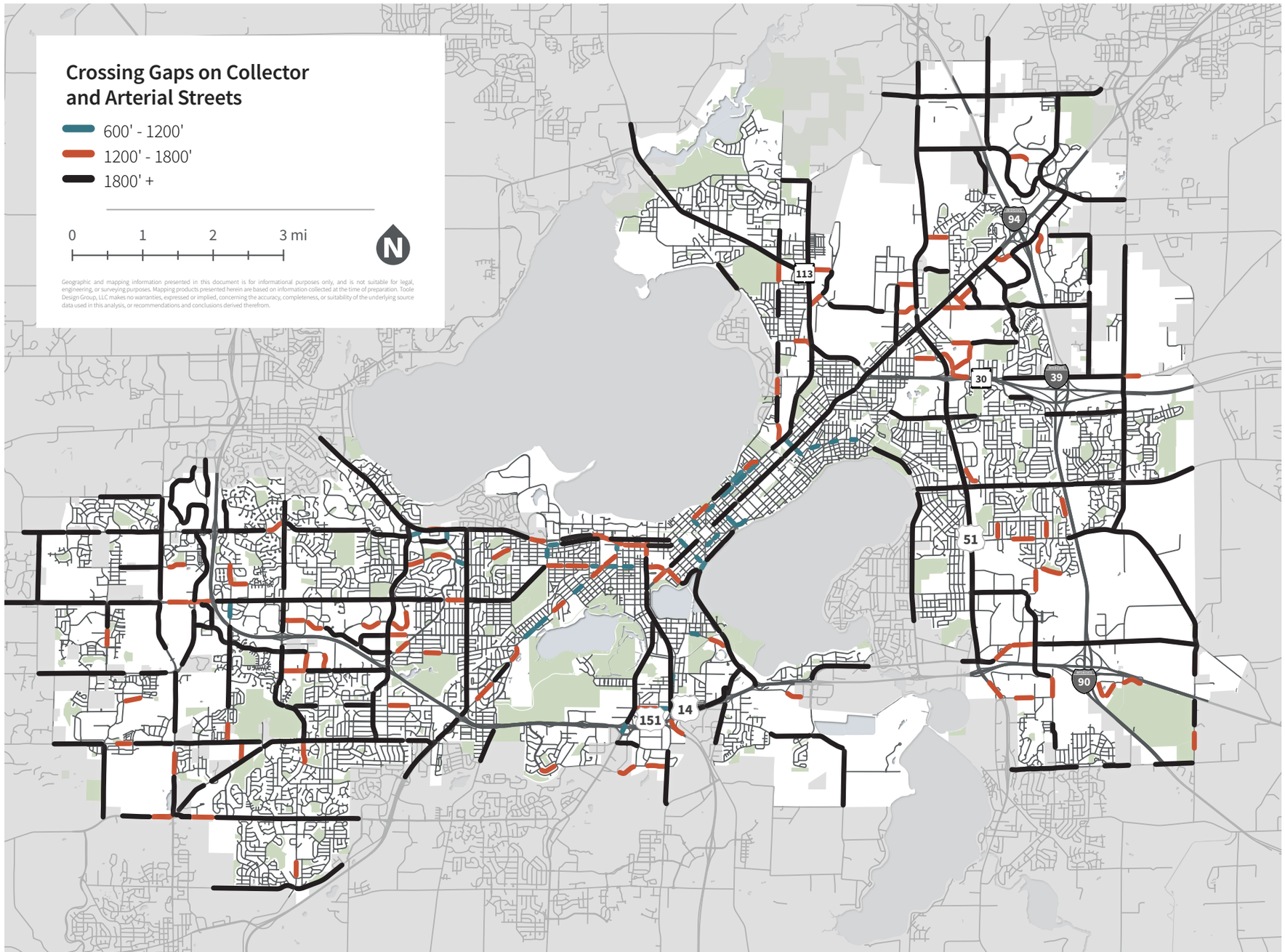
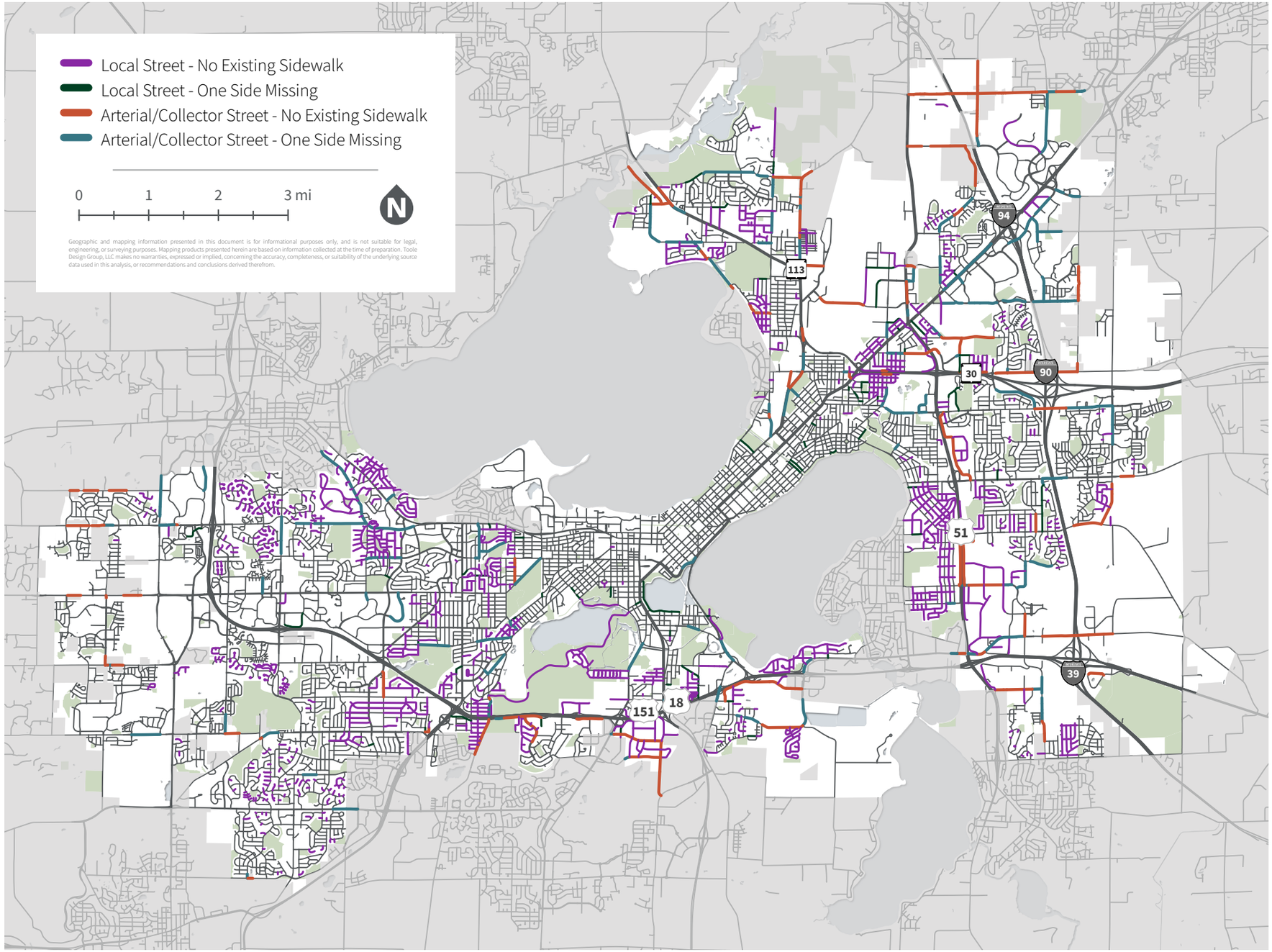


FIGURE 21 Map of Sidewalk Gaps



Strategy 11: Provide access to destinations for all individuals

Action 11.1: Expand and connect the pedestrian network to daily destinations such as schools, transit, places to buy food, parks, and services and goods.

Many areas of Madison—especially those built before the mid-20th century and in newer mixed-use neighborhoods—allow people to reach daily destinations on foot. Other parts of the city, particularly those with predominantly single-use development, have fewer nearby destinations, wider spacing between streets, and often lack continuous pedestrian connections to those destinations. Figure 17 reveals higher levels of potential demand for walking in some of these areas, especially clustered around destinations such as schools or commercial centers such as East Towne Mall and West Towne Mall. The City will improve walking access in these areas by providing high-quality, connected pedestrian routes and crossings that link homes to schools, transit stops, grocery stores, parks and other essential destinations, regardless of neighborhood context.

Action 11.2: Proactively reconnect communities through enhanced crossings. (Also relates to safety)

Some neighborhoods in Madison—many of which are in Neighborhood Priority Areas—are cut off from destinations and other neighborhoods by transportation infrastructure. For example, the Darbo-Worthington neighborhood is bounded by East Washington Avenue, Highway 30, and a rail line; the Allied Drive neighborhood is cut off from adjacent neighborhoods by Verona Road; and the Badger Rock neighborhood is cut off by the Beltline and US-14 (southern extension of Park Street). Railroads and highways often create barriers that can be challenging to overcome without significant investment. Providing adequate pedestrian access across barriers like these often entails building grade-separated crossings, like the recently opened Autumn Ridge Path, which includes a pedestrian and bicycle bridge over Highway 30.

Arterial streets—along which many of the high-stress crossings and crossing gaps identified in this plan are located—also create barriers. These arterials were often designed to maximize the number of vehicles they can carry, and not enough attention was paid to whether people could safely cross on foot. As a result, some of the streets that provide the most mobility for people driving create barriers to people walking. These barriers are disproportionately likely to be in Neighborhood Priority Areas, which contain higher percentages of high-stress crossings and crossing gaps than other areas.

Depending on the specific context, different interventions may be appropriate to provide or improve pedestrian crossings. These improvements can be standalone projects to reconnect neighborhoods or can be timed to coincide with future street projects. When the transportation infrastructure is not owned by the City, the City will work with the appropriate agency to address the concern.

Action 11.3: Strengthen wayfinding systems to help pedestrians better understand how to get to key destinations and to/from major transit stops.

A strong wayfinding system provides consistency and clarity along every step of the user trip, including the planning stage, when people are determining whether they can walk or use transit to get to their destination. Wayfinding should integrate with and promote the use of digital resources such as online maps and applications via the use of QR codes or NFC tags, and the use of real-time arrival information at transit stops. Wayfinding should also use landmarks and environmental cues that are consistent across modes of transportation; for example, using the image of the capitol building to represent downtown Madison and the image of Bascom Hall to represent UW-Madison. Larger community-level parks, including Elver, Vilas, Tenney, Warner, Rennebohm, and Olbrich, should be included in future wayfinding efforts. The City will also provide signage or other environmental cues to help guide pedestrians between major destinations that are several blocks from a BRT station, such as Camp Randall Stadium or Monona Terrace.

Strategy 12: Leverage street projects and land development projects to expand and enhance the pedestrian network

Action 12.1: Provide sidewalks and appropriate crossing opportunities as part of every street improvement project in Madison. (Also relates to safety and comfort)

The City's 2009 Complete Streets policy affirmed the City's commitment to Complete Streets—a philosophy for designing streets to meet the needs of all users, especially people walking and rolling, which includes providing sidewalks on all streets. This led to the current City policy that mandates evaluating streets for sidewalk installation as part of the reconstruction and resurfacing processes. If no sidewalks exist, their construction will be evaluated. Existing sidewalks are to be surveyed for compliance with ADA curb ramp guidelines. In practice, the City has sometimes not included sidewalk construction on street projects due to challenges including topography or due to property owner opposition. This has led to gaps in the sidewalk network, which in turn creates accessibility issues. Moving forward, the City commits to providing sidewalks and appropriate crossings as part of every major street improvement project and will coordinate with adjacent residents and neighborhood groups to find collaborative solutions.

Sidewalk design will adhere to the Complete Green Streets Guide, which includes sidewalk width parameters for all streets in Madison depending on their classification. As street improvement projects are planned and designed, both the minimum and preferred walk zone widths will be considered in context, including the street's classification and the priority of its walk zone. Regarding minimum and preferred widths, the Guide states that:

"…while minimum widths are identified, applying only the minimums for each zone in order to avoid making tradeoffs is not a good approach because it erases the priority between zones and results in a street design that does not function well for any use."

This Plan recommends maximum distances between low-stress crossings, ranging from 600-1,200 feet depending on location and street classification (see Chapter 3). A low-stress crossing should be provided within at least 100 feet of every transit stop. The Complete Green Streets Guide includes guidance for specific treatments to lower crossing stress, including signal timing, pedestrian refuge islands, curb extensions, road diets, and raised crosswalks and intersections. For each street classification, appropriate and potentially appropriate treatments are identified.

Providing sidewalks and crossing treatments are the perfect opportunity to "right-size" streets, one of the core Complete Green Streets concepts:

*"**Right-sized Streets**: Streets that are not overbuilt. Often new street construction has provided additional capacity (parking, travel lanes) that might be needed in the future. This has created streets prone to speeding, long pedestrian crossing distances, and neighborhood streets that draw traffic. Streets should be designed for **today's** needs, with additional right of way reserved for the future if needed."*



Example of a compromise solution. This street reconstruction project on Dean Avenue narrowed the roadway to allow the addition of sidewalks without requiring right-of-way acquisition or removal of mature trees.

Action 12.2: Develop a flowchart that clearly communicates which types of street projects provide opportunities to add sidewalks and crossings. (Also relates to safety)

The City's policy is to include sidewalks on both sides of all streets, and to add missing sidewalks as part of street projects. However, some types of street projects (such as restriping) offer limited opportunities for adding new sidewalks. A flowchart detailing which types of street projects are candidates for including the addition of sidewalks will help the City expand the network transparently and with consistency. In general, larger street projects with more expansive scopes should include more ambitious sidewalk projects. Reconstruction projects disturb the street surface to varying degrees and are good opportunities to construct sidewalks as part of the same project. If one of these large projects calls for narrowing travel or parking lanes, some of that space should be used for a new sidewalk. Conversely, resurfacing projects minimally alter the street surface and therefore may not be good candidates to include new sidewalk construction projects.

The flowchart will also explain how to address crossing gaps. The flowchart should be included in the Complete Green Streets Guide the next time it is amended.

Action 12.3: Encourage community and site development patterns and land uses that are conducive to pedestrian travel.

At its core, a convenient pedestrian network requires low-stress routes that are both continuous and interconnected. A low-stress route is not convenient if it requires going far out of the way to reach a destination. At the same time, denser, mixed use development can encourage more walking by providing destinations that are easily accessible by foot from nearby residences. In areas that already contain accessible low-stress routes and mixed uses, plans should focus on how to incorporate increased density so that residents of all income levels can access those routes. New developments will be planned to provide high-quality pedestrian networks, with pedestrian facilities on both sides of all streets. These development patterns will be reinforced through the Area Plan process, which is guiding the development of 12 plans to cover the entire City and its future growth areas. Each plan will contain a Generalized Future Land Use map. These maps represent future visions for every parcel of land in the City and are intended to guide decisions on zoning and development proposals. Adopting plans that call for pedestrian-friendly land use patterns establishes an expectation for new development that is pedestrian-friendly, whether on undeveloped land or as part of previously developed infill projects.

While the Area Plans establish visions and guide zoning decisions, the City's subdivision regulations and zoning ordinance together govern the division and development of land. The City's subdivision regulations currently support compact, high-quality development, which is generally conducive to pedestrian travel. These regulations require that sidewalks and other facilities for non-vehicular travel be built when streets are built. This ensures that people walking and driving are afforded the same convenience and connected networks. The subdivision regulations also regulate street and block design to encourage connectivity. Blocks are generally limited to 500 feet in length, although they may be longer under certain circumstances.[25] When a new block is more than 900 feet long, the Plan Commission may require a midblock crossing at least 10 feet wide that provides pedestrian access across the street and through the block. This should be revised to state that in these circumstances, providing midblock crossings should be the norm.

Action 12.4: Revise the subdivision regulations to require dedication of right-of-way for future shared-use paths.

The City's subdivision regulations require that developers of new subdivisions install sidewalks or other facilities on existing streets at a subdivision's perimeter. This requirement provides pedestrian connections from new subdivisions to their immediate surroundings. Path dedications will align with the All Ages and Abilities (AAA) Bike Network recommendations whenever possible.

Strategy 13: Prioritize projects that connect underserved parts of the city, demonstrate a need, and will continue to provide value

Action 13.1: Prioritize connectivity and access in Neighborhood Priority Areas.

The Neighborhood Priority Areas in this Plan include neighborhoods with higher densities of people with low incomes and traditionally under-represented populations. They are often neighborhoods that have historically received less investment, which has compounded into continued and ongoing disparities, including disproportionate disconnection from the rest of the City and different safety perceptions and outcomes. Addressing these imbalances will require a concerted effort to

25 Cul-de-sacs are generally not allowed per MGO 16.23(6)1. a. However, when allowed, they are limited to 600 feet in length and require pedestrian access through them.

listen and direct investment where it is most needed. Prioritizing investments in NPAs reinforces other goals, because these areas contain disproportionate numbers of high-stress crossings, crossing gaps, and streets on the high-injury network.

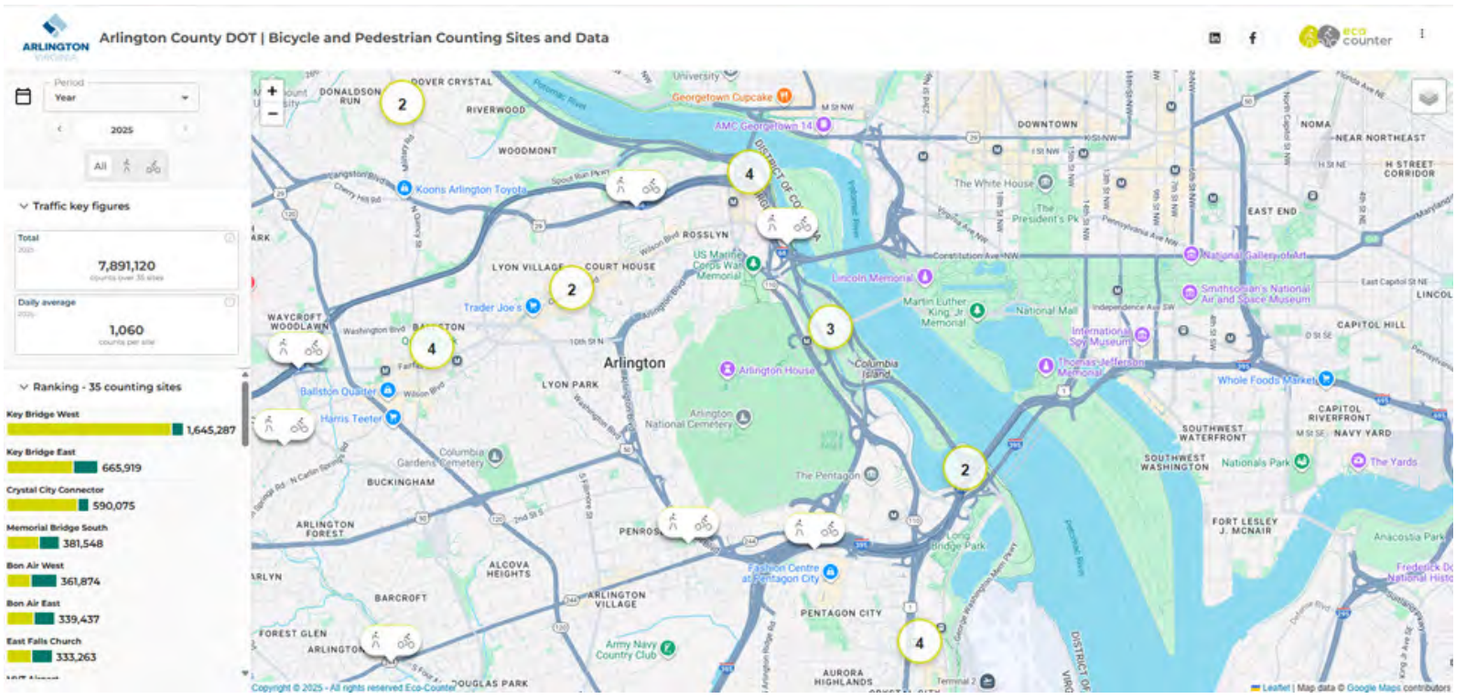
Action 13.2: Use a data-driven approach to objectively prioritize pedestrian network projects.

When implementing the pedestrian network projects illustrated in Figure 20 and Figure 21, decisions should consider objective data—such as safety issues, pedestrian trip potential, and proximity to key destinations—framed in community values. In other words, the City will use a data-driven prioritization method rooted in the community input that shaped this Plan's goals of safety, comfort, convenience, and enjoyment. In addition to objective analysis, the City needs to evaluate individual projects before finalizing decisions, especially within NPAs to ensure that community needs are considered.

To address crossing gaps, the City will focus on providing low-stress crossings in areas with significant distance between existing low-stress crossings. These primarily consist of locations where the distance between low-stress crossings is greater than ¼-mile. Because many of these locations are in or adjacent to Neighborhood Priority Areas, lowering the stress of these crossings increases access to the pedestrian network in areas with the greatest need.

Action 13.3: Continue to collect data on pedestrian activity to understand walking use and travel patterns in various contexts and locations across the city. (Also relates to safety, comfort, convenience)

Accurate data on pedestrian activity over time will allow the City to monitor progress toward implementing this plan. The simplest version of this data is numerical counts at certain times and locations. This can be done either manually or with automated systems. The City has two visual bike counters and has pedestrian counters installed along State Street and King Street downtown. The City also conducts annual screenline counts that count all modes of travel at selection locations. The City will install additional permanent automated counters that can capture all modes automatically, or acquire movable data collection devices that can be rotated between different locations. This data can be used to understand who is using the pedestrian network and how pedestrian use changes over time or with respect to specific events or projects. This can be compared with project types to determine how different types of projects resulted in different changes to pedestrian travel.



Arlington County, VA, uses 35 automated counters to record pedestrian and bicycle counts

5 ENJOYMENT

Goal: Create places to walk and roll that are welcoming and interesting, ensuring that everyone feels that they belong and are legitimate users of the transportation system.

While safety, comfort, and convenience are the essential elements for creating a basic functioning pedestrian system, the concept of enjoyment spans and enhances those essential elements and determines whether the pedestrian system is merely functional or if it truly betters people's lives. Creating joy for people walking and rolling is a complex task that slowly develops through a combination of government actions, community development, the natural environment, and individual perception. There is already a high level of enjoyment for walking and rolling in Madison, but opportunities exist to expand joyful experience, create new generators of joy, and ensure they reflect Madison's unique and diverse community.



Objectives

- Encourage people to walk more often and for more of their daily needs by increasing access to new destinations and places.
- Enhance the look and feel of streets and paths to make walking and rolling enjoyable.
- Make places to walk visually attractive and reflective of community preferences and needs.

Primary Measures, Targets and Baseline

Measure	Target	Baseline (2025)
Walking trips to work	Increasing	7.6% (2025)[26]

26 U.S. Census Bureau, "Commuting Characteristics by Sex," *American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S0801*, accessed on February 10, 2026, https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2024.S0801?q=S0801++Madison,+WI.

Enjoyment: Existing Conditions and Needs

Enjoyment is not directly measurable, so this assessment considers data on how often people walk and roll and survey data where respondents described their level of enjoyment, what they enjoy about walking and rolling today, and what would make them enjoy it more.

How often people walk and roll

How regularly people walk and roll is one way to evaluate enjoyment. While people may walk and roll out of necessity, higher levels of pedestrian activity is an indication that people are choosing this way of travel over other options, such as driving.

The American Community Survey (ACS) is a national survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. This survey asks people how they travel to work. While the mode people take to work only captures a fraction of total walking and rolling activity, it is one of the more significant data points available. According to the ACS data,[27] approximately 7.6 percent of employed residents walked to work in 2024. In comparison, an estimated 2.9 percent biked to work and 20.5 percent worked from home. The rate of walking to work has declined since a 2019 high of 9.1 percent (in 2019, only 4.7 percent of people worked from home).

Another source of information on walking and rolling activity levels is Replica data, which uses big data sources to create large-scale models of multimodal travel activity. According to Replica[28], approximately 1.2 million trips[29] of all types happen in Madison on a typical weekday. Approximately 15 percent (184,000) of these trips are walking trips. The median length of these walking trips is 0.4 miles, but 24 percent of walking trips are over 1 mile in length. People with household incomes below $25,000 per year are twice as likely to walk than people with higher incomes. While people with only one household vehicle or no vehicles are nearly twice as likely to walk, people in households with two or more vehicles still walk at a high rate. Replica data also indicates that overall walking for transportation has increased since 2019. This contrasts

FIGURE 22 Madison Residents Walking to Work (2019-2024)

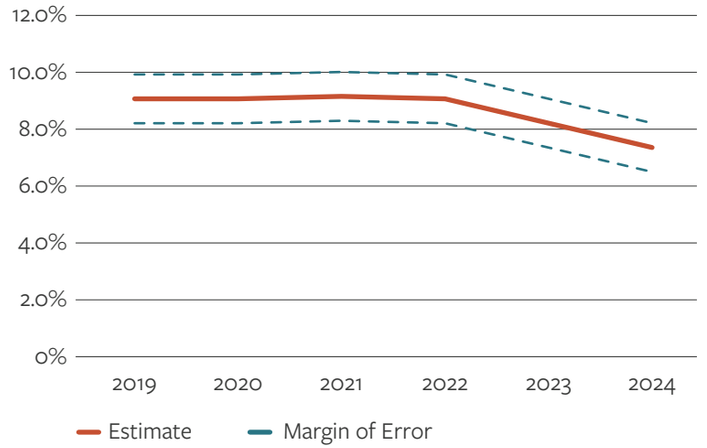


FIGURE 23 Walking Mode Split (Replica Data)



27 U.S. Census Bureau, "Commuting Characteristics by Sex," *American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables, Table S0801*, accessed on March 4, 2026, https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2024.S0801?q=S0801++Madison,+WI&y=2024.

28 Replica Places Data, Great Lakes Region, Fall 2024, Typical Thursday. Data filtered to trips originating in Madison.

29 A trip is defined as traveling from one location to another and does not include purely recreational trips, like walking around the block.

with Census data, which shows a decline in walking specifically for commuting to work—a difference that likely reflects COVID-era travel shifts to remote and hybrid work.

Adding context to this information, a survey[30] conducted for this Plan found that 54 percent of people walk daily and 85 percent walk at least a few times a week. There are demographic differences in walking activity: 56 percent of white respondents walk daily compared to 44 percent of respondents from under-represented populations. However, respondents from under-represented populations place a higher priority on walking and rolling investments compared to white respondents.

When asked why they walk, bike, or roll, most people say they do it because:

- It's their favorite way to get to work, school, or run errands. (Ranked by 75 percent of people as one of their top three reasons)
- They do it mainly for exercise or health. (Ranked by 72 percent of people as one of their top three reasons)
- They enjoy leisurely trips, discovering new routes, or sightseeing. (Ranked by 66 percent of people as one of their top three reasons)

Notably, 15 percent of respondents said they are car-free and rely on walking/biking/rolling as a primary way to get around.

What people enjoy, and what would increase enjoyment

In the community survey for this Plan, people were asked what they enjoy about walking and rolling and what sort of changes would increase their levels of enjoyment. When asked they love the most about walking, biking, and rolling in Madison, most responses fell into three categories: Madison's path network (61 percent of comments), scenery and nature (26 percent), and access to destinations (16 percent).

- Example quotes about what people love:
  - "Access to lakes, shops, schools, campus and restaurants."
  - "The fact that many paths go past the lake and go through neighborhoods. The ability to get out of the city and enjoy natural areas."
  - "Don't have to worry about parking a car."

When asked what would make walking/biking more enjoyable, most responses fell into three categories: more traffic calming (50 percent of comments), enhanced scenery and pleasant environment (19 percent) and better infrastructure and access to destinations (17 percent). Notably, the survey indicates that people living and traveling in parts of Madison without adequate basic walking infrastructure are less likely to identify ways to make walking and rolling more enjoyable other than completing the network.



30 Survey conducted June and July 2025. 557 responses were collected. Survey participants self-selected and the results are not statistically valid.

Enjoyment: Strategies and Actions

This section lists strategies and actions to increase enjoyment for people walking and rolling in Madison, organized by relevant objectives. For some strategies and actions, their relationship to other plan goals (safety, comfort, and convenience) is identified.

Strategy 14: Encourage people to walk more often and for more of their daily needs by increasing access to new destinations and places

Action 14.1: Emphasize Madison as a pedestrian-first city.

The Complete Green Streets Guide includes a modal hierarchy that prioritizes walking and rolling above all other modes in Madison's transportation decision making. The City will build upon and reinforce this policy position by increasing investment in pedestrian infrastructure and promoting walking as the best way to see the city. This policy direction will influence funding decisions; policies, priorities, and goals for other planning efforts; and public-facing actions such as economic development and tourism marketing.

Action 14.2: Expand safe walking education opportunities for all K-12 students and their families.

The City and the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) are developing a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) plan that includes recommendations for implementing walking and mobility education for K-12 students and a program to promote walking school buses. The City will support these recommendations and collaborate with MMSD and other organizations such as the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and the Wisconsin Bike Fed to fund and staff these initiatives. City staff will also support other initiatives that help make walking, biking, and taking the bus the norm for students and families.

Action 14.3: Adopt internal policies to encourage walking among public employees and elected officials.

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies in Madison aim to reduce single-occupant vehicle trips and encourage walking, biking, and transit use. The City already applies TDM principles in its own operations, for example, by providing employees with Metro Fast Fare cards.

To strengthen this commitment, the City will explore additional programs that encourage walking among staff and elected officials. Other cities have successfully implemented walking challenges and similar initiatives to promote active travel within local government. For example, in Idaho, the Blue Cross of Idaho Foundation for Health sponsors an annual Mayor's Walking Challenge for cities across the state. Madison will adopt comparable programs to model healthy, sustainable travel behavior and reinforce walking and rolling as core components of community health.



Action 14.4: Develop and implement programs that encourage walking and celebrate streets as community spaces.

Partnerships between the City, nonprofits, businesses, schools, artists, neighborhood associations, and other civic leaders can support programs that build excitement about walking in Madison. The City will explore ideas for promotional programs and partner with community organizations to design and implement them.

One example has been implemented on the 100 block of South Pinckney Street where all parking spaces on the street are transformed into sidewalk cafes during much of the year. Another is Park(ing) Day, a global event in which the City has partnered with organizers to transform parking spaces into small public parks and social spaces. Madison could build on these current activities by permitting extended temporary public space installations on City streets. Another opportunity is to promote an "art walk." Madison's public spaces house countless local works of art, from decorated utility boxes to murals and sculptures. These "art spots" can serve as destinations along a community-curated walking route. Promotion and guidance for the art walk could be supported by a community-developed app or map.

Action 14.5: Continue to use temporary street closures for open streets events to reinforce community and pedestrian use of space. Expand these events outside of the downtown/isthmus area.

Madison issues approximately 240 permits per year for street use events and block parties, which allow temporary street closures to support pedestrian-focused events. The weekly Dane County Farmers' Market and Concerts on the Square are also both accompanied by closed streets on Capitol Square, and the annual Ride the Drive event closes much of John Nolen Drive and Williamson Street to let people walk, roll, or bike without the presence of motor vehicles.

Expanding similar events beyond the downtown and isthmus areas would allow more residents across Madison to participate. In residential areas, these could take the form of block parties. The Madison Parks Division manages a block party permit system that allows closures of up to two blocks of a residential street. However, current rules prohibit public promotion of these events, amplified sound, vending, and the use of temporary structures such as tents. The City will consider revising these restrictions to enable more neighborhoods to enjoy their streets as public spaces.

Action 14.6: Implement an enhanced engagement strategy in Neighborhood Priority Areas.

Previous planning efforts in Neighborhood Priority Areas such as Darbo-Worthington and South Park Street uncovered disparities in mobility and access, investment, and influence over City processes. Residents in many of these neighborhoods have limited time and capacity to navigate City meetings and processes to address these disparities. The City will dedicate time and effort to engaging with community members in Neighborhood Priority Areas, reducing barriers to participation, and following up directly with residents about their concerns to build trust.



Strategy 15: Enhance the look and feel of streets and paths to make walking and rolling enjoyable

Action 15.1: Provide shade, wind blocks, and visual interest along sidewalks and paths by expanding the tree canopy. Prioritize filling mapped street tree locations without street trees, especially in areas with low canopy coverage. (Also relates to comfort)

Madison's street trees are an integral part of its green infrastructure system. Trees have multiple environmental benefits, including CO2 uptake, stormwater mitigation, and air pollution reduction. The presence of street trees has been linked to increased pedestrian perceptions of aesthetics, comfort, safety, and reduced noise.[31] Trees also provide shade in the summer and wind protection in the winter. The Complete Green Streets Guide identifies tree canopy priority areas, which are generally areas of the city with the lowest tree canopy coverage, along with parameters and recommendations for each street classification. The City will prioritize planting street trees in locations in or near tree canopy priority areas and will consider developing guidance for minimum distances between shade points along sidewalks and paths.

The City will also prioritize the preservation of large, healthy trees during street and pedestrian facility projects. Whenever possible, adequate terrace width should be provided to support large canopy trees where overhead power lines do not conflict; this space can often be provided by slightly narrowing streets, which also has a traffic calming effect. Where narrow terraces are necessary, the City will consider using more complex soil engineering solutions to support the planting and long-term health of canopy trees. Where on-street parking is present ,and as feasible, the City will consider implementing pedestrian safety and traffic calming treatments like curb extensions, which can create space for street trees.

Action 15.2: Provide public seating, water fountains, trash and recycling receptacles, and rest areas at regular intervals along streets and shared-use path corridors.

Many shared-use paths in Madison have been designed primarily with bicyclists in mind but are used heavily by pedestrians. Madison should consider providing public seating, water fountains, trash and recycling receptacles, and rest areas at regular intervals in high-traffic areas along shared use path corridors making them more enjoyable for pedestrians of all ages and abilities. These area should provide shade, either from trees or artificial structures, whenever possible. The City should also consider adding seating and possibly other amenities at bus stops. These amenities also promote social interaction and health by encouraging hydration, rest, and community use of space.

Action 15.3: Establish a program for identifying and implementing human-centered streets, such as slow streets, school streets, and shared streets in areas of high pedestrian activity.

Many cities in North America are implementing slow streets by using low-cost design treatments to reduce the number of motor vehicles and speeds. Temporary-to-permanent materials can be used to implement turn restrictions, traffic diverters, roadway narrowing, and stop signs. Some cities have also allowed schools to place temporary barricades during arrival and dismissal to create safer conditions for walking to school. The City will explore peer cities' examples and the potential of piloting similar programs in Madison.

The Madison Complete Green Streets guide established two shared street types: Neighborhood Shared Street and Civic Space, but few have been built under City jurisdiction. While these street types are common in parts of Europe, they present challenges in the U.S. context related to PROWAG and ADA requirements, fire access, and the need for a continuous, obstruction-free, and winter-maintained pedestrian path. City staff will review the subdivision code, and consider if changes are necessary to encourage developers to experiment with this street type in new medium-to-high density developments on public streets. The Engineering Division will identify potential candidates for this street type on some of the urban mixed-use streets, such as the streets connecting the Capitol square in downtown Madison.

31 Yu et al., 2024. *The impact of street greenery on active travel: a narrative systematic review*. Frontiers in Public Health 12:2024. Accessed August 7, 2025.

Strategy 16: Make places to walk visually attractive and reflective of community preferences and needs

Action 16.1: Explore the use of pavement art at intersections and crossings to increase visibility, enhance pedestrian safety, and create a sense of identity and community for people walking. (Also relates to safety)

Pavement art between crosswalk markings or in intersections can make these spaces more visible to drivers and enhance visibility for people walking. The art chosen can foster shared identities and a sense of belonging. Madison has already installed pavement art at the eastern end of State Street, in the Owl Creek neighborhood, along Dayton Street, and in other locations, and adding more at strategically chosen crossings could reinforce the local culture of safety as discussed in Chapter 2.

Action 16.2: Formalize and expand a program to install visual art along sidewalks on utility boxes, vacant facades, windowless walls, etc., to highlight local history, community members, and points of pride.

The Madison Arts Commission operates a program in which local artists design public art for utility boxes, with over 100 designs completed. Since 2017, the City's *Percent for Art* ordinance has directed one percent of development funds for public projects exceeding $5 million toward public art. In 2024, the Atwood Avenue Reconstruction project included designs on the multi-use path encouraging users to slow down, along with poems from recent poet laureates and youth poet laureates embedded in the sidewalks. Future public art installations will continue to feature community-centered messages and enhance the walking experience.

Action 16.3: Continue to strategically place art (murals, sculptures, pavement engraving, sidewalk decals, lighting installations, etc.) in underpasses.

Underpasses can feel intimidating or uncomfortable for people walking and rolling. Adding art in these often unwelcoming spaces can promote feelings of safety and community and affirm that people walking are legitimate users of the facility. The City will explore future public art opportunities in these areas.

Action 16.4: Activate paths with interpretive and integrated wayfinding, public art, cultural history of the area or neighborhood, gardens, sensory spaces, or other amenities to help all users feel welcome.

Many of Madison's diverse neighborhoods are connected by the cross-town shared-use paths. Opportunities abound to activate sections of these paths to reflect the individuality of the surrounding neighborhoods and to develop them into community spaces. Examples include allowing local organizations to use the rights-of-way for community purposes (like the community gardens in the Atwood Neighborhood) and providing opportunities for local artists to create culturally reflective installations. This action is especially important in Neighborhood Priority Areas to help foster a sense of ownership and inclusion in the path system.

Interpretive and integrated wayfinding enhances user experience by expanding the role of wayfinding beyond simple directional signage. Interpretive and integrated wayfinding clearly communicates information, context, local history, ecological facts, cultural points of interest, and multilingual cues to improve safety, comfort, convenience, and enjoyment. This educational and engagement tool connects users, creating a stronger sense of community along the path network.

A comprehensive approach to activating paths relates to the goals of this Plan in multiple ways:

- Safety is boosted through clear cues about path use, hazards, and emergency resources (e.g., mileage markers, multilingual signage, blue light locations).
- Comfort and enjoyment are enhanced by providing engaging content, rest stops, water, points of interest, and validating the user's location and purpose.
- Convenience is maximized with easy-to-read maps (digital or sign-based), multilingual language, distance markers, and connections to transit or key community destinations.
- Community connection is fostered by sharing local narratives and artistic ideas that reflect the diverse culture of the greater Madison area, making all residents feel respected and represented.

The City will encourage ways to activate paths and will investigate what is allowed in path corridors owned by other entities including the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

6 MOVING FORWARD

Implementing the Plan

The City of Madison has long recognized the importance of walking as a fundamental part of its transportation system and community life. This Plan provides a framework to guide decisions that will improve walking and rolling conditions across the city—making it safer, more comfortable, more convenient, and more enjoyable for people of all ages, abilities, and identities.

The recommendations in this Plan are intended to guide policies, programs, and infrastructure investments over time. Implementation will occur incrementally through ongoing decisions about priorities, available resources, and opportunities to incorporate pedestrian improvements into projects across the City.

Build on Madison's Strong Foundation

Madison already has many strengths that support walking and rolling. The City has an extensive network of sidewalks, shared-use paths, and enhanced street crossings that support everyday travel and contribute to Madison's reputation as a city where walking and biking are viable ways to get around.

This Pedestrian Plan builds upon the City of Madison's strong commitment to prioritizing pedestrian safety in its multimodal transportation system. It advances and relates to the goals and objectives of the City's Vision Zero, Complete Green Streets, and Safe Streets Madison programs. These efforts prioritize the safety and comfort of vulnerable road users and help ensure that transportation investments support a broader range of travel choices.

Achieve a Long-Term Vision Through Everyday Decisions

This Plan will guide decision-making over the long term. While many recommendations can begin implementation in the next five to ten years, others will take longer as opportunities arise through capital projects, policy changes, and program development.

Rather than acting as a fixed checklist, this Plan informs ongoing decisions about where and how to invest in pedestrian improvements. City staff and elected officials will continue to weigh factors such as safety needs, under-represented population needs, available funding, and project readiness when determining priorities.

Over time, these decisions will shape how the pedestrian network evolves and how resources are directed to support the Plan's goals.

Advance Improvements Through Projects, Programs, and Partnerships

Many improvements recommended in this plan will occur as part of the City's regular transportation and infrastructure programs. Sidewalk construction, crossing improvements, and other pedestrian safety treatments will often be implemented as part of street reconstruction projects, resurfacing projects, and other capital improvements.

Implementation will also occur through coordination with existing initiatives and programs that influence transportation decisions, including Vision Zero, Safe Streets Madison, and Madison Metro service improvements such as additional Bus Rapid Transit lines. Capital budgeting, neighborhood planning efforts, and other City planning processes will also shape how and where pedestrian improvements occur.

Private development will also play a role in expanding the pedestrian network. In many cases, sidewalks and pedestrian connections are constructed as part of the development process when new streets are built or existing streets are improved. These incremental improvements help close network gaps and strengthen pedestrian connectivity as Madison grows.

Coordinate Across Departments and Agencies

Implementing this plan will require collaboration across multiple City departments as well as coordination with partner agencies. Mobility & Infrastructure, Engineering, Planning, Metro Transit, Parks, and other agencies all contribute to decisions that affect walking conditions.

Some improvements will also require coordination with external partners such as the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and Dane County, particularly where pedestrian improvements are needed along or across highways and other major corridors under these agencies' jurisdiction. Continued coordination will help ensure that pedestrian needs are considered in transportation projects across jurisdictions.

Align Investments with Available Funding

Funding will influence the pace at which recommendations in this plan are implemented. Infrastructure improvements such as new sidewalks, enhanced crossings, and shared-use paths require significant investment and will compete with other transportation priorities.

Implementation will therefore rely on a combination of funding sources, including local capital budgets, state and federal grants, transportation safety funding programs, and development-related improvements. As funding opportunities arise, the strategies and priorities outlined in this plan will help guide how those resources are used.

Continue Listening, Learning, and Adapting

Finally, implementation of this plan will require ongoing evaluation and community engagement. Data collected through safety analysis, pedestrian counts, and public feedback will help the City measure progress and refine its strategies over time.

The City will continue to listen to residents, advocacy groups, and community organizations to better understand how people experience walking in different neighborhoods. These perspectives will help ensure that future investments address real needs and advance equity across the transportation system.

By continuing to evaluate progress and adapt its strategies, the City of Madison can build a pedestrian network that reflects the community's values and supports safe, accessible mobility for everyone.



