

**Morgantown Monongalia MPO**  
**Safe Streets for All Grant Narrative**

**Introduction and Background**

Morgantown West Virginia is the home of West Virginia University (WVU) a major land grant institution. The area is one of the few communities in West Virginia that is growing. With the recent location of a new manufacturing plant as well as the ongoing activities of the private sector and public agencies including the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, the National Energy Laboratory, and WVU Medicine, Morgantown is a vibrant community that is crucial to the State. The area is focusing on improving all of its transportation infrastructure.

While the area has a strong off-street network of facilities including the Deckers Creek Rail Trail and the Mon River/Caperton Trail, these facilities cannot meet the non-motorized transportation needs of the area by themselves. The ingredient missing in the area is safe connectivity to the street network. The safety for all users of the transportation network but particularly pedestrians is key.

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

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

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

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

This proposal for our area is primarily built on the 2019 Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan focusing on non-motorized safety and equity issues.

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

[https://www.plantgether.org/files/ugd/613794\\_033102a655c74ed3b1d53e18ae075b9e.pdf](https://www.plantgether.org/files/ugd/613794_033102a655c74ed3b1d53e18ae075b9e.pdf)

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

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

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

[https://www.plantgether.org/files/ugd/613794\\_9c77731352844ebda71fc0bac5b69e99.pdf](https://www.plantgether.org/files/ugd/613794_9c77731352844ebda71fc0bac5b69e99.pdf)

In addition to the WVDOH program noted above, WVU and the members of the ad-hoc pedestrian safety working group, are improving pedestrian facilities on and adjacent to campus. As a result of the ad-hoc committee work WVU also includes pedestrian safety messages in their regular media outreach to all students and faculty. The group has annually participated in a walk through examining pedestrian safety issues in the neighborhoods around WVU's campus.

More information on the incidents that led to the community effort for pedestrian safety can be found at these links:

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

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

While the ad-hoc pedestrian safety group has been an informal group you may find evidence of its work at the following links:

<https://www.dominionpost.com/2019/06/27/city-county-wvu-addressing-pedestrian-hot-spots-before-students-return/>

<https://www.dominionpost.com/2019/09/04/state-local-stakeholders-look-at-pedestrian-issues/>

<https://www.dominionpost.com/2021/01/29/two-pedestrian-improvement-projects-completed/>

<https://www.dominionpost.com/2022/05/21/project-aims-to-improve-congested-strip-of-university-avenue-for-motorists-pedestrians/>

The Federal Highway Administration's Safe Streets for All grant program has been a catalyst for bringing together the greater Morgantown urban areas local governments to address pedestrian safety and complete streets implementation in an unprecedented fashion. All of these local governments have expressed an interest in participating in the grant project though they were unable to propose projects for this application due to fiscal constraints and other factors. Even though they were unable to participate some of them provided Resolutions adopting the Zero Fatality goal. A key factor in the local interest in the SS4A process is the provision that projects funded in the process need to be completed within 5 years. Currently the largest ongoing local transportation construction project in the area, the Mileground widening project, has taken 10 years to begin and is anticipated to be completed sometime near the end of this year.

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

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

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

community. WVDOH Traffic Engineering and WVDOH Planning will also provide guidance to the SS4A grant oversight committee as partners in the project.

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

**-Monongalia County**-Participant in pedestrian safety initiative and partner for the Willey Street Project through the Morgantown Area Partnership/Monongalia County Economic Development Authority (MAP/MCEDA) and as a partner for the traffic safety and active transportation educational program.

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

**-West Virginia University**-Participant in pedestrian safety initiative and potentially the Willey Street Project being led by the MAP/MCEDA and the traffic safety and active transportation public education program.

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

**-Mountain Line Transit**-Mountain Line proposes to participate with the installation of several bus shelters along the corridors included in this application.

### **Project Selection Process**

Pedestrian safety and transportation improvements in general have been high priority issues for the greater Morgantown Area since prior to the inception of the MMMPO. The 2016-17 update of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan included a survey for identifying priorities for complete streets improvements for our area. The survey asked its 725 respondents to list potential improvements they would desire rather than listing proposed improvements. The survey identified Dorsey Avenue and High Street also ranked well for bicycle improvements ranking 13<sup>th</sup> in priority, though this did not show up in the abbreviated form of the report. The survey recognized Willey Street as the number 14 roadway improvement in the area.

In 2019 Alta Planning and Engineering conducted a Bicycle and Pedestrian Study in 2019, which included an extensive outreach program including outreach to the underserved community. Alta's findings confirmed the MTP's survey and expanded on it by designating Bicycle Corridors as well as identifying connectivity and maintenance needs. The Alta Study identified the South High Street/Dorsey Avenue project as a high priority project. You can access the Alta Study under the heading from the link above.

The MMMPO revisited the 2019 projects in the 2022 Metropolitan Transportation Plan update in which the vast majority of the urban area's local elected officials participated. At the beginning of determining if the MPO would apply for this grant, the MMMPO Staff suggested to the MPO Policy Board members, that connectivity should be a key component of any grant application. The logic of this recommendation was that this grant would provide the backbone of the area's on-street network for non-motorized facilities. MMMPO staff reached out to the MPO's Policy Board with a slate of five potential projects from Tier One of the 2022 MTP priority list that would address safety and connectivity issues, as well equity issues. The purpose of this discussion was to determine which projects the municipalities, agencies and their constituents supported for funding. Through this process Policy Board leadership, in conjunction with WVDOH, determined that the major corridors to be addressed in this application were the Willey Street Project and the High Street/Dorsey Avenue project. In discussion with MPO Staff all parties agreed that the Educational program would address issues of local attitudes toward traffic safety and also provide metrics for the success of the program. Most importantly to this process, the municipalities and participating agencies agreed to working to provide a portion the match required for the grant at the end of the process. Letters of support from most of the participating entities are included in the supplemental information provided with this document. A letter from WVU will be provided at a later date. Their participation has been confirmed.

To assure that the projects in this grant application are representative of the community's needs the MMMPO presented the projects to the public by providing them to the local newspaper and talk radio station. Staff also presented them to the Traffic Commission and the Pedestrian Safety Committee. The MMMPO also presented the proposed projects to a meeting held by the area's urban municipalities and Monongalia County at a joint public meeting held to review the County's and the municipalities draft comprehensive plans. The projects proposed in this application have been posted on the MPO's website since September 1, 2022.

Following is a description of the construction projects and the educational project included in the SS4A grant. Please note that the South High Street/Dorsey Avenue project is anticipated to be constructed in existing right of way. Please also note that the cost estimates for the construction projects were developed by the City of Morgantown Engineering Department and by Stantec the consultant for the MMMPO's Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update. All construction cost estimate have also been reviewed by the West Virginia Department of Transportation-Division of Highways:

**-Willey Street (US 119) Reconstruction/Relocation Project-**Willey Street is an urban arterial street designated as US 119. Willey Street designated as US 119, is a narrow winding substandard arterial street with narrow sidewalks (where they exist) and no accommodation for bicycle traffic. According to the MMMPO's traffic count program in 2019 the AADT on Willey Street was 10,800 vehicles per day. While Willey Street is not a high volume facility it is a critical connection to downtown Morgantown providing access to the regional airport and for commuters from the outlying Cheat Lake area of Monongalia County. This project was identified in the MMMPO's recently adopted (2022) Metropolitan Transportation Plan as a high priority project. The State's Pedestrian Safety Study also identified Willey Street as a roadway of concern.

In addition to being of concern for pedestrian safety improvements Willey Street is an integral part of a plan to redevelop the Richwood neighborhood in the vicinity of WVU's downtown campus. The project is being developed and implemented by the Monongalia County Development Authority (MCDA). The proposed project includes improved sidewalks as well as accommodation of cyclists and standard lane widths for vehicular traffic and modifying several sharp turns as possible. The alternatives under consideration for this project include upgrading the existing roadway to include improved sidewalk and accommodations for bicycles or using land purchased by MCDA as right of way for the relocation of Willey Street. The estimated cost of this project including the preparation of environmental documents through construction is approximately \$19.7 million. A recent news story on the economic development project may be found here:

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

A video drive through of the Willey Street Corridor is available at this link:

[https://youtu.be/ILRz2tS\\_4\\_Y](https://youtu.be/ILRz2tS_4_Y)

**-City of Morgantown-South High Street/Dorsey Avenue Corridor Improvement Projects-**

This is a complex set of projects to improve a minor arterial corridor consisting of two streets serving neighborhoods south and west of downtown Morgantown. Safety projects included in this category include intersection redesign, sidewalk installation (with drainage improvements), installation of crosswalks some with beacons, and other safety improvements. The installation of sidewalk serving Luckey Lane proposed in this project is consistent with outreach the MPO had with the residents of the Marjorie Gardens Section 8 housing, adjacent to the corridor. The total cost of this group of projects is approximately \$4.4 million. A complete list of proposed improvements is included in the additional information provided. This project is proposed for existing right of way. It is anticipated that the environmental review needed to implement it would be a categorical exclusion. The sidewalk portion of this project has been a City of Morgantown's priority for a while. Please see this link for a newspaper story on it.

<https://www.dominionpost.com/2021/05/23/city-seeking-design-funds-for-dorsey-avenue-sidewalk-pedestrian-bridge/>

A video drive through of the corridor is available at this link : <https://youtu.be/aoEN0evFCYM>

**-Areawide Traffic Safety and Active Transportation Educational Program-**Unfortunately, the Morgantown area has a reputation for citizens not observing traffic laws. Crossing streets against signals and at unmarked mid-block locations, particularly by students, is very common. While implementing construction projects is one method of promoting safety. Assisting area residents in understanding how to properly use a facility is the best way to ensure that users are safe. Promoting traffic safety while educating our area's residents on the benefits of active transportation is a way to also address unsafe use of our facilities and attacking our states most pressing health issue obesity. This program is to assist in changing the culture of our community to a healthier and safer model as we implement improved infrastructure. It is anticipated that this

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program will include a multi-faceted outreach strategy including but not limited to public meetings, online meetings, radio and television and social media. The program will also be used to identify additional action items for the Steering Committee to address in the future. This is consistent with the recommendations of the Notice of Funding Opportunity for this grant.

In the past the MMMPO has worked with advocates for underserved communities to develop strategies for reaching and working with underserved communities. It is anticipated that the Educational Program will utilize many of these methods to ensure that underserved communities are served by the improvements proposed in this application and any subsequent improvements identified in this process. You can find information on the MMMPO's coordination with underserved communities at this link:

<https://placeandhealthwv.com/transportation/suggested-practices-for-the-transportation-planning-community/>

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

### **Complementary Projects**

The projects proposed in this grant work as individual improvements for the safety and connectivity of the transportation network of the greater Morgantown area. More importantly these projects also work with other projects. The mapping of our proposed projects shows that the Willey Street Project works to provide safe bicycle and pedestrian connection for the Richwood and Woodburn neighborhoods to the ongoing Mileground (US119) widening which includes the installation of sidewalk on one side of the road. The design process for the Willey Street project will identify how these projects connect.

The South High Street/Dorsey Avenue Project connects directly to the Greenbag Road Project at Luckey Lane. The Greenbag Road project is designed to provide an alternative route for heavy truck traffic which currently travels through the low/moderate income Greenmont Neighborhood and downtown Morgantown. A portion of the Greenbag Road Project (between Luckey Lane and Mississippi Street) is currently funded for construction in FY 2025 Federal funds. This project includes the installation of sidewalk on Luckey Lane to connect Mountaineer Elementary School.

In addition to the ongoing Greenbag Road project, scheduled for construction in 2025, the MMMPO was recently notified that the FHWA has selected its RAISE grant application for the design of the remainder of the Greenbag Road Corridor for funding. The Greenbag Road RAISE grant also provides for a feasibility study for the construction of an off-road multi-purpose path to connect Luckey Lane to the Deckers Creek Rail Trail. As demonstrated by the attached mapping, this connection combined with the South High Street/Dorsey Avenue Project would complete a circuit of bicycle and pedestrian friendly facilities connecting important Morgantown neighborhoods with downtown Morgantown with the Sabraton area of Morgantown.

### **Equity Analysis of Proposed Projects**

Both of the proposed projects in this grant proposal directly border and provide access to a Census Tract identified by the USDOT as being Historically Transportation Disadvantaged. Below please find a listing of the Census Tracts identified as historically transportation disadvantaged by project. A map of showing these Tracts and the projects is included in the attachments to the application.

-Willey Street Project-Tract 101.02

-South High Street/Dorsey Avenue Corridor Project-Tract 110

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

There are also a maps of these findings included in the additional attachments to this grant.

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

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

Given the results noted above from the USDOT Transportation Disadvantaged Tool and the analysis performed utilizing the EPA Environmental Justice tool, we believe it is fair to say that the proposed projects would positively impact transportation for underserved communities. This conclusion, for the South High Street/Dorsey Avenue project, is supported by the work done for the Greenbag Road project in the MPO's 2015 Study and validated by the 2021 Environmental Assessment performed by WVDOH for the programmed portion of Greenbag Road.

### **Proposed Steering Committee**

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

**City of Morgantown-Mayor, Engineering staff**

**Monongalia County-County Commissioner**



**West Virginia University-Representatives of Government Relations and Administration**  
**WV Local Transportation Assistance Program-Engineer**  
**Morgantown Monongalia MPO-Executive Director**

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

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

Monongalia County Economic Development Authority-designated representative

Mountain Line Transit-designated representative

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

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

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

-Upon notification of the grant award

- 1) Expansion of the existing Pedestrian Safety Ad-Hoc Committee to a Safe Streets for All Oversight Committee
- 2) Negotiation of Memorandum of Understanding with West Virginia Department of Transportation for implementation of SS4A grant program
- 3) Negotiation of Memorandum of Understanding with the Federal Highway Administration
- 4) Preparation and release of RFQ(s) as required by MOU's with State and FHWA for the following tasks:
  - a) Perform Educational Outreach effort
  - b) Environmental/Design Study for Willey Street Project
  - e) Design S. High Street/Dorsey Avenue Corridor Improvements
- 5) Selection of consultant(s) for tasks noted above

-Upon notice to proceed:

- 1) MMMPO enters into contracts for required services consisting of:
  - a) MOU with FHWA on funding
  - b) MOU with WVDOH for Project management and construction

- c) Contract with consultant for educational/community outreach process
- 2) Begin implementation of the proposed public outreach/educational effort. The first step in this program would be to identify through a survey community awareness of traffic safety and active transportation concepts including but not limited to: Share the Road, shared lanes, dedicated bike lanes and the use of shoulders by pedestrians. Special attention would be given to ensuring that underserved communities are represented in the survey or through other efforts as identified in the Educational Program scope of work. After the survey/outreach efforts there would be educational efforts guided by the results to raise public awareness of these concepts in coordination with active infrastructure projects. This project is to run the life of Project.
- 3) Process for – Dorsey Avenue/High Street Corridor (Anticipated to be Categorical Exclusions)
  - a) Enter into contract for environmental study WVDOH/Consultant
  - b) Environmental Study complete at two years
  - d) Select firm(s) to construct projects at two and a half years
  - e) Construct Projects year three through five
- 4) Environmental process, Design/Build Willey Street Project (Anticipated EA or EIS)
  - a) Contract for environmental study first quarter of year one (1)
  - b) Environmental Study complete in two and half years
  - c) Advertise project for design/build construction prior to beginning of year three (3)
  - d) Enter into contract by three (3) and a half years
  - d) Construction complete by end of year 5.

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

### **Conclusion**

The Morgantown Monongalia Metropolitan Planning Organization and our partners appreciate the opportunity to submit this narrative for our Safe Streets for All grant application. We recognize that this is an ambitious application but our area has a long history of unmet needs when it comes to non-motorized transportation facilities and safety. We have advocated a complete streets approach to our area's transportation needs since 2008. We understand that the Safe Streets for All program can provide the backbone of a strong multi-modal network that will foster a healthier more prosperous Morgantown and Monongalia County. We hope the reviewers of this proposal will agree with this conclusion and support the funding of this grant application. Thank you for your consideration.