

CONNECT CONWAY

CONNECT CONWAY PROJECT

FY 2022 RAISE Grant Application

Submitted by the City of Conway, Arkansas to the
United States Department of Transportation

April 14, 2022



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Founded in 1875, Conway, Arkansas, population 64,134, is the eighth-largest city in Arkansas and the county seat for Faulkner County. While the City of Conway has experienced substantial growth over the past five decades, it lacks equitable transportation alternatives for central and east Conway residents.

The Connect Conway Project aims to build a safe, connected, and accessible transportation system by reducing transportation and economic barriers through bike and pedestrian infrastructure for those living and working in Historically Disadvantaged areas of the city.

The primary route includes approximately 15.2 miles of developed and upgraded pedestrian and bike infrastructure that connects to ten city parks, seven schools, three major retail areas, three universities and colleges, fourteen major

employment centers, sixteen neighborhoods, and other vital community services.

Public engagement has driven the project, including a walk audit of the complete route and preliminary environmental and design work to assess constructability challenges. Connect Conway is committed to by public and private partners and supported by Senator Boozman, Senator Cotton, Congressman Hill, and Governor Asa Hutchinson.

The following application requests \$24,647,664 to implement the Connect Conway project. The project represents a transformational undertaking that addresses transportation equity, safety, environmental sustainability, and dramatic improvement in quality of life for east Conway and the community as a whole.

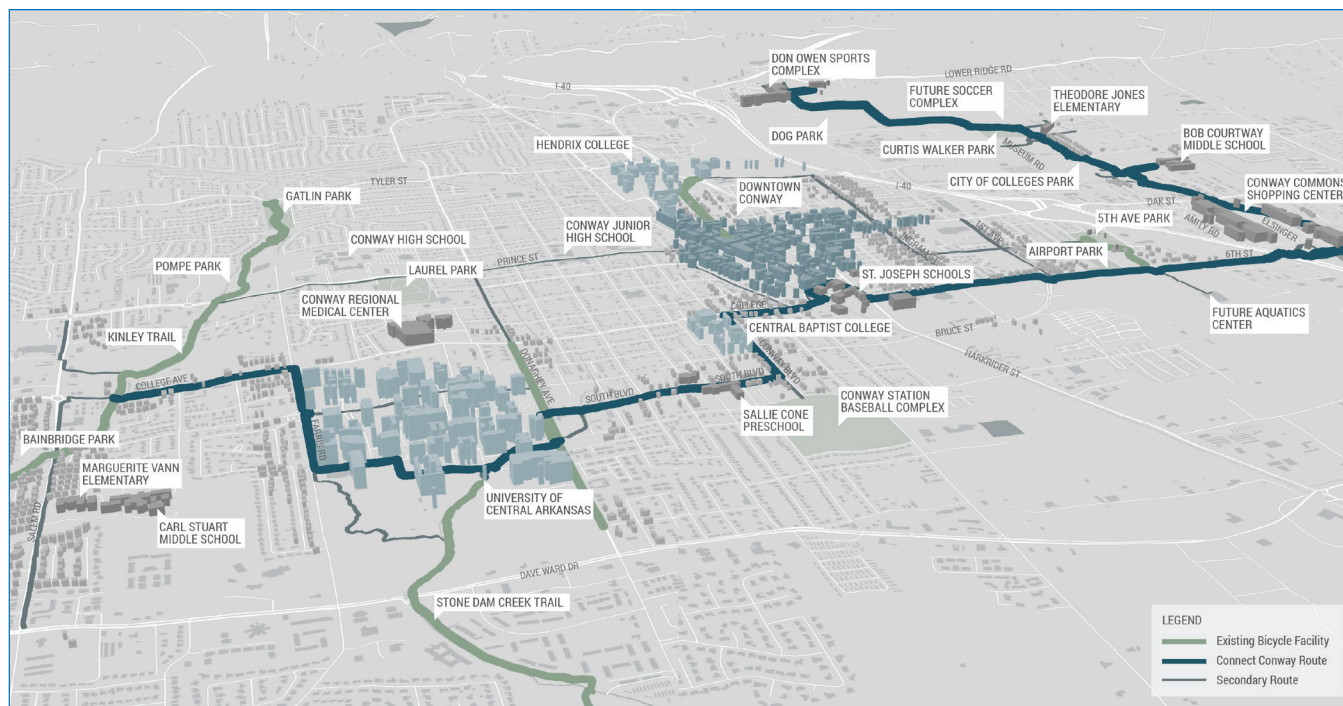


FIGURE 1 - CONNECT CONWAY ROUTE MAP

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

OVERVIEW

The Connect Conway Project aims to build a safe, connected, equitable, and accessible transportation system for the Conway community through an investment of 12.5 miles of new bike and pedestrian infrastructure in the form of a 12' shared-use greenway trail, 12' sidepath, 12' cycle track, and sidewalks. These investments primarily are placed within the Historically Disadvantaged east Conway neighborhoods, home to a concentration of most of the city's Areas of Persistent Poverty.

Connect Conway will bridge historic divides in the community and provide a viable transportation option for many by connecting ten city parks, seven schools, three major retail centers, three universities and colleges, fourteen major employers, sixteen neighborhoods, the 3.1-mile Kinley Trail, the 1.9-mile Stone Dam Creek Trail, and numerous other community services.

This project will provide safe access to jobs, healthcare, educational facilities, shopping, and other key daily transportation destinations for many community members.

Connect Conway is an outgrowth of three significant initiatives: Conway 2025, the 2020 Citizen Survey, and the City of Conway Five-Year Strategic Plan. Conway 2025, which began in 2009 and was updated in 2021, was a citizen-led, comprehensive visioning process resulting in a long-range plan for the future of Conway. The 2020 Citizens Survey gathered resident opinions about community livability and government services and yielded nearly 1,600 individual responses. The survey identified deficiencies in bike and walking mobility. The Citizen Survey informed the development of the city's Five-Year Strategic Plan, completed in 2021, and highlighted bike and pedestrian travel as a focus area for improvement.



FIGURE 2 - SHARED-USE GREENWAY TRAIL FACILITY RENDERING

CHALLENGE

The primary challenge is providing safe, equitable access to key community destinations for central and east Conway residents and workers without furthering dependence on the automobile or causing increased pollution and sedimentation in Lake Conway.

Transportation options are limited to personal automobiles or biking/walking for many east Conway residents. The area is not generally designed to safely accommodate people on bikes and pedestrians and fosters reliance on the automobile, which places an inequitable burden on many low-income residents. East Conway is largely Historically Disadvantaged, housing the majority of Conway's Areas of Persistent Poverty, and is generationally and racially diverse.

Significant future development opportunities exist within the area, with over 345 acres of developable land within 1,000 feet of the Connect Conway primary route. It is anticipated that half, if not more, of these lands will develop in the next decade. This future growth presents an opportunity for new walkable, livable, and economically accessible development to a broader swath of current and future Conway residents.

These transportation and future development challenges create an ongoing threat to a nearby natural resource. Lake Conway, a 6,700-acre man-made lake, was built in 1951 to provide recreational fishing opportunities for the region. The lake has become an important winter habitat and stopover for migratory birds. Sedimentation and pollution threaten the lake's existence and increase flood risk. A study commissioned by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission in 2015 estimates the northwestern bay of the lake, fed by Little Creek and Stone Dam Creek, will be filled entirely with sedimentation within 45 years (Appendix 14). Deeper portions of the lake will be filled in 120 years at current rates.

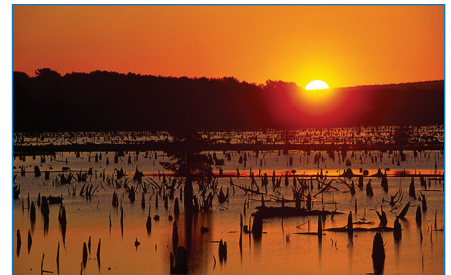


FIGURE 3 - LAKE CONWAY

SOLUTION

Connect Conway will provide new safe, equitable transportation and recreation possibilities to a substantial portion of east Conway residents, integrating the area by connecting to existing bike and pedestrian improvements in the rest of the community. It will provide 15.2 miles of bike and pedestrian infrastructure with 12' shared-use greenway trails, 12' sidepaths, 12' cycle track, and sidewalk improvements. The project will connect ten city parks, seven schools, three major retail centers, three universities and colleges, fourteen major employers, sixteen neighborhoods, and many other critically important community services.

A centerpiece of the project is the Little Creek Plaza. Located less than 3 miles from the mouth of Lake Conway, the Little Creek Plaza will serve as a demonstration project for riparian repair along the stream. It will feature low-impact development (LID) improvements and include techniques such as stream boulders to slow water, allow pooling and reduce sedimentation, bank stabilization to prevent erosion, and a variety of native plantings. These plantings will form a treatment train using phytoremediation to remove pollutants from runoff from the nearby Conway Commons development.

STATEMENT OF WORK



FIGURE 4 - ADVISORY COMMITTEE WALK AUDIT

Considerable preliminary analysis and effort have gone into the Connect Conway project. The route was significantly refined over previous application submissions where constructability was defined as a critical issue. The project advisory committee conducted a walk audit, identifying construction challenges with the new route. A technical study was commissioned following the walk audit to provide additional network and facility recommendations. The technical study took place in conjunction with public engagement efforts (Appendix 7).

The walk audit identified the portion of Little Creek, directly behind Conway Commons retail center (Elsinger Boulevard/Oak Street), as an environmentally sensitive portion of the project. Preliminary engineering and environmental review assessed potential risks and identified challenges. No issues were identified that posed a catastrophic problem for the project (Appendix 8).

Topographic surveys of the primary route alignment have been obtained. Engineering for the project is at 10-15% plans (Appendix 3). Purchased right-of-way and easements are anticipated to be needed along the route. Existing agreements or right-of-way will be primarily utilized for portions of the route crossing the University of Central Arkansas campus or where there are sidepaths. The city has considerable experience acquiring property consistent with the Uniform Relocation Act and is willing to use eminent domain when necessary.



FIGURE 5 - SHARED-USE GREENWAY TRAIL



FIGURE 7 - CYCLE TRACKS



FIGURE 6 - SIDEPATHS



FIGURE 8 - BUFFERED BICYCLE LANES

Nine proposed trailheads will be integrated into the Connect Conway project. Typical trailheads will consist of bike repair stations, educational kiosks, bike racks, benches, trash receptacles, drinking fountains, and access to restrooms (Appendix 9).

The primary route begins in the northeastern portion of the city connecting with the Conway Towne Center retail center near U.S. Highway 65 (Skyline Drive). A trailhead will be constructed near the Don Owens Sports Complex, an indoor and outdoor park and community center. Facilities will consist of 12' shared-use greenway trail as well as 12' sidepath along Museum Road and Bob Courtway Drive, which ties in neighborhoods, Curtis Walker Park, the voter-approved future Soccer Complex, City of Colleges Park, Theodore Jones Elementary School, and Bob & Betty Courtway Middle School.

As the route approaches Little Creek at Bob Courtway Drive, it will cross under a major arterial (U.S. Highway 64/Oak Street).

Preliminary engineering has determined the feasibility and permitting requirements to construct a pedestrian underpass at the roadway bridge over Little Creek.

The route proceeds to the Little Creek Plaza trailhead and park, following the meandering stream and transforming a forgotten space behind a major retail center into a community destination that connects residents with the environment.

Continuing behind Conway Commons and along Little Creek, the route turns west and crosses Interstate 40 over the 6th Street overpass, vitally connecting the eastern portion of Conway with the central and western sides of the community. 12' shared-use greenway trails and sidepaths will be implemented along this portion of the route. A small portion of the route will utilize an existing driveway south of the Amity Road/6th Street roundabout, developing a 12' cycle track along the existing pavement, converting the current driveway to entrance only.



FIGURE 9 - LITTLE CREEK TRAILHEAD PLAZA CONCEPTUAL RENDERING



FIGURE 10 - FORMER CONWAY REGIONAL AIRPORT SITE

After crossing Interstate 40, the project enters Central Landing. The area is the former site of the Conway Regional Airport and a 120+ acre zone of redevelopment and investment. Central Landing is an Area of Persistent Poverty, Opportunity Zone, and the future location for the Conway Community and Aquatic Center. There are connections to parks, apartments, industry, neighborhoods, and other businesses as the route flows through Central Landing and enters downtown Conway. This portion of the route will utilize existing sidewalks and widen them to a 12' sidepath standard.

Additionally, multiple secondary facilities in 12' sidepaths and sidewalks will feed into the surrounding neighborhoods.

The Downtown portion of the route crosses a major arterial (U.S. Highway 65/Harkrider Street) and connects several secondary routes that lead to downtown Conway. Retail and local businesses, St. Joseph Catholic School, Central Baptist College, major employers, and industry are present along this portion of the route. A trailhead is planned at the College and Elm Street intersection. A 12' cycle track is proposed along Chestnut from the St. Joseph Catholic School's parking lot to College Avenue, utilizing the existing street paving. The route, consisting primarily of 12' sidepath, will follow along College Avenue and then turn south on Conway Boulevard before turning west on South Boulevard.

Neighborhoods are connected to the route as it approaches the University of Central Arkansas (UCA). Between South Boulevard and Robins Street, a short section will utilize existing sidewalks and buffered/separated bike lanes. The route will then proceed through the UCA campus, connect to the current 1.9-mile Stone Dam Creek Trail, and utilize a planned bridge crossing over Stone Dam Creek. UCA and Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT) will construct this bridge. Finally, the route will follow Farris Road and College Avenue with a combination of 12' sidepath and 12' cycle track to connect to the existing 3.1-mile Kinley Trail.

Connecting UCA will provide many opportunities for the community. With enrollment of over 10,000 students, UCA is a major employer and significant generator/destination for vehicular, bike, and pedestrian traffic. Connect Conway will provide a safe, accessible transportation option for faculty, staff, and students. Additionally, connection to the main campus of the Conway Regional Health System will increase access to healthcare.

Many resources and funds have been invested into the existing Stone Dam Creek and Kinley Trails, including current work to extend both. These existing trails will help investments from Connect Conway reach more neighborhoods, businesses, retail, park facilities, and important community institutions. Ultimately the project will reduce transportation barriers for low-wealth residents to economically participate in the community. Other investments have been made or are planned along the proposed Connect Conway route. They are listed in Tables 1 and 2.

TABLE 1 - RECENT INVESTMENTS

PROJECT NAME	PROJECT TYPE	FUNDING	COST
College Avenue Sidepath Project	Pedestrian/Bike	ARDOT, Metroplan, City	\$547,500
Donaghey Avenue Improvements (Phase 2)	Pedestrian/Roadway	City	\$3,000,000
Markham Street Improvements	Pedestrian/Roadway	Metroplan, City	\$1,875,000
Markham Square	Park/Recreation	EPA, City, Art	\$1,480,548
Wayfinding Signage	Signage	City	\$150,000
Locust Street Improvements	Sidewalk Repair	City	\$40,000
Dave Ward Drive Pedestrian Overpass	Pedestrian Bridge	ARDOT, Metroplan, City	\$3,363,903
I-40 and 6th Street Overpass	Pedestrian/Vehicle Bridge	City	\$30,000,000
College and Salem Roundabout	Roadway/Pedestrian	City	\$897,720
Farris Road RRFB at UCA	Pedestrian Safety	City	\$9,000
Chestnut and Van Ronkle Roundabout	Roadway/Pedestrian	City	\$500,000
Stone Dam Creek Phase II	Pedestrian/Bike	ARDOT, City	\$1,500,000
UCA Pedestrian Bridge	Pedestrian	ARDOT, UCA	\$250,000
Salem Road Bridge at Tucker Creek	Bridge Construction	ARDOT, Metroplan, City	\$3,000,000
Harkrider Street Improvements	Roadway Improvements	ARDOT, City	\$7,000,000
Harkrider Sidewalk Improvements	Pedestrian Sidewalk	Metroplan, City	\$506,942
Oak Street Ahead (U.S. Highway 64)	Corridor Study	City	\$250,000
TOTAL			\$54,370,613

TABLE 2 - FUTURE INVESTMENTS

PROJECT NAME	PROJECT TYPE	FUNDING	COST
Salem Road Improvements	Roadway/Pedestrian	Metroplan, City	\$6,000,000
Conway Town Center Access	Road Construction	City, TBD	TBD ~\$700,000
College Avenue and Farris Road. Roundabout	Roadway/Pedestrian	City	TBD ~\$750,000
Conway Mountain Bike Park	Park/Recreation	TBD	TBD ~\$5,000,000
Conway Community and Aquatic Center	Construction	City	\$27,300,000
Community Center Street Connections	Road Construction	City	\$3,970,000
Conway Soccer Complex	Construction	City	\$5,500,000

PROJECT HISTORY

The City of Conway began improving trail systems within the community in the late 1990s. Work was completed along Tucker Creek in west Conway, connecting many surrounding neighborhoods. Residents greatly supported this work, and the popularity of trails has grown significantly.

Conway adopted a complete streets program in 2009 and master bicycle and pedestrian plans in 2016 and 2018, respectively (Appendix 13). Currently, the community has over 126 miles of bike and pedestrian facilities that consist of shared-use greenway trails, sidepaths, shared lane markings, bi-directional separated bike lanes, and buffered/non-buffered bike lanes. In 2011, the League of American Bicyclists named Conway a bronze-level Bicycle Friendly Community. In 2017, the city became the first in Arkansas to offer a bike-share program.

In 2009, the Conway Area Chamber of Commerce launched a community-wide visioning process, with 1,400 residents surveyed. Conway 2025 was derived from that citizen-led strategy and planning process. Transportation improvements were identified as a priority. In 2020, the City of Conway conducted a Citizen Survey (Appendix 6) to evaluate citizens' concerns and priorities. Nearly 1600 residents completed the survey. Only 38% of respondents rated travel by bike as good or excellent. Ease of walking and city sidewalks were only seen as good or excellent by 48% and 45% of respondents, respectively. The City of Conway's Five-Year Strategic Plan (Appendix 6) utilized the Citizen Survey to inform future planning. Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel was identified as an important area for improvement.

Connect Conway has evolved over the past several years and has been refined through this process. During current proposal

development, an advisory committee was formed to guide the process and provide valuable input. This advisory committee was composed of a racially and generationally diverse cross-section of the community, representing numerous key stakeholder groups.

Several meetings were held, and a comprehensive walk audit was performed to review the constructability of an alternative to previously planned routes. The primary route with secondary connections were defined, and planning was initiated out of that process. Racial Equity Screening was conducted to determine impacts on communities of color and inform the public engagement process. Community-wide meetings were held to garner formulating input on the project, with particular emphasis on attempting to engage people of color. A visual preference survey was also completed to help inform the proposed system's necessary amenities and visual character.

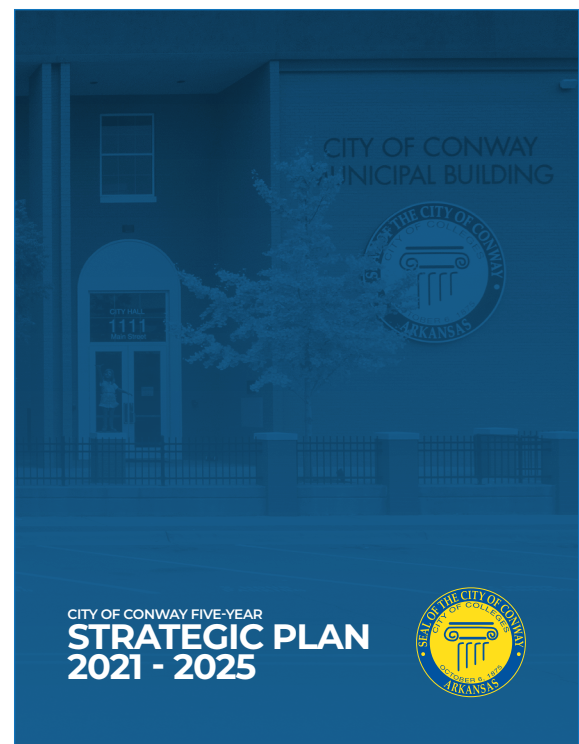


FIGURE 11 - CITY OF CONWAY FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN



FIGURE 12 - 6TH STREET OVERPASS

After public input, environmental and engineering work was initiated. Trail programming was identified and considered, along with technical feasibility. The Connect Conway team compiled all input from the advisory committee, stakeholders, and general public to complete this proposal. It has been a collaborative community process in which community leadership and public support have been critical to the planning and overall form of the project (Appendix 11).

Conway has experience in implementing projects that reduce barriers, bridge community divides, promote alternative modes of transportation, and provide recreational opportunities. A recent project that reduced a barrier for the community was the 6th Street Overpass Bridge that span Interstate 40. This \$30 million project, completed in 2017, now provides safe passage for bike and pedestrian users.

The city continues to reinvest in this Area of Persistent Poverty, and those investments will only increase as the main corridor for Connect Conway passes through Central Landing.

Conway's two major trail systems previously implemented are the Stone Dam Creek trail and Kinley Trail, which follows much of Tucker Creek. Both trail systems will link in with the primary route of Connect Conway. The Stone Dam Creek trail provides a completed \$3.3 million pedestrian bridge that crosses Dave Ward Drive and helps users safely cross this major arterial. Donaghey Avenue has also focused on trail improvements and is a major secondary connector to the primary route of Connect Conway. Improvements on Donaghey Avenue are ongoing, and the city continues to make investments along this corridor. Markham Street improvements have been and continue to be made, bolstering the bike and pedestrian facilities in the downtown area and connecting to the primary corridor. Investment in bike and pedestrian infrastructure has propelled the desire to implement Connect Conway. Many of Conway's leaders believe that Connect Conway will bring transformative benefit to our community's most concentrated Areas of Persistent Poverty, the city as a whole, and the surrounding region.

PROJECT LOCATION

The Connect Conway project is located within the city of Conway, Arkansas. Conway is the county seat of Faulkner County and part of the Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Conway is Arkansas's Second Congressional District and represented by Senators John Boozman and Tom Cotton and Representative French Hill. Connect Conway is centrally located, mainly running east to west, connecting amenities to the east of Interstate 40 with the amenities to the west of the major interstate arterial.

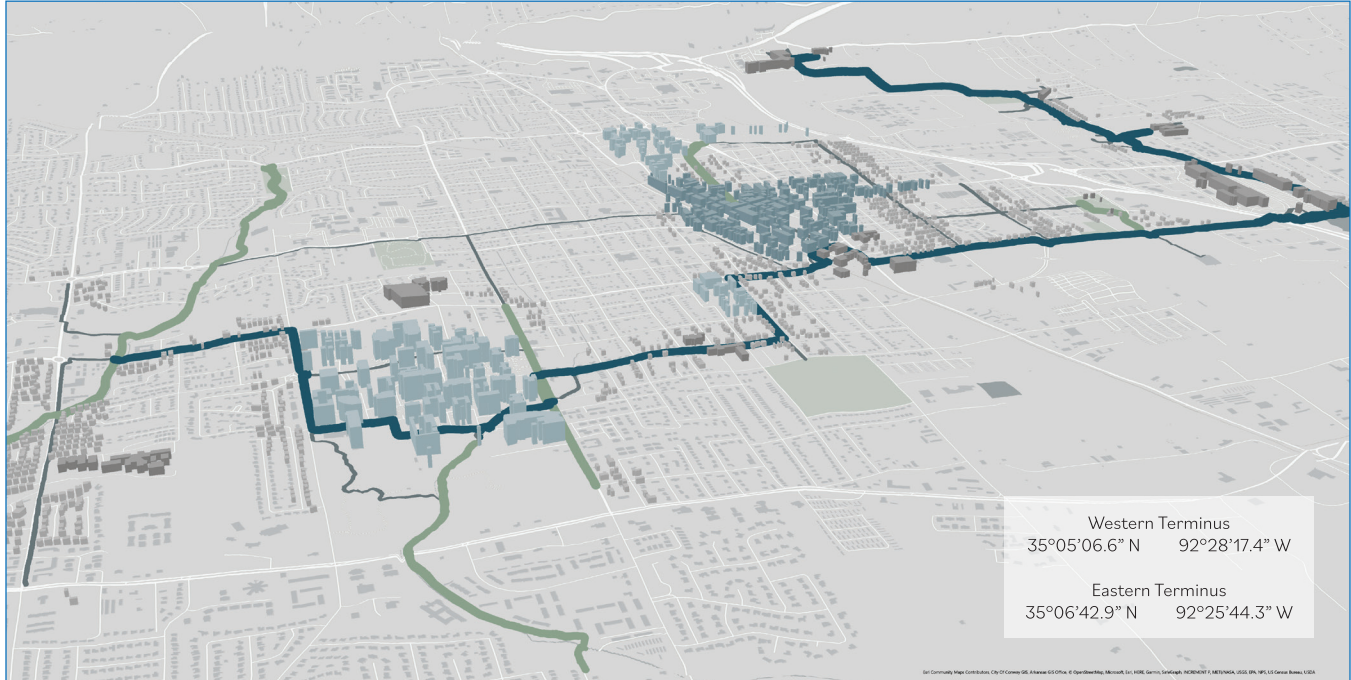


FIGURE 13 - CONNECT CONWAY PRIMARY ROUTE

Connect Conway will provide access to ten parks, seven schools, three major retail developments, fourteen major employers, three colleges and universities, health care facilities, social services, existing trails, sixteen neighborhoods, and two grocery stores.

The primary route passes through Areas of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Communities that are low-income and historically underserved portions of the community. Table 3 shows the five qualified census tracts for Areas of Persistent Poverty within the city of Conway. The primary corridor will go through or run along the border of four of the five qualified census tracts.

TABLE 3 - CONNECT CONWAY CENSUS TRACT DATA

QUALIFIED CENSUS TRACTS	307.01	307.02	304.03	304.04	308	309
% of Vacant Housing Units	17.7%	11.2%	16.4%	6.9%	17.8%	20.8%
Median Household Income	\$21,600	\$31,377	\$49,565	\$53,403	\$43,194	\$28,314
Unemployment Rate	7.4%	2.2%	4.8%	2.6%	8.1%	4.2%
% Below Poverty Level	37.1%	33.1%	16.2%	6.0%	28.6%	39.3%
Area of Persistent Poverty	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Historically Disadvantaged Community	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓



The City of Conway requests \$24,647,664 in RAISE grant funding to implement Connect Conway, including completion of design and permitting, construction, inspection, and right-of-way acquisition. Design plans have defined an alignment and are at a 10-15% stage with preliminary environmental work to identify potential permitting challenges and risks that might prevent Categorical Exclusion. Considerable local, state, and federal funds have been expended previously on improvements that will leverage Connect Conway's impact. These demonstrate the City's commitment to the project. No match is proposed for the project, with all funding sourced from this grant. According to the Department of Transportation's definition, the City of Conway is designated as a rural area, and this project is located in Areas of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Communities.

TABLE 4 - DETAILED OPINION OF PROBABLE COST

PROJECT CATEGORIES	UNITS	QUANTITY	UNIT COST	COST
CONSTRUCTION COSTS				
Concrete	CY	7,355	\$550.00	\$4,045,229.63
Asphalt	Ton	26,754.75	\$130.00	\$3,478,117.50
Undercut	CY	36,478.22	\$50.00	\$1,823,911.11
Class 7 Base	Ton	19,197.78	\$35.00	\$671,922.30
Site Prep	LF	65,861	\$12.50	\$823,262.50
Earthwork	CY	36,589.44	\$20.00	\$731,788.89
Utility Relocation	LF	65,861	\$8.00	\$526,888.00
Creek Crossings	EA	11	\$70,000	\$770,000.00
Seeding/Mulch	AC	11.4	\$2,500	\$28,500.00
Topsoil/Sod	SY	27,588	\$8.00	\$220,704.00
Erosion Control	LF	65,861	\$5.00	\$329,305.00
Trail Lighting	EA	549	\$3,500	\$1,921,500.00
Street Crossings (w/RRFB)	EA	4	\$9,000	\$36,000.00
Construction Layout	LF	65,861	\$2.50	\$164,652.50
Traffic Control	LF	65,861	\$2.50	\$164,652.50
Trailheads	EA	9	\$20,000	\$180,000.00
Little Creek Plaza	LS	1	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000.00
Restroom Facility	EA	1	\$200,000	\$200,000.00
Subtotal				\$17,116,433.93
Contingency (20%)				\$3,423,286.79
CONSTRUCTION TOTAL				\$20,539,720.72
MISCELLANEOUS COSTS				
Design (6%)				\$1,232,383.24
Inspection (4%)				\$821,588.83
Right of Way				\$2,053,972.07
MISCELLANEOUS TOTAL				\$4,107,944.14
TOTAL RAISE FUNDING REQUESTED				\$24,647,664.86
NON-FEDERAL SOURCES				\$0
OTHER FEDERAL SOURCES				\$0

SAFETY

Connect Conway intends to provide safe, equitable transportation options for people on bikes and pedestrians. Planned safety enhancements include traffic calming, reducing vehicular conflicts, increasing user comfort levels, promoting a sense of belonging, and enhancing connections within the community.

The main facility types utilized along the primary route will be 12' shared-use greenway trail, 12' sidepath, 12' cycle track, and sidewalks. These facilities will be geared towards all ages and abilities and promote a sense of belonging. Shared-use greenway trails will be used primarily along the Little Creek east of Interstate 40, while sidepaths will be used for most improvements west of Interstate 40, where off-street corridors are limited. Cycle tracks are bi-directional protected bike lanes where ample pavement is available and vertical bollards offer protection from vehicular traffic. There are plans to implement cycle track along a small portion of the driveway at Amity Road, on Chestnut Street between Harkrider Street and College Avenue, and Farris Road between Bruce Street and College Avenue. Buffered and separated bike lanes will also be utilized in certain portions of the route. These lanes will implement striping on wide roads with lower traffic levels and can integrate vertical bollards for more protection and safety.

There will be portions of the route where shared-use greenway trails and sidepaths intersect with roadways and high traffic areas. Safe and ADA accessible crosswalks are planned at these vehicular conflict areas with High Visibility Crosswalks, Yield to Pedestrians signage, and User-Activated Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB).

It is also anticipated that an existing HAWK (High-Intensity Activated Crosswalk Beacon) beacon being replaced by an underpass will be repurposed along the route. This type of pedestrian hybrid beacon allows protected crossings that stop road traffic as needed. Beacons will be deployed in high traffic areas and school zone locations, promoting safer access to the seven schools along the route. Lighting is included along the route providing a sense of safety for travel during low-visibility hours.

Preventing vehicle crashes that involve pedestrians is a safety focus of Connect Conway. The 2020 Nonmotorized Crash Data study from Metroplan compiled important vehicular and pedestrian crash information for the project area. There were 29 crashes for the year with varying levels of severity. Thirteen crashes were not at intersections, seven were at 4-way intersections, and nine were at T-intersections. There were five fatal events, five serious injuries, thirteen minor injuries, two possible injuries, and four crashes with no apparent injuries.

The project advisory committee performed a walk audit of the trail route and focused on areas where pedestrian and vehicle conflicts could occur. The committee imagined the route as vulnerable users and discussed ways to promote safety and comfort for users age 8 to 80. This walk audit tour was an educational process that helped steer the planning of the route and how to move trail users safely along the corridor.

BBC Researching and Consulting analyzed safety benefits and calculated the monetary value of reducing crashes along the proposed route. BBC estimates that an approximate annual value of \$1,022,000 will be saved from reduced injury and no injury crashes.

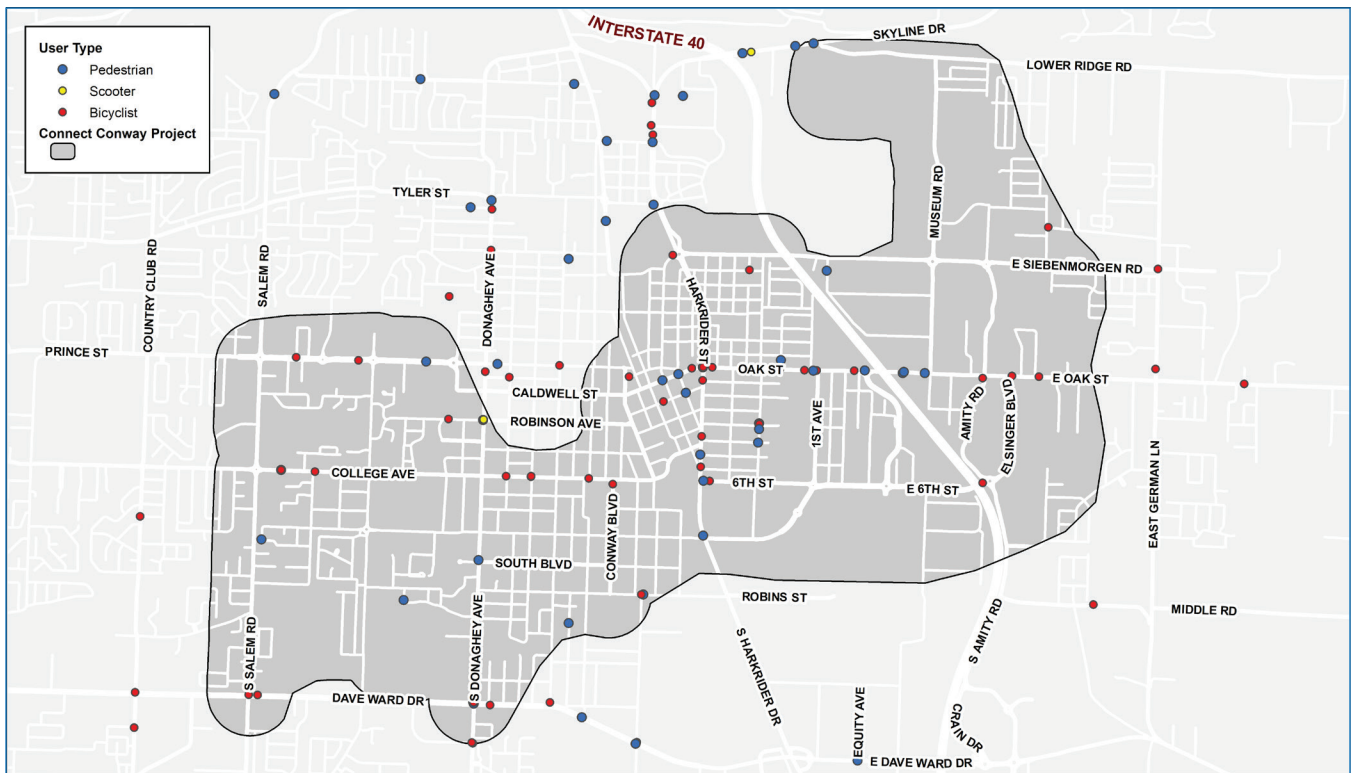


FIGURE 14 - METROPLAN 2020 NONMOTORIZED CRASH DATA STUDY MAP

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Connect Conway advances environmental sustainability by providing a low-impact transportation alternative for potential users, particularly low-wealth/low-income east Conway residents and workers for which lack of a personal automobile presents a substantial barrier to full participation in the economy and community. Having access to this transportation option will generate numerous environmental benefits for the community.

Foremost, Connect Conway will reduce vehicle emissions by providing modal alternatives and decreasing congestion issues. Non-motorized transportation systems help improve air quality and fight against the effects of climate change. Vehicular transport in Conway is a significant environmental concern. Conway has experienced consistent population growth, doubling in size since the mid-1990s. With this growth, vehicles and congestion have affected the area's environmental quality. A study done in 2020 by the Arkansas Department of Transportation showed that many of the state and city roads that intersect with the primary route of Connect Conway have daily traffic estimates ranging from 1,000 to 30,000 vehicles. Reducing this environmental impact will help create a sustainable system for a growing city.

Connect Conway lies within the Lake Conway-Point Remove Watershed (HUC# 11110203) and drains into the Arkansas River Basin in Central Arkansas. There are two segments within the project area listed on the State's 303(d) List of Impaired Streams. The impaired segments are related to Stone Dam Creek (HUC# 11110203904) and have turbidity and dissolved oxygen impairments. This project will improve water quality by reducing pollutants, increasing filtration, and improving stormwater quality and drainage. Improvements will be made in Little Creek as channel and bank modifications will be implemented, decreasing flow velocities and adding riffles utilizing large rocks and boulders.

A plaza and trailhead are planned along the Little Creek corridor portion of the route in the highly urbanized Conway Commons shopping area. It will serve as a demonstration project for sustainable streamside use and riparian repair. It will allow users to experience a more natural environment with an observation area, in-stream improvements, native vegetation, and park amenities. Educational opportunities will also be possible as this project connects residents and visitors with a more natural greenway transportation alternative and recreational facility.

Throughout the planning process, environmental justice and racial equity have been key components of the project. Significant portions of the trail will pass through neighborhoods with large African American populations, many of which have historically seen less infrastructure investment than other areas of the city. The EPA's Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool was employed to visualize overlay the future trail area on different demographic data to capture how marginalized groups will benefit from the trail's construction.

Each map produced shows the location of the city limits, the future trail area, and the demographic data being mapped (Appendix 4, 5). The demographic data displayed on each map originated from the American Community Survey 2014-2018 5-year estimates, showing data at the census block level. After analyzing various demographic factors, the maps revealed significant overlap between many of these variables. Areas with large minority populations, specifically African Americans, also coincided with block groups with a high percentage of people whose primary mode of transportation is walking. With a current lack of pedestrian infrastructure in this part of the city, Connect Conway will provide a much-needed alternative for people living in the surrounding neighborhoods.

In addition to providing a new connection for cyclists and pedestrians, Connect Conway will also link disadvantaged neighborhoods to numerous city parks. By better allowing all city residents to have easy access to parks and green spaces, the project will help make the city more equitable. Groups who have not been able to easily or safely access public amenities such as schools, parks, and community centers will now have a viable route available without needing access to a car.

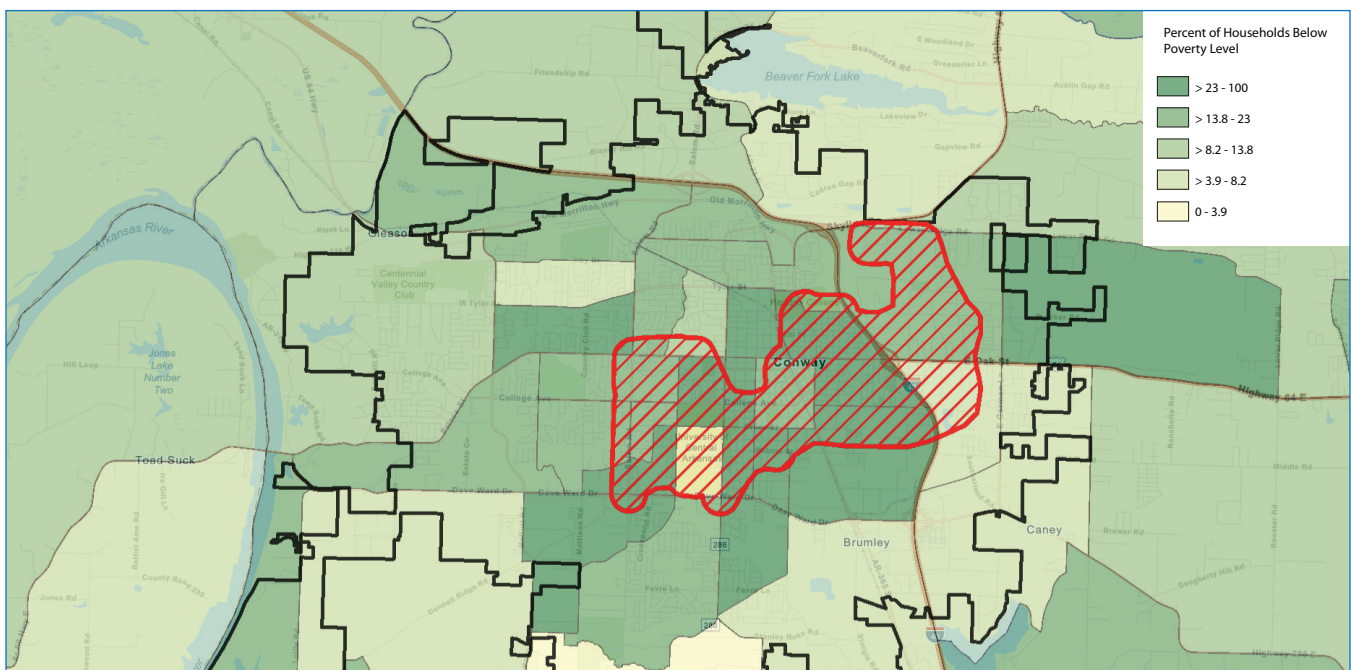


FIGURE 15 - PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS BELOW POVERTY LEVEL

QUALITY OF LIFE

Increasing the quality of life for Conway residents through access, connectivity, health benefits, job opportunities, and pride for the community is an integral part of the Connect Conway project. Bike and pedestrian transportation alternatives can significantly affect a community's physical, mental, social, and economic well-being. With Connect Conway, the transportation options and facilities will provide residents with easier access to vital community services and amenities.

Most of Conway's existing bike and pedestrian infrastructure is located in the western portion of the city. Connect Conway creates a crucial link for the eastern portions of Conway with west Conway, providing more equitable access to vital services and opportunities. East Conway is a primarily Historically Disadvantaged area and home to most of the city's Areas of Persistent Poverty. Full economic and community participation is almost an impossibility for those without access to a personal automobile. The construction of Connect Conway will provide a tangible and significant benefit to those community residents and stakeholders by increasing personal mobility with a safe, accessible transportation alternative.



FIGURE 16 - KINLEY TRAIL

Increased mobility options can improve access to job opportunities and other workforce-related services, improving many residents' quality of life. Revitalizing previously underserved city areas with bike and pedestrian infrastructure will increase community pride and city aesthetics. Investments made into parks and greenway infrastructure have been shown to improve local economies, property values, and attract and retain businesses. The impacts of a project like Connect Conway will help the community be more cohesive, social, and livable.

Arkansas ranks high in obesity rates among students and adults. Nationally, Arkansas is typically among the top three worst states in obesity. According to Aspire Arkansas data provided by the Arkansas Community Foundation, 37% of students and 70% of adults in Faulkner County are overweight or obese. About 32% of adults are physically inactive in Faulkner County. Connect Conway plans to combat the health and morbidity problems in Conway and the region by providing easier access to recreational exercise and amenities. Integrating bike and pedestrian infrastructure and connections to community amenities will increase physical activity, helping prevent obesity-related health impacts. The quality of life benefits from this project may influence the economic well-being of users by reducing health care costs due to lack of physical activity.

MOBILITY AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

The primary purpose of Connect Conway is to increase mobility within the community by providing an alternative transportation system for pedestrians and people on bikes. The project will significantly invest in bike and pedestrian infrastructure in the underserved east Conway, connecting it to existing infrastructure in the western portions of the community. Areas of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Communities will have better access to community services and destinations through the development of this system. Residents who do not have access to a vehicle will now have access to a more walkable system that will promote safety and accessibility.

This proposal increases connectivity to ten parks, seven schools, three major retail centers, three

universities and colleges, fourteen major employers, sixteen neighborhoods, and other vital community services. The trail system has been designed to serve all age requirements and levels of physical ability. Individuals with disabilities will see improvements at intersections, increasing the safety of all users. The City of Conway measures approximately seven miles from east to west and six miles from north to south. Active transportation is a viable answer for much of the population living and working in Conway. The primary corridor connects the community from east to west, and secondary connections create a more extensive active transportation system and walkability. Significant barriers or deterrents for active transportation are minimized with alternative routes and connections to safe passageways over or under major thoroughways.

Barriers, such as major thoroughways, can be a significant challenge in preventing non-motorized travelers from getting around the community. Pedestrians traveling north and south on the eastern side of the city have faced the obstacle of crossing Oak Street. Interstate 40 presents a similar, if not more significant, hindrance for those going east and west. The proposed route includes grade-separated crossings utilizing existing bridge infrastructure at both locations. Removing physical barriers and creating safe places to cross major thoroughways will make walking and biking more feasible. Lack of viable routes and safety were among the top concerns that prevent residents from walking and biking. Additional accessibility concerns for individuals with disabilities make having a vehicle a near necessity. Connect Conway provides a space where people with strollers, elderly residents, individuals with disabilities, and everyone in between can feel safe and comfortable while traveling to their destination.

Trailheads provide areas of respite and connectivity to trail users along the route.

Nine proposed trailheads are planned for integration along the Connect Conway route (Appendix 9). The trailheads benefit pedestrians and cyclists through amenities, information, and service while also providing connection points throughout the community.

ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

Economic competitiveness is a central impetus for Connect Conway, and it is projected that the project will be a catalyst for future investment. The development of trails and trail systems make profound economic impacts on regions and communities that surround them. There are many examples of how trails boost local economies by bringing in tourism, creating jobs, attracting businesses, increasing property values, combating environmental issues, and generating revenue.

The Connect Conway primary route will connect shopping centers, parks and sports complexes, restaurants, major employers, and local businesses. The Central Landing area of Conway is a focus of redevelopment and revitalization. There have been considerable investments made into the area. The Conway Development Corporation (CDC) is a nonprofit economic development organization created to promote economic growth and development for the City of Conway and Faulkner County, Arkansas. The CDC has acted as the primary developer for the Central Landing area and has developed several hundred acres of industrial and commercial property over its 60-year history. Infrastructure investments in Central Landing, such as road development and improvements, a bicycle/pedestrian-friendly bridge, and a multi-family housing complex, have been infused into the Historically Disadvantaged Community and Area of Persistent Poverty. This area is the future home of the voter-approved Conway Community and Aquatics Center. The investments that voters approved in February of 2022 will consist of just under

\$40 million to pay off bonds issued in 2017, finance the construction and operation of the community and aquatic center (\$27.3 million), and build a new soccer complex (\$5.5 million) along the Connect Conway route. Conway voters' commitment to the community will increase the economic competitiveness of the city and the Central Arkansas region, creating job opportunities and increasing tourism.

People of all income levels will benefit from the alternative transportation option that Connect Conway will provide. Not having the expense of an automobile, with lower maintenance and fuel costs, will allow residents to improve their financial situation. Conway is initiating a Microtransit system with the assistance of Rock Region Metro, a Central Arkansas public transit system, for those who are without access to a vehicle. As the Microtransit system develops and improves, Connect Conway provides another opportunity for transportation alternatives for those who need access to essential services and employment. With the Microtransit system, there are opportunities to integrate service points along Connect Conway. As Conway continues to grow, it is important to make transit investments, and Conway has made the first transit step in planning for future growth.

Connect Conway will result in a more productive economy for the city and the region. Improvements in transportation options and infrastructure will improve the well-being of residents and raise the standard of living. These improvements will attract investments and talent and help Conway propel into the future.

STATE OF GOOD REPAIR

Connect Conway plans to maintain existing roadways that are in good condition for a longer period by reducing vehicle miles traveled and unnecessary trips that overwhelm the transportation system. Upgrades will be

made at strategic locations along the route to roadway surfaces and pedestrian facilities. The benefits of providing an alternative route for transportation will take some time to derive measurable repair and maintenance costs, but over time and with more adoption of the system, roadway conditions will degrade at a slower rate.

The pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure conditions along the primary and secondary routes can vary in state and need of repair or replacement. Conway has made investments in repairing sidewalks and upgrading pedestrian facilities. Projects such as Donaghey Avenue, Markham Street, and Locust Street have all seen repairs and upgrades to facilities. Connect Conway plans to widen existing sidewalks in several locations along the primary route in addition to constructing the trail system.

When possible, Connect Conway will utilize existing roundabouts at points where crossing a major roadway is necessary. Installing additional pedestrian crossing signals at traditional intersections adds cost to the project and creates additional maintenance requirements in the future. Utilizing roundabouts allows users to take advantage of existing infrastructure, such as refuge islands in the roadway. Additionally, this design can avoid further utility work that may otherwise need to be conducted to install pedestrian crossing signals.

Improvements are planned for areas that do not adequately meet ADA standards. Portions of the trail which cross intersections and roundabouts will be of particular interest. Sharp drop-offs typically associated with curbs will not be constructed; rather, the design will be such that those with accessibility concerns can easily navigate the trail. In areas where existing sidewalk is utilized, improvements may also be required to meet ADA standards. Maintaining the Connect Conway system

will be multi-partnered cooperation, mainly between the City of Conway and Conway Corp. The city departments involved in maintenance will be the Conway Transportation and Parks and Recreation departments. Conway Corp is a valuable partner with the city and will be the point of contact for anything related to utilities.

The Conway Department of Transportation will handle the maintenance of pavement and transportation improvements. The department conducts biennial pavement condition assessments to monitor paving conditions and effectively direct resources to ensure proper facilities maintenance. Paving maintenance can extend the life cycle of paving before catastrophic failures occur that require costly rebuilds. The city's pavement management system will be used to assess and monitor improvements for the Connect Conway system. Additionally, the city is in a multi-year process of tying the funding of maintenance to the expected life cycle of facilities controlled and maintained by the city, ensuring new infrastructure will be maintained in a state of good repair. Conway Parks and Recreation provides mowing maintenance where needed and will be responsible for maintaining trail amenities. Conway Corp will assume responsibility for maintaining lighting systems.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATORS

The Connect Conway project and initiative have brought together numerous partners and stakeholders who are excited to see this project become a reality. Since 2018, various partners have dedicated work and time to developing Connect Conway's vision. Lead partners such as the City of Conway, Conway Area Chamber of Commerce, Conway Development Corporation, Conway Corp, and the University of Central Arkansas have been involved in various capacities going back to the first BUILD grant submission in 2018.

For the grant application, a project advisory committee was formed to help steer the main objectives and vision of Connect Conway. This advisory committee consisted of members from the city (staff and city council), Conway Area Chamber of Commerce, Conway Development Corporation, Conway Corp, University of Central Arkansas, Hendrix College, Central Baptist College, Bicycle Pedestrian and Advisory Board, Conway Public Schools, Community Action Program for Central Arkansas (CAPCA), and community-at-large representatives.

Since the inception of this project, Conway has prioritized input from residents through various community engagement methods. Virtual public meetings were held to discuss the trail route, amenities, project location, and benefits the project would provide. When possible, in-person meetings were held to accommodate stakeholders in a socially distant manner. A visual preference survey asked residents to give input on desires and needs by showcasing various design elements from existing trails. For more information on the public engagement aspects of Connect Conway, please refer to Appendix 11.

Connect Conway has received 24 letters of support from partners who have taken their time to propel the project forward by supporting this initiative (Appendix 2).



INNOVATION

The Connect Conway project will incorporate innovative project delivery and connectivity techniques. Traffic calming techniques will be utilized in upgrading pedestrian and vehicle intersections. Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons and High-Intensity Activated Crosswalk beacons will be integrated into the system to boost user safety.

The project also features innovation with the proposal of the Little Creek Plaza. The plaza will serve as a demonstration project for sustainable streamside use and riparian repair and allow users to experience a more natural environment with an observation area, in-stream improvements, native vegetation, and park amenities. Improvements will be made in Little Creek as channel and bank modifications will be implemented, decreasing flow velocities and adding riffles utilizing large rocks and boulders. Native plantings will be used along the streamside to create a treatment train for stormwater runoff from the adjacent parking lots of the Conway Commons retail center. These plantings will use phytoremediation to remove or capture pollutants entering Little Creek and flowing into the challenged northwestern bay of Lake Conway. The plaza will also provide educational opportunities to connect residents and visitors with a more natural greenway transportation alternative and recreational facilities that place people along the scenic portion of the route.

Implementing this trail system within Conway provides an option for active transportation for residents and visitors, but there will also be the opportunity to integrate electric bikes and e-scooters along the route. Conway previously incorporated a bike-sharing program in 2017 with Zagster as the program partner. Unfortunately, due to challenges associated with COVID-19, this program was paused by Zagster in early 2020, and the company terminated all operations later that year. Upon

notice of award, the City intends to issue a Request for Information and Qualifications on development of an e-bike share program to help determine viability. Based on the outcome of the request, the City anticipates initiating a public-private partnership to develop a city-wide e-bike share program to fully leverage Connect Conway improvements and expand transportation alternatives across the community.

The City of Conway has a strong partnership with Conway Corp, who for more than 90 years has operated the utility system for the city, and provides electric, water, wastewater, video, internet, voice, and security services. Through this partnership, coordination will be vital in developing the Connect Conway trail system. A “dig once” policy and practice will be utilized to coordinate utility relocations that may arise during the project’s construction phase. Trailheads will provide an opportunity for innovation by installing charging stations and Wi-Fi technologies.



FIGURE 17 - LITTLE CREEK TRAILHEAD PLAZA

BENEFIT-COST ANALYSIS

The Benefits Cost Analysis (BCA) determines the estimated value of a project compared to the invested costs of implementing the project over a fixed period. The Connect Conway project utilized the 2022 (Revised) Benefit-Cost Analysis Guidance for Discretionary Grant Programs as a basis for the analysis. Safety, Health, Environmental Sustainability, and Economic Competitiveness benefits were quantified for the proposed pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Other factors were evaluated, such as property values, willingness to pay for trail amenities, and other fiscal benefits. These benefits were documented, but the analysis did not assign a monetary value. Results from the analysis are detailed below in Table 5 and 6. For this analysis, an annual timeframe value was documented to determine categorical benefits and a seven percent discount rate was applied to the health benefits category. The City of Conway partnered with BBC Research and Consulting for this analysis, and more information can be found in Appendix 1.

TABLE 5 - SUMMARY OF CONNECT CONWAY BENEFIT-COST ANALYSIS

QUANTIFIED ANNUAL BENEFITS	
Health Benefits	\$1,704,000
Safety Benefits	\$1,022,000
Economic Competitiveness	\$48,000
Environmental Sustainability	\$4,900
TOTAL QUANTIFIED ANNUAL BENEFITS	\$2,778,900
20-YEAR BENEFITS TOTAL	\$55,578,000
TOTAL PROJECT COSTS	\$ 24,647,664
BCA RATIO	2.25
NET BENEFIT	\$30,930,336

TABLE 6 - SUMMARY OF CONNECT CONWAY ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS	
Property Values	2-15% increase
Increased Use of Trails	+24 minutes; +2 miles
Value of Access	\$0.45-\$0.49 per trip
Bicycling User Day Value	\$64.20

PROJECT READINESS

The Connect Conway team has evaluated environmental, financial, technical, and other potential obstacles in developing the project successfully and in a timely fashion. Topographic survey and conceptual plans at a 10-15% design level have been developed for the project to demonstrate technical feasibility. cursory environmental reviews have been performed along portions of the route, and a detailed environmental constraints analysis has been completed for the Little Creek Trailhead Plaza. Conceptual Plans have been developed for the entirety of the Connect Conway primary route (Appendix 3), and a Preliminary Engineering Report was completed for the Little Creek Trailhead Plaza (Appendix 8). Financial risks were considered, and utility relocations were factored into the planning and design process. Several environmental permits, reviews, and approvals will be needed for this project to enter the construction phase. State and Federal agencies will be contacted, and cooperation will be achieved through the permitting and approval process.

ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS

Environmental reviews have been performed along portions of the proposed Connect Conway route, and a more in-depth environmental analysis has been completed for the Little Creek Trailhead Plaza portion. Previous environmental work was completed on different route segments, such as the Central Landing area and the 6th Street Overpass. Roadway improvements were made in this area, and the Federal Highway Administration granted approvals by issuing a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Tier 3 Categorical Exclusion. This portion of the route comprises 0.8 miles of the Connect Conway corridor. Based on the evaluations of environmental constraints, a Categorical Exclusion (CE) class of action is anticipated. If an unforeseen impact is determined through further evaluation, adequate time for completing an Environmental Assessment (EA) has been assumed for scheduling.

A preliminary engineering report and environmental study have been developed for the Little Creek Trailhead Plaza by Crafton Tull engineering. The review area for this project is approximately 4 acres and considered the trail area and adjacent parcels. Within this report, Crafton Tull discussed construction feasibility, utilities and right of way, permitting,

costs, biological resources, floodplains, historic and cultural resources, hazardous materials, societal factors, and air and water quality impacts. The permits and approvals expected are listed below in Table 7. Threatened and Endangered species, migratory birds, Bald and Golden eagles, and Monarch butterflies were also evaluated for this project area and may present a risk that will need to be mitigated. For more information on the Little Creek Trailhead Plaza environmental risks (Appendix 8).

Historical and cultural resource impacts have been taken into consideration. The route will traverse two historic districts and several properties on the National Register of Historic Places. We anticipate Section 106 review and will coordinate with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). No impacts outside of existing street right-of-way are anticipated in these areas, and the city's historic preservation official has been intimately involved in the project's planning.

FINANCIAL RISKS

The City of Conway has experience planning, designing, and constructing greenway trails and administering federal and state grants for the community. The installation of two major overpasses at Dave Ward Drive and Interstate 40/6th Street were multimillion-dollar projects with multiple partnerships. Conway has put considerable resources toward developing the Stone Dam Creek and Kinley Trail systems with federal funding. The financial risks of Connect Conway have been taken into account, and utilizing expertise in developing similar projects will greatly help the development of the system.

OTHER RISKS

When developing trail and transportation systems, utility relocation and Right of Way challenges can be potential risks. Some easements will need to be acquired along portions of the route and potential property acquisitions. The city has significant experience in effectively acquiring ROW consistent with the Uniform Relocation Act. These issues have been factored into the scheduling and budgeting of Connect Conway. The city has already begun coordination with ArDOT on the project's accommodation in planned roadway improvements. The route has been designed to require minimal coordination with Union Pacific Railroad, avoiding railroad right-of-way where possible and utilizing an existing pedestrian crossing with crossbars.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement has and will continue to be an integral part of the planning and design process for the project. The project has been guided by a generationally and racially diverse project advisory committee. Engagement efforts, to date, have included a walk audit, visual preference amenity survey, consultation with the city's Bicycle and

Pedestrian Advisory Board, and community-wide input meetings. Planning has been conducted with particular emphasis on environmental justice impacts on Areas of Persistent Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Areas within the project zone.

TABLE 7 - ANTICIPATED PERMITS AND APPROVALS

NAME OF PERMIT	PERMITTER
General Permit ARR150000	Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ)
Clean Water Act Section 404 Individual Permit	US Army Corps of Engineers
State of Arkansas Short Term Activity Authorization (STAA) – Section 401	Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ)
Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) for large sites – Section 402	Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ)
Floodplain Development Permit	Local Floodplain Administrator/(FEMA)
No Rise/No Adverse Impact Certification	Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
Letter of Map Revision	Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
Management of Airspace Agreement	Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDOT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

TABLE 8 - CONNECT CONWAY PROJECT SCHEDULE

	2022				2023				2024				2025				2026				2027			
DESCRIPTION	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
RAISE Grant Award Selection																								
ARDOT Notice to Proceed																								
Planning and Environmental																								
NEPA-Environmental Assessment																								
Permitting																								
Preliminary Design																								
Surveys																								
Geotechnical Studies and Report																								
30% Plans																								
Develop 30% Trail Plans																								
ARDOT Review and Approval																								
60% Plans																								
Develop 60% Trail Plans																								
ARDOT Review and Approval																								
Design Public Hearing																								
Right of Way																								
Strip Map																								
ARDOT Review and Approval																								
Acquisition																								
ARDOT Certification																								
Final Design																								
90% Plans																								
Develop 90% Trail Plans																								
ARDOT Review and Approval																								
100% Plans																								
Develop 100% Plans																								
RAISE Grant Funding Obligation																								
Advertising / Bid Letting																								
Construction																								

Funds to be Expended by September 30, 2031