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## BUILD Capital Grant: Project Description

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Dyersville, Iowa, is seeking **\$25 million** in Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant funding to deliver the Connections for Economic Freedom Project (the Project), a transformative investment for rural Iowa. This generational undertaking will strengthen community resiliency, improve safety, and elevate quality of life by creating seamless connections for vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists, and emergency responders.

The Project consists of **three integrated components**:

- **New bridges** spanning the North Fork Maquoketa River and Bear Creek to improve access and reliability.
- **A grade-separated overpass eliminating a hazardous Canadian National (CN) Railway crossing** to ensure safer and faster travel.
- **Accessible trails** linking neighborhoods, parks, commercial hubs, and the regional 30-mile Heritage Trail to foster community connection and economic vitality.

Together, these improvements will knit the community closer, enhance mobility, and position Dyersville for sustainable growth. See **Figure 1** for Project components. The Project represents the culmination of more than 12 years of research, public engagement, and strategic planning. Its components form the essential backbone necessary for the City of Dyersville (City) to provide consistent, reliable, and accessible multimodal connections and access to services and opportunities. Dyersville, a rural midwestern community of roughly 4,500 people, sits in the heart of northeast Iowa along U.S. Highway 20 (US-20). The City is steeped in history and heritage and home to the iconic *Field of Dreams* movie site. Dyersville blends natural beauty, cultural attractions, and small-town charm, attracting more than 275,000 visitors each year. The City's unique topography includes the convergence of two waterways: the North Fork Maquoketa River and Bear Creek, which routinely overtop and create natural barriers, isolating neighborhoods, and threatening mobility, safety, and economic activity.

To address continued flooding risks, the City partnered with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to evaluate flood reduction strategies. The 2004 "Initial Assessment Report for Flood Damage Reduction" (CWIS No. 179046) recommended raising roads, enlarging drainage structures, implementing flood-warning systems, developing a watershed management plan, encouraging citizens to move out of the floodplain, and using floodplain areas for recreational amenities. Since this report, the City has invested in implementing these suggestions as flood frequency and severity have continued to increase.

The City's planning efforts have grown beyond flood mitigation and include visioning and transportation plans (2011, 2012); regional and local comprehensive plans (2013, 2018); a housing study (2017); a watershed vision plan (2021); a hazard mitigation plan (2023); a Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities study (2024 – [Appendix A](#)); and numerous smaller traffic, structural, environmental, economic development, and tourism studies and reports. These plans have identified the critical connectivity components included in this application as top priorities. In addition, these efforts revealed opportunities to support community growth and development. The 2018 Comprehensive Plan was the catalyst for the City's investment in the preliminary design of critical road and bridge projects and the preservation of necessary right-of-way (ROW).

The improvements constructed as a part of the Project will build resilient, sustainable infrastructure that supports all residents and the additional 275,000 tourists that visit each year. Roadway and pedestrian facility improvements will support tourism and economic activity related to the *Field of Dreams* movie site. The City is partnering with a non-profit group to implement \$55 million in improvements, including a new professional-grade baseball park to be completed in 2026, which will increase tourism traffic even more. Dyersville Events Inc, the development

sponsor, noted that 367 baseball teams representing 23 states came to play in tournaments in the Dyersville area in 2024, a 240 percent increase over the prior year.<sup>1</sup>

Figure 1. Connections for Economic Freedom Project Components Map



<sup>1</sup> Telegraph Herald, [Dyersville receives \\$12.5 million grant for permanent Field of Dreams stadium | Breaking | telegraphherald.com](https://www.telegraphherald.com), accessed January 10, 2025

## Detailed Scope of Work

The Project involves three components, detailed in **Figure 1**. Completed construction of all components is anticipated by the end of 2030, if funding is awarded.

### Existing Transportation Challenges

The CN Railway line creates multiple conflict points, with the nearest grade-separated crossing located 5 miles west of Dyersville. Approximately 10 trains cross tracks daily in Dyersville and when trains block primary routes, emergency medical services (EMS) are forced into extended detours. Combined with flooding, these closures delay emergency response significantly and disrupt mobility. Since 2000, Dyersville has experienced six major flooding events that isolated residential neighborhoods and dramatically increased EMS response times. In addition, the absence of bicycle and pedestrian facilities limits safe multimodal transportation options, reducing connectivity and quality of life. Current funding is insufficient to implement the improvements needed to address these critical safety, mobility, and resiliency challenges.

### Proposed Project Component Solutions

#### Component 1 – North-South Connection (7th Street SW to 1st Avenue W, Beltline Overpass)

The new North-South Connection is a critical flood-resilience project corridor. Component 1 will include the following:

- A new bridge, road, and trail over Bear Creek that aligns with 7th Street SW. This includes a 518-foot-long, multispan, prestressed concrete beam (PPCB) bridge and realignment of Bear Creek for conformance with Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) requirements for floodway conveyance, clearance of the paddle trail, and no-rise criteria.
- A new urban roadway and trail overpass that eliminates an at-grade crossing of Beltline Road and the CN Railway. This includes a 32-foot-wide roadway with a 10-foot-wide multiuse trail with 1-foot shoulders and a 110-foot-long, single-span, steel girder bridge over the CN Railway.
- New roundabout to raise and realign the intersection of 7th Street SW, 1st Avenue W, and Beltline Road while also reducing vehicle conflict points and crash risk.

In combination, these corridor elements will:

- Create a reliable linkage between the southwest and north side neighborhoods and adjacent industrial area, even during flood events.
- Establish a secondary north-south route that supports emergency service access in case of accidents or train blockage of U.S. Highway 52 (US-52)/9th Street SE.
- Provide access to areas of Dyersville that have historically been completely cut off from emergency services and other vital access during flood events.
- Create the first, and only, grade-separated railroad crossing within 5 miles of Dyersville;
- Connect Dyersville's trail system to the 30-mile-long regional Heritage Trail.

Project development of Component 1 is approximately 20 percent complete, including the establishment of the bridge type, size, and location. Active coordination with DNR related to the floodplain accommodations are progressing. It is anticipated that coordination with the Federal Emergency Management Agency on a Conditional Letter of Map Revision (CLOMR) will also be needed.

#### Component 2 – East-West Connection (13th Avenue SE to 12th Avenue SW)

Like the North-South Connection, the East-West Connection is a critical flood-resilience project identified during planning work and will create a reliable multimodal link and critical EMS connection among the southwest neighborhoods, schools, hospital, and fire and law enforcement services. Preliminary design is complete ([Appendix D](#)), and the City owns the ROW.

This new corridor will connect 13th Avenue SE and 12th Avenue SW over the North Fork Maquoketa River and include the following:

- A 511-foot-long, multispans, PPCB primary bridge and 232-foot-long PPCB secondary bridge to meet the conveyance requirement and no-rise criteria established by Iowa DNR and the height requirements for the established paddle trail. The new roadway elevation is currently modeled to provide access for emergency services up to the 100-year flood elevation. This will provide additional local system redundancy during flooding events.
- A 34-foot-wide roadway with a protected, 10-foot-wide multiuse trail with 1-foot shoulders.
- Roadway lighting.
- New urban curb and gutter roadway section with storm sewer and subdrains.

Environmental field studies have been completed, and the Categorical Exclusion (CE) documentation is currently underway. Overall Project development has progressed to 30 percent complete for Component 2. Concurrence on hydraulic modeling methodology has also been received from Iowa DNR for conformance with requirements for floodway conveyance, clearance of the paddle trail, and no-rise criteria, and Component 2 and is ready to advance to the CLOMR process.

### Component 3 – Community Trail Connections (multiple locations)

The Project will close critical gaps in Dyersville's bicycle and pedestrian network and create safe, continuous connections across the community. Years of planning have consistently prioritized the need for a cohesive multimodal system that supports all users. In 2018, 52 percent of the Dyersville community identified "improving and increasing active transportation" as a planning priority (2018 Comprehensive Plan). This Project addresses the most significant gaps in the existing trail network and will create continuous and safe connections throughout the community. Adding wayfinding signage will provide accessible, easy-to-navigate routes for all users.

The Project will add 2.5 miles of new trails, trail-width sidewalks, and buffered bike lanes at key locations to complete both north-south and east-west non-vehicular connections across the City. These improvements will include crosswalks, accessible ramps, and pedestrian signals to ensure safety and accessibility. By building out these dedicated paths, the Project will unlock seamless access to an additional 30 miles of regional trails and create a fully connected network for residents and visitors. These areas, outlined in **Figure 1**, include the following:

- 13th Avenue SE between 6th Street SE and the east end of the new East-West Connection. Pedestrian traffic control signals at the US-52 intersection will include Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant ramps.
- Dyersville Park Trail, which will include a new segment from the west end of the East-West Connection bridge along the river that terminates at Candy Cane Park and the existing trail network.
- 12th Avenue SW from the west end of the East-West Connection.
- 7th Street SW, including bike lanes painted between 12th Avenue SW and the south end of the proposed bridge over Bear Creek and sidewalks to fill gaps between 9th Avenue SW and the south end of the Bear Creek bridge.
- Beltline Segment, which will include a new trail along Beltline Road connecting to 2nd Street NE.

The development of Component 3 is 10 percent complete. Cost has been estimated from conceptual plans. A preliminary cost estimate is anticipated for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) decisions.

## Project History and Community Engagement

Since 2018, the City has invested heavily in advancing the Project's components. During this time, Dyersville completed conceptual and preliminary designs, initiated NEPA review, and conducted extensive public involvement. Engagement efforts included presentations, public meetings and hearings, and interviews with key organizations. To ensure broad participation, the City also contracted a professional public involvement consultant to perform demographic analysis and targeted outreach to senior populations and service providers to capture travel patterns and unique challenges to inform Project design. The resulting Demographic Profile and Transportation Access Impacts Report is linked as [Appendix C](#).

## Project Location and Census Geography

The Project is located in Dyersville, Iowa, a rural city in eastern Delaware County and western Dubuque County, which together have a population of 116,228. Project components span both counties, and a Project location KMZ file is included as an attachment.

While many rural communities are shrinking, Dyersville's population grew by 10 percent from 2010 to 2020 (from 4,000 to 4,500 residents), and nearly 20 percent of its population is over age 65, underscoring the need for safe, accessible transportation options. The Project area lies primarily in Census Tract 105, with a small portion in Census Tract 9501. Although this is not a U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT)-designated area of persistent poverty, pockets of poverty exist. The northwest corner of the City consistently reports around 11 percent of households living below the poverty level in the last 12 months.

By improving multimodal connections, the Project will provide broad access to community resources, emergency services, housing, jobs, schools, recreational amenities, and regional trails, all of which advance the BUILD grant program priorities of mobility and community connectivity, safety, economic opportunity, and quality of life for all residents.

## Broader Area Context

The Project complements and strengthens broader local and regional transportation investments by closing long-standing network gaps and creating a safer, more cohesive multimodal system for Dyersville. The proposed grade-separated north-south at-grade crossing and new east-west bridge connection transform previously disconnected areas into a unified community, improving access between residential neighborhoods, Dyersville Elementary School, parks, and key community amenities. Integrated bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout the Project provide continuous, low-stress connections that will link directly to the 30-mile-long regional trail system, enhancing first- and last-mile freight access and expanding travel options for residents of all ages and abilities. By tying the roadway, trail, and community destinations into a single, coordinated network, the Project ensures existing transportation investments work better together while advancing safety, mobility, and quality of life for the entire community.