

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PLAN AND PURPOSE



The City of Watertown has been incrementally building a network for pedestrians and bicyclists over the last 20+ years. Through collaborative efforts across multiple City departments (Public Works, Parks, Recreation & Forestry), along with coordination with both Jefferson and Dodge Counties, and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Path Task Force, projects such as the Interurban Trail have expanded the City's options for walking and biking, both as a means of transportation and for recreation. Over the last few years, it has become apparent that a long-range plan is needed to clearly create a guide to develop a fully-connected network, which the City can work to implement in phases. A long-term plan like this is ambitious and will require continued collaboration across City departments, support from the City Council, and stewardship from non-profit and advocacy organizations.

The purpose of this planning process is:

- 1 To create a plan that addresses the future of a city-wide bicycle and pedestrian network, building off the existing network.
- 2 To gather and incorporate community feedback and desires to address safety and a future vision for active transportation in Watertown.
- 3 To identify best practices and guide the City in future facility and network investments.
- 4 To guide policy and programming improvements, such as wayfinding, bike parking, and educational and encouragement activities.
- 5 To build awareness of and enthusiasm for expanding multimodal transportation opportunities in and around Watertown.

WHY PLAN FOR BIKING AND WALKING IN WATERTOWN?

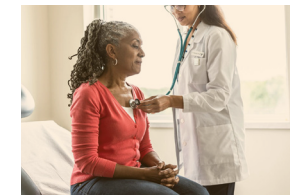
The following are some key reasons for planning for the future of biking and walking in Watertown. To learn more, see **Chapter 1: Introduction, page 6.**



» **Safety**



» **Livability**



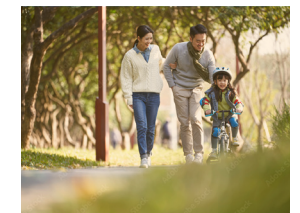
» **Health**



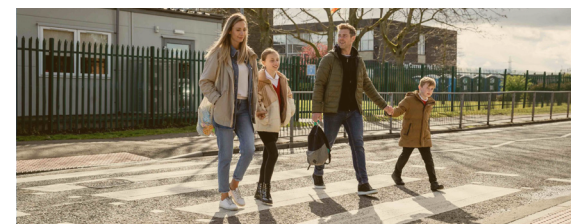
» **Prosperity**



» **Air Quality**



» **Recreation**



» **Parking and Transportation Networks**



» **Tourism**

PLANNING TIMELINE

 **Winter 2025**
Project Kick-off

 **Spring 2025**
Information Gathering

 **Summer 2025**
Public Involvement
• Open Houses
• Pop-up Events
• Advisory Group Meetings

 **Fall 2025**
Develop Recommendations

 **Winter 2025 - 2026**
Finalize the Plan

 **Implement the Plan**

PLAN OBJECTIVES

Early in the planning process, the following objectives were identified to holistically address bicycle and pedestrian issues within the plan. The Plan Objectives focus on physical infrastructure improvements, programs, and policies.



Address a Variety of Users

Define a cohesive, connected walking and biking network in Watertown that meets the needs of

- » Commuters
- » Recreational bicyclists and hikers
- » People with disabilities
- » People who don't have the ability or interest in driving
- » People who use public transportation
- » Children and young people
- » Seniors
- » Families
- » Visitors



Make Connections

Better connect residents and visitors to:

- » Schools
- » Community Destinations
- » Commercial Centers
- » Employment Centers
- » Neighborhoods
- » Medical Destinations
- » Parks



Encourage and Educate

- » Identify programs and initiatives to support biking and walking in Watertown
- » Promote ways to make passive forms of exercise, such as biking and walking, a part of daily routines for residents
- » Develop or identify programs or initiatives to educate bicyclists, pedestrians, and drivers about safety and etiquette



Prioritize and Implement

- » Define community goals and vision for the future of walking and biking in Watertown
- » Create a plan that will assist with future grant-writing and fund-seeking efforts
- » Identify projects that can be started in the near-term
- » Recommend strategies for phasing and implementation of the plan
- » Identify champions or stewards for projects or initiatives that can't be implemented by the City alone



Address Facilities and Infrastructure

- » Fill network gaps and address difficult intersection crossings and barriers to walking and biking circulation within the city
- » Find ways to make biking and walking safe, convenient, and easy
- » Define trail, sidewalk, and facility standards that are reasonable, feasible to build, and sustainable for the City of Watertown

WATERTOWN TODAY

Today, there are **6.4 miles of paved shared use paths, and 97.9 miles of sidewalks within the City of Watertown.** As part of the planning process, a thorough review was conducted to build an understanding of the conditions and connectivity of the existing network of facilities (sidewalks, shared use paths, and on-street bikeways). The Downtown Core of Watertown is fairly well connected with a consistent sidewalk network; however many neighborhoods throughout the city do not have sidewalks. The bike network has grown over the last few years with targeted projects throughout the City. These short segments of trail lack connectivity with each other to create a fully linked network that takes people where they need to go.

Along with the physical inventory, a review of demographic information and previous planning efforts were also conducted to understand who will benefit most from the plan, as well as what decisions have already been made. Today, not very many people in Watertown choose to walk or bike to work or school. In contrast, nearly 9% of households in Watertown do not have access to a personal vehicle or cannot drive on their own.

To learn more about the analysis work, see **Chapter 2: Existing Conditions.**

Other Analysis Completed:

- » Roadway Functional Classification
- » Hydrology
- » Slope Analysis
- » Future Land Uses and Development
- » City Ordinance Review

8.5%
of households in Watertown have no vehicles

11%



Carpool to work



Work from home

0.5%

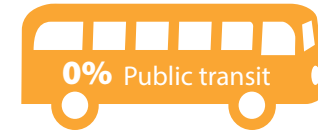


Bike to work



4%

Walk to work



0% Public transit

77%



Drive to work alone

Transportation to Work in Watertown and Household Vehicle Ownership (2023 ACS Data)



Existing alleyway



Riverwalk



Existing bike lane



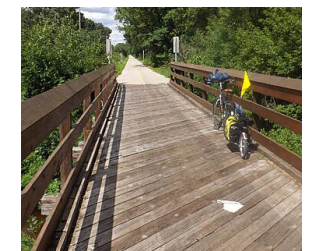
Existing sidewalk



Interturban Trailhead



Rock River Trail



Glacial River Trail

Figure 0.1 Existing Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities in Watertown

COMMUNITY INPUT



WHAT WE HEARD

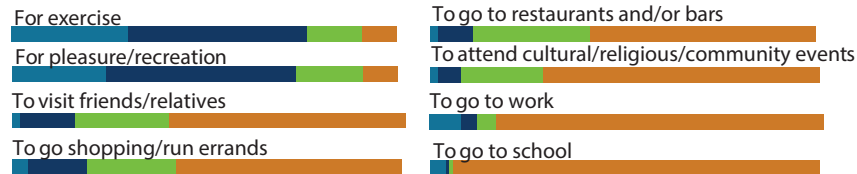
EVENTS

- » Bike Rodeo Pop-up
- » Riverfest Pop-up
- » Community Open House
- » Bike and Pedestrian Path Task Force + Community Advisory Committee Meetings
- » Stakeholder Meetings

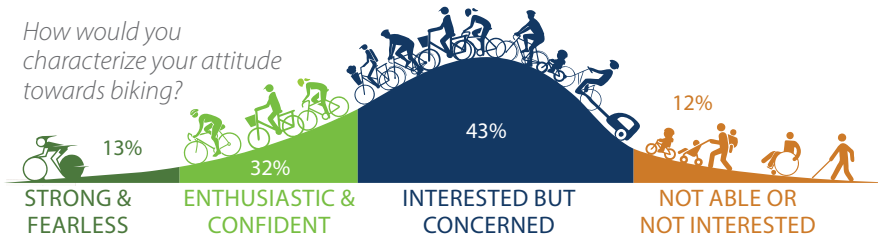
OUTREACH

Gathering feedback, ideas, and concerns from the community was an integral component to the creation of this plan. During the planning process, the City hosted a project website to share information about events, and linked to online survey tools. Information about the plan was shared through the Chamber of Commerce Newsletter, and direct invitations to events were sent via email to a growing list of community stakeholders throughout the project. See Chapter 3 for more details on the process and feedback collected.

During the warmer months of the year, how often do you walk or bike for the following reasons?



How would you characterize your attitude towards biking?



COMMUNITY SURVEY

A community survey was conducted over a 4-month period of time to gather information from the community about how they currently bike and walk, as well as what they'd like to see in the future.

371 responses gathered!

SOCIAL PINPOINT

Social Pinpoint is a map-based interactive online tool that allows participants to leave comments on a map of the city.



Top Concerns:

- » Crosswalk and intersection safety
- » Biking and walking along roadway shoulders
- » Need for bike lanes, bollards or separated trails
- » Lack of bike facilities Downtown
- » Biking on narrow bridges
- » Incomplete sidewalk connections



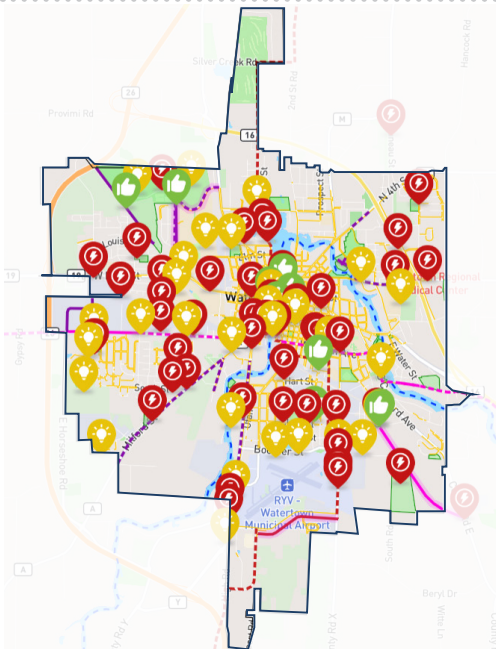
Top Ideas:

- » Fill gaps in the existing network
- » Improve sidewalk conditions
- » Enforcement / etiquette / education for drivers and bikers
- » Do not allow parking in bike lanes
- » Increase amount of separated trails
- » Add protected bike lanes



Places People Like:

- » Storywalk at Brandt-Quirk Park
- » Library
- » Interurban Trail and Trailhead
- » Riverwalk



BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

- » Lack of interconnected facilities that link to all areas of Watertown, as well as within the region.
- » Physical barriers, such as rail lines, highways, and the Rock River impact where facilities are easy or convenient to build.
- » Need for upgrades at specific intersections and mid-block crossings for safety.
- » Need for consistent, well-defined facilities for bicyclists to travel across the City.
- » One-way streets in downtown are difficult for bicyclists to navigate and impede connectivity.



KEY OPPORTUNITIES

- » Create a network of well-connected bikeways and sidewalks that make choosing to bike or walk to work, school, or other common destinations a viable option for most residents.
- » Celebrate the Rock River with improved connections to parks, the Riverwalk, and water access locations for biking and walking.
- » Create a network that is safe and comfortable with considerations for young people, families, seniors, and people who are visiting or new to Watertown.
- » Promote Watertown as a biking destination by highlighting existing regional trail and route connections that run through Watertown.
- » Develop and support programs for education and awareness around road etiquette for all roadway users.

NETWORK PLAN

The Network Plan shows the existing and proposed bicycle and pedestrian facilities to build out a well-connected network in the future. Each facility type shown in the proposed Network Plan is detailed in the **Facility Design Guidance** section in **Chapter 4**. Additionally, Chapter 4 contains specific guidance on intersection treatments.

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

A set of goals were developed to guide the future bicycle and pedestrian network.



Goal 1

Increase the opportunities for residents and visitors of Watertown to choose multimodal transportation to travel throughout the city to get to school, work, or run daily errands.



Goal 2

Provide comfortable routes to connect all areas of Watertown for pedestrians and bicyclists of all ages and abilities, including seniors, young people, and people who depend on mobility devices.



Goal 3

Provide appropriate facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists with consideration for data and context that support improvements.



Goal 4

Prioritize connections for biking and walking to the Rock River, schools, parks, businesses, churches, community centers and libraries, retail, and medical locations, as well as regional destinations outside of Watertown.



Figure 0.2 Network Plan

Shared Use Paths



Shared use paths are paved trail segments, located off-street and physically separated from vehicle traffic by a boulevard and raised curb. They are generally located in parallel to a roadway but can also be located independently.

Two-Way Protected Bike Lanes



There are three segments within downtown Watertown where **two-way protected bike lanes** are proposed. This facility provides a single area for bicyclists to travel within the road (in both directions) with a physical barrier that separates vehicle traffic from bicycle traffic.

Bike Lanes



Bike lanes are designated areas within the roadway for bicycle travel. Generally, bicycle lanes are located on both sides of the roadway and are designated with a solid white stripe marking with bike lane markings at intersections.

Neighborhood Bikeways



Neighborhood bikeways are proposed areas with shared lane markings (also known as sharrows) to indicate an on-street bicycle facility that overlays with an existing vehicle travel lane.

Sidewalks



Proposed **sidewalks** are shown on the Network Plan in primarily residential areas where none exist today. Sidewalks are concrete walkways intended for use by pedestrians.

SYSTEM RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 5: System Recommendations provides detailed guidance on dimensions, materials, applicability, and placement for trailheads and trail access points, bike parking, wayfinding, bridge and railroad crossings, and best management practices for landscaping and stormwater management as the network plan is implemented.

TRAIL ACCESS POINTS

Trail access points are designated public access locations for a trail or path, often located at the endpoints of a path as well as at key locations along the way. The map to the right outlines ten trail access point locations within Watertown, most of which are in alignment with existing trailheads, parks, or open spaces. Many of these access points are within existing City parks that have some on- or off-street parking available currently. As the network is built-out, consideration for upgraded amenities at the trail access points should be folded into the design.

Below are potential amenities to consider at trail access points. **Note that not every amenity listed below is required at every location.** A combination of amenities should be considered that fit the existing context, available space, and need. **Table 5.1 on page 60** outlines suggested amenities at each trail access location.

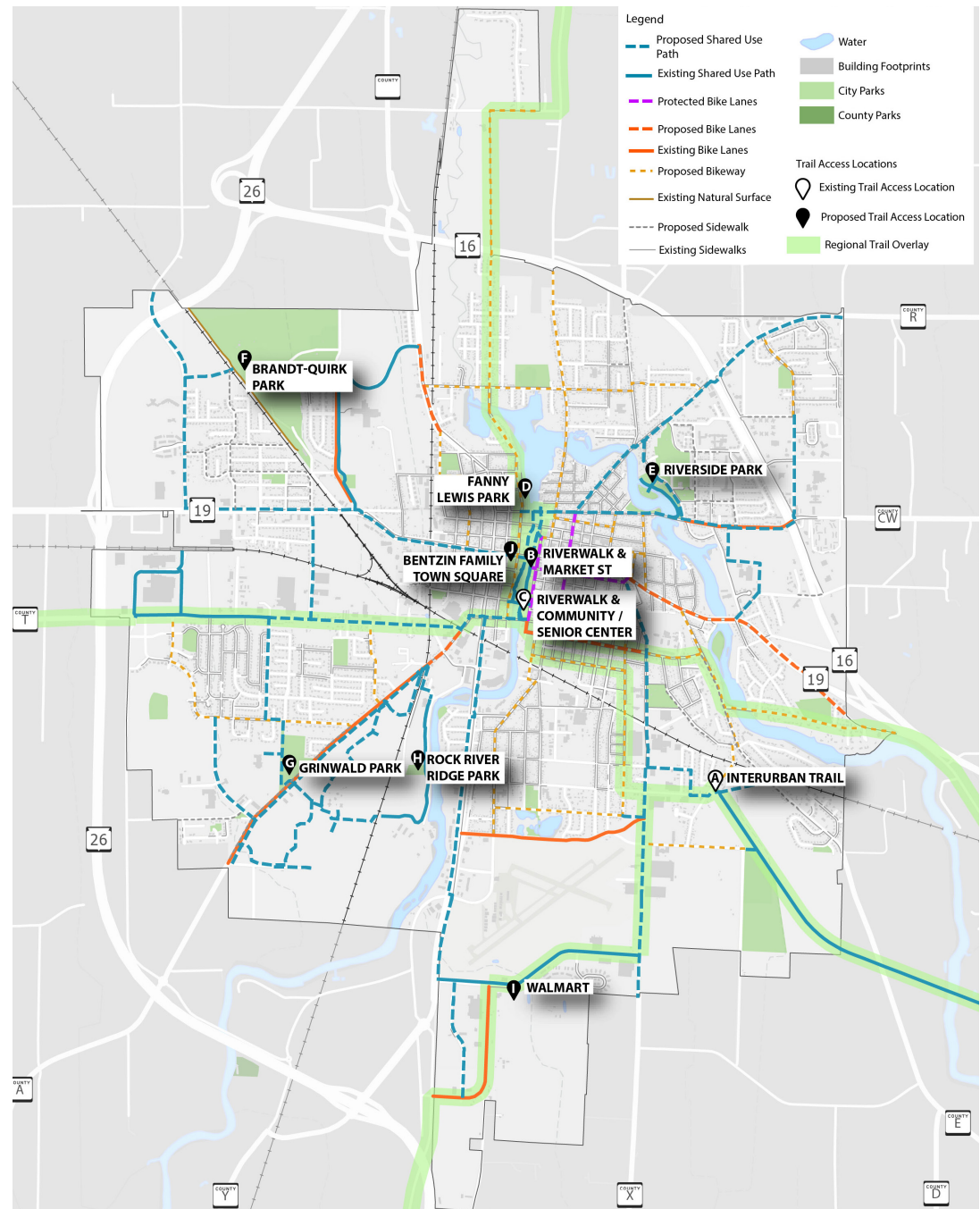


Figure 0.3 Trail Access Plan

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

See **Chapter 5: System Recommendations** for additional guidance related to :

- » Bike Parking
- » Railroad Crossing
- » Bridge Crossings and Other Constrained Areas
- » Landscaping and Stormwater Management

See **Chapter 6: Policy Recommendations** for guidance related to:

- » Subdivision Code Considerations
- » E-Bike and E-Scooter Policies

WAYFINDING

Clear, consistent, and visible wayfinding is an essential component for a bike and pedestrian network. Wayfinding helps people navigate throughout a system, utilizing a variety of signage types and, in some cases, with online mapping. A Wayfinding Framework has been developed for Watertown, which outlines a series of signage types linked to the facility types shown in the Network Plan. **It is recommended that the City develops a full wayfinding and signage plan with design and construction-level graphics that can be implemented consistently throughout the City as new trail, sidewalk, and bikeway projects are constructed.**

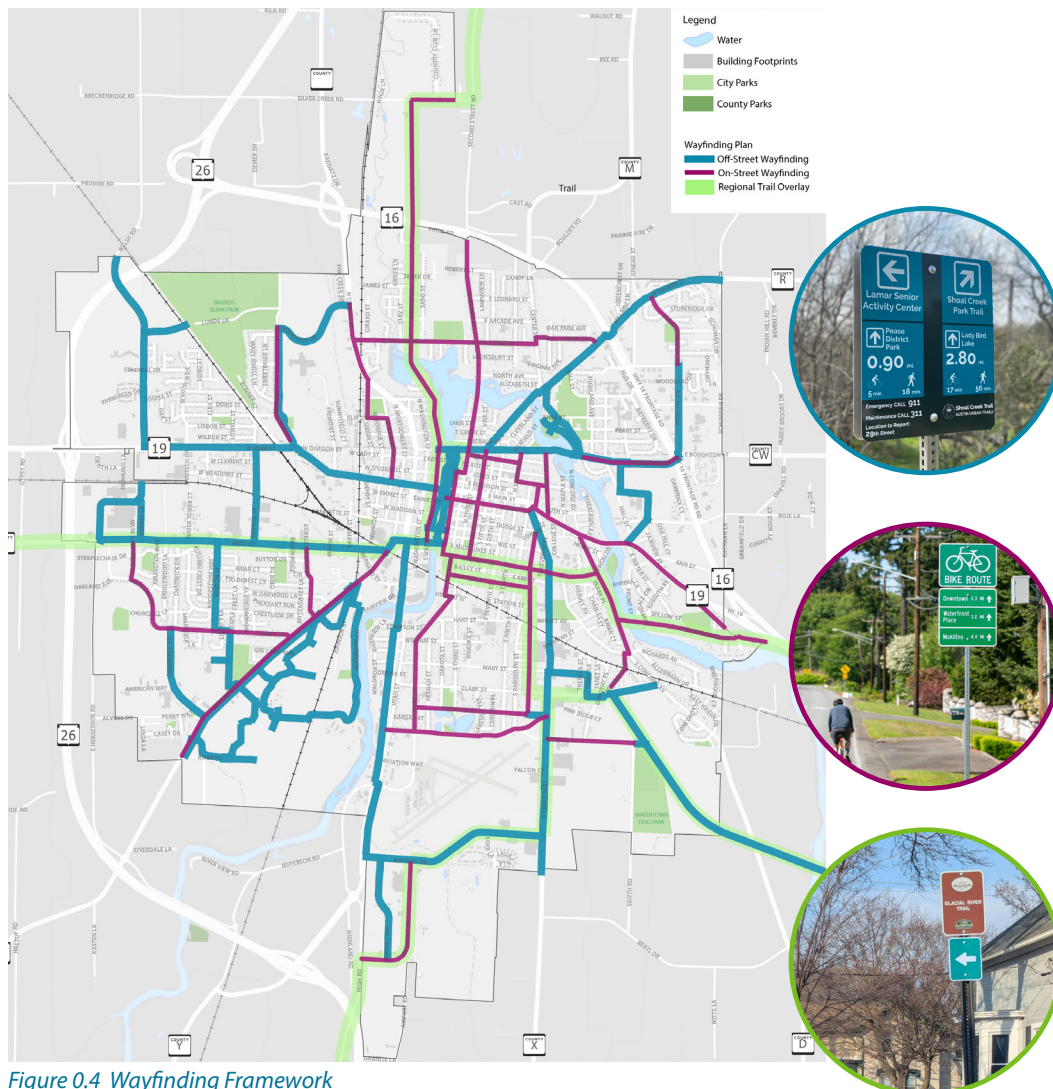


Figure 0.4 Wayfinding Framework

Off-Street Wayfinding (Shared Use Path Network)

- » Directional signage at trail access points and at decision points, with approximate distances called out to nearby community destinations.
- » Trail crossing signage at intersection crossings.
- » Directional signage at alleyways that have been improved for pedestrian use throughout Downtown Watertown.

On-Street Wayfinding (Bikeways and Bike Lanes)

- » BIKE ROUTE and BIKE LANE signage along routes, visible to vehicles and meeting MUTCD standards.
- » SHARE THE ROAD signs, visible to vehicles and meeting MUTCD standards.
- » Directional signage at decision points with approximate distances called out to nearby community destinations.

Regional Trail Overlays

- » Branded signage consistent with County or Regional Trail branding.
- » Additional signs or badges to accompany the On- and Off-Street Wayfinding

IMPLEMENTATING THE PLAN

This plan will require the City and partner organizations to stay connected and focused on the goals, ready as opportunities and funding comes along to implement. Four Implementation Recommendations (below) provide guidance on how to build and keep momentum for the plan. A detailed Phasing Plan has been developed, with prioritized projects identified, alongside lower-lift projects to be implemented incrementally over time. See **Chapter 7: Implementation** for a full set of tables outlining projects, costs, priorities, and costs.

Additional information on Operations and Maintenance and Grant Funding Sources are in Chapter 7.

1 Bicycle & Pedestrian Path Task Force

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Path Task Force should **continue to meet and work in tandem with City staff to support implementation of the plan**, evaluation of projects and priorities on an annual basis, education and community engagement, coordination with regional and agency collaborators, and assisting the City with grant and fund-seeking efforts.

3 Evaluation, Monitoring & Tracking

- The following actions are recommended to keep the City's information up-to-date and accessible as the network develops:
- » Continue to **maintain a GIS geodatabase** with existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities. As facilities are built, update this information, along with reviewing inventory on an annual basis.
 - » Continue to **conduct annual or multi-year condition assessments** of trails, sidewalks, and on-street facilities, in order to budget for annual maintenance.
 - » **Develop a public-facing ArcGIS Online map** that shows existing trails, sidewalks, and bikeways.
 - » **Collect annual user counts** on trails and on future pilot projects.
 - » **Conduct a community-wide survey** on an annual or biennial basis. This way, information can be compared year-over-year to understand if concerns are being addressed and to help prioritize projects for inclusion in the City's CIP.

2 Agency & County Coordination

Implementation of many projects will require ongoing coordination and collaboration with WisDOT, Dodge County, Jefferson County, Watertown School District, and other local agencies and non-profit organizations. **Convening annual or quarterly meetings with City, agency and County staff to review potential project collaborations is recommended.**

4 Encouragement & Education

- Programs and initiatives are recommended to promote a culture of biking and walking in Watertown, as well as to educate and inform residents about best practices:
- » Continue to **support the Watertown Police Department's annual Bicycle Rodeo and educational events** to teach young people (and adults!) how to safely maneuver a bicycle and learn the rules of the road.
 - » Develop a **guidebook of the City's general bicycle, pedestrian and driver etiquette** and rules of the road ordinances.
 - » Develop a program to **share in the cost for installing city-branded bike racks at businesses** throughout Watertown.
 - » **Develop a city-wide wayfinding plan** with specific brand design for directional signage for the On- and Off-Street Network and Regional Overlays.
 - » Re-apply to be certified as a **Bicycle Friendly Community** through the League of American Cyclists.

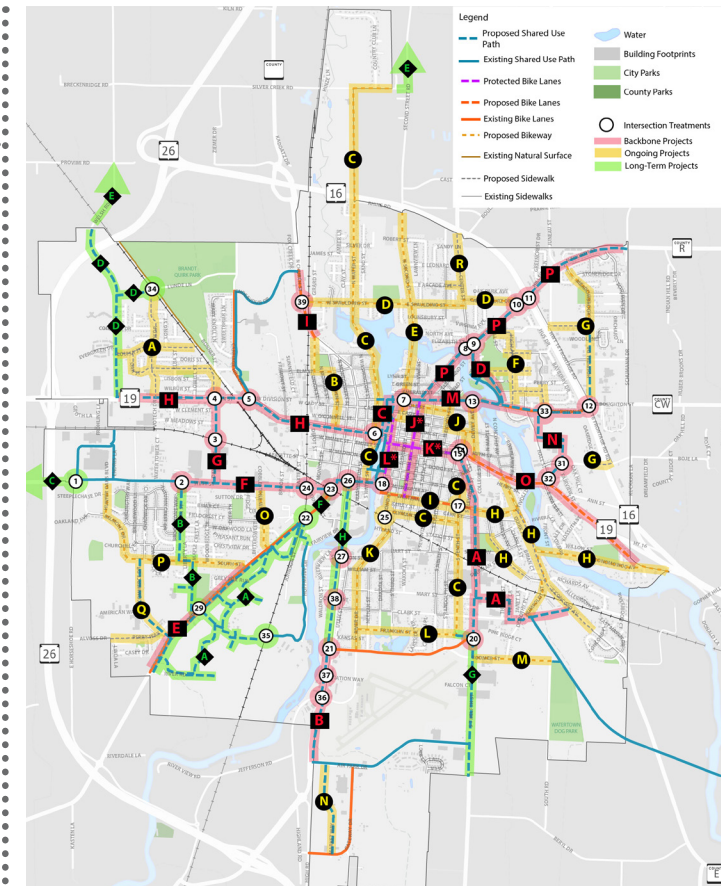


Figure 0.5 Phasing Plan

Backbone Projects are generally larger projects that have been identified as vital to create a well-connected network.

Ongoing Projects are generally smaller, lower-cost projects or projects that can be more easily folded into the City's Capital Improvement Program.

Long-Term Projects will generally require more planning and collaboration with regional agencies to implement or are intended to be initiated and completed as part of future.