



VISION ZERO NORTHWEST SIDE COMMUNITIES (NORTH AVENUE)

Safe Streets and Roads for All
Implementation Grant Application 2024

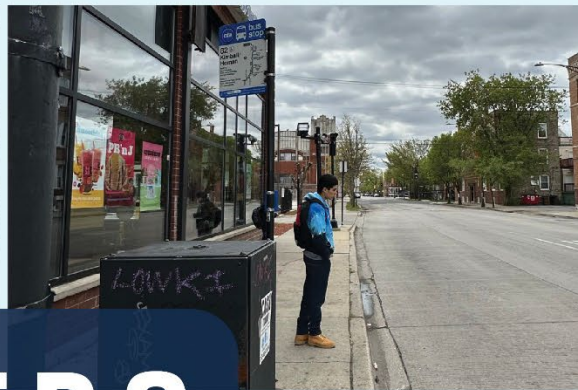




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Project Website: SS4ANorthAve.CNECTChicago.com



1. Overview

North Avenue is one of the main thoroughfares in the Humboldt Park Community Area. Humboldt Park is located within the Near Northwest Side, which is one of eight High Crash Areas in the [Vision Zero Chicago Action Plan](#). Humboldt Park is a diverse community with a strong Puerto Rican heritage to the east and a largely Black population to the west. The neighborhood is a historically disinvested area in Chicago.

The community does not have a Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) train station, and therefore public transit users rely on the public bus network, including the North Avenue bus route 72. North Avenue is also a key east-west bike route for everyday commuters and connects to the north-south bike route on Kedzie Avenue. Humboldt Park borders the project corridor, and is an important cultural hub for the community, being home to the National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture and several recreational facilities.

The [Vision Zero Northwest Side Recommendations Report](#) (VZNSRR) identifies safe multimodal traffic operations as a priority for the Humboldt Park community. The goal of the North Avenue Corridor Improvements Project is to provide safe, walkable, attractive streets that foster community and economic growth. This effort will support the City's initiative to re-activate neighborhood cores that have historically served as focal points for pedestrian activity, shopping, services, transportation, public spaces, and quality-of-life amenities for local residents.

North Avenue carries on average 22,700 to 23,900 vehicles per day. In 2020, bike lanes were installed along the eastern half of the corridor, between Kedzie Avenue and Central Park Avenue, along with curb extensions, pedestrian refuge islands, and pedestrian crosswalks with pedestrian beacons. However, high crash rates on North Avenue have persisted; IDOT's 2023 [Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessment](#) (VRUSA) identifies a high-density crash cluster, which covers 51% of the North Avenue Corridor Improvements Project limits. This area is ranked 7th among all crash clusters in both the City of Chicago and the State of Illinois. Community engagement during the Vision Zero Plan update for this area revealed that safety continues to be a top concern for the community.

The North Avenue Corridor Improvements Project will install safety treatments with the goal of reducing crash rates, bringing it into alignment with Chicago Department of Transportation's (CDOT) Complete Streets Guidelines and Vision Zero goals. The project will enhance safety between Kedzie Avenue and Kostner Avenue by prioritizing treatments that slow down vehicles and deter reckless driving, such as possibly implementing signal modifications, including assessing adding left turn arrows and adding curb extensions. The project will also improve the existing pedestrian, bike, and transit infrastructure. Some safety treatments could include, but not limited to, improving ADA accessibility, installing raised crosswalks across minor streets, potentially extending the bike lanes on North Avenue to the western-half of the corridor, and also potentially adding bus bulbs, which will improve bus operations, offer safer and more comfortable bus stops, and slow down vehicles.





2. Project Location

The North Avenue Corridor Improvements Project will improve 1.5 miles of North Avenue between Kedzie Avenue and Kostner Avenue in the Humboldt Park community of Chicago, Illinois. North Avenue is under Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) jurisdiction, but it is maintained by the City of Chicago. Humboldt Park is located in the Near Northwest Side Area, which is one of eight high crash areas in the [Vision Zero Chicago Action Plan](#). The [VZNSRR](#) confirmed through community outreach that improving safety on North Avenue is a priority for Humboldt Park stakeholders, especially adding consistent pedestrian safety measures near Kedzie Avenue and measures to mitigate a perceived increase in unsafe driving since the COVID-19 pandemic. The Vision Zero Northwest Side Report updates the crash analysis, which shows that in addition to the Kedzie intersection, over 13 intersections along the North Avenue corridor should be evaluated for safety improvements, see Selection Criterion #1: Safety Impact for more. Please see **Appendix C** for Project Maps.

3. Response to Selection Criteria

Criterion #1: Safety Impact

CDOT identified safety needs and proposed countermeasures in the [Vision Zero Chicago Action Plan](#) and several subsequent updates and supplements, including the [High Crash Corridors Framework Plan](#), the 2017-2018 [Vision Zero Chicago Annual Report](#), and 2020 updates to the [SAFE Ambassadors](#) program. The City's 2024 [VZNSRR](#) focuses on public engagement, documenting community feedback on local conditions in northwest side high crash communities. At the state level, the Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT's) 2023 [VRUSA](#) identifies a state-wide [high injury network](#) and crash cluster locations. Together, these resources provide the data to focus transportation safety resources on the most pressing needs in Chicago's Northwest Side.

Identified Safety Priorities

Humboldt Park is one of eight High Crash Areas identified in the City's original [Vision Zero Chicago Action Plan](#). These areas were ranked by a composite score of total fatal and serious injury crashes, total fatal and serious injury crashes per 100,000 residents, total fatal and serious injury crashes per square mile, economic hardship, and proportion of fatal and serious injury crashes per total crashes. Together these High Crash Areas, which represent 20% of Chicago's area and 25% of Chicago's population, experienced 36% of Chicago's severe crashes.

The 2024 [VZNSRR](#) updated and refined roadway safety goals for three of the High Crash Areas with a heavy emphasis on community engagement. The plan's recommended strategies include traffic calming measures, accessible and well-maintained sidewalks, improved pedestrian infrastructure around bus stops, bicycle network upgrades, and streetscape elements to make the walking environment more pleasant.

IDOT's 2023 [VRUSA](#) identifies a high injury network based on crash data from 2005-2022. The high injury network includes two portions of the North Avenue Corridor Improvements Project. These two segments, from Lowell Avenue to Pulaski Avenue and from Lawndale Avenue to Drake Avenue, represent 0.65 miles (43% of the total project length.)

The VRUSA also identifies a high-density crash cluster, which covers 51% of the North Avenue Corridor Improvements Project limits. This area is ranked 7th among all crash clusters in both the City of



Chicago and the State of Illinois. It extends along North Avenue and cross streets between Kilbourn Avenue (one block west of the North Avenue Corridor Project limits) and Hamlin Avenue.

Crashes reported within the North Avenue Corridor Improvements Project limits from 2017-2021 have been analyzed in detail, and countermeasures to address these crashes are described below. More details on the crash analysis, including crash maps, are available in the Existing Conditions Memo (**Appendix D**). A map of proposed countermeasure locations is found in **Appendix C**.

Countermeasures Identified in Action Plans

The following identified safety priorities and improvements are illustrated on maps in **Appendix C**. One stated goal of the *Vision Zero Chicago Action Plan* is to build a transportation network that provides choices for all modes of travel.

The plan recommends nine specific design elements rooted in Chicago’s *Complete Streets Design Guidelines* that provide safer crossings, safer speeds, and safer streets for all users. The state-wide *VRUSA* identifies specific recommended countermeasures for pedestrian and bicycle safety. Many recommendations from these plans are incorporated into the North Avenue Corridor Improvements Project (**Table 1**).

Bike Lanes

Bike Lanes are being considered along North Avenue from Kostner Avenue to Central Park Avenue, where no bike facilities currently exist. These will be an extension of existing bike lanes that begin at Central Park Avenue and continue east beyond the project limits. *FHWA-SA-21-051* finds that bike lane additions to an urban 4-lane undivided road can reduce crashes up to 49%. 28 bicycle crashes were reported within the project limits from 2017-2021, five of which resulted in incapacitating injuries. Four of these serious bicycle crashes occurred in the Kostner Avenue to Central Park Avenue section (**Table 2**), where this project considers providing future bike lanes.

Table 1. Recommended Improvements by Various Plans

Countermeasure	Recommended Improvement		
	Vision Zero Action Plan	Vision Zero Northwest Side Recommendations Plan	Vulnerable User Safety Assessment
	Chicago	Chicago	IDOT
Bike Lanes	x		x
Bump-outs / Curb Extensions and Bus Bulbs	x	x	x
Leading Pedestrian Intervals	x		x
Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS)	x		x
Accessible Pedestrian Routes		x	x
Raised Crosswalks			x
Protected Left Turn Phasing			x
Traffic Signal Timing and Visibility Improvements			x
Geometric Improvements			x

Table 2. Crashes involving a bicyclist between Kostner Avenue and Central Park Avenue

Fatal crashes (K)	Incapacitating Injury (A)	Non-Incapacitating Injury (B)	Injury Reported / Not Evident (C)	Other Crashes (O)	Total
0	4	9	0	2	15



Bump-Outs / Curb Extensions and Bus Bulbs

Curb Extensions will be installed where feasible, with specific locations to be determined as the design progresses through the preliminary engineering stage of the project. These will reduce pedestrian exposure to crashes by shortening the crosswalks, reducing speeds of turning traffic, and increasing visibility between drivers and non-motorized road users. 15 pedestrian crashes were reported from 2017-2021 in the cross streets along North Avenue, and two of these produced incapacitating injuries (**Table 3**).

Table 3. Pedestrian crashes on cross streets (intersections with potential for bump-outs on cross streets)

Fatal crashes (K)	Incapacitating Injury (A)	Non-Incapacitating Injury (B)	Injury Reported / Not Evident (C)	Other Crashes (O)	Total
0	2	12	1	0	15

At bus stops, longer bus bulbs will be considered. Bus bulbs have the same effects as bump-outs, but with additional benefits to transit operations. They provide extra space for bus passengers to wait, board, and exit buses, and they can improve bus operations by keeping buses in the travel lane. After passengers have boarded, drivers do not need to wait for a gap in traffic to continue on their route.

Intersections with bus stops and/or crosswalks where main street bump-outs will be evaluated include Kildare Avenue, Kedvale Avenue, Keeler Avenue, Karlov Avenue, Pulaski Avenue, Springfield Avenue, Hamlin Avenue, Lawndale Avenue, Central Park Avenue, St. Louis Avenue, Drake Avenue, Homan / Kimball Avenue, Spaulding Avenue, and Kedzie Avenue.

36 pedestrian crashes were reported from 2017-2021 in North Avenue within the project limits at locations where main street bump-outs or bus bulbs would be considered (**Table 4**). Three of these were fatal and 13 of produced incapacitating injuries.

Table 4. Pedestrian crashes on North Avenue (intersections with potential for bump-outs on North Avenue)

Fatal crashes (K)	Incapacitating Injury (A)	Non-Incapacitating Injury (B)	Injury Reported / Not Evident (C)	Other Crashes (O)	Total
3	13	15	4	1	36

Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPis)

LPI phasing will be included at all signalized intersections. All of the existing signalized intersections along North Avenue within the project limits currently lack leading pedestrian intervals. Leading Pedestrian Intervals are expected to reduce pedestrian-vehicle crashes by 13% at these intersections, according to [FHWA-SA-21-032](#). Between 2017 and 2021, 33 crashes involved pedestrians at signalized intersections (**Table 5**). Three of these were fatal crashes, and nine resulted in incapacitating injuries.

Table 5. Pedestrian crashes at signalized intersections

Fatal crashes (K)	Incapacitating Injury (A)	Non-Incapacitating Injury (B)	Injury Reported / Not Evident (C)	Other Crashes (O)	Total
3	9	19	2	0	33



Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS)

APS equipment will be added to all signalized intersections where feasible. They are installed routinely in the City of Chicago as part of all projects that include signal improvements.

Accessible Pedestrian Routes

All sidewalks and crosswalks within the North Avenue Corridor Improvements Project will be built to current ADA standards, ensuring a continuous accessible path for the entire length of the project.

Raised Crosswalks

Raised crosswalks will be installed across side streets where feasible. Preliminary candidates for side street raised crosswalks are all unsignalized intersections. The [Handbook of Road Safety Measures](#) found installing raised pedestrian crosswalks resulted in crash reduction factors between 30 and 46%. Although none were incapacitating, four pedestrian crashes were reported from 2017-2021 in the unsignalized cross streets along North Avenue (**Table 6**).



Table 6. Pedestrian crashes on unsignalized cross streets

Fatal crashes (K)	Incapacitating Injury (A)	Non-Incapacitating Injury (B)	Injury Reported / Not Evident (C)	Other Crashes (O)	Total
0	0	3	1	0	4

Protected Left Turn Phasing

[VRUSA](#) found that left turning vehicles contributed to 15% of bicyclist crashes and 19% of pedestrian crashes in Chicago. Based on preliminary feasibility review, likely candidates for new left turn phasing are the intersections of North Avenue with Central Park Avenue and Kimball Avenue. Changing from permissive left turns to protected-permissive left turn phasing results in crash reduction factors for fatal and injury crashes ranging from 0.5% to 4.2%, depending on roadway characteristics, according to the study [Crash Modification Factors for Changing Left Turn Phasing](#). 39 crashes at the candidate intersections from 2017-2021 involved turning vehicles (**Table 7**). Although not all of these crashes involved left turns, it is anticipated that a significant portion would be mitigated by left turn phasing. One of these turning crashes caused incapacitating injuries.

Table 7. Turning crashes at potential locations for left turn phasing improvements

Fatal crashes (K)	Incapacitating Injury (A)	Non-Incapacitating Injury (B)	Injury Reported / Not Evident (C)	Other Crashes (O)	Total
0	1	7	0	31	39



Traffic Signal Visibility Improvements

Signal visibility will be improved by installing longer mast arms with one signal head per lane. This improved visibility is expected to reduce crashes at six signalized intersections along North Avenue where signal equipment has not yet been modernized including at Keeler Avenue, Pulaski Avenue, Hamlin Avenue, Lawndale Avenue, Central Park Avenue, and Kimball Avenue.

From 2017-2021, 448 crashes occurred at these intersections (**Table 8**). Two were fatal, and 21 resulted in incapacitating injuries. 91 crashes resulted in non-incapacitating injuries or injuries that were reported but not evident. The study [Evaluating the Safety Impacts of Improving Signal Visibility at Urban Signalized Intersections](#) found that improved signal visibility results in a crash reduction factor of 3% for fatal and injury crashes and 6% for all crashes.

Table 8. Crashes at unmodernized signals

Fatal crashes (K)	Incapacitating Injury (A)	Non-Incapacitating Injury (B)	Injury Reported / Not Evident (C)	Other Crashes (O)	Total
2	21	61	30	334	448

Geometric Improvements

Geometric improvements will eliminate conflict points, reduce crossing distances, and slow turning vehicles by improving intersection geometry where feasible. The FHWA guide [A Safe System-Based Framework and Analytical Methodology for Assessing Intersections](#) describes methods to analyze intersection safety by assessing exposure and risk factors for intersection crashes. By simplifying geometry and eliminating conflict points at intersections, the North Avenue Corridor Improvements Project will reduce users' exposure to potential crashes. Many of the cross streets within the project limits form offset intersections at North Avenue, and these will be evaluated for opportunities to improve intersection geometry and crosswalk configurations.

Criterion #2: Equity, Engagement, and Collaboration

North Avenue is one of the main thoroughfares in the Humboldt Park Community Area. Humboldt Park is located within the Near Northwest Side, which is one of eight High Crash Areas in the [Vision Zero Chicago Action Plan](#) analysis where economic hardship was considered. Additionally, in IDOT's [VRUSA](#), North Avenue is identified as part of a crash cluster ranked 7th highest in the City of Chicago as well as in Illinois. The North Avenue Corridor Improvements Project implements many elements designed to improve safety throughout the corridor potentially including raised crosswalks across minor street unsignalized crosswalks, traffic signal modifications, and bike lanes. A full list of corridor improvements is discussed in Selection Criterion #1: Safety Impact. Safety improvements have been identified via crash analysis and preliminary community input. Ongoing community involvement will inform project designs as they are refined and finalized.

[Humboldt Park: Staking Our Claim Quality of Life Plan](#) is a community-led plan that calls out the desire to revitalize North Avenue. The [VZNSRR](#) documents safety challenges described by Humboldt Park community members as part of its robust public engagement. After over 40 listening sessions with stakeholders, priority safety challenges emerged, which include navigating the intersections along Grand Avenue, lack of consistent safety interventions throughout the corridor, and a perceived uptick in unsafe



driving since the COVID-19 pandemic. The report also identifies community engagement and communication as a strategy for implementing and sustaining many of these safety challenges.

Since this project's initiation in May 2023, CDOT has prioritized equity and meaningful engagement throughout the North Avenue Corridor Improvements Project processes. CDOT and the project team aim to ensure the residents, community groups, special interest groups, agencies, and other stakeholders within Humboldt Park are provided opportunities to provide input and participate in the project development process. The project's Public Involvement Plan provides the framework for achieving consensus and communicating the decision-making process between the general public, neighborhood residents, public agencies, and governmental officials to identify improvements along North Avenue between Kedzie Avenue and Kostner Avenue.

Humboldt Park is a majority Hispanic community in Chicago, and 80% of the census tracts along the corridor are identified as USDOT Disadvantaged Census Tracts for at least one of the five components measured to determine disadvantaged status. Three of the five components, Climate and Disaster Risk Burden, Environmental Burden, and Social Vulnerability, rank in the 94th, 93rd, and 81st percentile respectively. All census tracts in Chicago are listed in **Appendix M**, with information on the population and disadvantaged status of each tract.

The Puerto Rican Cultural Center, a local organization, is partnering with the City on community engagement as part of the project team. Leveraging the Puerto Rican Cultural Center's strong local relationships, the public was invited to learn about the project and provide insights at a public meeting in March 2024. The project team will continue conversations with the community through aldermanic meetings, public meetings, attendance at pop-up events, community-led meetings, focus groups / individual stakeholder meeting and Community Advisory Group (CAG) meetings.

The CAG is comprised of 19 local organizations and stakeholders identified to guide the North Avenue Corridor Improvements Project (for a complete list, see **Appendix E**). The CAG will provide insights on achieving safety benefits in line with the needs of the community. The first of three meetings was held in August 2023. Members of the CAG have also provided Letters of Support for the project, included in **Appendix F**.

The project team will conduct a social media campaign and make all project materials available online via a [project website](#) and newsletter. Much of the community are Latino/a and Spanish-speaking. All public facing communications and project materials are being made available in Spanish.

The project team is currently incorporating proven countermeasures and community guidance into the preliminary concepts for the North Avenue Corridor and will continue to do so as the designs are refined and finalized. These countermeasures are described in further detail in Selection Criterion #1: Safety Impact.

Criterion #3: Effective Practices and Strategies

Chicago maintains policies and standards to ensure that all design decisions made in the public right-of-way are focused on safer streets for all. All roadway design decisions are rooted in the City's [Complete Streets Design Guidelines](#), which explicitly prioritize pedestrians, transit users, and cyclists over motor vehicles. The [Vision Zero Chicago Action Plan](#), which was followed by several updates and refinements including the [VZNSRR](#), recommends countermeasures to improve roadway safety in Chicago. More recently, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) released the 2023 [VRUSA](#) identifies a state-wide [high injury network](#) and crash cluster locations. This document follows the State's [2022-2026](#)

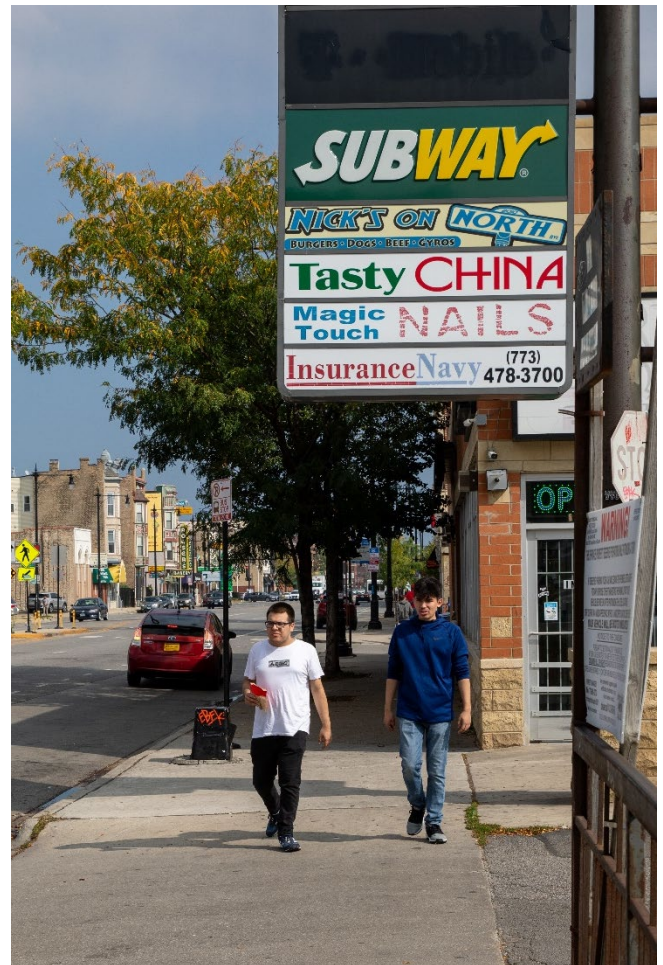


[Strategic Highway Safety Plan](#), recommending safety strategies and priority locations based on analyses of crash data (both statewide and specific to the City of Chicago) and community engagement. Both of the State plans are based on the Safe System approach.

The North Avenue Corridor Improvements Project incorporates many strategies recommended in these plans. Other plans and policies that guide safety decisions are below, and **Appendix H** provides a more detailed list.

New Safety Initiatives

A 2023 [Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MOU) between the City of Chicago and IDOT gives Chicago the flexibility to reduce lane widths, choose smaller design vehicles, and implement pedestrian safety improvements that previously would have been subject to extensive coordination and review to obtain approval at the State level. North Avenue is under State jurisdiction, so the design will directly benefit from this agreement. Soon after the MOU was signed, similar legislation was passed at the State level so that local governments throughout Illinois can restrict large trucks and design streets appropriately for local conditions. Another 2023 safety update is the [Chicago Cycling Strategy](#), which outlines the City’s vision for the next 150 miles of bikeways to be designed by CDOT. As described above, the State of Illinois’ [VRUSA](#) released in 2023 recommended many strategies that will be incorporated into the North Avenue Corridor Improvements Project. The project team will also consider street treatments identified in the [2023 Chicago Transit Authority Better Streets for Buses Report](#) to improve bus operations and passenger safety.



Safe Systems

Many of the documents listed in **Appendix H** are rooted in Safe Systems fundamentals. The [Vision Zero Chicago Action Plan](#) and the [VRUSA](#) in particular recommend many roadway design features that advance the Safer Roads goals of the Safe Systems approach. These are described in more detail as they relate to North Avenue in the Selection Criterion #1: Safety Impact section of this document. Safer Vehicles recommendations from the plan were later enacted in an ordinance requiring side guards and convex mirrors be installed by City contractors on large vehicles in their fleets. Many design elements recommended in the [Vision Zero Chicago Plan](#), the [Complete Streets Chicago Design Guidelines](#), and the [VRUSA](#) are proven countermeasures to achieve Safer Speeds, and the City actively uses automated enforcement technology to target speed problem locations near parks and schools.

The Vision Zero Chicago Plan also led to changes in the city’s [SAFE Ambassadors program](#), broadening the focus of their education and outreach efforts to align with the goals of the Vision Zero Chicago Plan. In 2022, the City launched the [Corridor Ambassador Program](#) for 13 commercial corridors, including



North Avenue. The program hires neighborhood residents to provide on-street support for shoppers and businesses, and coordinate with other safety initiatives such as the Chicago Public School's Safe Passage program which ensures students can travel to and from school safely.

Equity and Accessibility

The [Vision Zero Chicago Action Plan](#) found that Chicagoans who live in areas of High Economic Hardship are at increased risk of being involved in a severe crash. The City's 2021 [Strategic Plan for Transportation](#) further refines CDOT's approach to Equity and Mobility justice, and the plan's [Year 1 Update](#) highlights actions taken. These include incorporating economic and mobility hardship metrics into the process for selecting Arterial Resurfacing projects and providing free bikes to income-eligible residents through the [Bike Chicago](#) program. The City's [Equitable Transit-Oriented Development](#) policy and grant program are focused on efficient transportation design and land use to with equity as a guiding framework. The North Avenue Corridor Improvements Project was prioritized for safety improvements based on its location in a historically disadvantaged area with a history of elevated crash rates compared to other parts of Chicago.

Construction of sidewalks or corner ramps by city crews or outside contractors in Chicago is inspected for ADA compliance according to the [Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines](#) (PROWAG). Traffic signals are routinely updated to include accessible pedestrian signals, pedestrian countdown timers, and leading pedestrian intervals on any project that involves traffic signal work. As part of the North Avenue Corridor Improvement Project, all sidewalks, crosswalks, and traffic signals will be designed and built to current PROWAG standards, ensuring the entire length of the project is fully accessible.

Criterion #4: Other DOT Strategic Goals

Climate and Sustainability

In addition to reducing serious and fatal crashes, the safety improvements funded by SS4A will incorporate Chicago's climate resilience goals where possible and prioritize making North Avenue a safe option for cyclists, pedestrians, and transit users.

The [2023 Chicago Climate Action Plan Addendum](#) targets a 67% reduction in GHG emissions by 2040 by following five pillars identified in the [2022 Chicago Climate Action Plan](#) (CAP). One of the pillars is to deliver a zero-emissions mobility network that would enable Chicagoans to choose active transportation or micromobility for 45% of all trips by 2040, and to increase public transit ridership by 20% by 2030. The [2023 Chicago Cycling Strategy](#) builds on the CAP to address roadway safety, setting a goal that for the next 150 miles of bikeway installations, 85% of planned projects will be low-stress bikeways (neighborhood greenways, protected bike lanes, or off-street trails), and that 70% of Chicagoans will live within ½ miles of a low-stress bikeway. This project will also consider sustainable construction strategies outlined in the CAP, such as diverting construction materials from the landfill, consider installing tree planning and other vegetable cover, and optimize climate resiliency through community-led infrastructure projects.

Only half of the corridor has marked bike lanes, between Kedzie Avenue and Central Park Avenue. This project will potentially extend the bike lanes to the rest of the corridor, contributing to Chicago's growing zero-emissions mobility network. The project team will also consider street treatments identified in the [Chicago Transit Authority Better Streets for Buses Report](#) to improve bus operations and passenger safety, including bus bulbs with enhanced ADA accessibility features and upgrading signalized intersections with protected left turn phasing and accessible pedestrian signals.



This project aligns with the City’s efforts to promote Equitable Transit-Oriented Development. In July 2022, Chicago passed the [Connected Communities Ordinance](#), which, aims to promote investment in low-income neighborhoods while addressing the negative impacts of a car-centric built environment.

The community living and working near the North Avenue Corridor is among the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. According to the USDOT ETC Explorer, 94% of the census tracts along the corridor are climate disaster risk and environmentally burdened, and according to the USEPA EJ Screen Report, the community’s flood risk within one mile of the North Avenue Corridor is higher than 88% of the US. See **Appendix J** for full EJ Screen Report and **Appendix K** for the ETC Explorer Report.

Economic Competitiveness

The North Avenue Corridor is a key neighborhood commercial corridor with a mix of essential services and retail. One of the goals of the North Avenue Corridor Improvements Project is to re-activate neighborhood cores that have historically served as focal points for pedestrian activity, shopping, services, transportation, public spaces, and quality-of-life amenities for residents.

Two libraries, seven schools, a park that connects to the [citywide Boulevard system](#), and the Bloomingdale Trail (a rails to trails project) are within three blocks of the corridor. Additionally, several nonprofits are located on North Avenue and offer a wide range of support for people in need. There is also a mix of legacy and new local businesses along the corridor, providing the community access to culturally relevant food, services, and entertainment. The Northwest Industrial Corridor is at the western end of the North Avenue Corridor and is a key job center for the community. According to Policy Map analysis of 2018-2022 Census data, 21% of the residents near the corridor work in industrial, wholesale, and warehousing industries. See **Appendix L** for the Policy Map Community Profile.

The [2022 CDOT Strategic Plan for Transportation 1 Year Update](#) highlights how the department is prioritizing transportation equity and mobility justice, including by using the Mobility and Economic Hardship Index (MOBEC) tool in deciding where and when infrastructure improvements are made throughout the City. The North Avenue Corridor is within an area that scored ‘High’ using this tool. According to the USDOT ETC Tool, 62% of the census tracts along the corridor are transportation cost burdened, and 74% are under the 200% poverty line.

The City of Chicago is injecting resources into the community through other programs to bolster economic development along North Avenue. The corridor is within three Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts, which represent a total of \$239.5M in total project investments. Along the North Avenue Corridor, there is an affordable housing development for senior citizens and a development for permanent supportive housing for homeless and near homeless youth and families partially funded by TIF. Chicago’s [Neighborhood Opportunity Fund](#) has provided small business grants for four local businesses along the corridor, totaling over \$900K.

The safety improvements along North Avenue will improve micro mobility connectivity to this key job and resources center by extending existing bike lanes west toward the Northwest Industrial Corridor and improving cycling safety along the corridor. The potential installation of bus bulbs could make bus stops safer and bus operations more reliable. This project boosts the ongoing economic development along the corridor through safety and connectivity improvements.

Workforce



In the past, to further enhance local project benefits, the City of Chicago has used local hiring agreements when permitted by the funding agency. Ensuring that disadvantaged populations and youth have access to employment opportunities is a high priority for the City. The City has put numerous initiatives to increase the number of skilled workers and increased diverse hiring. The initiatives include incentives for contractors, workforce development programs, and partnerships with local non-profits and chambers of commerce.

The Chicago Residency Ordinance requires construction contractors to utilize at least 50% of all labor hours by Chicago residents, and at least 7.5% of all labor hours by residents in the project area. The City encourages contractors that 15% of their workforce is female and 70% are minority workers. The City provides monetary incentives, ranging from 0.5 – 6% of the contract value, to hire City residents, people from socio-economically disadvantaged areas, women, minorities, and ex-offenders, and apprentices.

The City has invested in local workforce programs to increase access to well-paying jobs. The [Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership](#) is the largest workforce development system in the nation, serving more than 140,000 people annually. The partnership connects employers and job seekers, and are able to provide training, coaching, paid internships, and more. The Chicago Department of Family and Support Services also works with community partners to connect Chicagoans to well-paying jobs at workforce centers and re-entry support centers. The network of workforce programs in Chicago is vast, and has programs for all Chicagoans, including ex-offenders, unhoused or at-risk people, people with limited English proficiency, individuals who are low skilled and low income, out-of-work or out-of-school youth, and veterans.

Apprentice training programs must be union-authorized and must sponsor graduates from the Chicago City Colleges (CCC) or Chicago Public Schools (CPS). This apprenticeship program benefits low-income students of color; 25% of CPS students are bilingual and nearly 71% qualified for free or reduced lunch in the 2021-2022 school year. At the CCC 75% of students identify as students of color.

Additionally, the Chicago Department of Procurement Services (DPS) works with 45 local non-profit agencies and/or chambers of commerce that represent the interest of small, minority and/ or women owned businesses. DPS meets with these agencies on a quarterly basis and conducts an annual review of City of Chicago and Assist Agencies partnerships. These partnerships help small businesses and M/WBE firms learn of procurement opportunities; and provide a channel for DPS to receive feedback about the procurement process.

4. Consideration: Project Readiness

The North Avenue Corridor Improvements Project is currently in the Preliminary Engineering Phase and expected to begin construction in 2026, as it is a priority for Chicago and the metropolitan region. As a priority area in the [VZNSRR](#), it is essential to capitalize on the recent, significant community engagement and investment plans for this historically disinvested area. Reconfiguring North Avenue for multimodal transportation and reducing roadway fatalities and serious injuries is paramount to making the corridor safer and more accessible for all residents, and these improvements have the support of elected officials and local organizations. Letters of Support are found in **Appendix F**. CDOT is moving quickly to complete engineering plans and to obligate SS4A funds with the same urgency and priority. **Appendix G** contains a letter of Funding Commitment.



Schedule

Table 9. North Avenue Corridor Improvements Project Schedule

Project Milestone	Status	Completion Date*
Coordination with Illinois DOT	Ongoing	March 2024 (Kick-Off)
Environmental Survey Request	Underway	May 2024
Coordination with FHWA	Pending	July 2024
Public Meeting 1	Complete	March 2024
Public Meeting 2	Pending	August 2024
Geometric Submitted to IDOT for Approval	Pending	December 2024
Public Hearing	Pending	April 2025
Section 106 Approval	N/A	N/A
Section 4(f) Approval	N/A	N/A
Preliminary Design Submitted to IDOT for Approval (PDR)	Pending	June 2025
Final Plans and Specifications	Pending	Q3 2026
Procurement	Pending	Q4 2026
Construction Start	Pending	Q2 2027
Construction Completion	Pending	Q4 2028

*Quarters shown in calendar years.

With grant funding assumed to be awarded in December of 2024, obligation will occur no later than 12 months thereafter. The proposed budget for this project is available in **Appendix B**.

The North Avenue Corridor Improvements Project is well-positioned to complete construction before the end of the five-year performance period, expected to be December 2029. As shown in the schedule, project activities are already underway with the initiation of environmental coordination, public involvement, and preliminary geometric design. The proposed design will adhere to all applicable state and local standards. Right-of-way acquisition, other than temporary easements for construction, will not be required. While watermain and sewer work is expected, relocation of private utilities is not anticipated which reduces the risk to the project schedule. There are no wetlands or floodplains adjacent to North Avenue between Kedzie Avenue and Kostner Avenue, thus environmental impacts are likely to be limited. The North Avenue Corridor Improvements Project is anticipated to qualify for a Categorical Exclusion under 23 CFR 77.1.117 C. This project is incorporated within the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning’s Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The schedule includes a year as buffer as construction needs to be complete by 2029 to meet statutory requirements

