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Project description

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is requesting \$8,360,000 in federal funding from the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) program. RAISE funds will be used to conduct planning processes that will result in the removal of longstanding barriers in two historically disadvantaged communities on the I-90 corridor – Spokane (East Central Neighborhood at I-90) and Seattle (Judkins Park Station Area at I-90). Products from these planning processes include community-supported recommendations for active transportation improvements in both locations and development of statewide guidance and tools.

Collectively titled “Reconnecting I-90 Communities,” this proposal covers three main project activities. In Spokane, WSDOT will partner with the City of Spokane to restore the bifurcated East Central Neighborhood by developing grade-separated solutions, such as a land bridge, to address the barrier created by I-90 near the city’s Liberty Park. In Seattle, WSDOT and local agencies will develop safer active transportation access to the future Judkins Park light rail Station (JPS) opening in 2023, addressing another barrier created by I-90. For both locations federal funds will move these projects to 30% design. In Spokane, the legislature has approved an additional \$4 million that will take the project to 90% design. Both planning processes will prepare these locations to seek construction funding. As the third component in this project, RAISE funding for Reconnecting I-90 Communities will enable WSDOT to develop and to put into practice new analytical methods and safety measures introduced in the recently completed Active Transportation Plan (ATP).

A culturally diverse working-class neighborhood cut in half by I-90

The East Central neighborhood of Spokane was developed in the late 1800s and early 1900s as a strong community of culturally diverse working-class and immigrant families that initially grew in connection with industrial development. It was the first neighborhood built east of the city’s downtown core. However, the early financial success did not last long. Beginning in the 1920s, core industries declined after World War I and land values in East Central dropped. The Federal Housing Administration, which was established in 1934, refused to insure mortgages in and near African American, low income, and immigrant neighborhoods – a policy known as “redlining” – making it difficult or impossible for people in those areas to access mortgage financing, become homeowners, and build equity. The redlining maps identified the East Central neighborhood as an area of limited funds and improvements, and by the 1950s it had become one of the poorest neighborhoods in Spokane, along with other redlined neighborhoods in West Central and Hillyard. Still, East Central remained home not just to thousands of families from all different backgrounds, but hundreds of businesses that employed many of its residents. The struggles of the previous decades had left a connected and optimistic, if less well-off, community.

The depressed land values eventually made East Central a focus for federal highway planners in the 1950s seeking to develop the national system of interstates. The interstate was routed through East Central, one of three options through Spokane, with devastating and traumatic impacts for residents. The development of I-90 split the neighborhood into two sections north and south of the freeway, leveled over a thousand homes, and displaced residents – the majority of whom were African American and immigrant families. Nearby Liberty Park was the oldest and most

elaborate city park in Spokane at the time, and a source of pride for the East Central community. However, the park was destroyed when the city sold 26 of its 28 acres for the freeway. With traffic redirected onto the freeway, long-standing businesses struggled to stay open, and many were forced to close.

This history of housing discrimination and legacies of racial and economic inequality have had long-lasting impacts on the East Central neighborhood. In the face of these challenges, however, the area remains rich in cultural identity, history, and unique resources, and continues to provide a strong sense of community for the many residents who call it home. A reconnected East Central neighborhood would redress longstanding disruption and inequitable policy decisions.



Figure 1. I-90 cuts through the heart of Spokane's East Central neighborhood (image from [WSDOT Reconnecting I-90 Communities Video](#)).

A historically Black community displaced and disrupted by I-90

The Central District is the historic center of Seattle's Black community and continues to be one of the city's most racially and ethnically diverse neighborhoods. The area has historically been impacted by systemic injustices that have restricted its residents' access to opportunity. The practice of redlining denied many of Seattle's non-white residents the opportunity to own homes, and racial deed restrictions and other discriminatory real estate practices enforced de-facto segregation that concentrated most of the city's non-white population in the Central District and neighboring areas. The neighborhood continued to suffer from systematic injustices throughout much of the 20th century, including displacement impacts from 1960s urban renewal projects, and bifurcation from the construction of I-90. The consequences of these policies are still being felt today. **Error! Reference source not found.** shows a side-by-side comparison of how those born in historically redlined Seattle neighborhoods are more likely to experience poverty today.

In recent years, the City of Seattle has enacted policies to increase the supply of affordable housing as part of surging development and population growth. In addition to increasing allowable densities throughout the neighborhood, the city also implemented its Mandatory Housing Affordability Program, which requires developers to either set aside a percentage of units for affordable housing or pay an opt-out fee that funds a comparable amount of affordable housing at another site. Due to potential for gentrification and displacement, developers must meet the program's most stringent requirements when building within the project area. This increase in affordable housing supply has coincided with a reduction in the median rent as a

percentage of household income in the Judkins Park area. Over the course of the last 10 years this rate has fallen below the city-wide average, even as rents have increased throughout the city. These policies have significantly increased the population of people living within walking or biking distance to the new light rail station, while also ensuring that existing residents can afford to stay in the neighborhood. Despite these investments, the high-stress conditions at the I-90/Rainier Avenue South interchange will continue to act as a major barrier to new and existing residents hoping to access the light rail station. Improvements are needed to fully realize the benefits of these development trends.

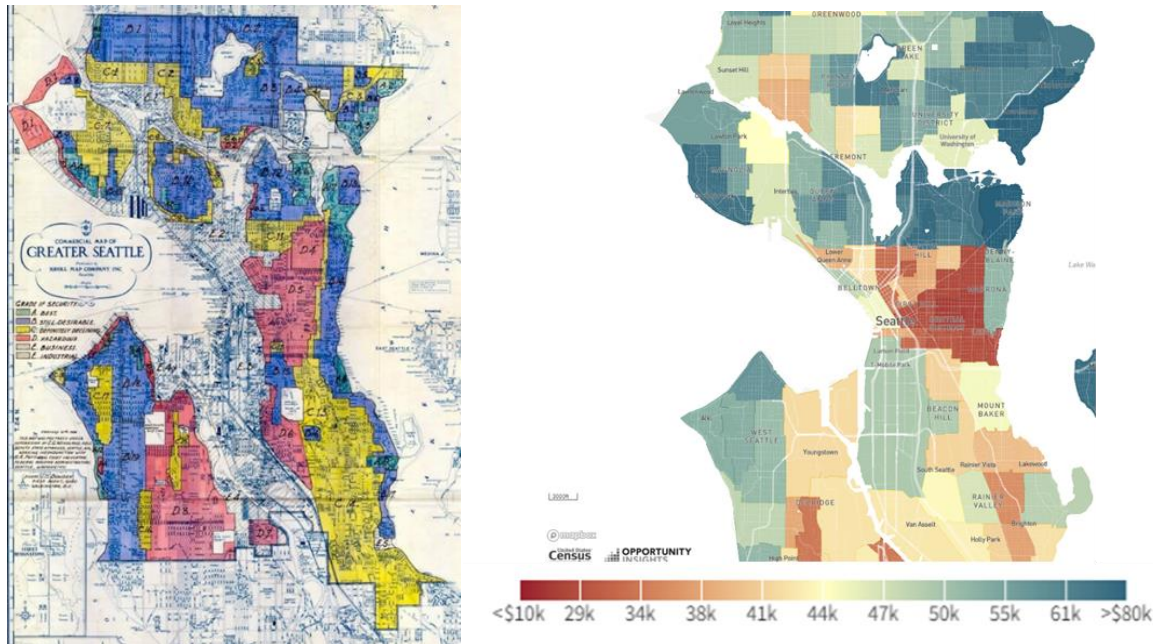


Figure 2. A 1936 map (left) prepared for the State of Washington and FHWA assigned higher risk (yellow and red) to loans issued to homeowners in non-white neighborhoods. Nearly a century later, those born in historically “red lined” neighborhoods have significant lower average annual household incomes, as shown on this map from the Opportunity Atlas.

A toolkit for reconnecting communities

WSDOT has identified specific needs for new guidance and process updates to support the Reconnecting I-90 Communities studies in Seattle and Spokane, and to extend lessons learned throughout the agency’s work at additional locations statewide. With funding for this project those tools will be prioritized, developed, tested within different local planning contexts, and refined. A practitioner-oriented approach grounded in equity-based decision-making will create tools that advance the state of practice in active transportation design and operations while reflecting the needs and priorities of historically underrepresented Washingtonians.

This project will be organized to fit production of new materials into standard agency processes for updating the Design Manual, Traffic Manual, and other guiding documents and associated training. With each iteration WSDOT staff knowledge will deepen and the materials themselves will evolve. Toolkit development rests on the recognition that people who feel ownership of new tools are more likely to use them and to involve others in learning about the changes.

At the end of these project activities, these and other communities across the state will have new understanding and tools to support effective, inclusive planning and project design for people who rely on walking, bicycling, and transit access for everyday transportation. WSDOT will have a suite of process guides that simplify and update routine actions and decisions to address the challenges borne by communities severed by I-90 and other highways and facilities across the state.

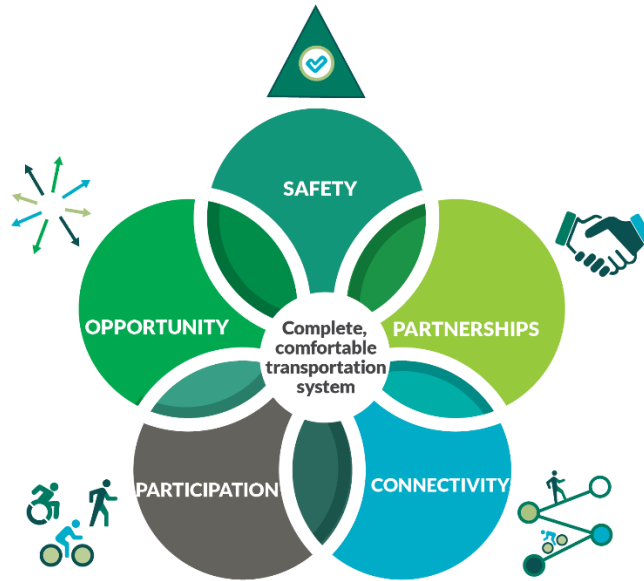


Figure 3. The state Active Transportation Plan goals include opportunity – the ability to go anywhere – which requires eliminating gaps and barriers for active transportation use.

Project statement of work

The proposed statewide project will bring WSDOT together with local and regional partners to act on urgent safety and mobility needs prioritized in local planning while applying and refining innovative new methods described in the ATP.

Planning for improvements in the I-90 communities coupled with toolkit development and testing are presented here as a single project. Collectively they represent a unique approach to improving safety and mobility for vulnerable road users in both the short and long term.

Outcomes of the project include:

- Actionable recommendations and designs to improve network connectivity and safety in underserved and overburdened communities severed by the construction of I-90 in Spokane and Seattle.
- Creation of a practitioner-tested, user-friendly toolkit for implementation of insights from these locations, including ATP’s equity and safety prioritizing methods, statewide.

Both locations and the toolkit have independent utility in the activities proposed here. Due to their geographic locations, the proposed improvements will be implemented on independent timelines, with toolkit development and testing coordinated across the locations. The contexts and challenges presented by the need for more effective planning for active transportation in

general, and the specific issues and opportunities at both sites, collectively address the RAISE grant selection criteria.

RAISE PROJECT TIMELINE WITH MILESTONES

	SEATTLE	SPOKANE	TOOLKIT
2023	Determine final scope of work and launch. Begin community engagement, conceptual design & evaluation.		Determine initial scope of work and launch. Advance GIS framework. Develop/test Transportation Equity Lab.
2024	Develop conceptual design and cost estimate for community supported preferred option. Planning study complete.		Produce/test decision-making tools for critical activities. Hold Transportation Equity Lab, other workshops.
2025	Finalize Preliminary Engineering (30% design level).	Determine final scope of work and launch.	Refine toolkit scope of work. Hold Transportation Equity Lab. Continue to test/refine/train on toolkit.
2026		Community engagement to determine, evaluate, select, and prepare cost estimates for 2-3 concepts.	Develop/test materials identified in updated scope of work. Hold Transportation Equity Lab.
2027		Develop conceptual design and cost estimate for community supported preferred option. Planning study complete.	Revise materials/trainings. Compile/disseminate case study examples via trainings.
2028		Finalize Preliminary Engineering (30% design level).	Submit report on initial phases.
2029		Continue design development and community engagement.	
2030		Continue design development and community engagement.	
2031		90% design expected to be complete.	Submit final report.

Figure 4. Proposed schedule for RAISE planning grant.

Seattle, 2023-2026

The Judkins Park Station area access study will launch in 2023 with determination of the final scope of work for the consulting team, contract execution, and the beginning phase of community engagement. Conceptual design and the feasibility study will be completed in 2023-2024, and preliminary engineering in 2025.

Spokane, 2025-2031

The Spokane study will begin in 2025 with determination of the final scope of work for the consulting team and contract execution. Community engagement in 2026-27 will result in identification of the preferred option with its type, size, location, and cost estimate. Pre-design will be finalized at the 30% concept level in 2028. State funds will be used following this phase to complete the 90% design level.

Toolkit, 2023-2028

Toolkit work will begin in 2023 with determination of the initial scope of work and contract for the overall work plan, along with establishment of evaluation metrics appropriate to the scope. Over the course of the project WSDOT will update its active transportation GIS analysis and make it available and will refine and repeat the Transportation Equity Lab. Ongoing work includes updates to decision-making processes, tools, and manuals and workshops for staff and partners on new concepts. In 2025 WSDOT will evaluate progress and update the scope of work as needed to refine core deliverables for the balance of the project. As the Spokane and Seattle locations move forward, information will be collected and presented as case studies in training materials. Appendix B, Active Transportation Context, provides additional detail.

Consultants for this work will be selected for their ability to engage people most often left out in traditional decision-making processes, to work creatively to identify both people and issues essential to equity-informed processes and decisions, and to identify short-, medium-, and long-term organizational change and staff development needs coupled with pragmatic action plans.

WSDOT's Active Transportation Division will lead the project and support the learning elements of the project. Region offices will apply principles and methodologies from the ATP as they work with local partners in planning and design of solutions that reconnect I-90 communities.

This project is a first step in "shovel-worthy" locations and will help close a gap that currently exists between planning and project selection for state highways and local roadways.

Collectively, these exemplary planning/design projects and toolkit will move policy into practice. The effect will be to accelerate the agency's shift toward integrated multimodal approaches to create a safer and more sustainable future.

Transportation challenges

Reconnecting I-90 Communities will help address the challenges still faced by communities divided and disconnected decades ago by interstate highway construction. By proactively addressing racial equity disparities, removing physical barriers to opportunity, and increasing the use of lower-carbon modes, Reconnecting I-90 Communities will leverage local, regional, and federal investment in the transportation network. The effect will be to increase safety, enhance mobility options, work toward environmental justice, and reduce automobile dependency in historically disadvantaged communities.

A history of barriers

When it was built more than 50 years ago, I-90 bisected the working-class East Central Neighborhood in Spokane and removed hundreds of homes. The interstate highway continues to

pose a significant barrier to connectivity between residential areas to its south and the mix of civic and religious institutions, employers, and educational facilities to the north. This project seeks to continue the ongoing efforts to reduce the barrier with the development of grade-separated design concepts. The development of concept alternatives will leverage and continue the extensive community engagement led by WSDOT in collaboration with the City of Spokane, Eastern Washington University, neighborhood associations, and other stakeholders.



Figure 5. *Highway construction in Spokane displaced hundreds, with effects still felt today.*

Likewise, in Seattle I-90 bisected the Judkins Park Neighborhood, historically part of the center of Seattle’s Black community and now soon to be the site of a light rail station. The area surrounding the station – an interchange of I-90 and a busy former state highway now serving as an urban arterial – was designed to accommodate the speed and scale of motor vehicles, at the detriment of those who will soon seek to walk, bike, or roll to JPS. This project seeks to address the problem through community engagement, planning, and design of crossings, active transportation facilities, and other elements needed to enable people to reach the station safely and directly.

The original design decisions for I-90 in Washington reflected real estate redlining practices and further exacerbated those policies’ disparities and disproportionate burdens on community residents. The effects continue to this day in increased exposure to transportation emissions and pollutants, serious or fatal crashes involving vulnerable road users, and barriers to opportunity. The resulting disruption to active transportation use is especially problematic in lower-income neighborhoods like those included in this project, where more people rely on walking, bicycling, and access to transit to meet their daily transportation needs.

Driving-centric designs and funding

When I-90 and other interstates were constructed, they often created gaps in the active transportation network. The ATP analyzed state routes specifically to identify the effects for people walking and rolling – not something state DOTs typically do systemwide. Crash data discussed in the ATP illustrates the long-term negative effects: disproportionate rates of serious and fatal injuries of vulnerable road users in neighborhoods with higher percentages of people living in poverty or higher percentages of residents who are Black, Indigenous, and people of

color. As cities, counties, and the state developed a transportation system that made driving easier, that same system made it harder for people to walk or bike safely. This pushed people who had the financial ability to do so to drive for short trips, increasing the environmental impact on neighborhoods cut by highways and exacerbating climate change.

Treatment of the state highway system as somehow separate from local networks exacerbated the problem; biking and walking were considered local concerns without recognition of the gaps, barriers, and critical connections that state highways create in the overall network. Active transportation improvements directly address all these factors but generally suffer from a lack of resources for coordinated planning and best practices in design. Planning for these facilities is more often treated like the facilities themselves: secondary to the needs of drivers, without consideration for an integrated network to enable people to get safely from here to there.

The communities severed by the construction of I-90 require solutions as bold and long-lasting as the effects of freeway construction.

Poverty and necessity

Higher-poverty places have lower rates of vehicle ownership and higher reliance on walking, biking, and transit to meet basic transportation needs. These same places have disproportionate numbers of serious and fatal crashes involving pedestrians and bicyclists. Where no facilities exist a “pedestrian detour” is imposed that costs individuals and the community the value of their lost time, an opportunity cost that [directly inhibits upward economic mobility](#).

Safety concerns and crash exposure must be addressed both to improve outcomes for people walking or bicycling out of necessity and to inspire and invite people to shift short trips from driving to walking or bicycling. The Washington State Legislature (Legislature) recently passed a historic transportation package that includes a pilot program aimed at reweaving the active transportation network in communities like these. The Legislature also enacted a Complete Streets design requirement for WSDOT, another opportunity to improve transportation equity in line with [federal guidance](#). The toolkit component of this proposal will be applied to reconnect communities across Washington in the future using state funds.

*This proposal lays the foundation for embedding **commitment to equity** for the most vulnerable people using our roads into standard practice.*

Moving commitment into concrete

State departments of transportation have implemented programs to meet federal environmental justice and Title VI requirements for many years. Yet there is widespread acknowledgement among communities, policy makers, and agencies that these programs do not do enough to address systemic transportation disparities.

A national leader in furthering transportation equity, WSDOT adopted an [anti-racism and diversity, equity, and inclusion policy](#) in July 2021. The ATP published in December 2021 was

Washington's first statewide modal plan to incorporate equity as a fundamental basis of analysis and priority.

Reconnecting I-90 Communities will receive additional attention and investment under the transportation revenue and investment package enacted by the Legislature in 2022. The package, known as Move Ahead Washington, builds on the directives in the state's 2021 Healthy Environment for All ([HEAL](#)) Act. The HEAL Act requires WSDOT to assess state transportation projects for their effects on overburdened communities and to go beyond federal requirements in meaningful community engagement and project decisions. A number of active transportation and transit grant programs funded through Move Ahead Washington will accelerate transportation equity investments.

Moving principles into practice on the ground

Statewide modal plans often stay at the conceptual level. WSDOT took a different approach in the ATP with more substantive analysis and direction. The challenge now is to move its principles into practice, and the I-90 communities provide valuable learning laboratories. Core concepts/tools from the ATP will be tested and refined at the two locations included in this project and woven into WSDOT's project development and planning processes. These include use of the route directness index (RDI) as an element of network connectivity and accessibility and level of traffic stress (LTS) as a measure of network quality. WSDOT guidance will be updated to incorporate specific recommendations concerning context and active transportation planning and design.

Both locations have elements that will help to further refine all the planning and development tools from the ATP, particularly crossing barriers. The work will clarify how the tools should be improved for project-specific decisions and feed into the agency's guidance on pedestrian crossing frequency. In addition, these projects will help to determine where the intersection LTS and RDI analyses best fit within project development.

Additional topics to be addressed that represent new approaches to active transportation and the Safe System Approach include emphasis on reducing driving speed through self-enforcing roads to save lives; a definition of demand based on destination density, not user counts; and focus on population centers (including census-designated places, not solely incorporated municipalities) as places in need of complete active transportation networks.

High-need communities often do not have the capacity to develop best-practice designs that can compete successfully for limited grant funding. This project will help fill these gaps with the creation of model design concepts that can be applied in many communities.

WSDOT has developed a [video](#) that summarizes Reconnecting I-90 Communities.



Figure 6. Limited sight lines create an unwelcome feeling for those seeking to cross this highway off-ramp in Seattle's Judkins Park neighborhood ([WSDOT Reconnecting I-90 Communities Video](#)).



Figure 7. Patrons of the Lighthouse for the Blind navigating nearby streets.

Project history

Reconnecting I-90 Communities builds upon many previous efforts. WSDOT, partner agencies, and nonprofit organizations have already invested years of time and talent in these communities. The funds from this proposal will leverage those past public and civic investments.

In Spokane, there have been many state, regional, and local efforts to reimagine the existing transportation network via innovative and restorative infrastructure design that corrects past mistakes. Current projects include the construction of the North Spokane Corridor freeway, which is also expanding the local trail network and applying place-keeping principles. In 2022, the Legislature authorized WSDOT to use unspent funding for the North Spokane Corridor on the preferred option for a grade-separated active transportation land bridge near Liberty Park.

In Seattle, the project will leverage the state's partnerships with community members, City of Seattle, Sound Transit, King County Metro, and other key stakeholder groups. The project builds on work undertaken in the City of Seattle's [JPS Access Study](#) and the advocacy work of [Disability Rights Washington](#).

The overall project will benefit from recent WSDOT policy development, such as the 2018 EDC-4 [Safe Transportation for Every Pedestrian \(STEP\)](#) plan for pedestrian crossing safety improvements; the [ATP's](#) evaluation of state routes and associated recommendations for change; and a [policy framework](#) from the WSDOT-led injury minimization speed management work group that centers neighborhood context and safety. The ATP provides detailed analysis of conditions for active transportation use along and across state routes in population centers; crash data with identification of patterns that must be addressed; and equity analysis identifying the people and places most disproportionately affected.

Washington's innovative Active Transportation Plan describes what needs to change on and around state highways to improve safety and mobility for all. Reconnecting I-90 Communities presents the opportunity to address high speeds and the need for better crossings and connections – major contributors to the unacceptable rates of serious injuries and deaths of people walking, rolling, and bicycling.

Project locations



Figure 8. I-90 is the main east-west interstate in Washington State.

WSDOT seeks funding for planning and design at two high-priority sites to develop strategies to bridge gaps and restore connections in the state's active transportation network. These sites are in the two largest cities in the state and demonstrate the longstanding inequities that persist decades after the construction of interstates. They further represent opportunities to test the new analytical tools in the ATP, particularly level of traffic stress and the route directness index, and to learn from site-specific applications. With these insights incorporated into the toolkit, benefits will accrue to communities throughout Washington.

Reconnecting I-90 Communities is consistent with state efforts to reduce climate impacts and incorporate environmental justice and equity into transportation processes and projects. As described below under Criteria – Environmental Sustainability, both locations experience disproportionately high levels of exposure to transportation emissions and pollutants.

Spokane, WA (Area of Persistent Poverty, Historically Disadvantaged Community)

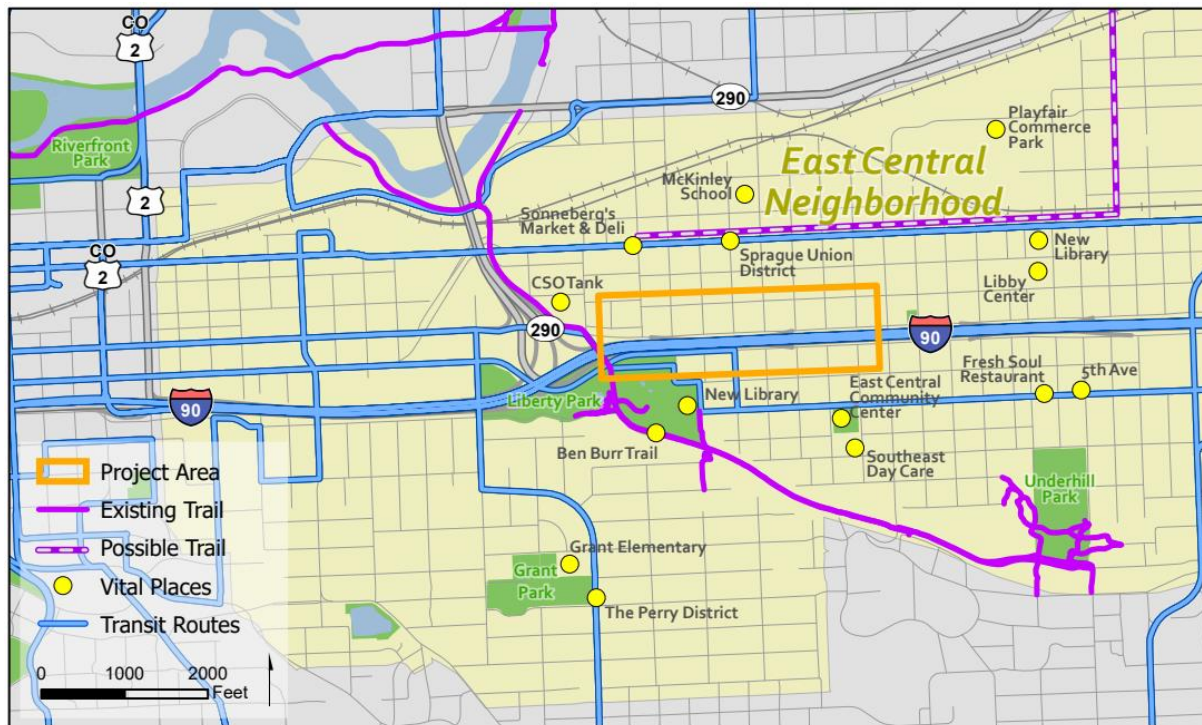


Figure 9. The project area in Spokane (orange rectangle) is in an area of persistent poverty and a historically disadvantaged community.

The project is in the East Central neighborhood of Spokane, WA. The project is located in Census Tracts 30 and 145 of Spokane County, both of which are Areas of Persistent Poverty, Historically Disadvantaged Communities, and Empowerment Zones. Census Tract 145 is an Opportunity Zone. It is one of the most diverse neighborhoods in the city.

The immediate vicinity of East Central is urban with commercial, single family, and multi-family residential development. Vital local gathering places near and around the project location include Underhill Park, Liberty Park, the Spokane Public Library-Liberty Park, Liberty Aquatic Center, churches, and businesses. The area is undergoing revitalization efforts consistent with the City's plans to discourage gentrification and displacement while enhancing quality of life and place. Recent improvements, such as the addition of a branch of the public library, have acted as catalysts for new housing starts.

The transportation system is car-centric due to the limited number of access points that cross I-90. Spokane Transit provides fixed route bus and human services transportation that connect to locations in Downtown Spokane and adjacent cities such as Spokane Valley, Cheney, and Liberty Lake. Due to the limited highway crossings, bus passengers frequently need to make more than one transfer to travel from one side of I-90 to the other. Adding a grade-separated active transportation feature such as a land bridge would allow people more convenient access to bus stops, eliminating some transfers, and would encourage more use of the Ben Burr Trail and regional trail network.

Seattle, WA (Historically Disadvantaged Community, Opportunity Zone)

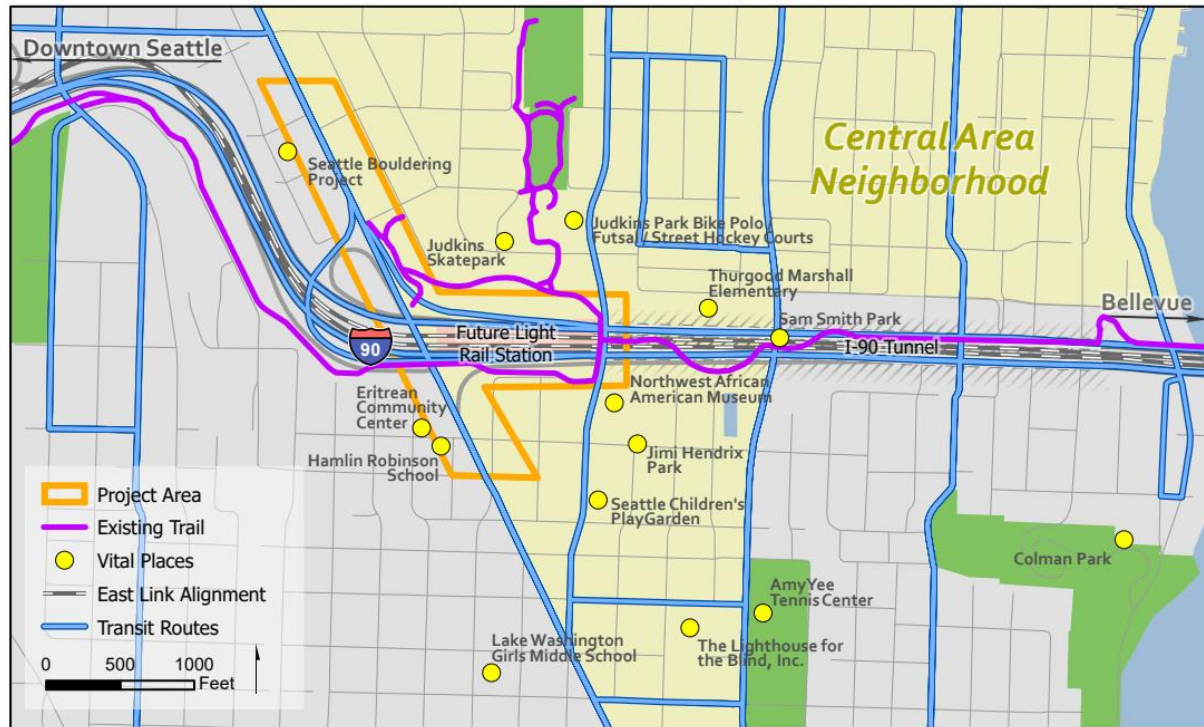


Figure 10. The project area in Seattle (orange polygon) is in a historically disadvantaged community, and partially overlaps with an opportunity zone.

The project is in the Judkins Park subarea of the larger Central Area neighborhood of Seattle, WA. The project is in Census Tract 94 of King County, WA, which is a Historically Disadvantaged Community (HDC), an Opportunity Zone, and an Empowerment Zone.

The immediate vicinity of I-90/Rainier Avenue South is urban with commercial, single family, and multi-family residential development. Local draws such as the Northwest African American Museum, the Eritrean Community Center, Lighthouse for the Blind (a major employer and job training site for blind and low-sighted individuals), schools, businesses on Rainier Avenue South, human services, and a large park system make the area a daily destination for people beyond residents of the immediate area.

The area connects to many trails of regional significance, including the Mountains to Sound Greenway. For people living in the neighborhood, improving the I-90 ramp and local street crossings is essential to supporting safe, reliable access by foot, bike, mobility device, bus, and, in 2023, light rail. Via light rail thousands of people will be able to reach critical destinations including jobs, educational and cultural opportunities in downtown Seattle, Bellevue, and Redmond; hospitals on Capitol Hill; the University of Washington; and SeaTac International Airport.

Grant funds, sources, and uses of all project funding

WSDOT is requesting \$8.36 million in FY 2022 RAISE Grant Program planning funds for Reconnecting I-90 Communities to complete planning and advance design for two key locations in historically disadvantaged communities, as well as establish guidance and best practices that will accelerate our ability to reconnect communities split apart by highways across Washington. Reconnecting I-90 Communities has a 37% match, reflecting the commitment of Washington to this work, even though the project is eligible for a 100% federal share due to its location in historically disadvantaged communities. The federal investment of RAISE funds will be leveraged by a commitment of \$4 million made by the Legislature to the Liberty Park land bridge in Spokane, as well as \$920,000 in staff time funded from non-federal sources.¹

Funding Source by Component	Total \$	Total %	Spokane	Seattle	Toolkit
Non-Federal	\$4,920,000	37%	\$4,000,000	\$270,000	\$650,000
RAISE	\$8,360,000	63%	\$4,000,000	\$2,730,000	\$1,630,000
Other Federal	\$0	0%	\$0	\$0	\$0
TOTAL	\$13,280,000	100%	\$8,000,000	\$3,000,000	\$2,280,000

¹ The \$4 million for the Liberty Park land bridge is included in a list of projects that will be funded over the course of the 16-year Move Ahead Washington transportation revenue and investment package enacted in 2022. WSDOT's Active Transportation Division is developing the sequencing plan for these projects to align them with state and local planning studies and optimal delivery timelines. This project's timing and its relationship to this RAISE application will be identified in a report to be submitted to the legislature Dec. 1, 2022.

Use of Funds	Non -Federal (\$)	Non-Federal (%)	RAISE (\$)	RAISE (%)	Other Federal (\$)	Other Federal (%)	Total (\$)	Total (%)
Planning, preliminary engineering and community engagement	\$270,000	5.5%	\$6,730,000	80.5%	\$0	0.0%	\$7,000,000	51.7%
Final design and community engagement	\$4,000,000	81.3%	\$0	0.0%	\$0	0.0%	\$4,000,000	30.7%
Development of best practices toolkit	\$650,000	13.2%	\$1,630,000	19.5%	\$0	0.0%	\$2,280,000	17.5%
TOTAL	\$4,920,000	100.0%	\$8,360,000	100.0%	\$0	0.0%	\$13,280,000	100%

Figure 11. Proposed funding amounts and sources for RAISE planning grant.

Total project costs include project management; evaluation of type, size, and locations of alternatives; scoping and preliminary engineering; real estate and title research as necessary; specialty functions such as hydraulic, bridge, and structures; traffic and environmental studies; equity-centered community engagement and communications; planning alignment between local, regional, and state partners; and, for the Spokane location, final 90% design for the preferred alternative. WSDOT is ready, willing, and experienced with the delivery of transportation and planning projects and can start the Reconnecting I-90 Communities project as soon as RAISE grant funds become available. WSDOT has the technical feasibility and staff with expertise in engineering, planning, community engagement, environmental disciplines, and management of supplemental work from consultants as needed to deliver this project.

Selection criteria

Safety

Reconnecting I-90 Communities directly addresses the disproportionate rate of serious injuries and fatalities suffered by people walking and bicycling in Washington compared to other road users, which is especially high in communities where past projects created disadvantages and

burdens. In both project locations, safety concerns will be directly addressed with proposed solutions that focus not only on reduced injuries and fatalities, but also on reduced security and health risks (addressed in the Criteria – Environmental Sustainability section below). The focus will be to improve the safety and security of pedestrians and bicyclists by incorporating Complete Streets principles and the Safe System approach. Developing a safer, more accessible connection for walking and bicycling invites mode shift that reduces driving trips, which further reduces crash exposure.

The opening of the Judkins Park Station will transform this area from a little-traversed gap in the urban fabric to a major destination, increasing potential crash exposure by orders of magnitude.

In Seattle, the future Judkins Park light rail station opening in 2023 will generate a significant increase in walking, rolling, and bicycling in the project area. By 2030, [Sound Transit estimates](#) 1,770 added daily arrivals to, and departures from, the station. With continued investments in local redevelopment and high-capacity transit that can carry upwards of 12,000 people per hour, potential ridership is much higher if the barriers to station access can be addressed.

Given that this station has no vehicle parking, the vast majority of light rail riders will arrive by walking, rolling, bicycling, or taking transit. The improvements developed by Reconnecting I-90 Communities are critical to their safety. With multiple schools and the Lighthouse for the Blind nearby, some of the most vulnerable users will need access to the station. Disability advocates have called for active transportation safety improvements, and alternatives developed by this proposal will pay special attention to the needs of the blind, deafblind, and low-vision community.



Figure 12. The conditions at this I-90 on-ramp from Rainier Avenue South illustrate what pedestrians have been facing in the area around the future light rail station and in other locations across the state. With designs like this, people have to cross at a point where drivers tend to accelerate to highway speeds.

From 2017-2020 there were eight crashes involving nine pedestrians within the Seattle project area. All of these collisions resulted in pedestrian injuries, including two serious injury crashes, and the majority of the crashes occurred at night. With less than nine hours of daylight in the winter and frequent rain, low visibility, fog, and glare, driver interactions with pedestrians and cyclists are a common and reoccurring hazard.

One of the most common types of crashes has involved conflicts with pedestrians trying to cross the ramps at I-90/Rainier Avenue South. Once the light rail station opens it is expected that – without countermeasures to reduce conflicts between vulnerable road users and higher speed vehicles – injury crashes will increase commensurate with the anticipated significant increase in the volumes of people walking, biking, and rolling.

Date	Location	Crash Description	Crash Severity	Lighting Condition
2/10/2017	Rainier Ave S and Charles St intersection	Pedestrian in crosswalk hit by driver turning left	One Evident Injury	Daylight
10/11/2017	I-90 On-ramp	Pedestrian hit in crosswalk by driver going straight	One Serious Injury	Dark- Street lights on
4/30/2018	Rainier Ave S and S Massachusetts St intersection	Pedestrian in crosswalk hit by driver turning right	One Evident Injury	Daylight
2/28/2019	Rainier Ave S and Charles St intersection	Pedestrian in crosswalk hit by driver turning left	One Serious Injury	Dark- Street lights on
11/23/2019	Rainier Ave S and Charles St intersection	Pedestrians in crosswalk hit by driver turning left	Two Poss. Injuries	Dark- Street lights on
12/18/2019	I-90 On-ramp	Pedestrian hit in crosswalk by driver going straight	One Evident Injury	Dark- Street lights on
1/5/2020	South of Rainier Ave S and Charles St Intersection	Ped. crossing mid-block hit by driver going straight	One Evident Injury	Daylight
9/30/2020	North of I-90 Interchange/ Rainier Ave S Interchange	Ped. crossing mid-block hit by driver going straight	One Evident Injury	Dark- Street lights on

Figure 13. Pedestrian and bicycle crash data for the Seattle project area underscores some of the safety challenges of this location.

High speeds and limited visibility conditions at these ramps and intersecting local streets will be a major focus. The project team will engage with the community to vet proven safety countermeasures that will reduce crash potential. These include geometric improvements that increase crosswalk sight distance to increase drivers yielding/stopping; narrower lanes, bulb-outs, and local street median treatments to reduce pedestrian crossing distances; and speed management and other traffic system management and operations tools to increase driver yielding and to reduce average driving speeds and speeding episodes. Examples of enhanced pedestrian crossing treatments that may be considered include high visibility delineation and striping ([25% crash reduction factor \[CRF\] for pedestrian crashes](#)); rectangular rapid flashing beacons ([47% CRF for pedestrian crashes](#)); pedestrian hybrid beacons ([69% CRF for pedestrian crashes](#)); pedestrian signals, traffic calming measures, enhanced pedestrian-scale lighting ([41% CRF for all crashes](#)); and/or roundabouts ([79% CRF for all injury crashes](#)).

In Spokane, from 2017-2020 two crashes involved two pedestrians within the project area: one fatality, one serious injury crash. Both occurred in the dark (after 9:00 pm) and both people were struck by drivers going straight ahead. Currently, the proximity of the interstate, design of the underpass, and lack of pedestrian-scale lighting do not provide a welcoming environment for vulnerable road users. Therefore, the hostile conditions artificially suppress the volumes of walking and riding through the area for those who have access to other choices.

As with the Judkins Park location, the East Central Neighborhood around Liberty Park is affected by exposure to high traffic speeds. A land bridge or cap alternative would attract more people to the area, decrease the frequency of conflicts between drivers and other road users, and increase volumes of active transportation users on the at-grade system. Safety requires proactive countermeasures that could reduce or eliminate those potential conflict points such as the existing at-grade crosswalks on the Ben Burr Trail within the project area. The project will also explore pedestrian-scale lighting, which would help more people feel comfortable using the facility, thereby further increasing security through safety in numbers. The countermeasures identified for Judkins Park are equally applicable here and will be carefully evaluated to determine recommended alternatives.

***Failure to address safety imposes a hidden “tax” on society.
WSDOT has calculated the annual societal cost to Washingtonians
of serious and fatal crashes as equivalent to a \$4.73/gallon gas tax.***



Figure 14. *On the south side of I-90 in Spokane's East Central neighborhood, a poorly lit underpass is one of the only nearby options for those who walk, bike, or roll to get to the north side. It is also one of the only north/south connections for drivers, resulting in more interactions and more potential crash exposure. Source: Google Earth*

Conditions similar to those found at these two locations are evident in other areas of the state. WSDOT's approach to safety recognizes past design and operation of the transportation system has favored vehicle usage, and much of the active transportation network is incomplete or has a significant level of traffic stress that limits safety and accessibility for vulnerable road users.

FHWA's Crash Modification Factor Clearinghouse, Proven Safety Countermeasures, and the AASHTO Highway Safety Manual will be used throughout the alternatives analysis and in determining a preferred design alternative to reduce LTS and crash exposure. In addition to site-specific designs, the toolkit will result in new design and operations guidance for other locations with similar conditions and in updates to WSDOT practice statewide. Lessons learned in the analysis will be incorporated into WSDOT's Safety Analysis Guidelines for Planning & Design.

Washington's Safe System Approach to road safety, as outlined in the State's Strategic Highway Safety Plan ([Target Zero](#)) and ATP, moves beyond the traditional reactive identification of safety issues based on waiting for death and serious injuries to occur and then addressing the contributing factors that led to the crashes. Both projects will use the proactive Safe System approach. Incorporation of speed management for injury minimization and route directness/crossing improvements in plans, designs, and other toolkit elements will address the top two factors contributing to disproportionate serious injuries and deaths in Washington of people walking, rolling, and bicycling.

Environmental sustainability

Reconnecting I-90 Communities is a step towards addressing the ongoing environmental impacts of state highway construction on disadvantaged and marginalized communities. Analysis of the project locations using the EPA's Environmental Justice Screen (EJScreen) tool demonstrates they are in high percentiles for a number of environmental justice indicators. Reducing vehicle trips and increasing active transportation trips will provide direct environmental benefits.

The East Central neighborhood in Spokane experiences disproportionate impacts from noise and traffic emissions. The area ranks above the 80th percentile in the state and the EPA region on all

environmental justice indexes. It is above the 90th statewide percentile for PM 2.5 (96th), traffic proximity and volume (94th), and ozone (91st). 28% of residents in this area are people of color, and 51% of the residents are of low-income status. People of color among the block groups make up a range from a low of 13% to a high of 34%. The Spokane overall average is around 5%, making this area one of the most diverse neighborhoods in the city.

In an effort to mitigate environmental and health disparities, this project will recommend design concepts, such as a land bridge, that help shield the East Central neighborhood from traffic noise and vehicle emissions. The design concepts will be designed around zero-carbon modes including walking, biking, micromobility, and use of mobility assistive devices.

Seattle's Central District also experiences disproportionate environmental and health disparities. The area ranks above the 80th percentile in the state and the EPA region on all environmental justice indexes. It is above the 90th statewide percentile for NATA Diesel PM (94th), traffic proximity and volume (96th), Superfund proximity (97th), RMP proximity (94th), hazardous waste proximity (98th), and wastewater discharge indicator (96th). The area is 65% people of color, which is at the 92nd percentile in the state. The population includes 15% linguistically isolated (93rd percentile) and 16% have less than a high school education (84th percentile).

By addressing the barriers to station access, this project will help to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and transportation-related air pollution by encouraging a modal shift away from single-occupancy vehicles and towards walking, biking, and transit.

In addition to supporting new station access, the Seattle project will also consider strategies to promote more walking and biking trips to neighborhood destinations. Although over 8,000 residents live within a ½ mile radius of the project area, residents surveyed in the [JPS Access Study](#) indicated that they choose not to walk or bike around their neighborhood due to safety concerns. The need to invite and encourage active transportation use for short trips will continue to grow as the neighborhood densifies.

WSDOT's [2011 Climate Impacts Vulnerability Assessment](#) concluded that the area of I-90 in the Judkins Park area has a low vulnerability to climate impacts. The area of I-90 near East Central has a medium vulnerability to climate impacts due to intermittent flooding under bridges, and high temperatures affecting bridge expansion joints. While climate science has evolved since this assessment was completed, its results are useful at a planning level, and contain good insight about existing and future conditions.

Reconnecting I-90 Communities builds directly on principles of environmental justice and equity addressed in the ATP. By contributing to development of complete networks this proposal increases access to the cleanest and greenest forms of transportation as it prepares communities to reduce vehicle miles traveled. Reduced VMT helps meet Washington's directives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reduces airborne and waterborne particulates generated by automobile travel, benefiting people and ecosystems. Consideration of the effects of climate change on active transportation use, such as the need for bus shelters and shade in areas with increasing high temperatures, will also be an element of the planning effort.

Quality of life

“This area of Rainier Avenue has long been one of the most dangerous stretches of roadway in the entire city, to the point where most residents (including my wife and I) simply avoid it entirely when on foot or bicycle.”

Max Rappaport, Judkins Park resident

The Reconnecting I-90 Communities sites are in Historically Disadvantaged Communities, Empowerment Zones, and at least partially located within Opportunity Zones. These projects will expand access to essential services and connections to transit. According to the American Community Survey, 2014-2018, more than 21% of households in both the East Central neighborhood of Spokane and the Judkins Park neighborhood of Seattle have no vehicle access, meaning neighborhood residents are more dependent on active transportation and public transit to access vital services and places. As discussed under Project History, both these locations were affected by redlining policies that intersected with the harms caused when the construction of I-90 severed the neighborhoods. By directly addressing barriers to active transportation use and transit access, these projects both reduce dependence on automobiles and begin to redress those prior inequities. This will increase accessibility for underserved, overburdened, and disadvantaged travelers.

Planning for active transportation benefits everyone, especially the estimated 25 percent of Washingtonians who do not hold a driver’s license. Emphasis on accessible active transportation supports the requirements and principles of the Americans with Disabilities Act. As communities prepare or update their ADA Transition Plans, this effort is especially timely.

With the support of the state legislature, in Spokane WSDOT is working to make state-owned land that would be served by the future land bridge available for partnerships with local organizations and agencies. Uses for the land may include housing and ancillary improvements, parks, community revitalization projects, enhanced public spaces such as trails and public plazas, and projects that provide enhanced economic development. With these improvements, WSDOT is removing barriers for individuals and communities to transportation, potential jobs, business opportunities, and full participation in community life.

Mobility and community connectivity

The two locations this proposal focuses on, and others that will benefit from the toolkit, exemplify the impact of state highway construction that harmed communities’ ability to thrive and provide safe and healthy access to opportunity. Decades-old highways continue to present challenges, leaving fewer viable route options for those without a private vehicle. Reconnecting I-90 Communities addresses these barriers to mobility and connectivity.



Figure 15. *Narrow and obstructed sidewalks approaching Judkins Park Station put vulnerable users in harm's way. (Max Rappaport image)*

In East Central, WSDOT will use the grant funding to hire a consultant to recommend design concepts to address mobility challenges for active transportation users unwilling or unable to use the current facilities to cross I-90. Conditions described in the Criteria – Safety section actively discourage walking, biking, or rolling.

The design concepts will be developed to proactively incorporate Universal Design principles so that users of all abilities can access them; will enable connection to the planned Children of the Sun Trail being constructed by WSDOT as part of the US 395 North Spokane Corridor; will implement the ATP findings that reducing the level of traffic stress leads in turn to increased use; and will address the neighborhood's perceptions of safety and security. A 2019 survey by [Gallup-Urbanova](#) found that 32% of residents in East Central strongly disagree or disagree that they always feel safe and secure in their neighborhood.

This project is consistent with WSDOT's efforts to separate freight traffic from local streets. Freight mobility will be improved by separating active transportation users from [freight traffic](#), thus reducing conflict points and improving freight travel time reliability.

The segment of I-90 that bifurcates East Central has an annual truck tonnage of 31,530,000 and an average daily truck volume of 7,000, with trucks comprising 7.6% of the traffic. This project will offer a grade-separated option for active transportation users to cross I-90 by avoiding the crossings at East 3rd Avenue and East 2nd Avenue. At those points the Ben Burr Trail has an at-grade crossing at East 3rd Avenue that has an average annual daily truck volume of 8,009 and annual truck tonnage of 2,315,000, and an at-grade crossing at East 2nd Avenue with an average annual daily truck volume of 11,156 and annual truck tonnage of 2,065,500 ([WSDOT Freight](#)

[and Goods Transportation System 2021 Update](#)). These streets introduce bottlenecks for freight at points that also represent crash exposure for trail users.

This project is also consistent with the Spokane County Regional Trail Plan's goal to support tourism, including bicycle tourism drawn by the growing network of bikeways and trails in the area (Appendix B, Active Transportation Context, includes more details). According to a [study](#) prepared by Tourism Economics, tourism is an integral part of the Spokane regional economy, and the industry made significant contributions in 2018 by generating a total of \$2 billion in total sales.

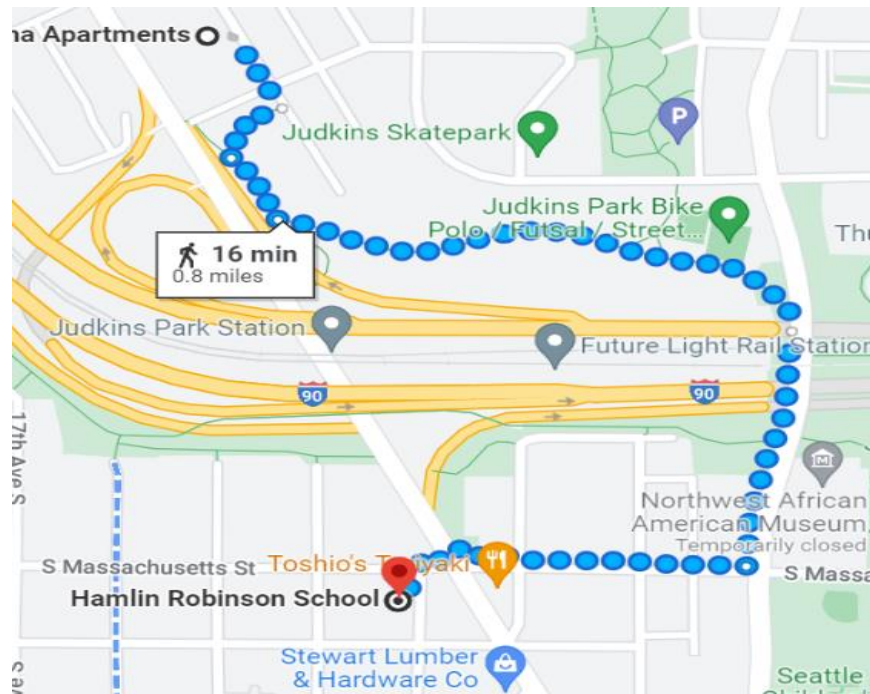


Figure 166. In order to avoid crossing the high-speed ramps at the I-90 interchange, a middle-school student would have to walk nearly a half a mile out of direction and up a major hill.

Like the East Central neighborhood and many traditionally underserved communities, the Judkins Park neighborhood in Seattle was bifurcated by urban interstate construction. Although much of I-90 through Seattle was tunneled and capped, allowing for greenspace and trail connections, the segment in the immediate vicinity of the project area was not, severing the local street grid and limiting opportunities for direct active transportation connections in the process.



Figure 177. Community members connect with each other as "living infrastructure" to help someone cross a high-speed I-90 off-ramp at Rainier Avenue South. (David Seater image)

Inadequate facilities and multiple high-speed ramp crossings at the Rainier Avenue South interchange prevent it from serving as a viable active transportation connection for anyone but the brave or desperate. Rainier Avenue South is also one of the neighborhood's major commercial, transit, and high-density housing corridors, increasing the need for direct active transportation access across I-90. Lack of a direct connection discourages active transportation trips and increases reliance on automobile travel. For those who have no choice but to use active transportation and transit, it creates unacceptable burdens of time, effort, and personal energy.

By identifying solutions to create a safe and accessible active transportation connection through the I-90/Rainier Avenue South interchange this project will close a key connectivity gap, reconnect a historically bifurcated neighborhood, and promote a more walkable and bikeable neighborhood in the process.

The existing configuration of the I-90/Rainier Avenue South interchange can be particularly challenging for persons with disabilities to navigate. Missing and obstructed sidewalks present impassable barriers for those in wheelchairs and personal mobility devices, and uncontrolled high-speed off-ramps can prove especially difficult to navigate for those with vision and auditory challenges.

Throughout the planning process, the project team will build upon the relationships established throughout Seattle DOT's Judkins Park Station Access Study to work closely with disability advocates. The project team will ensure that developed concepts reflect the unique accessibility needs of users of all ages and abilities through the incorporation of Universal Design principles.

This will include close coordination with the Lighthouse for the Blind, a nonprofit enterprise who provides employment, support, and training opportunities for people who are blind, deafblind, and blind with other disabilities. Lighthouse for the Blind operates their major employment center just south of the project area, and many of their employees who are blind and/or deaf will benefit from the accessibility improvements that this project will identify.

Both projects will leverage past and future community, local, state, and federal investments in complete trail networks, transit service, and a fast-expanding light rail system. They will remove barriers to access and increase mobility options for users of all ages and abilities far beyond the project areas. They also serve as case studies in application of the principles of network connectivity, route directness, level of traffic stress, and crossing safety integral to the ATP. These real-world examples and the decision-making and analytical elements to be developed in the toolkit will enhance its applicability in other projects across the state.

“The formidable barrier of crossing the I-90 ramps continues to exclude those most in need of access. The impact is particularly acute for those with mobility, vision, and auditory challenges. This grant will provide critical funding towards fixing this broken link.”
Lighthouse for the Blind Letter of Support

Economic competitiveness and opportunity

Planning for active transportation improvements in these locations contributes to economic opportunity and to quality of life and place in a number of ways. It will support individual and community health and lower healthcare costs; reduce the “hidden tax” that results from societal costs for serious and fatal crashes; enhance workforce recruitment; and provide space-efficient transportation that can be more reliable than driving in places with high levels of motor vehicle traffic congestion, at the lowest possible individual transportation cost. Walking and bicycling also reduces long-term environmental mitigation and health costs by reducing air and water emissions and pollutants associated with vehicle use.

Spokane and Seattle have experienced rapid economic growth and are projected to continue strong growth, as illustrated in Figure 18. Despite strong regional growth the neighborhoods of East Central and Judkins Park still lag behind. Improving access to transit connections and destinations without requiring the expense of a personal vehicle expands access to opportunity for members of these communities.

Economic Statistic	Spokane County Value (2020)	Spokane County Value (2039)	Spokane County 20 Year Growth (2020-2039) % Change	King County Value (2020)	King County Value (2039)	King County 20 Year Growth (2020-2039) % Change
Population	536,196	661,068	23.3%	2,296,419	2,884,697	25.6%
Gross Domestic Product (millions of current dollars)	\$31,618	\$67,912	114.8%	\$315,411	\$809,073	156.5%
Personal Income (millions of current dollars)	\$28,165	61,509	118.4%	\$226,152	\$543,735	140.4%
Real Disposable Income per capita	\$40.81	\$48.74	19.4%	\$71.41	\$90.66	27.0%
Total Employment	306,210	354,656	15.8%	1,733,870	2,159,999	24.6%

Figure 18. Spokane County and King County are both forecasted to experience growth in the next twenty years. This table is based on the 2021 Washington State Remi-Transight.

The East Central neighborhood has lower incomes, greater rates of poverty, and more reliance on walking, bicycling, and transit than is typical across Spokane County, as shown in Figure 19 **Error! Reference source not found.** from the Census 2020 American Community Survey Data (5-year 2016-2020 average).

Economic status	Units	Spokane County	Census tracts 30, 145
Median household income in the past 12 months	2020 \$	\$60,101	\$39,716
Mean household income in the past 12 months	2020 \$	\$80,652	\$51,883
% of population below poverty level	Percentage	12.9%	31.6%
Means of Transportation to Work	No. of Workers	236,263	1,887
By Car, truck or van - drive alone	Percent of total	75.8%	68%
By Car, truck or van – carpooled	Percent of total	9.5%	14.15%
By Public Transportation	Percent of total	2.5%	6.78%
By Walking	Percent of total	2.7%	2.81%
By Biking, taxicab, motorcycle or other means	Percent of total	1.5%	2.07%
Mean Travel Time to Work (all modes)	Minutes	22	17.9

Figure 19. This table indicates that East Central neighborhood is not equitably benefitting from economic growth taking place at the county level. Source: Census 2020 American Community Survey. Note: The percentages from the census tracts are averages across two census tracts and will not add up to 100%.

The East Central project will develop concepts that provide low-cost alternatives to driving alone between homes located south of I-90 to job centers and services located north of I-90. This neighborhood is already home to far higher percentages than the countywide average of people using public transportation, walking, or bicycling to get to work. Improved safety and connectivity for those walking or rolling out of necessity will also invite mode shift for those who have more choices available.

This project will connect the Ben Burr Trail to the proposed Children of Sun Trail as an urban trail corridor. Neighborhoods adjacent to the trail corridor will have a unique opportunity for [trail-oriented development and community-led placemaking](#). This work combined with the trail's connections to other regional trails can transform it into a true community asset.

This project is consistent with the City of Spokane's [Planning and Economic Development Team strategy](#) to invest in key public amenities and facilities. The city has seen positive results by implementing this strategy. For example, investments to infrastructure in Spokane's East Sprague Employment Center made in 2017 resulted in a 3% increase in taxable property value in 2018. The city expects to see similar increases for efforts in the East Central area. At the same time, they are developing strategies to address concerns about the potential for gentrification and displacement so that increased walkability and bikeability will benefit current residents.

In Seattle, the Judkins Park neighborhood is similarly not experiencing the same level of economic growth as the average across King County. Figure 20 below shows the differences from the Census 2020 American Community Survey Data (5-year 2016-2020 average).

Economic Status	Units	King County Value	Census tract
Median household income in the past 12 months	2020 \$	\$99,158	\$57,959
Mean household income in the past 12 months	2020 \$	\$134,708	\$85,477
% of population below poverty level	Percentage	8.4%	18.0%
Means of Transportation to Work	No. of Workers	1,200,041	2,090
By Car, truck or van - drive alone	Percent of total	58.3%	36.3%
By Car, truck or van – carpooling	Percent of total	9.3%	5%
By Public Transportation	Percent of total	12.5%	28%
By Walking	Percent of total	5.3%	10.2%
By Biking, taxicab, motorcycle or other means	Percent of total	14.6%	20.5%
Mean Travel Time to Work (all modes)	Minutes	29.8	29.5

Figure 20. This table indicates that Judkins Park neighborhood is not equitably benefitting from economic growth taking place at the county level (Source: Census 2020 American Community Survey).

In Seattle, the East Link light rail extension will provide the Judkins Park neighborhood with unprecedented access to employment and population centers by providing direct transit connections to major employment centers such as downtown Seattle, downtown Bellevue, Microsoft’s headquarters in Redmond, SeaTac Airport, and the University of Washington. It will provide visitors with easier access to the neighborhood’s cultural amenities and local businesses. As discussed in Criteria – Quality of Life, however, existing conditions surrounding the JPS will likely prevent these economic benefits from being equitably realized among members of vulnerable communities, particularly excluding those with mobility and sensory challenges. The lack of safe and comfortable active transportation connections from the new station to neighborhood destinations will likely also prevent the Judkins Park community from fully capitalizing on the tourism potential that light rail can bring.

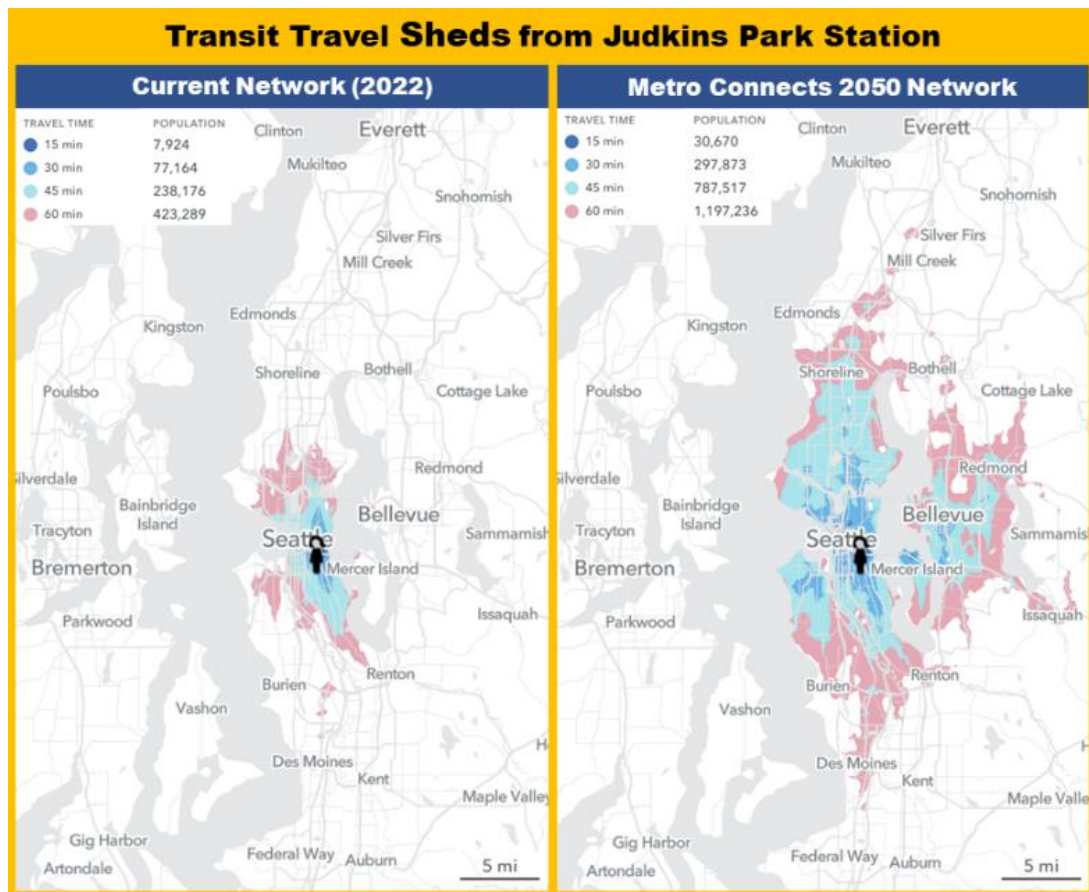


Figure 21. The area within a one-hour transit trip from Judkins Park will expand greatly, mostly in 2023 with the opening of the East Link light rail extension.

The comprehensive and community-focused approach of this project will help to ensure that the economic opportunities brought about by this historic light rail investment will be realized by Judkins Park’s community members and businesses in an equitable way.

Additionally, Reconnecting I-90 Communities will incorporate equitable and progressive approaches to public outreach, removing financial barriers and increasing access to decision-making power for underserved communities. In 2022 the Legislature passed 2SSB 5793, which allows WSDOT to provide a direct stipend and to cover costs of participation, such as childcare, for individuals who are low income who participate in an advisory group. This legislation reinforces the importance of public participation by individuals and communities directly impacted by government decision-making and provides an innovative approach for more equitable and sustainable policy outcomes. WSDOT will work to incorporate this approach in the public outreach and engagement work of Reconnecting I-90 Communities and will seek other opportunities to engage local organizations and firms so existing members of the community will have increased opportunities to directly partake in the growing prosperity stimulated by public investment.

Active transportation investments make communities like these more appealing for business and talent recruitment and create far more jobs per dollar invested than any other type of transportation project. The projects’ locations have unique ties to bicycle tourism, and their

connection with extensive trail networks will draw additional visitors and tourism dollars to the area. Appendix B, Active Transportation Context, provides more detail.

State of good repair

Reconnecting I-90 Communities is consistent with plans to maintain transportation facilities or systems in a state of good repair and is consistent with the [WSDOT Transportation Asset Management Plan](#). The proposal would develop plans and preliminary designs to repair and maintain sidewalks, remove obstructions, and fill in gaps in the pedestrian and bicycle networks to prioritize connections and transit access for people who walk, ride, or roll.

In the Judkins Park neighborhood, this will help to maximize the benefit of the significant public investment being made with the coming light-rail expansion. It is expected that improved pedestrian access to transit, along with improved bus stop quality and safety, may reduce demand for paratransit. This will serve to lower operating costs for transit providers while supporting transportation independence for people with disabilities. Seattle DOT has a [policy in place](#) to prioritize marked crosswalks at locations that serve as pedestrian generators, including locations associated with a [transit-plus multimodal corridor map](#) that includes all Link light rail stations.

In Spokane, alternatives that replace the deficient existing pedestrian overpass with other grade-separated infrastructure will further help reduce maintenance costs. Snow and ice removal from a land bridge will be less expensive and easier to accomplish than on the current narrow, enclosed pedestrian overpass that can only be reached by steep and narrow ramps. Estimated maintenance and overall life-cycle costs will be developed as part of the planning process.

Toolkit development will support innovative problem-solving approaches for maintenance. Alignment of plans will enable all partners to identify potential sources of funding and a unified voice in support of targeted investments. Part of this work includes developing and testing models for collaborative maintenance agreements involving public and private partners where appropriate. This could include shared-use agreements for specialized equipment, coordinated schedules, and other mechanisms to improve maintenance at the lowest possible cost for all partners.

Partnership and collaboration

Reconnecting I-90 Communities, its project work and its policy development, can only be accomplished through inclusive collaboration.

For the East Central neighborhood, the project realizes a long-term vision of the City of Spokane to mitigate the impacts of past decisions on marginalized communities by developing a plan **with** the neighborhood – not developing plans **for** the neighborhood or doing things **to** the neighborhood. Grade-separated access across I-90 for active transportation users of all ages and abilities has support from the community and complements the efforts of a variety of local, regional, state, and national agencies.

The project will connect with the Children of the Sun Trail, a pedestrian/bicycle trail that parallels the full length of WSDOT's US 395 North Spokane Corridor (NSC) project. The Spokane Tribe is an active participant in the NSC and Children of the Sun Trail projects and has partnered with Gonzaga University to develop a mobile app for trail users that identifies native plants and includes stories from the Tribe and other neighbors.



Figure 22. Judkins Park Station is a culmination of years of collaborative partnership between Sound Transit and WSDOT. (Sound Transit)

In Seattle, the project benefits from a strong foundation of local support and is consistent with completed and ongoing partner studies and projects. The project will build off the work of the Seattle Department of Transportation’s JPS Access Study, which engaged with a broad base of local partners and community members. The project will also be conducted in close coordination with Sound Transit as construction of JPS concludes and East Link begins service in 2023. Safety and accessibility concerns at the Seattle location have also been highlighted in [news articles](#), and by [transportation advocates](#) and [elected officials](#) who have spoken publicly on the need to improve conditions. WSDOT’s planning work will include a robust public engagement component that will continue to build community consensus while centering the needs of underserved and overburdened communities.

The planning alignment approach and Transportation Equity Labs will invite the participation of organizations that may not have participated in local transportation planning in the past. The project will develop structures aimed at incorporation of a broad range of interests, particularly from historically underrepresented groups – not just for the activities in this proposal but for ongoing relationships. Best practices in developing bold, community-based proposals that align local and state plans on a foundation of equity and resiliency will become part of the toolkit.

WSDOT has worked closely with local agencies and advocates in both project locations. Letters of support representing those relationships are attached to this application as Appendix C.

Innovation

Reconnecting I-90 Communities contributes to innovative outcomes through practice and policy. In both Spokane and Seattle, this project looks beyond outdated and inadequate pedestrian infrastructure by encouraging communities and decision makers to work together to develop context-sensitive design solutions that reflect and incorporate the input of the people and communities they serve. Both locations provide opportunities to incorporate new methods in lighting, modal integration, vegetation management, and stormwater runoff in an esthetically pleasing environment that will encourage active transportation use.

“Emblematic of the kind of work that needs to be done to make sure that we actually meet our goals as a Legislature for Vision Zero.”

Washington State Senator Rebecca Saldaña, advocating for improvements to the I-90/Rainier Avenue South Interchange

The ATP used an innovative strategy to incorporate Safe System thinking into its analysis of state routes. It establishes the first-ever needs assessment of the state system with a data-driven, quantitative evaluation of its suitability for active transportation use. Providing the level of traffic stress data, route directness index, and results of the equity + safety + potential demand analysis in WSDOT’s community planning portal will make it possible for agencies to collaborate in identifying where improvements both on and off the state system will create complete networks. This project will apply these innovative methods in two locations and use that experience to further develop guidance for practitioners.

Planning for active transportation supports the ongoing and accelerating shift toward new mobility devices. With statewide sales totaling more than [\\$25 million in 2021](#), electric bicycles have established their value as a lower-cost automobile replacement capable of hauling children or groceries and enabling people to use bicycle transportation over longer distances with ease. For those who cannot afford a new e-car, an e-bike may be a solution at one-tenth the cost when coupled with well-planned infrastructure. While e-bikes do not require special charging stations, charging access at destinations will be considered during the planning process for both locations. In East Central, WSDOT will coordinate with Urbanova, a public-private partnership, as well as private companies and universities to use technology to solve urban transportation problems. This project will lay the groundwork for future implementation of innovations in project delivery and financing. The consultants will explore opportunities to accommodate any future efforts to provide electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

The agency is ready and willing to implement the new approaches needed to incorporate equity and safety into all transportation projects. Providing applied examples from an agency recognized as a leader in both active transportation and equity will accelerate this learning for the benefit of all of Washington and beyond.

Conclusion

Reconnecting I-90 Communities develops solutions for communities bifurcated by high-speed highways, beginning to reweave and reconnect the fabric of community life. It incorporates active transportation planning and design principles that are emerging as most significant for creation of a truly multimodal transportation system and will extend new practices from these projects to benefit the entire state. It contributes directly and substantially to the safety and mobility of people walking, bicycling, and accessing transit, and stimulates many more people to make these healthy choices and to enjoy them with dignity.



Figure 23. Roller skaters in Seattle's Judkins Park (Timothy Kenney).

Figure 234. East Central neighbors celebrate at the Carl Maxey Center Open House (Q6).