



OKLAHOMA
Transportation



Hochatown Community Access and Pedestrian Safety Project

Project Outcome Criteria

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FY23 MPD GRANT APPLICATION

MPD Grant Request: \$20 million

1. Project Outcome Criteria

This section describes how the Hochatown Community Access and Pedestrian Safety Project (Project) aligns with each of the six Project Outcome Criteria for the Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant Program/Rural (MPDG).

Table 1. Project Outcome Criteria and Project Benefits

MPDG Project Outcome Criteria	How this Project Addresses the MPDG Project Outcome Criteria
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Protects nonmotorized travelers and communities from safety risks by constructing crossing improvements, installing new traffic lights at intersections, and completing a multiuse bicycling and pedestrian trail adjacent to US Highway 259 (US-259). ▪ Improves nighttime visibility and reduces traffic collisions in low-light conditions with the installation of new street lighting in the urban area of Hochatown. ▪ Reduces serious injuries in this underserved rural community. The US-259 corridor through Hochatown experiences collision rates that are 3 times higher than the statewide average. ▪ Reduces the risk of vehicular crashes by 50 percent with Project elements such as the dedicated center turning lane, and the installation of street and permanent traffic lighting.
State of Good Repair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creates a modernized, safer expanded highway with the construction of a shared-use trail to support connectivity along the corridor and improve overall conditions for a traditionally underserved and Historically Disadvantaged Community (HDC). ▪ Improves the existing infrastructure to show the community and visitors that the area is growing, which may promote business/land investments and future urban growth. ▪ Reduces vehicle miles traveled (VMT) for persons switching to walking for some short trips to produce a state of good repair savings of \$99,000.
Economic Impacts, Freight Movement, and Job Creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creates beneficial long-term efficiencies for reduced travel time, increases travel time reliability, improves tourism, and expands job opportunities in the region. ▪ Expands lanes and constructs a designated center turning lane to improve safety and provide more efficient timely access to daily destinations, local businesses, lodging areas, and planned future job opportunities. This will serve to stimulate overall growth and economic development.
Climate Change, Resiliency, and the Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Manages stormwater more effectively with the installation of new curbs and gutters in some locations, removing runoff from the roadway to minimize pooling while eliminating untreated spillover into the watershed. ▪ Reduces greenhouse gas emissions with construction of the multiuse trail that provides alternative modes of transportation. Trail connectivity to nearby community parking is a strong desire and will be a consideration. ▪ Reduces visible air emissions by using warm mixed asphalt that produces lower greenhouse gas emissions. ▪ Reduces 16,500 tons of CO₂ emissions by capacity improvements to reducing congestion and reduced VMT from increase in walking/cycling.

MPDG Project Outcome Criteria	How this Project Addresses the MPDG Project Outcome Criteria
Equity, Multimodal Options and Quality of Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improves access to daily destinations—such as jobs, healthcare, grocery stores, places of worship, recreational facilities, and parks—through lane expansion and construction of a multiuse trail. ▪ Enhances mobility and connectivity throughout Hochatown with the multiuse trail and Americans with Disabilities Act improvements. Connectivity to existing trails and recreational areas will be considered throughout the design development and collection of feedback from the community. ▪ Expands US-259 lane capacity to restore the free flow of traffic, reduce travel delays, and create a safer experience for motorized and nonmotorized travelers. ▪ Creates the opportunity for more than 162,000 additional pedestrian trips and 34,000 cycling trips in the opening year.
Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Features the use of dynamic message signs by ODOT to inform the community of public meetings during the construction period. ▪ Enables ODOT to explore inclusion of solar-powered lighting throughout design development. ▪ Allows ODOT to evaluate the use of artificial intelligence (AI)-improved traffic signal systems and components. ▪ Incorporates Warm Mix Asphalt which offers a range of benefits that align with modern sustainability and performance goals while also addressing environmental concerns. ▪ Receives funding from the \$200 million the Rural Economic Transportation Reliability and Optimization (RETRO) Fund.

1.1 Safety

The Hochatown Community Access and Pedestrian Safety Project will provide improved safety for both local travelers and tourists as well as both drivers and pedestrians. In recent years, Hochatown has become a new favorite destination, drawing tourists from throughout Oklahoma, as well as from neighboring states and beyond. The existing US-259 infrastructure is inadequately designed to meet the high level of traffic experienced today and projected for the future, thus necessitating immediate attention to address the needs of the growing region. The existing US-259 within the Project area contains a two-lane-, undivided roadway with limited shoulder widths and stormwater conveyed through roadside ditches. There are only limited left or right turning lanes, and no existing bicycle or pedestrian facilities such as sidewalks. Large vehicles and vehicles towing trailers are currently unable to make left turns onto side streets and into commercial areas without causing significant traffic backups. Rear-end collisions can result when vehicles suddenly decrease speed or stop to make a left turn.



Traffic Backup on US-259 through Hochatown

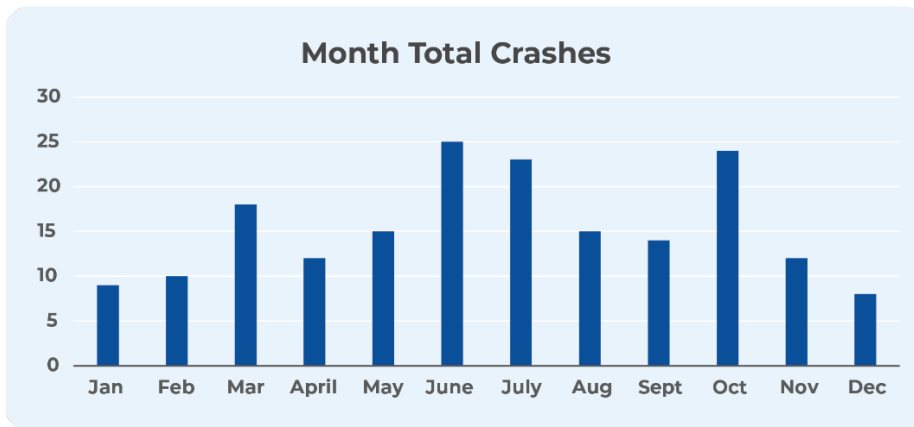
In July and August 2022, approximately 7,200 vehicles per day in one direction (either northbound or southbound) or 12,000 vehicles per day in both directions traveled along the US-259 corridor through Hochatown. Segments between Old Hochatown Road and Carson Creek Road had a higher number of collisions due to an increase in residential and commercial driveways, and higher frequency of side roads.

Over a 10-year period, from 2012 through 2021, a total of 185 collisions occurred along US-259 (Figure 1). Five collisions resulted in 7 fatalities, 70 collisions resulted in injuries, and 110 collisions resulted in property damage only. The US-259 corridor has experienced nearly a 70-percent increase in traffic collisions from 2017 through 2021 compared with the previous 5-year period from 2012 through 2016, which is due to the increased tourism and traffic growth in the area. June, July, and October recorded the highest average monthly collisions over the 2012 through 2021 observation period, accounting for 40 percent of total collisions, and weekend days, including Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, accounted for approximately 60 percent of total collisions (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Total Crashes by Year



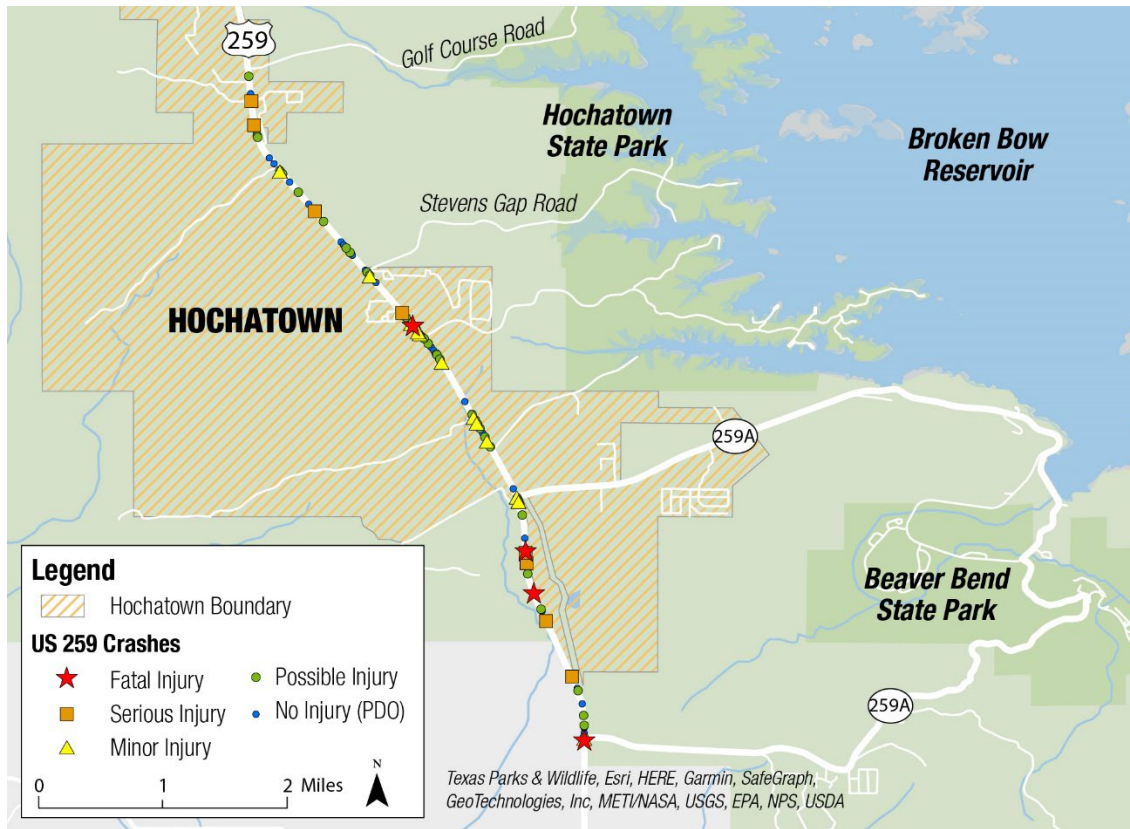
Figure 2. Total Crashes by Month (2012-2021)



Note: Total Crashes = 185

Figure 3 illustrates the locations of collisions along US-259 within the Project limits based on injury type.

Figure 3. US-259 Collision Map



PDO = Property Damage Only

Rear-end, angle, and roadway-departure (fixed object) collisions were the predominant collision types along US-259, making up nearly 88 percent of all collisions (Figure 4). More than 68 percent of rear-end collisions did not occur at intersections, which suggests these instances were a result of a traffic queue where an upstream vehicle was attempting to make a left turn impeding through traffic. The total collision rate for US-259 is nearly 3 times greater than the statewide average rate for similar facilities. The fatal collision rate is also more than 2.2 times greater than the statewide average as shown in

The Project Corridor collision rate is almost
3x the state average

Table 2. Because a large number of tourists uses US-259, there are many pedestrian generators near the urban section of Hochatown, and the users of nearby cabins utilize nonmotorized transportation to experience local restaurants, shops, and hiking trails at Beavers Bend State Park. These attractions increase the risk for vehicle, pedestrian, or bicycle conflicts. This Project intends to proactively improve active transportation infrastructure including sidewalks to enhance the visitor experience and protect visitor and resident safety.

Figure 4. Collision Types

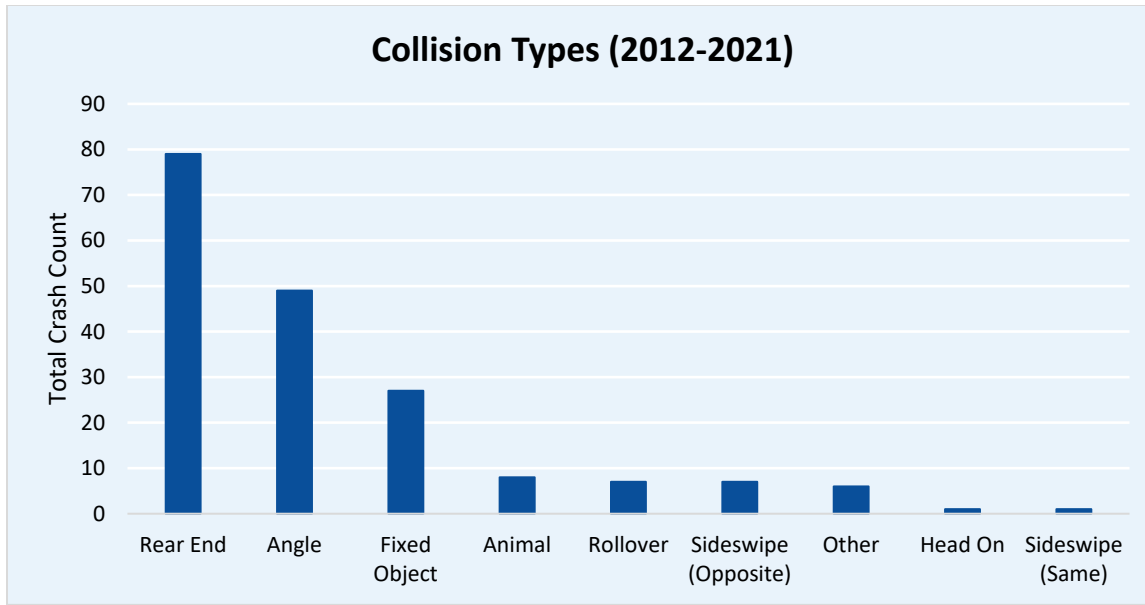
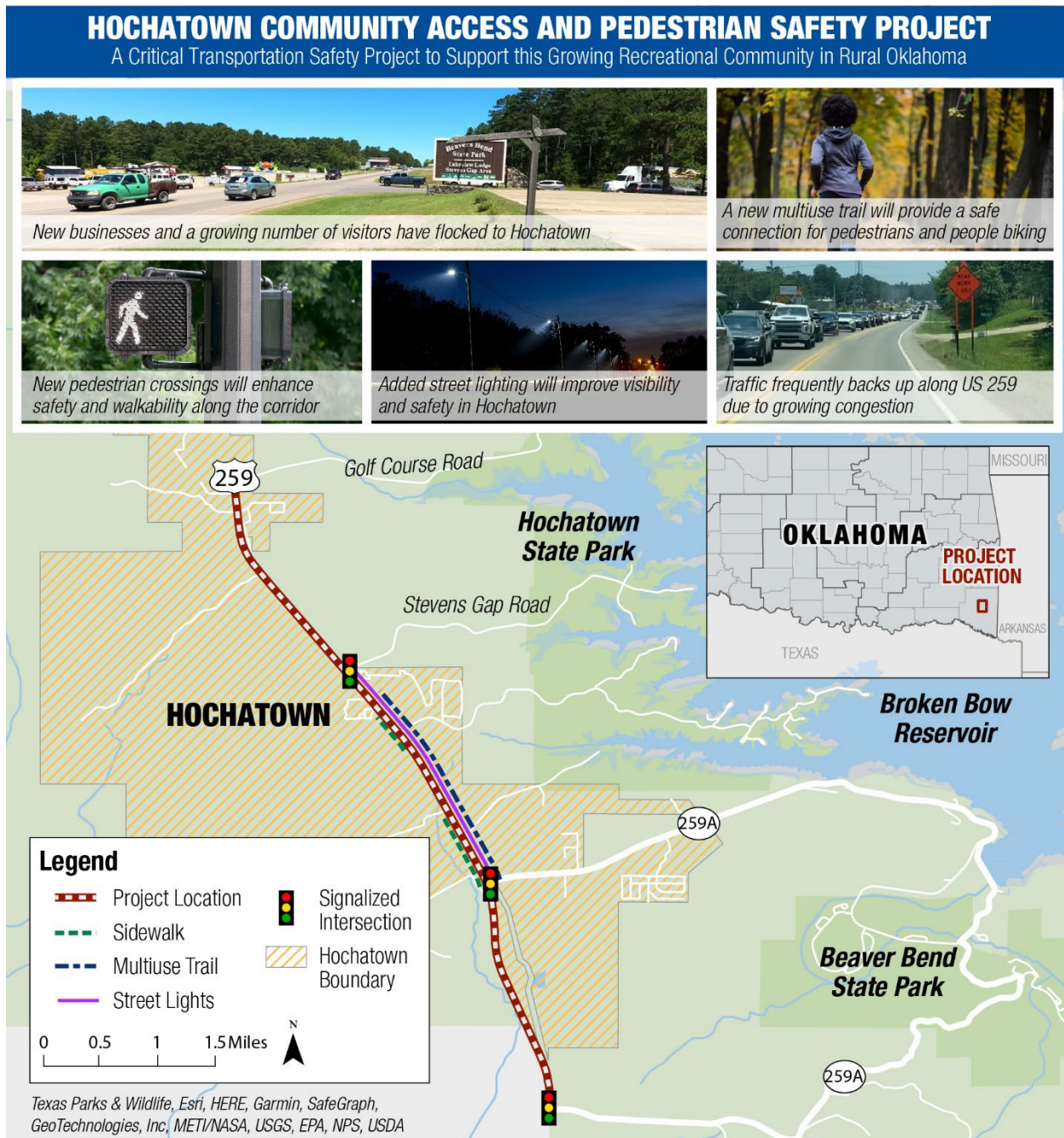


Table 2. US-259 Collision Rates

	Project Corridor Rates	Statewide Rates (2018–2020)
Total Collisions	220.93	74.99
Fatal Collisions	5.97	2.70

The Project will reduce the occurrence of crashes, and resulting injuries and fatalities, within a disadvantaged community. Roadway speeds will be reduced to 45 miles per hour in the urban area to the north and south of State Highway (SH) 259A North. The lower speed will improve safety and reduce the likelihood and severity of collisions as the area continues to develop and multimodal traffic increases. Additional safety elements will be implemented, such as consolidation of driveways and access management improvements, which will assist with traffic flow and allow vehicles to safely enter and exit properties. Traffic signals will be installed, and intersection approaches will be widened to include dedicated turning lanes, which will provide safer vehicle movements at Stevens Gap Road, and SH-259A North and South. Parallel to the roadway, ODOT will construct a multiuse bicycle and pedestrian trail to promote safety and mobility for active transportation modes for travelers including both residents and tourists in the area. Within the urban section, ODOT will install new sidewalk and improve Americans with Disabilities Act accessibility components. Figure 5 illustrates the project location and the proposed elements.

Figure 5. Project Location and Proposed Elements



1.2 State of Good Repair

The existing US-259 corridor is a two-lane, undivided highway with varying shoulder widths, no turn lanes, and no pedestrian or bicycling facilities. While the overall pavement condition along US-259 in the Project area is currently rated as “good,” a portion of the roadway with cracking is rated as “fair” and “poor.” The Project will provide a modernized, safer expanded highway with a shared-use trail to support connectivity along the corridor and



US-259 North of Stevens Gap Road

improve overall conditions for a traditionally underserved community. Without construction of the Project, Hochatown will continue to be negatively impacted by its transportation network deficiency, which may affect long-term economic growth, and the accessibility and mobility of residents and tourists. Travel delays because of bumper-to-bumper congestion and safety concerns regarding rear-end collisions would continue to increase. The Hochatown Community Access and Pedestrian Safety Project will improve existing infrastructure, show the community and visitors that the area is growing, and may promote business and land investments and future urban growth.

ODOT strives to remediate pavement deterioration due to traffic and weather. As such, ODOT has a \$500M 4-Year Asset Preservation Plan which is both federally and state funded to address pavement and bridge conditions throughout the state. The Project is a rural two-lane highway that no longer meets the needs, expectations, and demands associated with modern transportation users. As the area continues to develop, pavement deterioration will be subjected to further deficiencies because of traffic loads and environmental conditions. The Project anticipates the current and future growth and will take a preventative approach in improving US-259 to a state of good repair to further ensure safety and minimize traffic delays due to pavement deterioration.

1.3 Economic Impacts, Freight Movement, and Job Creation

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, Hochatown became a fast-growing popular destination spot for Oklahomans and visitors from neighboring states. Hochatown is a rural community that approximately 250 people call home; however, on the weekends, holidays, or during popular seasons, Hochatown can have more than

30,000¹ people visiting the area. Beavers Bend State Park is a popular state park in Oklahoma with more than 2 million visitors each year and is only accessible from within the project limits. For most of its years, Hochatown has been an often-overlooked community in the southeastern corner of Oklahoma in McCurtain County but has since experienced tremendous growth from cabin rental investment opportunities and tourism. The newly incorporated city has seen a 145 percent increase² in travel spending compared to 2019.

The Project is expected to have beneficial long-term efficiencies for reduced travel time, increased travel time reliability, tourism, and job opportunities in the region. The Project's lane expansion and designated center turning lane will improve safety and provide more efficient timely access to daily destinations, local businesses, lodging areas, and planned future job opportunities, and will serve overall to stimulate growth and economic development.

The Project will reduce delays for both vehicles and pedestrians and will improve system connectivity. The multi-use path for bicyclists and pedestrians may increase access to retail areas, restaurants, and saloons, and provides a link to other nearby trails. Access to employment will also be improved with safer, more efficient travel times.

As a relatively small community, Hochatown has quickly adjusted and adapted to the overwhelmingly positive amount of increased business performance. The community is continuing to develop and plans for future growth, such as a new Choctaw Landing development adjacent to SH- 259A.



Estimated Travel
Time Savings:
\$2.4 million



Tourist Attractions and Businesses Line US-259 in Hochatown

This proposed resort development will create more than 2,000 new jobs in the area, and will include a small grocery store or market, dining options, and a fuel station. The

¹ <https://www.texarkanagazette.com/news/2022/nov/28/its-official-tourist-haven-hochatown-okla-now-a/>

² <https://nondoc.com/2020/11/23/hochatown-southeast-oklahoma-unlikely-tourism-hub/>

development will also educate visitors about Choctaw Nation history. The Choctaw Nation is coordinating with ODOT to prepare for the increased traffic anticipated with the new development. The Project will promote an increase in tourism, support future job opportunities, and improve a main transportation link in a rural community.

1.4 Climate Change, Resiliency, and the Environment

The Project significantly reduces transportation-related air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions by reducing traffic congestion, thereby reducing idle vehicle emissions. Other environmentally sustainable elements of the Project include the following:

- Construction of the sidewalks and multiuse trail will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by providing alternative modes of transportation. Trail connectivity to nearby community parking is a strong desire and will be a consideration.
- Installation of new curbs and gutters in some locations will help manage stormwater more effectively, removing runoff from the roadway to minimize pooling while eliminating untreated spillovers into the watershed. ODOT will evaluate drainage solutions along the corridor as design advances.
- Use of warm mixed asphalt will reduce visible air emissions and produce lower greenhouse gas emissions.
- Construction of the Project will reduce 16,500 tons of CO₂ emissions from reduced VMT from increased pedestrian and bicycling activity.

The Project will benefit both residents and the surging number of tourists by providing multimodal access throughout the town and to activities at Beaver Bend State Park with greater efficiency, as well as improved accessibility for emergency vehicles and evacuations. Stormwater management improvements will be included to remove runoff more effectively from the roadway to minimize pooling and eliminate untreated spillover into the watershed.

The multiuse trail will be completed to allow a variety of options for people to travel throughout the corridor and community. Encouraging the modal shift from vehicles to active transportation will help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Many visitors and residents already walk and bike the corridor, whether by necessity or choice, and the trail will provide safety benefits to encourage more bicycle and pedestrian travel. Solar-powered lighting along sidewalks and the trail area will be considered throughout the project's design.

ODOT will place warm mixed asphalt as part of the project. Warm mixed asphalt will reduce visible air emissions and produce lower greenhouse gas emissions compared to hot mixed asphalt. Lower burn temperatures are needed to produce warm mixed asphalt, which generates lower emissions of CO₂e. Additionally, there is less energy needed to operate burners, which reduce overall fossil fuel consumption.


1.5 Equity, Multimodal Options, and Quality of Life

The Project significantly removes barriers for individuals to transportation, jobs, and businesses; increases opportunities by providing more extensive transportation choices and access to urban amenities; and reduces commute time and congestion.

The Project will provide improved accessibility to many of Hochatown's most visited assets and activities, and includes the following Equity, Multimodal Options, and Quality of Life elements:

- Americans with Disabilities Act improvements included with the multiuse trail will enhance the mobility and connectivity throughout Hochatown. The lane expansion and multiuse trail will improve access to daily destinations, such as jobs, healthcare, grocery stores, places of worship, recreational facilities, and parks.
- Connectivity to existing trails and recreational areas will be considered throughout the design development and collection of feedback from the community.
- Lane capacity expansion on US-259 will restore the free flow of traffic, reduce travel delays, and create a safer experience for motorized and nonmotorized travelers.
- Improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists are expected to generate more than 162,000 additional pedestrian trips and 34,000 cycling trips in the opening year.

OKLAHOMA STATE PARKS

 **Accessible Information**
Beavers Bend State Park

The following park amenities are available:

- Fully accessible comfort station near the old Nature Center
- Acorn Campground:
 - One fully accessible comfort station, five RV sites
- Armadillo campground on Stevens Gap:
 - One comfort station, three RV sites
- Carson Creek:
 - One fully accessible comfort station, one RV site
- Blue Jay primitive campground:
 - Two sites
- Coyote primitive campground:
 - Two sites
- Cabin #48 accessible and meets ADA specs.
- Lakeview Lodge-One double/double room, one king and one suite, and all public areas of the lodge (Stevens Gap Area.)

Other:
Forest Heritage Center entrance and public restrooms

[ADA Information at Beavers Bend State Park](#)

EQUITY

Hochatown is located within the Choctaw Nation, a reservation which covers nearly 11,000 square miles in southeastern Oklahoma. Hochatown is a historically disadvantaged community as defined by the Council on Environmental Quality's Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST). The project is located in census tracts 982 and 985, both of which are considered disadvantaged. Census tract 982 is in the 93rd percentile nationwide for transportation barriers, and tract 985 is in the 95th percentile nationwide in the same measure according to the CEJST, making efficiency, safety, and multimodal improvements all the more critical for local residents. The Project will improve safety and connectivity to this historically underserved area, enhance the growing community, and may provide opportunities for new development and resulting good-paying jobs. Additionally, ODOT will continue to consider the needs of the Choctaw Nation and Hochatown community members throughout the design of the project.

PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

ODOT presented the Project at a community outreach event on October 27, 2022, at the Broken Bow Senior High School auditorium in the town of Broken Bow. The presentation included brief background information, and a description of existing conditions of the Project area, Project goals, interim improvements, current operational traffic volumes, and the findings of the level-of-service analysis. ODOT will continue to engage with the community throughout the Project development process.



ODOT hosted another open forum in Broken Bow on May 16, 2023, to receive community feedback on the decision-making process. This meeting was focused more on the 6-mile segment of US-259 between SH-259A South and Golf Course Road. This meeting delivered new data and information on the suggested safety improvements that were intended to address the concerns of the substantial growth from tourism and new developments. There are two additional community outreach events scheduled for the Project.

STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT

Letters of Support have been received from the City of Broken Bow, Kiamichi Economic Development District of Oklahoma (KEDDO), Oklahoma Trucking Association, Oklahoma Forestry Association, and the City of Idabel. While these Letters of Support are available in the Appendix of this application, a complete list to all the Letters of Support received for this Project are available on the [ODOT Grant Website](#).

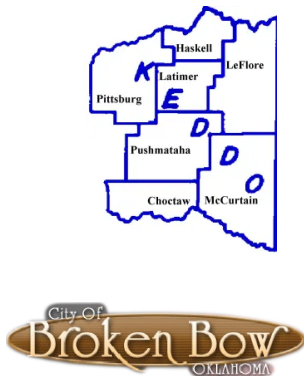
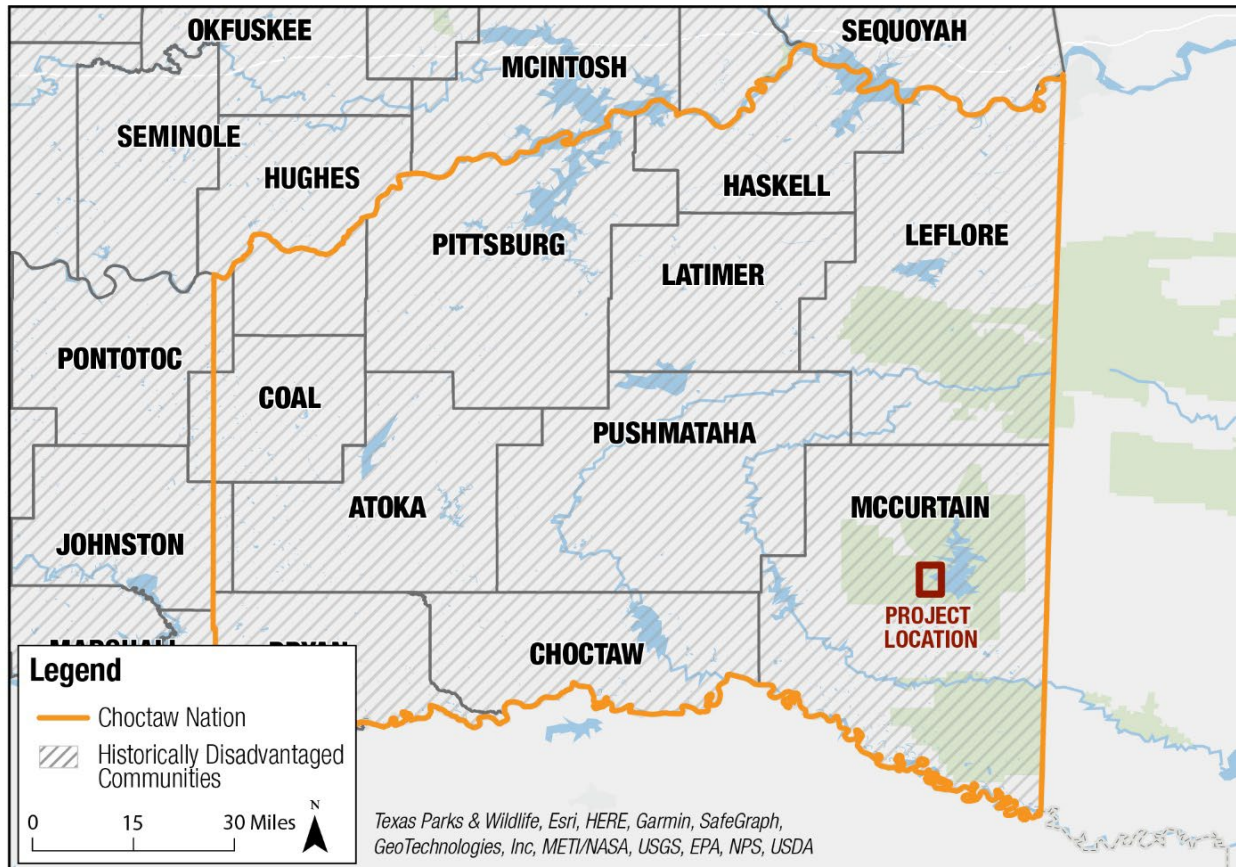


Figure 7. Historically Disadvantaged Communities



MULTIMODAL OPTIONS

In addition to the lane expansion, ODOT will construct much-needed sidewalks in Hochatown and a multiuse trail running parallel to US-259 as part of the Project. This will provide multimodal opportunities for community residents and visitors, who currently must use their car even for very short distance trips such as travelling between Hochatown’s amenities. The multiuse trail will be about two miles long and provide a safe, accessible path for nonmotorized travel for the underserved community. In addition to serving as a recreational trail for pedestrians and cyclists, it will help reduce the number of vehicles on the highway for short-distance trips between lodging areas, restaurants, breweries, wineries, and other popular adventure or activity destinations in Hochatown.

The Project’s multiuse trail will include Americans with Disabilities Act improvements and enhance the mobility and connectivity throughout Hochatown. Connectivity to existing trails and recreational areas will be considered throughout the design development and collection of feedback from the community.

ODOT is committed to supporting a safe and effective transportation system that provides affordable, accessible multimodal opportunities for active transportation and access to key daily destinations as well as local attractions.

QUALITY OF LIFE

The Project will improve access to daily destinations in and around Hochatown, such as jobs, healthcare, grocery stores, places of worship, local businesses, trails, parks, and recreational areas like Beavers Bend State Park and Broken Bow Lake within the Ouachita National Forest.

One of the main benefits of the Project is the increase of mobility and connectivity for all users, including pedestrians and bicyclists. Currently, the existing US-259 corridor is unable to accommodate the combination of residents and the influx of tourists visiting the area by vehicles, causing major traffic delays. During weekends, holidays, and the summer months, motorists in the small, rural community of Hochatown experience longer trip times, an increase of vehicle queues, and bumper-to-bumper traffic. Large vehicles and towing vehicles are unable to make safe left turns into local businesses and popular tourist destinations like Broken Bow Lake.



Visitors Paddle on Broken Bow Lake

The Project will expand the capacity of the existing two-lane highway and include a center two-way left turn lane to reduce vehicle queuing and rear-end traffic collisions caused by the sudden change in traffic flows. The expansion of lanes will promote better quality of life and mobility for the community and its visitors, making automobile trips easier and more direct. ODOT will install pedestrian-friendly signals and crossings at each of the intersections where permanent traffic signals will be installed. There are currently no safety signals or dedicated crossings for pedestrians. Installation of pedestrian crossings and signals will allow locals and visitors to traverse US-259 safely when accessing businesses, restaurants, and other popular destinations. The Project will restore the flow of traffic that has been otherwise impacted by the booming growth and will provide further mobility and connectivity to address future needs for the growing region.

Beavers Bend State Park is located east of Hochatown along the shores of Broken Bow Lake and Mountain Fork River in the Ouachita National Forest, one of the oldest and largest national forests in the southern United States. The scenic beauty of Beavers Bend State Park draws the attention of millions of visitors per year, making it one of Oklahoma's most popular areas. With more than 3,482 acres of park to explore, the towering trees, crystal-clear waters, and rugged terrain make this state park a nature lover's paradise.



Welcome Sign to Beavers Bend State Park.

1.6 Innovation Areas: Technology, Project Delivery, and Financing

INNOVATION TECHNOLOGY

In addition to traditional public outreach, ODOT will use dynamic message signs to inform the community of public meetings and construction. These assets will help inform the public and provide communication to allow users to plan alternative routes. These efforts reduce congestion during construction while improving the safety and efficiency of movement through and around the work zone.

ODOT will evaluate the use of traditional and artificial intelligence (AI)-improved traffic signal systems and components. AI traffic signal monitoring and detection solutions will identify patterns in traffic and use precise technology to accurately identify users at intersections. This system will optimize traffic operations for various users and serve as an innovative strategy to protect and better serve vulnerable users, improve traffic flow, and reduce congestion within the community. Inclusion of this system will reduce risk of injury to pedestrians and cyclists from heavy freight vehicles and other large towing vehicles. Other considerations for the upgraded signals are high-speed signalized approaches and associated dilemma zones.

PROJECT DELIVERY

The Project will incorporate Warm Mix Asphalt (WMA) into the paving aspects of this Project. WMA offers a range of benefits that align with modern sustainability and performance goals while also addressing environmental concerns and improving construction practices. It is a proven technology that can offer the following benefits:

- Reduce paving costs
- Extend the paving season
- Improve asphalt compaction
- Allow asphalt mix to be hauled longer distances
- Improve working conditions by reducing exposure to fuel emissions, fumes, and odors
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions

INNOVATIVE FINANCING

The Project will also receive state funding Rural Economic Transportation Reliability and Optimization (RETRO) Fund which is a one-time funding allocation of \$200 million from the state's the Fiscal Year 2024 General Appropriations bill. Per RETRO Fund provisions, these resources will help accelerate construction, repair, and maintenance of Eight-Year Construction Work Plan projects in qualifying rural areas that have experienced robust economic development causing an impactful increase to traffic volumes and safety concerns.