



**OKLAHOMA**  
Transportation



# Hochatown Community Access and Pedestrian Safety Project

## *Merit Criteria*

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**FY24 RAISE Grant Application**

**RAISE Grant Request: \$20M**



## 1. MERIT CRITERIA NARRATIVE

This section describes how the Hochatown Community Access and Pedestrian Safety Project (Project) aligns with each of the eight Project Merit Criteria for the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Program. Table 1 summarizes the RAISE merit criteria and the Project’s benefits.

*Table 1. Merit Criteria and Project Benefits*

RAISE Merit Criteria	How this Project Addresses the RAISE Merit Criteria
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protects nonmotorized travellers 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 259.</li> <li>Improves nighttime visibility and reduces traffic collisions in low-light conditions with the installation of new street lighting in the urban area of Hochatown.</li> <li>Reduces serious injuries in this underserved rural community. The US 259 corridor through Hochatown experiences collision rates that are three times higher than the statewide average.</li> <li>Reduces the risk of vehicular crashes by 34% with Project elements such as the dedicated center turning lane and the installation of street and permanent traffic lighting and marked crosswalks.</li> </ul>
Environmental Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>Aligns with the state’s <a href="#">Carbon Reduction Strategy</a> which Identifies projects and strategies to reduce transportation emissions.</li> <li>Reduces visible air emissions by using WMA, which produces lower greenhouse gas emissions.</li> <li>Reduces CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2,600 tons through capacity improvements to reduce congestion and VMT from increase in walking and cycling.</li> </ul>
Quality of Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The lane expansion and shared-use trail will improve access to daily destinations, such as jobs, healthcare, grocery stores, places of worship, recreational facilities, and parks.</li> <li>Enhances walkability with the installation of sidewalks and a shared-use bicycle and pedestrian trail, providing residents and visitors with safer and more accessible options for commuting and recreation.</li> <li>By addressing traffic challenges and increasing road capacity, alleviates congestion, improving the overall flow of traffic within Hochatown.</li> </ul>
Mobility and Community Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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 shared-use trail.</li> <li>Enhances mobility and connectivity throughout Hochatown with the shared-use 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.</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>



RAISE Merit Criteria	How this Project Addresses the RAISE Merit Criteria
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creates the opportunity for more than 34,100 additional pedestrian trips and 44,400 cycling trips in the opening year.</li> </ul>
Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creates beneficial long-term efficiencies for reduced travel time, increases travel time reliability, improves tourism, and expands job opportunities in the region.</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>
State of Good Repair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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 HDC.</li> <li>Improves the existing infrastructure to show the community and visitors that the area is growing, which may promote business and land investments and future urban growth.</li> <li>Reduces VMT for persons switching to walking and biking for completing short trips, avoiding damage to roadway pavement for a state of good repair savings.</li> <li>The Project will primarily be constructed within the existing right-of-way (ROW) and will necessitate only minimal ROW acquisition.</li> </ul>
Partnerships and Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ODOT will continue to collaborate with the community members of Hochatown, McCurtain County, the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, and others to ensure the Project will support all community stakeholders.</li> <li>The Project has garnered support from both local community organizations and statewide organizations.</li> </ul>
Innovation: Technology, Delivery, Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Features the use of dynamic message signs by ODOT to inform the community of public meetings during the construction period.</li> <li>Enables ODOT to explore inclusion of solar-powered lighting throughout design development.</li> <li>Allows ODOT to evaluate the use of AI-improved traffic signal systems and components.</li> <li>Incorporates WMA, which offers a range of benefits that align with modern sustainability and performance goals while also addressing environmental concerns.</li> <li>Receives funding from the \$200 million RETRO Fund.</li> </ul>

AI = artificial intelligence  
 CO<sub>2</sub> = carbon dioxide  
 HDC = Historically Disadvantaged Community  
 ODOT = Oklahoma Department of Transportation  
 RETRO = Rural Economic Transportation Reliability and Optimization  
 US 259 = U.S. Route 259  
 VMT = vehicle mile(s) traveled  
 WMA = warm mixed asphalt

## Safety

The Project will provide improved safety for both local travelers and tourists as well as both drivers and pedestrians. On average, the safety amenities and facility enhancements amount to \$170,000 annually, serving approximately 77,000 bicycle trips and 66,000 pedestrian trips per year. Additionally, induced users benefit from a mortality reduction valued at \$452,000 per year.

In recent years, Hochatown has become a popular 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



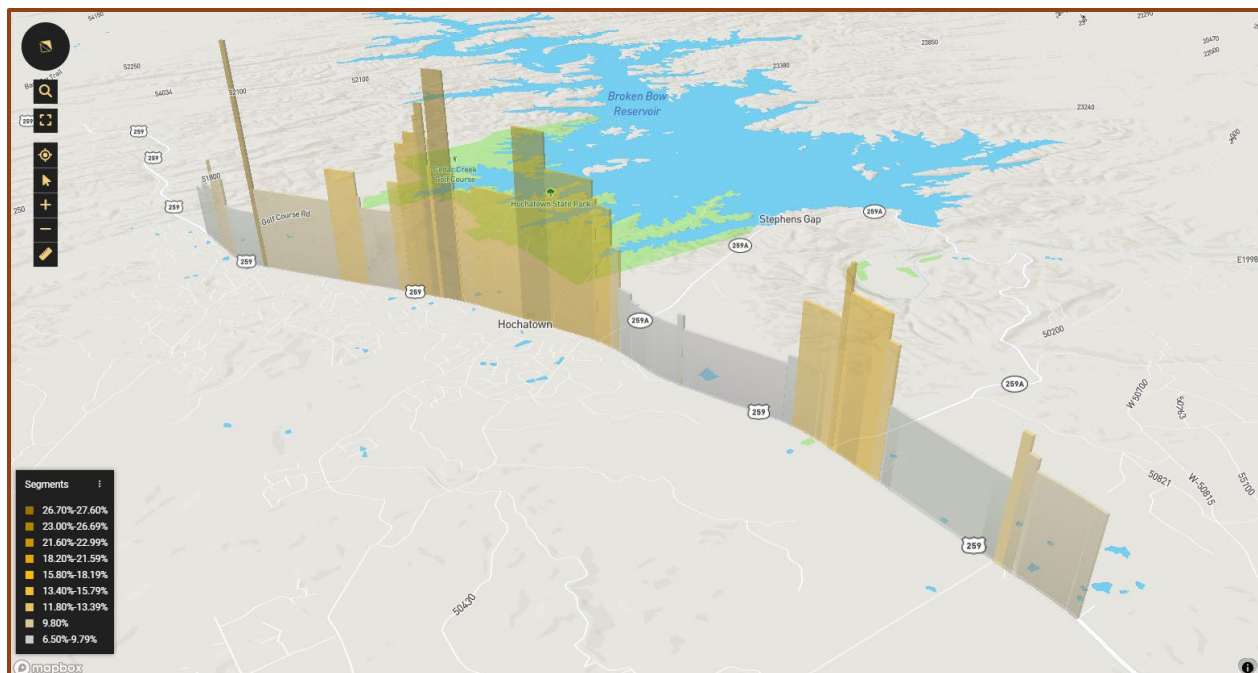
within the Project area contains a two-lane, undivided roadway with limited shoulder widths and stormwater conveyed through roadside ditches. There is only limited left or right turning lanes, and no existing bicycle or pedestrian facilities such as sidewalks. Large vehicles and vehicles towing trailers 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.

A segment analysis was carried by Streetlight out on the US 259 corridor through Hochatown (see Figure 1). This analysis offers insights into trips along the corridor, utilizing analytics derived from Navigation-GPS data—location records generated by connected cars and turn-by-turn navigation apps for mobile devices. Here are the findings from the segment analysis:

- High congestion is observed toward the center of Downtown Hochatown.
- The average speed primarily falls within the range of 50 to 60 mph.
- Travel times along this corridor are generally less than 10 minutes.

In summary, the Streetlight analysis indicates that traffic from nearby communities primarily converges on downtown Hochatown. The ongoing project aims to enhance travel safety and efficiency in these regions.

*Figure 1. US 259 Corridor Segment Analysis by Streetlight*



From July 2023 to January 2024, an average of 9,700 daily vehicles traveled along the US 259 corridor through Hochatown. During the summer season, the daily traffic from Monday to Thursday averaged 11,100 vehicles, while daily traffic from Friday to Sunday averaged 13,300 vehicles, an increase of 20%. 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 a higher frequency of side roads.

From 2012 to 2021, 188 vehicle crashes occurred within the Project area, resulting in 9 severe injuries and 5 fatalities. The construction of the center turn lane and the installation of street lighting is expected to reduce the number of expected crashes per year from 18.8 to 12.4, an average reduction of 6.4 crashes per year, valued at \$2.8 million. The US 259 corridor has experienced nearly a 70% increase



in traffic collisions from 2017 through 2021 compared with the previous 5-year period from 2012 through 2016, which is a result of the increased tourism and traffic growth in the area. June, July, and October had the highest average monthly collisions recorded over the 2012 through 2021 observation period, accounting for 40% of total collisions, and weekend days, including Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, accounted for approximately 60% of total collisions.

Figure 2 illustrates the locations of collisions along US 259 within the Project limits based on injury type.


Figure 2. U.S. Route 259 Collision Map (2012 to 2021)



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% of all collisions (Figure 3). More than 68% 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 Table 2. Because many tourists use 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.



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

Figure 3. Collision Types (2012 to 2021)

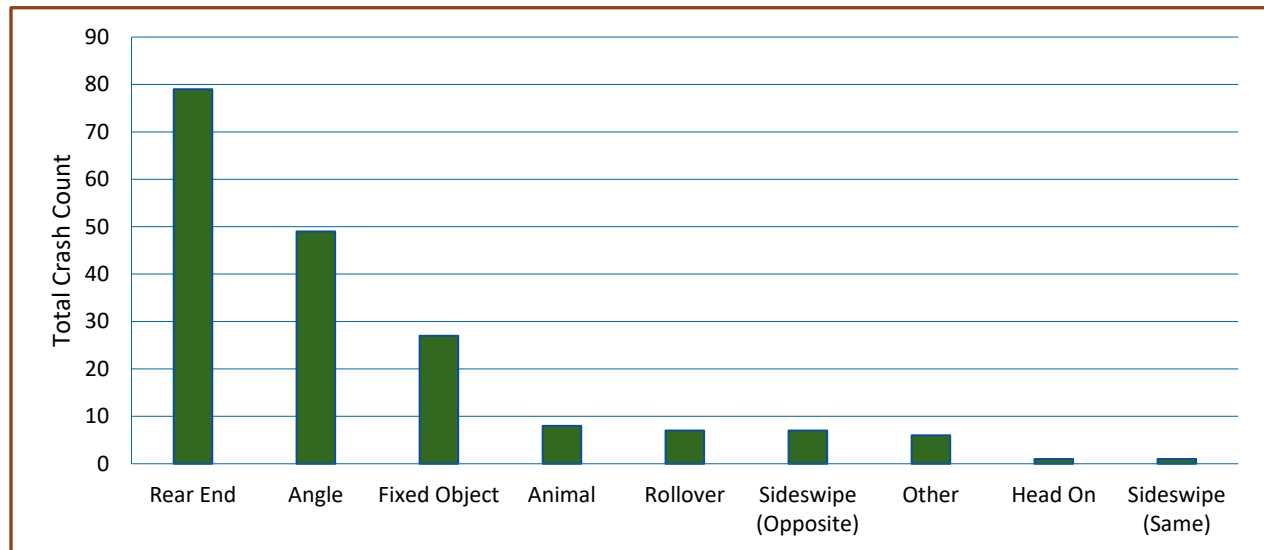


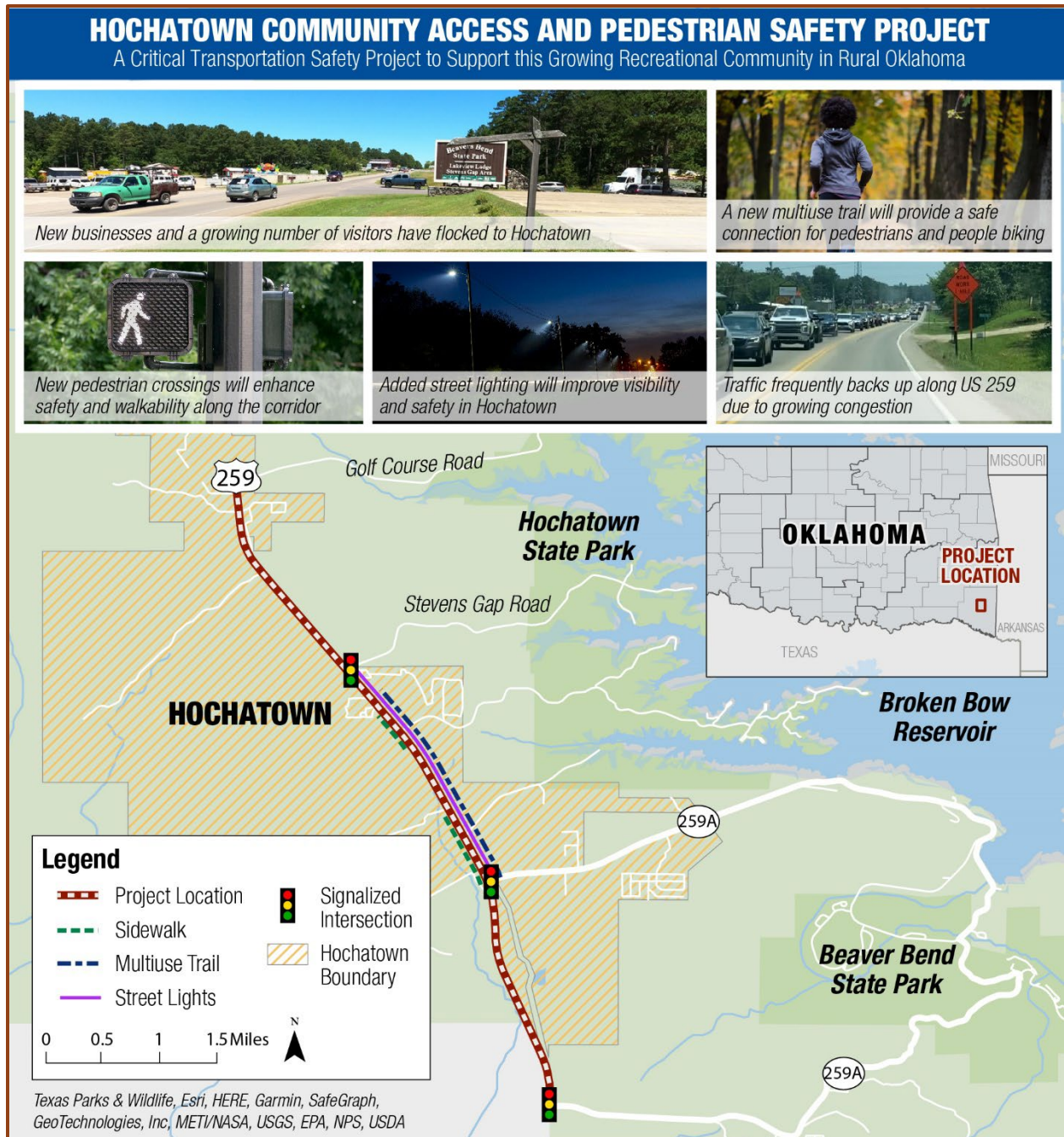
Table 2. U.S. Route 259 Collision Rates

	Project Corridor Rates (2012–2021)	Statewide Rates (2018–2020)
Total Collisions	220.93	74.99
Fatal Collisions	5.97	2.70

The Project aims to decrease the frequency of crashes and subsequent injuries and fatalities within an HDC. 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. Permanent 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 1.8-mile shared-use 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 approximately 1 mile of new sidewalk and improve Americans with Disabilities Act accessibility components. Figure 4 illustrates the Project location and the proposed elements.

Figure 4. Project Location and Proposed Elements





## Environmental Sustainability

The Project aligns with the state's approved Carbon Reduction Strategy and will significantly reduce transportation-related air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions in the area by reducing traffic congestion, thereby reducing idle vehicle emissions. Other environmentally sustainable elements of the Project include the following:

*The Project will reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2,600 tons through capacity improvements to reduce congestion and through reduced VMT from increased walking and cycling.*

- Construction of the sidewalks and shared-use trail will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by providing alternative modes of transportation. Based on the difference in travel speeds through the Project area and the estimated vehicle trips shifting to pedestrian and bicycle trips, the Project is expected to increasingly reduce the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions into the future. Over the 20-year analysis period, the reduction in annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is expected to increase from 19 tons in 2027 to 323 tons in 2046, for a total reduction of 2,600 tons, or an average of 130 tons per year.
- 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 WMA will reduce visible air emissions and produce lower greenhouse gas emissions, leading to a substantial reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 17% to 37% and carbon monoxide (CO) emissions by 2% to 6% when compared to hot mixed asphalt (HMA) mixtures.

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. The U.S. Forest Service indicates that Hochatown faces a significant wildfire risk over the next 30 years. Access to Hochatown primarily relies on US 259, providing restricted entry and exit options during significant wildfire emergencies. 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 shared-use 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 WMA as part of the Project. WMA will reduce visible air emissions and produce lower greenhouse gas emissions compared to HMA. Lower burn temperatures are needed to produce WMA, which generates lower emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent. Additionally, there is less energy needed to operate burners, which reduce overall fossil fuel consumption.



### Quality of Life

The Project will improve access to daily destinations in and around Hochatown, such as jobs, public health, grocery stores, places of worship, local businesses, trails, parks, and recreational areas like Broken Bow Lake (Figure 5) and Beavers Bend State Park (Figure 6) within the Ouachita National Forest.

One primary advantage of the Project is the enhancement of mobility and connectivity for all users, including pedestrians and bicyclists. Hochatown presently suffers from a deficit of sidewalks and bicycle facilities. The current US 259 corridor struggles to handle both residents and the surge of tourists using vehicles, resulting in significant traffic congestion. The construction of the new pedestrian and bicyclist infrastructure, including the shared-use path, sidewalks, and crosswalks, is expected to benefit existing and induced users; these include local residents and tourists visiting Hochatown. The value of the safety amenities and facility improvements averages \$170,000 per year for the estimated 77,000 bicycle trips and 66,000 pedestrian trips per year. The induced users receive a mortality reduction benefit of \$452,000 per year.



*Figure 5. 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.



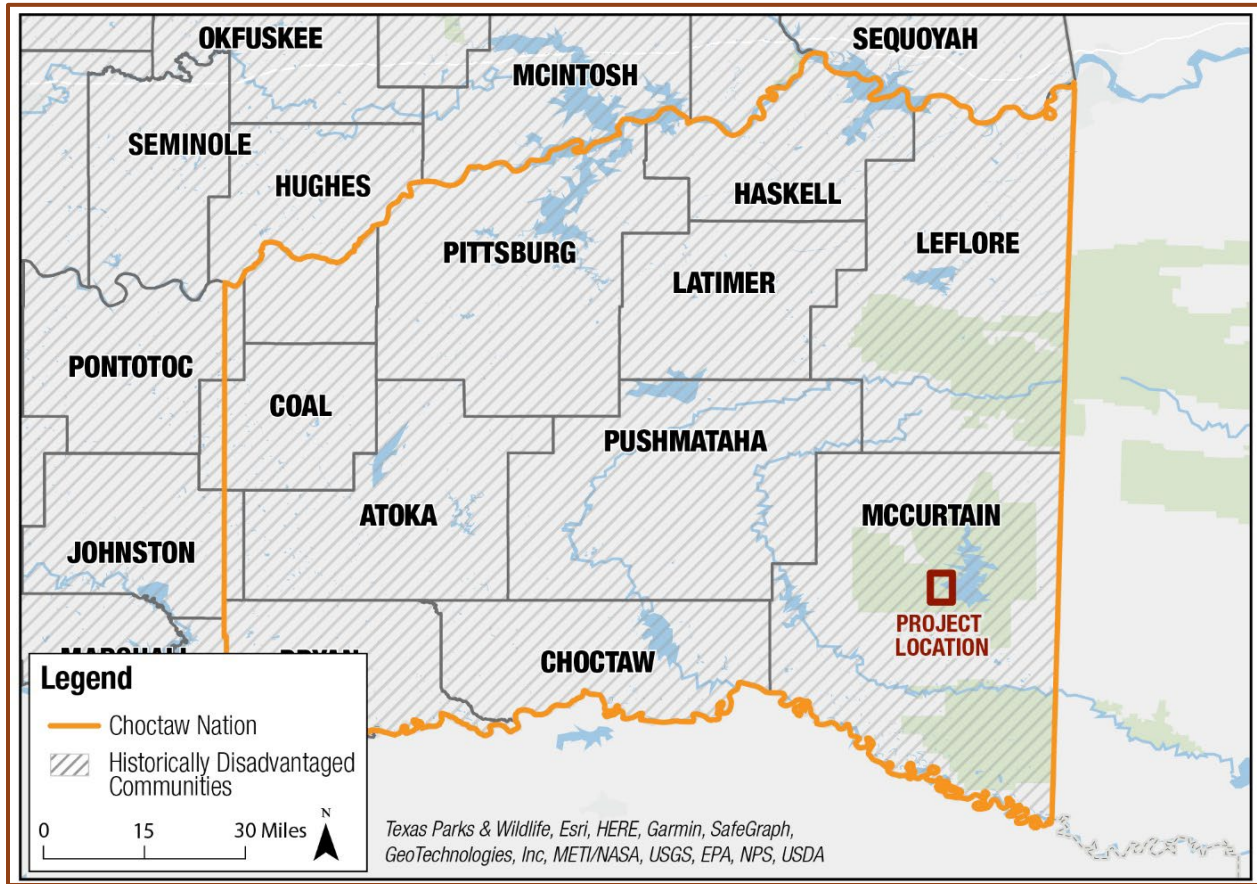
*Figure 6. Welcome Sign to Beavers Bend State Park*

### Equity

Hochatown is located within the Choctaw Nation, a reservation that covers nearly 11,000 square miles in southeastern Oklahoma (see Figure 7). Hochatown is an HDC as defined by the Council on Environmental Quality's [Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool](#) (CEJST). The Project is located in Census Tracts 89.982 and 89.985, both of which are considered disadvantaged. Census Tract 89.982 is in the 93rd percentile nationwide for transportation barriers, and Census Tract 89.985 is in the 95th percentile nationwide for the same measure according to the CEJST, making efficiency, safety, and multimodal improvements all the more critical for local residents. Although the Choctaw Nation has adapted and persevered, the lasting effects of colonization, resettlement, and industrialization persist

among residents. The Project is geared toward improving safety and connectivity in this historically underserved area, fostering growth within the community and potentially opening doors for new development. ODOT remains committed to addressing the needs of both the Choctaw Nation and Hochatown community members throughout the Project’s design, emphasizing safety, connectivity, and economic opportunities, including the creation of well-paying jobs.

Figure 7. Historically Disadvantaged Communities in the Project Area



## Mobility and Community Connectivity

The current state of the US 259 corridor passing through Hochatown fails to meet both present demands and the anticipated needs of a rapidly evolving area. The existing two-lane highway struggles to accommodate the rising traffic volume propelled by local development and tourism. This Project aims to augment the corridor’s capacity, improving safety and operational efficiency while addressing the pressing need for safe pedestrian connectivity, which is currently lacking in the area. 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 shared-use trail will enhance the mobility and connectivity throughout Hochatown. The lane expansion and shared-use 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 34,100 additional pedestrian trips and 44,400 cycling trips in the opening year.*

### Multimodal Options

In response to Hochatown's lack of sidewalks and bicycle facilities, ODOT plans to address these deficiencies as part of the Project. Alongside the lane expansion, the Project will involve the construction of essential sidewalks and a shared-use trail running parallel to US 259. This development aims to offer multimodal transportation options for both residents and visitors, alleviating the need for short-distance car trips between Hochatown's amenities. The approximately 2-mile shared-use trail will serve as a safe and accessible route for nonmotorized travel, catering to the underserved community's needs. Beyond its recreational purposes for pedestrians and cyclists, the trail will contribute to reducing vehicular traffic on the highway, particularly for journeys between lodging areas, restaurants, breweries, wineries, and other popular destinations in Hochatown.

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. The Project's shared-use 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.

### Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity

Tourism has emerged as the primary economic driver in the region, drawn by the scenic beauty and recreational offerings of Broken Bow Lake, the McCurtain County Wilderness Area, Beavers Bend State Park, and the surrounding Ouachita National Forest. Over the past few decades, private landowners have developed homes, luxury cabins, roads, and other infrastructure along the national forest's borders. Hochatown has evolved into a favored destination for families and friends to convene for various occasions, including holidays, weddings, and summer getaways. 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, and during popular seasons, Hochatown can have more than 30,000<sup>1</sup> people visiting the area. Beavers Bend State Park is a popular state park in Oklahoma with more than 2 million visitors each year, and the park is only accessible from within the Project limits. For most of its existence, 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

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<sup>1</sup> Dunn, Lori. 2022. "It's official: Tourist haven Hochatown, Okla., now a city." *Texarkana Gazette*. November 28. <https://www.texarkanagazette.com/news/2022/nov/28/its-official-tourist-haven-hochatown-okla-now-a/>.



investment opportunities and tourism. The newly incorporated city has seen a 145% increase<sup>2</sup> 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 overall serve to stimulate growth and economic development.

*Total travel time savings for all vehicles is \$17.9 million.*

The Project will reduce delays for both vehicles and pedestrians and will improve system connectivity. The shared-use path for bicyclists and pedestrians may increase access to retail areas, restaurants, and saloons, and it will provide 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 US 259.

*Figure 8. Tourist Attractions and Businesses Line U.S. Route 259 in Hochatown*



The Choctaw Landing resort, scheduled to open in 2024, is poised to generate over 2,000 new jobs in the area. The facility will feature amenities such as a small grocery store or market, dining options, and a fuel station. Beyond its economic impact, the development aims to educate visitors about Choctaw Nation history. In anticipation of increased traffic as a result of the new development, the Choctaw Nation is collaborating with ODOT to prepare. The Project is expected to boost tourism, contribute to future job opportunities, and enhance a crucial transportation link in the rural community.

### *Freight Movement*

The US 259 road passing through Hochatown serves as a crucial freight corridor, supporting not only tourism but also various industries like agriculture and logging. These industries contribute to the traffic load on US 259, which is the sole major highway in the region. Unfortunately, this highway is currently congested due to its two-lane configuration.

<sup>2</sup> Brandes, Heide. 2020. "Hochatown: Southeast Oklahoma's unlikely tourism hub." *NonDoc*. November 23. <https://nondoc.com/2020/11/23/hochatown-southeast-oklahoma-unlikely-tourism-hub/>.



To address these challenges, an ongoing project (3433304) within the [Freight Program and Oklahoma Freight Transportation Plan](#) aims to enhance US 259's capacity. This project focuses on alleviating congestion and improving safety. However, there are additional concerns related to access management for local businesses. Since there are no alternative roads bypassing Hochatown, all regional traffic is funneled through US 259, creating difficulties for both local businesses and the broader community.

Logging is the primary industry in this region, necessitating the use of large transport trucks on the heavily traveled highway through Hochatown. Unfortunately, the existing US 259 lacks designated turning lanes, which poses a significant challenge for large vehicles, including logging trucks and those towing trailers. Left turns become difficult or impossible, leading to traffic backups, delays, and an increased risk of rear-end collisions for motorists along US 259.

### State of Good Repair

The project aims to construct within the existing footprint, minimizing the need for right-of-way (ROW) acquisition. The US 259 corridor, vital for truck traffic due to the logging industry in rural and natural areas, lacks an alternative north-south connection in the southeastern region. To enhance safe and efficient travel, support goods and services movement, and promote tourism, ODOT prioritizes investments. Currently, the US 259 corridor is a two-lane, undivided highway with varying shoulder widths, no turn lanes, and no pedestrian or bicycling facilities (refer to Figure 9).



*Figure 9. U.S. Route 259 North of Stevens Gap Road*

The existing transportation infrastructure lacks essential amenities for underserved communities, including bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The Project aims to rectify these deficiencies by introducing a modernized, safer expanded highway along with a shared-use trail. This initiative seeks to enhance connectivity along the corridor and uplift conditions for a traditionally underserved community, which currently lacks such amenities. 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 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.

Operation and maintenance costs for the next 30 years are secured within ODOT's state budget, guaranteeing dependable highway operations, while upon completion, the Project becomes eligible for inclusion in ODOT's [Asset Preservation Plan](#). ODOT is actively addressing pavement deterioration due to traffic and weather, allocating \$500 million over four years, with federal and state funding, to mitigate pavement and bridge conditions statewide. The Project focuses on a rural two-lane highway that no



longer meets modern transportation needs, anticipating increased pavement deterioration from traffic and environmental factors as the area develops. Taking a preventive approach, the Project aims to enhance US 259 to a state of good repair, ensuring safety and minimizing traffic delays attributable to pavement degradation.

## Partnerships and Collaboration

The Project has received a surge of support from both the local community, businesses in the region, and statewide interest groups, highlighting a collaborative effort to address pressing transportation challenges. The current two-lane roadway falls short in meeting the area’s needs, particularly as the region experiences dynamic growth and evolving demands. With development and tourism fueling traffic growth, the existing highway struggles to accommodate the increasing volume. This congestion detrimentally impacts local residents, tourists, and businesses reliant on the US 259 corridor. The collective recognition of these challenges underscores the importance of partnerships and collaboration in finding effective solutions.

ODOT presented the Project at a community outreach event on October 27, 2022, at the Broken Bow Senior High School auditorium in Broken Bow. The presentation included brief background information, 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.

## 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. These Letters of Support are available in the appendix of this application, and a complete list of all the Letters of Support received for this Project are available on the [ODOT website](#).





## Innovation: Technology, Delivery, Financing

### *Innovative Technology*

In addition to conventional public outreach methods, ODOT will utilize dynamic message signs to communicate information about public meetings and construction to the community. These assets play a crucial role in informing the public and enabling users to plan alternative routes, ultimately reducing congestion during construction. This approach aims to enhance the safety and efficiency of movement through and around the work zone.

ODOT will evaluate the use of traditional and 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.

### *Innovative Project Delivery*

The Project will incorporate WMA technology into the paving aspects of the Project. Employing WMA will significantly diminish visible air emissions and result in lower greenhouse gas emissions. It is estimated that the use of WMA will lead to a substantial reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions ranging from 17 to 37% and CO emissions ranging from 2 to 6% compared to HMA mixtures. WMA also offers a range of benefits that align with modern sustainability and performance goals while also addressing environmental concerns and improving construction practices. WMA is a proven technology that can offer the following benefits:

- Reduces paving costs
- Extends the paving season
- Improves asphalt compaction
- Allows asphalt mix to be hauled longer distances
- Improves working conditions by reducing exposure to fuel emissions, fumes, and odors

### *Innovative Financing*

The Project will benefit from state funding through the RETRO Fund, which is a one-time allocation of \$200 million from the Fiscal Year 2024 General Appropriations bill. The RETRO Fund has been instrumental in innovatively financing rural transportation projects in Oklahoma. In accordance with RETRO Fund provisions, these resources will help accelerate construction, repair, and maintenance of the 8-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.