

BACKGROUND



Overview

Prior to generating concepts and designs for the Highway 53 Corridor, the Project Team reviewed past plans, conducted studies, and engaged with the community. This section summarizes what the Project Team learned about the overall Corridor and redevelopment opportunities. This section also explains the information gathered during analysis of specific plan elements that were conducted as part of the planning process such as: market analysis, land use/zoning, development patterns, transportation, urban design, environmental factors, and health impacts. The Project Team also thoroughly reviewed the potential outcomes of the UPTOWNE Summit.



ECONOMIC VIBRANCY / SUSTAINABILITY



PAST PLANS



CORRIDOR DISTRICTS
AND THEIR UNIQUE URBAN DESIGN + LAND
USE + ZONING



MARKET ANALYSIS



DEVELOPMENT
PATTERNS



TRANSPORTATION



ENVIRONMENTAL
FACTORS



OUTCOMES OF
UPTOWNE SUMMIT



HEALTH IMPACTS

Past Plans for the Highway 53 Corridor

Over the years, the Highway 53 Corridor has been a part of several planning studies conducted at the regional, city, and neighborhood levels. Below is a summary of recommendations for the Highway 53 Corridor from studies that are still relevant based on public and participant input.

Confluence: The La Crosse Comprehensive Plan

- ✓ Initiate redevelopment efforts in the USH 53 Corridor, Riverside North, and the Lower Northside Depot Neighborhood.
- ✓ Improve transportation system safety throughout the corridor, especially high crash rate intersections.
- ✓ Improve existing transportation efficiency through - access management strategies, coordination of traffic signals, and improvement of intersections; decrease transportation demand through land use changes and demand management strategies; improve multi-modal transportation options; and accept traffic congestion.
- ✓ Include extra landscaping and beaming when installing public landscaping along the corridor and require private developments to do the same.
- ✓ Consider the creation of a parkway or boulevard in concurrence with road and utility projects.
- ✓ Establish a path or green-way from Riverside Park to Copeland Park.
- ✓ Seek opportunities to improve access to the waterfront through purchase of property or public easements along the Black River.
- ✓ Continue to implement the recommendations of neighborhood plans.
- ✓ Develop and evaluate options to protect properties located in the floodplain.
- ✓ Create dedicated funding sources for implementing the storm water management program and floodplain protection projects.

Coulee Vision

- ✓ Envision the implementation of land use and transportation policies that will focus growth as infill development both through targeting and development and adopting policies to restrict and prevent sprawl. In order to support infill development the region's transit system will need to be enhanced to accommodate the increased demand while improving the quality of life for the residences of the La Crosse/La Crescent area.

Economic Development Strategic Plan

- ✓ Explore acceptable future uses, density, urban design, and aesthetic issues for the redevelopment area from Interstate 90 to Downtown La Crosse.

Lower Northside Neighborhood Plan

- ✓ Encourage new housing to be consistent with historical character of neighborhoods.
- ✓ Identify and prioritize target areas to concentrate owner occupied housing and multiple unit dwellings.
- ✓ Develop and promote a positive image for the neighborhood.
- ✓ Encourage mass transit improvements to reduce single-occupancy vehicle use.
- ✓ Expand current off-street trails network.

La Crosse Transportation Vision

- ✓ Prioritize changes that result in outcomes like safety, walkability, bike friendliness, access, slower driving speeds, few vehicle-miles-traveled, complete streets, and beauty; and not prioritize conventional ideas such as reduced delays for motorists, high speed roads, high levels of service for motorists, abundant and low-cost automobile parking, and fighting congestion through road widening.
- ✓ Restore Rose Street and Copeland Avenues to 2-way functions.
- ✓ Reduce the overwhelming and unsustainable dependency on the single occupant vehicle as the primary mode of transportation and prioritize cycling, walking, public and private transit, telecommuting, land use changes, parking changes, and other supportive measures.

Highway 53 Corridor Enhancement Plan

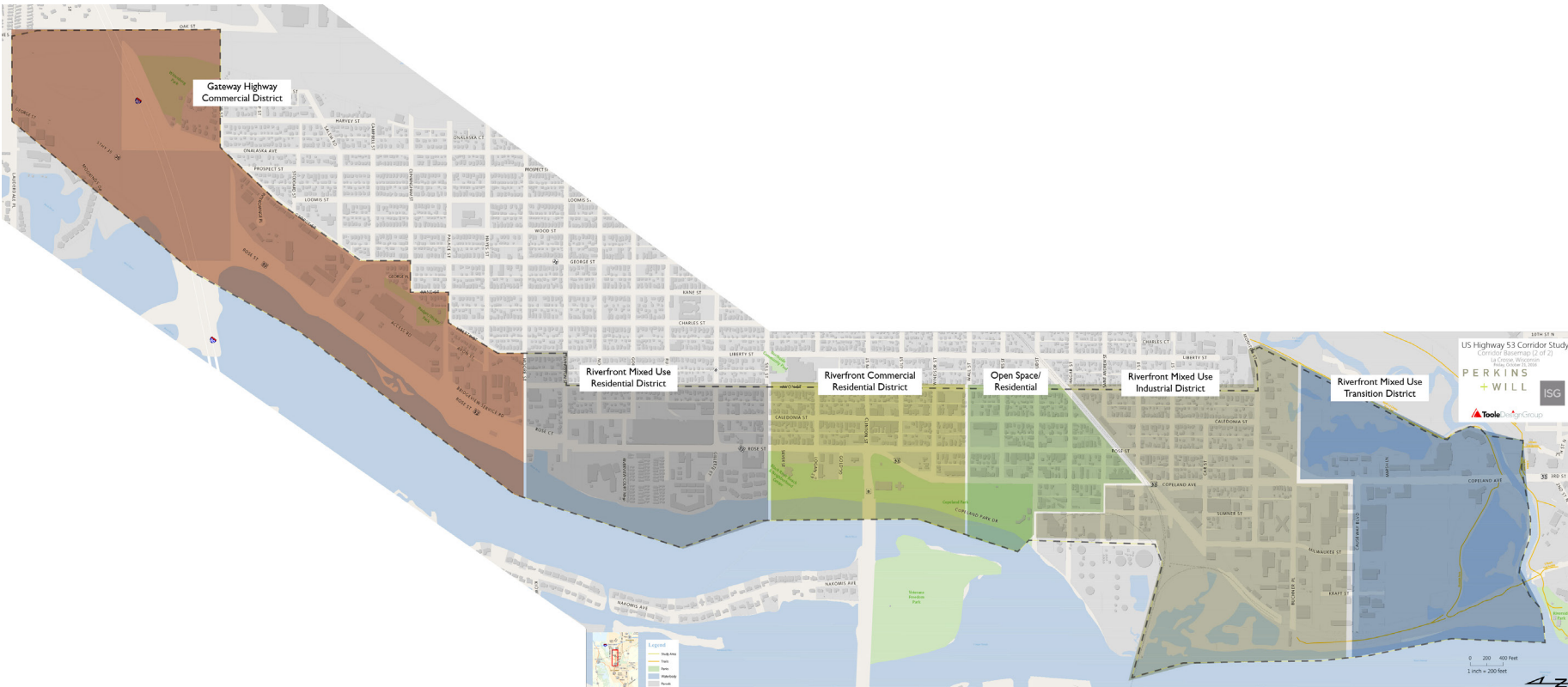
- ✓ Continue to add trees, decorative light poles, sidewalks, uniform wayfinding, and signage when roadway construction and developments take place.

2015-2017 Mississippi River Parkway Commission Strategic Planning Report

- ✓ Enhance and preserve the Great River Road National Scenic Byway and its amenities.
- ✓ Increase the economic impact of overnight travel on the Great River Road.

Corridor Districts

Five distinct districts have evolved along the Highway 53 Corridor, each representing a progression in era and development type from north to south. Each district is characterized by the components that shape the environment including: block patterns, land uses, lot sizes, building and parking lot placement, architectural typologies, traffic volumes, open space, vegetation, and land form. These districts are: the Gateway Highway Commercial District, located between Moorings Drive and Palace Street; the Riverfront Mixed-Use Residential District, located between Palace Street and Sill Street; The Open Space Residential District, located between Sill Street and railroad crossings along Rose Street and Copeland Avenue; The Riverfront Mixed-Use District located between the railroad bridge crossings and Monitor Street,north of Copeland Avenue and Causeway Boulevard; The Riverfront Mixed-Use Transition District, located between Causeway Boulevard and the La Crosse River.



Gateway Highway Commercial District

This District serves as the gateway to North La Crosse and Downtown La Crosse from Interstate 90. Portions of the Exit 3 interchange have recently been reconstructed and other portions will continue reconstruction through Fall 2017. The land use designations in this district are primarily commercial. The District is characterized by a rigid, auto-orientated suburban development pattern. The combination of buildings set back from the street, large lot sizes, architectural treatments and signage create a visually cluttered environment. Large parking lots are placed in front of businesses, creating a shapeless corridor and barrier to pedestrian access. The Bridgeview Plaza building and adjacent stand-alone retailers (restaurants and gas station) are an example of the existing built-form and set a negative image and character of this gateway area.

This District located at the I-90 Interchange is primarily comprised of retail uses. The primary land use identified within this District is commercial. Most of the commercial land use is located directly adjacent to Highway 53. At the eastern edge of the project boundary are single family residential land uses that transition to adjacent residential neighborhoods.



Riverfront Mixed-Use District

This District is characterized by a wide roadway, narrow sidewalks and a variety of incompatible land use. High traffic volumes, width of the roadway, and numerous access and turning points create an active but hazardous environment for both pedestrians and drivers. In certain areas, deep setbacks which afford more commercial opportunities, allow parking lots to dominate the street and a mixture of building types, setbacks, and signs create visual clutter. Signs are larger and higher to compete with other signs to be seen at higher traffic speeds.

A majority of the land use located adjacent to the Highway 53 Corridor is identified as commercial. There is a large multi-block area of general industrial along the Corridor, which is occupied by the Central States Warehouse (CSW) storage facility. Located along the Black River there are medium to high density land uses.

Riverfront Commercial/Residential District

This District serves a secondary gateway into the Highway 53 Corridor from the west along the Clinton Street Bridge. The most important feature in this District is Copeland Park, which serves as a community gathering space for celebrations and events and provides public access to the Black River. The development pattern in this District starts to transition away from the suburban auto-oriented orientation to a more traditional urban development pattern as Highway 53 splits into Rose Street and Copeland Avenue. Along these two roadways the development pattern is characterized by a 300-400 foot block size and small, shallow lots with some on-street parking. The land uses are balanced between single- and multi-family residential and independently owned commercial uses. This area of the Corridor is considered the most pedestrian accessible along the corridor due to the minimal setbacks and compact, pedestrian scaled buildings.

The primary land uses within this portion of the Corridor are park/open space and low density residential. Copeland Park is the largest individual land use within this District, with numerous identified commercial land uses located near the intersection of Clinton Street and Highway 53.



Riverfront Mixed-Use Industrial District

Similar to the Open Space Industrial District, this District has areas of more traditional development patterns located north of Copeland Avenue. These areas contain a mix of neighborhood scaled commercial and single-family homes.

The areas south of Copeland Avenue are almost exclusively commercial and industrial. This area is characterized by the heavy traffic volumes, large trucks/service vehicles, large street blocks and roadway widths, an overall lack of public realm and properties in the flood plain.

The two primary land uses that comprise this District are low density residential and general industrial. Generally, the industrial land uses exist west of Copeland Avenue with a few parcels located between Copeland Avenue and Rose Street. Most of the land uses along Rose Street are comprised of commercial uses and low density residential.



Riverfront Mixed-Use Transition District

This District is the transition from North La Crosse to the Downtown La Crosse. This is where Copeland Avenue and Rose Street merge together and is again characterized by a wide roadway, high traffic volumes and lack of a public realm. Recent redevelopment along the north side of the Corridor has started to change the overall character of this section, and future redevelopment opportunities associated with the Riverside North project, will continue the trend of improved design aesthetics and emphasis on the built form. Existing trails along the La Crosse River and the numerous wetlands in close proximity to the Corridor offer future visual and physical connection to natural features and amenities.

This last District is primary comprised of general industrial land uses and high-density land uses. Most of the recent redevelopment, and future redevelopment are located within the high-density land use areas.



Market Analysis Summary

A market study was prepared that assessed the potential demand for new development along the Corridor. Recent demographic and employment trends indicate a strong demand for housing and employment in close proximity to the downtown, such as the southern portion of the Corridor, or in neighborhoods with a variety of amenities, such as river access, river views, and pedestrian oriented retail featuring small shops, restaurants, and bars.

Market trends are equally promising. Rents in all real estate sectors have been rising for several years and vacancies are currently very low. Moreover, very little development has occurred among most sectors in recent years, which indicates a growing pent-up demand for new space.

Despite strong market indicators, the neighborhoods that comprise North La Crosse, where the Corridor is located, have below average incomes for the region. Therefore, certain types of development, especially at second tier sites, may require gap financing or would likely need to wait until catalytic projects alter the character of the immediate neighborhood.

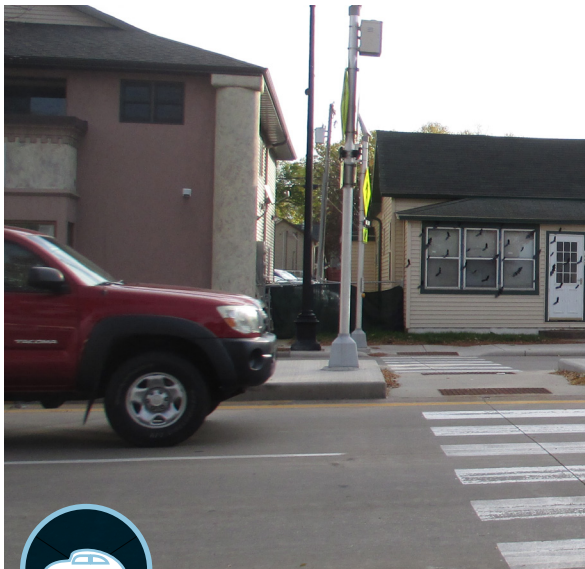
Calculations based on demographic and employment growth through 2030 indicate the Corridor and its adjacent neighborhoods could support up to 620 units of housing, up to 45,000 square feet of new neighborhood-scale retail, and up to 45,000 square feet of new office space.

Land Use + Development Pattern Evaluation

The Highway 53 Corridor consists of both traditional compact urban development patterns and conventional auto-oriented development patterns. The core area along Highway 53 between Gillette Street and the Canadian Pacific Railway is characterized as a more traditional development pattern which includes more closely-spaced buildings that collectively shape the street corridors and create a more compact, pedestrian-friendly environment.

The remainder of the project area is characterized by widely spaced buildings set back and isolated from the street in order to accommodate highly visible parking lots. In these areas, the land uses are compartmentalized. As a result, streets and signs have been designed to accommodate the motorists, creating a cluttered environment lacking a distinct sense of place.

The ultimate challenge for these areas is to balance, but also modify the functional needs of and reliance on vehicles with those of pedestrians, bikes, and transit and to create a sense of personal safety, comfort and nurture a memorable image.

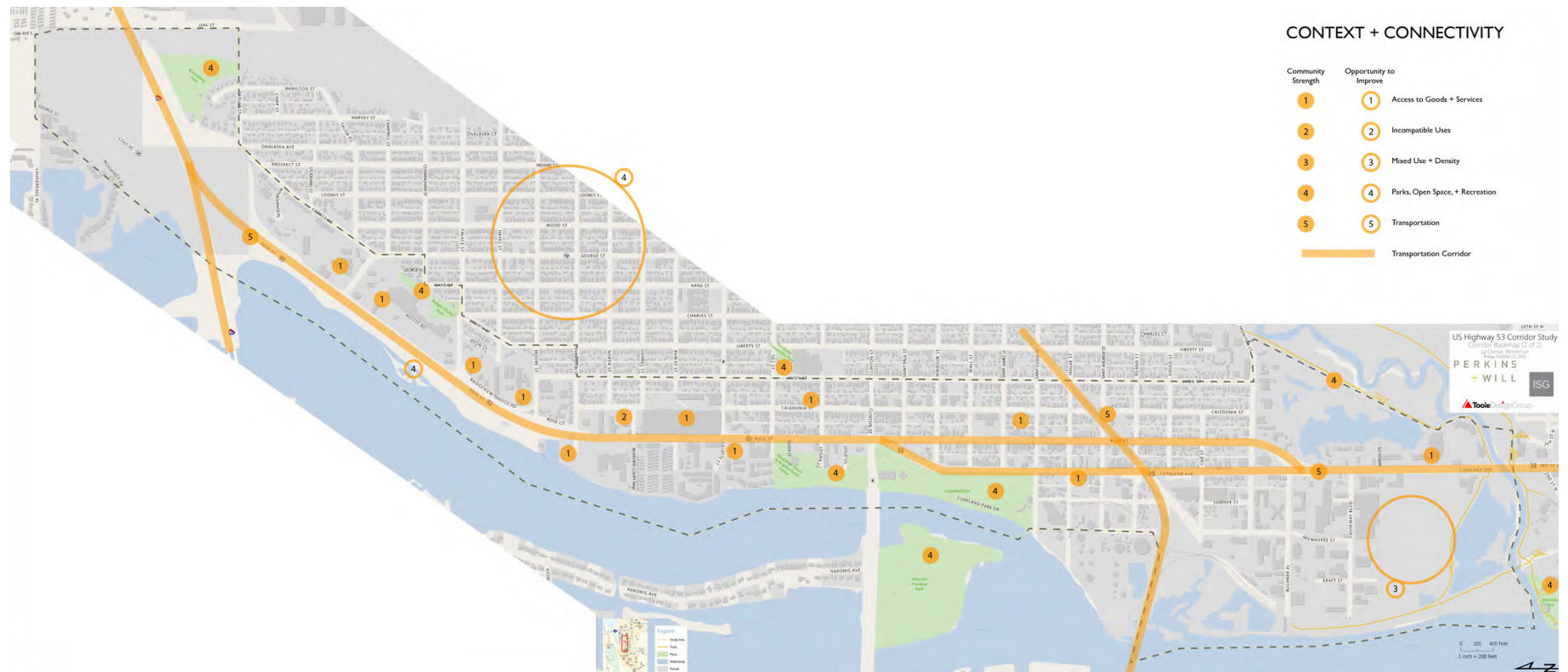


Transportation Evaluation

The Project Team was challenged with evaluating how the Highway 53 Corridor could become more pedestrian, bike, and transit friendly. Currently, the roadway and narrow sidewalks occupy almost the entire public right-of-way, limiting options for comfortable sidewalk widths, bicycle facilities and/or planted boulevards. The Project Team studied how the roadway is being used by each mode and forecasted how it might be used in the future. This chapter outlines what was learned through the analysis.

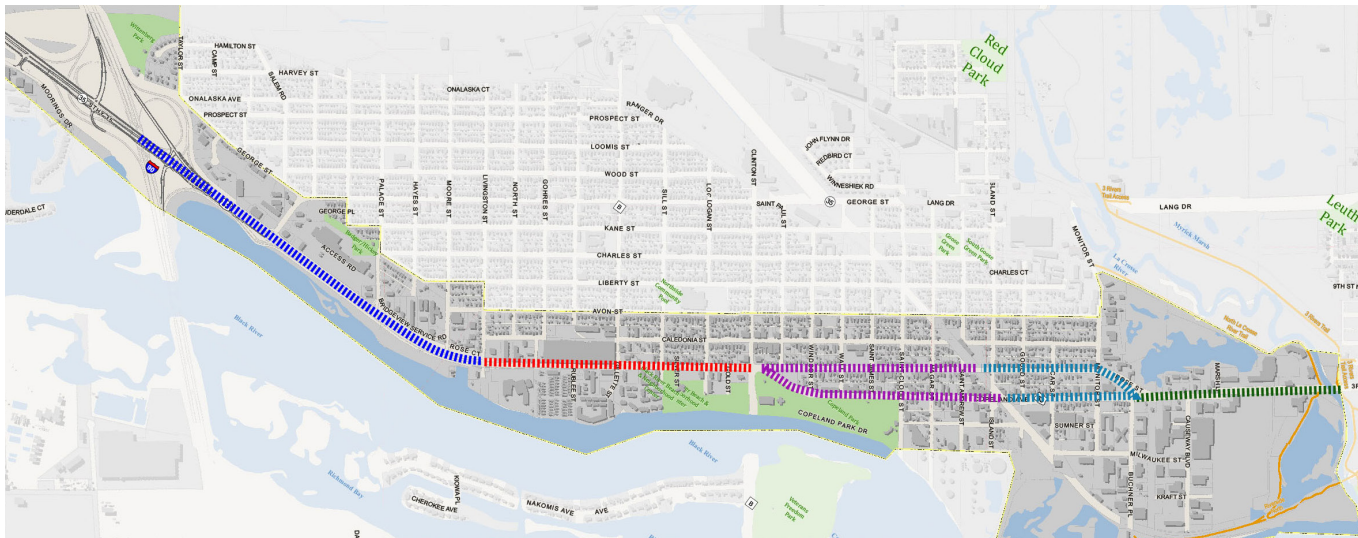
Regional Context

USH 53 is the second most highly traveled north-south corridor in the region behind only State Highway 16. However, it is unique in that the USH 53 Corridor is much more developed with neighborhoods, businesses, and industry. USH 53 is a gateway to the city for people traveling from the North. The Corridor is a very complex environment that needs to balance movement of goods, mobility of people, economic vitality, and quality of life all within a limited width.



Existing Roadway Configuration

Beginning at the Northern Study Area boundary, Highway 53 (Rose Street) is a divided highway with two lanes in each direction (plus turn lanes at intersections) and a rural cross section (no curb and gutter) with no on-street parking. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation is currently reconstructing this section of the highway. Following reconstruction, the street will have an urban profile with curb and gutter, sidewalks on the east side of the street, and a shared use path on the west side of the street along the river.



AT LIVINGSTON STREET, Highway 53 (Rose Street) transitions to an undivided highway with two lanes in each direction and a two-way left turn lane with sidewalks on both sides of the street. The two-way left turn lane is red colored concrete. There is no on-street parking in this segment.

AT CLINTON STREET, Highway 53 separates with southbound traffic on Copeland Avenue and northbound traffic on Rose Street. Copeland Avenue and Rose Street both have two travel lanes (plus turn lanes at intersections) with parking lanes and sidewalks on both sides of the street.

AT THE RAILROAD TRACKS (near Island and Gould Streets), both Rose Street and Copeland Avenue continue on bridges over the tracks. Each roadway consists of two lanes plus a sidewalk on one side of the street. The sidewalk does not provide adequate distances from either the street or the railing at the side of the bridge. There is no on-street parking in this segment.

SOUTH OF THE RAILROAD BRIDGES, Copeland Avenue and Rose Street both have two travel lanes (plus turn lanes at intersections) with parking lanes and sidewalks on both sides of the street.

AT MONITOR STREET, Rose Street begins to curve to rejoin Copeland Avenue. Currently, both Copeland Avenue and Rose Street have sidewalks on only one side of the street and two travel lanes each. This segment of Rose Street does not allow for any parking or standing. On Copeland Avenue, parking is allowed on both sides of the street between Monitor Street and Buchner Place and no on-street parking is allowed to the south of Buchner Place.

AT THIS POINT, Highway 53 continues as Copeland Avenue. This section includes two travel lanes in each direction and sidewalks on both sides of the street. Portions of this segment include a two-way left turn lane, and a raised median is present at River Bend Road. No on-street parking is allowed in this segment.

Accessibility

The Highway 53 Corridor should be accessible to as many people as possible with guidance from the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The age and condition of infrastructure as well as the space available for facilities throughout the Corridor creates challenges for accessibility. Some of the sidewalks are in poor condition with cracks and gaps that impede travel and contribute to difficult conditions. Curb ramps that provide accessible access to and from sidewalks at street intersections do not exist at many locations, and where they do exist, many curb ramps do not meet current ADA standards or have been poorly maintained. Many driveways have cross sidewalks throughout the study area and often create cross-slope that is difficult to navigate and/or appear to be ADA non-compliant. Many of the issues outlined below also detract from the corridor's accessibility.



Pedestrian + Traffic Crossings

Crossing Highway 53 as a pedestrian was frequently identified as problematic by the public. At un-signalized crossings, motor vehicle operators rarely yield to pedestrians attempting to cross the street. When they do, pedestrians are faced with a “multiple threat” condition where traffic in one lane may stop, but traffic in subsequent lanes does not. At signalized intersections, pedestrians have issues with turning traffic not yielding to pedestrians and with pedestrian signals that do not provide adequate time to cross the street, particularly for people with mobility issues.

In 2016, the City installed the Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacon (RRFB) and pedestrian refuge island for pedestrians crossing Highway 53 near Sill Street and the Black River Beach Park. Residents report that compliance with the RRFB, that is motorists yielding to pedestrians, is generally good, and that the RRFB and pedestrian refuge island have assisted with crossing the street at this location. The 2012 La Crosse Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan identified three pedestrian problem intersections within the project study area:

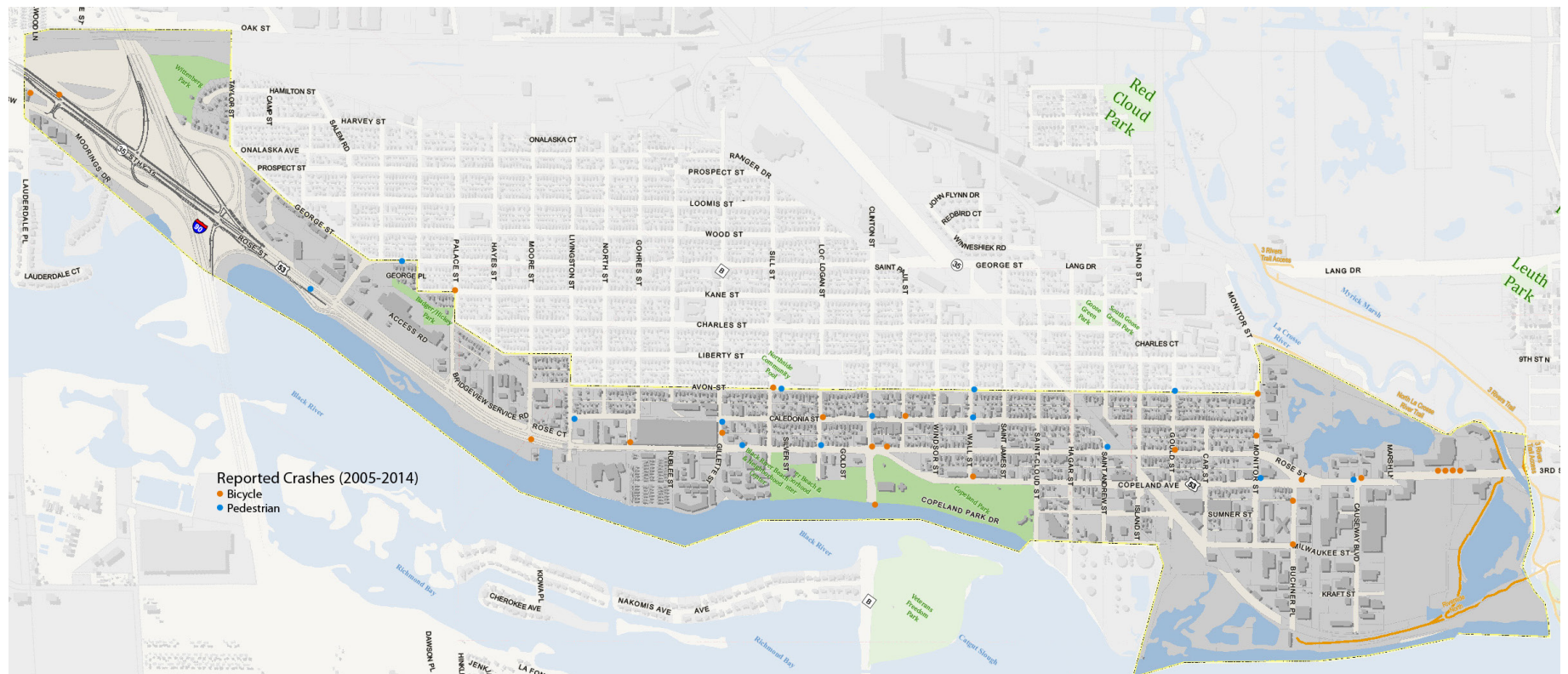
- George Street and Stoddard Street
- George Street and W George Street
- Rose Street and Logan Street

These intersections were mentioned by the public during public input sessions for this Plan, but it was also regularly noted that all crossings of Highway 53 are challenging. The 2012 Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan prioritized the need to install marked crosswalks at intersections throughout the city in order to improve pedestrian crossing conditions. Within the study area, the following intersections were prioritized:

INTERSECTIONS PRIORITIZED	PRIORITY LEVEL		
	1	2	3
Gillette + Liberty Street	●		
Avon + Clinton Street	●		
Sill + Caledonia Street		●	
Wall + Caledonia Street		●	
Copeland + Windsor Street		●	
Copeland + Wall Street		●	
Copeland + St. James Street		●	
Copeland + St. Cloud Street		●	
Copeland + Hagar Street		●	
All other unmarked intersections			●

Pedestrian Crashes

Within the study area, there were twenty-one crashes involving pedestrians between 2006 and 2016. Crashes were dispersed throughout the study area without any significant concentration of crash areas. However, twelve of the crashes occurred on or at an intersection with Highway 53, confirming the reports from the public about challenges crossing Highway 53 as a pedestrian. Additionally, four of the crashes occurred on or at an intersection with Caledonia Street, likely to greater pedestrian activity in the UPTOWNE/Old Towne North area.



21 crashes involving pedestrians between 2006 and 2016

12 crashes occurred on or at an intersection with Highway 53

4 crashes occurred on or at an intersection with Caledonia Street

Sidewalk Concerns

Throughout the Highway 53 Corridor, space allotted for pedestrian use is constrained within five to eight feet. Areas with larger setbacks contain usable pedestrian space up to 12 feet, but some of this space resides on private property. The approximate five-foot sidewalk area is being encroached upon by commercial parking lots and residential yards that have not been maintained and/or obstructed by power and sign poles. As a result, the sidewalk effectively becomes more narrow than the required four-foot pedestrian access route with some routes even more narrow at three feet.

As a result of this constrained environment, sidewalk treatments along the Highway 53 Corridor are inconsistent and vary block by block. There are very few blocks along Highway 53 that have sidewalk segments that include a grass boulevard areas between the sidewalk and roadway.

The portion of Highway 53 where Rose Street and Copeland Avenue split (between Clinton Street and Monitor Street) includes striped parking lanes that provides a buffer between pedestrians and travel lanes (i.e., the parked cars next to the curb provide a barrier, and when not occupied the space provides a buffer).

5' TO 12' current width of pedestrian walkways



Inconsistent Development Setbacks

Typically, residential fences in the Corridor are at the edge of the sidewalk within the public right-of-way. A lack of a Frontage Zone minimizes the usable portion of the sidewalk. However, on commercial land uses, buildings are set back one or two feet to provide additional room. The images below illustrate the inconsistent development setbacks that occur along the Highway 53 Corridor. The first image illustrates a residential fence that creates a narrow feel of the sidewalk area, and the second image represents a new development that increased the sidewalk width in addition to providing a Frontage Zone by setting the building back from the edge of the sidewalk. Challenges related to accessibility follow and include sidewalk obstructions, snow, grades, and personal safety concerns.

Sidewalk Obstructions

Sidewalk obstructions such as sign posts, vegetation, utility poles, garbage cans, and temporary signs are prevalent along Highway 53 and narrow the walk zone. Above ground utilities, furniture, and vegetation would otherwise be placed in the Planting/Furnishing Zone if it was available.

Snow Removal

It has been identified that the sidewalks in winter are impassable in locations due to the lack of snow removal. Maintaining sidewalks during the winter is difficult due to snow storage space being nonexistent or limited. Snow from the roadway is plowed directly onto the sidewalks, creating difficulty for adjacent property owners to adequately maintain the sidewalks. La Crosse has an existing policy requiring snow removal from sidewalks by abutting property owners, but the policy needs stronger enforcement.



Curb Condition

In many sections of the Highway 53 Corridor, the deteriorating curbs provide little to no vertical separation from the roadway. This minimizes the barrier a curb can provide between vehicles and pedestrians, facilitating encroachment on the sidewalk for maneuvering or parking automobiles, delivery trucks, and buses.

Streetscape

The entire Corridor lacks greenery and wooded areas, furniture, pedestrian scale lighting, art, and wayfinding. Where furnishings are provided, they frequently interrupt the walkway and reduce the accessibility of the pedestrian access route. Non-fixed objects such as waste receptacles and newspaper boxes are particularly challenging as they can move from their intended space. The railroad bridges along Rose Street and Copeland Avenue provide narrow sidewalks for pedestrian travel that are not consistent for pedestrian use.



Bicycle Issues

No dedicated or marked bicycle facilities exist on Highway 53 or other streets within the Corridor. Bikers use the sidewalk or travel lanes with motor vehicle traffic.

Bicycle count data shows that Highway 53 has a higher rate of sidewalk riding than other count locations, which indicates this stretch of Highway 53 is not meeting the needs of people biking.

Although there are no designated bicycle facilities or routes within the study area, a few neighborhood streets provide suitable bicycle conditions. In particular, Caledonia Street and Avon Street provide long routes with relatively low traffic volumes. Avon Street provides a crossing of the railroad tracks, which is a key connection for people bicycling north to south in the area. North-South bicycle routes should be improved and safe and convenient East-West crossings and accesses to Highway 53 are lacking as well.

Shared use paths exist at the southern end of the study area near the La Crosse River. The path on the west side of Highway 53 connects Riverside Park across the La Crosse River to Riverside North and Causeway Boulevard. Just outside the study area to the east, paths run along both sides of the La Crosse River connecting Riverside Park, Monitor Street, West Avenue, and beyond. These bicycling and pedestrian paths facilities are widely used but are missing key connections that would enhance their utility and popularity.

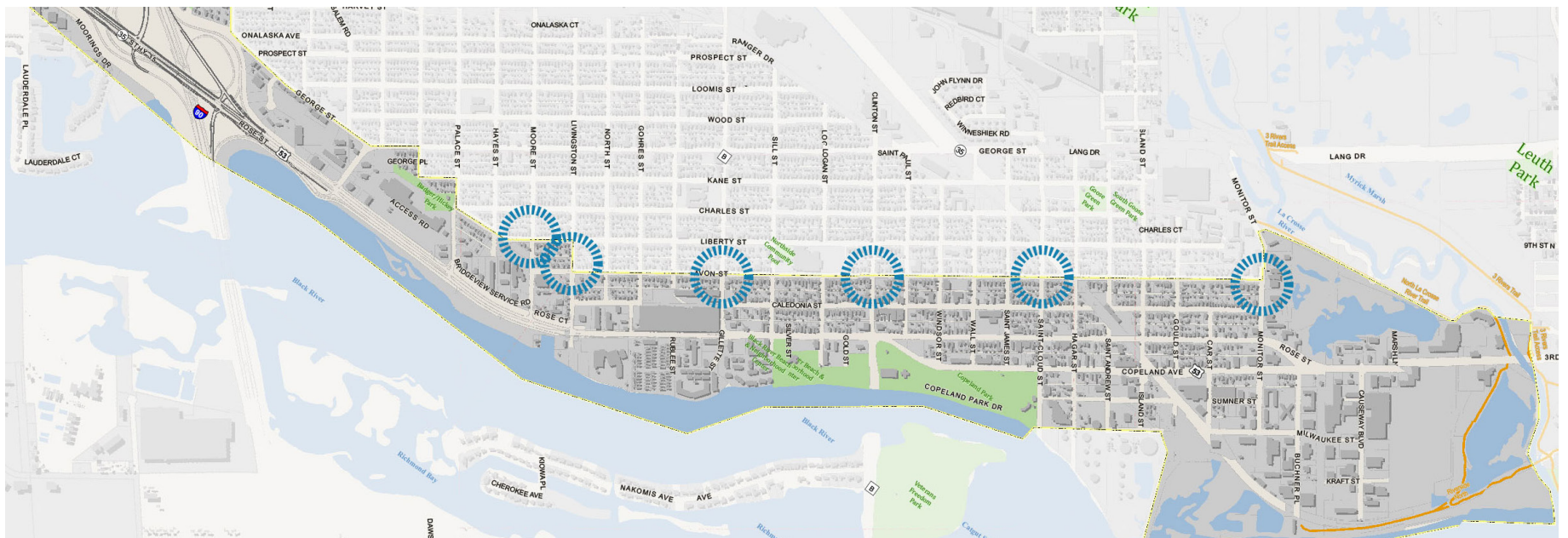


Bicycle Crossings

Crossings of Highway 53 and other streets in the study area were frequently cited as problematic by the public. The 2012 La Crosse Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan identified problems with six bicycle intersections within the Highway 53 Corridor:

- 1 Rose Street and Livingston Street
- 2 Avon Street and Moore Street
- 3 Avon Street and Gillette Street
- 4 Avon Street and Clinton Street
- 5 Avon Street and Saint Cloud Street
- 6 Avon Street and Monitor Street

These intersections were mentioned by the public during input sessions, but it was also regularly noted that all crossings of Highway 53 are challenging.



Bicycle Crashes

Within the Corridor, there were 43 crashes reported to the police involving bicycles between 2006 and 2016. Thirty-three of the crashes occurred on or at an intersection with Highway 53; six of these crashes were at or near the intersection of River Bend Road, which leads into the River Bend Plaza. The high concentration of crashes along Highway 53 demonstrates that people are bicycling along or across Highway 53 even without the presence of a bicycle route. This is likely due to the high concentration of destinations along Highway 53. Because of the lack of bicycle routes on Highway 53, many people bicycle on the sidewalk. While legal, sidewalk bicycling is not safe, and crashes frequently occur at intersections with streets and driveways.

Bicycle Plans

The 2012, La Crosse Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan provided numerous recommendations for facilities, programs, and policies to improve bicycling in the study area and La Crosse as a whole. Bicycle facilities proposed by the plan for the study area include:

- Shared Use Paths: Riverfront Trail (I-90 to La Crosse River); Powerline Corridor (Proposed Riverfront Trail to Highway 53)
- Bike Lanes: George Street (Highway 53 to Gillette Street); Highway 53 (Livingston Street to La Crosse River); Monitor Street (Copeland Avenue to Lang Drive); Saint Cloud Street (Copeland Park Drive to George Street); Clinton Street (Black River to George Street); Gillette Street (Rose Street to River Valley Drive); I-90 shoulder through entire study area
- Shared Lane Markings: Moore Street (Highway 53 to George Street)
- Bike Boulevards: Avon Street (Moore Street to Monitor Street)
- Bike Routes: Logan Street (Black River Beach Park to Highway 53); George Street (W George Street to N Salem Road)

None of the facilities proposed above have been constructed, but the City is currently moving ahead with plans to provide a bicycle boulevard on Avon Street and to provide bike lanes on Monitor and Clinton Street.



Transit

The La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility (MTU) provides bus service in the study area through the Route 6 Northside bus with regular service on weekdays and weekends. Limited service is also provided in the study area on weekdays via the Route 7 French Island bus and the Route 9 Onalaska bus. More detail about these routes is provided below:

6 Route 6: Northside

- Seven days a week service
- Weekday service every 30 minutes from 5:12 am until 5:42 pm
- Weekday service every hour from 6:42 pm until 9:41 pm
- Weekend service hourly until 6:42 pm on Saturdays and 5:42 pm on Sundays

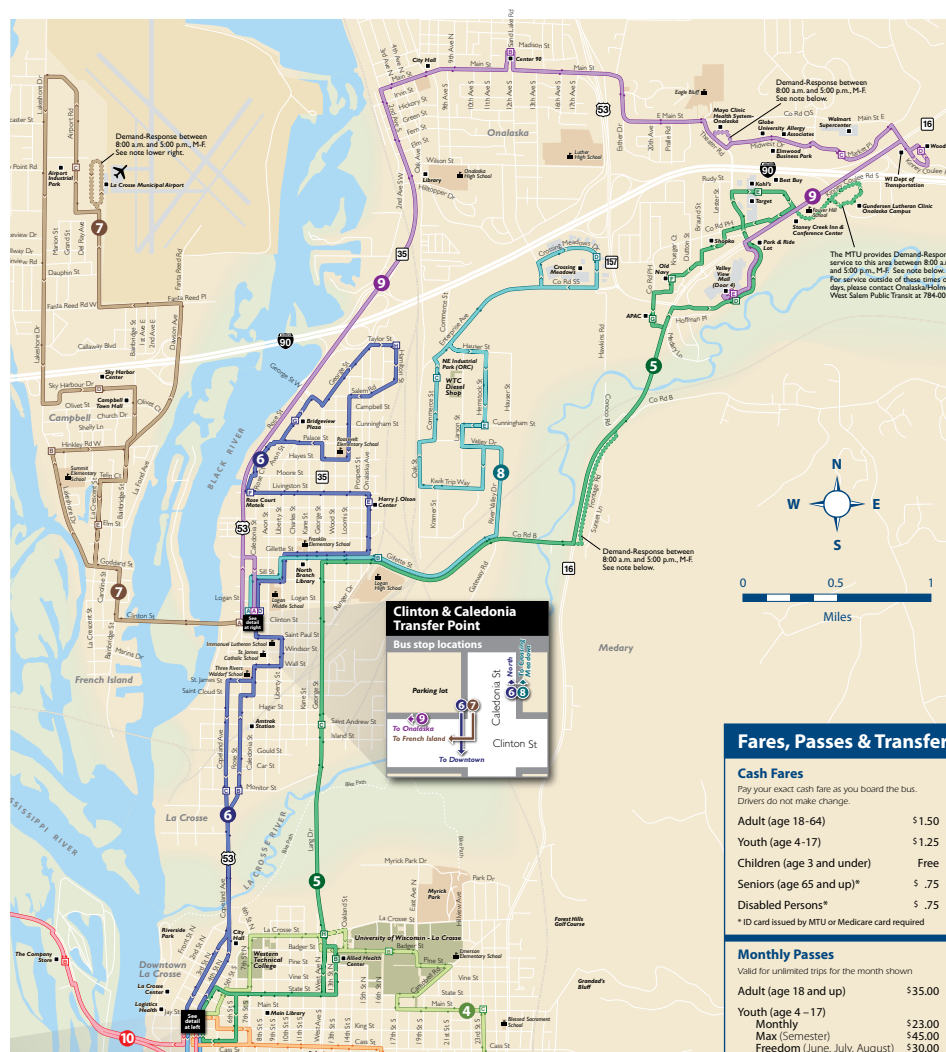
7 Route 7: French Island

- Limited service: Weekdays only
- Hourly service from 5:55 am to 5:25 pm

9 Route 9: Onalaska

- Limited service: Weekdays only
- Three full morning routes (once per hour), plus one partial morning route
- Five afternoon/evening routes (once per hour)

The majority of bus stops in the Corridor are single signs noting the location of a bus stop, with most bus stops lacking benches, lights, and shelters. While concrete pads exist at bus stops, snow removal in the winter is inconsistent and can make bus loading and unloading difficult. Passenger shelters are provided at the intersections of Copeland/Hagar, Copeland/Monitor, and Copeland/River Bend (both sides). Where benches do exist, they frequently add to the obstructions in the walkway due to inadequate space within the right of way. The consolidation of select bus stops and the addition of shelters is a possibility for the future.



Intercity Rail

The La Crosse Amtrak Station is located at the intersection of Caledonia Street and Saint Andrew Street. Service is provided daily on the Empire Builder route which runs from Chicago to Seattle and Portland. The Amtrak Station provides an enclosed waiting area with restrooms and both short-term and long-term vehicle parking options.

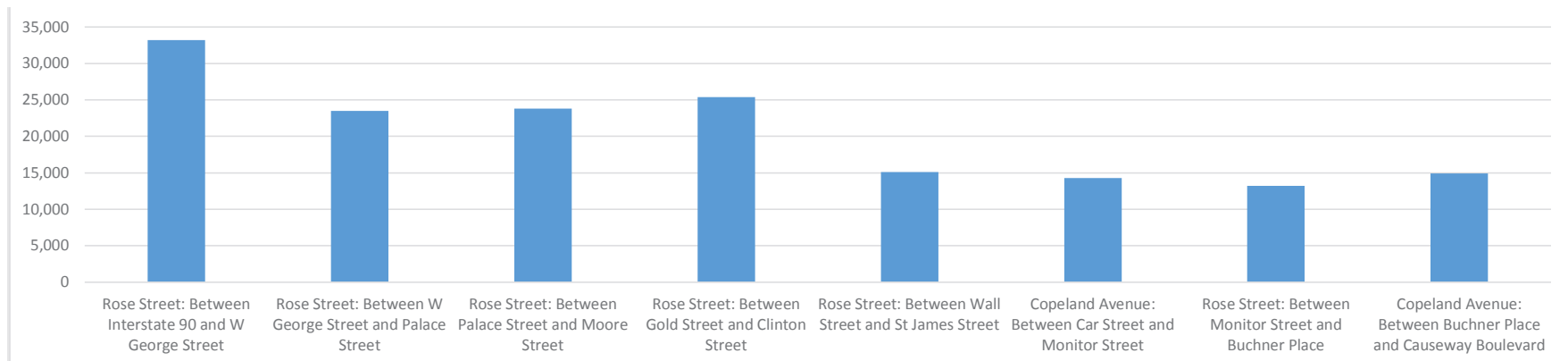
Existing Roadway Data

The overall Highway 53 Corridor was analyzed to better understand how the corridor might better serve people walking and biking and allow for redevelopment. This analysis looks at how the roadway is used (automobiles, pedestrians, bikes, transit, freight), how many motor vehicles the roadway can accommodate (capacity), who is using the roadway, how safe the roadway is (crashes), and how much it might be used in the future (forecast motor vehicle traffic volumes).

Early in the planning process, it became evident that improving the biking and pedestrian environments would require taking space from existing vehicle travel lanes. To gain an understanding of whether or not this would be possible, a planning-level review of the entire Highway 53 Corridor was necessary. This analysis looked at existing counts and crash history. Following are highlights of the current findings.

Average Daily Traffic Counts

Average Daily Traffic (ADT) on Highway 53 ranges between 23,500 and 33,200:



The five-lane cross section of Highway 53 and the one-way pair of streets from Clinton Street to near Buchner Place provides adequate capacity for the level of traffic on the street. At most times of the day, traffic delays are minimal. During peak periods, there are minor delays and queuing at traffic signals throughout the corridor, but the observed levels of delay do not warrant any intervention.

Vehicular Crash Analysis

Within the Corridor, there were 1,639 motor vehicle crashes from 2006 to 2016; this total excludes crashes on I-90 and crashes involving bicyclists or pedestrians. Of these crashes, 1,253 or 76 percent occurred on Highway 53. Crashes are constant over the length of Highway 53 and George Street within the study area and significant concentrations of crashes also occurred along Gillette Street and Clinton Street.

The large number of crashes along Highway 53 is largely due to the greater traffic volume on the street than those surrounding. However, the crash numbers may also be high due to higher traffic speeds at the northern end where the street has a rural highway design. As motorists begin to encounter traffic signals and slowed traffic at George Street, crashes occur. The long distances between traffic signals in the corridor contribute to speeding, which also contribute to crashes when traffic does slow or stop. The large number of driveways and intersections in the corridor also contribute to many vehicles turning on and off of Highway 53.



1,639 motor vehicle crashes from
2006 to 2016

1,253 or 76% of crashes occurred
on Highway 53

Parking and Parking Demand

There is no on-street parking within two-way segments of Highway 53, but on-street parking is provided to portions of the one-way segments of the street and is allowed on most other streets within the study area. Along Highway 53, there is ample off-street parking at most destinations. The only concerns that were cited by the public about parking availability during certain times of the day in the UPTOWNE/Old Towne North business district (Caledonia Street from Clinton Street to Saint Paul Street). While substantial on and off street parking exists in this area, it is consistently occupied by local business patrons.



Truck Movements

A number of intersections in the study area have been designed to accommodate large truck movements. These intersections are designed with large curb radii to allow large trucks to make turns without encroaching over curbs and sidewalks. While this design allows for easier movements by large trucks, it contributes to drivers of smaller vehicles making turns at higher speeds. Large curb radii also contribute to longer pedestrian crossing distances. The longer crossing distances combined with vehicles making turns at higher speeds increases the likelihood of crashes between motorists and pedestrians.



Environmental Evaluation

Black River/La Crosse River Marsh

The USH 53 Corridor has several environmental and open space amenities within and adjacent to its boundary. The entire western edge of the study boundary has waterfront along the Black River. While improvements to waterfront public access and conditions are recommended, the Black River is already a cherished piece of the Northside Community. The southern portion of the Corridor is also adjacent to the La Crosse River Marsh. Connections to this amenity can be enhanced as recommended in later sections of this Master Plan while preserving its natural qualities.



Environmental Contamination

No environmental site assessments were conducted as part of this planning process. Because of the large number and area of current and past industrial land uses, environmental contamination can be expected to be encountered during future redevelopment activities. For example, a large and lengthy environmental assessment and remediation process was required to prepare the Riverside North redevelopment site.

Green Infrastructure

Limited amounts of green infrastructure exist along the Highway 53 Corridor due to lack of redevelopment. Most developments along the Corridor occurred prior to current federal, state, and local stormwater management regulations. Also, most street reconstruction occurred prior to adoption of the City's Green Complete Streets Ordinance. However, new developments and street reconstructions will be required to abide by these regulations and policies.

Future development of green infrastructure is necessary to preserve and protect many environmental amenities that currently exist within the Corridor. Green infrastructure can also improve existing areas over current conditions by reducing the frequency and impacts of localized flooding caused by limited storm sewer capacity and creative value-added real estate investment opportunities. Storm water that does not infiltrate will eventually flow into the Black River. Therefore, storm water management has direct impacts on the quality and sustainability of one of the corridor's most important environmental and recreational assets.

There are several challenges to implementing storm water BMPs in the Highway 53 Corridor due to extensive past development and drainage patterns. The City is in the early stages of taking the steps towards conducting a flood hazard mitigation plan, in cooperation with state and federal agencies. The purpose of this plan will be to inform the proper location, type, and size of structural and non-structural improvements to green infrastructure. A flood mitigation plan, this Master Plan, and other City plans and policies will aid in future development of storm water BMPs during redevelopment within the corridor.



UPTOWNE/Old Towne North

The “Next Great Place UPTOWNE Summit” was held in October 2016. To address current concerns and conditions of the community in “Old Towne North” regard economic development, transportation, redevelopment opportunities, historic preservation and community involvement and networking. The process focused heavily on community engagement and included local facilitators and facilitators from other communities across the nation. The process was community led and funded.

Many of the goals, opportunities, and tactics documented in the Workshop Outcomes report are included in this Master Plan as well through reoccurring themes as a result of community engagement and data gathering or incorporation. Both processes recommend a number of immediate, short-term, mid-term, and long-term actions, which can be found within the Implementation Section of this report.

Continuous investment in this district is critical to local economy and neighborhood livability along with continual reevaluation of the needs and commitments to the district.

