

WALKABILITY ASSESSMENT

WARREN, IL SUMMER 2021

Completed by:



This assessment was made possible by funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration granted to Blackhawk Hills Regional Council for assistance with response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Executive Summary

The Warren walkability assessment was completed by Blackhawk Hills Regional Council (BHRC) staff and was made possible through U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) funding for COVID-19 response and recovery. The goal of this assessment is to identify opportunities to improve active transportation within the Village of Warren. The three priority focus areas identified for assessment were "Routes to Schools and Park", which was comprised of routes to Meridian Park and the schools, "Food Access", which included routes south of Jefferson to Hartzell's IGA, and "Routes to Fairgrounds", which was an east/west connection across the railroad on Johnson St and different iterations of routes to the fairgrounds that host the Jo Daviess County Fair.

The assessment was completed by surveying the identified priority routes and intersections in each focus area. The survey looked at a variety of factors that contribute to walkability, including contiguity of the sidewalk network, compliance with accessibility standards, and streetscape elements that make a place more or less appealing to walk. Crash data for the Village from 2016 to 2020 was obtained from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). This data provides a measure of existing safety conditions for the Village. Ordinances were also reviewed for broader opportunities to improve active transportation.

Survey findings were presented to the steering committee along with initial recommendations for improvements. The higher-prioritized recommendations are:

- Sidewalk replacement along streets surrounding the school campus
- Curb ramp replacement at intersections near the schools
- Sidewalk replacement along the west side of Bellevue Ave to address severe heaving from tree roots
- Sidewalk construction on the east side of Chestnut St adjacent to the schools

The steering committee discussed prioritization of improvements and made a follow up decision to submit a Safe Routes to School application for the 2021 funding cycle. On August 6, 2021, BHRC staff reviewed routes and projects proposed in a Safe Routes to School application that was submitted by the Village for the 2019 funding cycle. It was determined that the projects proposed in the 2019 application were still of high priority. The 2019 application was resubmitted on September 30, 2021 with updated cost estimates and supporting documentation.

Project Overview

BHRC was awarded \$400,000 from the U.S. Economic Development Administration in 2020 to support the region's response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Providing an assessment of communities' walkability was identified as a comprehensive way to look at factors that contribute to safety, inclusivity, sense of place, and human health and well-being. These factors are major drivers of a community's resilience during the pandemic, the recovery period, and beyond.¹ Working on improvements for walkability has numerous positive implications for communities, including:

Safety: Over the past decade, the United States has seen a 45 percent increase in people struck and killed while walking. The past four years were the most deadly in the past three decades.² Despite fewer vehicles on the road during the height of the pandemic in 2020, pedestrians faced greater risks due to the absence of typical traffic congestion to slow speeds and the presence of other factors that contributed to dangerous driving behavior. When accounting for the 13.2 percent decrease in vehicle miles traveled in 2020, the pedestrian fatality rate saw an unprecedented 21 percent increase from 2019.³ Improving safety for pedestrians helps make roads safer for all users. Traffic calming and other engineering techniques designed to create safer environments for pedestrians also have the impact of reducing fatalities from automobile crashes.⁴

Health: Nearly 80 percent of American adults do not get enough physical activity. About half of all American adults have one or more chronic diseases, and seven of the most common chronic diseases can be improved by regular physical activity.⁵ Walking offers a no-cost, low-skill opportunity for people to be active across a lifetime.

Social Equity: Non-motorized transportation is essential for accessibility. One-third of Americans do not drive due to age, disability, choice, or lack of financial means to own

¹ Love, Hanna and Mike Powe. "The Necessary Foundations for Rural Resilience: A Flexible, Accessible, and Healthy Built Environment." Brookings. 1 Dec. 2020 <u>https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-necessary-foundations-for-rural-resilience-a-flexible-accessible-and-healthy-built-environment</u>, "Cities that Heal: How the Coronavirus Pandemic Could Change Urban Design." On Point. WBUR. 3 Aug. 2020. <u>https://www.wbur.org/onpoint/2020/08/03/healthy-cities-urban-design-pandemic</u>, Sisson, Patrick. "How the '15-Minute City' Could Help Post-Pandemic Recovery." Bloomberg CityLab. 15 July 2020. <u>https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-07-15/mayors-tout-the-15-minute-city-as-covid-recovery</u>

² Dangerous by Design 2021. National Complete Streets Coalition and Smart Growth America. <u>https://smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design</u>

³ Snider, Adam. "Pedestrian Deaths Soar in 2020 Despite Precipitous Drop in Driving During Pandemic." Governors Highway Safety Association. 20 May, 2021. <u>Pedestrian Deaths Soar in 2020 Despite Precipitous Drop in Driving During</u> <u>Pandemic | GHSA</u>

^{4 &}quot;What is Vision Zero", Vision Zero Network, https://visionzeronetwork.org/about/what-is-vision-zero

⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. 2nd Edition. 2018.

and maintain a vehicle.⁶ Consequences for poor walking and wheelchair rolling conditions are disproportionately affecting older adults, people of color, and people walking in low-income communities. These groups are overrepresented in fatal pedestrian crashes – even when accounting for differences in population size and walking rates.²

Environment: The transportation sector is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in the United States.⁷ Passenger vehicles and light-duty trucks are the largest contributing category, emitting 59 percent of transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions.⁸ In addition to reducing transportation's large carbon footprint, trading more short drives for active transportation (walking, biking, or rolling) can also positively affect air quality. Ground level ozone, created by vehicle emissions, can create health problems, especially for children, older adults, and individuals with chronic conditions like asthma and emphysema.⁹

Transportation: Active transportation is a viable alternative to driving for many trips from a distance perspective. About 40 percent of all trips are less than 3 miles.¹⁰ Improvements to pedestrian infrastructure benefit everyone, as even motorized trips involve an active transportation link such as from a parked car to a destination.

Economy: Automobile-dependent communities offer residents less opportunity for economic resiliency. During times of unexpected financial distress, such as job loss or fuel price spikes, households are left with few options to reduce their transportation costs, which is the second largest household expense in the United States.¹¹ In addition to helping families find ways to reduce their transportation costs, improving walkability can help communities recruit talent and attract business. Between 2010 and 2015, nearly 500 companies relocated to more walkable downtowns.¹² This trend was seen across the country in both small and large cities.

7 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (2021). Carbon Pollution from Transportation. <u>https://www.epa.gov/transportation-air-pollution-and-climate-change/carbon-pollution-transportation</u>

⁶ Thomas Gotschi and Kevin Mills. Active Transportation for America: The Case for Increased Federal Investment in Bicycling and Walking. Rails to Trails Conservancy. 2008.

⁸ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (2020). Fast Facts on Transportation Greenhouse Gas Emissions. <u>https://www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/fast-facts-transportation-greenhouse-gas-emissions</u>

⁹ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (2021). How Mobile Source Pollution Affects Your Health. <u>https://www.epa.gov/mobile-source-pollution/how-mobile-source-pollution-affects-your-health</u>

¹⁰ Litman, T. Short and Sweet: Analysis of Shorter Trips Using National Personal Travel Survey Data. Victoria Transportation Policy Institute. 2010. <u>www.vtpi.org/short_sweet.pdf</u>

¹¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Consumer Expenditures-2019. Economic News Release (2020). https://www.bls.gov/news.release/cesan.nro.htm

¹² Smart Growth America. Core Values: Why American Companies are Moving Downtown (2015). https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/core-values-why-american-companies-are-moving-downtown

Goals & Objectives

Warren was included in the first round of walkability assessments conducted in the spring and summer of 2021. A kick-off call was held on May 13th with the steering committee to introduce the assessment process and begin identifying local goals. Members of the steering committee provided representation from the Warren Chamber of Commerce, Village Streets Committee, and Warren School Board.

The steering committee and BHRC staff discussed and identified priority issues and routes to be surveyed. Three major themes emerged from these discussions: safe routes to schools and parks, food access, and routes to the fairgrounds. With the help of the steering committee, BHRC staff tailored the assessment to identify opportunities for improving active transportation options to the schools, Meridian Park, Hartzell's IGA, and the fairgrounds. Specific objectives to meet the goals included:

- Survey three route categories in the Village (see map below for locations):
 - **Routes to Schools & Meridian Park:** Routes that connect Warren Elementary and Warren Jr/Sr High School to Meridian Park included several streets immediately surrounding and to the north and west of the schools. Although these routes covered the core streets adjacent to the schools, the other surveyed routes may be used by students coming from the south and east parts of the Village.
 - Food Access: These routes included several streets south of the schools and a section of IL 78 (Tisdell Ave) that connects to Hartzell's IGA and Dollar General.
 - Routes to Fairgrounds: The routes to the fairgrounds included a critical east/west connection point for the Village across the Canadian National railroad tracks on Johnson St. Key roads along with alternatives for these routes were Jefferson, Railroad, and Beebe streets.
- Review a 2019 Safe Routes to School application for opportunities for improvement for potential resubmission
- Review crash data available from IDOT for the village
- Examine village ordinances and planning documents for opportunities to further encourage active transportation and associated infrastructure
- Create a table of recommendations for improving active transportation in Warren
- Identify grant opportunities and funding strategies to implement selected recommendations



Map 1. Selected survey routes and focus area descriptions

Methods

Routes and intersections within the three focus categories (Routes to Schools & Meridian Park, Food Access, and Routes to Fairgrounds) were assessed using a survey designed to evaluate sidewalk conditions, intersections, ADA compliance, and streetscape. Streetscape elements make a space more or less appealing for walking and include measures such as proximity to high speed traffic, protection from the elements, trees and landscaping, and other characteristics that contribute to a positive sense of place. Surveys were completed on June 2nd and 3rd, 2021 through ArcGIS Survey123 app data collection, photography, qualitative notes, and walking methods. The survey app generated georeferenced points where observations of issues were recorded. These points and associated survey data have been provided to the steering committee as shape (.shp) files and can be viewed in Google Earth.

Locations Surveyed and Data Reviewed

Routes to Schools & Meridian Park:

- <u>Water St</u> from Main St south to Jefferson St
- Galena Ave from Water St west to Bellevue Ave
- Bellevue Ave from Washington St south to Jefferson St
- <u>2nd St</u> from Bellevue Ave west to Meridian Park
- <u>Courtland St</u> from Galena Ave south to Jefferson St
- <u>Chestnut St</u> from Galena Ave south to Jefferson St
- Mary St in entirety (Chestnut St to Water St)
- <u>Jefferson St</u> from Bellevue Ave east to Water St

Food Access:

- <u>IL 78/Tisdell Ave</u> from Jefferson St south to Hartzell's IGA and Dollar General
- <u>Pearl St</u> from Jefferson St south to James St
- <u>Water St</u> from Jefferson St south to James St
- <u>Chestnut St</u> from Jefferson St south to James St
- James St from Chestnut St east to IL 78/Tisdell Ave

Routes to Fairgrounds:

- <u>Jefferson St</u> from Water St east to IL 78/Tisdell Ave
- <u>IL 78/Tisdell Ave</u> from Jefferson St north to Johnson St
- Johnson St from IL 78/Tisdell Ave northeast to Beebe St
- <u>Railroad St</u> from Johnson St southeast to High Rd
- Beebe St from Johnson St south to High Rd
- <u>Staver St</u> from Railroad St northeast to Beebe St
- <u>High Rd</u> from Railroad St to the fairgrounds

Traffic crash data was reviewed from IDOT for insight on the village streets' recent safety history. Village ordinance were also reviewed for opportunities for improvement via planning and policy changes. A mapping exercise using Google Earth aerial imagery was also conducted to develop a sidewalk gap audit. The resulting map allows for identification of patterns in missing sidewalks throughout the village.



Map 2. Red sections indicate missing sidewalks

Following the completion of survey work and a follow up call with the steering committee to review findings, a review of routes specific to the Safe Routes to School application was completed by BHRC staff on August 6th. The map below shows the routes that were reviewed for projects to be included the application.



Map 3. Route reviewed for Safe Routes to School application shown in purple

US Access Board's Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG)

Originally established in 1973 to ensure access to federally funded facilities, the US Access Board is now the nation's lead agency on accessible design. In 1990 when the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law, the board was tasked with developing accessibility guidelines for facilities and transportation systems.¹³ Since the board published the original ADA Accessibility Guidelines in 1991, several updates have been published to incorporate additional aspects of public life and changes in technology.

In 2011, the board issued proposed Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG) for public comment.¹⁴ These guidelines would set standards for sidewalks, pedestrian crosswalks, and other public rights-of-way. The PROWAG have not yet been finalized for a variety of reasons including the board's decision to supplement the guidelines to address shared use paths. Although not yet enforceable at the federal level,¹⁵ the PROWAG offer the most up-to-date and recommended design practices for supporting accessible active transportation. It is anticipated that the board will release the finalized version of the guidelines in spring of 2022, and for that reason, the proposed guidelines were used as a benchmark for assessing accessibility in this study.

ADA Self Evaluations and Transition Plan Requirements

Two critical requirements of the ADA, which are frequently left uncompleted, are self-evaluations and transition plans.

The 1991 ADA regulation required all public entities, regardless of size, to evaluate all of their services, policies, and practices and to modify any that did not meet ADA requirements. In addition, public entities with 50 or more employees were required to develop a transition plan detailing any structural changes that would be undertaken to achieve program access and specifying a time frame for their completion. Public entities were also required to provide an opportunity for interested individuals to participate in the self-evaluation and transition planning processes by submitting comments.¹⁶

Completing or updating a self-evaluation and transition plan would give the Village a broader perspective of where improvements in accessibility are needed, an action plan to implement needed changes, and would ensure that legal obligations are being upheld should a complaint be filed.

14 U.S. Access Board (2021). (Proposed) Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines. https://www.access-board.gov/prowag/ 15 The 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design are the current enforceable standards to date, but lack nuanced guidance for outdoor access routes.

https://www.ada.gov/regs2010/titleII_2010/title_ii_primer.html#coordinator

¹³ U.S. Access Board (2021). About the U.S. Access Board. https://www.access-board.gov/about/

¹⁶ U.S. Department of Justice (2015) ADA Update: A Primer for State and Local Governments.

Findings

SURVEY

Routes to Schools & Meridian Park

Although routes with sidewalks were favored during selection to provide data on conditions, the streets that provide links between Meridian Park, schools, and the immediate vicinity have some impactful sidewalk gaps.



Absence of sidewalks along 2nd St to Meridian Park



End of sidewalk along Jefferson St, west of Courtland St

The lack of sidewalks along 2nd St, which ends at Meridian Park, is problematic for non-motorized park access. Although 2nd St is designed for low volume traffic, the new pool, sports games, and other events may bring more people to the park at certain times. Other connectivity issues include gaps in the sidewalk network along Jefferson St west of Courtland St and lack of sidewalks on one side of the street along Bellevue Ave, Galena Ave, and Chestnut Ave. The absence of sidewalks along the east side of Chestnut St, adjacent to the schools, may be particularly challenging for students.

Sidewalk conditions along the routes to schools and Meridian Park ranged from fair to poor with more issues concentrated adjacent to the schools along Water, Jefferson, and Mary Streets.



Cracking and surface deterioration at driveway crossing along Water St



Vertical fault greater than 1/2" along Mary St

Common issues observed along the routes included vertical faults greater than ½" caused by frost/thaw heaving and/or tree roots, severe cracking, surface deterioration, and vegetation overgrowth. Many issues were found where driveways intersect with the sidewalk. As is typical for older sidewalk infrastructure, most segments are less than 4 to 5 feet wide, narrower than current guidelines for ADA accessibility.



Severe heaving caused by tree roots along Bellevue Ave



Map 4. Light blue dots indicate recorded sidewalk condition issues. Routes to Schools and Meridian Park shown in yellow, sidewalk gaps shown in red.

The majority of the intersections surveyed along Routes to Schools and Meridian Park lack curbs and associated curb ramps. Although absence of curbs is not an ADA compliance issue on its own, the transitions from sidewalk to street were generally not flush and lacked detectable warning strips. Other intersection issues along these routes include lack of crosswalk striping and grass at the sidewalk to road transition.

None of the intersections along these routes have controlled pedestrian crossings. The most challenging crossings due to traffic volume and speed are at Bellevue and IL 78 and at Water and IL 78. The crossing at Bellevue also lacks curb ramps (and has curbs) and crosswalk striping. There are recently improved pedestrian crossings along IL 78/Main St that facilitate safe crossing of the state highway, although the number of these crossing is limited.



2nd St & Bellevue Ave



Water St & Mary St- lack of detectable warning strips and flush transitions



Water St & Jefferson Stabsence of ADA-required turning space at top of ramp



Map 5. Purple dots indicate recorded intersection issues. Routes to Schools and Meridian Park shown in yellow, sidewalk gaps shown in red.

Food Access

The sidewalks surveyed for the routes in the "Food Access" category have several gaps in connectivity, with the most notable being the lack of sidewalks along IL 78/Tisdell Ave south of Winslow Rd. The shoulders of the road are paved but unpainted and narrow until just south of Hartzell's, where they transition to gravel with an uncurbed edge. The other sidewalk gaps along these routes include sections along the east side of Pearl St and the north side of James St. Although they are inconvenient and likely lead to more roadside walking, these gaps are less of a safety concern than the gap along IL 78/Tisdell Ave due to traffic volume and speed.



Dollar General, IL 78- Google Earth Street View, 2018 Hartzell's IGA, IL 78- Google Earth Street View, 2018

The sidewalk conditions along the "Food Access" routes have similar issues to those along "Routes to Schools and Meridian Park". Age and maintenance issues have led to vertical faults greater than $\frac{1}{2}$ ", cracking, surface deterioration, and vegetation overgrowth. These routes have slightly more issues with temporary sidewalk obstructions such as overgrown bushes and low hanging tree branches, which are an easier fix that more permanent obstructions like utility poles and sign posts.



Condition issues and tree rounds obstructing sidewalk on S Water St.



Temporary obstruction from shrub overgrowth along James St



Cracking at old driveway intersection on Pearl St.



Map 6. Light blue dots indicate recorded sidewalk condition issues. Food Access routes shown in blue, sidewalk gaps shown in red.



Map 7. Purple dots indicate recorded intersection issues. Food Access routes shown in blue, sidewalk gaps shown in red.

The intersections along the Food Access routes have similar issues to those along the Routes to Schools and Meridian Park. Most streets lack curbs, but transitions are not flush between sidewalk and street. The intersections that do have curb ramps generally lack ADA-compliant detectable warning strips. When considering the efficiency of improvement projects, it may be best to focus on intersections along IL 78/Tisdell Ave. This route would likely serve the most number of people going to the grocery store and would also benefit students going to school from the south part of the Village.

Attention to intersections along Jefferson St and particularly at IL 78/Tisdell Ave and Jefferson St would make a positive impact for students walking to school. Both intersections lack ADA-compliant curb ramps and there are issues with vertical faults and gravel accumulation.



Gravel accumulation at Jefferson St & Pearl St



Vertical fault at curb ramp at IL 78/Tisdell Ave & Jefferson St

Routes to Fairgrounds

In addition to accessing the fairgrounds, which host several events including the Jo Daviess County Fair, the Routes to Fairgrounds also capture one of the two major east/west connector streets in the village across the railroad tracks at Johnson St. The routes in this category have several connectivity issues. The majority of streets only have sidewalks on one side. High Rd and sections of Beebe St are missing sidewalks on both sides. The railroad crossing on Johnson St presents a significant connectivity challenge in its current condition.



Sidewalk leading up to railroad crossing is piled with gravel



Flangeway gaps should be no wider than 3 inches for tracks carrying freight

Sidewalk conditions are very similar to that of other route categories but include slightly more issues with deteriorated surfaces particularly at the south end of Beebe St near an abandoned property and around the ComEd substation at High Rd and Railroad St.



Sidewalk surface deterioration and grass overgrowth at south end of Beebe St



Severe cracking and heaving around ComEd substation



Map 8. Light blue dots indicate recorded sidewalk condition issues. Routes to Fairgrounds shown in green, sidewalk gaps shown in red.



Map 9. Purple dots indicate recorded intersection condition issues. Routes to Fairgrounds shown in green, sidewalk gaps shown in red.

All intersections along the Routes to Fairgrounds had issues with ADA compliance. The majority of sidewalk to street transitions have surface issues with gravel accumulation, grass overgrowth, or vertical faults. There were some intersections with curbs that lack curb ramps, most notably at Johnson St and Railroad St.



Absence of curb ramps at Johnson St and Railroad St

TRAFFIC CRASH DATA

Traffic crash data for the Village of Warren was requested from the Illinois Department of Transportation. Data was provided for the years 2016 to 2020.



Map 10. Red dots indicating reported crashes in Warren (2016-2020)

No major trends in locations of crashes were identified, but slightly more incidents occurred at intersections along IL 78 (Bellevue Ave, Warren St, and Water St). These crashes likely correlate with higher traffic volume along IL 78. Crash points were also reviewed for pedestrian and cyclist involvement. One incident along Francis St in 2019 involved a pedestrian. The vehicle was reportedly exiting a driveway onto the street when the crash occurred. The pedestrian incurred a class C injury (reported or claimed, but not evident). Francis St lacks sidewalks on the east end, and sees truck traffic with loading areas off both the north and south sides of the street. The crash history and traffic conditions may warrant prioritizing sidewalk construction on the east end of the street.

VILLAGE ORDINANCES

The Village of Warren's **Codified Ordinances**, updated in 2018, provide several references to sidewalks. Some ordinances provide a solid foundation for supporting active transportation in the village, while others have room for improvement. The Title VII section for Traffic Code includes a subsection on school zones. The ordinance states that speed limits can be set at 20 mph for school zones during school days when children are present and provides for fine amounts for first and subsequent violations. The subsection does note, however, that the special speed limits and enforcement rules are only applicable if school zones are signed to identify the zone and the speed limit. The streets surrounding the Warren schools were not signed as a school zone nor were they marked with the 20 mph speed limit when the walkability survey was conducted.

Title IX, General Regulations, includes a Streets and Sidewalks section that covers sidewalk repair and replacement. The Village offers reimbursement to residential property owners who replace or construct sections of sidewalk. The reimbursement covers the cost of the concrete for a sidewalk 4' wide and 4" deep. Reimbursement for replacement or construction is also offered for commercial sidewalks, but details are worked out between the business owner and the Village on a case-bycase basis due to the varying sizes and requirements for commercial sidewalks.

The sidewalk reimbursement program is a good basic incentive for property owners to maintain adjacent sidewalks, however, the Village should consider the standards used for sidewalk width. As also noted in the Specifications subsection of the Streets and Sidewalks section, the Village is using ANSI (American National Standards Institute) standards that include a 4' width requirement. Current best practices in accessible design follow PROWAG standards which require a minimum of 4' for sidewalk width. If sidewalks are less than 5', a 5x5' passing area (which may include the sidewalk) must be available every 200'. The Village should consider updating the standards referenced in the ordinance to encourage best practices in accessible design.

Policies containing information about initial sidewalk construction requirements for new subdivisions in the Village were not available or do not exist. It would be prudent to adopt a requirement for all new subdivisions to include sidewalk construction with any road construction. Building sidewalks up

front is the easiest way to incorporate them without problems associated with landscaping, utility lines, or homeowner opinions that may come up if constructed later on.

The ordinances do mention communication with property owners and enforcement to address sidewalks in disrepair but fail to outline a sidewalk maintenance plan. Currently, the Work Coordinator shall notify property owners if sidewalks present a public safety concern and are in need of repair or replacement. The Village would benefit from a sidewalk inspection and maintenance plan.

By taking on some of the responsibility for sidewalk maintenance through the reimbursement program, the Village is acknowledging the importance of keeping up conditions for the safety of all users. Maintenance can help prevent and protect against liability claims in situations where sidewalk conditions are in question following an incident. Even when a community has ordinances that require adjacent property owners to maintain sidewalks (through snow removal, vegetation trimming, etc.), the municipality may still be found ultimately responsible for sidewalk conditions. Recording an inspection and maintenance plan in writing can help limit exposure to liability. In times when a municipality's budget is minimal, having a policy in place that effectively uses resources that are available can still help mitigate risk of liability.¹⁷

The benefits of having a written sidewalk maintenance plan are manifold. Advantages of a maintenance plan include:

- Improved sidewalk conditions and safety
- Protection of infrastructure investment
- Conveyance of information to residents
- Provision of guidelines for village employees in public works departments
- Mitigation of exposure to lawsuits
- Compliance with the ADA and improved accessibility of the sidewalk network for all users

Sidewalk maintenance policies should contain some level of detail to be effective. Strong policies address the following elements:¹⁸

1. Identification of defective conditions

The policy should establish criteria that defines when a sidewalk is defective and requires repair or replacement.

2. Development of an inspection procedure and schedule

The plan should include conducting an initial survey (or continuation of the survey provided in this assessment). A frequency for subsequent surveys should be set, and it should be determined whether surveys cover the entire village or are done by sections.

¹⁷ U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, *A Guide for Maintaining Pedestrian Facilities for Enhanced Safety.* Washington D.C. (2013) <u>https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/tools_solve/fhwasa13037/chap2.cfm#ftn3</u>

¹⁸ U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, *A Guide for Maintaining Pedestrian Facilities for Enhanced Safety. Appendix D: Risk Management Information* (2010). <u>https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/tools_solve/fhwasa13037/appxd.cfm</u>

3. Prioritization of repair and replacement needs

An effective policy should establish prioritization criteria: location of sidewalk, pedestrian traffic, cost vs effect, resident complaints, etc. The development of a repair and replacement schedule should also be incorporated and designed in a way that can address unexpected changes in budget, resources for conducting work, and condition of sidewalks.

4. Development of cost-recovery mechanisms

If property owners are expected to share the cost of sidewalk repair, clear policies and procedures for assessing costs to property owners should be established. The Village ordinances set a foundation for these expectations, but should be reassessed and updated to use the latest sidewalk design standards.

5. Response to resident complaints and concerns

It is best to consult with an attorney to develop an appropriate plan for addressing sidewalk incidents and complaints.

More information about developing a sidewalk maintenance plan, including examples, can be found in the <u>US DOT Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)'s Guide for Maintaining Pedestrian Facilities</u> for Enhanced Safety.

The Village acknowledges the impact winter weather can have on active transportation by requiring all property owners to clear snow from sidewalks within 24 hours after snowfall has stopped. Property owners are also responsible for applying sand or other material to improve slippery conditions on sidewalks after sleet or ice has accumulated. The Village may enforce this ordinance with fines from \$25 to \$200 depending on the number of subsequent violations.

Winter precipitation has a profound effect on all modes of transportation, but sidewalks can be particularly vulnerable as they are often last to be cleared or end up being used for snow storage after roads are cleared. A new, ADA-compliant sidewalk can be rendered useless after just a few inches of snow if a winter maintenance plan isn't in place. This can be particularly frustrating for those who have disabilities and rely on active transportation. The ADA requires any "accessible route" to be maintained "in working order." This means that sidewalks left covered in ice or snow are in violation of the ADA.

It should be recognized that some residents may struggle to meet snow removal requirements due to age or disability. Coupling a snow removal ordinance with a volunteer program or student on-call job service can be a good way to address this need.

Informing and reminding residents and businesses about snow removal requirements should be the first step in gaining compliance. An annual brochure mailer is one method for ensuring that information is circulated. The brochure can also be used to share information about winter parking, snow emergencies, appropriate de-icing mechanisms (rock salt can be damaging to concrete sidewalks), and keeping catch basins and fire hydrants cleared. Massachusetts's Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) has collected examples of snow removal procedure brochures which can be found in their <u>Snow Removal Policy Toolkit</u>. The University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration also offers a <u>Winter Maintenance of Pedestrian Facilities Guide for Local</u>

<u>Governments</u>, as does the FHWA in its <u>Guide for Maintaining Pedestrian Facilities</u> and <u>US DOJ in its</u> <u>ADA Guide for Small Towns</u>.

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

A review of the routes and projects included in the application for 2019 Safe Routes to School funding was completed on the morning of August 6, 2021. BHRC regional planners Emily Lauderdale and Tara Walters determined that the projects included in the 2019 application were still of high priority (see Appendix B for project map). They include removing and replacing existing sidewalks on Water, Mary, and Jefferson streets adjacent to the school and constructing two speed tables and corresponding signage along Water and Chestnut streets.

Updated cost estimates were acquired along with teacher student talleys, parent surveys, a letter of support from the school board, and an interview with the school superintendent and elementary school principal. These documents were incoporated into an updated application that was approved by the village board on September 27th and submitted on September 30th. Notification of selected Safe Routes to School is anticipated to occur around spring of 2022.

Recommendations

The following improvement options were identified based on survey findings, review of village ordinances, and discussions with the walkability assessment steering committee. Please see Appendix A for additional improvement options.

Improvement	Route Category	Cost/Benefit	Requires ext. involvement (IDOT)	Requires ext. involvement (other)	Relies on other improvements to be effective	Notes		
Safe Routes to School 2021 Application								
Remove and replace identified sections of sidewalk along Mary, Water, and Jefferson streets. Replacements will be 5' wide and include ADA compliant curb ramps.	Routes to Schools	Moderate cost/High benefit				Included in the 2021 Safe Routes to School application submission.		
Install speed tables and associated signage on Chestnut and Water streets.	Routes to Schools	Low-to-moderate cost/High benefit				Speed tables would slow high school drivers leaving the school on Chestnut St and other traffic passing school bus loading zone on Water St.		
Infrastructure Improvements								
Replace curb ramps at the following intersections: Water & Jefferson, Mary & Water, Chestnut & Mary, Jefferson & Chestnut, Galena & Chestnut	Routes to Schools and Meridian Park	Moderate cost/ High benefit				Partially included in 2021 Safe Routes to School application and eligible for future applications.		
Place school zone and speed limit signage at appropriate locations along Water, Jefferson, Chestnut, and Mary streets	Routes to Schools and Meridian Park	Low cost/Moderate benefit				Eligible as a Safe Routes to School project for future application. Required for school zone ordinances to be enforceable.		
Conduct sidewalk maintenance and replacement along Water, Mary, and Jefferson streets	Routes to Schools and Meridian Park	High cost/ High benefit				Partially included in 2021 Safe Routes to School application and eligible for future applications.		
Construct sidewalk on east side of Chestnut Street adjacent to schools	Routes to Schools and Meridian Park	High cost/ Moderate benefit		✓ School District		Eligible as a Safe Routes to School project for future application.		

Improvement	Route Category	Cost/Benefit	Requires ext. involvement (IDOT)	Requires ext. involvement (other)	Relies on other improvements to be effective	Notes
Conduct sidewalk maintenance and replacement along the west side of Bellevue Ave to address severe heaving from tree roots	Routes to Schools and Meridian Park	Moderate cost/High benefit		✓ Residents (trees are on private property)		This improvement is critical for access to Meridian Park and for general sidewalk connectivity as there is no sidewalk on the east side of Bellevue Ave. Pairing this improvement with a tree replacement plan would help to offset the potential loss to the village tree canopy and may help alleviate residents' concerns.
Construct sidewalks on at least one side of 2 nd St	Routes to Schools and Meridian Park	Moderate cost/ Moderate-High benefit		✓ Residents		As traffic may increase with the newly replaced pool, having a sidewalk on at least one side of 2 nd St will be important for safety.
Replace curbs and improve school crossing signage potentially incorporating a rapid flashing beacon at IL 78/Tisdell Ave & Jefferson St	Food Access Also benefits routes to schools	Moderate cost/ High benefit	√			Eligible as a Safe Routes to School project for future application.
Extend sidewalks on IL 78/Tisdell Ave south to Hartzell's IGA and Dollar General on both east and west sides	Food Access	High cost/ High benefit	~			

Improvement	Route Category	Cost/Benefit	Requires ext. involvement (IDOT)	Requires ext. involvement (other)	Relies on other improvements to be effective	Notes
Repair and replace sidewalks south of James St along IL 78/Tisdell Ave on both east and west sides	Food Access	High cost/Moderate benefit				
Repair and replace sidewalks along Johnson, Railroad, and Beebe streets	Routes to Fairgrounds	High cost/Moderate benefit				
Replace curb ramps at the following intersections: Johnson & Railroad, Johnson & North, Staver & Beebe (also serves as a school bus pick up location?), Staver & Railroad	Routes to Fairgrounds	Moderate-High cost/Moderate benefit				
Construct sidewalks on at least one side (prioritize north) of High Rd	Routes to Fairgrounds	Moderate cost/Moderate benefit		✓ Residents		Sidewalks along High Rd would be particularly beneficial when the fairgrounds see both vehicular and pedestrian traffic during events.

Improvement	Route Category	Cost/Benefit	Requires ext. involvement (IDOT)	Requires ext. involvement (other)	Relies on other improvements to be effective	Notes
Work with Canadian National to improve the railroad crossing on Johnson St. Improvements should include removing the piled gravel, making any necessary repair or replacement to the sidewalks currently under the gravel, and ensuring that the Flangeway gaps meet ADA guidelines	Routes to Fairgrounds	Moderate-Low cost/High benefit		✓ (Canadian National)		This railroad crossing is one of only two critical east/west connections across the railroad in the Village.
Construct sidewalks on the east end of Francis St	IDOT crash data review	Moderate-Low cost/Moderate benefit		✓ Residents/ Business owners		Adding sidewalks on the east end of Francis St would provide a safer option for pedestrians navigating past loading zones in this area.

Policy, Plan, and Ordinance Changes

Improvement	Notes
Update village sidewalk design specifications to meet current ADA guidelines	Update sidewalk design specifications to meet the PROWAG. The proposed guidelines are available at Regulations.gov and are anticipated to be formally adopted in spring of 2022.
Develop a written sidewalk maintenance plan	A sidewalk maintenance plan that addresses short and longer-term needs would help the Village plan for improvements by identifying both budget and coordination needs with IDOT, businesses, and/or residents. A maintenance plan could work particularly well in combination with a village tree plan or forestry program to address necessary tree removals and replacements.
Develop a snow removal assistance program and annual information plan to pair with the snow removal ordinance	A plan for residents who require assistance with snow removal and a plan to inform residents about the requirement and options for assistance are important for ensuring that the existing ordinance is effective.
Require new subdivision developers to construct sidewalks and, in certain cases, bike lanes along any new roadways	Requiring new subdivisions to include sidewalks with few exceptions will help to ensure that new parts of the village are connected to the sidewalk network and will reduce future gaps. Criteria for when bike lanes would be required should also be incorporated.
Develop a community forestry program to address tree health, hazard mitigation, and tree planting needs	Working through the Tree City USA program would provide a strong framework for the village to address concerns and needs regarding trees. The process of becoming a designated Tree City requires municipalities to develop a tree board, establish a tree care ordinance, institute a community forestry program, and host an Arbor Day observance and proclamation. <u>Tree City USA</u> offers helpful resources and templates for developing these programs and ordinances.
	Trees Forever, a non-profit based in Marion, IA, assists communities in Iowa and Illinois in community forestry efforts and would be a helpful partner for the Village in establishing a forestry program.
Complete or update an ADA self- evaluation and transition plan for the Village	To be compliant with the ADA, the Village should ensure that a self-evaluation has been completed and is on file. Although not required for municipalities with fewer than 50 employees, a transition plan would be helpful in planning out improvements to meet compliance. The New England ADA Center offers an <u>Action Guide for State and Local Governments</u> on how to conduct a self-evaluation and develop a transition plan. The website also offers sample documents and self-evaluation forms.
Review and revise the Village's lighting plan to meet safety and International Dark-Sky Association recommendations	Street lighting is critical for safety and can also be an important factor for security. An often forgotten impact of poorly planned lighting is effects on the quality of the night sky, which is important for both animal and human health. The International Dark-Sky Association provides resources for finding Dark-Sky Friendly Lighting and offers accreditation programs for International Dark Sky Communities . Two recently designated communities in Illinois are Hawthorn Woods and Homer Glen in Lake and Will counties.

Funding Strategies

The following grant opportunities and programs are a snapshot of what is currently available or may be available in the future. Additional guidance and future opportunities are likely to be offered as the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic progresses.

Grant/Strategy	Administrating	Funding available & match	Applicable projects	
	org.	requirements		
Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP) Next funding cycle will be announced in the fall of 2022	Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT)	Up to \$2,000,000 with no local match requirement as of 1/1/2022. Funds biking and walking infrastructure on IDOT-maintained roads. Preliminary engineering costs are eligible for reimbursement, but invoices must be submitted after Federal Authorization of the funding.	All improvements along and within the IL 78 corridor.	
Local Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)	IDOT	State DOTs receive federal funding for projects on their State Transportation Improvement Program lists.	Work with IDOT staff to determine if IL 78 projects would qualify.	
Safe Routes to School (SRTS)	IDOT	Up to \$250,000. 20% local match required.	All improvements within a 2 mile radius of the schools.	
AARP Community Challenge Grant	AARP	Grants can range from several hundred dollars to several thousand or tens of thousands of dollars. Applications are typically due in April and projects must be complete by November of the same year.	Most improvements along local roads would qualify under the Transportation category. The Village may be interested in submitting other projects under the Public Places or Diversity and Inclusion categories.	
America Walks Community Change Grant	America Walks	Grants of \$1,500 are awarded for projects that improve walking and movement at the community level. Awarded funding is to be spent within one year.	Some lower-cost project recommendations, such as school zone signage, would qualify.	

<u>Urban and</u> <u>Community</u> <u>Forestry Grants</u>	Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR)	The program is 50/50 cost share reimbursement. The applicant must have an approved tree care ordinance or equivalent or must use an application to ask for funding to create a tree care ordinance.	Creation of a tree care ordinance and village forestry plan.
Rapid Flashing Beacons Give Away	America Walks	In Spring of 2021, America Walks partnered with Carmanah Technologies to give away rapid flashing beacons to communities who applied and showed need. Although it is uncertain whether this will be an annual opportunity, it is worth checking for subsequent years.	Crosswalk improvements at IL 78 and Jefferson St. Other crosswalks that may benefit include IL 78/Main St & Bellevue Ave and IL 78/Main St & Water St.

Appendix A. Additional Improvement Options

Improvement	Route Category	Cost/Benefit	Requires ext. involvement (IDOT)	Requires ext. involvement (other)	Relies on other improvements to be effective	Notes
Replace curb ramps at the following intersections: IL 78/Main St & Bellevue, Bellevue & 2 nd , Bellevue & 3 rd , Galena & Bellevue, Galena & Center, Galena & Water, Chestnut & Emelyne	Routes to Schools and Meridian Park	Moderate-to-high cost/Moderate benefit				
Work with IDOT to improve crosswalks at IL 78/Main St & Bellevue and IL 78/Main St & Water	Routes to Schools and Meridian Park	Low-to-moderate cost/ Moderate benefit	1			Improvements could include painting crosswalks, signage, or rapid flashing beacons.
Construct sidewalks to address gaps on the south side of Galena Ave, the east side of Bellevue Ave, and Jefferson St west of Courtland St	Routes to Schools and Meridian Park	High cost/ Moderate benefit		✓ (residents)		
Replace curb ramps at the following intersections: IL 78/Tisdell & Hyde St, James St, Platt St, York St, and John St, and Jefferson St & Pearl St	Food Access	Moderate-to-high cost/ Moderate benefit				
Repair and replace sidewalks along Chestnut, Water, Pearl, and James streets	Food Access	High cost/ Moderate benefit				
Construct sidewalks to fill gaps along Pearl St and the north side of James St	Food Access	High cost/Moderate benefit		✓ (residents)		
Replace curb ramps at IL 78/Tisdell & Johnson St	Routes to Fairgrounds	Moderate cost/Moderate benefit				
Construct sidewalks to fill gaps along Beebe St and the north side of Johnson St	Routes to Fairgrounds	High cost/Moderate benefit		✓ (residents)		

Appendix B. Safe Routes to School Project Map

