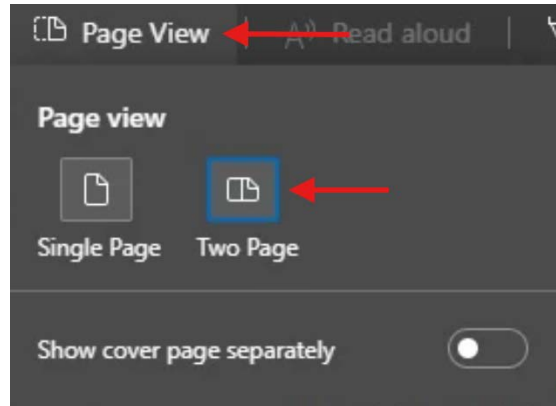
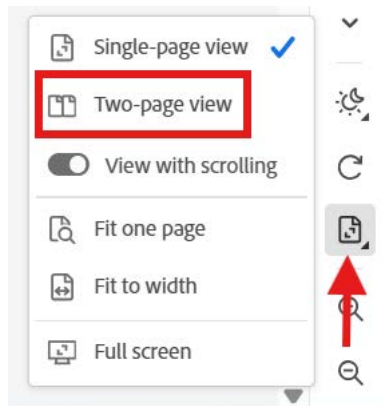


NOTICE

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Do not select the option that shows the cover page separately.



Greater Helena **MPO**



Long Range Transportation Plan

October 1, 2026



DRAFT



Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
1.1. MPO Planning Area.....	2
1.2. LRTP Purpose.....	4
1.3. Federal Requirements for Transportation Plans.....	5
1.4. Planning Background.....	6
1.5. Goals and Objectives.....	7
1.6. Public Engagement.....	8
1.7. Plan Process.....	10
2. Inventory.....	13
2.1. Our Community.....	13
2.2. How We Get Around.....	16
2.3. Walking and Biking.....	18
2.4. Transit.....	20
2.5. Freight, Rail, and Air.....	22
2.6. System Condition.....	24
2.7. Safety.....	26
3. Forecast.....	29
3.1. How Much We'll Grow.....	29
3.2. Where Growth Will Occur.....	30
3.3. Traffic on Tomorrow's Roads.....	32
4. Analyze.....	35
4.1. People and Growing Needs.....	35
4.2. Roads and Intersections Under Pressure.....	36
4.3. Gaps in Walking and Biking.....	38
4.4. Transit Needs.....	38
4.5. Freight, Rail, and Air Considerations.....	38
4.6. Safety.....	39
4.7. Keeping the System in Good Repair.....	39
4.8. Growth Outpacing Infrastructure.....	39
4.9. Network Improvement Scenario Testing.....	40
5. Recommend.....	43
5.1. Recommendations Overview.....	43
5.2. How Recommendations Were Developed.....	45
5.3. Prioritized Projects.....	46
5.4. Multimodal Investments.....	66
5.5. Beyond Capital Projects.....	71
5.6. Long-Term Vision.....	72
6. Comply.....	77
6.1. Funding the Plan.....	77
6.2. Performance Targets.....	79
6.3. Environmental Considerations.....	81
6.4. Implementation and Next Steps.....	82
7. References.....	85



Figures

Figure 1: Greater Helena MPO Planning Area 3

Figure 2: Existing Major Street Network 17

Figure 3: Multimodal Network..... 19

Figure 4: Goods Movement Network..... 23

Figure 5: Bridge and Pavement Conditions 25

Figure 6: Crash Density and Statistics 27

Figure 7: Future Employment and Housing Growth, 2022–2046..... 31

Figure 8: Projected Traffic Volume Difference, 2024–2046..... 33

Figure 9: Projected Volume-to-Capacity Ratios (2046)..... 37

Figure 10: Modeling Scenarios 41

Figure 11: Committed Projects (2026-2031) 51

Figure 12: Recommended Projects (2026-2047) 53

Figure 13: Grant Contingent Projects..... 59

Figure 14: Illustrative Projects 65

Figure 15: Non-Motorized Spot Improvements 69

Figure 16: Visionary Major Street Network..... 73

Figure 17: Visionary Non-Motorized Network 75

Tables

Table 1: Committed Projects (2026-2031) 47

Table 2: Annual Programs (2026-2047) 49

Table 3: Recommended Projects (2026-2047) 52

Table 4: Grant Contingent Projects 58

Table 5: Illustrative Projects (Beyond 2047) 62

Table 6: Non-Motorized Spot Improvements..... 66

Table 7: Other Plans, Policies, and Programs..... 71

Table 8: Comparison of LRTP Estimated Revenues and Expenditures (Thousands)..... 78

Table 9: State Performance Measures and Targets 80

Table 10: Capital Transit Performance Measures and Targets..... 81

Appendices

Appendix A — Federal Requirements Checklist

Appendix B — Goals and Objectives

Appendix C — Public and Stakeholder Outreach

Appendix D — Existing and Projected Conditions

Appendix E — Modeling Alternatives

Appendix F — Recommendations and Funding

Appendix G — Performance Management and Compliance



1 Introduction

Helena became a metropolitan area after the 2020 Census showed its urban area population had grown past 50,000 people. That milestone triggered a federal requirement to form a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and develop a *Long Range Transportation Plan* (LRTP): a 20-year vision for how people and goods move through the region, whether by foot, bike, vehicle, or transit. The Greater Helena MPO brings together multiple local partners to guide how the broader region invests in a cohesive transportation system.

The Greater Helena MPO is a partnership between the City of Helena, City of East Helena, Lewis and Clark County, and the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT). Together, these agencies are responsible for coordinating how the region plans, prioritizes, and funds transportation improvements.

Two committees carry out that work. The Transportation Policy Coordinating Committee (TPCC), made up of elected and appointed officials from each partner agency, sets policy direction and gives final approval on major decisions, including adoption of this plan. The Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC), made up of staff from each partner agency, reviews technical work and makes recommendations to the TPCC. MPO staff coordinate this work day to day and manage public involvement throughout the process.



MPOs ensure federal transportation funds are directed where they're needed most, coordinate planning across city, county, and state agencies, and help the region prepare for growth.



1.1. MPO Planning Area

The LRTP planning area matches the Greater Helena MPO’s formal boundary, shown in **Figure 1**, which includes the Helena and East Helena urban areas along with surrounding county lands expected to see growth over the next 20 years. Throughout this plan, “Greater Helena MPO,” “Greater Helena Area,” and “planning area” are used interchangeably to describe this same boundary.

 **~40 miles**
of **bicycle facilities**

700 miles
of **roadway**



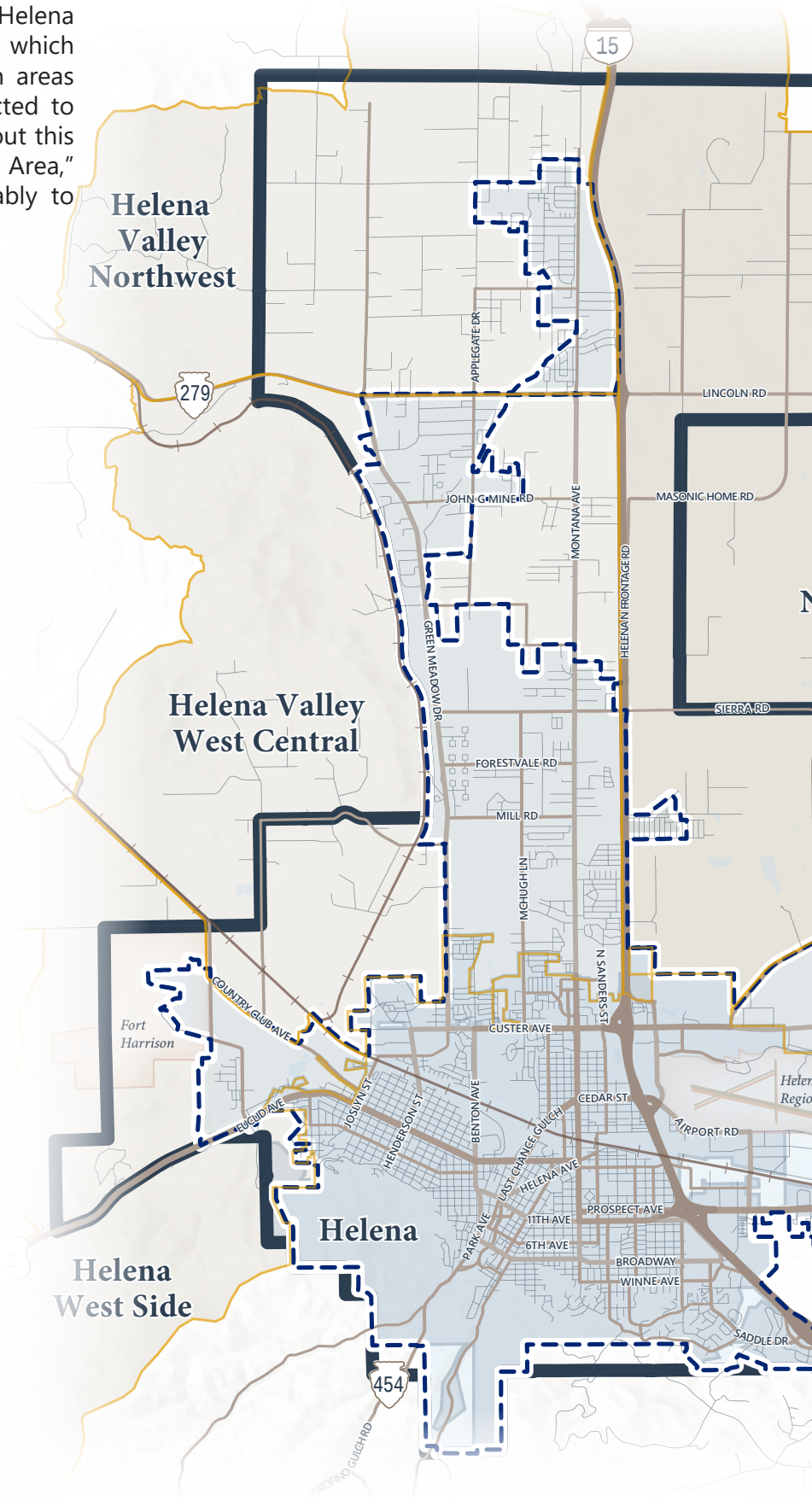
Located on local, regional,
and international
trade routes

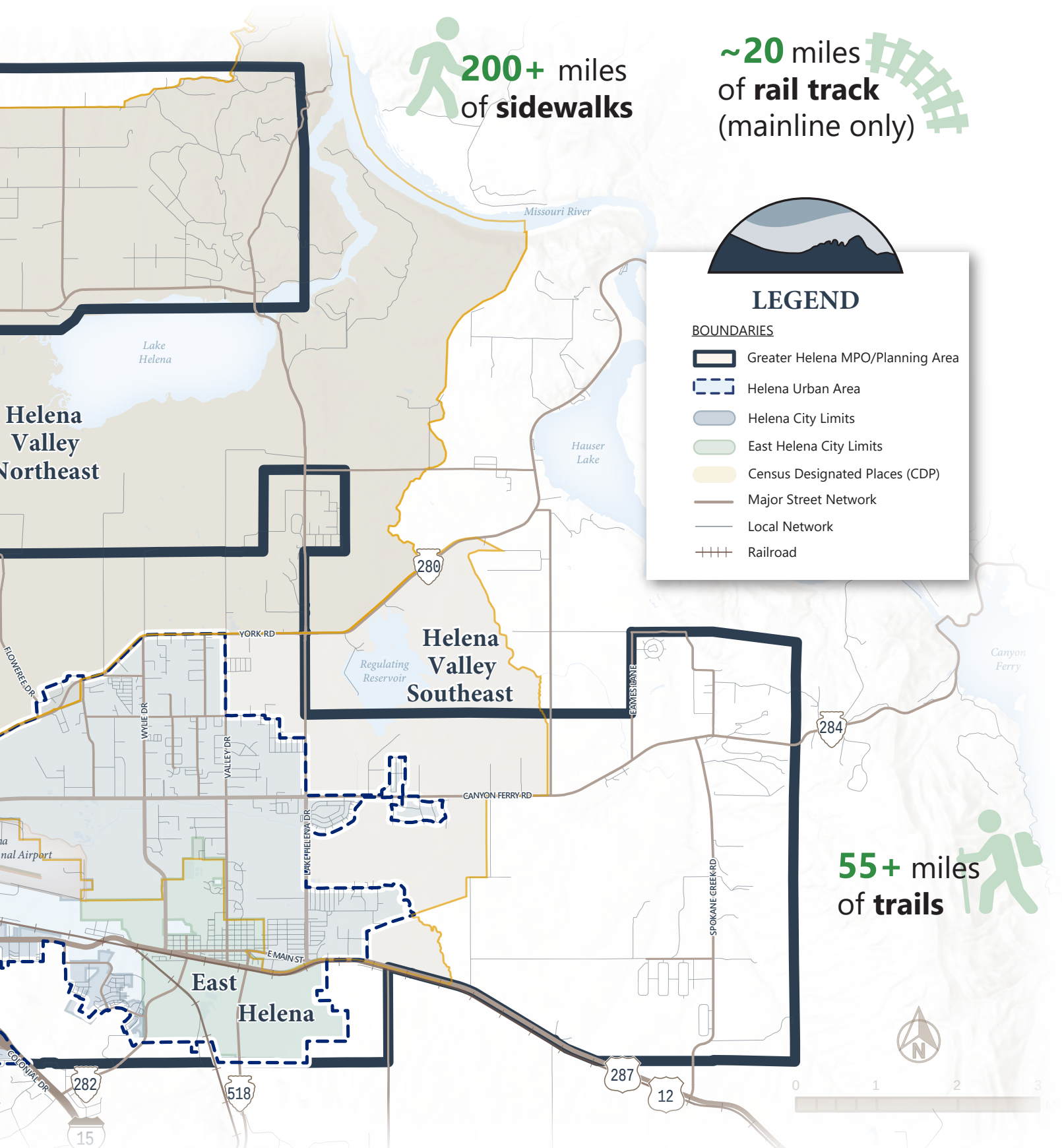


Curb-to-curb service
provided by **Capital
Transit**



 **53**
bridges





1.2. LRTP Purpose

The LRTP is the Greater Helena MPO’s guide for investing in the area’s transportation system over the next 20 years. It was developed through a collaborative process involving MPO partner agencies, local officials, and community members, and sets out where the system stands today, where growth is headed, what needs should be addressed, and which projects and programs are positioned to meet those needs within realistic funding constraints.

The plan considers every way people and goods move through the planning area, including roads, sidewalks, bike routes, transit, and freight. It reflects a performance-based planning process built on a detailed review of current conditions and future needs alongside public input and technical analysis, and results in a set of recommendations sized to what the MPO can reasonably afford over the plan’s 20-year horizon.

Federal law requires the LRTP to be updated at least every five years. That cycle gives the MPO a built-in opportunity to revisit community priorities, incorporate new data, and adjust course as growth, funding, and transportation needs continue to change.



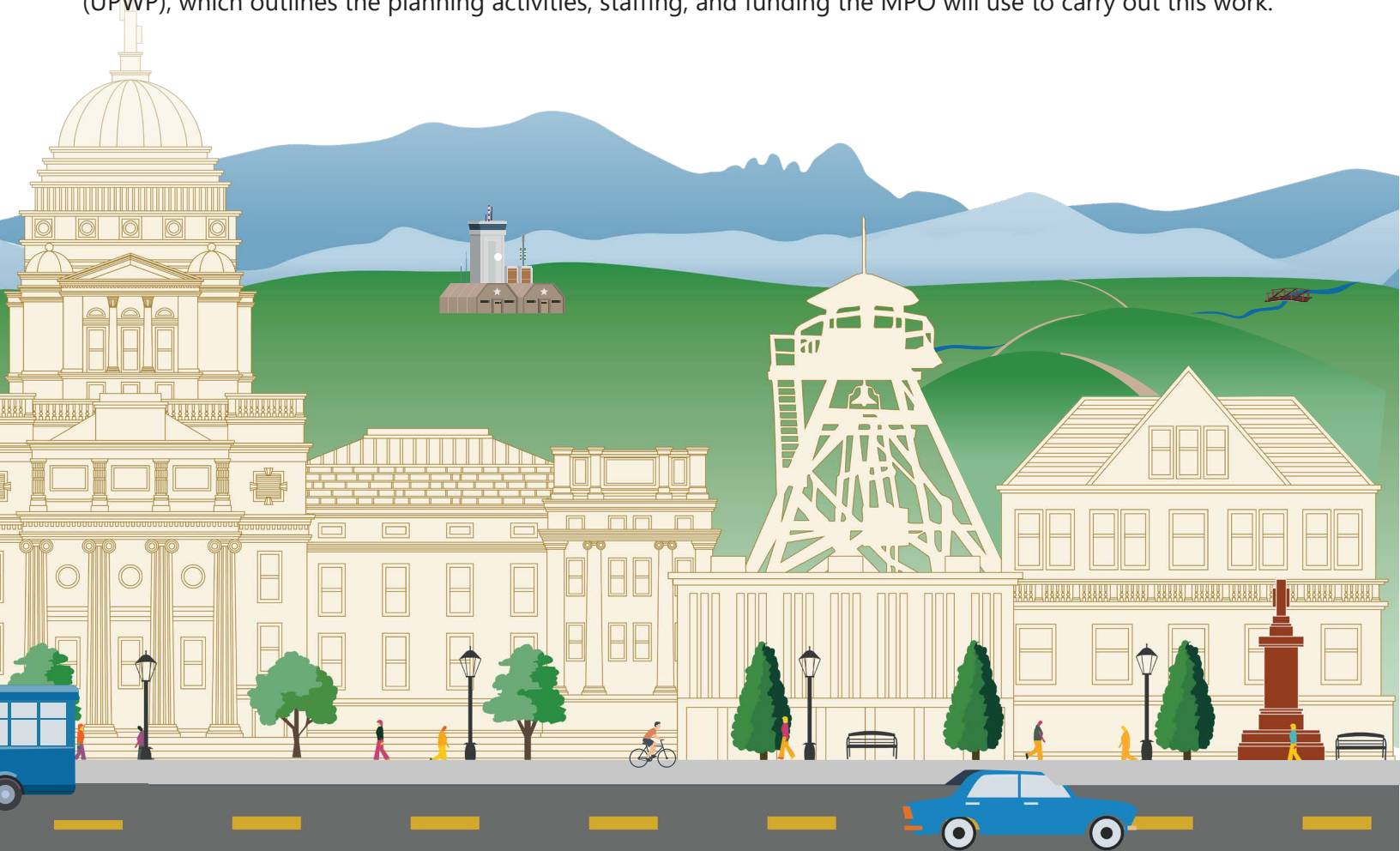
1.3. Federal Requirements for Transportation Plans

Federal law requires that MPOs serving urbanized areas plan for the safe and efficient movement of people and freight, support economic growth, connect housing and jobs, and reduce environmental impacts. The Greater Helena MPO's LRTP is built to meet these requirements, along with ten national planning factors that federal law directs MPOs to consider, including:

- ✓ Increasing safety and security for all users
- ✓ Increasing accessibility and mobility for people and freight
- ✓ Enhancing connectivity across and between modes
- ✓ Promoting efficient system management and operation
- ✓ Emphasizing preservation of the existing system
- ✓ Supporting economic vitality and competitiveness
- ✓ Improving resiliency and reliability, including stormwater impacts
- ✓ Protecting the environment and promoting energy conservation
- ✓ Enhancing travel and tourism

A complete checklist demonstrating how this plan addresses each federal planning requirement is provided in **Appendix A**.

To meet these requirements, the LRTP is performance-based, meaning it sets measures for safety, pavement and bridge condition, system reliability, and transit assets, and tracks progress against them on a regular basis. That tracking is used to guide decisions on which projects ultimately move forward and carries directly into how they get funded. The LRTP's 20-year vision shapes the MPO's *Transportation Improvement Program* (TIP), which schedules funding for specific projects over the short term, and feeds into MDT's annual *Statewide Transportation Improvement Program* (STIP) at the state level. Each year, the MPO also publishes a *Unified Planning Work Program* (UPWP), which outlines the planning activities, staffing, and funding the MPO will use to carry out this work.

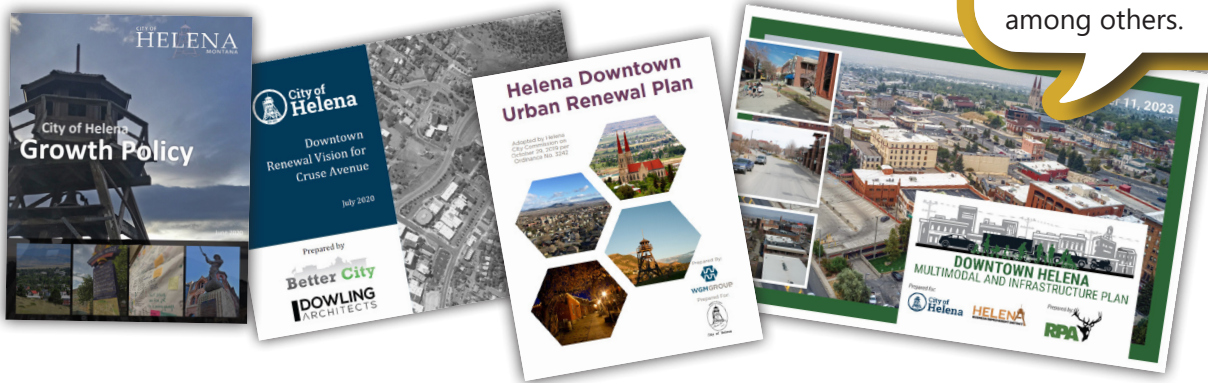


1.4. Planning Background

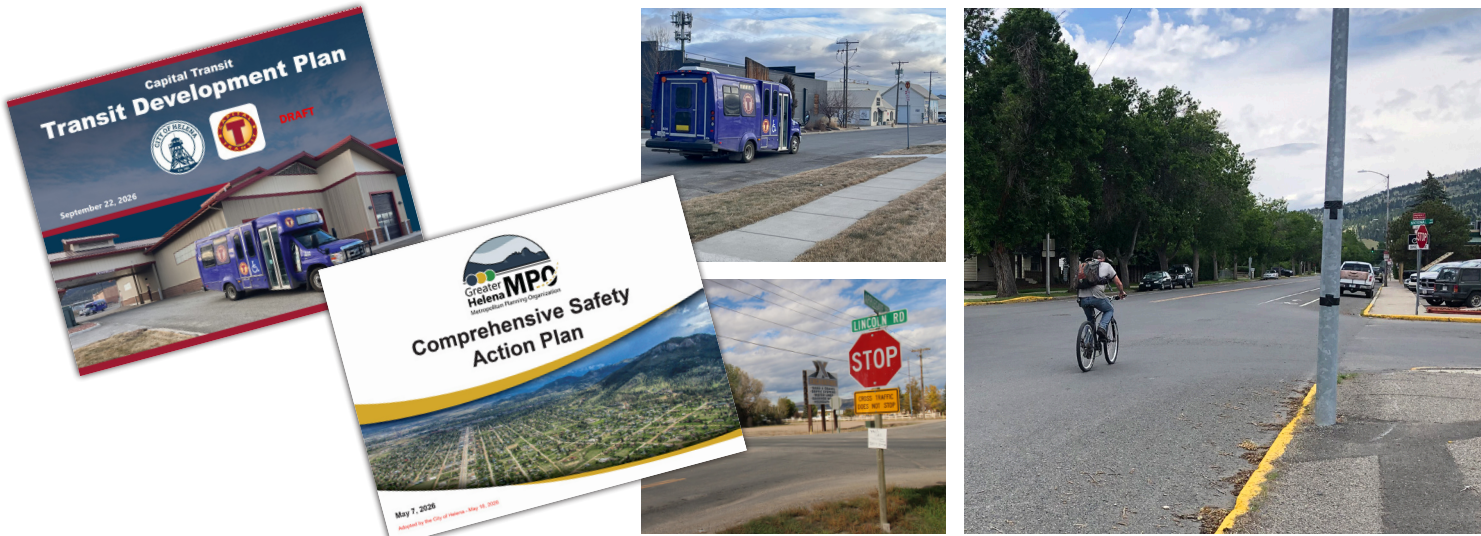
This LRTP is the first for the Greater Helena MPO, though it builds on a longer history of regional transportation planning among partner agencies, most recently the *Greater Helena Area LRTP - 2014 Update*. Since the region's last transportation plan, a number of local, county, and state planning efforts have been completed, and speak to how the region should grow and move. This 2026 plan is a chance to take a fresh look at how the region has changed, revisit those priorities, and synthesize that existing direction into a single, performance-based plan that reflects where Helena, East Helena, and Lewis and Clark County are headed. Plans reviewed in development of this LRTP include:

- *Lewis and Clark County and City of Helena Joint Infrastructure Study* (2026)¹
- *Helena Forward Land Use Plan* (2025)²
- *Lewis and Clark County Growth Policy* (2025)³
- *Downtown Helena Multimodal and Infrastructure Plan* (2023)⁴
- *City of East Helena Growth Policy* (2021)⁵
- *Active Living Wayfinding System* (2017)⁶
- *Greater Helena Area Community Transportation Safety Plan* (2013)⁷

The *Downtown Helena Multimodal and Infrastructure Plan* was itself a synthesis of 11 earlier City of Helena-led studies, including the *Five-Point Intersections and Corridor Connections Multimodal Traffic Study*, *Cruse Avenue Revitalization Plan*, *Downtown Urban Renewal Plan*, and *ADA Transition Plan*, among others.



This plan also draws directly on findings from parallel efforts, including the MPO's *Comprehensive Safety Action Plan* (CSAP) as well as Capital Transit's *Transit Development Plan* (TDP) and *Transit Asset Management (TAM) Plan*, so that safety, transit, operations, and infrastructure condition are tracked as part of one coordinated picture. Future MPO planning efforts, such as pedestrian or bicycle plans, are intended to be folded into the LRTP by amendment as they're completed, keeping the region's plans working from the same goals and priorities.



1.5. Goals and Objectives

Every recommendation in this plan is measured against a set of five goals developed specifically for the Greater Helena MPO. These goals reflect a review of local growth policies, state and federal planning priorities, and extensive input from the public and stakeholders gathered throughout the planning process, as detailed in **Appendix B**. These goals are designed to meet the area's evolving needs over the next 20 years. Each goal is supported by more specific objectives that describe how it can be achieved.



Goal 1

Ensure consistent infrastructure, maintenance, and operational reliability in the existing transportation system.

- Maintain motorized and non-motorized facilities
- Clarify long-term maintenance responsibilities
- Enhance seasonal maintenance activities



Goal 2

Enhance the reliability and efficiency of the transportation system for the safe movement of all users.

- Explore multimodal solutions
- Increase system redundancy and connectivity
- Improve traffic operations to reduce delay and conflict
- Optimize freight operations and emergency response



Goal 3

Promote transportation solutions that are sustainable, complementing future growth and maintaining community character.

- Coordinate transportation and land use planning
- Support tourism and economic vitality
- Consider and minimize impacts to the environment
- Integrate sustainable infrastructure



Goal 4

Improve accessibility, safety, and multimodal connectivity for all users.

- Ensure equitable access to walking, biking, and transit
- Improve safety in key activity centers
- Identify and close network gaps
- Enhance infrastructure to reduce conflicts



Goal 5

Deliver transportation improvements efficiently through collaboration, transparency, and innovation.

- Coordinate planning among regional partners
- Engage the public in transportation projects
- Pursue innovation to reduce costs and accelerate implementation

1.6. Public Engagement

Public input is central to the Greater Helena LRTP. Throughout the planning process, the MPO worked to make it easy for residents, businesses, and community organizations to learn about the plan and share what matters most to them. Guided by the MPO’s *Public Participation Plan*,⁸ engagement unfolded in three rounds timed to the planning process.



VISIONING (Fall 2025)

The first round of engagement introduced the LRTP and the MPO itself and gathered broad, visionary feedback on community priorities and goals. The round included two in-person open houses in Helena and East Helena, a month-long virtual open house and survey, and one-on-one meetings with seven stakeholder groups.



BASELINE CONDITIONS (Winter 2026)

The second round of outreach shared progress on existing conditions and introduced the CSAP and transit planning work. Alongside two in-person open houses and a second virtual open house, the MPO hosted a Stakeholder Safety Summit, coordinated with four additional stakeholder groups, and gathered transit-specific feedback through an online and paper survey to reach current and prospective Capital Transit riders.



RECOMMENDATIONS (Summer 2026)

The final round of targeted public and stakeholder engagement gave the community an opportunity to review and comment on draft recommendations. Outreach included Farmers Market pop-ups in Helena and East Helena, two in-person open houses, and a final month-long virtual open house with commenting maps showcasing draft recommendations.

Across all three rounds of engagement, the MPO heard consistent priorities:



Active Transportation & Safety

Better sidewalk continuity, safer crossings, and traffic calming near schools and other high-conflict locations.



Bicycle Network & Infrastructure

A more connected, comfortable bike network with more separation from traffic on busy streets.



Street Design & Intersection Performance

Redesigned intersections, updated signal timing, and other tools to reduce congestion and improve safety.



Railroad Crossings & Connectivity

Reduced delays and better pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicle access across rail lines.



Transit Service & Regional Mobility

Expanded, more reliable transit connecting Helena, East Helena, Fort Harrison, and the airport.



Land Use & Street Network Connectivity

Better-connected streets and coordination between land use and transportation decisions.



Infrastructure Maintenance & Operations

Consistent snow removal, pavement upkeep, and clarity on who maintains what.



Environmental Considerations

Green infrastructure, landscaping, and wildlife-friendly design integrated into transportation projects.



Equity, Accessibility & Mobility for All Users

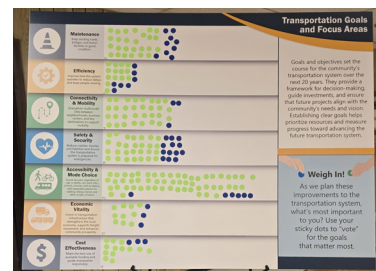
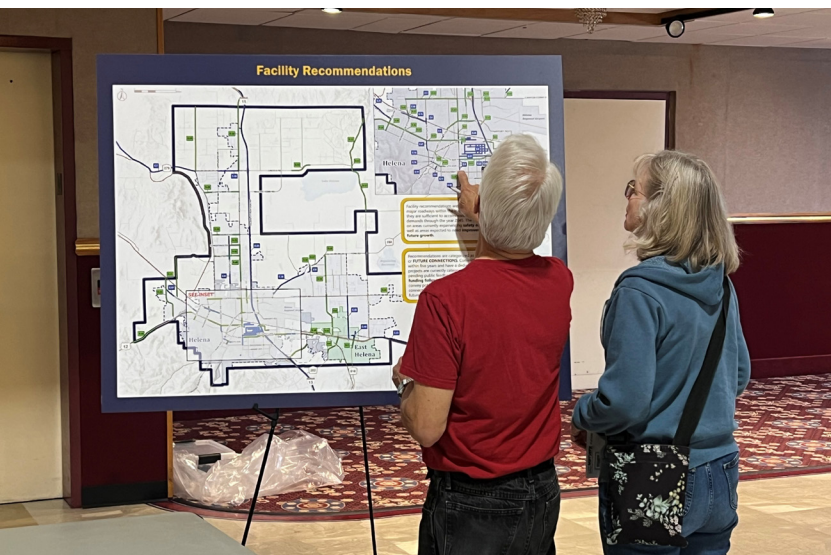
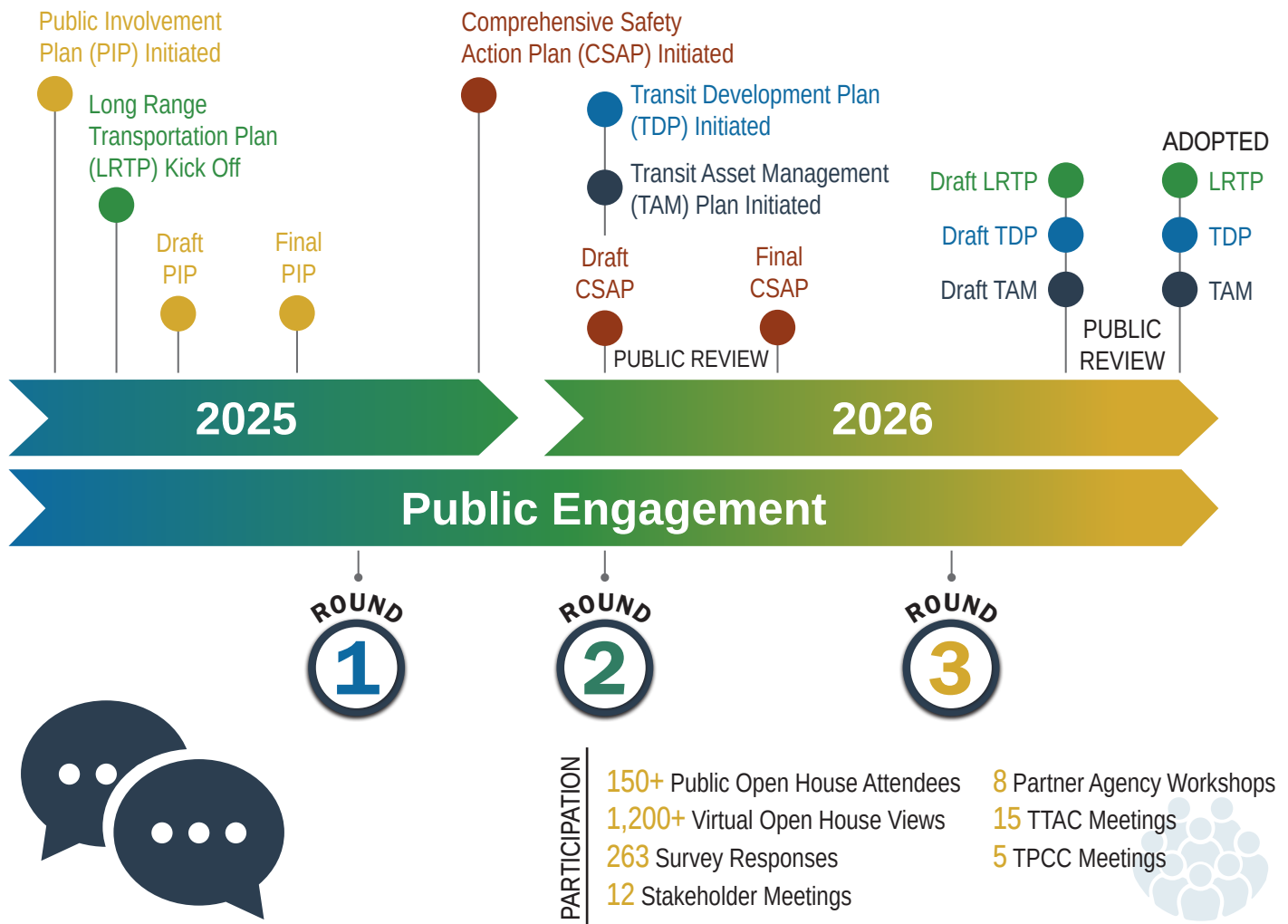
Transportation options for older adults, youth, people with disabilities, and households without a vehicle.



Public Engagement & Coordination

Continued transparency and coordination among the city, county, MDT, the railroad, and the community throughout planning and implementation.

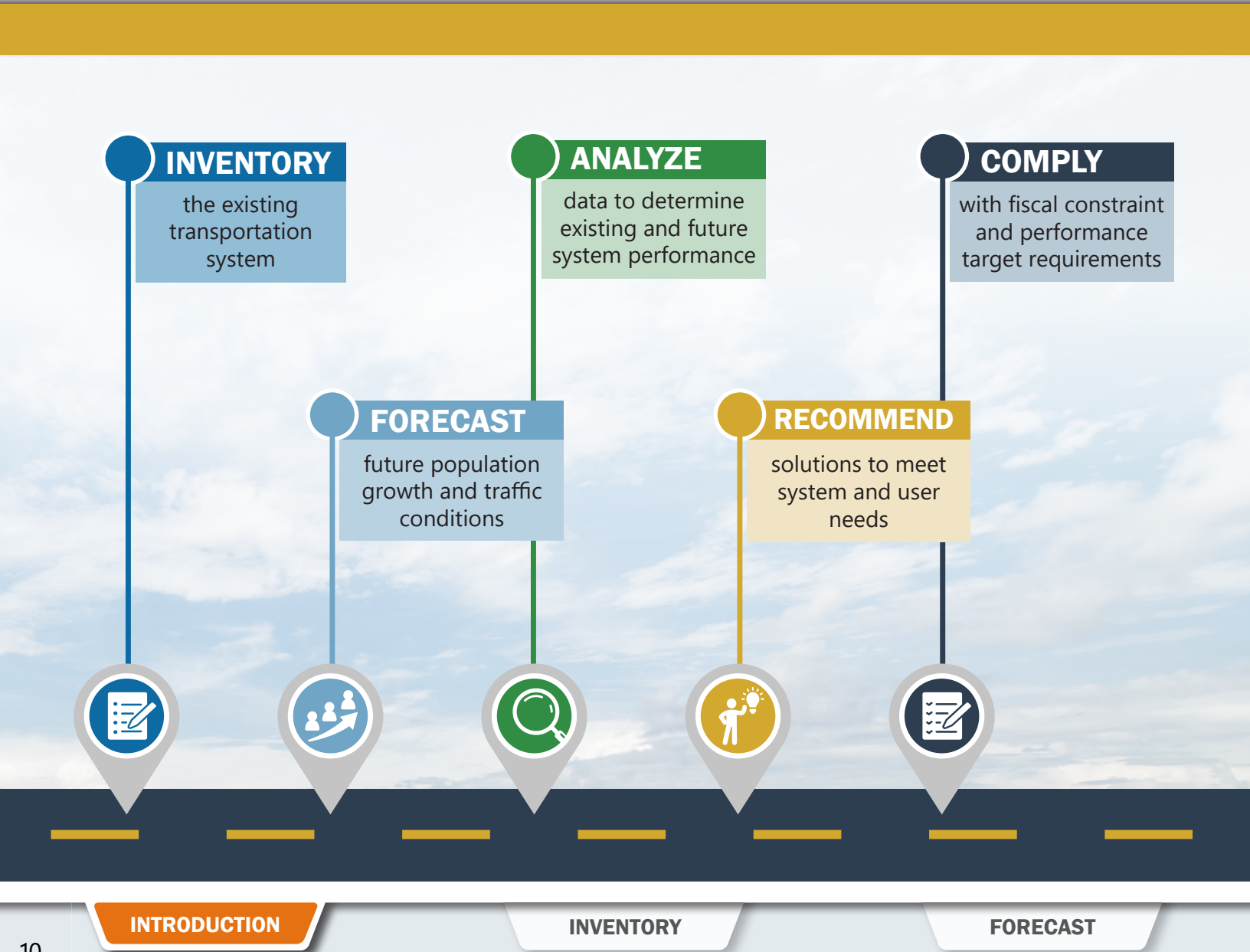
Throughout plan development, the TPCC and TTAC provided regular direction and technical review. The project website, www.greaterhelenampo.com/LRTP, was paired with email updates and social media posts to keep the public informed, share documents, and distribute information about upcoming outreach events. The timeline below highlights key milestones across the LRTP and its companion planning efforts. Full outreach summaries, including stakeholder meeting notes, survey results, and public comment logs, are provided in **Appendix C**.

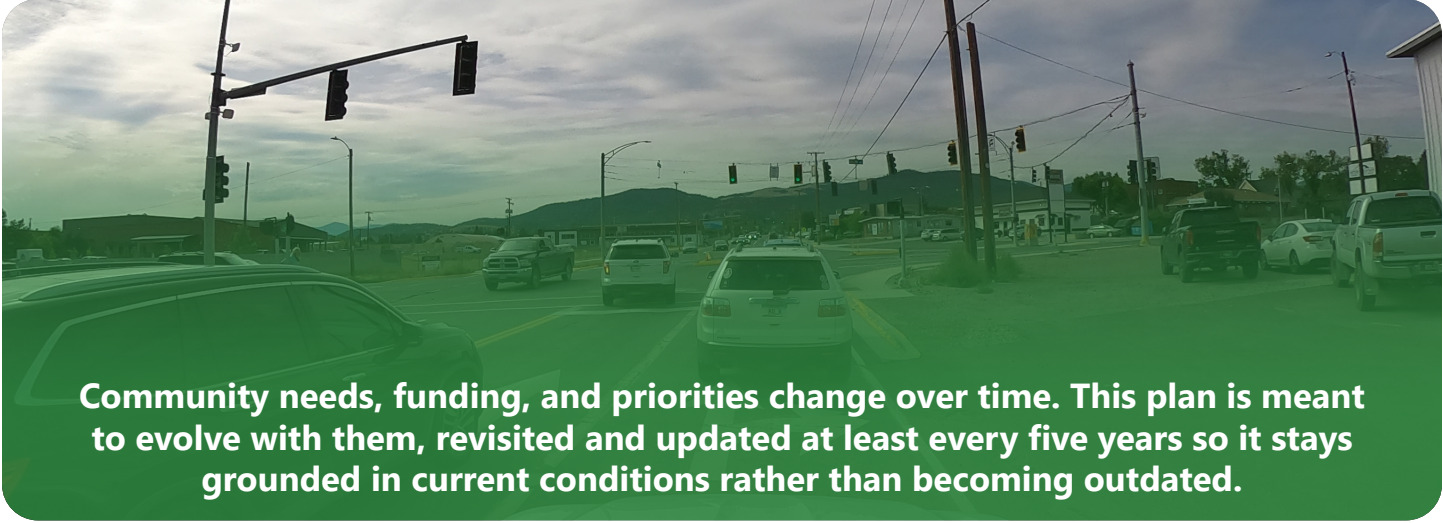


1.7. Plan Process

Developing the Greater Helena LRTP meant moving from understanding today’s transportation system to recommending investments for the next 20 years, following five steps:

-  **Inventory** the existing transportation system, cataloging roads, sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and transit routes to understand what’s currently in place across the region.
-  **Forecast** future population growth and traffic conditions, using demographic and land use projections to understand how travel demand will change over the planning horizon.
-  **Analyze** data to determine existing and future system performance, evaluating how well the current system works today and where it’s likely to fall short as the region grows.
-  **Recommend** solutions to meet system and user needs, developing a set of projects, programs, and policies sized to the needs identified in the previous steps.
-  **Comply** with fiscal constraint and performance target requirements, making sure recommendations fit within realistic funding expectations and support progress toward the plan’s performance measures.





Community needs, funding, and priorities change over time. This plan is meant to evolve with them, revisited and updated at least every five years so it stays grounded in current conditions rather than becoming outdated.

This plan does:

- ➔ Set priorities and direction for the region's transportation system
- ➔ Identify projects and programs worth pursuing
- ➔ Guide funding and implementation decisions as opportunities arise
- ➔ Get revisited and updated at least every five years as conditions change

This plan doesn't:

- X** Authorize construction
- X** Commit to a specific design, alignment, or configuration for any project
- X** Guarantee funding for any individual project
- X** Lock the region into a fixed sequence or timeline

Individual projects still go through design, environmental review, and funding before any work begins. This plan is what guides which projects move through that process, and in what order.





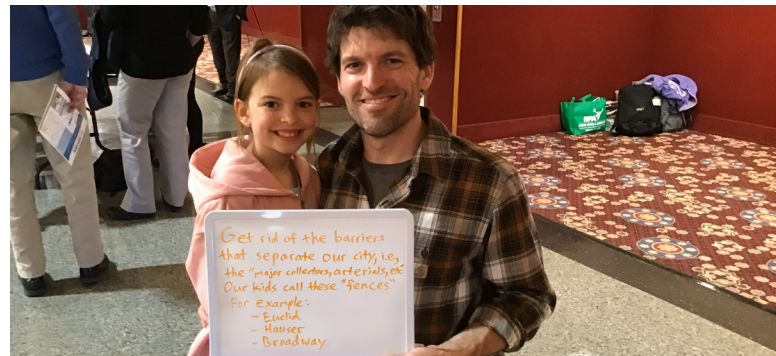
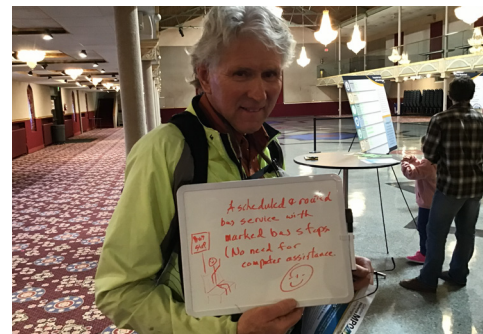
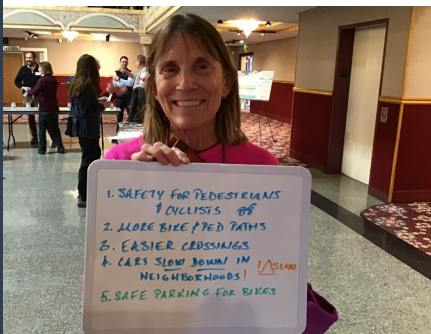
2 Inventory

Before looking at where the Greater Helena Area is headed, it helps to understand the transportation system as it exists today. This chapter looks at who lives here and how they get around, how the current network functions, and the condition of what's already in place. Later chapters build on this picture to identify needs and shape recommendations. Additional details can be found in the *Existing and Projected Conditions Memorandum* ([Appendix D](#)).

2.1. Our Community

Approximately 71,000 people live in Lewis and Clark County, with about 32,000 in Helena city limits and 2,000 in East Helena. The county has more than doubled in population since 1970, faster than both the State of Montana and the nation over the same period. Growth has historically been concentrated on the fringes of Helena city limits and in the unincorporated Helena Valley, but that pattern is starting to shift. The city's population growth has accelerated to 1.30 percent annually over the past ten years, compared to 0.69 percent over the last five decades, suggesting more growth is beginning to occur within city limits itself. Conversely, East Helena's population declined for years after the 2001 closure of the ASARCO smelter but is expected to increase as new subdivisions are developed.

Who lives in the Greater Helena Area, and how that's changing, shapes what the transportation system needs to do. A growing population means more trips on the network. An aging population means more residents relying on safe sidewalks, crossings, and transit rather than driving. And residents with disabilities may need infrastructure built with greater accessibility in mind, from curb ramps to transit vehicles. Understanding these patterns now helps this plan target investments where they'll matter most over the next 20 years.



We Are Changing



We are getting older: Nearly one in five county residents is 65 or older, a share expected to keep growing as the population ages in place.



More of us are working from home: Remote work has risen to about 13 percent of workers countywide, and 15 percent in Helena, a lasting shift from pre-pandemic commuting patterns.



Housing has outpaced population: The county's housing stock has more than doubled since 1980, even as household sizes have shrunk, meaning more homes are needed for roughly the same number of people.

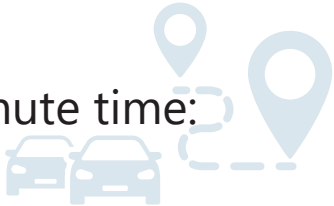


Jobs keep growing: Total employment has grown steadily to nearly 40,000 jobs, anchored by state government, healthcare, and education.

The Greater Helena Area at a Glance

Median age: **41**

Total employment: **~40,000 jobs** 

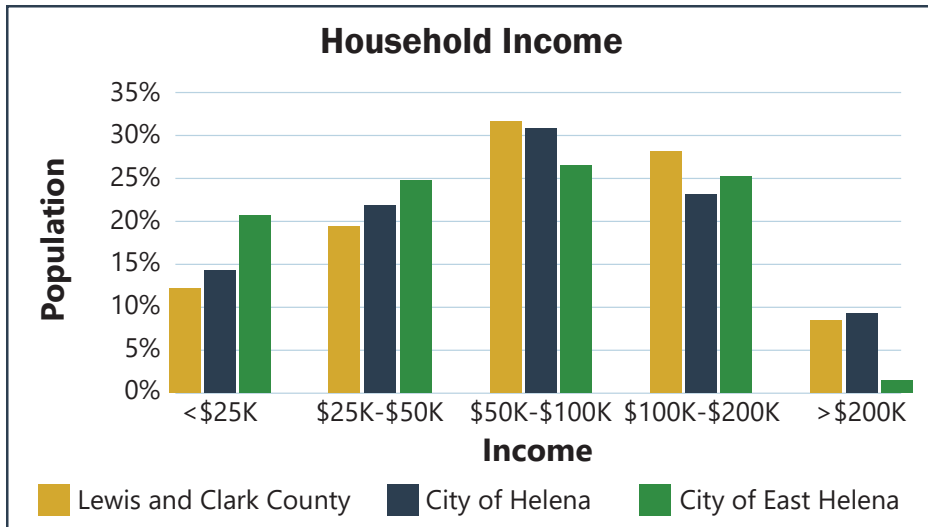
Average commute time: **17.5 minutes** 

Median household income: **\$74,543**

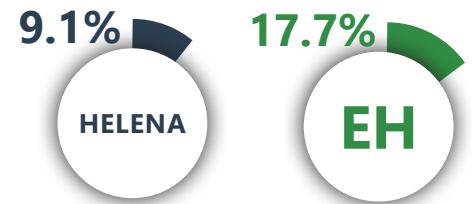
Population: **~71,000**
(Lewis and Clark County, 2020)

Total housing units: **33,600** 

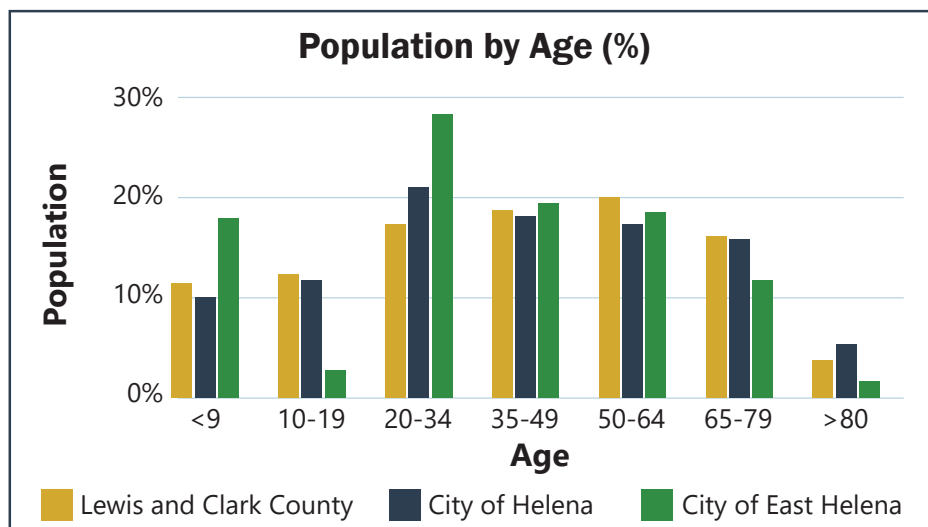
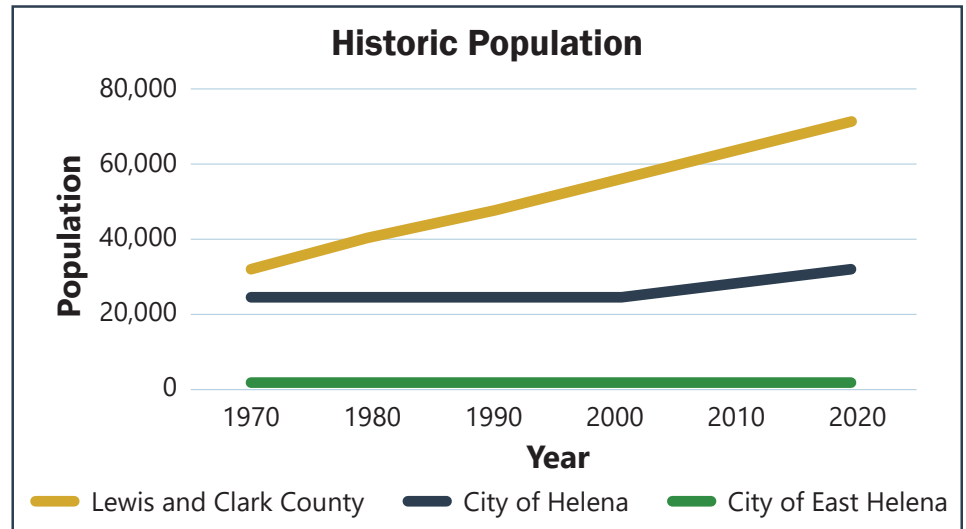




8.7% of county residents live in **poverty**



93,830 Projected Lewis and Clark County **population** by 2046



15% of county residents live with a **disability**



2.2. How We Get Around

The area’s roadways are organized by functional classification, a hierarchy that balances two competing objectives: mobility (moving people and goods efficiently over distance) and land access (providing direct access to adjacent property). At either end of this spectrum, interstates and local streets are optimized for one objective at the expense of the other, while arterials and collectors balance both to varying degrees. Preserving this hierarchy, rather than allowing individual corridors to serve conflicting functions, supports predictable, efficient travel as the area grows.

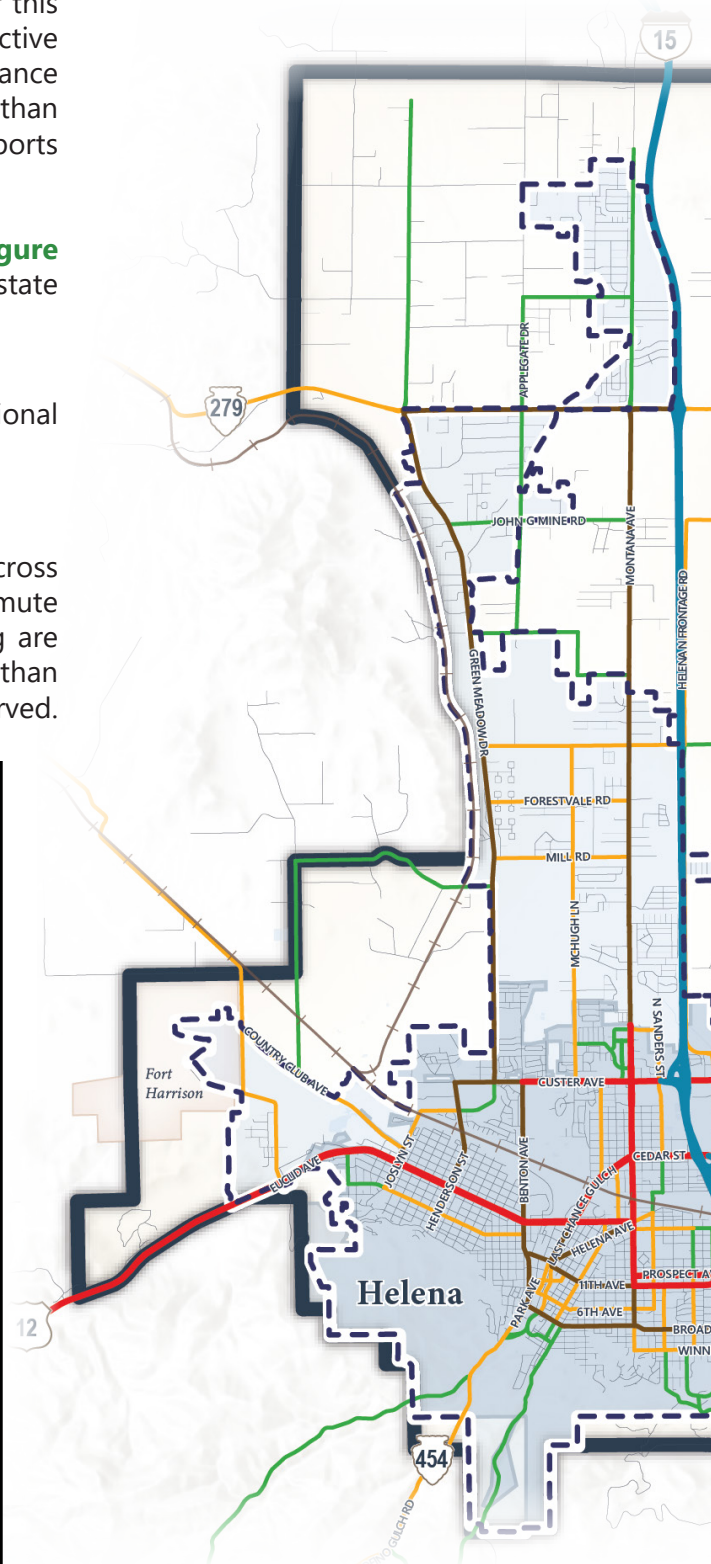
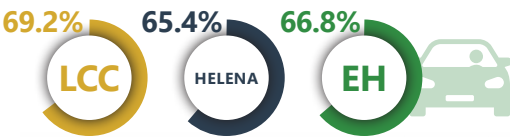
This LRTP focuses on the Major Street Network, shown in **Figure 2**, which is a connected system of collector, arterial, and interstate roadways described above (excluding local streets), which:

- ✓ Carry the highest volumes of traffic
- ✓ Connect neighborhoods, schools, business centers, and regional highways
- ✓ Form the backbone of the area’s transportation system

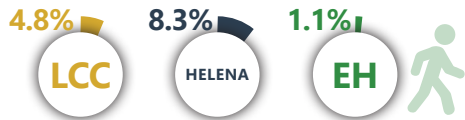
Driving alone remains the dominant way people get to work across the planning area, accounting for roughly 65-70 percent of commute trips depending on geography. Transit and bicycle commuting are minimal, walking is more common in Helena’s urban core than elsewhere, and noticeable growth in remote work has been observed.

Mobility	Interstate: Designed for long-distance, high-speed travel between cities and regions. Very limited access (on/off ramps only), focused entirely on mobility.
	Principal Arterial: Major roads that move people and goods quickly across the region. Prioritize mobility over access (few driveways, higher speeds).
	Minor Arterial: Connect neighborhoods and business areas to principal arterials. Balance mobility and access with moderate speeds and more intersections.
	Major Collector: Gather traffic from local streets and funnel it to arterials. Provide community access with moderate mobility.
	Minor Collector: Serve shorter trips, linking local streets to major collectors. Provide local access with lower speeds and mobility.
Land Access	Local Network: Provide direct access to homes, schools, and businesses. Prioritize access over mobility with low speeds.

COMMUTE TO WORK TRAVEL MODE Drive Alone



Walk



Bicycle



Work from Home

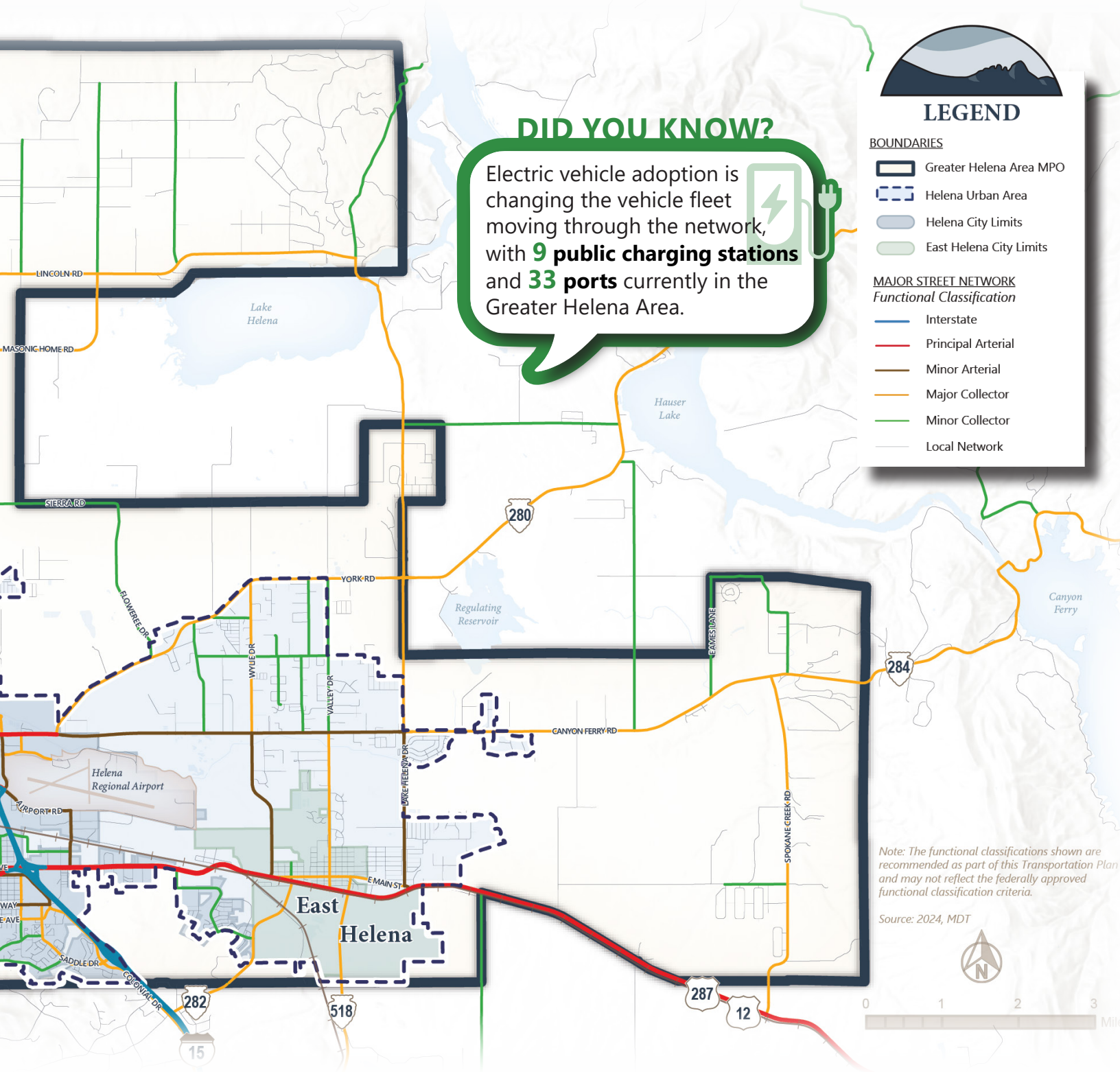
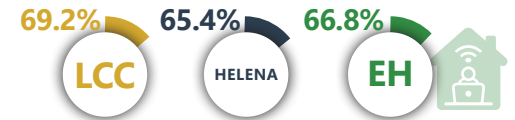


Figure 2: Existing Major Street Network

2.3. Walking and Biking

The Greater Helena Area is known for its trail system, with more than 70 miles of single-track mountain trails and close proximity to the Continental Divide Trail. Within Helena, sidewalks are relatively complete in the city core, and off-street trail and shared-use path connections such as the Centennial Trail provide important links across the community. On-street bicycle infrastructure, however, remains limited. The City of Helena adopted a Complete Streets resolution in 2010, requiring new and reconstructed roadways to accommodate all modes, but implementation has been gradual, and gaps in the network persist.

East Helena has a smaller sidewalk network concentrated around schools, downtown, and newer subdivisions, with no designated bike routes. In the unincorporated areas of Lewis and Clark County, non-motorized infrastructure is largely limited to occasional paved shoulders and isolated shared-use path segments.

E-bikes, electric scooters, and other micromobility devices are also becoming part of this network, and their growing use, along with local and state rules governing where and how they can operate, means the area’s sidewalks, trails, and bike facilities may need to accommodate a wider mix of speeds and users than originally designed for.

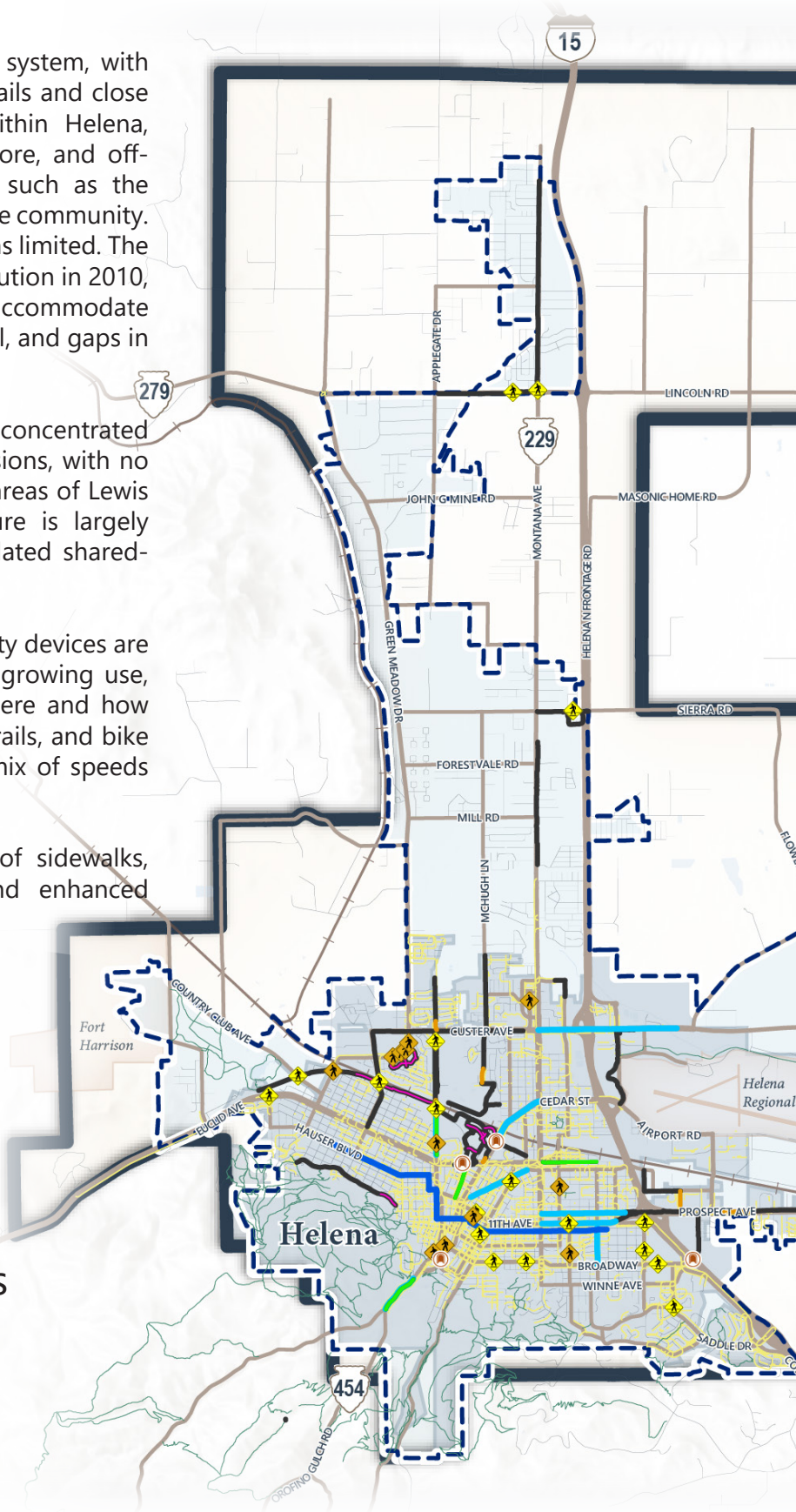
The existing multimodal network, consisting of sidewalks, bicycle facilities, shared-use paths, trails, and enhanced crossings, is shown in **Figure 3**.



4 Grade-Separated Crossings

11 Enhanced Pedestrian Crossings

**As of spring 2026*



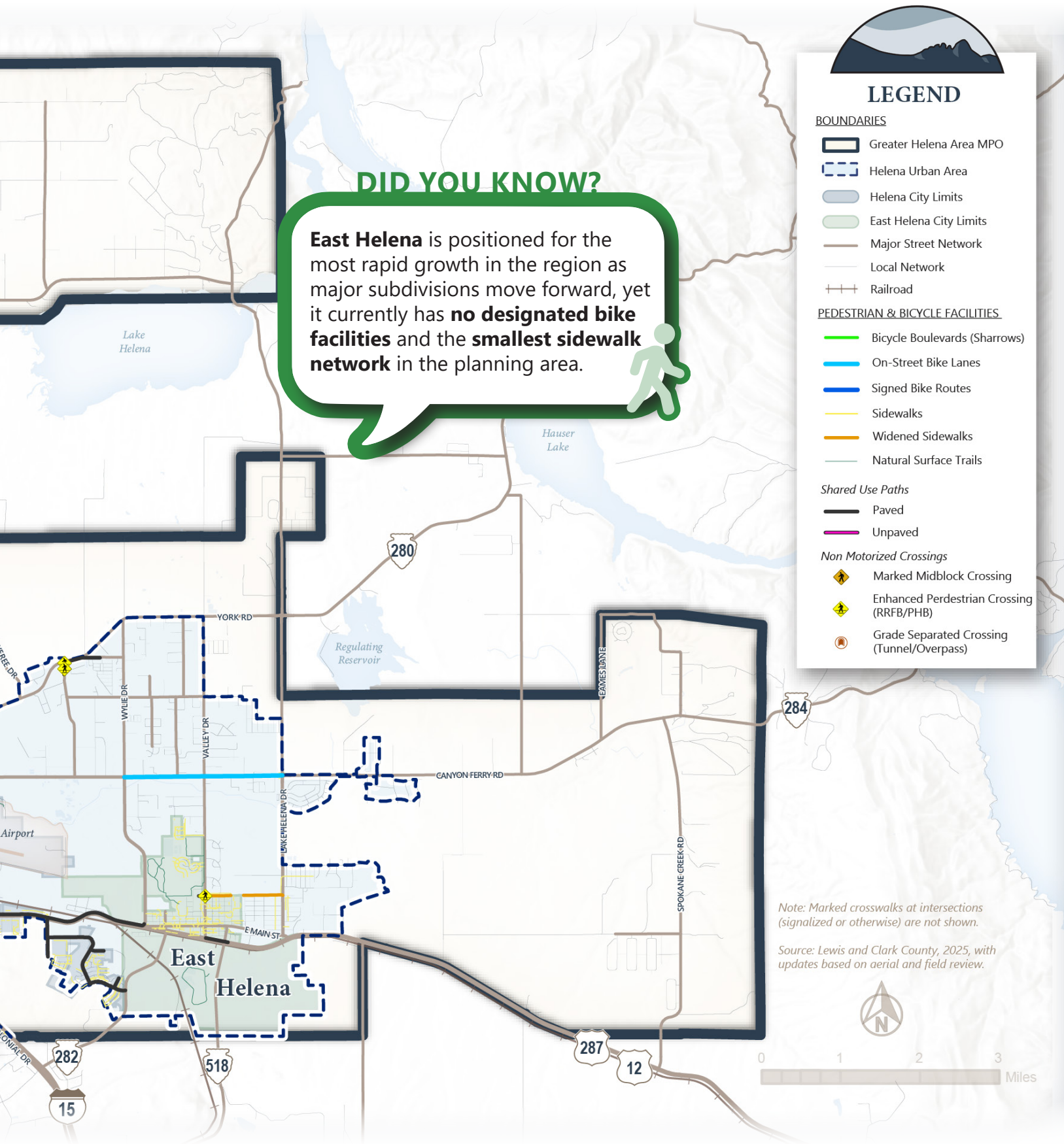


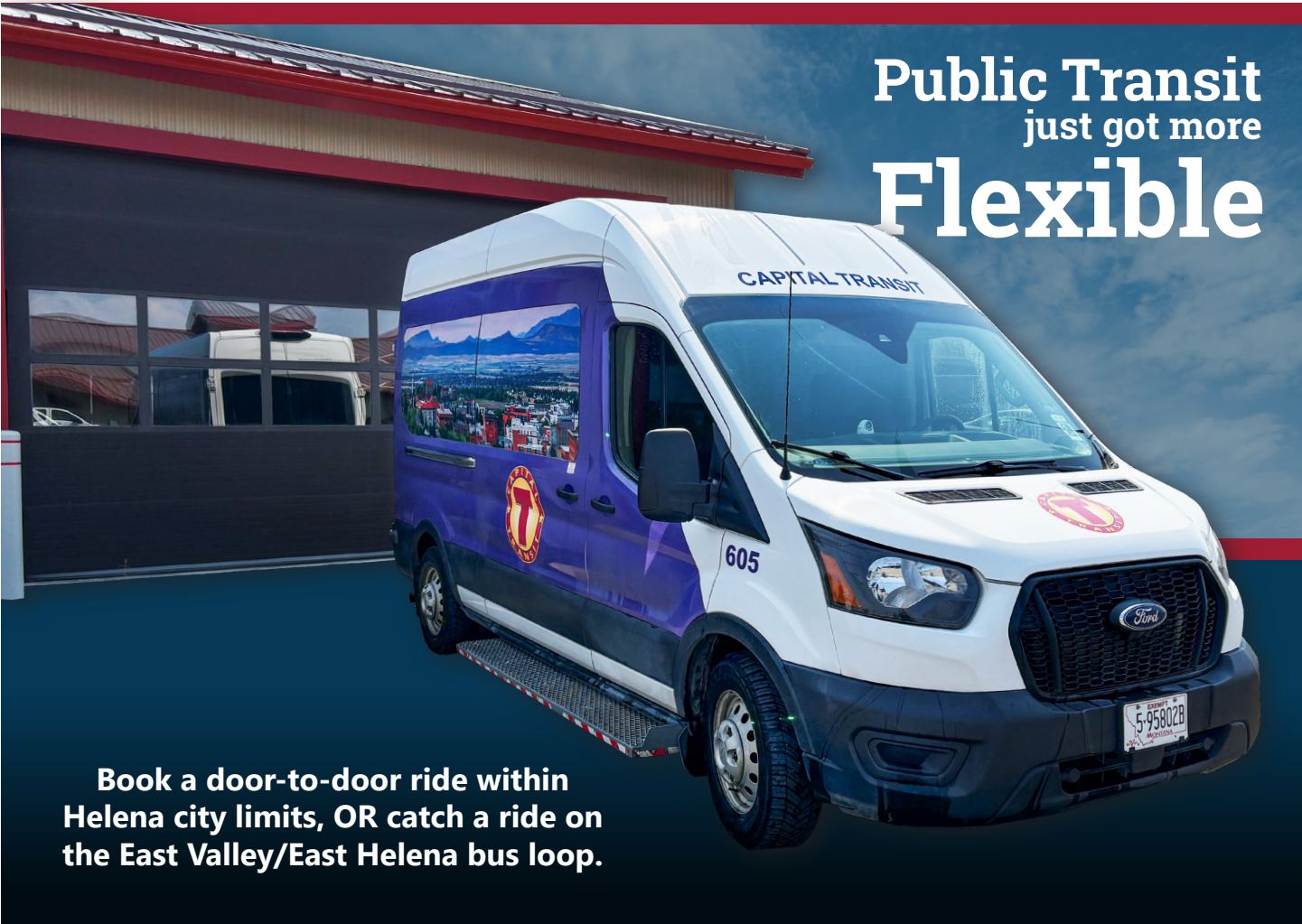
Figure 3: Multimodal Network

2.4. Transit

Capital Transit launched in 1979 as a demand-response, dial-a-ride service. It introduced fixed routes in 2016 (the Red and Blue Routes within Helena) plus a limited demand-response East Valley Bus to East Helena, but pandemic-era ridership declines and staffing shortages pushed the system back to a curb-to-curb, demand-response model in 2022. Today, the service operates a fleet of 14 vehicles within Helena city limits on weekdays from 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., plus a twice-daily East Valley Bus with service to East Helena.

Fares were updated in October 2023, the system’s first adjustment in more than 40 years. Pre-scheduled rides, booked up to a day in advance, cost \$3.00 (\$1.00 for seniors, riders with disabilities, and other qualifying groups), while same-day requests carry a premium fare of \$5.00 (\$2.00 discounted). Even with that increase, fare revenue covers only a small share of the system’s operating cost, about four percent, with the remainder funded primarily through the City of Helena’s General Fund alongside state and federal sources.

Ridership has stabilized under the current model, averaging about 3,320 boardings a month, though it remains below pre-pandemic levels. Weekday-only service, a limited operating window, and a service area confined to city limits leave gaps for riders needing early morning, evening, weekend, or regional travel, gaps the agency’s *Transit Development Plan*⁹ evaluates in more detail.



Public Transit
just got more
Flexible

**Book a door-to-door ride within
Helena city limits, OR catch a ride on
the East Valley/East Helena bus loop.**

Two Ways to Ride

Helena City Limits

Monday - Friday

6:30am - 6:00pm

In Helena, the bus comes to you. Tell us where and when, and the bus picks you up and drops you off at the door. Book up to one day ahead **in the app** or **by phone**.

Ready to Ride?

Schedule by using the app or call
406-447-8080, Extension 1

East Valley/East Helena

This bus runs a round-trip loop between the Capital Transit Station and the East Valley service area. (Monday–Friday, closed federal holidays.)

Morning Loops:

Depart the Transit Station at 8:00am and 9:00am

Afternoon Loops:

Depart at 2:00pm and 3:00pm

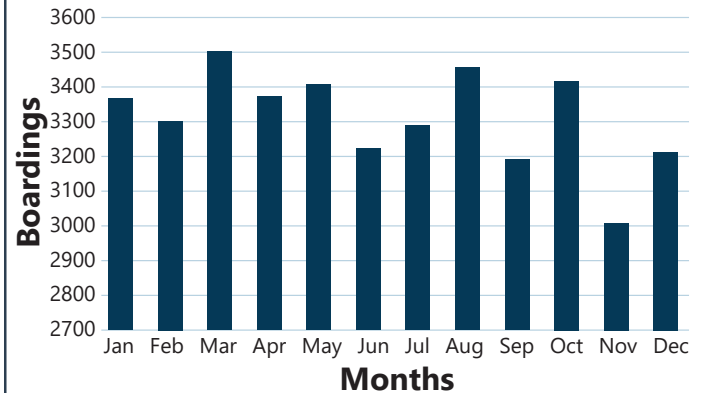
Each loop leaves the Capital Transit Station, serves the East Valley, including two designated walk-on stops in East Helena, then returns to the Transit Station. Each loop takes an hour.

There are two ways to ride:

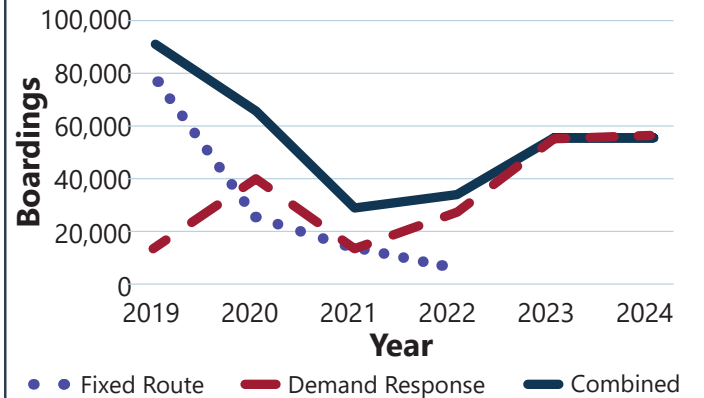
- **Call ahead** (406-447-8080, ext. 1) to schedule pickup/drop-off **anywhere within the East Valley service area** at the **pre-scheduled fare**.
- **Walk up** to one of the East Helena stops, no reservation needed. **Same-day fare** applies.



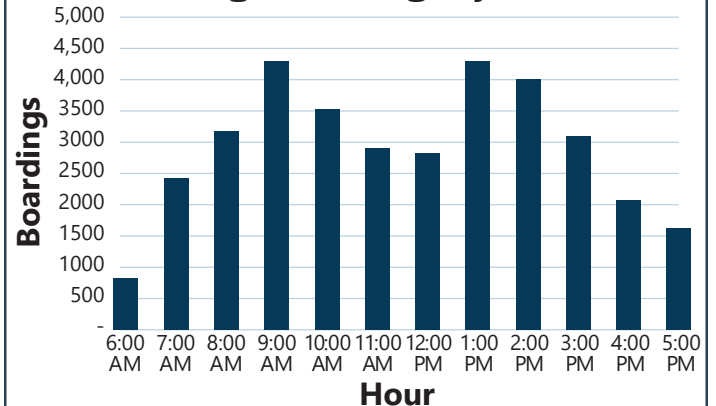
Average Boardings by Month (2022-2026)



Ridership



Average Boardings by Hour



2.5. Freight, Rail, and Air

Freight, rail, and air infrastructure support the Greater Helena Area’s economy and everyday life, from stocked store shelves to construction materials arriving on time. Helena sits along important regional and international trade routes, connecting to Bozeman, Butte, Great Falls, and Missoula via US 12, US 287, and I-15, and forming part of the Canamex Corridor, a federally designated trade route linking Canada, the United States, and Mexico.



Freight: With no designated truck routes through the planning area, geography and trade patterns largely dictate where trucks travel. As shown in **Figure 4**, I-15 carries the heaviest volumes, about 1,100 commercial vehicles a day, while US 12 threads through the city carrying 350 to 550 heavy vehicles daily. Truck traffic is expected to keep growing as freight increasingly shifts toward trucking statewide.

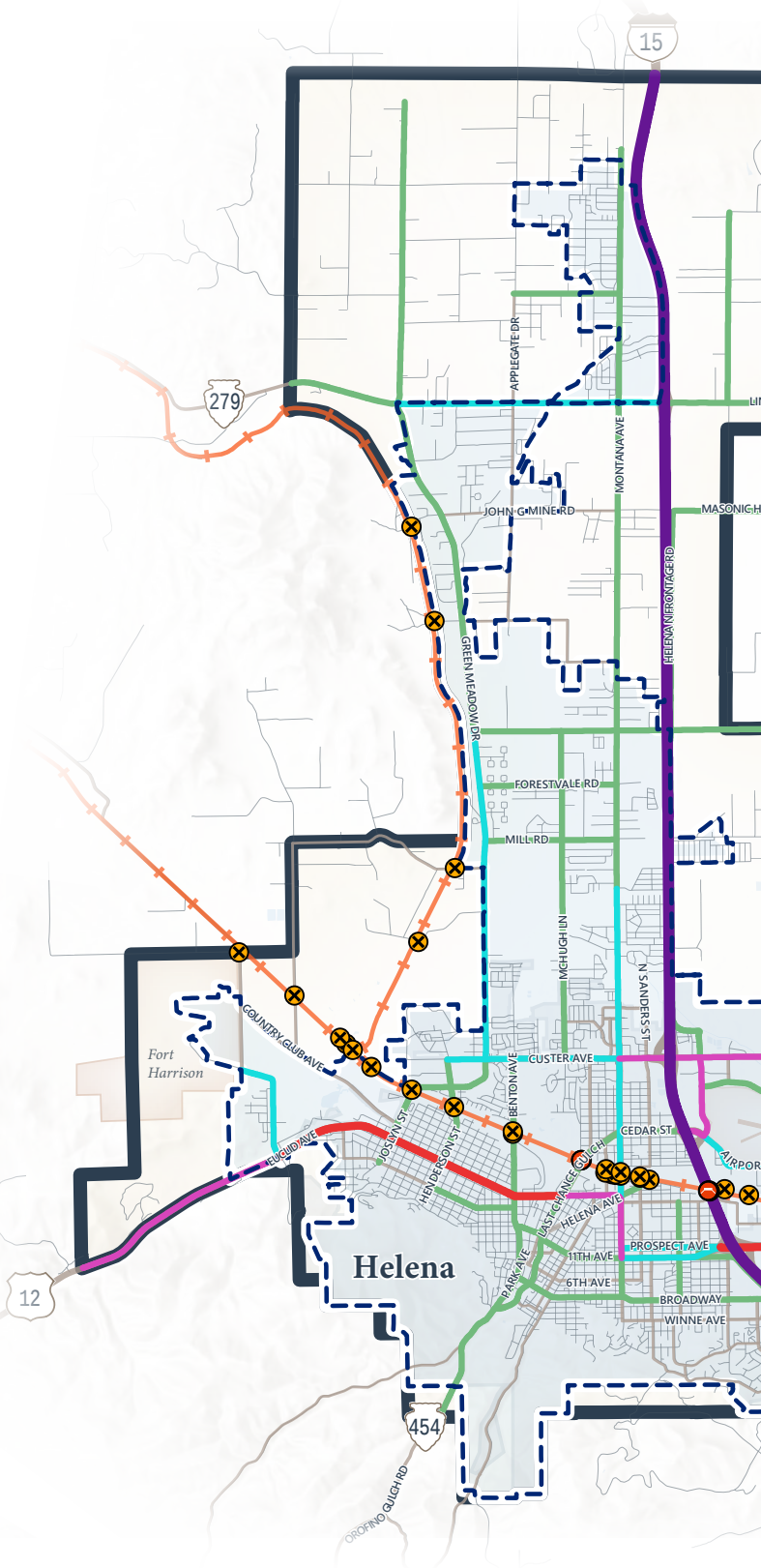


Rail: BNSF Railway operates roughly 20 miles of mainline rail and several spur lines through the area. About 35 trains pass through Helena daily. At-grade crossings at Montana Avenue, Carter Drive, and Benton Avenue remain a major source of delay and safety concern, though a quiet zone established in 2017 between Joslyn Street and Carter Drive has reduced horn noise through Helena.

While no passenger rail service exists today, the City of Helena has supported restoring passenger service and formally joined the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority (BSPRA) in 2024. The proposed Big Sky North Coast Corridor would connect Helena to Billings, Bozeman, and Butte, linking to the national Amtrak network, with the historic Helena Train Station identified as a preferred future stop. Service restoration, if it moves forward, is anticipated in the 2030s. As corridor planning advances, the MPO will continue coordinating with BSPRA on preserving station access and multimodal connections (see **Section 5.5**)



Air: Helena Regional Airport supports both passenger and freight traffic, with air cargo serving specialized, time-sensitive shipments rather than bulk freight. The airport also anchors a cluster of non-aviation businesses, including Helena College’s Airport Campus and Costco, that generate their own freight and travel demand.



 **~203,000 boardings at**
Helena Regional Airport (2025)

**11 at grade
rail crossings
on the major
street network**



LEGEND

BOUNDARIES

-  Greater Helena Area MPO
-  Helena Urban Area
-  Helena City Limits
-  East Helena City Limits
-  Major Street Network
-  Local Network

PUBLIC RAIL ELEMENTS

-  Railroad
-  At Grade Rail Crossing
-  Railroad Overpass

2024 TRUCK VOLUMES

-  0 - 50
-  51 - 150
-  151 - 300
-  301 - 500
-  501 - 1100

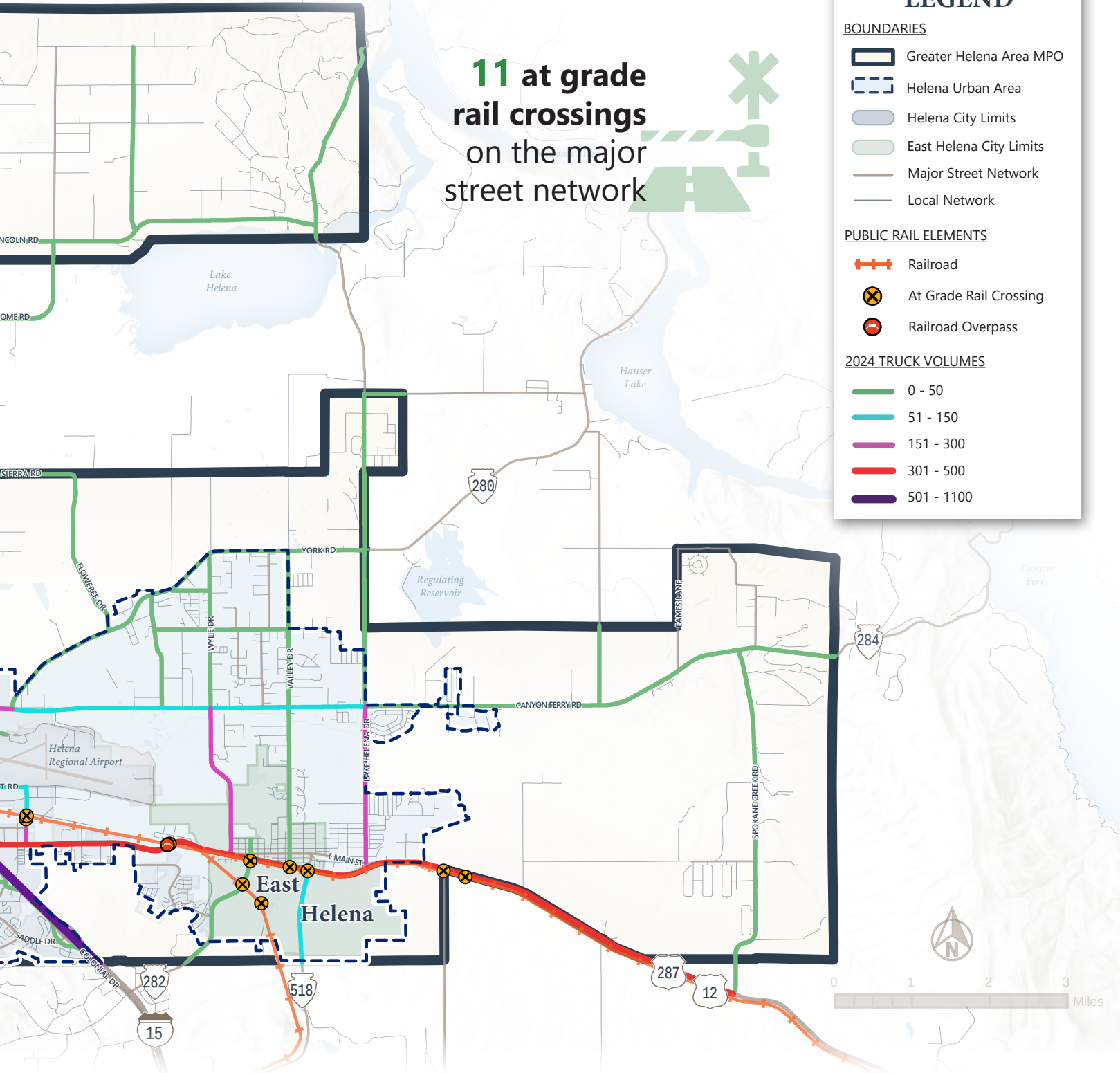


Figure 4: Goods Movement Network

2.6. System Condition

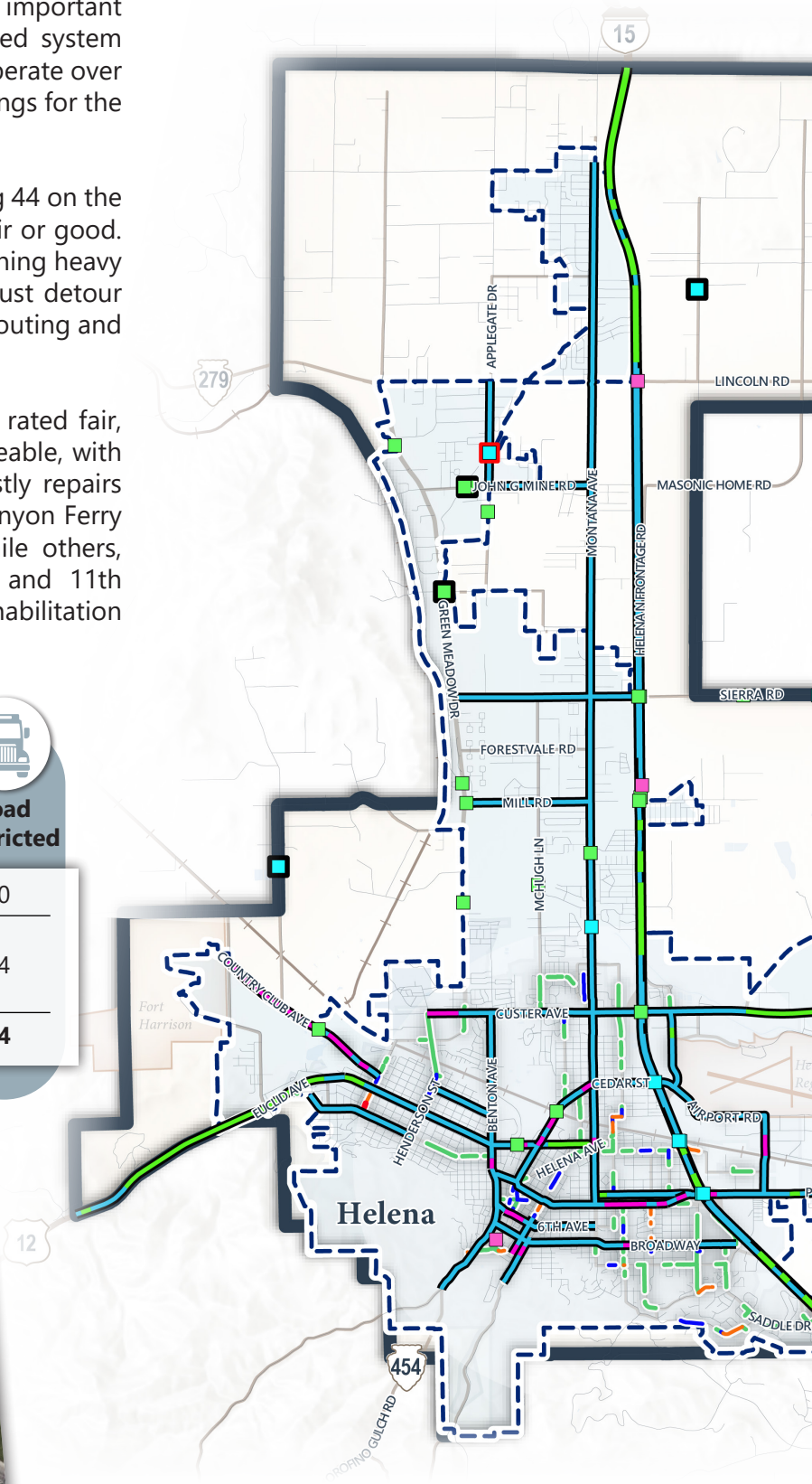
Keeping existing infrastructure in good repair is as important as building new capacity, since a well-maintained system serves residents more reliably and costs less to operate over time. Current pavement and bridge condition ratings for the Greater Helena Area are shown in **Figure 5**.

The Greater Helena Area has 53 bridges, including 44 on the major street network, most of which are rated fair or good. Four of those bridges carry load restrictions, meaning heavy vehicles like trucks and emergency apparatus must detour around them, a limitation that can affect freight routing and emergency response times.

Most of the major street network’s pavement is rated fair, meaning it shows some wear but remains serviceable, with continued upkeep important to avoid more costly repairs later. Some segments, including parts of I-15, Canyon Ferry Road, and US 287, rate good to excellent, while others, including Country Club Avenue, Valley Drive, and 11th Avenue, rate poor and are candidates for major rehabilitation rather than routine maintenance.

Owner	 Structures	 Good/Fair	 Poor	 Load Restricted
MDT	27	25	2	0
Lewis & Clark County	17	16	1	4
Total	44	41	3	4

Major Street Network Structures and Condition Ratings



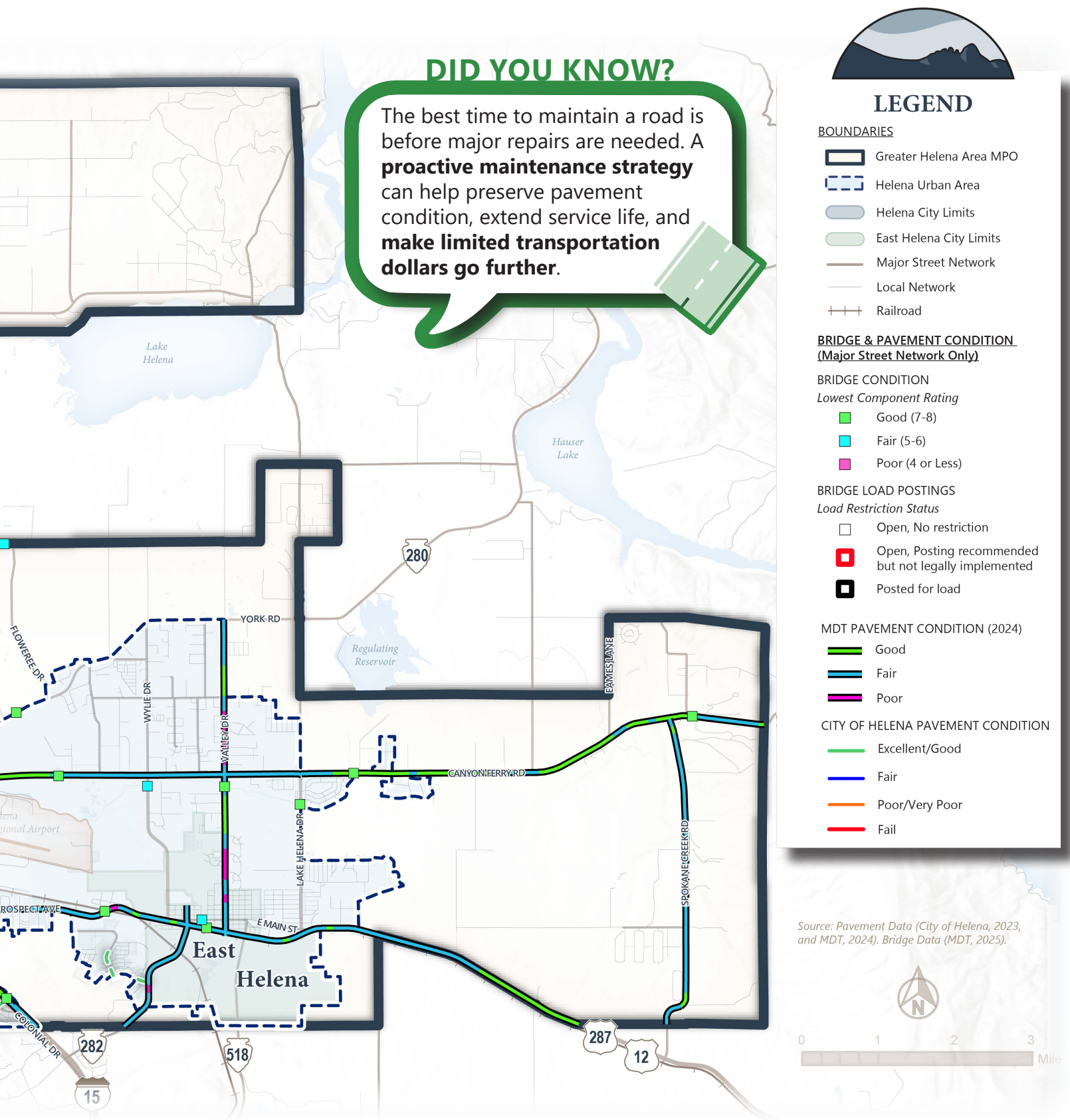


Figure 5: Bridge and Pavement Conditions

2.7. Safety

Between 2020 and 2024, 4,385 crashes were reported within the planning area. As shown in **Figure 6**, roughly 90 percent occurred within the Helena urban boundary, concentrated along principal arterials such as Custer Avenue, Montana Avenue, and US 12. About two percent of crashes were severe, resulting in a fatality or serious injury. A more detailed analysis of crash trends and safety strategies is provided in the MPO's *Comprehensive Safety Action Plan*.¹⁰

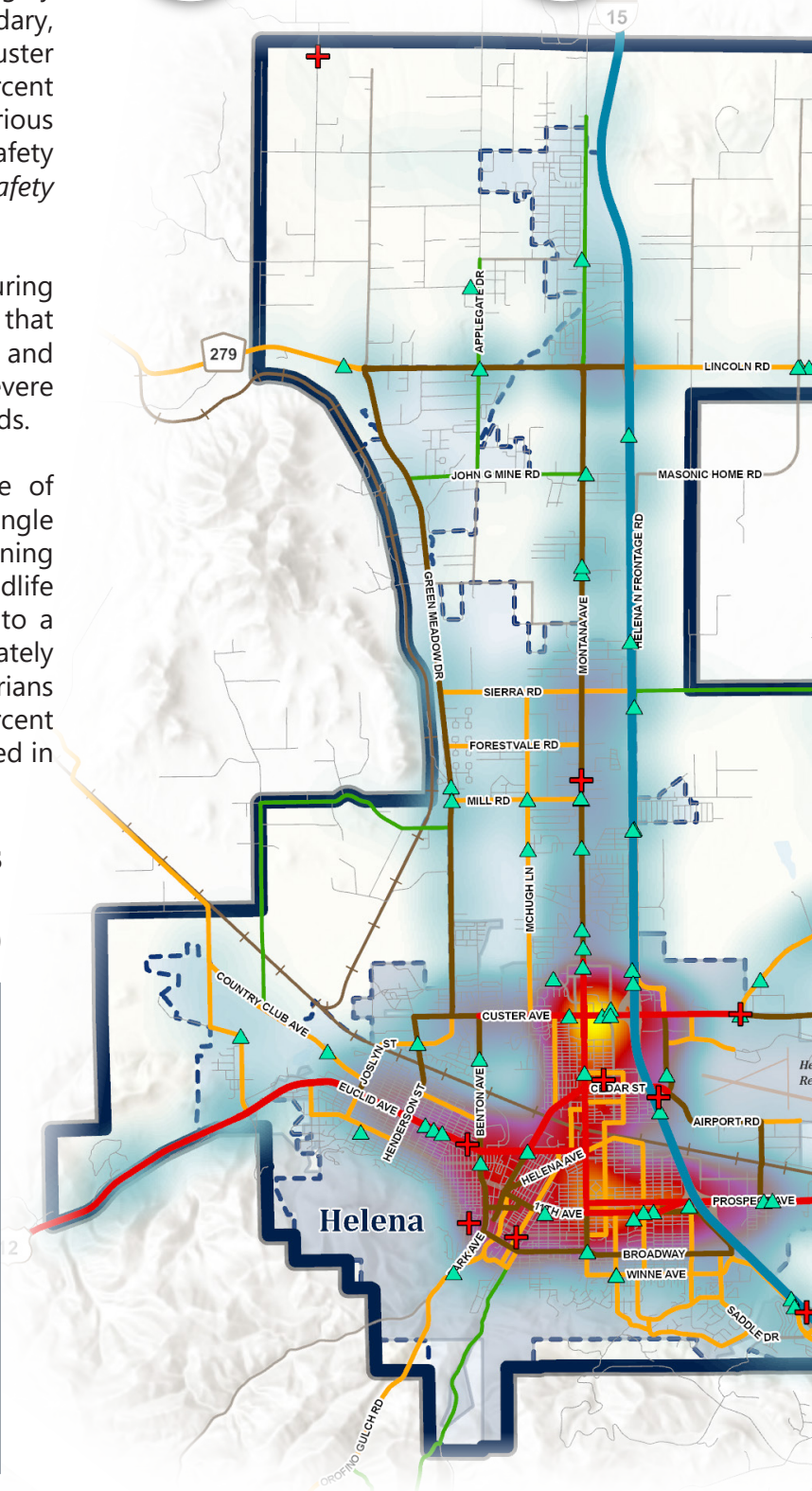
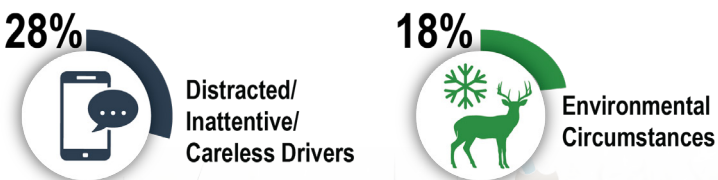
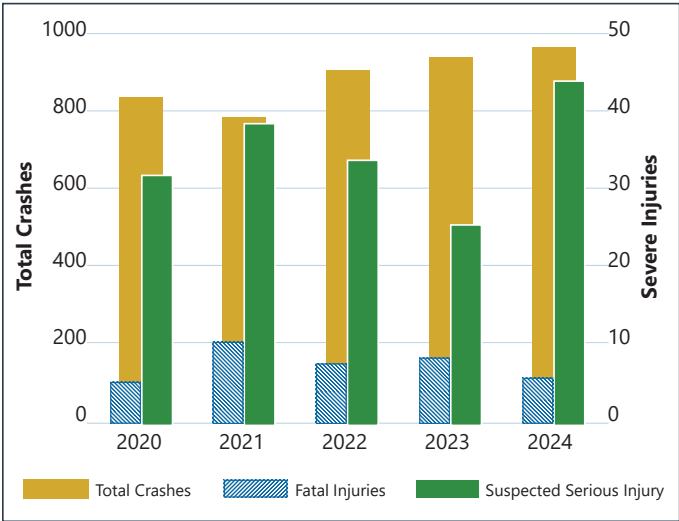
Most crashes happen in clear weather on dry roads during daylight, when most driving happens. But conditions that make driving more difficult such as darkness, snow and ice, still play a meaningful role, and on average, severe crashes are more likely to occur at night on unlit roads.

Driver behavior is a factor in a substantial share of crashes. Distracted or inattentive driving is the single largest contributing circumstance, followed by running off the road and environmental circumstances like wildlife or winter conditions. Impaired driving contributes to a smaller share of crashes overall but is disproportionately present in the area's severe crashes. Similarly, pedestrians and bicyclists were involved in just under three percent of all crashes, but 17 percent of these crashes resulted in death or serious injury.

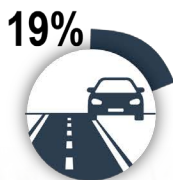


21 Fatalities & 93 Serious Injuries

reported in the planning area
(2020–2024)



Pursuant to 23 U.S.C. § 407, reports, surveys, schedules, lists, or data compiled or collected for the purpose of identifying, evaluating, or planning the safety enhancement of potential accident sites, hazardous roadway conditions, or railway-highway crossings, pursuant to sections 130, 144, and 148 of Title 23, U.S.C., or for the purpose of developing any highway safety construction improvement project which may be implemented utilizing Federal-aid highway funds shall not be subject to discovery or admitted into evidence in a Federal or State court proceeding or considered for other purposes in any action for damages arising from any occurrence at a location mentioned or addressed in such reports, surveys, schedules, lists, or data. This publication is not intended to waive any of the State of Montana's rights or privileges under 23 U.S.C. § 407.



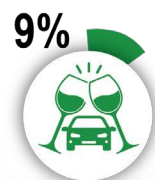
Run-off-the-Road



Failure to Yield
Right-of-Way



Speeding/
Drove Too Fast
For Conditions



Impaired
Drivers

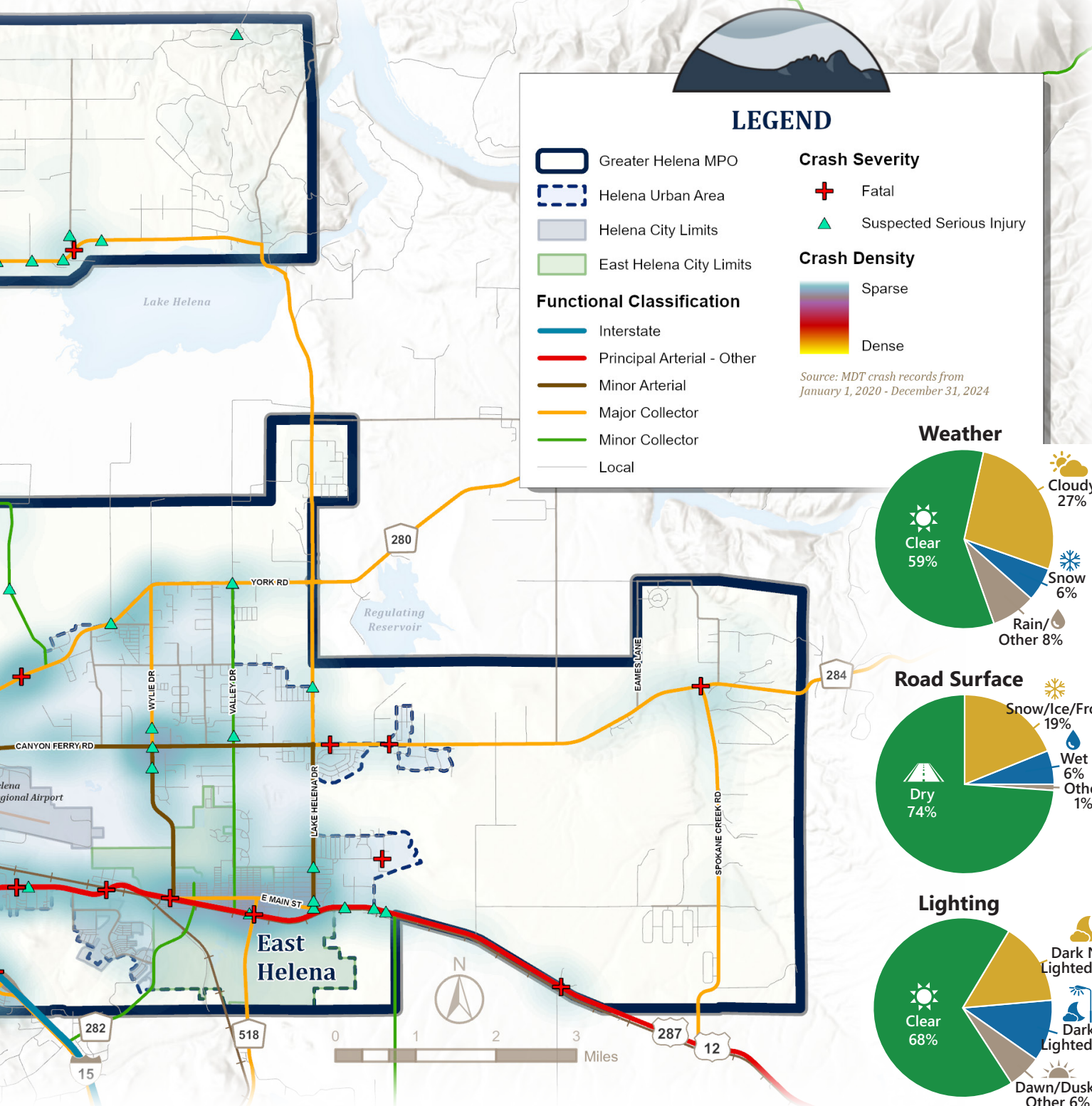


Figure 6: Crash Density and Statistics



3 Forecast

Understanding today's transportation system is only half the picture. This chapter looks ahead to how the Greater Helena Area is expected to grow over the life of this plan, in population, housing, jobs, and travel, so recommendations can be sized to meet future demand rather than just today's.

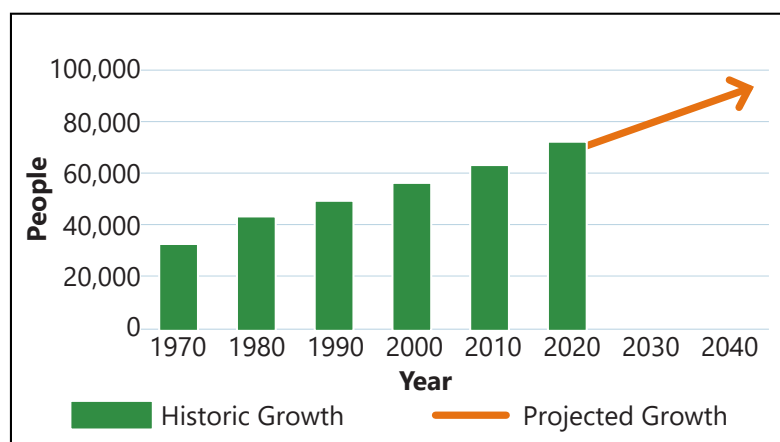
Growth patterns described in this chapter were developed through coordination among city, county, and MDT representatives in a series of land use forecasting workshops, where participants identified where future housing and employment growth would most likely occur based on local knowledge of development trends, land availability, zoning, growth policies, planned infrastructure, and known development proposals already in motion. Additional information can be found in the *Existing and Projected Conditions Memorandum* ([Appendix D](#)).

3.1. How Much We'll Grow

Lewis and Clark County is projected to grow by about 1.14 percent annually over the next two decades, consistent with the growth rate experienced over the past ten years. Applied to the county's current population, that rate puts the county at roughly 93,800 residents by 2046, an increase of nearly 23,000 people since the 2020 Census. To house that growth, the county is expected to add about 10,800 housing units, with roughly 9,000 of those, 83 percent, landing within the MPO planning area itself.

Growth won't be spread evenly across the area. Helena's *Growth Policy* projects the city reaching about 44,800 residents by 2045, while East Helena, still recovering momentum after the 2001 ASARCO smelter closure, is positioned for the most dramatic change, with its population potentially growing several times over as major subdivisions move forward.

Job growth is expected to follow a steadier path. Employment in Lewis and Clark County is projected to reach about 52,400 jobs by 2046, an increase of roughly 13,900 jobs in the county over the planning horizon, consistent with the area's historic pattern of steady, government- and service-anchored growth rather than a boom tied to any single industry.



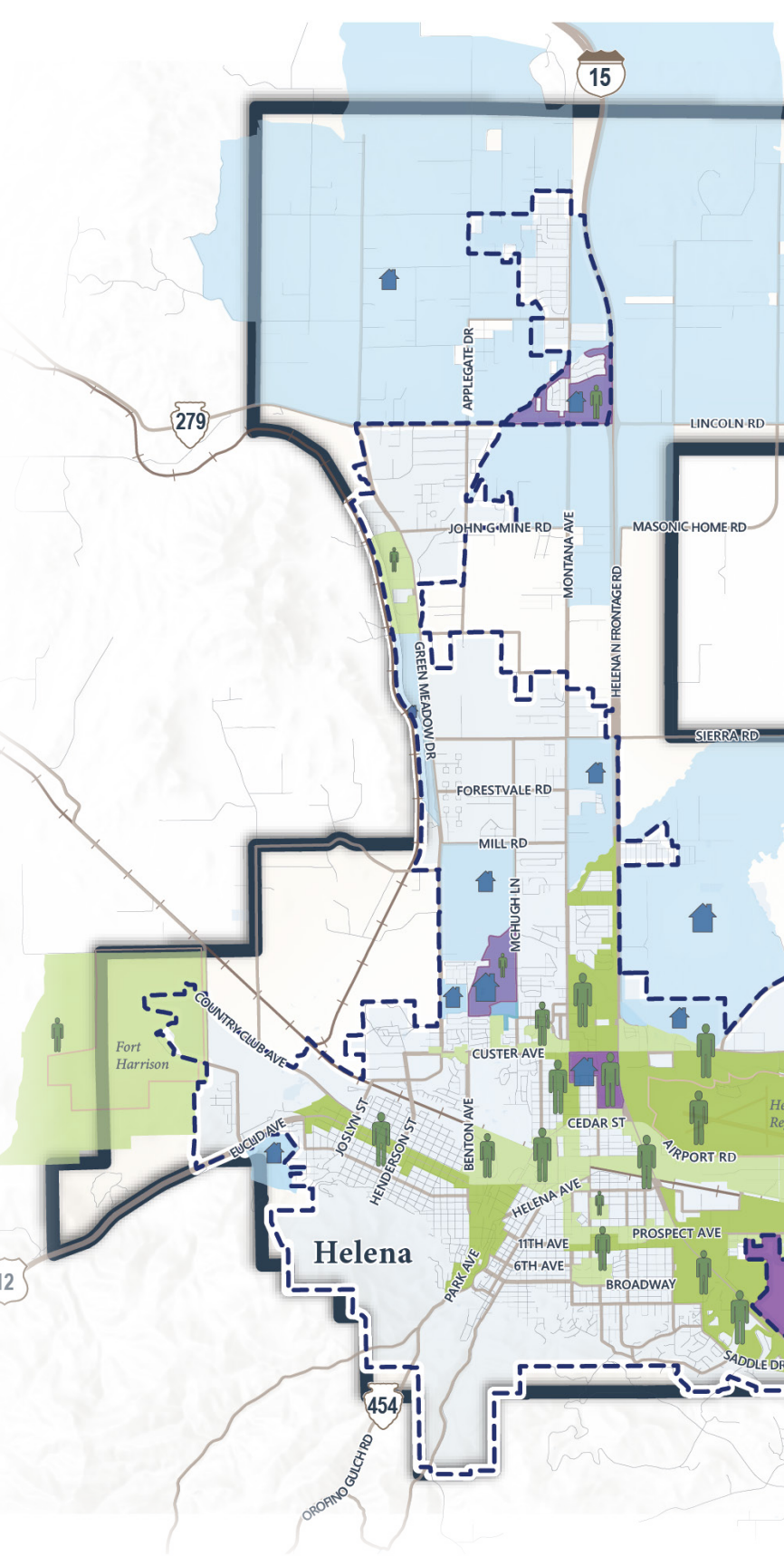
Over the next **20 years**, the Greater Helena MPO could grow by **about 20,000 people** - requiring roughly **9,000 new homes** and **13,000 new jobs**.

3.2. Where Growth Will Occur

Figure 7 shows where housing and job growth is anticipated to occur based on local knowledge. Housing growth is expected to happen in a mix of places: infill and redevelopment within existing neighborhoods, and new development on the edges of the urban area. In Helena, most vacant residential land is already built out, so the city is steering new housing toward infill and higher-density options like duplexes, townhomes, and apartments, with redevelopment already underway at sites like the former Capital Hill Mall and continued investment in downtown and the Great Northern Town Center. Growth also continues to push outward along US 287 and I-15, where infrastructure extensions are already in progress.

East Helena is on a different trajectory entirely. Large proposed developments, including Rose Hills and Prickly Pear Estates, could add up to 6,000 new homes over the next two decades, potentially multiplying the city’s population several times over and establishing it as a major residential hub in the Helena Valley. Redevelopment of former ASARCO smelter lands, now managed through ongoing cleanup and land transfers, is also opening opportunities for new schools, subdivisions, and commercial and light-industrial development. The surrounding county also faces housing demand pressure, with policy directing growth toward designated areas with existing infrastructure capacity rather than further into unserved rural land.

Job growth is expected to concentrate in a handful of areas rather than spread evenly. The airport area is positioned for advanced manufacturing, aerospace, and technology employment. East Custer Avenue is expected to expand as a regional commercial center, while infill along Montana and Euclid Avenues offers opportunities to strengthen underused corridors, and downtown Helena continues to anchor office, retail, dining, and cultural employment. While many residents will continue to work in Helena, East Helena is beginning to shift from a commuter town toward a community with its own growing base of jobs in education, services, retail, and light industry.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Rose Hills and Prickly Pear Estates alone could add up to **6,000 new homes in East Helena** over the next several years, potentially multiplying the city's population several times over.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Helena is largely built out. Rather than expanding to new land, the city is focused on **infill, higher-density** housing like duplexes, townhomes, and apartments within existing neighborhoods.



LEGEND

BOUNDARIES

- Greater Helena Area MPO
- Helena Urban Area
- Helena City Limits
- East Helena City Limits
- Major Street Network
- Local Network
- Railroad

FUTURE GROWTH AREAS

Employment Growth

- 0-100
- 101-300
- 301-500

Housing Growth

- 0 - 250
- 251 - 500
- 501-1000
- 1001-1650

Future Employment & Housing Growth

- New Housing Units
- New Jobs

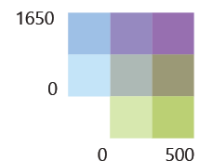


Figure 7: Future Employment and Housing Growth, 2022–2046

3.3. Traffic on Tomorrow's Roads

More people and more jobs mean more trips on the network. To understand where that growth will be felt most, the projected housing and job growth described previously was fed into a travel demand model, a tool MDT uses to estimate how many vehicles will use each road in the future based on where people are expected to live and work. That modeling points to several corridors likely to see the greatest increases in traffic pressure by 2046: US 287 between East Helena and Helena, I-15 near the Capitol and Cedar Street interchanges, and major arterials including Custer Avenue, 11th Avenue/Prospect Avenue, Montana Avenue, and Lyndale Avenue/Euclid Avenue, as shown in **Figure 8**.

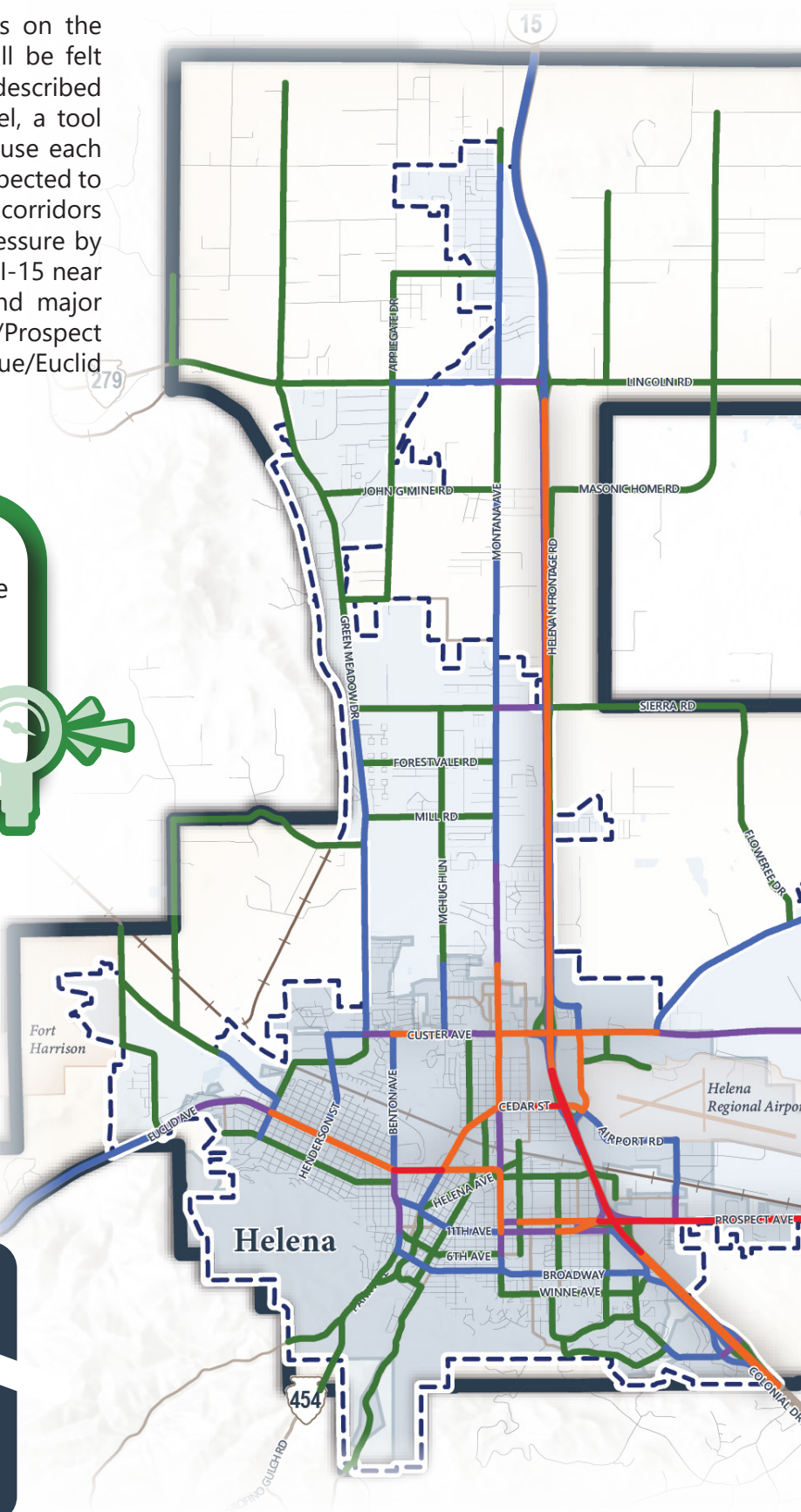
KEY TAKEAWAY

The roads expected to see the most traffic growth by 2046 are largely the same roads carrying the most traffic today. That means **future growth** is likely to **add pressure to existing busy corridors** rather than create entirely new problem areas.



How to read the map

-  Cooler colors = lower traffic growth
-  Warmer colors = higher traffic growth



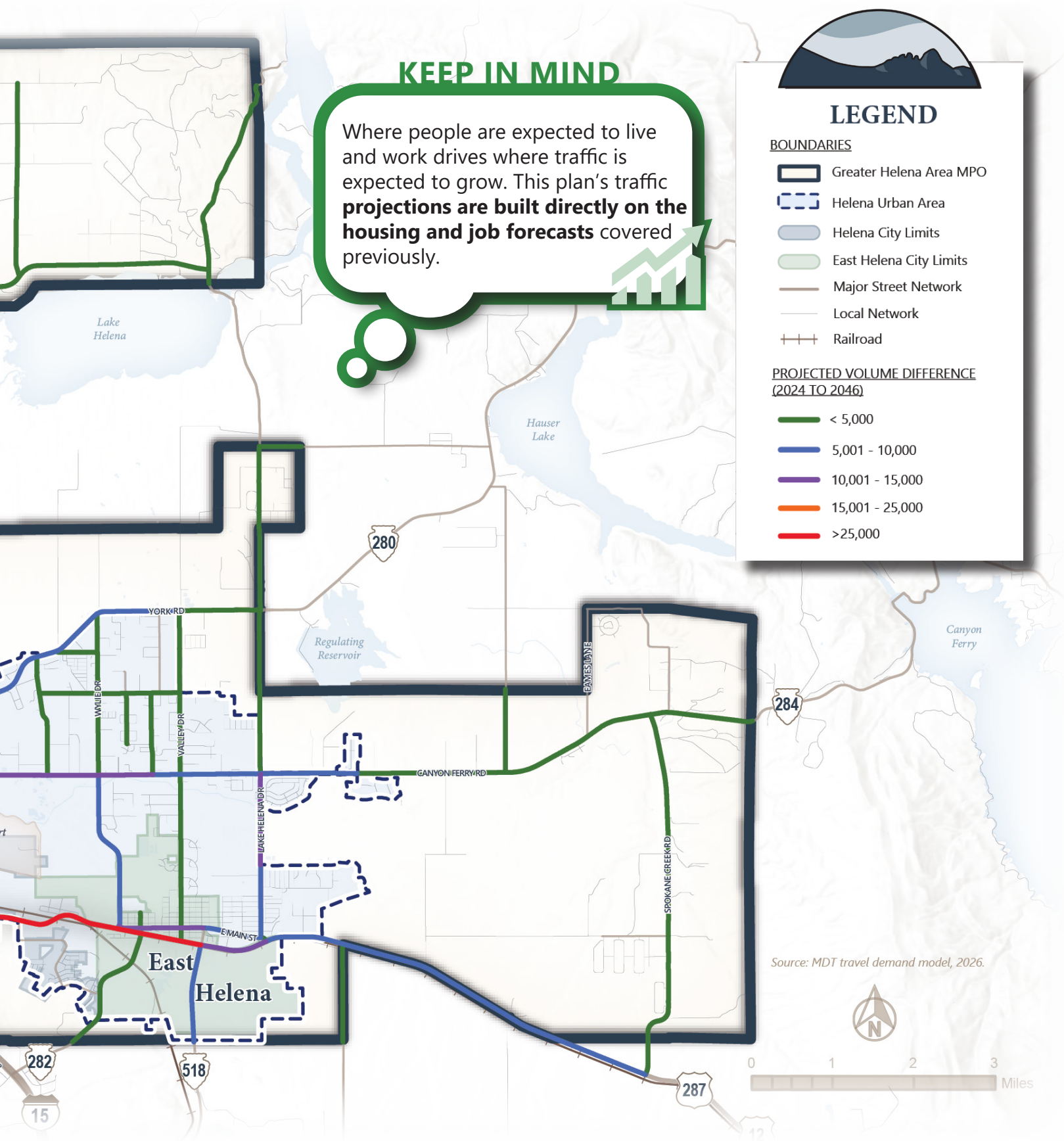


Figure 8: Projected Traffic Volume Difference, 2024–2046





4 Analyze

Chapters 2 and 3 described the transportation system as it exists today and where the Greater Helena Area is headed over the next 20 years. This chapter brings those two pictures together to identify where the system falls short, now and as growth continues, to inform the recommendations in the next chapter.

4.1. People and Growing Needs

The area’s population is growing and aging, with nearly one in five residents already age 65 or older, and that share is expected to keep rising. Disability rates add another layer to this picture. About 15 percent of county residents report a disability, with that share climbing to 18.8 percent in East Helena, one of the highest rates in the planning area. Together, these trends point to a growing need for infrastructure that works for people who can’t or don’t want to drive, including safe sidewalks, accessible crossings, and reliable transit.



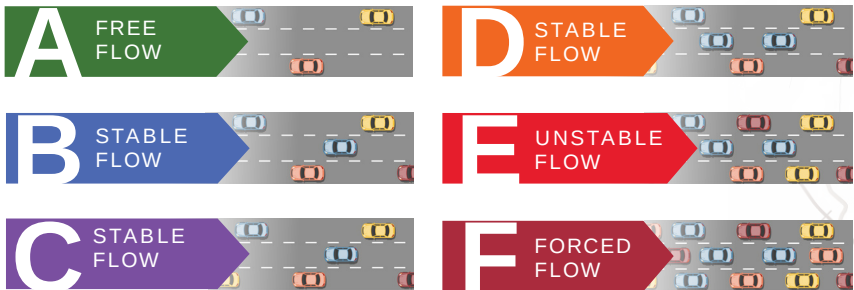
4.2. Roads and Intersections Under Pressure



INTERSECTION DELAY

Traffic operations were evaluated at 145 intersections across the planning area, using traffic counts collected between 2022 and 2025 during the evening peak hour, when congestion is typically worst. Level of service (LOS) grades an intersection from A (little to no delay) to F (significant delay and congestion), similar to a report card, to describe how well the intersection performs as shown in the graphic below.

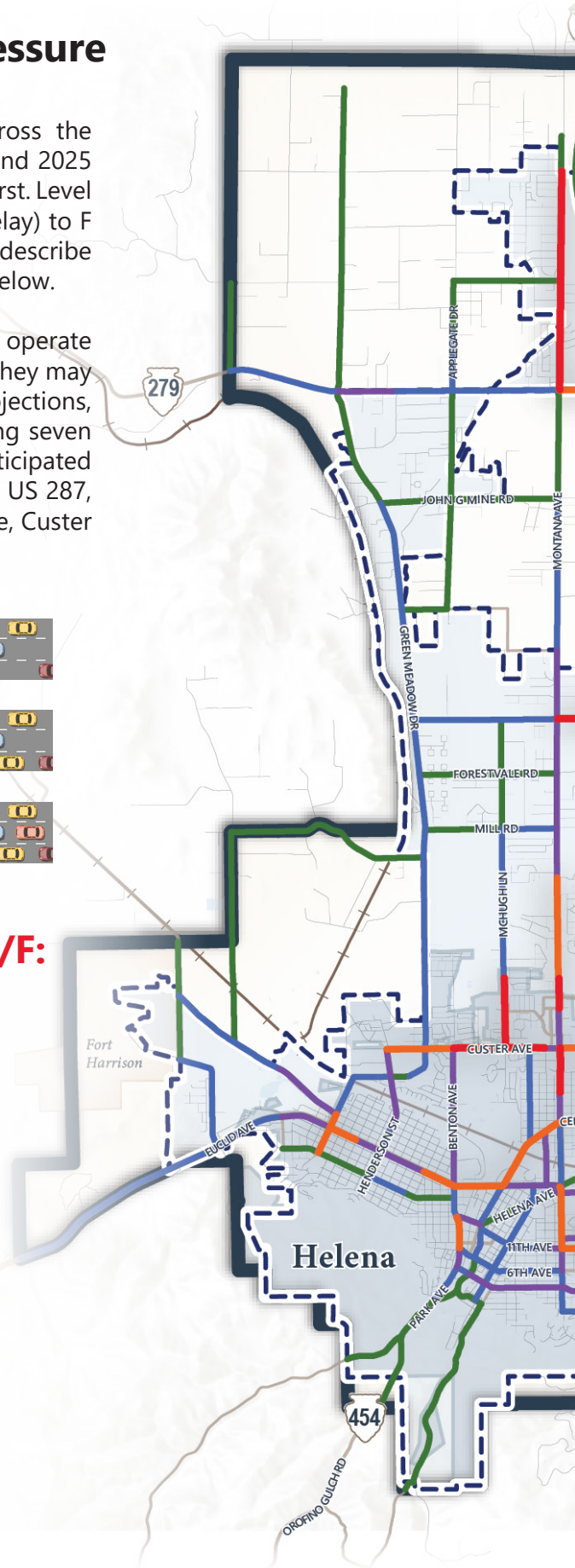
Under today's conditions, 13 of the 145 intersections already operate at LOS E or F, and nearly all of those are unsignalized, a sign they may need a higher form of traffic control. Under 2046 growth projections, that number more than doubles to 29 intersections, including seven that are already signalized. The pattern is consistent with anticipated corridor growth and congestion which is concentrated along US 287, Prospect Avenue/11th Avenue, Lyndale Avenue/Euclid Avenue, Custer Avenue, Cedar Street, and Montana Avenue.



Intersections operating at **LOS E/F:**
Existing 2026 (**13**) vs.
Projected 2046 (**29**)

ROADWAY CAPACITY

Beyond individual intersections, corridor-level traffic counts (annual average daily traffic, or AADT) show how much traffic a road segment carries on a typical day. Comparing that volume to how much traffic the road was designed to handle produces a volume-to-capacity (v/c) ratio, with a ratio above 1.0 flagging a corridor where demand exceeds design capacity. Projected v/c ratios are shown in **Figure 9**. By 2046, Custer Avenue, 11th Avenue, US 287 between East Helena and Helena, and portions of Montana Avenue are projected to cross that threshold indicating possible capacity constraints.



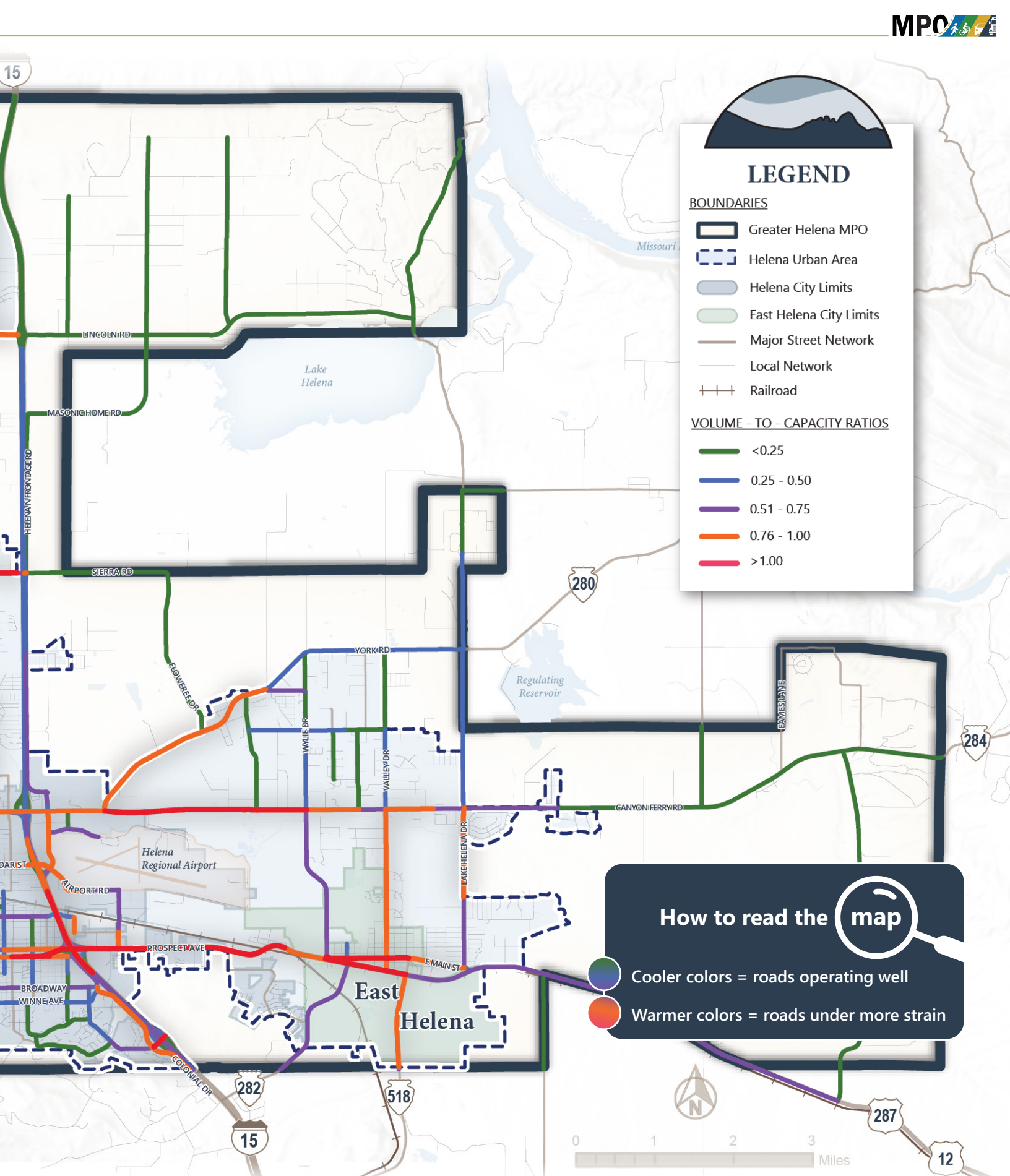


Figure 9: Projected Volume-to-Capacity Ratios (2046)

4.3. Gaps in Walking and Biking

The area’s sidewalk and trail network is strong in places, particularly Helena’s core and the Centennial Trail, but it remains fragmented elsewhere. The City of Helena adopted a Complete Streets resolution in 2010, but implementation has been gradual, and on-street bicycle infrastructure remains limited even within city limits. East Helena has no designated bicycle facilities, and non-motorized infrastructure in unincorporated county areas is largely limited to occasional paved shoulders and shared-use paths. Growing e-bike and e-scooter use adds another layer of complexity, raising questions about where and how these devices should be allowed to operate alongside pedestrians and bicyclists on existing facilities.



4.4. Transit Needs

Capital Transit’s current curb-to-curb, weekday-only model averages about 3,320 boardings a month, still below pre-pandemic levels, and leaves gaps for riders needing early morning, evening, weekend, or regional service. Capital Transit’s *Transit Development Plan* is evaluating these gaps in more detail. Funding remains a central constraint: fare revenue covers only a small share of operating costs, with the remainder relying primarily on the City of Helena’s General Fund alongside decreasing state and federal sources, a structure that limits how much service expansion is realistic without a broader funding conversation.

4.5. Freight, Rail, and Air Considerations

 Freight traffic is expected to keep growing alongside the area’s population and development, particularly along I-15 and US 12, corridors that carry the heaviest truck volumes today. Several of these same corridors, including Prospect Avenue, 11th Avenue, Montana Avenue, and Lyndale/Euclid Avenues, also serve pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders, meaning future improvements will need to balance efficient freight movement with safe, comfortable conditions for other users sharing the same streets.

 About 35 trains pass through Helena daily, and at-grade crossings at Montana Avenue, Carter Drive, and Benton Avenue continue to create delays and safety concerns where freight rail meets major streets, a conflict likely to persist as both rail and roadway traffic grow.

 Passenger rail remains a longer-term consideration for the area as well. As the Big Sky North Coast Corridor advances through federal planning, preserving future station access and multimodal connections at the Helena Train Station will be an important consideration for future development and infrastructure decisions.

 Helena Regional Airport anchors a growing cluster of non-aviation and aviation-adjacent development, alongside its core passenger and general aviation activity, with passenger volume growing steadily and current forecasts projecting continued growth through 2043. To keep pace, the Helena Regional Airport Authority has identified several surface transportation improvements needed to support continued access and circulation around the airfield as nearby development continues.



4.6. Safety

Roughly 90 percent of the area's crashes occur within the Helena urban boundary, concentrated on principal arterials (Custer Avenue, Montana Avenue, Prospect Avenue, 11th Avenue, and Lyndale Avenue) that overlap directly with the corridors already under the most traffic pressure. While severe crashes are rare (about two percent of the total), they are commonly attributed to improper driver behaviors including distracted driving and impaired driving. Pedestrians and bicyclists are involved in fewer than three percent of crashes but account for a disproportionate share of severe crashes. The MPO's CSAP looks at specific policies, programs, and projects to address local trends.



4.7. Keeping the System in Good Repair

While most of the area's bridges and pavement are in fair to good condition, specific segments, including Valley Drive and 11th Avenue, are already candidates for major rehabilitation. Three bridges on the major street network are rated in poor condition, a reminder that ongoing inspection and maintenance remain essential even where the system is performing well overall. Deferred maintenance tends to compound: a bridge or roadway that slips from fair to poor condition typically costs far more to fix than one kept in a state of good repair.



4.8. Growth Outpacing Infrastructure

East Helena is positioned for the area's most rapid growth, potentially multiplying its population several times over as major subdivisions move forward, yet it currently has the smallest sidewalk network in the planning area, no designated bike routes, and only a twice-daily bus connection to Helena. The Helena Valley faces similar pressure: growth policies are actively working to direct new housing toward areas with existing infrastructure capacity rather than further into unserved rural land. As development continues, keeping infrastructure investment paired with growth in these areas will be an important consideration for this plan.

4.9. Network Improvement Scenario Testing

Using the projected 2046 traffic conditions, the effects of various network improvements were analyzed. In coordination with the MPO and MDT, eight alternative modeling scenarios, illustrated in **Figure 10**, were developed. The scenarios include roadway capacity modifications, changes in functional classification, or new roadway links in areas where transportation needs presently exist, or where future investment may be needed as a result of expected population and employment growth. The analysis of these alternatives was intended to give a theoretical idea of how certain network modifications might affect the overall transportation system and surrounding area, and to inform the development of recommendations.

Alt-1: Custer Avenue Expansion tested widening Custer Avenue to a five-lane arterial between National Avenue and Green Meadow Drive, in line with ongoing efforts to address congestion in that corridor. The expansion was shown to more than double traffic volumes on Custer Avenue itself, drawing trips from Mill Street, Cedar Street, Last Chance Gulch, and the Euclid/Lyndale corridor.

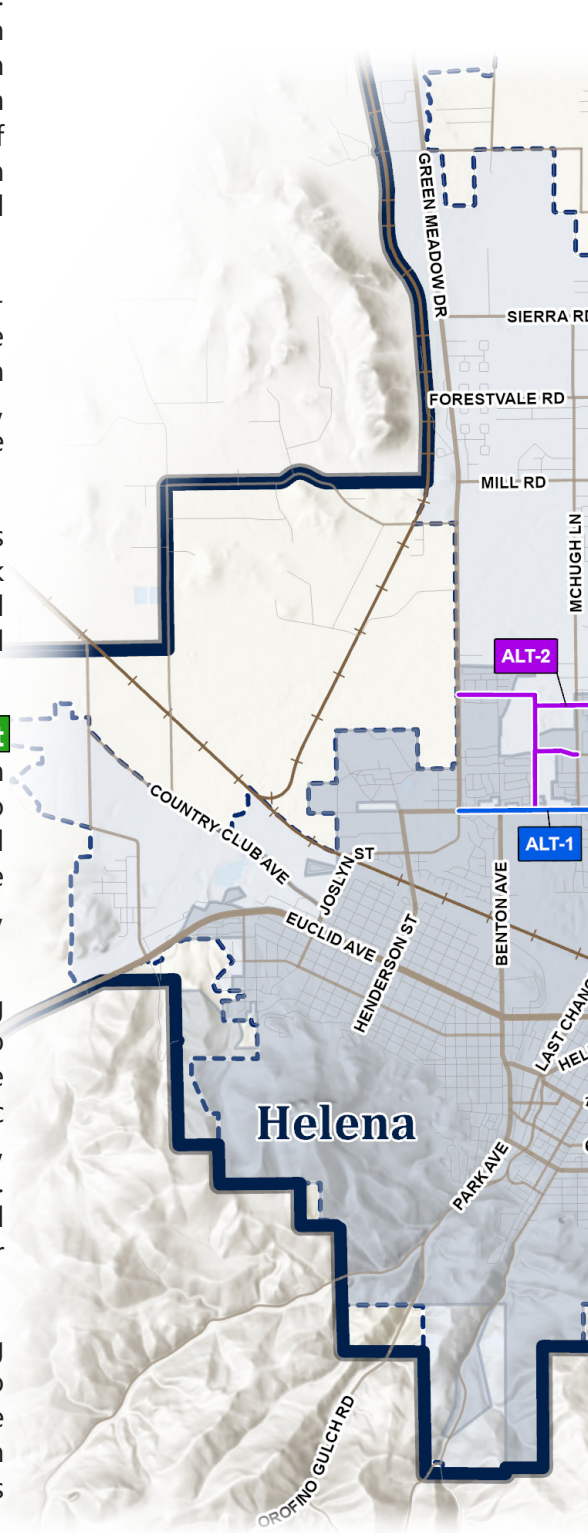
Alt-2: North Helena Network Buildout tested new east-west connections north of Custer Avenue, including a Wolf Road to Flagstone Avenue link and extensions of Cooney Drive and Roadrunner Avenue. Results showed modest local benefit, easing some volume on McHugh Lane, with limited effects on Custer and Montana Avenue traffic volumes.

Alt-3 and Alt-4: Montana Avenue Grade Separation and Road Diet tested a grade-separated rail crossing on Montana Avenue paired with narrowing the corridor from four lanes to three in two sections. Two versions were examined, distinguished by whether the Roberts Street rail crossing stays open. Both reduced traffic volumes on Montana Avenue corridor-wide, with traffic shifting primarily to 6th Avenue, Roberts Street, and National Avenue.

Alt-5/5b: East Side Arterial and Network Buildout tested completing the long-discussed arterial connecting the South Helena Interchange to Crossroads Parkway, along with supporting local connections through the Padbury Ranch area. The new arterial was shown to carry substantial traffic on its own and draw some volume off Prospect Avenue and Highway 518, while also increasing traffic on I-15 and Highway 282 by improving access. A supplemental scenario adding a Runkle Parkway extension produced similar results with larger reductions on US 12 by facilitating easier interstate access at the South Helena Interchange.

Alt-6 and Alt-7: Airport Road Extension tested two alignments using either Bozeman Avenue or Rock Ledge Drive to connect Carter Drive to Wylie Drive, along with a Plant Road connection to Valley Drive, which were both shown to reduce volumes on US 12/Prospect Avenue and Canyon Ferry Road while increasing traffic on Airport Road and the connectors themselves.

Alt-8: East Helena Connections tested new local links south of US 12 to serve planned development in the Rose Hills and Prickly Pear Estates areas, along with an upgrade to Diehl Lane. Results showed minor, localized effects on traffic patterns in that area.



Full modeling results for all scenarios are provided in **Appendix E**. These findings, together with the other needs identified throughout this chapter, inform the recommendations presented in **Chapter 5**.

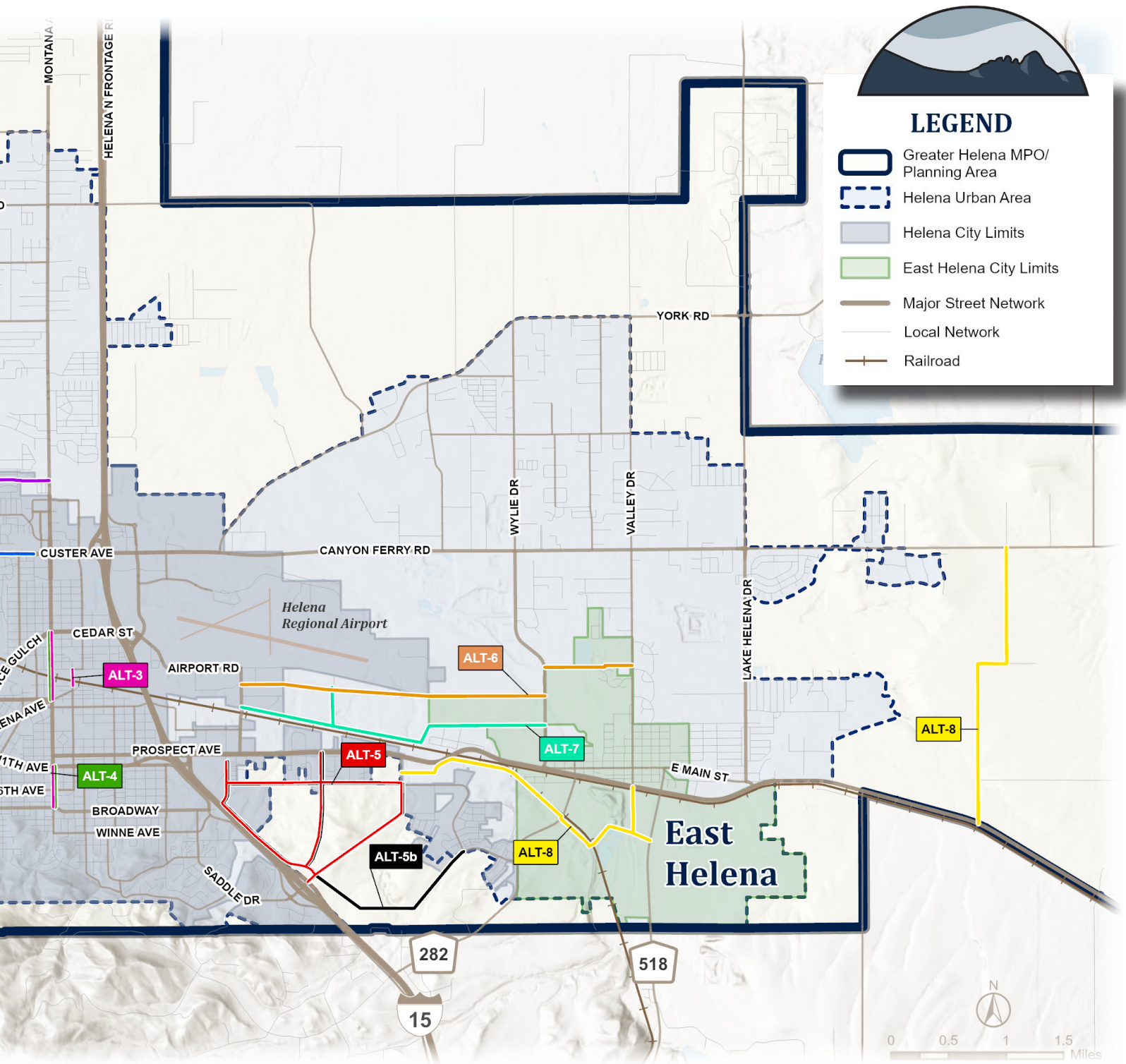


Figure 10: Modeling Scenarios





5 Recommend

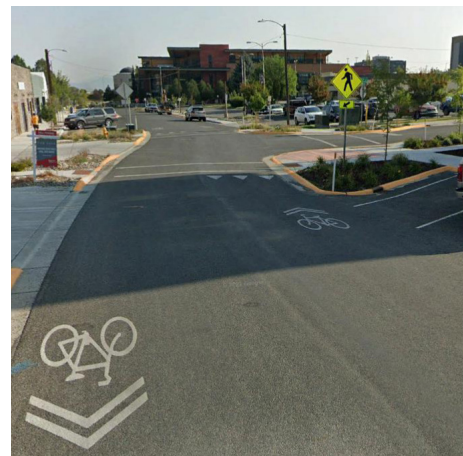
The needs identified in the previous chapters, including growing traffic pressures on key corridors, safety concerns, gaps in walking and biking connectivity, transit service limitations, and aging infrastructure, inform the recommendations in this chapter. These recommendations are prioritized and sized to what the MPO and its partner agencies can realistically fund over the plan's 20-year horizon. The complete *Recommendations and Funding* technical memorandum, including full project descriptions, cost estimates, and funding source detail for every project referenced in this chapter, is provided in [Appendix F](#).

5.1. Recommendations Overview

The Greater Helena Area hasn't been standing still. Of the projects identified in the 2014 LRTP, 41 have been completed, with another 19 projects partially complete or currently in progress. Major efforts included:

- ✓ Built new bridge structures and added lanes on I-15 between the Cedar and Capitol interchanges
- ✓ Improved Front Street and Neill Avenue in Downtown Helena
- ✓ Paved multiple sections of the Centennial Trail
- ✓ Upgraded ADA curb ramps at numerous intersections
- ✓ Reconstructed the Lincoln Road interchange
- ✓ Reconstructed multiple corridors to achieve current design standards
- ✓ Constructed multiple new roundabouts to reduce conflicts

Recommendations that remain relevant but haven't yet been completed, along with new needs identified through this and other recent planning processes, are carried forward into the recommendations that follow. They were weighed alongside community priorities gathered through three rounds of public engagement, technical analysis including travel demand modeling and the CSAP, and ongoing coordination with the City of Helena, City of East Helena, Lewis and Clark County, MDT, and Capital Transit.



Recommendations in this chapter were prioritized for how well they improve safety, preserve the system already in place, and strengthen multimodal connectivity. The resulting project list is fiscally constrained, built around funding the MPO can reasonably expect to have available through the plan horizon (2047), while some high-priority projects are classified as grant contingent or illustrative due to funding or feasibility limits. Keeping those projects in the plan, even without a funding source yet identified, preserves the flexibility to act if new opportunities emerge.

Recommendations throughout this chapter fall into five types of investment:



As discussed in the following sections, more than half of the 145 recommendations in this plan incorporate walking, biking, or multimodal access as part of their design.



5.2. How Recommendations Were Developed

Candidate projects considered for this plan came from four main sources. Public and stakeholder input, gathered across three rounds of outreach including surveys, interactive commenting maps, and in-person and virtual open houses, surfaced specific locations and corridors where community members experience problems firsthand. Agency coordination with the City of Helena, City of East Helena, Lewis and Clark County, MDT, and Capital Transit identified projects already planned, underway, or under consideration by each partner. Past planning efforts, including the 2014 LRTP, recent multimodal traffic studies, and the MPO's CSAP contributed projects that remain relevant but haven't yet been completed. Technical analysis, summarized in **Chapters 2** through **4**, identified additional needs based on existing and projected conditions. Together, these sources produced a comprehensive list of candidate projects evaluated through the prioritization process described below.

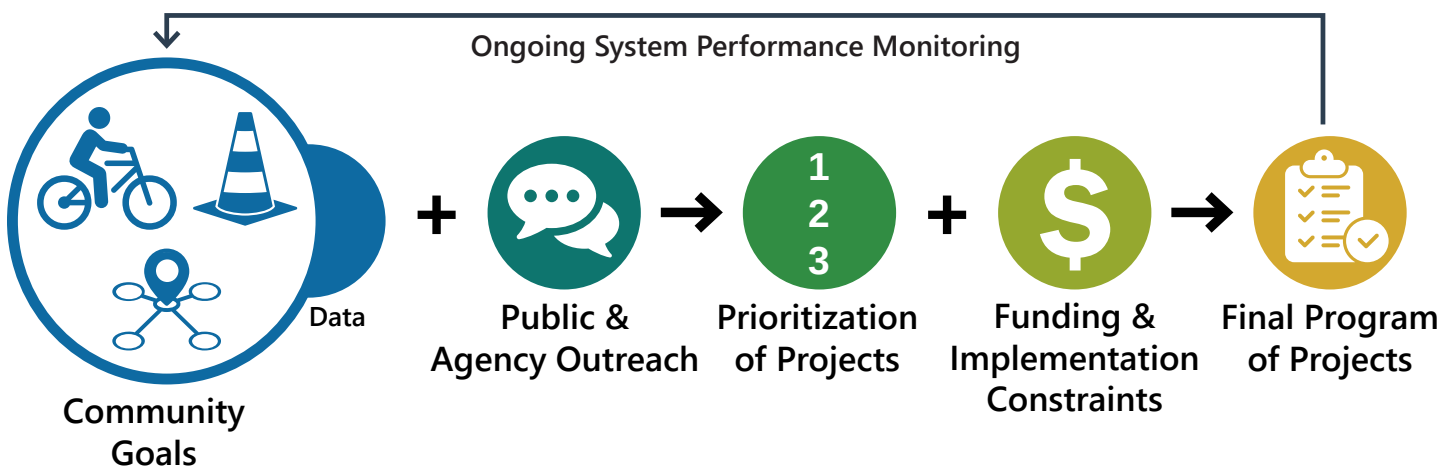
Project Prioritization

Because funding is limited, projects were prioritized for implementation using a performance-based planning process, one that directs funding first toward projects that most strongly support the LRTP's goals and objectives. Accordingly, each candidate project was evaluated against the LRTP's goals (see **Section 1.5**) to determine how well it addresses the region's transportation needs.



Beyond goal alignment, several other factors shape a project's priority, including estimated cost, availability of funding, right-of-way needs, how readily the project can move forward, and the level of community interest it received. This combined evaluation sorted projects into Recommended, Grant Contingent, or Illustrative categories, based on how strongly each project scored, practical implementation factors, and whether funding is expected to be available within the plan horizon. Committed Projects and Annual Programs, covered separately, are already funded through the TIP or local capital improvement programs and did not go through this scoring process. Non-motorized spot improvements and transit improvements followed a separate process as described in **Section 5.4**.

Performance monitoring should continue as funding is received and projects are moved forward into implementation. As development occurs, projects are completed, and community conditions change, ongoing system performance monitoring helps evaluate how well the plan is working and informs future investment decisions. Ultimately, the TPCC will determine which projects should advance, using the LRTP as a guide.



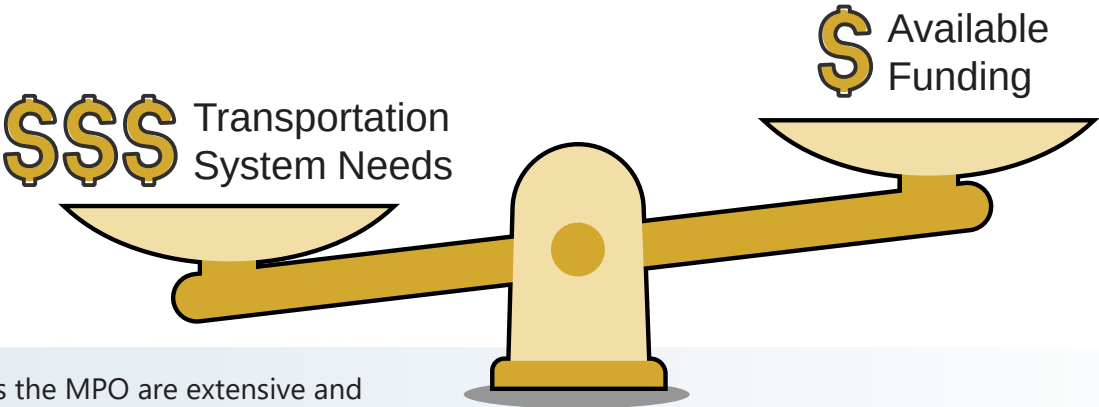
5.3. Prioritized Projects

Recommendations in this section are organized into five categories based on funding status. Committed Projects are funded and moving toward construction. Annual Programs are budgeted allocations recognizing the region’s ongoing commitment to maintaining the existing system. Recommended, Grant Contingent, and Illustrative projects were evaluated through the prioritization process described in **Section 5.2**, then sorted based on how strongly they scored and whether funding is expected to be available within the plan horizon.

COMMITTED	Funded and currently under development this year or expected to move forward in the next five years (2026-2031)
ANNUAL PROGRAMS	Ongoing yearly funding for maintenance, safety, and transit operations, not tied to a single project
RECOMMENDED	Fiscally constrained: funding is expected to become available within the 20-year plan horizon (through 2047)
GRANT CONTINGENT	High-priority projects too costly to fund with expected revenues, requiring funding from a grant or outside partner
ILLUSTRATIVE	Supported projects, but lower priority for funding within the plan horizon and not part of the plan’s fiscal constraint

KEEP IN MIND

Recommended, Grant Contingent, and Illustrative projects reflect planning-level concepts rather than finalized designs. Project descriptions, cost estimates, and general scope are based on current understanding of each need, but further engineering analysis, including preliminary and final design, environmental review, and public involvement, will determine the specific configuration, alignment, and treatment ultimately constructed. These projects should not be understood as construction-ready.



Transportation needs across the MPO are extensive and outpace the amount of funding that is currently available. The LRTP provides a path forward to address the highest priority needs within existing funding constraints.

Committed Projects

Committed projects are currently underway in 2026 or have funding allocated within the current 2027-2031 TIP or a partner agency's budget. Many of these projects are already under development or are anticipated to be constructed within the next five years. One project, the Fort Harrison Country Club & Williams Street Improvements (**C-31**), carries grant funding that extends beyond the current TIP window, so its full cost is included in **Table 1** even though construction may not be complete by 2031.

This category also includes projects at earlier stages, including feasibility and design studies that lay the groundwork for future construction recommendations, and pavement or bridge assessments that determine what improvements a facility will need going forward. Committed project locations are illustrated in **Figure 11**.

Table 1: Committed Projects (2026-2031)

Project Type	ID	Project Name	Description	Estimated Cost ¹
	C-1	Custer Ave - Helena	Feasibility study for reconstruction, including multimodal facilities	\$977,349
	C-2	RRxing - Benton Ave - Helena	Pedestrian improvements at Benton Avenue railroad crossing	\$1,630,186
	C-3	SF229 Helena Pedestrian Imprv	Enhanced pedestrian crossings on Last Chance Gulch at Centennial Park and along Montana Avenue near the Capitol	\$1,074,014
	C-4	6th Ward Curb Ramps - Helena	ADA curb ramp replacements	\$612,940
	C-5	Courthouse Sidewalk Improvements	Roadway, sidewalk, curb, and ADA improvements along N. Ewing Street	\$450,000
	C-6	McHugh Lane Improvements	Mill and overlay with curve straightening and updated traffic control near Forestvale Road	\$235,000
	C-7	Lincoln Rd - W of Green Meadow	Reconstruction and roadway widening to safely accommodate growing traffic volumes	\$5,064,234
	C-8	Paratransit Vehicles ²	Purchase ADA-accessible vehicles for transit partners (Family Outreach and West Mont)	\$141,535
	C-9	Tizer Rd Improvements	Intersection realignment with crosswalk and ADA upgrades near Warren School	\$350,000
	C-10	Wood Bridge Drive - Evaluation	Bridge health assessment and preliminary engineering for a second access point	\$12,000
	C-11	East Helena ADA Bus Stop Assessments	Accessibility assessment of East Helena school bus stops	\$15,000
	C-12	East Helena ADA Sidewalk Assessments	Assessment of sidewalk improvement needs in East Helena	\$15,000
	C-13	Centennial Trail Realignment	Realign and pave Centennial Trail between Joslyn Street and Benton Avenue	\$140,000
	C-14	6th & Davis/Cruse Improvements	Intersection redesign, including s-curve treatment, for safe non-motorized crossings	\$200,000

¹ Estimated based on current funding obligations contained in the DRAFT 2027-2031 Greater Helena MPO TIP or local agency budgets and capital improvement plans. Expressed in year-of-expenditure dollars.

² Partially or fully funded by a competitive grant.

Project Type	ID	Project Name	Description	Estimated Cost ¹
	C-15	Lawrence/Last Chance Gulch	Remove traffic signal and convert to enhanced two-way stop control	\$190,000
	C-16	6th/Last Chance Gulch Improvements - TIF Match ²	Intersection enhancements to improve safety and accessibility	\$200,000
	C-17	Prospect Ave - Montana to I-15	New asphalt overlay with updated signing, sidewalk ramps, and ADA features	\$3,560,349
	C-18	East Helena Public Schools Safe Route to East Valley Middle School ²	New sidewalks and safe crossings connecting to East Valley Middle School	\$671,749
	C-19	Lincoln Rd. N Montana Ave. Path Maintenance and Improvements ²	Trail resurfacing, ADA upgrades, and paved path widening	\$397,481
	C-20	Montana Ave RR Grade Separation Feasibility & Design ²	Feasibility study for an over- or underpass separating Montana Avenue from the railroad with intersection improvements at Montana Avenue/Helena Avenue/Lyndale Avenue	\$4,000,000
	C-21	East Side Arterial Connector Feasibility & Design ²	Feasibility and design for a new arterial connecting US 287 to I-15	\$1,300,000
	C-22	11th Ave / Prospect Ave-Helena	New asphalt overlay with ADA ramp upgrades and new pedestrian crossings	\$5,236,135
	C-23	East Helena - East	Reconstruct US 12 east of Lake Helena Drive, with possible turn lanes	\$5,496,989
	C-24	I-15 Br Rehab - Capitol Intch	Rehabilitate bridge deck and superstructure on US 12 over I-15	\$4,095,649
	C-25	Valley Drive - East Helena ²	Roadway widening, curb & gutter, and pedestrian/bicycle accommodations	\$11,104,890
	C-26	City of Helena Safe Routes to School – ADA Ramp Improvement Project ²	ADA accessibility upgrades at key intersections along school routes	\$424,094
	C-27	Redesign of Park Ave/Neill Ave	Intersection redesign with road diet evaluation and safe pedestrian crossings	\$325,000
	C-28	Centennial Trail & Henderson Street - Enhanced Crossing Feasibility Study	Feasibility study for trail crossing enhancements at Henderson Street	\$75,000
	C-29	SF 159 Lola Shepard Int Imprv	Street network reconfiguration to mitigate an existing crash trend	\$2,962,624
	C-30	SF209 York Rd Shld Wid	Shoulder widening and bridge replacement to address road departure crashes	\$9,259,026
	C-31	Fort Harrison Country Club & Williams Street Improvements	Roadway widening with multimodal accommodations, possible roundabout	\$14,550,000
	C-32	I-15 Fencing - Helena Area	Replace fencing along I-15	\$1,437,585
	C-33	SF189 Hlna HT Median Cablerail	Install high-tension cable rail in the I-15 median	\$14,689,616

¹ Estimated based on current funding obligations contained in the DRAFT 2027-2031 Greater Helena MPO TIP or local agency budgets and capital improvement plans. Expressed in year-of-expenditure dollars.

² Partially or fully funded by a competitive grant.

Annual Programs

Rather than funding a single defined project, Annual Programs represent budgeted allocations recognizing partner agencies' ongoing commitment to maintaining the existing system, addressing safety needs, and operating transit services year after year. The programs listed in **Table 2** did not go through the project-level prioritization process, since they reflect recurring commitments rather than one-time investments, but they account for a significant share of the region's transportation spending: \$6,367,500 annually, or roughly \$135 million over the plan's 20-year horizon.

These estimates based on past allocations and partner agency budgets, and are not a funding guarantee. Actual funding is determined annually and can vary year to year. Specific projects are generally not identified in advance for these programs; instead, they cover routine, system-wide needs like pavement preservation, seal coating, signing or pavement marking upgrades, and other maintenance activities that keep the existing system functional.

Table 2: Annual Programs (2026-2047)

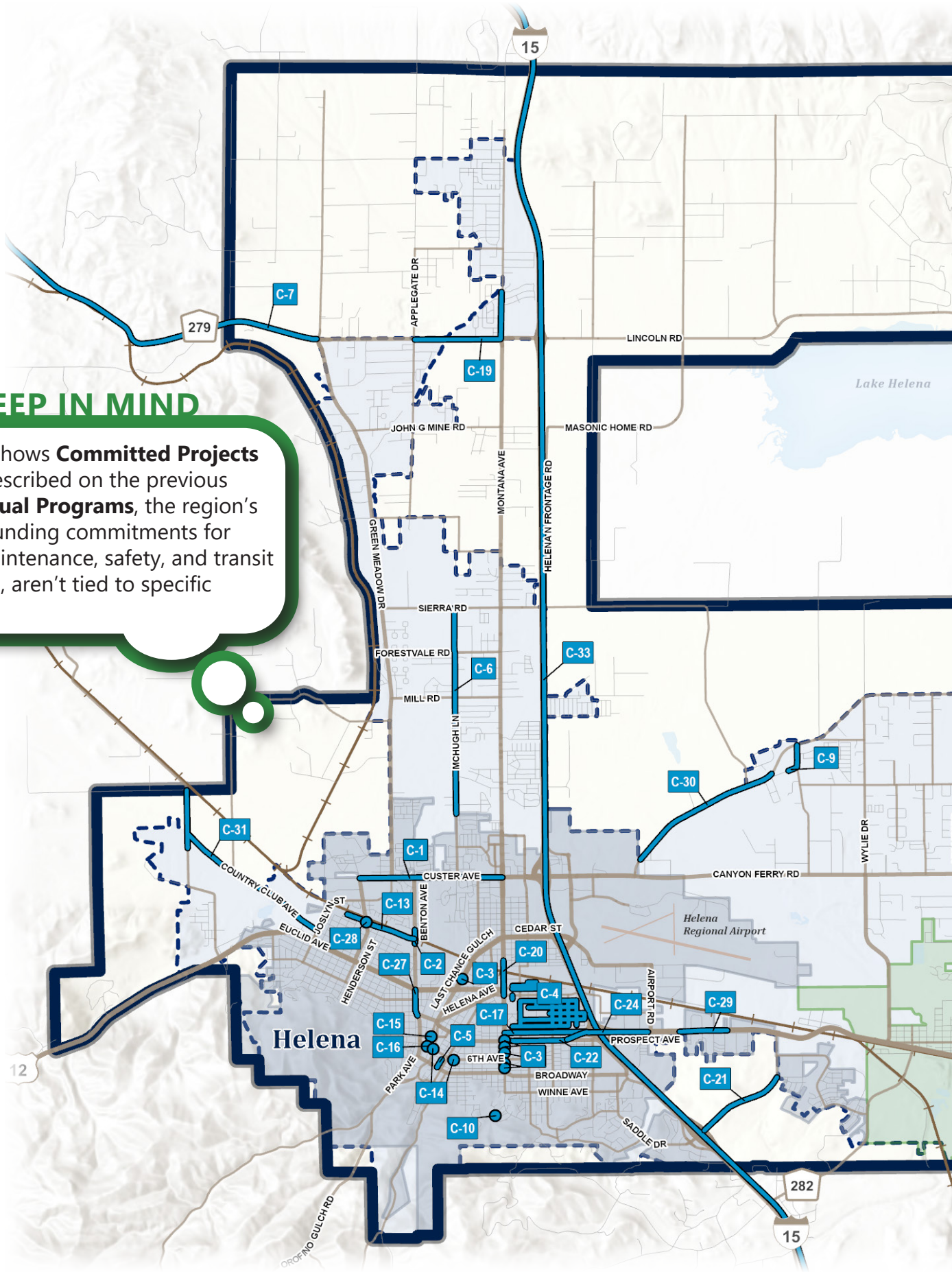
Project Type	ID	Project Name	Description	Estimated Annual Cost ¹
	P-1	MDT Preventative Maintenance	Annual maintenance projects by MDT including striping, durable pavement markings, and pavement preservation	\$750,000
	P-2	MDT HSIP Safety Projects	Safety improvement projects	\$200,000
	P-3	Transit Operating Expense	General transit operating expenses	\$1,791,000
	P-4	Transit Capital Purchase	Acquire vehicles and related equipment	\$408,500
	P-5	Helena Preservation and Maintenance Programs	Annual maintenance program for the City of Helena Streets Division, including pavement preservation, ADA compliance upgrades, dust abatement, and more.	\$1,975,000
	P-6	East Helena Preservation and Maintenance Program	Annual roadway maintenance projects per City of East Helena Public Works, including pavement preservation, striping, etc.	\$100,000
	P-7	Lewis and Clark County Preservation and Maintenance Program	Annual preventative maintenance projects by Lewis and Clark County Public Works including overlay projects, crack sealing, striping, etc.	\$1,143,000

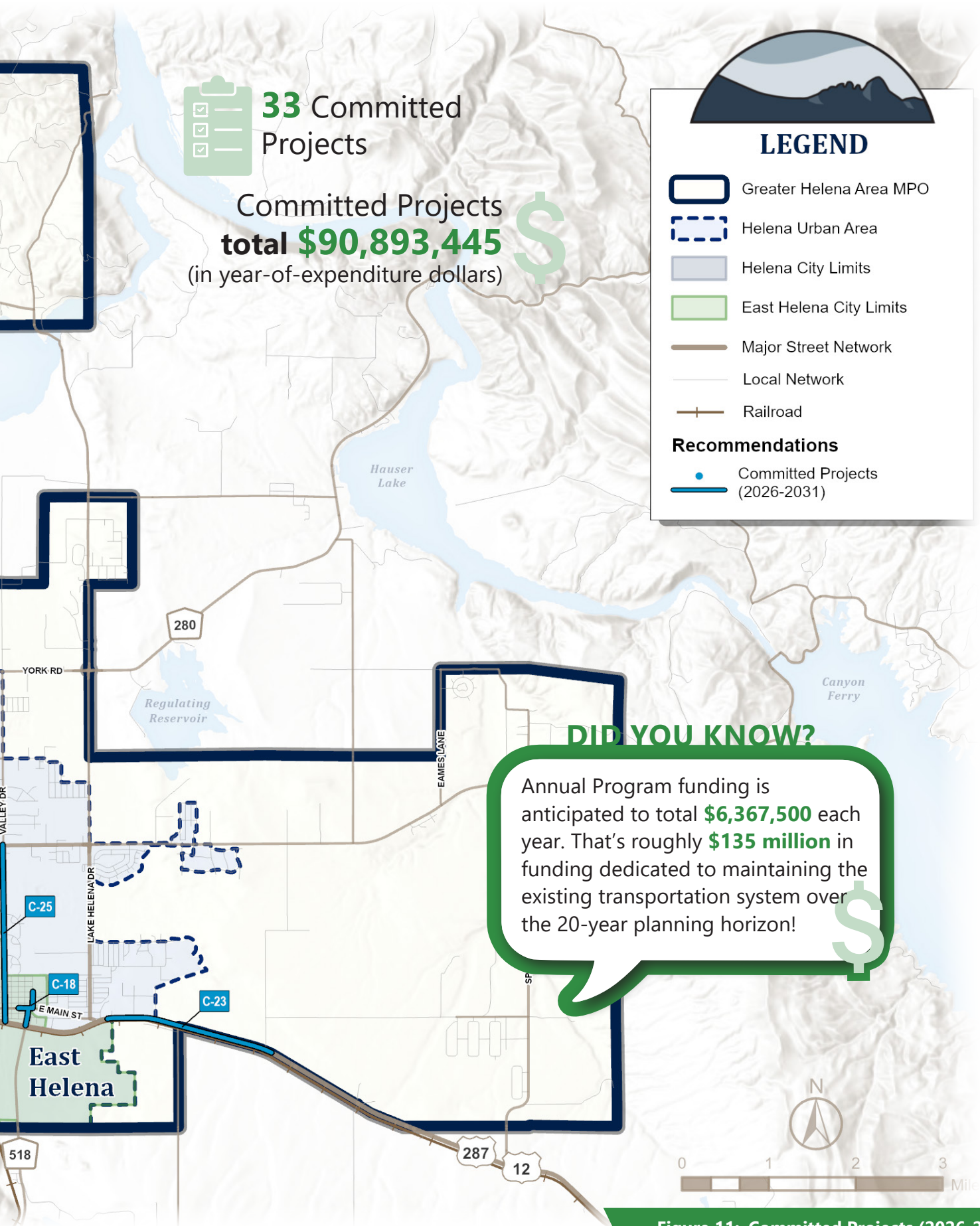
¹ Estimated based on current funding obligations contained in the DRAFT 2027-2031 Greater Helena MPO TIP or local agency budgets and capital improvement plans. Expressed in 2026 dollars.



KEEP IN MIND

This map shows **Committed Projects** only. As described on the previous page, **Annual Programs**, the region's ongoing funding commitments for system maintenance, safety, and transit operations, aren't tied to specific locations.





Recommended Projects

Recommended projects are the highest-priority candidates, both scoring well against the LRTP’s goals and receiving strong public and/or agency support, and can reasonably be expected to be funded within the plan’s 20-year horizon. Unlike Committed projects, which are already funded and in motion, Recommended projects don’t yet have secured funding, but they are fiscally constrained, meaning they count toward what this plan can realistically deliver given projected MPO revenue through 2047. Recommended project locations are illustrated in **Figure 12**.

Recommended projects are grouped into funding timeframes based on when revenue is anticipated to become available: 2026-2031, 2032-2036, 2037-2041, and 2042-2047. Two projects, **R-1** and **R-2**, are contingent on a pending Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) federal grant award. If awarded, both would proceed as shown; without it, they would not have a realistic funding path within this plan and would instead be treated as Grant Contingent.

Project costs in **Table 3** are shown in year-of-expenditure (YOE) dollars, meaning they’ve been adjusted for anticipated inflation based on each project’s funding timeframe, using a three percent annual inflation factor. This gives a realistic picture of what each project will actually cost when it’s built, rather than what it would cost today.

Table 3: Recommended Projects (2026-2047)

Project Type	ID	Project Name	Description	Time-frame	Estimated Cost (YOE)
	R-1	Custer Avenue/Henderson Street Intersection Improvements	Reconfigure intersection as a roundabout	2026-2031	\$2,223,981
	R-2	Last Chance Gulch/Helena Avenue/Neill Avenue Intersection Improvements	Reconfigure as a five-legged roundabout, creating a gateway to Downtown Helena	2026-2031	\$4,512,342
	R-3	Custer Avenue Reconstruction – Montana Avenue to Benton Avenue	Reconstruct with added capacity and multimodal accommodations per C-1	2032-2036	\$28,700,000
	R-4	6th Avenue – Beattie Street to Last Chance Gulch	Mill and overlay with ADA upgrades and intersection improvements	2032-2036	\$1,800,000
	R-5	Euclid Avenue – Helena	Pavement rehabilitation to preserve surface and ride quality	2032-2036	\$4,500,000
	R-6	Boulder Avenue Reconstruction – Washington Street to Billings Avenue	Construct/reconstruct segments to complete streets standards	2032-2036	\$5,200,000
	R-7	Wood Bridge Drive Bridge Improvements	Rehabilitate or replace bridge depending on outcome of C-10	2037-2041	\$3,200,000
	R-8	Custer Avenue Reconstruction – Benton Avenue to Henderson Street	Reconstruct with added capacity and multimodal accommodations per C-1	2042-2047	\$18,200,000



Recommended Projects
total \$68,336,323 \$
(in YOE dollars)

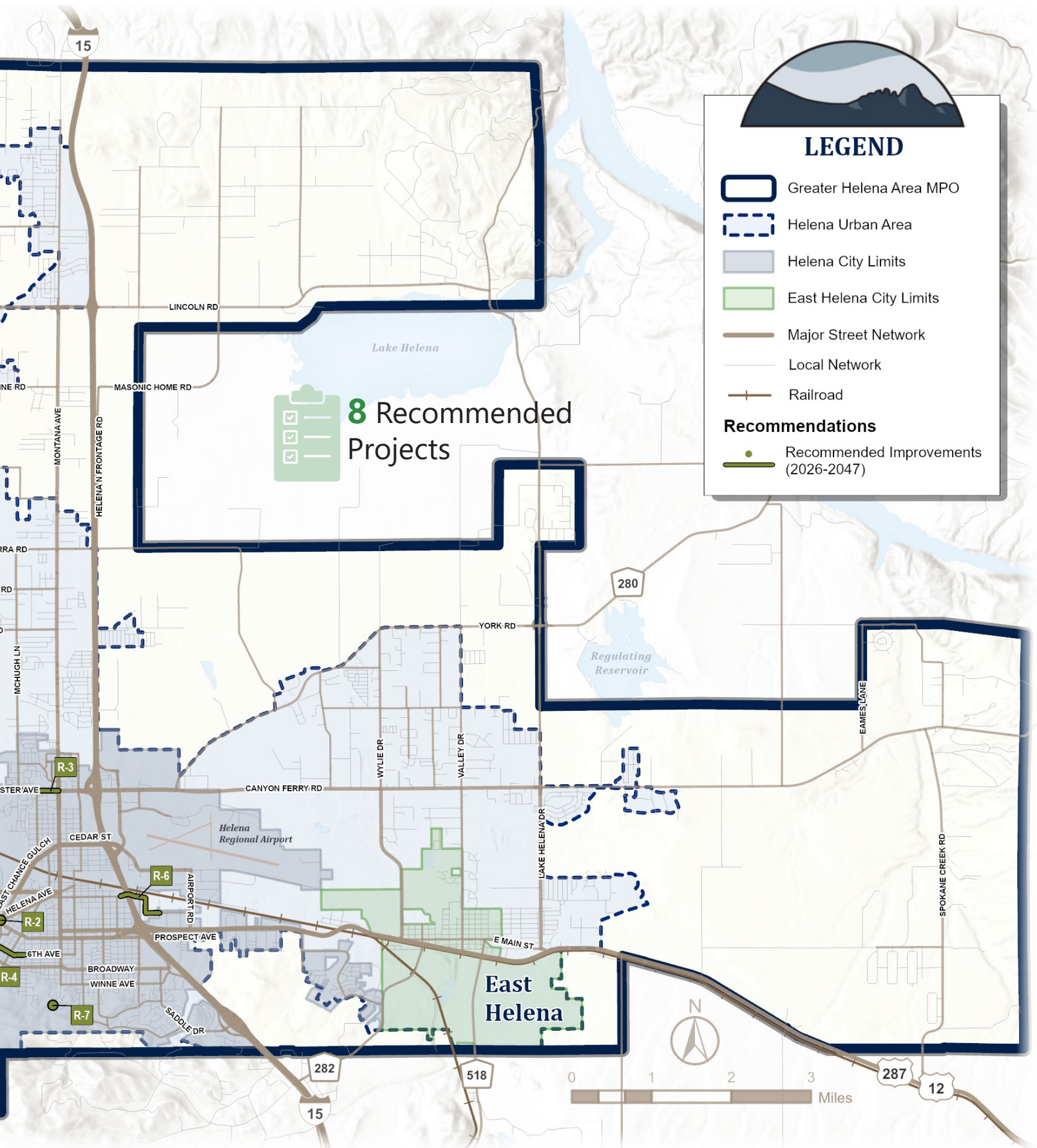


Figure 12: Recommended Projects (2026-2047)

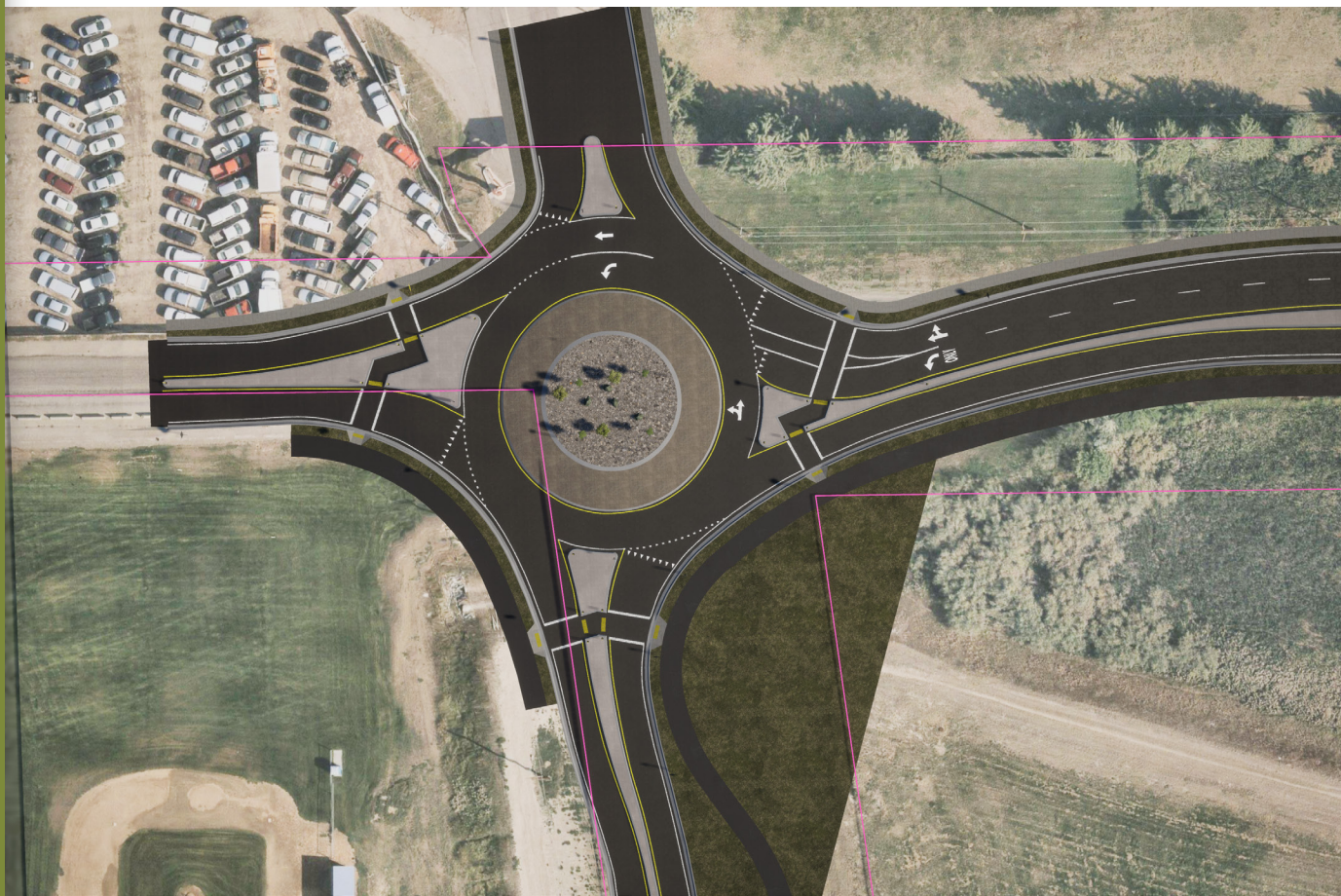
Recommended Project Highlights

R-1: Custer Avenue/Henderson Street Intersection Improvements

Complete Streets | \$2,223,981 | 2026-2031

This intersection sits at the primary access point to the Lewis and Clark County Fairgrounds, Ryan Fields (home to the largest youth baseball program in Montana), and adjacent to Capital High School. It operates with asymmetric, non-standard traffic control, including free-flow movements and channelized turning lanes that produce inconsistent driver expectations and unpredictable yielding behaviors. During major events like the Last Chance Stampede or the Helena Fair, congestion regularly extends across every approach. Turning movement counts from the 2024 Fair recorded up to 3,150 vehicles and 517 pedestrians crossing during a single peak period, requiring law enforcement to step in to manually direct traffic. The Lewis and Clark County Sheriff identified this intersection as his top transportation safety concern during an LRTP/CSAP stakeholder meeting.

Custer Avenue ranks fourth among all roadway segments on the region’s High Injury Network, and this intersection is a short-term priority in the MPO’s CSAP. This project would rebuild the intersection as a roundabout, decreasing vehicle-to-vehicle conflict points by 66 percent and pedestrian-to-vehicle conflicts by 50 percent, while calming speeds and providing safer crossings for students, families, and event attendees. Roundabout design was recently completed as part of Lewis and Clark County’s long-term commitment to the Custer Avenue corridor, and the City of Helena has applied for an SS4A federal grant. If a grant is not awarded, this project would most likely be folded into the broader Custer Avenue reconstruction projects (**R-3, R-8**).



R-2: Last Chance Gulch/Helena Avenue/Neill Avenue Intersection Improvements

Complete Streets | \$4,512,342 | 2026-2031

Known locally as “Mini Malfunction Junction,” five roads converge at irregular angles at this intersection within the constrained Downtown Helena environment as Last Chance Gulch transitions to a one-way street. The irregular configuration creates numerous vehicle conflict points, overlapping turning movements, and unusually long pedestrian crossings. All four two-way approaches rank within the top five percent of the region’s High Injury Network. The intersection historically operated under signal control until a catastrophic failure in 2024, which forced a switch to all-way stop while the city accelerated roundabout design. A pedestrian-involved crash in 2025 reinforced that the underlying safety concern is the intersection’s geometry and multimodal conflicts, not just how traffic is controlled. An Intersection Control Evaluation found the crash rate here runs about 1.8 times higher than predicted for a comparable intersection.

More than a decade of independent studies, from a 2012 concept study through the 2026 CSAP, have consistently identified the same problem at this intersection and consistently recommended a roundabout to address traffic and safety concerns. This project would rebuild the intersection accordingly, reducing vehicle-to-vehicle conflict points by 80 percent and pedestrian-to-vehicle conflicts by 70 percent. Analysis conducted for the project estimates the redesign would cut crashes and injuries at the intersection by roughly 60 percent. Designs are complete, and the city has applied for an SS4A federal grant to fund construction. Without a grant, the project would need to rely on already-constrained local funding dollars instead.



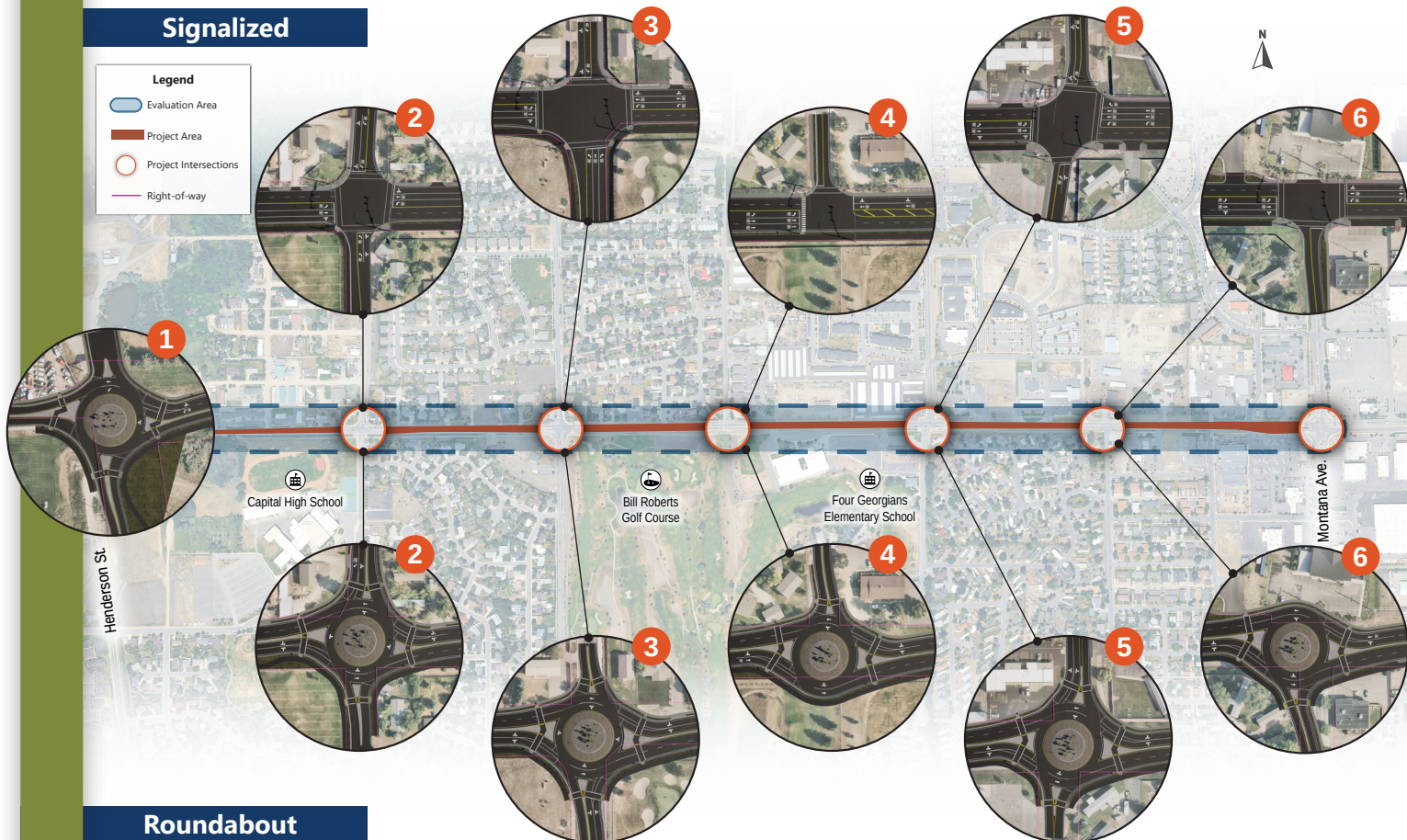
R-3 and R-8: Custer Avenue Reconstruction

Complete Streets | R-3: \$28,700,000 (2032-2036) | R-8: \$18,200,000 (2042-2047)

Custer Avenue is the only continuous east-west route across north Helena, and the need to fix it has been recognized for more than 30 years. Today's traffic regularly exceeds what the road was built to carry, and a trip across the corridor during peak hours can take roughly twice as long as it should. A 2018 public survey found 88 percent of residents said the corridor needs improvement, half of them calling it seriously congested.

Building on the feasibility work completed under **C-1**, two configurations remain under consideration for the rebuilt corridor: a five-lane signalized design that keeps a center turn lane and direct property access, or a four-lane roundabout design with a raised median that adds substantial safety benefits but changes how neighboring properties are reached. Both configurations would add capacity and cut vehicle delays roughly in half, but both carry a price tag beyond what the Helena urban area can fund in a single project. The engineering evaluation comparing these options did not identify a preferred configuration, instead noting that the decision will be made as the project advances into full design, dependent on funding and right-of-way constraints.

This plan reflects that reality by splitting the corridor into two phases: **R-3** rebuilds the eastern portion from Montana Avenue to Benton Avenue first, the segment where congestion is worst and where improvements deliver the greatest relief. Traffic modeling shows that stopping improvements any shorter would just push the bottleneck to the next constrained intersection rather than resolving it. Paired with the roundabout planned at Custer Avenue/Henderson Street (**R-1**), this first phase (**R-3**) addresses many of the corridor's operational and safety concerns. **R-8** completes the reconstruction west to Henderson Street in a later phase over the long term when funding is expected to be available.



R-6: Boulder Avenue Reconstruction — Washington Street to Billings Avenue

Complete Streets | \$5,200,000 | 2032-2036

This area has long been identified as having poor east-west connectivity and undeveloped road facilities in need of strengthening, a recurring topic of interest for both the City of Helena and Lewis and Clark County that reflects a shared interest in improving circulation and reducing reliance on more heavily traveled corridors nearby. Because the route crosses in and out of Helena city limits, the city and county will coordinate early in project development on ownership and long-term maintenance responsibilities, likely through an interlocal agreement, with the potential for future annexation into the city as the area develops.

This project involves reconstructing segments in the Boulder Avenue area to complete streets standards via one of two possible alignments. The primary option follows Boulder Avenue from Washington Street, under I-15, east to Stanley Street, then south to Billings Avenue and east to Blaine Street. An alternative route turns south sooner at California Street before tying back into Stanley Street and following the same path to Blaine Street. If the second alternative is selected, the resulting segment of Stanley Street would open up an opportunity to address drainage needs in the area, with that segment potentially repurposed as a stormwater retention pond rather than left as unused right-of-way.

Funding for the project draws from a mix of federal, state, and local sources, reflecting that same shared city-county interest in seeing it move forward.

Recommended Preservation and Maintenance Projects

Not every Recommended project addresses a safety concern or a capacity constraint; some simply keep the system in a state of good repair. Straightforward as these projects are, deferred maintenance compounds over time, and a road or bridge allowed to slip from fair to poor condition typically costs far more to fix than one that is regularly maintained.

R-4: 6th Avenue — Beattie Street to Last Chance Gulch

Complete Streets | \$1,800,000 | 2032-2036

Mills and overlays 6th Avenue between Beattie Street and Last Chance Gulch, with ADA upgrades completed as needed. This corridor connects the newly opened Montana Heritage Center at 6th Avenue/Roberts Street to Downtown Helena, and community leaders have identified a need to strengthen that connection.



R-5: Euclid Avenue — Helena

Roadway & Bridge | \$4,500,000 | 2032-2036

Performs minor rehabilitation to preserve the pavement surface and improve ride quality on US 12/Euclid Avenue from Granite Street to Benton Avenue.

R-7: Wood Bridge Drive Bridge Improvements

Roadway & Bridge | \$3,200,000 | 2037-2041

Rehabilitates or replaces the bridge on Wood Bridge Drive, based on the condition assessment completed under **C-10**. Since this road is the only access point for roughly 35 homes, construction staging and detour planning will need to account for maintaining resident access throughout the project.

Grant Contingent Projects

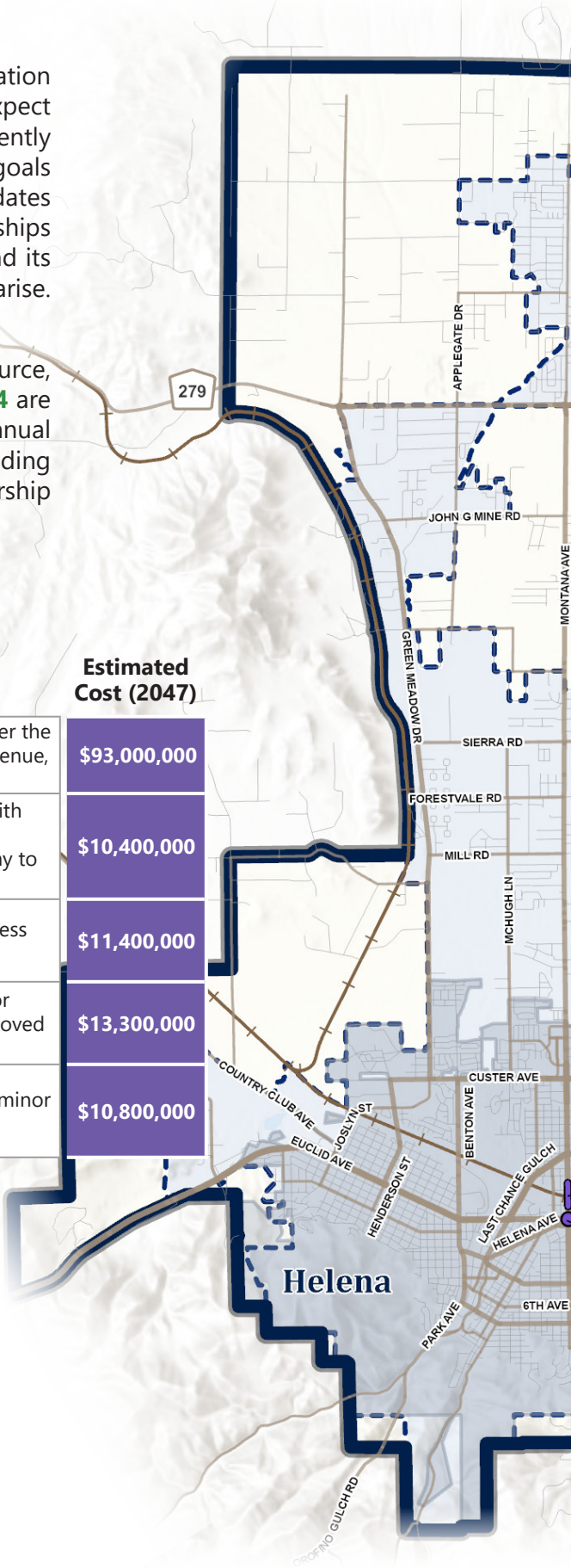
Some of the highest-priority projects identified through the prioritization process carry costs that exceed what the MPO can reasonably expect to fund within the 20-year plan horizon. These projects aren't currently assigned a funding source, but their strong support for the LRTP's goals and high level of public and agency backing make them strong candidates for competitive state and federal discretionary grants, or partnerships with private funding sources. They're included here so the MPO and its partner agencies are ready to pursue those opportunities as they arise. Grant contingent project locations are mapped in **Figure 13**.

Because Grant Contingent projects don't have a secured funding source, they are not included in the plan's fiscal constraint. Costs in **Table 4** are shown in 2047 year-of-expenditure dollars, using a three percent annual inflation factor. Since these projects don't have an assigned funding timeframe, their actual cost could be lower if a grant or partnership opportunity moves one forward sooner than 2047.

Table 4: Grant Contingent Projects

Project Type	ID	Project Name	Description	Estimated Cost (2047)
	G-1	Montana Avenue Railroad Grade Separation	Grade-separated crossing over the BNSF railroad at Montana Avenue, per C-20	\$93,000,000
	G-2	Montana Avenue/Lyndale Avenue/Helena Avenue Intersection Improvements	Roundabout design paired with the Montana Avenue grade separation, creating a gateway to the Midtown area	\$10,400,000
	G-3	Washington Street/Cromwell Dixon Lane Intersection Improvements	Intersection redesign to address operational and safety needs	\$11,400,000
	G-4	Lake Helena Drive Reconstruction – Deal Lane to Lincoln Road	Reconstruct roadway to minor collector standards with improved drainage and guardrail	\$13,300,000
	G-5	Hauser Dam Road Reconstruction – Lincoln Road to Black Sandy State Park	Continued reconstruction to minor collector standards as in G-4	\$10,800,000

 Grant Contingent Projects
total \$138,900,000*
(2047 year of expenditure)
**Some of these costs may be lower if funding allows projects to move forward sooner.*



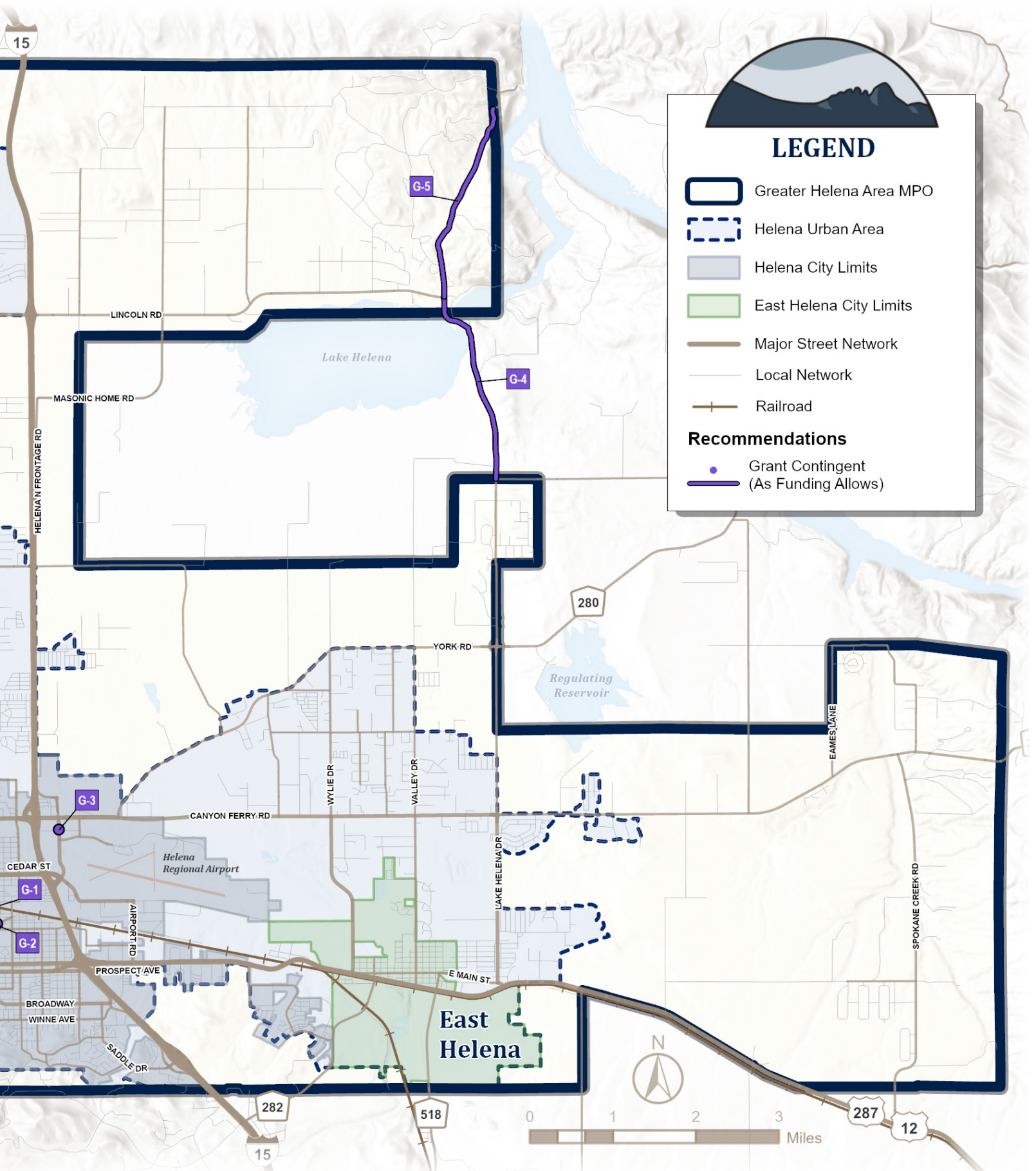


Figure 13: Grant Contingent Projects

Grant Contingent Project Highlights

G-1: Montana Avenue Railroad Grade Separation

Complete Streets | \$93,000,000

This crossing has been identified as a priority since the 1993 *Helena Area Transportation Plan* flagged it, followed by a 2002 city-led feasibility study and the 2003 MDT *Statewide Rail/Highway Grade Separation Needs Study*, which ranked it the second most feasible crossing in Montana for grade separation. The 2016 *Montana Rail Grade Separation Study* developed preliminary concept plans, and the 2021 *Five-Point Intersections and Corridor Connections Multimodal Traffic Study* also determined that it would be beneficial for the adjacent five-point intersection (**G-2**) to be designed and constructed in coordination with this crossing due to their close proximity and operational interdependence. The crossing carries about 13,250 vehicles per day, averages 35 freight trains daily, and has recorded seven vehicle-train accidents historically, including one in the past five years and one in 2016.

The city secured a Railroad Crossing Elimination grant in 2024 to fund preliminary engineering and environmental review through a feasibility study (**C-20**). This project would construct a grade-separated crossing, either an overpass or underpass depending on the feasibility study's results, resulting in closure of the existing at-grade crossing. Given the scale and complexity of separating an active freight corridor from a busy arterial, coordination with BNSF Railway will be required throughout design and construction.

Although a high priority for the community, the project's scale puts it well beyond what the MPO can fund on its own, which is why it's classified as Grant Contingent rather than Recommended.



G-2: Montana Avenue/Lyndale Avenue/Helena Avenue Intersection Improvements

Complete Streets | \$10,400,000

Locally known as "Malfunction Junction," this intersection ranks third-highest on the region's High Injury Network based on both total score and crash frequency. Its unusual five-legged geometry inhibits acceptable operations during peak-hour traffic, with several restricted turning movements. The signalized intersection currently operates at an overall Level of Service C during peak hours, with a history of rear-end, right-angle, and sideswipe crashes.



The 2021 *Five-Point Intersections and Corridor Connections Multimodal Traffic Study* recommended converting the intersection to a roundabout to balance these operational and access needs. The study also found that the intersection serves as a significant barrier for non-motorized users and limits access to the 6th Ward neighborhood, making the roundabout design an opportunity to establish a gateway into the Midtown area. Because the roundabout's function depends on how traffic clears the adjacent Montana Avenue railroad crossing, this intersection is planned jointly with the Montana Avenue grade separation (**G-1, C-20**) rather than independently.

G-3: Washington Street/Cromwell Dixon Lane Intersection Improvements

Complete Streets | \$11,400,000

This intersection ranks among the top 2.5 percent of intersections on the High Injury Network, with 24 reported crashes over five years, including several right-angle collisions, and safety concerns reinforced through public comments. Washington Street carries up to 13,000 vehicles per day with two through lanes in each direction and dedicated left-turn bays, while Cromwell Dixon Lane provides access to major commercial destinations, including big-box retail, Costco, and the Siebel Soccer Complex. The intersection is currently unsignalized, though underground signal infrastructure was installed during a past Washington Street reconstruction, and full turning and crossing movements are currently allowed, with operational analysis showing poor performance on the east- and westbound approaches contributing to risky gap acceptance and right-angle crashes.

It is recommended that the intersection be evaluated to identify improvements that address both operational and safety concerns. Potential improvements could include a dual-lane roundabout, traffic signal, or other suitable alternatives. Given the close proximity to the Custer Avenue/Washington Street (I-16) and Cedar Street/Washington Street (I-17) intersections, these locations should be evaluated collectively. Appropriate pedestrian crossing accommodations should also be incorporated into any improvements made. Recent interest from an adjacent business may also provide an opportunity to pursue a funding partnership to help offset costs.

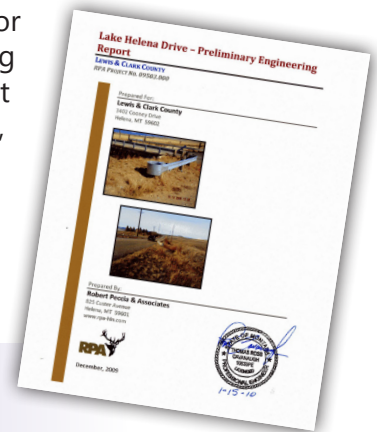
G-4: Lake Helena Drive Reconstruction — Deal Lane to Lincoln Road

Roadway & Bridge | \$13,300,000

This stretch of road serves as a primary connector across the easterly Helena Valley, tying together US 12, Canyon Ferry Road, York Road, and Lincoln Road. Substantial residential subdivision growth in the area has added traffic well beyond what the road was built to handle. A preliminary engineering report found the existing roadway falls short of minimum design standards, with an undersized pavement structure, narrow clear zones, and steep cut-and-fill slopes that leave little room for error and have contributed to a documented crash history.

Local funding available to Lewis and Clark County falls short of what is required for full reconstruction, which is why this project depends on securing grant funding rather than being fiscally constrained within the LRTP. While previous grant applications were unsuccessful, the county continues to seek grant funding, since maintaining the current roadway requires significant ongoing resources, including grading several times a year and regular gravel and magnesium chloride application. In the interim, the county has conducted limited maintenance investments, including a 2025 asphalt overlay of the existing paved section from the Causeway Bridge to Hauser Dam Road.

This project would reconstruct the roadway to achieve a 32-foot top surfacing width and bring it into alignment with minor collector standards, including improved drainage and guardrail. Grant applications could be coordinated with **G-5** (Hauser Dam Road) to ensure consistency across the entire corridor.



G-5: Hauser Dam Road Reconstruction — Lincoln Road to Black Sandy State Park

Roadway & Bridge | \$10,800,000

This project continues the reconstruction described in **G-4** further north, extending improved roadway standards from Lincoln Road to Black Sandy State Park, a popular access point on Hauser Lake that brings significant seasonal traffic to the corridor. Like **G-4**, this segment depends on federal grant funding given the scale of investment relative to the county's available resources. The two projects would benefit from being pursued and designed together for a consistent standard across the full corridor.

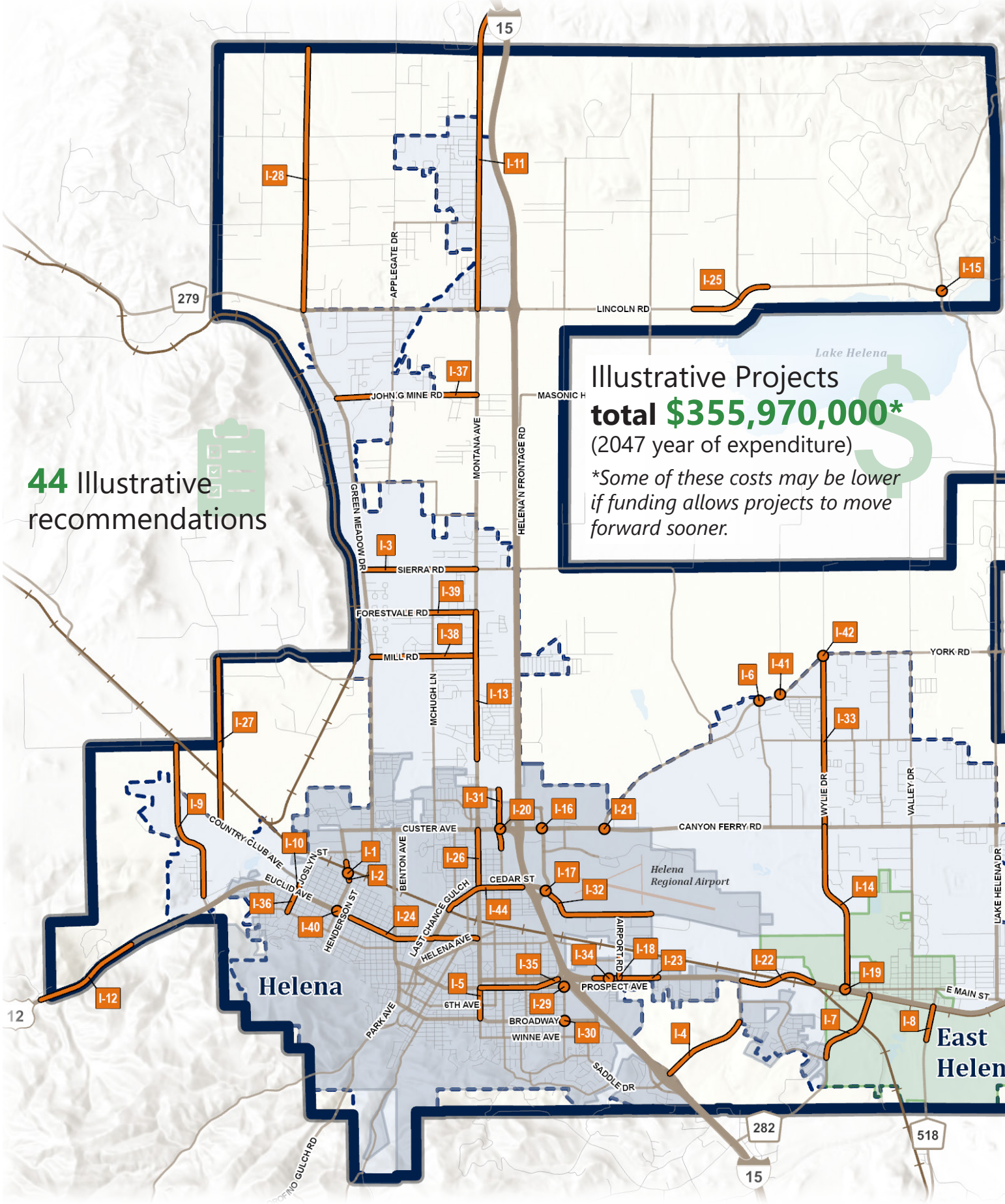
Illustrative Projects

Illustrative projects are supported by the community and partner agencies but scored lower in the prioritization process, or carry costs too high to fund given current revenue projections, placing them outside this plan's funding reach for now. They're included in **Table 5** and **Figure 14** because funding opportunities change over time: a competitive grant, a private development partnership, or a future revenue increase could move any of these projects forward. Like Grant Contingent projects, Illustrative projects are not part of the plan's fiscal constraint, and costs are shown in 2047 year-of-expenditure dollars.

Table 5: Illustrative Projects (Beyond 2047)

Project Type	ID	Project Name	Description	Estimated Cost (2047)
	I-1	Centennial Trail/Henderson Street Pedestrian Crossing	Grade-separated crossing across Henderson Street for Centennial Trail; pending results of feasibility study (C-28) and BNSF permits	\$3,000,000
	I-2	Henderson Street Railroad Crossing	Reconstruct bridge for adequate vertical clearance, improve Henderson Street to complete streets standards	\$9,100,000
	I-3	Sierra Road Reconstruction – Green Meadow Drive to Montana Avenue	Rebuild to major collector standard with a shared use path	\$5,300,000
	I-4	East Side Arterial Connector	Construct arterial connecting US 287 to I-15 via Crossroads Parkway	\$30,000,000
	I-5	S Montana Avenue Reconstruction – 11th Avenue to Broadway Street	Road diet to three lanes, roundabouts at Broadway Street and 6th Avenue, crosswalk enhancements	\$12,200,000
	I-6	York Road/Tizer Road Intersection Improvements	Evaluate higher form traffic control to improve safety and operations	\$1.4M-\$5.5M
	I-7	Highway 282 Reconstruction – US 12 to Runkle Parkway	Rebuild to major collector standard with multimodal accommodations and a safe crossing	\$12,400,000
	I-8	Highway 518 Reconstruction – US 12 to Prickly Pear Park	Rebuild to major collector standard with multimodal accommodations, intersection safety upgrades	\$16,900,000
	I-9	Williams Street Reconstruction – Ten Mile Creek Bridge to Fort Harrison	Reconstruct to major collector standard, realign sharp curves	\$5,400,000
	I-10	Joslyn Street Reconstruction – Euclid Avenue to Country Club Avenue	Reconstruct to complete streets standards (major collector)	\$1,500,000
	I-11	N Montana Avenue Reconstruction – North of Lincoln Road	Reconstruct to minor collector standard	\$7,300,000
	I-12	US 12 – Westside – Safety Enhancements	Enhanced wildlife warning treatments to reduce animal-related crashes	\$350,000
	I-13	N Montana Avenue Corridor Improvements	Operational and pedestrian safety improvements to reduce queuing and crossing risk	\$550,000
	I-14	Wylie Drive Reconstruction – US 12 to Canyon Ferry Road	Reconstruct to minor arterial standard with multimodal accommodations	\$21,000,000
	I-15	Lake Helena Drive/Hauser Dam Road/Lincoln Road Safety Enhancements	Nighttime recognition and safety improvements for an impaired-crash pattern	\$90,000
	I-16	Custer Avenue/Washington Street Intersection Improvements	Dual northbound left turn lane	\$190,000

Project Type	ID	Project Name	Description	Estimated Cost (2047)
	I-17	Cedar Street/Washington Street Intersection Improvements	Dual southbound right turn lane	\$510,000
	I-18	Carter Drive Reconstruction – Prospect Avenue to Rock Ledge Street	Reconstruct to complete streets standards, railroad crossing improvements	\$104,000,000
	I-19	US 12/4th Street Intersection Improvements	Enhanced intersection control to manage high-speed conflicts	\$2.3M-\$12.2M
	I-20	Custer Avenue/Sanders Street Intersection Improvements	Signal timing, access management, turning guidance	\$30,000-\$3.3M
	I-21	York Road/Canyon Ferry Road Intersection Improvements	Enhanced intersection control to address severe crashes	\$1.8M-\$6.3M
	I-22	US 12 Viaduct Safety Enhancements	Operational and warning enhancements for weather/animal risk	\$5,500,000
	I-23	US 12 – Gibbon Street to Nicole Street – Corridor Improvements	Access management, pedestrian crossing improvements	\$500,000
	I-24	Lyndale Avenue/Euclid Avenue Corridor Improvements	Access management, intersection operations, multimodal safety upgrades	\$1,200,000
	I-25	Lincoln Road – Collins Drive to Vulk Drive – Safety Enhancements	Roadway-departure countermeasures for a severe crash hotspot	\$70,000
	I-26	Montana Avenue Reconstruction – Custer Avenue to Cedar Street	Reconfigure from four to five lanes with center turn lane	\$16,900,000
	I-27	Head Lane Reconstruction – Country Club Avenue to Franklin Mine Road	Pave to minor collector standard with new traffic signal	\$4,500,000
	I-28	Green Meadow Drive Reconstruction – North of Lincoln Road	Reconstruct to minor collector standard	\$5,600,000
	I-29	California Street/Colonial Drive Intersection Improvements	Evaluate higher form of traffic control	\$1.4M-\$5.0M
	I-30	Broadway Street/Colonial Drive Intersection Improvements	Evaluate higher form of traffic control	\$1.4M-\$5.4M
	I-31	Sanders Street Corridor Improvements	Access management plan and operational speed measures	\$480,000
	I-32	Airport Road Reconstruction – Washington Street to “B” Street	Reconstruct to complete streets standards	\$14,400,000
	I-33	Wylie Drive Reconstruction – Canyon Ferry Road to York Road	Reconstruct to major collector standard	\$5,300,000
	I-34	18th Street/North Street/US 12 Intersection Improvements	Close North Street access to improve traffic flow	\$30,000
	I-35	11th Avenue – Montana Avenue to Interstate 15 – Capacity Improvements	Add third eastbound travel lane	\$5,800,000
	I-36	Joslyn Street Reconstruction – Hauser Boulevard to Euclid Avenue	Reconstruct to complete streets standards (major collector)	\$1,700,000
	I-37	John G. Mine Road Reconstruction – N Montana Avenue to Green Meadow Drive	Reconstruct with widened shoulders for bicycle traffic	\$6,500,000



DID YOU KNOW?

Illustrative Projects are supported but lower priority for funding within the plan horizon, and **aren't part of the plan's fiscal constraint**. They're included to keep identified needs visible, even without funding secured within this plan's horizon.



LEGEND

- Greater Helena Area MPO
- Helena Urban Area
- Helena City Limits
- East Helena City Limits
- Major Street Network
- Local Network
- Railroad

Recommendations

- Illustrative
- (Beyond 2047)

Table 5 (continued): Illustrative Projects (Beyond 2047)

Project Type	ID	Project Name	Description	Estimated Cost (2047)
	I-38	Mill Road Reconstruction – Green Meadow Drive to Montana Avenue	Rebuild to major collector standard with widened shoulders for bicyclists	\$3,700,000
	I-39	Forestvale Road Reconstruction – Green Meadow Drive to Montana Avenue	Rebuild to major collector standard with widened shoulders for bicyclists	\$4,100,000
	I-40	Euclid Avenue/Henderson Street Intersection Improvements	Left-turn bays and combination thru-/right-turn lanes	\$2,420,000
	I-41	York Road/Herrin Road/Helberg Drive Safety Enhancements	Approach reconfiguration and new traffic light	\$340,000
	I-42	York Road/Wylie Drive Safety Enhancements	Streetlight, sight distance correction, signage upgrades	\$30,000
	I-43	Canyon Ferry Road/Bannack Drive Safety Enhancements	Advance warning signage, turn-lane and access management improvements	\$500,000-\$8.3M
	I-44	Cedar Street Corridor Improvements	Median and access management improvements	\$1,110,000

Figure 14: Illustrative Projects

5.4. Multimodal Investments

Walking, biking, and transit are essential parts of a complete transportation system, giving residents travel options beyond personal vehicles and improving access for those who can't or don't drive. This section covers non-motorized spot improvements and transit operations. Unlike Committed, Recommended, Grant Contingent, and Illustrative projects, these investments aren't sorted by funding status or prioritized through the process described in [Section 5.2](#).

Non-Motorized Spot Improvements

Rather than prescribing an exhaustive, corridor-by-corridor list of walking and biking projects, this plan identifies a focused set of spot improvements addressing specific barriers and connectivity gaps in the existing non-motorized network, as shown in [Figure 15](#). A broader, longer-term vision for the area's pedestrian and bicycle network is presented separately in [Section 5.6](#).

Funding for standalone pedestrian and bicycle projects is generally more limited than for roadway projects, drawing primarily from competitive programs like Transportation Alternatives (TA) and the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) rather than a dedicated, guaranteed source. In light of that, these spot improvements are intentionally left unprioritized and outside the plan's fiscal constraint, preserving flexibility for the City of Helena, City of East Helena, and Lewis and Clark County to implement them as opportunities arise, whether through a competitive grant, a nearby roadway project that can incorporate the improvement at lower cost, or another funding source as it becomes available. Consistent with this approach, partner agencies intend to prioritize removing barriers within the existing non-motorized network before constructing new standalone facilities, and to incorporate pedestrian and bicycle accommodations into roadway projects whenever possible, such as adding a bike lane during a resurfacing or widening project.

Cost estimates in [Table 6](#) are shown in 2026 dollars without inflationary adjustment, and projects are intentionally left unordered and unconstrained so that local agencies retain the flexibility to implement any listed improvement as funding and opportunities allow.

Table 6: Non-Motorized Spot Improvements

Project Type	ID	Project Name	Description	Estimated Cost (2026)
	NM-1	Cruse Avenue/6th Avenue Intersection Improvements	Remove slip lane, install curb extension/bulbout	\$40,000
	NM-2	Cruse Avenue/Broadway Street Intersection Improvements	Remove slip lane, install curb extension/bulbout	\$40,000
	NM-3	Cruse Avenue/Cutler Street Intersection Improvements	Reconfigure intersection to reduce vehicle-pedestrian conflicts	\$150,000
	NM-4	Henderson Street – Hudson Street to Wilder Street – Path Improvements	Pave alley transitions to shared-use path	\$60,000
	NM-5	Granite Avenue/Overlook Boulevard Safety Enhancements	Add bulbout ramp for downhill bicyclists	\$4,000
	NM-6	Broadway Street Sidewalks – Montana Avenue to Hospital	Continuous ADA-accessible sidewalks and curb ramps along Broadway Street	\$920,000
	NM-7	Villard Avenue/N Last Chance Gulch Crossing Improvements	Median refuge and enhanced crossing	\$510,000

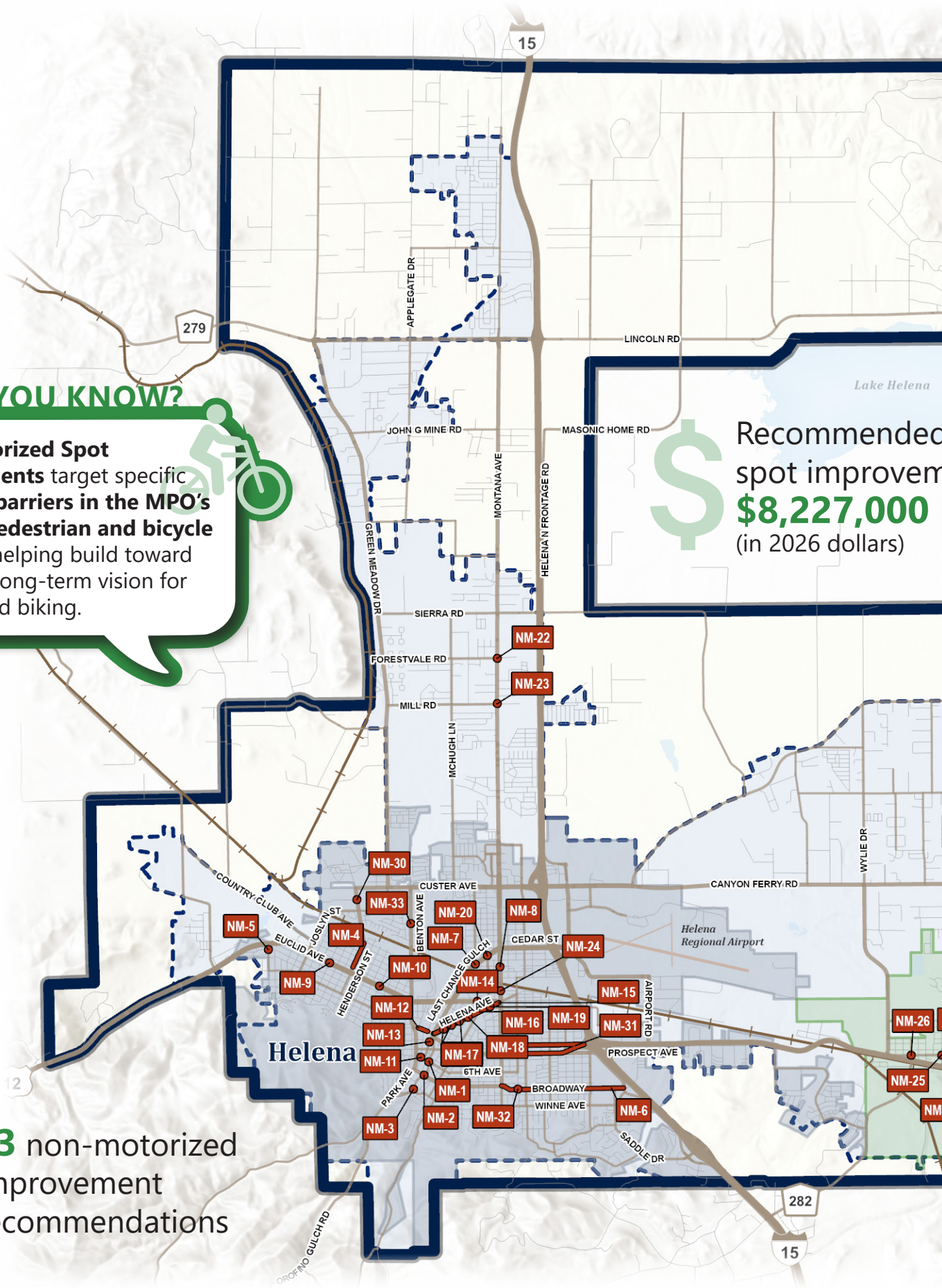
Project Type	ID	Project Name	Description	Estimated Cost (2026)
	NM-8	Montana Avenue/Chestnut Street Crossing Improvements	Bulbouts and hybrid beacon crossing	\$510,000
	NM-9	Euclid Avenue/Glendale Street Crossing Improvements	Pedestrian crossing study and treatment	\$300,000-\$510,000
	NM-10	Euclid Avenue/Lincoln Street Crossing Improvements	Pedestrian crossing study and treatment	\$300,000-\$510,000
	NM-11	6th Avenue/Fuller Avenue Crossing Improvements	Curb bulbouts and Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) at crossing	\$60,000
	NM-12	Neill Avenue Crossing Improvements	Enhanced pedestrian crossings	\$40,000
	NM-13	Last Chance Gulch/Placer Avenue Intersection Improvements	ADA curb ramps, bulbouts, colored crosswalks	\$140,000
	NM-14	Lyndale Avenue/Ewing Street/Rodney Street Crossing Improvements	Enhanced crossing and Centennial Trail connection	\$550,000
	NM-15	Helena Avenue Bike Lanes	Extend bike lanes toward five-point intersections	\$3,000
	NM-16	Helena Avenue Sidewalks	Continuous sidewalks with ADA curb ramps	\$210,000
	NM-17	Helena Avenue – 13th Street to 15th Street – Intersection Improvements	Corner and crosswalk improvements, RRFB	\$680,000
	NM-18	Helena Avenue/16th Street/Ewing Street Intersection Improvements	ADA crossing enhancements and intersection reorientation	\$150,000
	NM-19	Helena Avenue/National Avenue/Dakota Avenue/Boulder Avenue Intersection Improvements	Crossing enhancements and intersection realignment	\$230,000
	NM-20	Last Chance Gulch/National Avenue Crossing Improvements	Hybrid beacon and/or two-stage crossing	\$510,000
	NM-21	Lake Helena Drive/Clinton Street Crossing Improvements	New crosswalk, bulbouts, RRFB, path connections	\$280,000
	NM-22	Montana Avenue/Forestvale Road Crossing Improvements	RRFB at existing crossing	\$90,000
	NM-23	Montana Avenue/Mill Street Crossing Improvements	RRFB and crosswalk	\$100,000
	NM-24	Montana Avenue/Centennial Trail Crossing Improvements	Overhead RRFB and eastern trail extension	\$730,000
	NM-25	Main Street/Thurman Avenue Crossing Improvements	Enhanced pedestrian crossing	\$80,000
	NM-26	Main Street/1st Street Crossing Improvements	Enhanced pedestrian crossing	\$80,000
	NM-27	Main Street/Montana Avenue Crossing Improvements	Enhanced crossing, coordinated with C-25	\$80,000

DID YOU KNOW?

Non-Motorized Spot Improvements target specific gaps and barriers in the MPO's existing pedestrian and bicycle network, helping build toward the plan's long-term vision for walking and biking.

Recommended spot improvement
\$8,227,000
(in 2026 dollars)

 **33** non-motorized improvement recommendations



KEEP IN MIND

These improvements are **intentionally unprioritized** and outside the plan's fiscal constraint, **giving local agencies flexibility to implement** them as opportunities arise, through grants, nearby roadway projects, or other funding as it becomes available.



LEGEND

- Greater Helena Area MPO
- Helena Urban Area
- Helena City Limits
- East Helena City Limits
- Major Street Network
- Local Network
- Railroad

Recommendations

- Non-Motorized Improvements

Table 6 (continued): Non-Motorized Spot Improvements

Project Type	ID	Project Name	Description	Estimated Cost (2026)
	NM-28	Main Street/Kalispell Avenue Crossing Improvements	Enhanced crossing, coordinated with C-18	\$80,000
	NM-29	Lane Avenue/Porter Avenue Crossing Improvements	Improved crossing and sidewalk connections	\$350,000
	NM-30	Henderson Street/Ryan Fields Crossing Improvements	Enhanced crossing linking Capital High School and Ryan Fields	\$270,000
	NM-31	11th Avenue/Prospect Avenue Corridor Improvements	Monitor and advance multimodal safety enhancements post-MDT investment	\$60,000
	NM-32	Broadway Street/Roberts Street Connection	Ramp/switchback system connecting discontinuous segment	\$150,000
	NM-33	Benton Avenue/Meadow Drive Crossing Improvements	Repaint crosswalk, add signage and RRFB	\$50,000



0 1 2 3 Miles

Figure 15: Non-Motorized Spot Improvements

Transit Improvements

The transit needs identified in **Chapter 4** are addressed through Capital Transit’s TDP and TAM plan and incorporated into the LRTP for the sake of consistency and coordination. Fleet and vehicle needs and sustained operations are addressed through Committed Projects and Annual Programs, described in **Section 5.3**. Beyond fleet investment, Capital Transit’s TDP evaluates the system’s current service model against community needs identified through market analysis, performance analysis, and public and stakeholder engagement, guided by five goals:

- 1** Maintain and improve accessible, equitable service for all riders.
- 2** Improve service productivity and cost efficiency.
- 3** Expand and enhance service to better reflect regional travel demand.
- 4** Strengthen the financial sustainability of Capital Transit.
- 5** Improve system awareness, usability, and rider experience.



The TDP evaluated five service alternatives against Capital Transit’s current demand-response model, ranging from targeted enhancements to a full fixed-route restructuring. Since the most meaningful improvements hinge on securing a more stable local funding source, the TDP presents these as a phased approach tied to funding availability rather than a fixed schedule. None of the following is guaranteed within current budget constraints, as each step depends on the funding and staffing capacity available at the time.

- **Short-term (Years 1–5):** Build the case for expanded local investment through rider and stakeholder outreach and engagement with elected officials on long-term funding options, including an Urban Transportation District (UTD). Where budget allows, pursue lower-cost enhancements such as East Helena/East Valley Bus schedule adjustments, a weekend service pilot, or a fare reduction pilot.
- **Mid-term (Years 6–10):** If a dedicated local funding mechanism advances or additional resources become available, introduce structured improvements including corridor pilot service and meaningful East Helena/East Valley Bus expansion as East Helena develops. Scope and timing depend on the outcome of short-term funding efforts.
- **Long-term (Beyond Year 10):** Consider advancing a hybrid service model and revisit a fixed-route model, contingent on growth, infrastructure, and funding conditions at that time.

Of the TDP recommendations, development of a UTD stands out as the single most consequential item, identified in the TDP as the most significant lever available for closing Capital Transit’s structural budget gap and enabling the fleet and service investments described above. The TDP recommends tracking ridership, cost, and funding metrics as part of ongoing plan monitoring.



5.5. Beyond Capital Projects

Not every transportation need requires a construction project to address. Some of the region's needs are better met through coordinated programs, data collection efforts, planning studies, or policy actions. This section presents 15 such efforts, reflecting a mix of planning-level studies, ongoing programs, coordination frameworks, and policies addressing safety, operational, maintenance, and multimodal connectivity needs across the MPO. These efforts are expected to be funded with general city, county, or federal planning funds over the plan's 20-year horizon, rather than through the project-level funding categories described in [Section 5.3](#). They are not prioritized or ranked relative to one another, and estimated costs, where applicable, are shown in 2026 dollars without inflationary adjustment.

Beyond the efforts listed in [Table 7](#), the MPO and its partner agencies should also conduct periodic studies, such as intersection operations and speed studies, to monitor known problem areas and determine whether conditions warrant further action as the region grows and develops.

Table 7: Other Plans, Policies, and Programs

Project Type	ID	Project Name	Description	Estimated Cost (2026)
	O-1	MPO-Wide Pedestrian Mobility Plan	Coordinated framework for identifying and prioritizing pedestrian safety improvements near schools and for general non-motorized users, paired with education	\$200,000-\$400,000
	O-2	ADA/Sidewalk Gap Inventory and Prioritization Framework	Coordinated assessment of ADA and sidewalk conditions to guide accessibility improvements across the MPO	\$150,000-\$300,000
	O-3	Bike Count Program	Regional bicycle count program to collect consistent non-motorized travel data supporting planning, prioritization, and grant applications	\$5,000-\$25,000/year
	O-4	Shared Use Path Maintenance	Condition assessments and a maintenance/rehabilitation plan for existing shared-use paths	\$30,000-\$60,000/year
	O-5	Coordinated Roadway Departure Countermeasure Program	Multi-jurisdictional approach to identifying and applying roadway-departure safety countermeasures	\$10,000-\$25,000/year
	O-6	Safety Targets and Performance Dashboard	Online dashboard tracking crash data and safety performance indicators for public education and transparency	\$50,000-\$250,000
	O-7	Consistent Distracted Driving Ordinances Across Jurisdictions	Encourage East Helena and Lewis & Clark County to adopt distracted-driving ordinances consistent with Helena's, paired with education and enforcement	\$5,000-\$25,000 each
	O-8	Updates to Subdivision Regulations and Design Standards	Align local subdivision regulations and design standards to support consistent, coordinated roadway design	\$25,000-\$50,000 each
	O-9	Regional Maintenance and Winter Operations Coordination Framework	Coordinated winter operations and year-round maintenance practices across partner jurisdictions, with public education on snow removal responsibilities	\$75,000-\$175,000
	O-10	Support and Promote Behavioral Safety Programs	Elevate and support existing behavioral safety programs (DUI Task Force, Buckle Up Montana, and similar efforts)	Varies
	O-11	Implement and Evaluate the Bar Fairies Program	Continue piloting and evaluating this impaired driving prevention program	\$25,000/year
	O-12	Truck Route System	Establish an ordinance recognizing preferred through-truck routes, based on the 2014 LRTP's proposed system	\$150,000-\$400,000
	O-13	Benton Avenue Railroad Grade Separation Feasibility Study	Feasibility study to determine whether an overpass or underpass is achievable	\$400,000-\$1.5M
	O-14	Capitol Interchange Improvements	Engineering study to re-evaluate capacity, operations, and safety needs, updating outdated prior EIS recommendations	\$950,000-\$1.1M
	O-15	Support Passenger Rail Service	Support development of passenger rail service to Helena by improving multimodal connectivity between the station area and key destinations	Unknown

5.6. Long-Term Vision

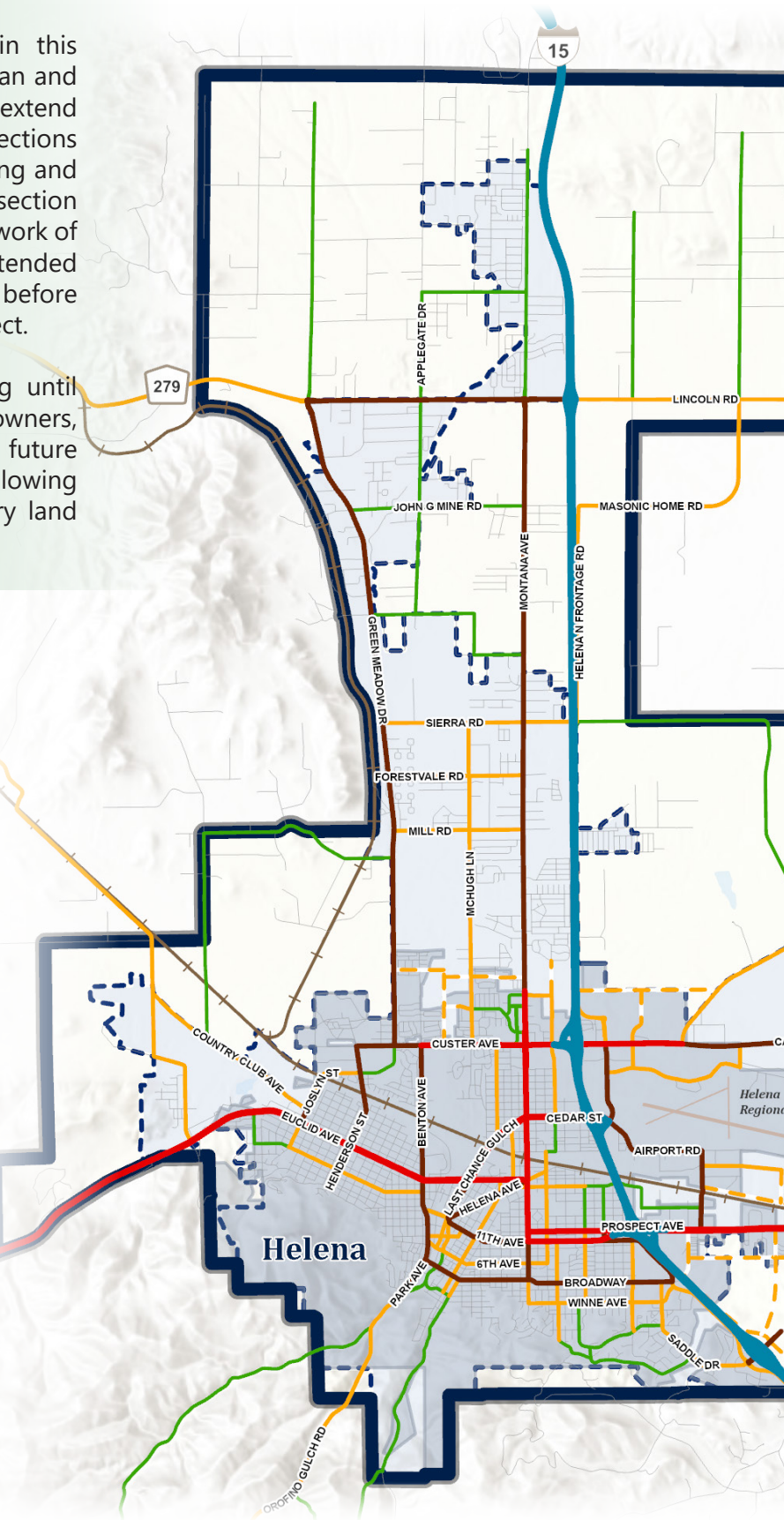
The projects and programs described earlier in this chapter address what the MPO can reasonably plan and fund through 2047. But some transportation needs extend beyond that horizon, including corridors and connections the region will likely need someday, even if funding and demand won't support them for decades. This section presents that longer-term vision: a conceptual network of future major streets and non-motorized facilities intended to guide land use and development decisions long before construction becomes a realistic near-term prospect.

Establishing this vision now, rather than waiting until growth forces the question, gives planners, landowners, and developers a shared understanding of where future transportation facilities will likely be needed, allowing right-of-way to be protected and complementary land uses planned in advance.

Visionary Major Street Network

Drawing on the growth patterns and traffic projections described in **Chapter 3**, the visionary major street network identifies the interstates, principal arterials, minor arterials, and collector routes the region is likely to need at full build-out. It builds on the recommendations presented earlier in this chapter, adding anticipated future connections that extend beyond the current 20-year horizon. Where past planning documents already identified a long-term corridor, this network generally carries that vision forward, adjusted where conditions have changed enough to warrant it.

Alignments for all future connections shown in **Figure 16** are conceptual in nature and may vary based on factors such as topography, wetlands, land ownership, and other unforeseen factors. It is likely that many of the corridors shown will not be developed into roads for many decades to come. On the other hand, if development is proposed in a particular area, the visionary transportation network will ensure that the various facilities will be established in a fashion that produces an efficient and logical future transportation system.



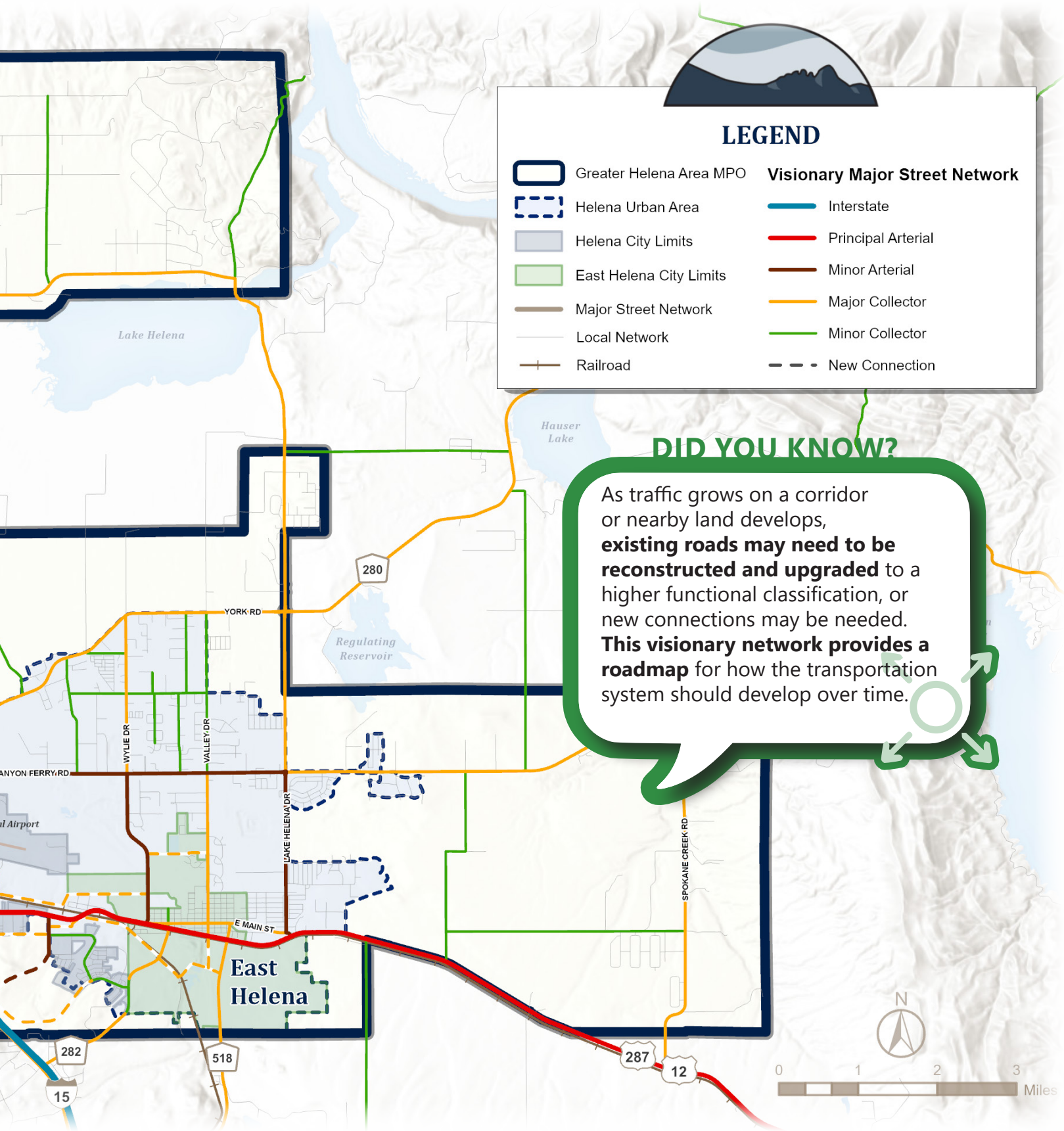
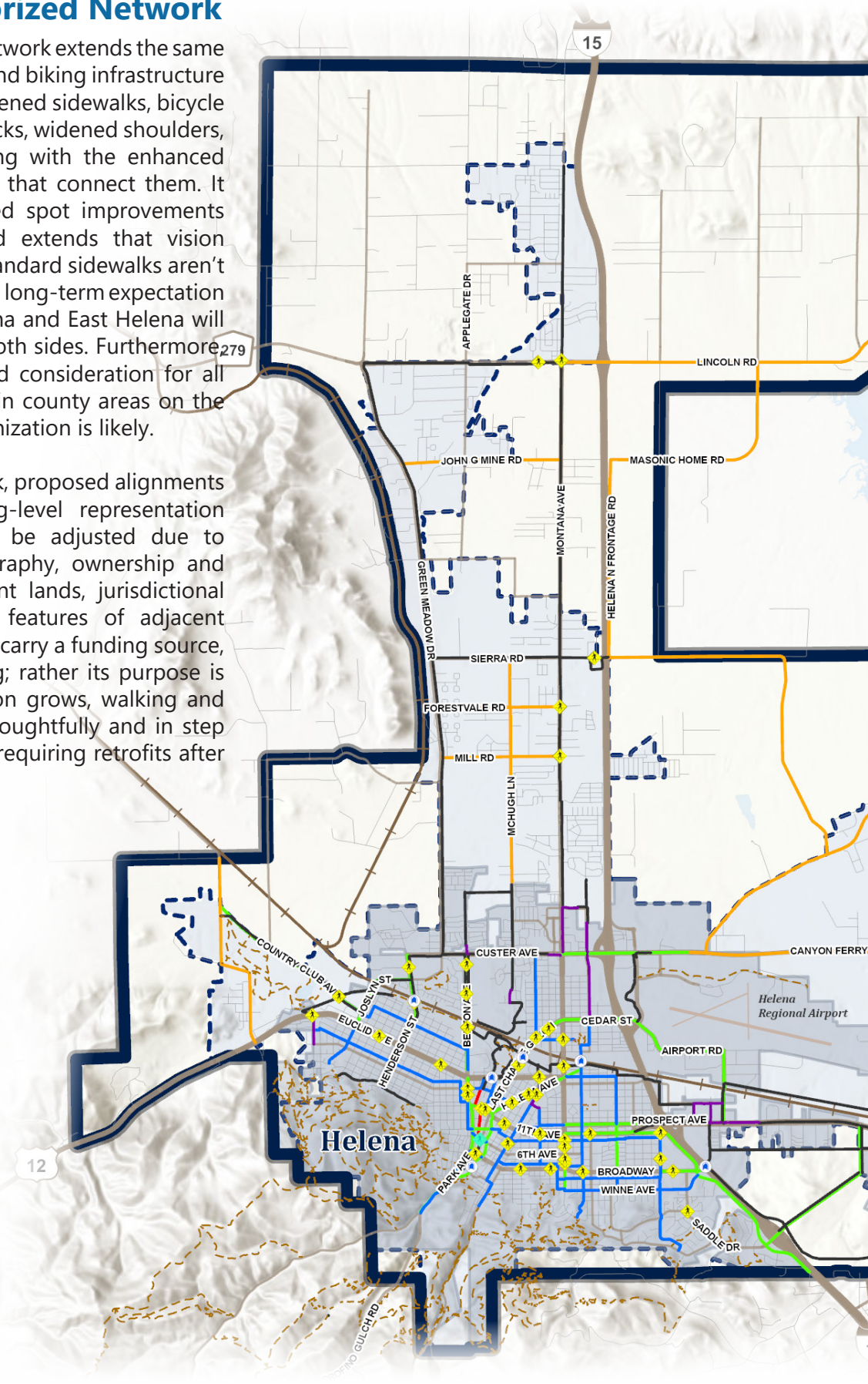


Figure 16: Visionary Major Street Network

Visionary Non-Motorized Network

The visionary non-motorized network extends the same long-term thinking to walking and biking infrastructure including shared-use paths, widened sidewalks, bicycle boulevards, bike lanes, cycle tracks, widened shoulders, and natural surface trails, along with the enhanced and grade-separated crossings that connect them. It incorporates the non-motorized spot improvements described in **Section 5.4** and extends that vision across the full planning area. Standard sidewalks aren't individually mapped, though the long-term expectation is that every street within Helena and East Helena will eventually have sidewalks on both sides. Furthermore, sidewalks should be a standard consideration for all new development, particularly in county areas on the urban fringe where future urbanization is likely.

As with the major street network, proposed alignments in **Figure 17** are a planning-level representation of intended routes and may be adjusted due to environmental features, topography, ownership and future development of adjacent lands, jurisdictional requirements, and geometric features of adjacent roadways. This network doesn't carry a funding source, a timeline, or a priority ranking; rather its purpose is to make sure that as the region grows, walking and biking connections are built thoughtfully and in step with development, rather than requiring retrofits after the fact.



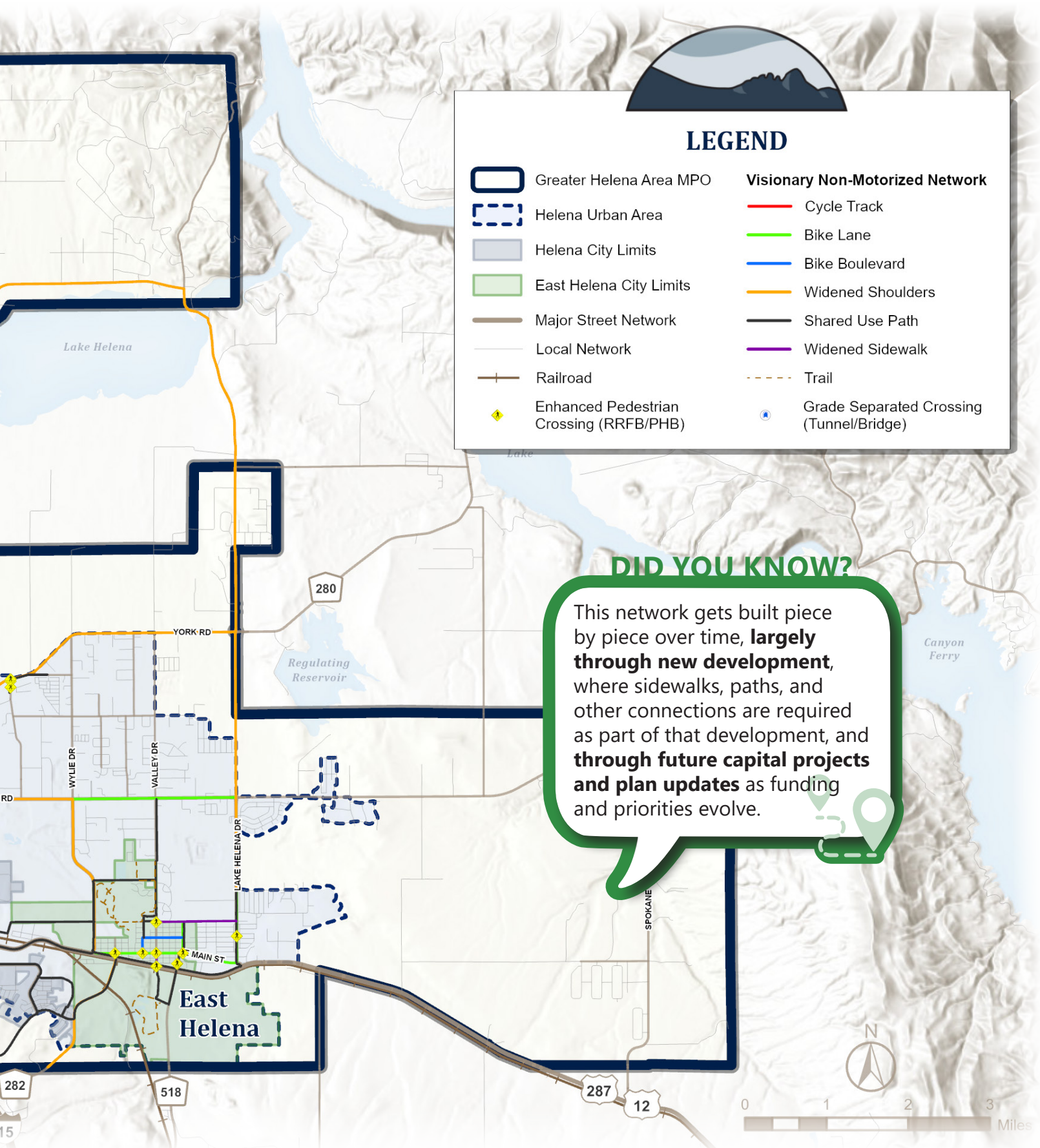


Figure 17: Visionary Non-Motorized Network



6 Comply

The recommendations in [Chapter 5](#) reflect what the Greater Helena Area needs over the next 20 years, but a plan only works if it can comply with the realities of funding and performance. This chapter covers the LRTP's final step, demonstrating that these recommendations are fiscally constrained and support the region's adopted performance targets, alongside the environmental considerations that shape how and where projects get built and what happens next as recommendations move into implementation and this plan evolves over time.

6.1. Funding the Plan

Every recommendation in this plan depends on funding, whether it's already secured, expected in coming years, or still being pursued. This section walks through where that funding comes from and demonstrates that the plan's committed and recommended costs fit within what the MPO can realistically expect to have available over the 2047 planning horizon.

Funding Sources

Transportation improvements in the Greater Helena Area are funded through a combination of federal, state, local, and private sources, each with its own eligibility rules, funding cycles, and level of predictability. Available funding programs are summarized here with additional eligibility details and subprogram breakdowns provided in [Appendix F](#).

Federal funding makes up the largest share of available revenue, delivered through several formula and competitive programs.

- ✓ The **National Highway Performance Program (NHPP)** supports maintenance, rehabilitation, and reconstruction of the Interstate (IM) and National Highway System (NH)
- ✓ The **Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG)**, including its Urban (STPU), Secondary (STPS), and Off-System (STPX) components, funds a broader range of projects on federal aid highway systems
- ✓ The **Bridge Formula Program (BR)** funds bridge replacement, rehabilitation, and preservation projects
- ✓ The **Carbon Reduction Program (CRP)** provides formula funding to reduce transportation emissions
- ✓ The **Transportation Alternatives (TA) Program** provides dedicated funding for pedestrian, bicycle, and Safe Routes to School projects, awarded on a competitive basis
- ✓ The **Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)** funds safety-focused improvements
- ✓ The **Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)** funds projects that improve air quality; however, Helena is only eligible for discretionary funds from the Montana Air and Congestion Initiative (MACI) set-aside program
- ✓ **Federal Transit Administration (FTA) programs**, including Sections 5307, 5310, 5311, and 5339 fund transit capital and operating needs
- ✓ **Discretionary grants**, such as Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) and Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE), can provide significant funding for individual high-priority projects, though programs are highly competitive, funding levels vary, and award is never guaranteed

State funding includes **State Funded Construction (SFCN)** dollars for preserving state highways, **TransADE** operating assistance for transit services serving elderly and disabled residents, and the state fuel tax, distributed to cities and counties for road construction, reconstruction, and maintenance.

Local funding comes from each partner agency’s own revenue tools. The City of Helena draws on its general fund, fuel tax allocations, street maintenance district, parking revenue, tax increment financing (TIF), and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. The City of East Helena and Lewis and Clark County rely on their own fuel tax allocations, maintenance districts, and capital improvement funds, with the county also drawing on rural improvement districts and state grant programs.

Private funding, typically tied to new development, supplements these public sources where projects benefit adjacent private property.

Fiscal Constraint

Federal law requires this plan’s Committed and Recommended project costs, combined with ongoing Annual Program spending, to stay within what the MPO can reasonably expect to have available through 2047. Project costs are converted to YOE dollars using a three percent annual inflation factor to allow a consistent comparison against anticipated revenue.

As shown in **Table 8**, Committed Projects total **\$90,893,445** and Recommended Projects total **\$68,336,323**. Combined with Annual Programs totaling **\$134,124,780**, total expenditures across the plan horizon (2026-2047) come to roughly **\$293,355,000**. Anticipated revenue over the same period totals **\$406,596,000**, leaving a projected balance of **\$113,241,000**.

That balance isn’t money without a purpose. A portion, nearly \$36 million, reflects state operations and maintenance funding within the MPO that goes beyond what’s already committed through Annual Programs. Another portion is reserved for future local match funding required to compete for and secure future awards for Grant Contingent projects (nearly \$140 million in additional needs). The remaining flexibility positions partner agencies to pursue Illustrative projects (roughly \$356 million), as private partnerships, future revenue growth, or shifting public priorities make them needed or possible. That same flexibility also supports the non-motorized spot improvements described in **Section 5.4**, which, like Grant Contingent and Illustrative projects, fall outside this plan’s fiscal constraint.

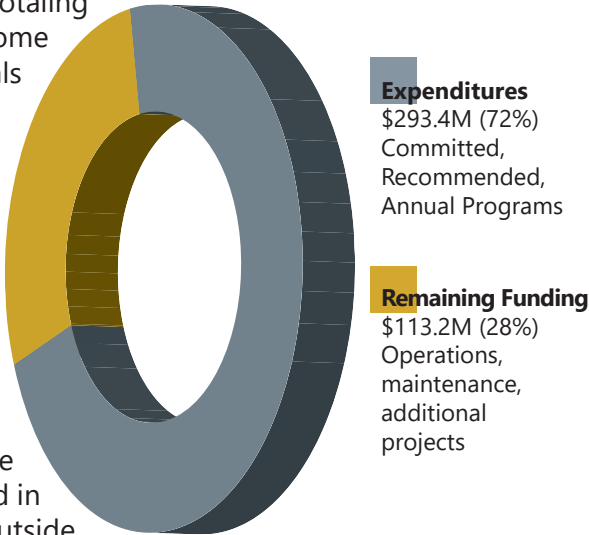


Table 8: Comparison of LRTP Estimated Revenues and Expenditures (Thousands)

Funding Source	2026-2031			2032-2047		
	Anticipated Funding ¹	Expenditures	Cumulative Balance	Anticipated Funding ²	Expenditures	Cumulative Balance
Federal	\$116,528	\$93,966	\$22,562	\$136,584	\$106,141	\$53,005
State	\$10,399	\$600	\$9,799	\$27,730	\$1,600	\$35,9284
Local	\$34,454	\$26,160	\$8,294	\$80,901	\$64,888	\$24,307
Total	\$161,381	\$120,726	\$40,655	\$245,215	\$172,629	\$113,241

1 2026-2031 Expected Funding is based on funding information provided by MDT regarding the DRAFT 2027-2031 Greater Helena MPO TIP.
2 2032-2047 Projected Funding is estimated based on past funding levels and is the best information available at this time. There is no guarantee that funding will be available in the future.

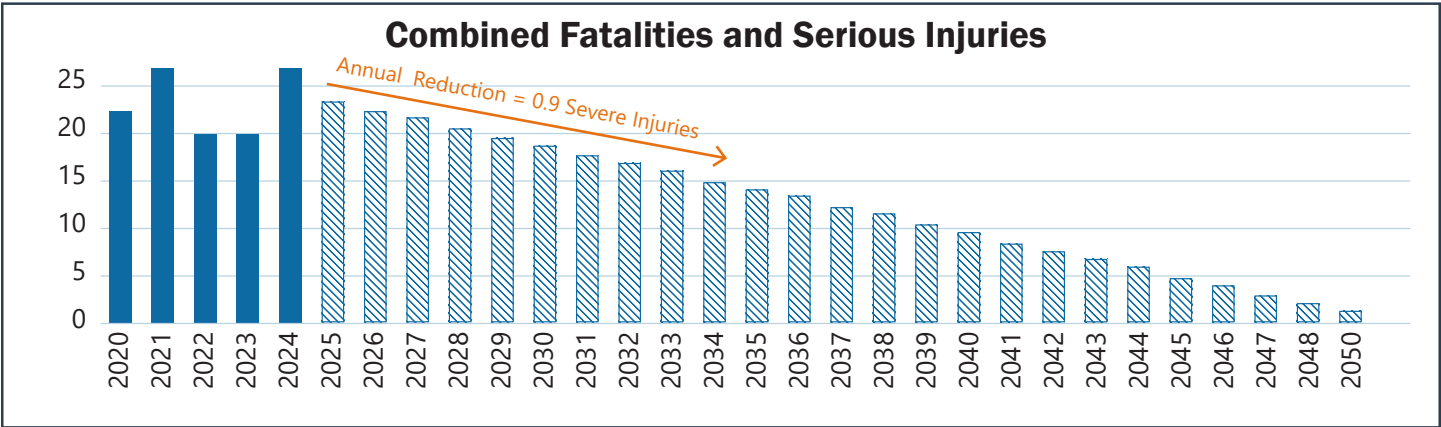
6.2. Performance Targets

Federal law requires the MPO to establish performance targets that reflect national performance goals, covering safety, pavement and bridge condition, system reliability, and transit assets. The MPO may adopt the state’s targets or set its own. At this time, the Greater Helena MPO has elected to adopt the state-established performance targets for safety, pavement and bridge condition, system performance and freight movement, and congestion mitigation,¹¹ and will support Capital Transit’s targets for transit asset management. The MPO will also carry forward the safety targets established in the MPO’s CSAP. As MDT and partner agencies update their targets over time, the MPO intends to incorporate those changes into future plan updates.

State performance targets are summarized in **Table 9**, while historical performance data for both the state and MPO as well as underlying federal reporting requirements are detailed in **Appendix G**.

Safety

The CSAP sets a target of reducing combined fatal and serious injuries to zero by 2050, consistent with MDT’s statewide goal of zero fatalities and serious injuries. Using a 2020-2024 baseline average, the CSAP establishes an interim target of approximately 23 combined fatalities and serious injuries in 2025, declining by about four percent each year to reach zero by 2050.



CSAP-identified projects and policies are integrated throughout this plan rather than tracked separately, appearing across the projects and policy actions described in **Chapter 5**. Like other recommendations in this plan, many CSAP projects that would meaningfully advance these safety targets currently fall outside what the MPO can fund within the plan horizon. Progress toward the CSAP’s targets will depend on continuing to pursue funding for these projects as opportunities arise, alongside the policy and program actions this plan can implement more immediately, and continued focus on the CSAP’s four priority crash patterns: intersection crashes, run-off-the-road crashes, non-motorist-involved crashes, and crashes tied to high-risk behaviors like distracted or impaired driving.



Pavement and Bridge Condition

The MPO supports MDT’s targets for the condition of pavement and bridges on the National Highway System. Meeting these targets depends on prioritizing highway system preservation alongside capital projects and ongoing city, county, and state maintenance activities as described in **Chapter 5**. Routine condition evaluation by each jurisdiction helps ensure maintenance is performed before a road or bridge deteriorates to the point of requiring costlier reconstruction.

System Reliability

The MPO supports MDT’s targets for travel time reliability and truck travel time reliability on the Interstate and National Highway System, along with associated air quality and emissions measures. Meaningfully improving reliability through added roadway capacity is largely not financially feasible for this plan. To advance progress toward meeting these targets, the LRTP recommends optimized intersection operations, multimodal infrastructure investments, new connections, and other management techniques to improve system reliability, alongside an assessment of freight patterns and locations to improve the movement of goods throughout the network.

Emissions Reduction

In Montana, quantitative emissions benefits are reported only for Missoula’s mandatory CMAQ projects. MDT’s flexible CMAQ funding is aimed at reducing congestion and improving air quality, but benefits from these flexibly funded projects aren’t quantified or reported, even though MDT’s target-setting methodology acknowledges they likely exist. MDT is currently only required to set statewide targets for Carbon Monoxide (CO) and Particulate Matter 10 (PM₁₀). Since the Greater Helena MPO doesn’t receive dedicated CMAQ funding for air quality non-attainment, it isn’t required to adopt these targets.

Table 9: State Performance Measures and Targets

Performance Measure	Targets (2026-2029)
Safety Performance Measures	
Number of Fatalities	205.4
Fatality Rate (per 100 million VMT)	1.507
Number of Serious Injuries	750
Serious Injury Rate (per 100 million VMT)	5.503
Combined Non-Motorized Fatalities and Serious Injuries	57.2
Infrastructure Condition Performance Measures	
Interstate Pavement – Good Condition	35%
Interstate Pavement – Poor Condition	2%
Non-Interstate NHS Pavement – Good Condition	30%
Non-Interstate NHS Pavement – Poor Condition	3%
NHS Bridge – Good Condition	17%
NHS Bridge – Poor Condition	8%
State of Good Repair Performance Measures	
Interstate Pavement – Ride Index	80+
Non-Interstate NHS Pavement – Ride Index	76
NHS Bridge Condition (Bridge Deck Area) – Good Condition	25%
NHS Bridge Condition (Bridge Deck Area) – Poor Condition	3%
Highway Reliability Performance Measures	
Interstate Travel Time Reliability (% Reliable - Person Miles)	98%
Non-Interstate Travel Time Reliability (% Reliable - Person Miles)	80%
Interstate Truck Travel Time Reliability Index	1.30
Emissions Reductions Performance Measures	
CO Emissions	>0 kg/day
PM ₁₀ Emissions	>0 kg/day

Transit Asset Management

Capital Transit's TAM Plan establishes performance targets for the age and condition of the system's vehicles and facilities, incorporated into this plan by reference. Capital Transit monitors asset condition on an ongoing basis and prioritizes replacement based on safety risk, cost of repair, and remaining useful life, with the City of Helena budgeting annually to address emergency replacement needs.

Table 10: Capital Transit Performance Measures and Targets

Asset Category - Performance Measure	Asset Class	2027 Target	2028 Target	2029 Target	2030 Target	2031 Target
Revenue Vehicles						
Age - % of revenue vehicles within a particular asset class that have met or exceeded their ULB	CU - Cutaway Bus	29%	29%	43%	57%	57%
	VN - Van	0%	0%	40%	20%	40%
	MV - Mini-van	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%
Facilities						
Condition - % of facilities with a condition rating below 3.0 on the FTA TERM Scale	Administrative & Maintenance Facilities	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

6.3. Environmental Considerations

Transportation projects can affect, and be affected by, the natural and human environment around them. This section addresses two related considerations: the region's air quality and transportation conformity status and the environmental mitigation process that applies as individual projects move toward construction.

Air Quality and Transportation Conformity

The City of Helena has no history of air quality nonattainment. East Helena, however, carries a history tied to the former ASARCO lead smelter, which operated in the area from 1898 until it closed in 2001. Emissions from the smelter led the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to designate East Helena as nonattainment for sulfur dioxide in 1978 and for lead in 1991. Following the facility's closure, which reduced both lead and sulfur dioxide emissions in the area by more than 99.999 percent, EPA redesignated East Helena as attainment for both pollutants in 2019, placing the area in maintenance status, where it remains today. Because the East Helena maintenance area lies within the MPO planning area, the MPO must consider its status in transportation planning.

Federal law requires MPOs in a nonattainment or maintenance area to demonstrate transportation conformity: a legal requirement showing that an LRTP won't cause a new air quality violation, worsen an existing one, or delay an area's progress toward meeting federal standards, before that plan can receive federal approval or funding. Despite East Helena's maintenance status, the MPO is not required to complete a conformity determination for this plan. Lead isn't regulated as a transportation conformity pollutant, and sulfur dioxide conformity only applies where transportation emissions are found to significantly contribute to the pollutant's levels. Since the ASARCO facility, not vehicle traffic, was the historical pollution source, transportation conformity does not apply. The former ASARCO property remains an active Superfund site, now reduced to a slag pile undergoing repurposing and regrading, and continues to be monitored to ensure any future development complies with air quality standards.



Environmental Mitigation

Federal law requires the LRTP to discuss environmental mitigation, addressing the potential effects of transportation projects on the natural and human environment and identifying opportunities to avoid or reduce those effects. Before any project in this plan moves forward, it will undergo its own environmental review to identify site-specific impacts and determine what mitigation or permitting is required. The discussion in this plan is intended to describe general considerations and coordination practices, not to evaluate any individual project.

Depending on location and design, transportation projects in the Greater Helena Area may need to consider effects on air quality, traffic noise for adjacent land uses, hazardous materials, important farmland soils, wildlife habitat, parks and recreational land, and water resources such as floodplains, streams, and wetlands. Addressing these considerations typically involves coordination with the appropriate federal, state, and local resource agencies as each project advances through design and construction. A complete discussion of environmental mitigation considerations, along with a summary of relevant resource agencies and potential mitigation measures by impact category, is provided in **Appendix G**.



6.4. Implementation and Next Steps

This LRTP identifies transportation needs and recommendations for the next 20 years, but the plan itself doesn't build anything. Turning a recommendation into a completed project involves several additional steps beginning with securing a funding source, nomination by the TPCC or a partner agency, feasibility and environmental review, design, right-of-way acquisition where needed, and finally construction. Public involvement continues throughout this process, not just during LRTP development.

Committed Projects have already secured funding and are moving through these steps. Recommended, Grant Contingent, and Illustrative projects have not yet completed these steps, and moving any of them forward depends on the funding paths described in **Section 6.1**. As funding becomes available, whether through the regular TIP cycle, a competitive grant award, or a new local funding mechanism, the TPCC will determine which projects advance, using this plan as its guide.



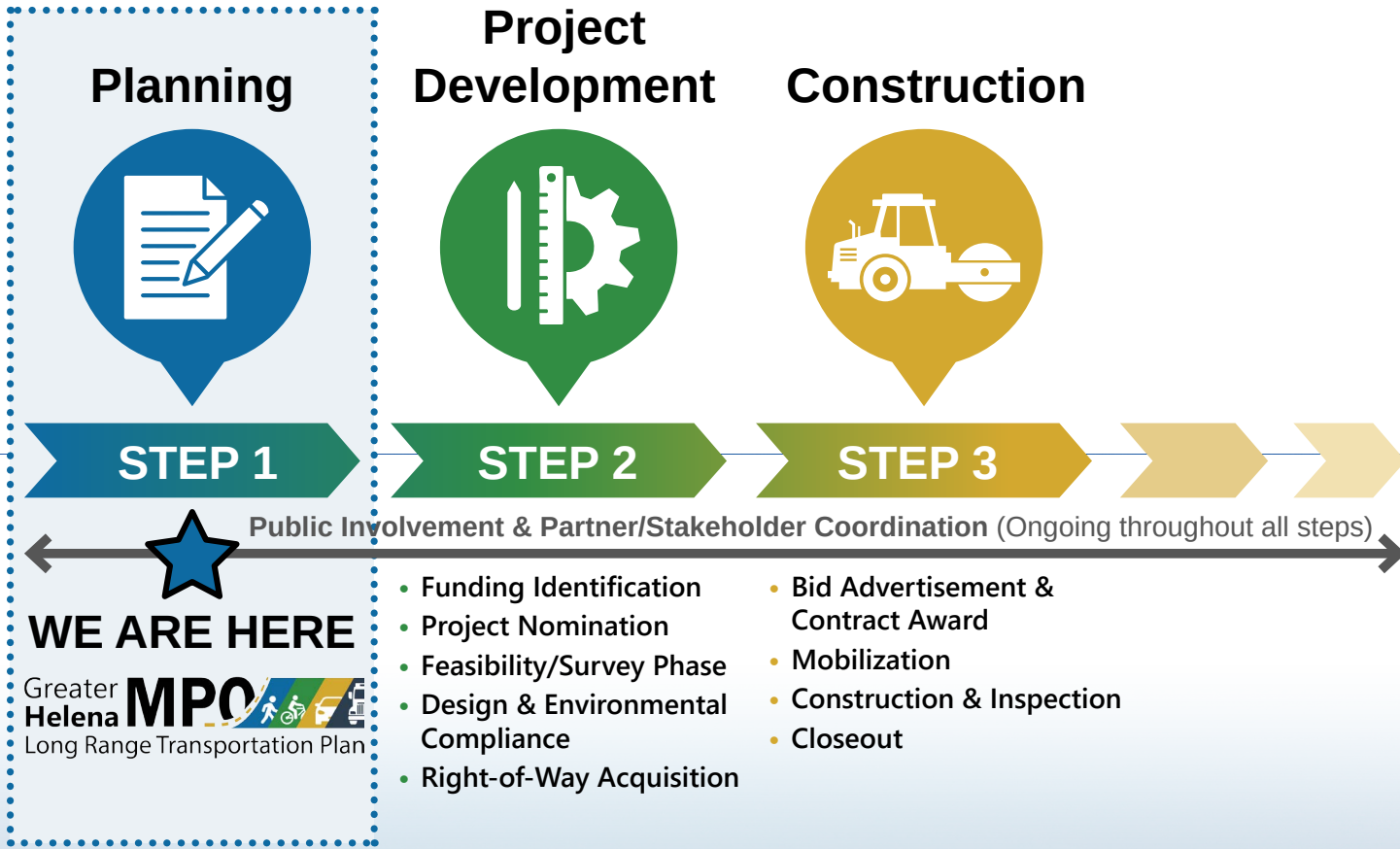
Coordination with Companion Plans

This LRTP incorporates the region's *Comprehensive Safety Action Plan*, *Transit Asset Management Plan*, and *Transit Development Plan* directly, rather than treating them as standalone documents. Keeping these plans integrated in one place ensures safety, asset management, and transit priorities are weighed against the same goals and the same funding picture as every other recommendation in this plan, rather than competing separately for resources. As each of these companion plans is updated on its own schedule, relevant changes will be reflected in this LRTP through amendment as appropriate, keeping the region's transportation planning coordinated across all four documents. Future planning efforts not yet underway, such as a dedicated pedestrian or bicycle plan, should similarly be incorporated into this LRTP by amendment once complete.

Monitoring and Updates

Conditions in the Greater Helena Area will continue to change over the life of this plan, through growth, new funding opportunities, and shifting community priorities. Progress toward the performance targets described in **Section 6.2** will be monitored over time, using data from MDT, Capital Transit, and partner agencies, and incorporated into future LRTP updates to help guide which projects and programs are prioritized going forward.

Federal law requires MPOs to update their LRTP at least every five years. Consistent with that requirement, the Greater Helena MPO anticipates its next full LRTP update around 2031, at which point the recommendations, performance targets, and funding assumptions in this plan will be revisited and refreshed based on the most current information available.





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Keni Grose

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or 711

kgrose@lccountymt.gov

316 N Park Avenue, Room 303
Helena, MT 59623

CITY OF HELENA

ADA Coordinator

(406) 447-8490

TTY Relay Service 1-800-253-4091
or 711

[citycommunitydevelopment@](mailto:citycommunitydevelopment@helenamt.gov)

helenamt.gov
316 N Park Avenue
Helena, MT 59623

CITY OF EAST HELENA

City Clerk

(406) 227-5321

TTY Relay Service 1-800-253-4091
or 711

cityclerk@easthelenamt.us

306 East Main Street, P.O. Box 1170
East Helena, MT 59635