

CHIPPEWA - EAU CLAIRE

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION



2023 SUMMARY REPORT

Staff

Four WCWRPC staff work full-time or part-time on MPO projects. In addition to the wide variety of planning projects, the MPO continues to help and work with several groups and organizations in the MPA. These include local and regional passenger rail groups, local bicycle and pedestrian groups, Chippewa and Eau Claire county traffic safety commissions, and Eau Claire Health Alliance.

If you have any questions about the summary report, the MPO, and/or how the MPO can help you with a project, please feel free to contact us at 715.836.2918 or eanderson@wcrpc.org. Our website is wcrpc.org/chippewa-eau-claire-mpo.



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Ongoing Projects

The MPO works on a wide variety of transportation projects for government entities in the MPA. The majority of the work in the MPO is funded through the Federal Highway Administration and matched by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) and the WCWRPC. MPO staff works to have conversations with the units of government in the MPA related to ongoing and possible future projects.

Starting with required projects like the Long Range Transportation Plan, TIP, and Urban Work Program, the following pages give brief highlights of projects that staff worked on in 2023.



MPO REQUIRED PROJECTS

Long Range Transportation Plan

Started: Fall 2019
Completed: February 2021

Every five years, MPO staff completes a Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) update for the MPA. The MPO completed the most recent plan update in 2021. The 2021 LRTP update included a more comprehensive and detailed public participation survey than in the past and included new mapping tools that helped analyze issues and opportunities in the MPA. The new mapping tools showed the highest concentration of types of crashes and severity of crashes in the MPA. These mapping techniques can help determine which areas have the highest need for improvement.

The survey had 344 responses, which is roughly double the previous LRTP. The survey included looking at how transportation infrastructure can impact property desirability (graph to the right) and what types of projects should be prioritized. The results prioritized safety, investment in all modes of travel, and showed expanding the existing system and focusing on shorter travel times as significantly less important.

Staff will start the next LRTP planning process in 2024.

Interesting/Innovative Project Feature: MPO Crash Report which created a crash report for each city, village, and town in the MPA. Staff was asked to present this crash report at a quarterly WisDOT MPO Director meeting. After discussions, it seems this was a first of its kind document in the State. This report will be enhanced for the 2026 LRTP.

Metropolitan Planning Area Boundary

Started: November 2023
Anticipated Completion: February 2024

The Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) consists of all the incorporated areas and any areas outside the incorporated areas that are or have a potential to be developed at an urban density in the next 20 years. After every 10 year Census, MPO staff is required to update the MPA.

Staff started this planning process in November 2023. Staff initially drafted a new MPA and sent that draft map to all local governments in the MPO for their review. Comments were then catalogued and continued discussion will be had at the January 2024 TAC meeting.

Interesting/Innovative Project Feature: To ensure enhanced community engagement, all local governments will have at least three opportunities to comment on the new MPA boundary.

MPO REQUIRED PROJECTS

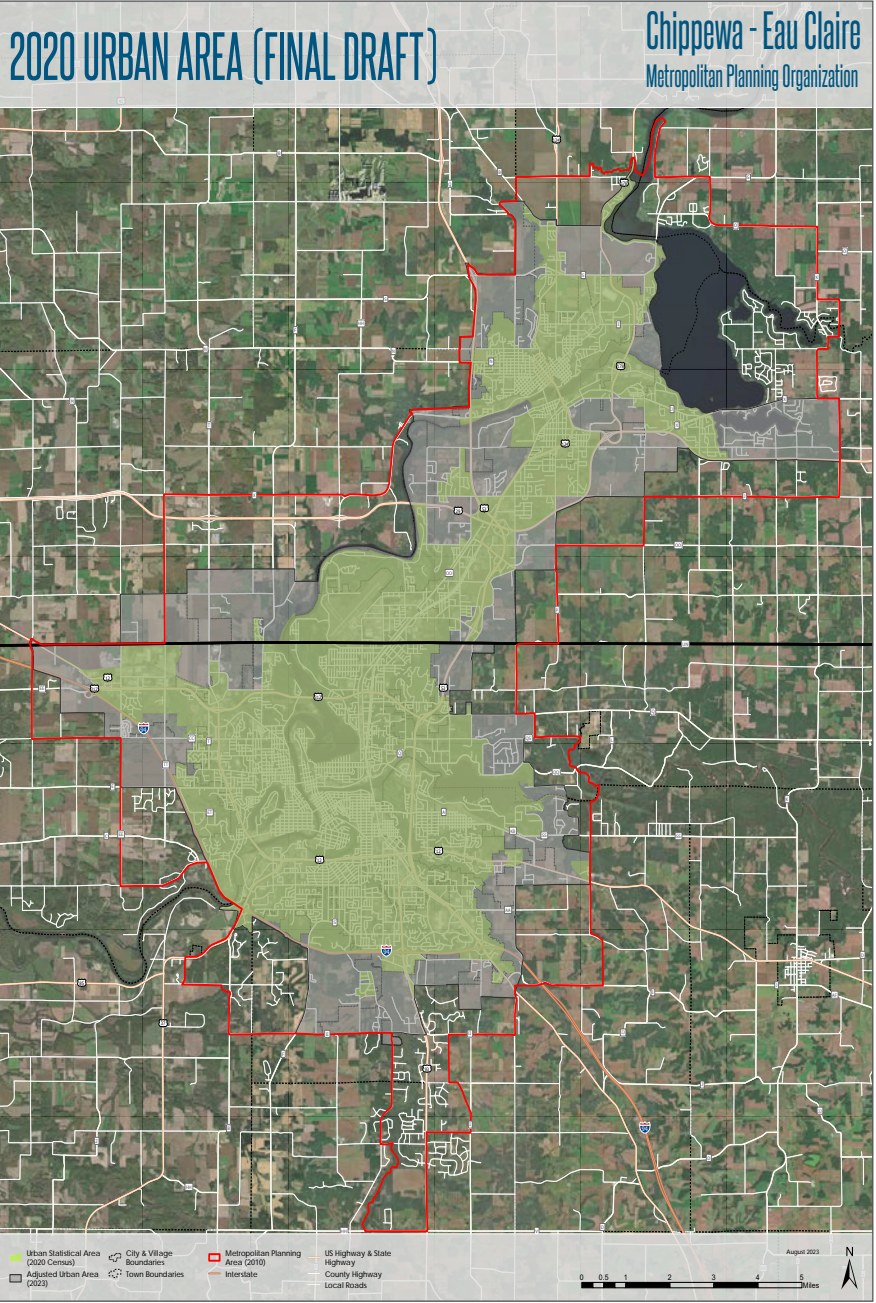
Urban Area Boundary

Started: February 2023
Completed: October 2023

The Urban Area Boundary (UAB) consists of all the incorporated areas and any areas outside the incorporated areas that are or have a potential to be developed at an urban density in the next 10 years. In addition, this is the area eligible for federal Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) funding. After every 10 year Census, MPO staff needs to update the UAB.

Staff started this planning process in February 2023. Staff initially met with WisDOT staff to go over the process. From there, staff drafted a new boundary and then had discussions with local units of government. Staff then made appropriate changes to the draft UAB and brought the new draft UAB to the TAC and Policy Council for discussion and approval. The updated UAB was adopted at the October MPO Policy Council meeting.

The 2020 UAB map is located to the right.



Transportation Improvement Plan

Started: August 2023
Completed: October 2023

The MPO completes a new Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) every other year. The TIP is required for projects to receive federal funding.

In Fall 2023, staff completed the 2024-2028 TIP. This TIP is for 2024 and 2025. The TIP lists all transportation related projects in the MPA that receive federal funding. The document also maps project locations in relation to both minority population and low-income populations at the Census Block geographic level. Over the two-year period, MPO staff will administer numerous amendments to the TIP which add, delete, or modify projects and their timing and funding amounts. These amendments are initiated by local units of government and WisDOT. In 2023, staff administered six different TIP amendments.

The TIP map showing project locations in relation low-income population is located on page 9.

Urban Work Program

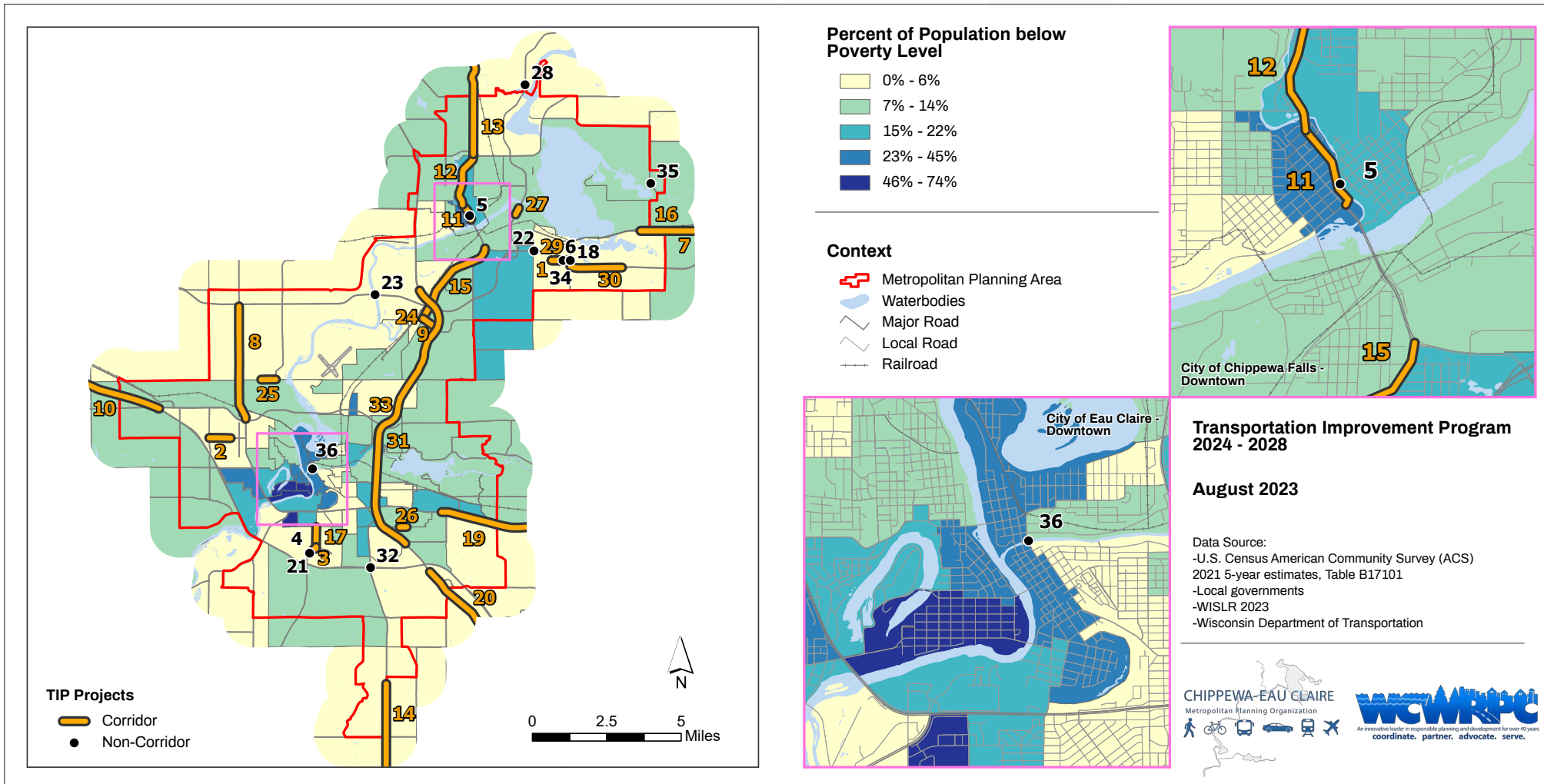
Started: August 2023
Completed: October 2023

In Fall 2023, staff completed the 2024 Urban Work Program. The Urban Work Program lists all projects that the MPO will work on in 2024. In addition, the Urban Work Program lists budgetary information. The Urban Work Program process starts with an initial meeting with WisDOT. MPO staff then prepares the document and sends it to the TAC and MPO Policy Council for approval. After Policy Council approval, the final Urban Work Program is then submitted to WisDOT.

Title VI and Public Participation Plan

Started: July 2023
Completed: October 2023

Every three years, staff needs to update the MPO Title VI Plan and Public Participation Plan (PPP). Entities that receive federal assistance from any federal agency must take concrete steps to ensure non-discrimination in their programs and activities. The Title VI plan demonstrates how the MPO will provide participation opportunities and language assistance to all population groups. The PPP lists public participation standards and policies for the MPO.



OTHER MPO PROJECTS

McKinley Road Multi-Use Path

Started: Spring 2021
Ongoing

In 2021, MPO staff reached out to the City of Eau Claire, Town of Seymour, Eau Claire County, and Eau Claire Area School District (ECASD) to discuss possible funding options for a multi-use bicycle and pedestrian path along McKinley Road between the North Crossing and Birch Street/River Prairie Road. From comments and discussions during several planning processes, this corridor is viewed as a high priority corridor to provide safe and accessible bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure between the multi-use paths on both ends and for the two ECASD schools along the corridor. With additional residential developments adjacent to the Birch/River Prairie intersection, the need will only increase.

In 2022, the group continued to look into funding options for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure along the length of this corridor. The MPO facilitated a Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) grant application for this project in early 2023. The application was not awarded, due to the majority of funding being allocated to rural areas. The MPO facilitated another WisDOT application in October 2023. Announcements of awards will be released in spring 2024.

Interesting/Innovative Project Feature: The project is a multi-jurisdictional project that includes Eau Claire County, City of Eau Claire, Eau Claire Area School District, the MPO.

The grant application map is located on page 11.

Chippewa Valley Bike Routes

Started: 2016
Anticipated Completion: December 2024

This multi-year project, which the MPO has facilitated, has created a signed 20-route bike system in the Chippewa Valley. To date, all routes have been created, sign locations have been determined, and sign design has been completed. Communities started installing signage in 2021. The goal is for all signs to be installed by the end of 2024. An online map will also be available which will show a person's location on the route system.

Regional Passenger Rail Groups

Started: 2010s
Ongoing

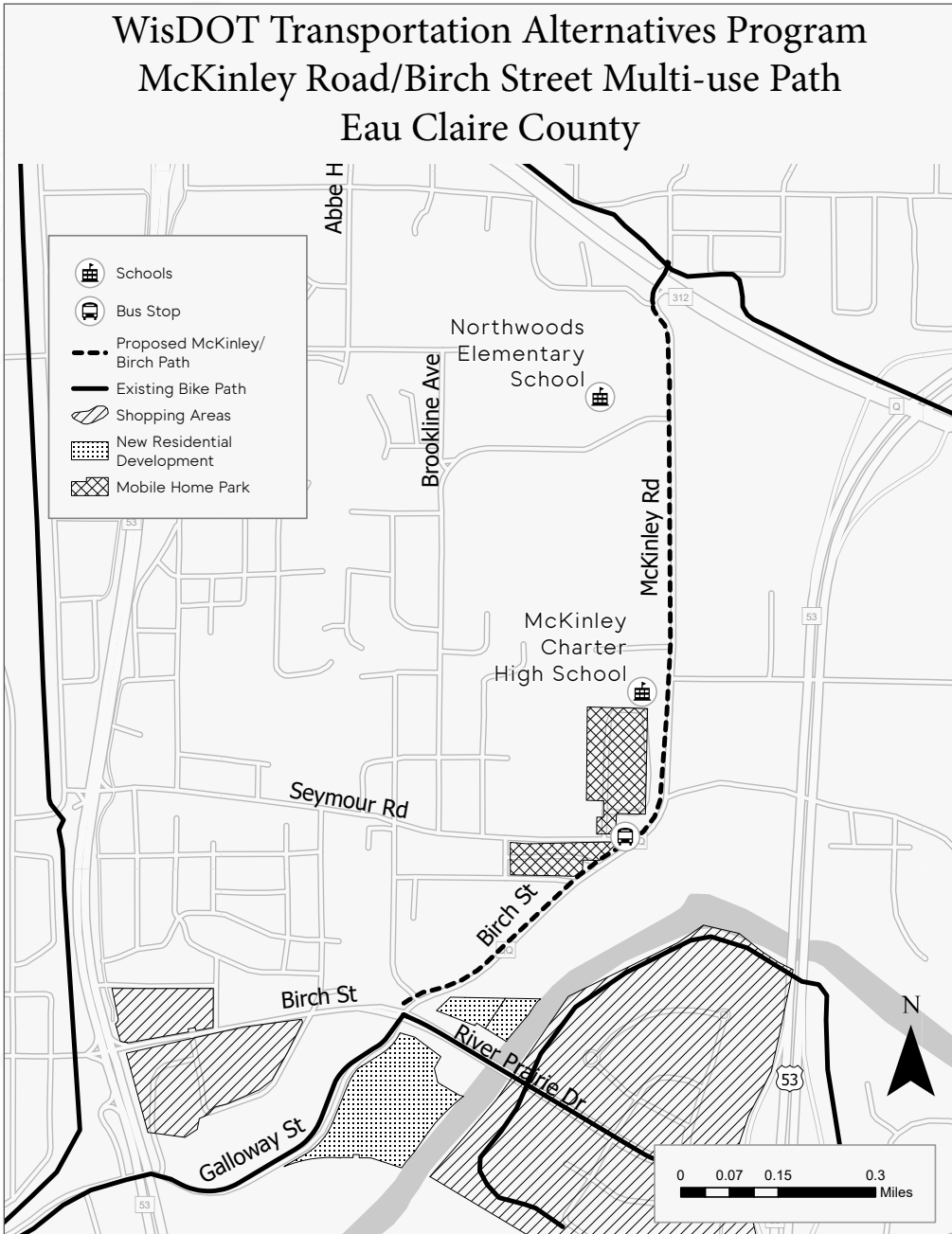
Staff continues to work with both the West Central Wisconsin Rail Coalition and the Chippewa - St. Croix Passenger Rail Commission. Both groups are working to bring passenger rail service to the Chippewa-Eau Claire urban area that would provide passenger rail service to the Twin Cities and Milwaukee/Chicago. Among other items, staff worked with other members on a successful \$500,000 grant from the Federal Railroad Administration. The Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID) Grant Program will allow the Eau Claire to Twin Cities corridor to gather additional data and look into feasibility of items like stations locations, ridership, local costs, etc.

OTHER MPO PROJECTS

Chippewa Falls Shared Ride Taxi

Started: 2015
Ongoing

The MPO staff continues to staff the administration of the City of Chippewa Falls Shared Ride Taxi program. This administration is through a contract with the City and includes a variety of services including working on grants, purchasing, and submitting required documentation.



OTHER MPO PROJECTS

Capital Improvement Plan Story Maps

Started: Summer 2021
Ongoing

Staff has continued partnering with local units of government to create Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) story maps. Instead of using a traditional map that only shows the general geographic location of the project, staff has incorporated the use of story maps. In addition to showing the exact location of the projects, these story maps show a variety of other data. These data include project costs, funding sources, and photos. Projects can be seen for the entire lifetime of the respective CIP and also at an individual year level. In 2023, the MPO completed updates for both the City of Chippewa Falls, Chippewa County, Eau Claire County, and Village of Lake Hallie.

Interesting/Innovative Project Feature: Staff is able to customize these online maps for each community and can include any data a community would want. Before creating a CIP story map for the Village of Lake Hallie, the Village didn't have a way to list and map their CIPs.

The Eau Claire County 2023-2028 CIP Story Map is located on page 13.

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

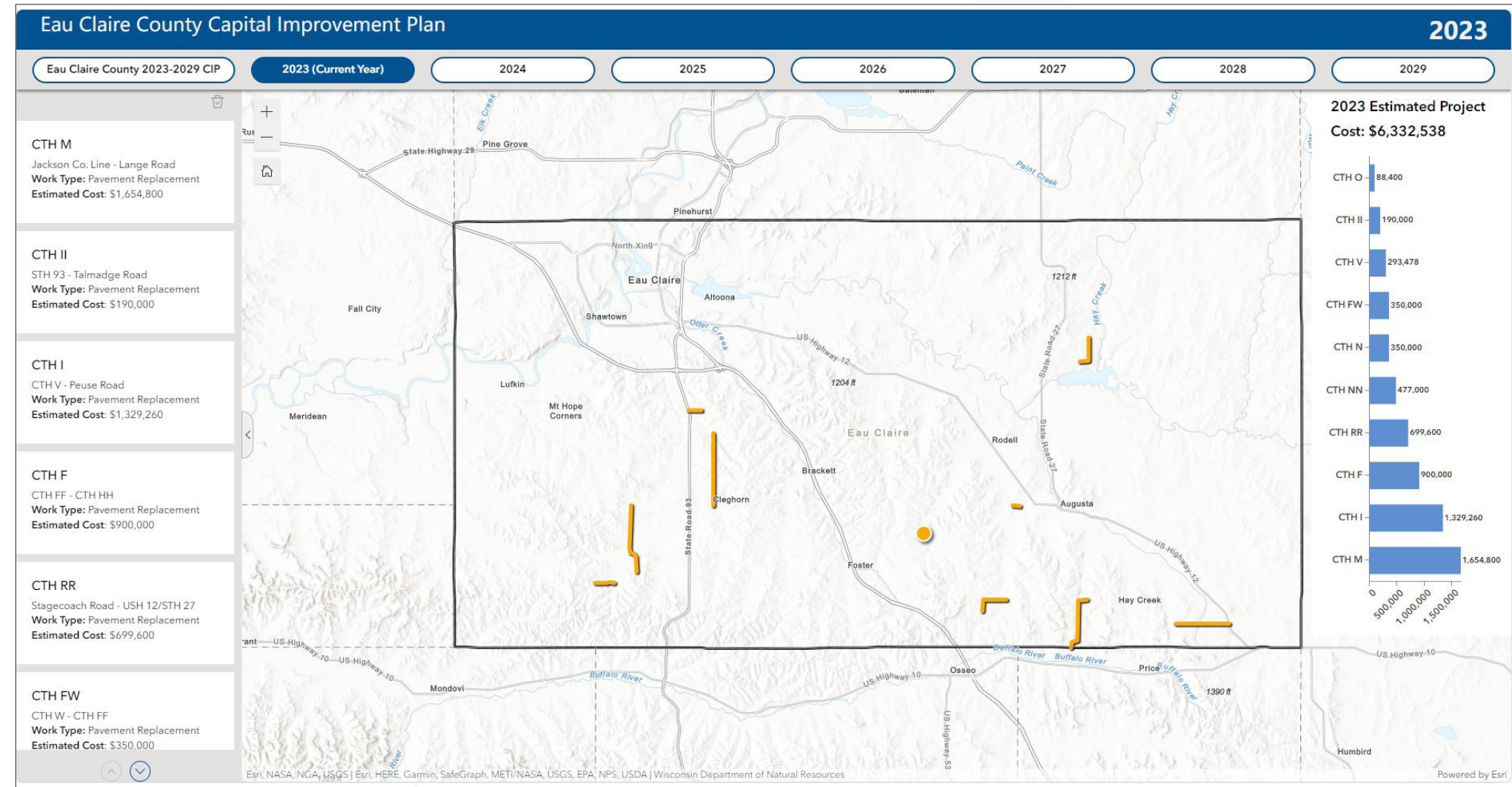
Funding Allocation

Started: April 2022
Ongoing

Federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funds were released in 2022. Among those funds was money for projects specifically inside MPOs. In 2023, one funding program was designated for projects in MPOs. Local projects were submitted to the MPO for funding. MPO staff scored and ranked the projects that were submitted. These scores, rankings, and funding options were then taken to the TAC and Policy Council for their recommendation and approval.

Interesting/Innovative Project Feature: In 2023, \$281,000 was allocated to the MPO for the BIL Carbon Reduction Program. .

OTHER MPO PROJECTS



Water Main Map

Started: January 2023
Completed: May 2023

Staff created a water main map for the MPA. This map shows the age of water mains in the urban area. Communities will often coordinate street reconstruction with when a water main needs replacement, as replacing a water main in the street requires the street to be reconstructed. Many consider the average water main's life expectancy to be in the 70-80 year range.

From the map and associated data, one can anticipate how many water main and street projects will be needed in the future. For instance, a community can see how many miles of water mains are from between 1960 and 1979 (201 total miles in the MPA). With that, communities can prepare for how many miles of water mains will need to be replaced in approximately five to 25 years. This number does not include water mains built earlier that might be behind schedule and/or repairs on newer water mains that might need fixing.

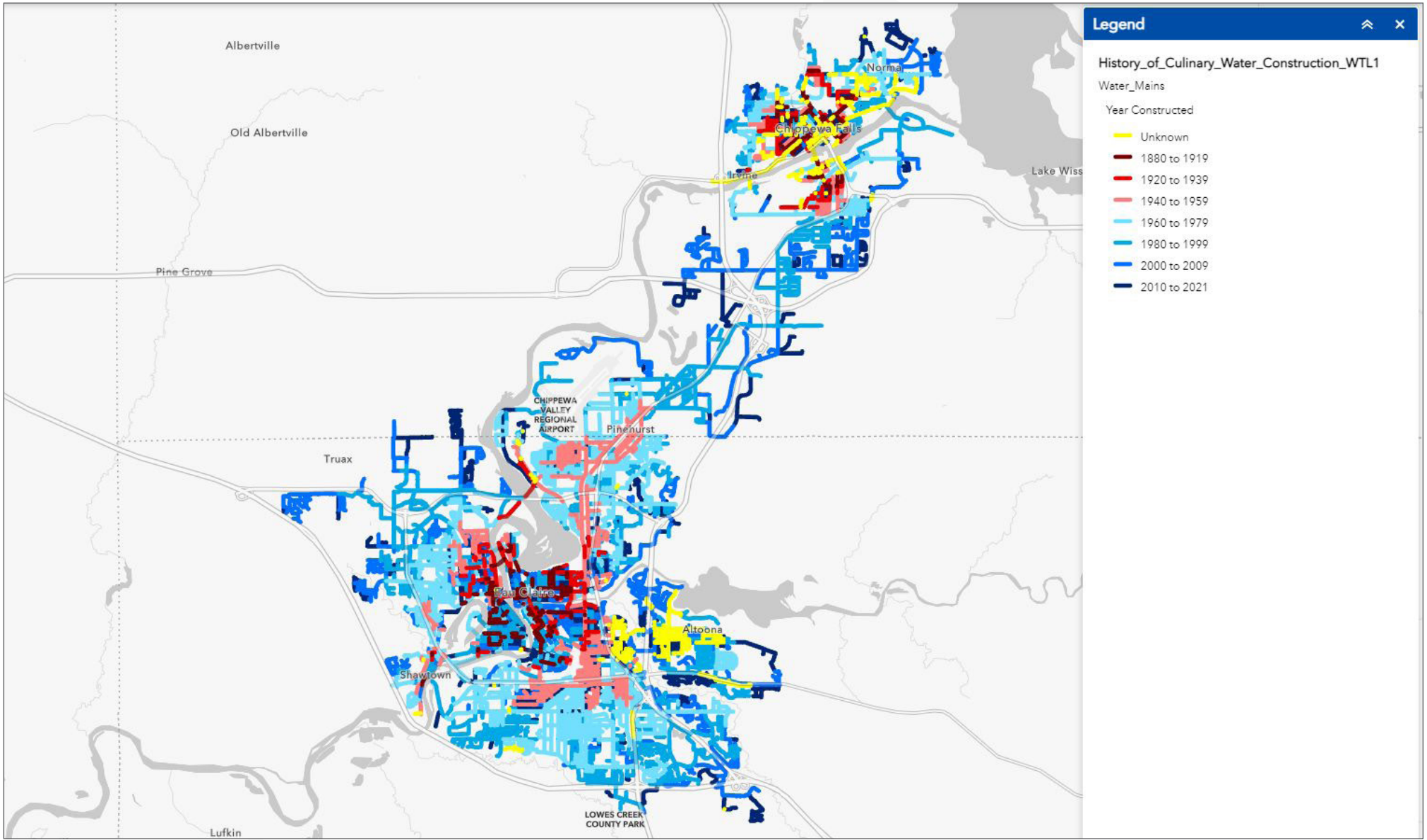
Interesting/Innovative Project Feature: Very little of the water main data was electronically mapped in our urban area before the MPO completed this map. Now, the four incorporated communities in the MPO have data and map data that they can use.

A screen shot of the map is located to the right on page 15.

MPO Federal Funding Allocations
Story Map

Started: December 2022
Completed: February 2023

The MPO receives Federal funds to allocate to local transportation projects in the MPA. These local projects are submitted to the MPO by local units of government. There are several funding programs which the MPO receives these Federal funds. To better document the projects that are funded in the MPA by Federal funds, MPO staff created a story map that both locates and provides descriptions of the projects.



OTHER MPO PROJECTS

**Village of Lake Hallie
Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan**
Started: April 2023
Anticipated Completion: January 2024

Staff worked with the Village of Lake Hallie on creating their first Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. At this time, less than one percent of the Village's streets have sidewalks, which introduces unique challenges to the planning process and desired outcomes of the plan. The plan looks at several different locations in the Village that need to be improved for bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

The desired outcome of the plan is to create safer and more accessible bicycle and pedestrian routes to specific locations in the Village, to provide guidance for the Village's CIP, and to provide support for potential grant applications.

Interesting/Innovative Project Feature: Less than one percent of the Village currently has sidewalk. Due to spatial and fiscal constraints, the Village knows it will not be able to install sidewalks throughout the community. Therefore, this plan focuses on making areas around specific locations safer and more accessible for pedestrians and bicyclists.

The map showing crash densities (heat map), serious and fatal pedestrian crashes, and focus areas is located to the right on page 17.

County Traffic Safety Commissions
Started: 2021
Ongoing

MPO staff has continued attending and participating in the Chippewa County and Eau Claire County Traffic Safety Commissions. Both counties host quarterly meetings which are attended by a variety of stakeholders including local and State law enforcement, WisDOT, school districts, and other local government agencies and departments. Attending these meetings has been a valuable opportunity to get a better understand of safety concerns in both counties.


**Chippewa Valley Transit Connections
Exploration**
Started: January 2023
Ongoing

MPO staff initiated transit connections discussions between the cities of Altoona, Chippewa Falls, Eau Claire and Village of Lake Hallie. These discussions brought all parties to the table to investigate local interest in connecting the transit systems in Chippewa Falls and Eau Claire with each other and provide service to Lake Hallie. The next step of discussions is planned for early 2024.

OTHER MPO PROJECTS






Crash Densities & Serious/Fatal Pedestrian Incidence Map

The map to the right depicts all vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian crash densities in the Village of Lake Hallie from 2018-2022. Crashes involving a pedestrian that resulted in a serious and/or fatal injury are displayed. Bicycle and pedestrian study areas that are highlighted in the plan are numbered on the map.

	
Pedestrian Crashes: 9	Serious/Fatal Pedestrian Crashes: 5

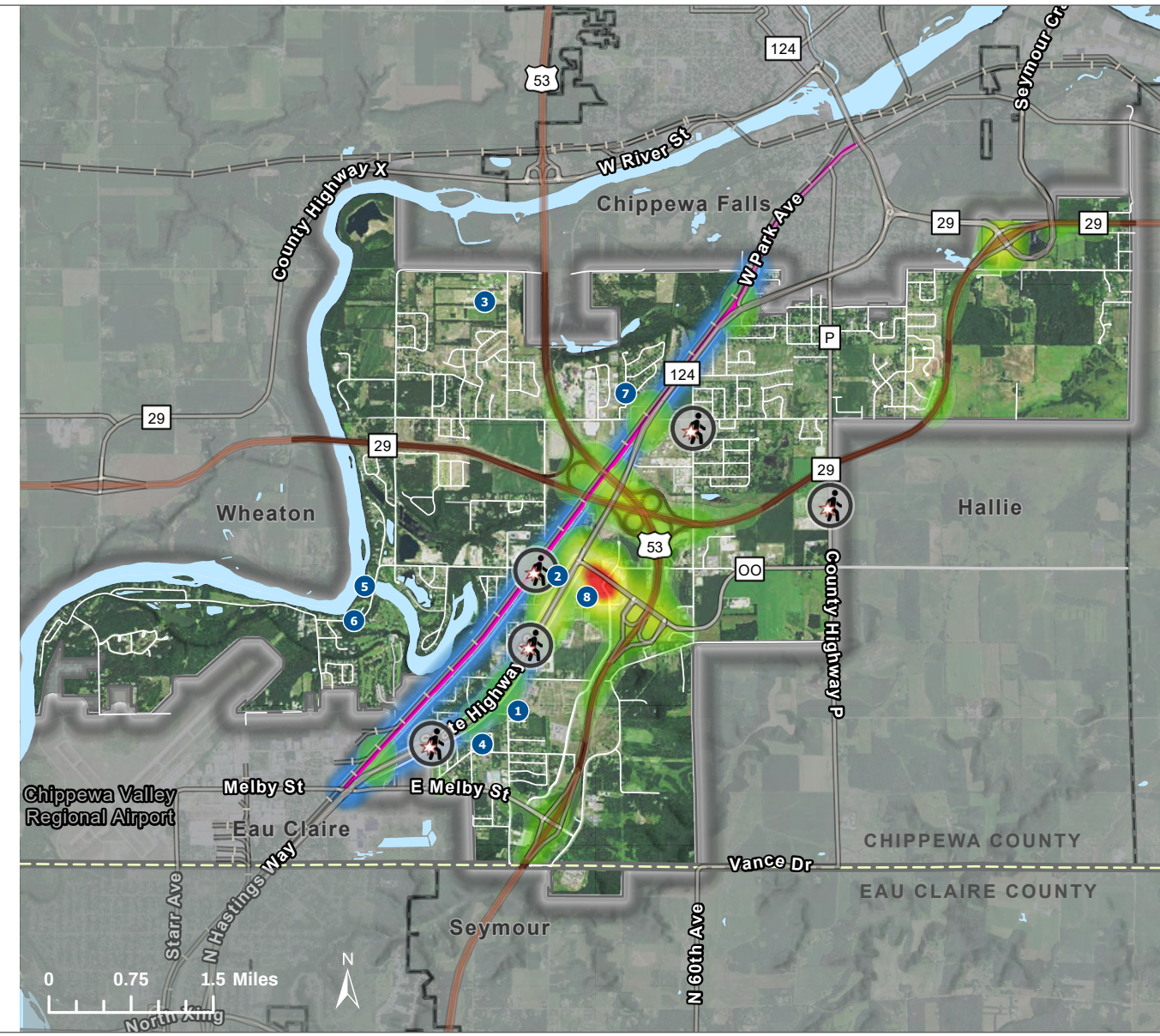
Crash Density

Low High

-  Study Area
-  Municipal Boundary
-  Old Abe Trail
-  County Boundary
-  Study Corridor

Data Sources:
ESRI, Chippewa County, Wisconsin Traffic Operations and Safety Laboratory (TOPS), WisDOA, WCWRPC.

CHIPPEWA-EAU CLAIRE
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION



City of Chippewa Falls Wayfinding Plan

Started: July 2021
Anticipated Completion: Summer 2024

The wayfinding plan will provide strategies to provide consistent and attractive information to assist the traveling public to navigate efficiently to key destinations within the City. To date, MPO staff has held meetings with the City and inventoried wayfinding signs in the City. All the inventoried signs have been mapped with a variety of information including: location, if the sign is intended for motorists or active transportation users, and physical condition.

Interesting/Innovative Project Feature: MPO staff has catalogued the sign location and sign condition for wayfinding signs in the City. This data is located in an easily accessible format and allows City staff to put together a plan for new sign locations and update signs that are in poor condition.

Sewer Service Area Plan Boundary Amendment

Started: August 2022
Completed: May 2023

In August 2022, the City of Eau Claire submitted an application for a Sewer Service Area (SSA) boundary amendment. The amendment proposed adding acreage to the SSA in the Town of Washington and taking out acreage in the Town of Brunswick. This amendment would allow public sewer to be extended to a proposed new subdivision.

The MPO serves as the agency to facilitate these SSA boundary amendment applications. Staff completed the initial staff report for this application. The application was on the agenda for both the MPO TAC and Policy Council in 2022. A public hearing was held during the Policy Council meeting, which was held at Chippewa Valley Technical College in Eau Claire and attended by dozens of citizens. Staff collected all public input and made all the arrangements for the meetings.

After submitting all information to Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for their final decision, the City amended their application. After receiving the new application, the SSA boundary amendment was placed on TAC (April) and Policy Council (May) agendas in 2023. These meetings were also held at special locations, and the Policy Council meeting had attendees from the public.

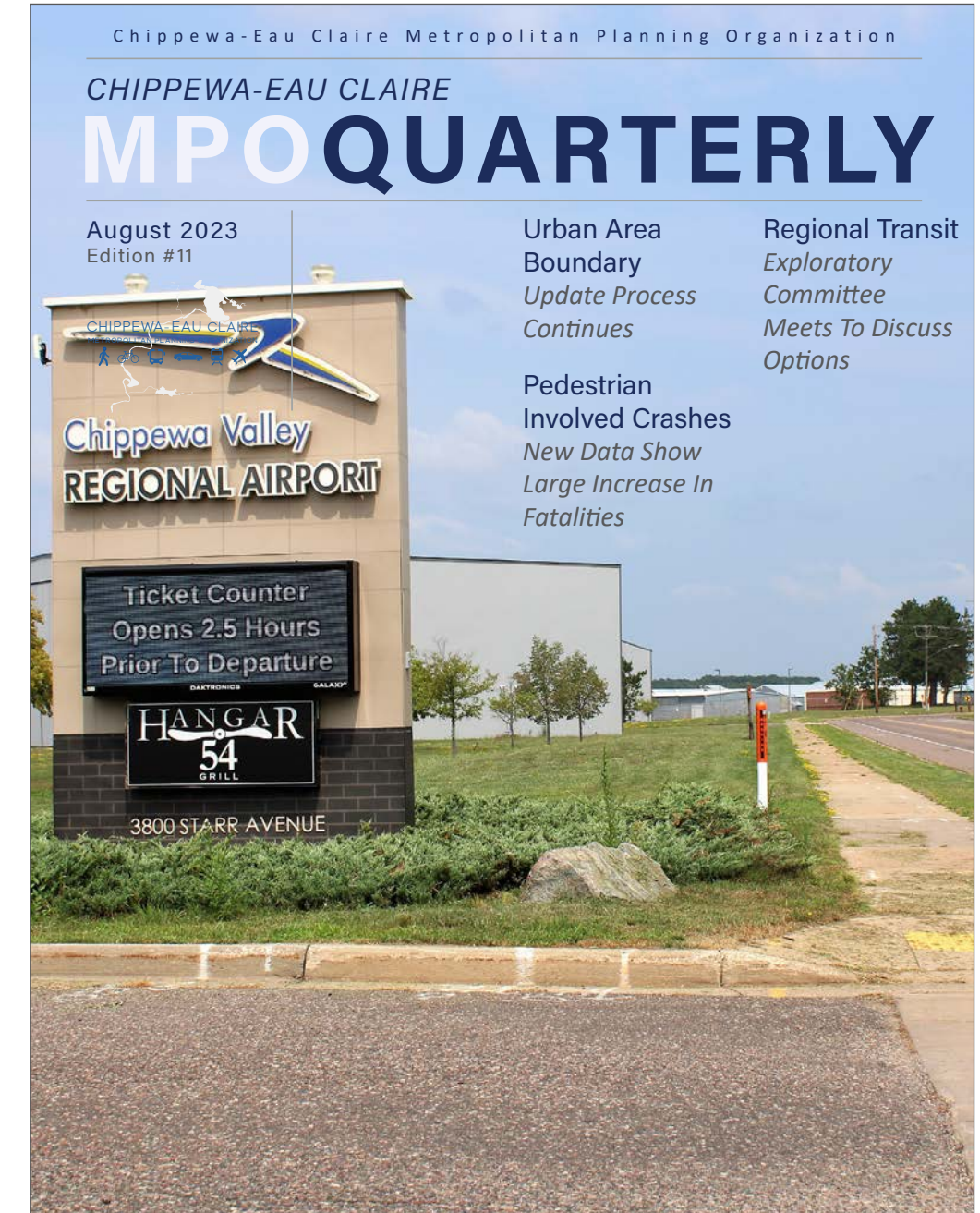
Staff then re-submitted a staff report and all additional material back to DNR.

MPO Newsletter

Started: February 2021
Ongoing

MPO staff released four newsletters in 2023. The goal of the quarterly newsletter is to have a brief update of current projects, highlight specific projects, pass along interesting best practices and/or new ideas in the transportation field, and provide some fun and interesting information about the MPO.

A newsletter cover page is located to the right.



Safe Routes To School

Started: 2008
Ongoing

Since 2008, staff have worked with the Altoona, Chippewa Falls, and Eau Claire school districts and city staff on Safe Routes To School (SRTS). In January 2020, WCWRPC submitted and received an application for funding from the WisDOT Transportation Alternatives Plan (TAP) to fund a SRTS Coordinator position for three years. This position was hired in July 2021. Since this position was filled a more comprehensive and robust regional SRTS program has been created at the WCWRPC.

In 2023, the following SRTS projects have been completed in the MPA:

- ECASD SRTS Plan update – Completed in March of 2023
- Walk and Roll Challenge – 11 schools participated from both ECASD and CFAUSD.
- Worked with Manz Elementary School to start a safety committee and assessed their drop off/pick up procedure.

A much more detailed report on SRTS activity can be found in the Chippewa Valley SRTS Partnership wcwsrts.com.

Conclusion

MPO staff worked on a wide variety of projects in 2023. This included updating and administering the Transportation Improvement Plan, preparing the Urban Work Program, reviewing and updating the Title VI Plan and Public Participation Plan, and updating the Urban Area Boundary. Staff also worked on numerous projects for local units of government in the urban area. In total, MPO staff worked on over 20 different projects or programs in 2023. In addition to working with local units of government, the MPO worked with a variety of Federal and State agencies and local groups during the year. This included the State’s Wisconsin Automated Vehicle External Advisory Committee, Eau Claire County Health Alliance, regional passenger rail organizations, the State’s Zero in Wisconsin program, and more.

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