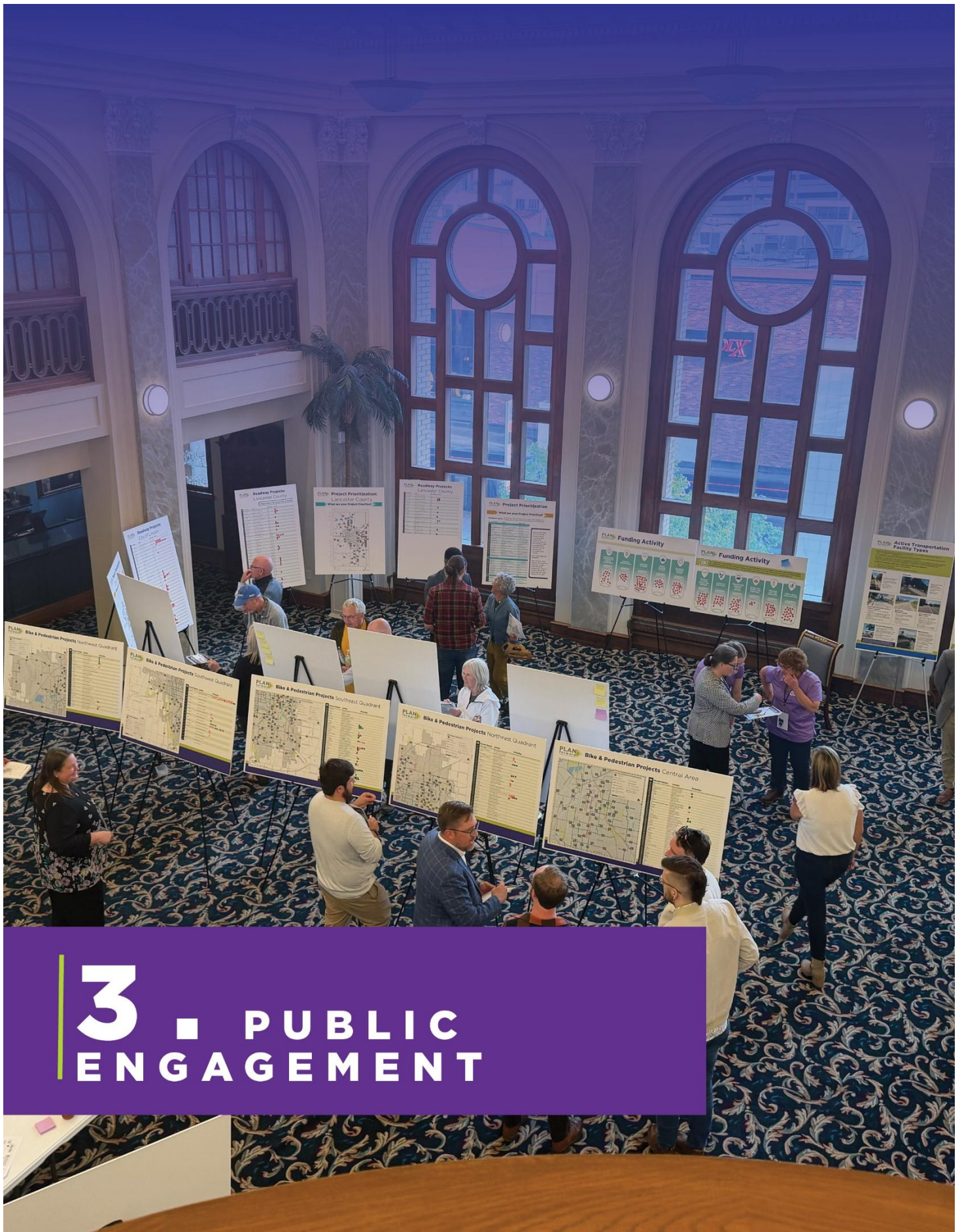




3 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

3. PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public involvement played a key role in shaping both the Lincoln MPO LRTP and the Lincoln Mobility Plan. Broad-based, inclusive community outreach efforts for this plan encouraged active participation in identifying the vision, goals, and needs of the region. The Lincoln MPO reached out to stakeholders across the region through online surveys and engagement opportunities, open houses, pop-up events, and focus groups. The City of Lincoln and Lancaster County participated extensively in the development of this plan, as did NDOT and many community-based organizations and advocacy groups representing the diverse interests of Lincoln and Lancaster County.

Purpose

All engagement strategies used during this planning process were centered on the following goals:

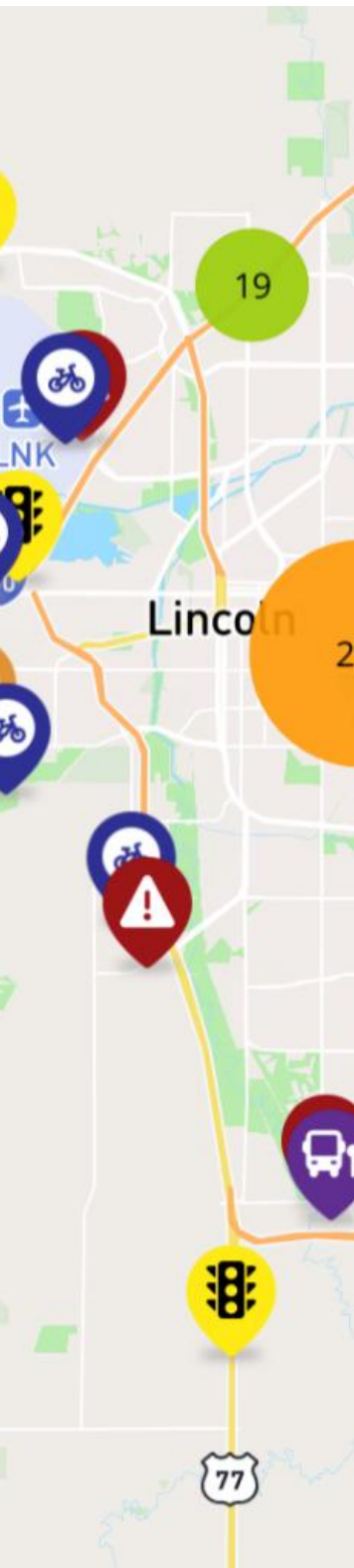
- **Build awareness and transparency through the planning process:** Clearly communicate the purpose, timeline, and decision-making steps so that the public understands how input shapes outcomes.
- **Use public input as a foundation for both the 2050 LRTP 2026 Update and the Lincoln Mobility Plan:** Ensure that community feedback is not only collected but used to influence the priorities, strategies, and recommendations throughout the planning process.
- **Reach historically underrepresented communities and incorporate lived experience:** Use targeted outreach and culturally appropriate engagement methods to highlight voices that have traditionally been excluded, integrating their unique perspectives into the final solutions.
- **Connect engagement activities to meaningful outcomes and plan recommendations:** Demonstrate how participation leads to tangible outcomes by linking feedback directly to performance measures and final recommendations.
- **Support long-term community buy-in and understanding:** Foster trust and a sense of ownership by crafting an engagement process that is accessible and ongoing, creating a shared vision that lives beyond the plan's development and adoption.

Three Phases of Public Engagement

- **Listening and Discovery (Fall 2025):** To understand how people currently travel, identify barriers and needs, new trends and concerns, and raise awareness of the planning effort.
- **Priorities and Tradeoffs (Winter 2025- Spring 2026):** To share draft goals and strategies; inform the public of project findings and gather input on priorities for investment and tradeoffs across the transportation system.
- **Draft Plan Review (Fall 2026):** To share the draft plan recommendations, report back on community input, and gather feedback from the community and stakeholders prior to adoption.

Approach

The major public involvement activities during the three phases of engagement are described as follows:



Project Website: The project website, initially published in fall 2025, provided basic information about the concurrent planning efforts, including project contacts, public meeting materials, and opportunities to provide feedback and ask questions.

Interactive Comment Mapping: The project team used Social Pinpoint's interactive commenting map to collect feedback throughout the project. The map allowed initial comments within the themes of safety, traffic, bicycle, pedestrian, transit, land use, and general/other. Later, feedback was collected on proposed needed facilities.

Project Survey: The project team developed an online survey to collect feedback on how the community uses the current transportation system and what improvements they would like to see in the future.

Pop-up Events: The project team held nine pop-up events across two phases, with seven occurring in the first phase. Pop-up events were distributed geographically across Lincoln and two were held in greater Lancaster County.

Committee/Stakeholder Meetings: Input from the project committees encompassed a broad array of departments, organizations, and agencies. Input was gathered through formal meetings or through topic-specific discussions or information requests.

Focus Groups: These meetings included representatives from community-based organizations, subject matter experts, transit users, and transit service providers across the region.

Direct Mail and Email The public was invited to provide their email address to remain informed during the LRTP update process. The project team also conducted direct mailings to key departments, stakeholders, and the general public during each of the three public engagement phases.

Dissemination of Information Informational kiosks were set up in several Lincoln City Libraries and the Air Park Community Center. Flyers were posted online, made available in various Lincoln City Libraries, translated into five languages other than English, and requested for distribution by University of Nebraska-Lincoln staff, Aging Partners, and other organizations.

Social Media: The project leveraged the City's social media channels to promote the virtual feedback period and public meetings. Lancaster County and the surrounding Cities outside Lincoln also provided social media posts to disseminate information about the LRTP process. Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn platforms were used throughout the public engagement phases.

Videos: Videos developed during Phases 2 and 3 of the public engagement process provided a concise overview of the LRTP process and its importance, key issues and themes, recommended projects and policies, and next steps.

Open Houses: The project team held open house events for the project. These large events provided the public with the opportunity to review detailed information and interact with the project team. Translators for four languages (Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, and Vietnamese) were available for non-English speaking attendees. Open House events were held at the following locations:

- Phase 1 - Culler Middle School, October 23, 2025
- Phase 2 – Lincoln Commercial Club, May 19, 2026
- Phase 3 – Gere Branch Library, September 22, 2026

Recurring Themes

Across the engagement process, several themes emerged consistently in feedback from residents, stakeholders, and community partners. While participants expressed a range of perspectives on transportation needs and priorities, common interests centered on creating a safer, more connected, reliable, and accessible transportation system.

- **Safety:** Public input consistently emphasized the need for a safer transportation system, with improvements to intersections, crossings, roadway design, and operations to better protect all users.
- **Active Transportation Connectivity:** Community members expressed strong support for expanding and connecting sidewalk, trail, and bicycle networks to provide safe and convenient access to destinations throughout Lincoln and Lancaster County. Residents cited “Trails and Biking” as what they liked best about Lincoln’s transportation system.
- **Transit and Mobility Choice:** Participants highlighted the importance of reliable transit service and expanded mobility options that provide residents with more ways to travel throughout the region.
- **System Reliability and Maintenance:** Maintaining and improving existing transportation infrastructure emerged as a priority, with attention to roadway conditions, congestion, and overall system performance. While maintenance of the system remains a critical priority, it received less focus than in past plans, when it ranked as the top concern. This change likely reflects the success of increased local investment in recent years, including “Lincoln on the Move.”
- **Growth and Accessibility:** Residents emphasized the need for transportation investments that not only support growth but also improve access to housing, jobs, services, and community destinations.
- **Multimodal Transportation:** Engagement participants supported a balanced transportation system that accommodates walking, bicycling, transit, freight movement, and automobile travel while strengthening connections between modes.
- **Funding and Implementation:** Stakeholders stressed the importance of strategic investment decisions, project prioritization, and coordinated implementation to maximize the long-term benefits of limited transportation funding.

Phase 1: Listening and Discovery

Phase 1 of the Lincoln MPO's LRTP update and the Lincoln Mobility Plan's development focused on understanding how people travel today, identifying barriers and needs, and validating the region's long-term transportation goals. Engagement used a combination of online tools, in-person events such as pop-up events at local gatherings, stakeholder and committee outreach, coordinated communications efforts, and open houses.

Engagement Takeaways

Responses from the public highlighted the interest in providing improved access and opportunity. Participants consistently identified transportation options for people of all ages and abilities as a top goal and priority. Moreover, these responses were fairly consistent regardless of the input location or format.

Quality opportunities for **biking and walking** are top of mind for the community. Residents are proud of the regional trail system and eager to see trails and bikeways connect seamlessly to neighborhoods, parks, schools, and downtown. Respondents specifically identified missing links, uncomfortable on-street routes, and rail crossings that act as barriers to multimodal accessibility. However, participants also expressed excitement about recent improvements to the bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. A call for greater **pedestrian and bicycle safety** was also heard. Residents flagged crossings near schools, parks, and local shops that experience fast moving traffic, have poor sight lines, and lack sufficient crosswalks.

Sidewalks were also an area of emphasis for respondents as they noted locations where sidewalks are too narrow, deteriorating, or often blocked by vegetation or e-scooters not in use. Unfortunately, some community members even shared stories of near misses at certain intersections, emphasizing the need to address these issues facing non-motorists.



Beyond active mobility, many comments addressed **traffic operations, street design, and road conditions** throughout the community. Participants noted locations with congestion, complicated intersections, or perceived speeding. Some referenced existing or potential roundabouts, turn lanes, or interchange designs. Others focused on pavement quality, potholes, gravel roads within city limits, and bridge or roadway projects that seem unfinished or overdue.

Transit and regional connectivity also emerged as strong areas of emphasis. While some residents focused on localized issues (access to transit stops, hours or services, limited route options, etc.), others chose to comment on larger-scale ideas such as adding transit hubs, bus rapid transit corridors, shuttle or commuter service to nearby communities, and future rail connections.

Phase 1 Engagement (At-a-Glance)

- 2,089 page views
- 953 unique visitors
- 700 total contributions
- 163 contributors
- 434 map posts
- 236 quick poll responses
- 1,023 engagements in total
- 95 attendees at the public Open House
- 298 community members engaged

Although there was considerable input regarding road conditions and congestion, these topics were brought up less frequently than during previous LRTP updates. This decline could reflect recent investments in roadway maintenance, such as the “Lincoln on the Move” sales tax initiative that devotes a 1/4-cent of sales tax revenues toward roadway projects.

In addition, other recent changes noted by stakeholders and respondents since the last LRTP update include:

- The South Beltway (State Highway 2) was completed, shifting traffic patterns, although significant freight traffic continues to use Nebraska Parkway (old Highway 2).
- Use of e-bikes and scooters has increased rapidly.
- Transportation funding has grown, although future funding levels are increasingly uncertain, reflective of a shift in federal transportation priorities over the last five years.
- In-person work has increased, although workplace flexibility remains more common than in the past.
- Concerns about speeding and distracted or inattentive driving have increased the emphasis on transportation safety.
- Roundabout implementation has continued throughout the community.

Focus Group Discussions

To inform the updates to the 2050 LRTP and Comprehensive Plan, as well as development of the Lincoln Mobility Plan, the project team conducted a series of focus group discussions with stakeholders representing business, development, housing, health, education, transportation, advocacy, and neighborhood interests. More than 200 individuals were invited to participate in 10 facilitated sessions held in October and November 2025, providing valuable insights on transportation challenges, opportunities, and priorities across Lincoln and Lancaster County. Input from these discussions shaped the plans' goals, strategies, and recommendations. The 10 groups represented the following interest areas:

- Business Community
- Development Community
- Active Mobility
- Freight Interests
- Transit and Human Services
- Neighborhoods
- Housing/Affordable Housing
- Government and Education
- Healthy Living and Environmental
- Advocacy Groups



Community Evolution

Participants were asked to share ideas that represent how they see the community evolving. They shared perspectives to expand how the planning process may consider transportation and priorities for the future. Perspectives focused on the following areas:



Rapid Growth and Geographic Expansion: Lincoln’s population growth is driving development on the eastern and northwestern edges, while the South Beltway is shaping growth and creating demand for housing and infrastructure on the fringe. Downtown is seeing increases in density and multifamily housing.



Housing Challenges and Shifting Patterns: Housing supply and affordability remain major concerns with affordable housing concentrated on the outskirts, while downtown is trending toward higher-density apartments. Rising costs, aging housing stock, and homelessness are pressing issues, alongside demand for rural development.



Transportation and Mobility Transformation: Transportation options are diversifying with more flexible transit systems, increased rideshare use, and non-traditional options like scooters and e-bikes to match the community’s evolving needs. Aging populations require better medical and accessible transit, while infrastructure faces strain from heavier traffic, faster travelers, and mixed vehicle types. Desire for flexible and remote work options can make transit staffing challenging and complex.



Infrastructure and Funding Pressures: Funding constraints make it challenging to meet growing needs for transportation, housing, and green space preservation. Upgrades to infrastructure and inter-jurisdictional coordination are critical to keep pace with the community’s growth.



Cultural and Economic Shifts: Economic drivers and new developments are shaping activity patterns, while return-to-office trends, cultural shifts, rising costs, and sustainability concerns influence the frequency and methods used for travel.

Changes Needed

The project team posed a question to all focus groups: What ONE (or two) word describes what you want most to change about transportation? The word cloud to the right represents the range of inputs and the strength of the sentiments provided by the groups.

Successes and Opportunities

Focus group discussions provided participants an opportunity to reflect on what is working with the current transportation system in the community. The participants were also asked to identify challenges or barriers to transportation in the community.



Table 1. Successes and Opportunities of the Lincoln Transportation System

Successes	Opportunities
Public Transit (StarTran and Multimodal Access)	Transit Access and Reliability
Trails, Cycling, and Pedestrian Infrastructure	Active Transportation Safety and Infrastructure
Roadway and Traffic Management	Funding for Growth and Development
Parking and Accessibility	Safety, Education, and Accessibility for All
Leadership, Vision, and Community Collaboration	Freight and Emerging Technology Integration

Priorities

The project team provided focus group participants with a handout to help them name and describe the goals of this planning effort. After the team explained how goals are useful for the planning process and considering projects and programs, participants were asked to reflect on the list and discuss which goals best represent what is most important to them.

Top 3 Priorities Identified by Focus Groups

- Access and Opportunity:** Ensure access to jobs, services, and resources for all residents.
- Safety and Security:** Foster a transportation system that protects users and promotes community confidence.
- Mobility and System Reliability:** Deliver a transportation system that is dependable, efficient, and supports seamless travel across modes.

Phase 2: Priorities and Tradeoffs

Phase 2 engagement focused on sharing draft transportation recommendations and gathering feedback on proposed roadway, transit, trail, bicycle, pedestrian, and mobility investments. Community members were invited to review recommended projects, learn about mobility concepts and future development patterns, and provide input on transportation funding priorities.

Public input collected during Phase 2 informed the final project prioritization process. Community preferences represent one component of the evaluation framework, alongside factors such as project readiness, funding availability, system performance, and long-term feasibility.

Phase 2 Engagement (At-a-Glance)

- 1,274 page views
- 996 unique visitors
- 575 total contributions
- 194 contributors
- 831 document downloads
- Visitors included **14 Spanish, 5 Arabic, 1 Somali, and 1 Vietnamese** language users

Continued Outreach

Community members had multiple opportunities to review the draft recommendations and engage directly with project staff. Engagement included a public Open House, pop-up events at UNL and Mahoney Park, and continued promotion through community events, partner organizations, project email updates, and agency communication channels.

Previous and new focus group participants were contacted again through email. New participants had the opportunity to attend an overview of previous engagement. All were invited to submit input on potential changes to the way transportation is funded to address challenges identified during the first discussions.

Approximately 60 participants attended the Phase 2 Open House. Attendees were given the opportunity to review and rank priority projects for roadways and trails in the City of Lincoln and Lancaster County. A funding exercise described below asked attendees to prioritize future transportation investments across various project types.



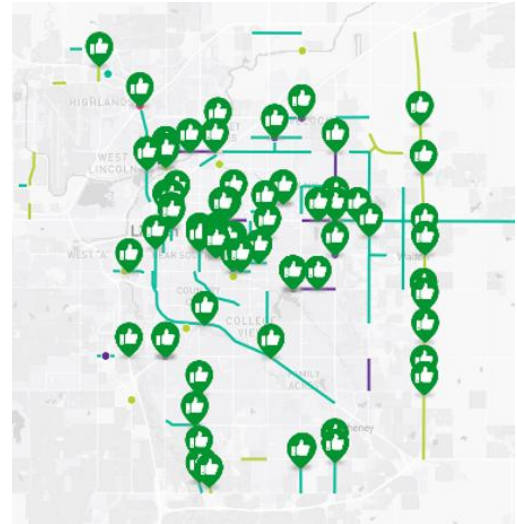
Preliminary Recommended Projects

As part of Phase 2 engagement, participants reviewed draft recommendations for Lincoln Roadway, Lancaster County Roadway, Trail, and Bicycle-Pedestrian projects. Participants also used an online Funding Priorities tool to indicate how they would prioritize available transportation funding across different types of improvements. The public input was reviewed by the project team and utilized in project evaluation.

Lincoln Roadway Projects

Participants reviewed the draft roadway recommendations and identified the projects they were most eager to see advanced. The map to the right shows the locations of the draft roadway projects and where participants placed “likes” to indicate the projects they most wanted to see advanced. The East Beltway emerged as the top priority, followed by improvements to key corridors and intersections, including O Street, Nebraska Parkway, A Street, S 56th Street, and the 14th/Warlick/Old Cheney area.

Overall, participants showed a strong preference for projects that enhance connectivity along major routes, reduce congestion, improve operations at critical intersections, and support growth in developing areas of the community.



Lancaster County Roadway Projects

Participants also reviewed draft transportation recommendations across Lancaster County and identified the projects they were most eager to see advanced. The map to the right shows the locations of the draft roadway projects and where participants placed “likes” to indicate the projects they most wanted to see advanced. The intersection of S 68th Street and Martell Road received the strongest support, followed by improvements along the N 148th Street corridor, as well as several bridge projects throughout the county.

Overall, participants favored projects that strengthen connectivity along key county corridors, improve intersection safety, and maintain critical transportation infrastructure. The strong level of support for bridge improvements highlights the importance of preserving vital connections across Lancaster County.



Trail recommendations generated some of the strongest engagement and support of any project category during Phase 2. The map to the right shows the locations of the draft trail projects and where participants placed “likes” to indicate the projects they most wanted to see advanced. The Greenway Corridor Trail/Haines Branch project received the highest level of support, followed by improvements to the Oak Creek, Chris Beutler, Deadman’s Run, and Cardwell Branch trails.

Specific to the Lincoln Mobility Plan, participants reviewed draft bicycle and pedestrian recommendations and identified the projects they were most eager to see advanced. The map to the right shows the locations of the draft bicycle and pedestrian projects and where participants placed “likes” to prioritize projects. (crossed this out to avoid repetition). The Burnham Street connection between Van Dorn Park and S 17th Street received the highest level of support, followed by improvements along A Street, Pioneers Boulevard, 13th Street, R Street, and corridors including Cotner Boulevard and N 48th Street.

These results align with feedback gathered throughout the planning process, as well as the transportation funding activity, where bicycle facilities and sidewalk improvements ranked among the community’s top investment priorities. Together, these findings reinforce the importance of expanding safe, connected options for walking and cycling across the community.

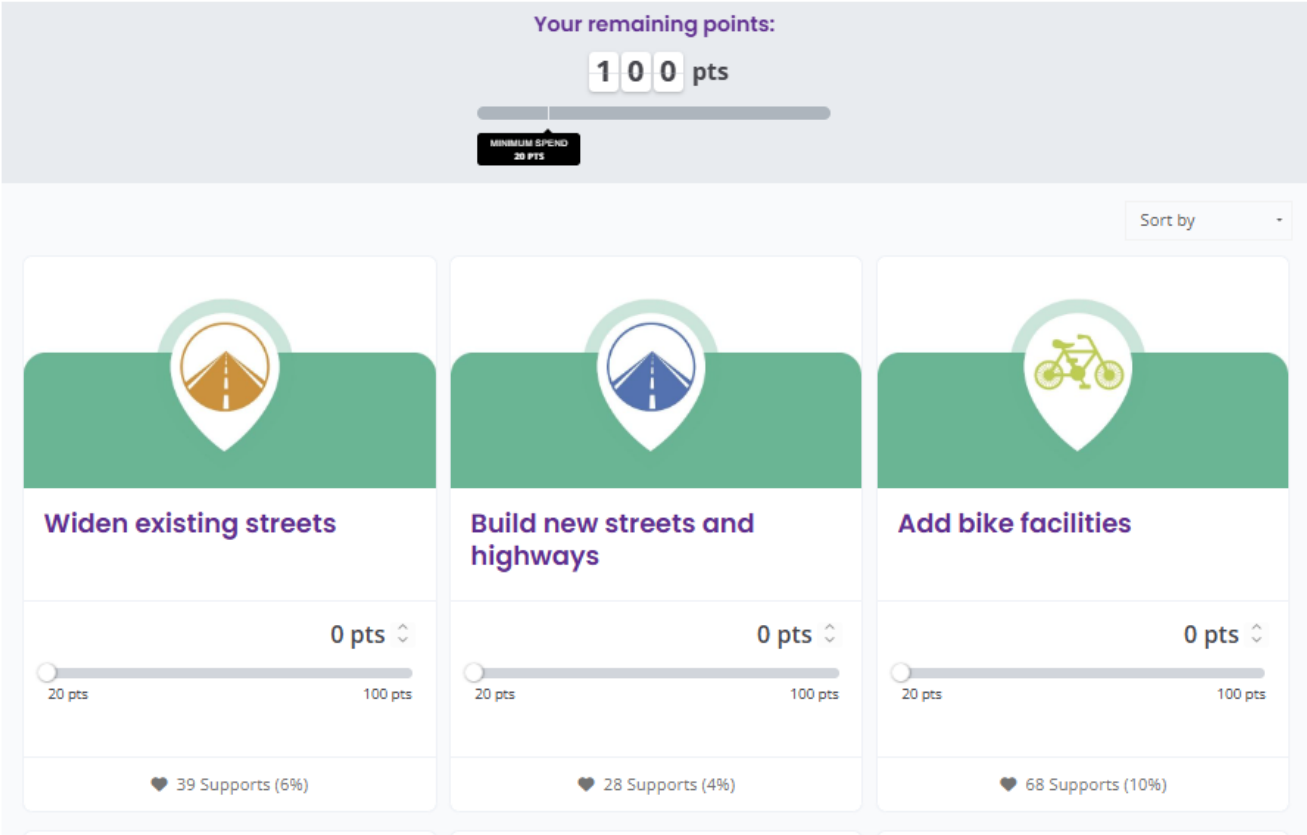
Funding Priorities

Participants were asked how they would prioritize transportation investments across a range of transportation needs and improvements (Figure 3), with results reflected in Figure 4. The exercise included voting at the Open House, which was replicated through an online engagement activity that attracted 575 unique contributors between May 19 and June 7, 2025.

Figure 3. Funding Priorities Tool

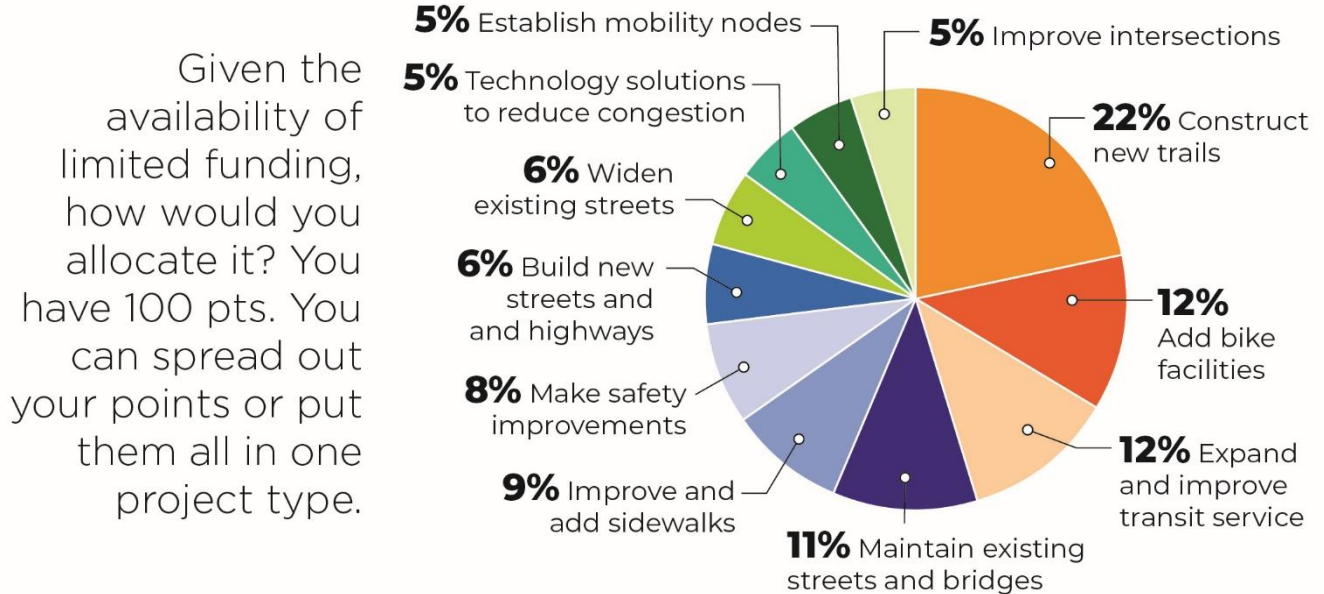
What types of projects would you like to fund?

The Long Range Transportation Plan is visionary. The recommendations won't happen all at once. Given the availability of limited funding, how would you allocate it? You have 100 pts. You can spread out your points or put them all in one project type.



Results showed the strongest support for expanding transportation options, particularly trails, bicycle facilities, and transit service. Participants also placed a high priority on maintaining existing infrastructure and improving safety, while roadway expansion projects generally received lower levels of support.

Figure 4. Community Input on Funding Priorities



Overall, the results suggest that the community places a high value on expanding transportation choices, improving safety, and maintaining existing infrastructure while placing less emphasis on roadway capacity expansion. These priorities provide important context for evaluating LRTP funding scenarios and project investment strategies.

Engagement Takeaways

Participants generally expressed strong support for transportation investments that enhance safety, expand travel options, and improve connections across neighborhoods and the broader region. **Safety** emerged as a central theme throughout the feedback, with many participants raising concerns about intersection operations, crossing conditions, speeding, and roadway design. There was a clear emphasis on creating safer environments for all users, including people walking, biking, rolling, and driving.

Participants had the opportunity to review and rank all of the proposed roadway, trail, and on-street active transportation projects, or to suggest other projects not on the project list. Participant comments provided a critical step in the planning process. The project team reviewed the input and included it in the project scoring.

A significant portion of feedback focused on the need to expand and improve **active transportation networks**. Community members frequently highlighted gaps in sidewalks and trails, the need for better bicycle facilities, and the importance of safer crossings, especially along major roadways. Several comments underscored the value of a more complete and connected network that links neighborhoods with schools, parks, and key destinations.

Transit improvements were also a recurring topic. Participants expressed interest in expanding transit services in growing areas, strengthening connections between destinations, and providing a more reliable, convenient transportation system.

Several participants also connected transportation investments to **broader community development goals**. Feedback emphasized the importance of supporting walkable neighborhoods, mixed-use activity centers, and development patterns that promote accessibility while preserving quality of life. Transportation was widely viewed as a key factor in shaping future growth.

A smaller set of comments focused on project delivery, maintenance, and communication. Participants expressed interest in understanding how projects are prioritized, how funding decisions are made, and how transportation investments relate to long-term community goals.

Phase 3: Draft Plan Review

This section will include comments received during public review of the draft plan for a 30-day period.

Takeaways and Next Steps

Following the conclusion of Phase 3, a summary of the takeaways from all LRTP public engagement will be provided.

Additional opportunities for public comment will be continue to be available during the public hearing processes as the LRTP moves through formal review and adoption.

The LRTP will have public hearing and action at the Planning Commission on October 28, 2026, alongside the Lincoln Mobility Plan. The City Council and County Board will be briefed on the LRTP in November as part of their briefings on the Lincoln-Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan Update. Public hearing and action at the MPO Technical Committee for both the LRTP and Mobility Plan is scheduled for November 4, 2026. Public hearing and action at the MPO Officials Committee is scheduled for December 8, 2026.

The deadline for adoption of the 2050 Long Range Transportation Update is 5 years from adoption of the previous update, or December 15, 2026. If approved, copies of the LRTP will be provided to NDOT, FHWA, and FTA.