



WELCOME

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

June 17, 2026

COUNCIL BLUFFS LINKAGES STUDY

Reimagining transportation between
downtown Council Bluffs and downtown Omaha



Public Commenting Period Closes
JULY 5, 2026

<https://fhu.mysocialpinpoint.com/council-bluffs-linkages>

HOW WE GOT HERE



The Council Bluffs Linkages Study is exploring future multimodal transportation connections between Downtown Council Bluffs and Downtown Omaha. Building on years of community planning and regional transit discussions, the study is evaluating opportunities to improve mobility, connectivity, and economic development through potential transit and corridor improvements. Recent investments such as Omaha's ORBT system and future Streetcar have helped generate momentum for stronger regional connections across the Missouri River.

PUBLIC INPUT HELPED SHAPE THE STUDY

During the first phase of engagement:

- 1,571 visits were recorded on the project website
- 460 public contributions were submitted
- 326 survey responses were received
- 134 map comments were submitted through the interactive comment map

FROM THAT DATA, TOP-RANKED PRIORITIES

1. Providing more transit options between Downtown Council Bluffs and Downtown Omaha
2. Improving safe and reliable transportation access to jobs
3. Creating development opportunities for new affordable and market-rate housing

*These are study findings not recommendations.

WHAT'S A "PEL"?

A **Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study** is a type of transportation study conducted at the corridor or subarea level prior to entering into the federal environmental (NEPA) and project design process.

The PEL process is a valuable tool for **creating efficiency in transportation project development and supporting agencies to collaborate and accelerate project delivery.**

PEL studies are often conducted when:

- A project is not yet well defined
- The study may result in multiple projects
- Project funding is not yet identified, but it is likely that a future project will seek federal funds
- There is need for early public engagement
- Multiple agencies or jurisdictions may be the permitting authority for the project

PEL BENEFITS



Accelerates project delivery



Aligns with future requirements



Stimulates development of new tools



Helps build relationships for agencies and the public



Early engagement in decision-making



Helps identify stakeholders early on



Creates better outcomes for the community



Improves planning products

PURPOSE & NEED

The purpose of the Council Bluffs Linkages Study is to provide a safe and efficient multimodal transportation option for users between downtown Council Bluffs, Iowa and downtown Omaha, Nebraska.

Community members, businesses, stakeholders, and partner agencies have identified a desire for stronger multimodal connections that improve access to destinations, support economic growth, and create safer and more connected travel opportunities throughout the region.

As part of the PEL process, alternatives are reviewed and evaluated based on how they address the project's needs.

PROJECT NEEDS



Enhance Accessibility & Safe Travel

Improve connections between healthcare services, employment centers, entertainment districts, recreation areas, and community destinations on both sides of the Missouri River.



Improve Mobility

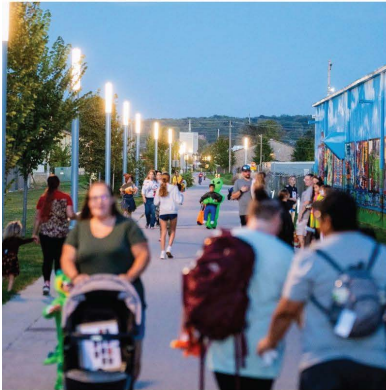
Expand transportation options and improve access for residents with transportation access burdens, including populations without reliable vehicle access.



Maximize Economic Development Opportunities

Support redevelopment, mixed-use development, and future economic growth opportunities while helping strengthen Council Bluffs' long-term tax base and regional competitiveness.

KEY ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES



PARKS AND RECREATION:

Cochran Park, First Ave Trail, and Trolley Park are near several alternative routes.

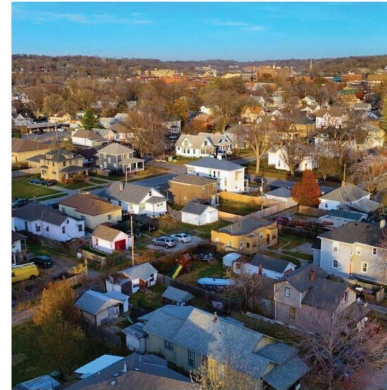
Encountering recreational facilities may require approval under Section 4(f) of the US Department of Transportation Act of 1966 and Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965.



HAZARDOUS MATERIALS:

Potential hazardous material sites include gas station and industrial facilities. Primarily, sites are concentrated along West Broadway and the downtowns of Council Bluffs and Omaha.

Further analysis on the impact to and from these sites would be required.



NOISE IMPACTS:

Noise impacts were considered and range between alternatives. Avenue G, Avenue A, and 2nd Ave have increased potential for noise impacts due to the residential nature of these corridors.

Noise impacts would be further refined.



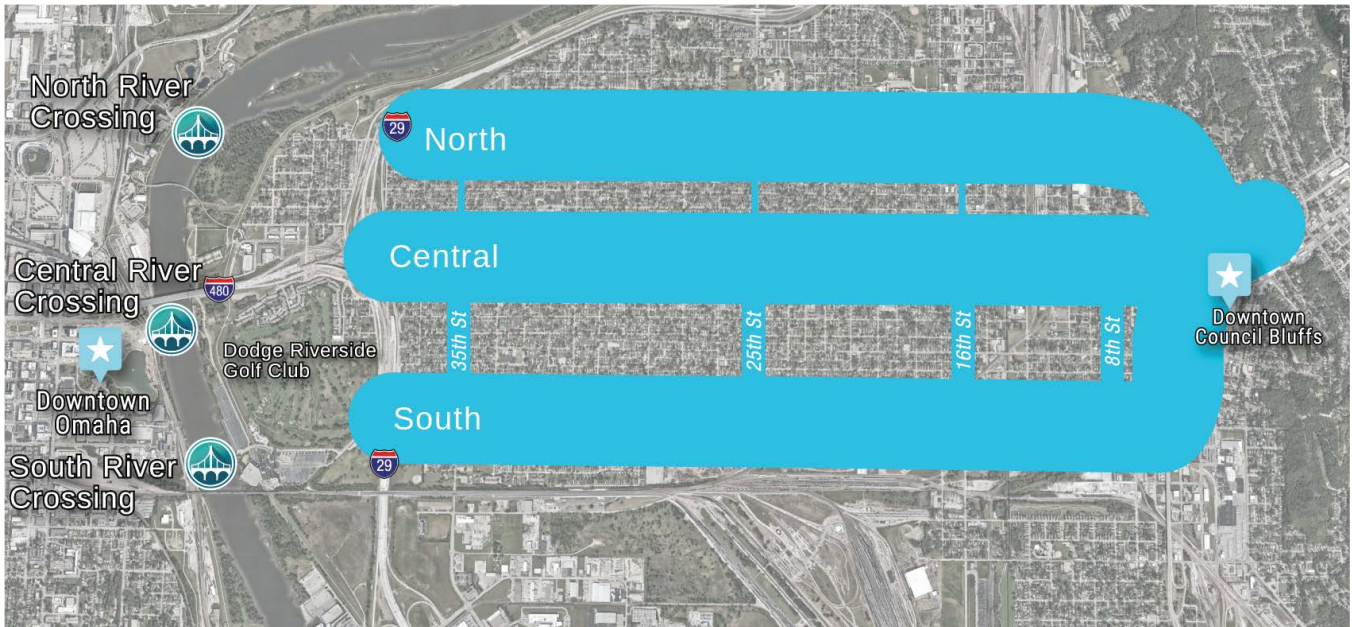
BRIDGE CROSSINGS:

Additional environmental impacts may arise if a river bridge or railroad viaduct crossing become necessary. Impacts would be specific to each location.

Levees, wetlands, floodplains, threatened and endangered species, and land use would be evaluated further.



WHERE WE STARTED: CORRIDOR CONCEPTS



Before narrowing to specific routes, the Linkages study took a “big-picture” look at three potential corridors for transportation service:



NORTH

This corridor concept would run through the northern portion of the study area somewhere between Avenue H and Avenue D. This corridor concept would likely use a north-south street like 7th Street or 8th Street to enter downtown Council Bluffs.

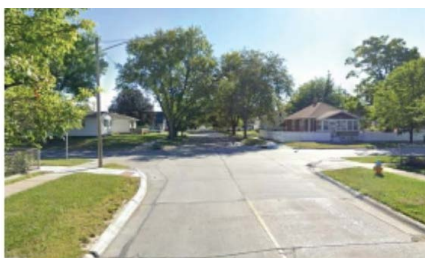
CENTRAL

This corridor concept would run through the center of the study area somewhere between Avenue C and 3rd Avenue. This corridor concept may use Broadway, the 1st Avenue corridor, or another pathway.



SOUTH

This corridor concept would run through the southern portion of the study area somewhere between 5th Avenue and 10th Avenue. This corridor would likely use a north-south street like 6th Street or Pearl Street to enter downtown Council Bluffs.



KEY CROSSINGS

There are three major transportation barriers between downtown Council Bluffs and downtown Omaha: the Missouri River, I-29, and multiple railroad tracks west of downtown.

MISSOURI RIVER CROSSING



NORTH

This corridor would cross the Missouri River from a location north of the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge and tie into a northern location in Council Bluffs. This corridor also explored opportunities to strengthen connections to Carter Lake, providing an “Iowa-to-Iowa” connection.

CENTRAL



This concept would cross the Missouri River on the I-480 bridge or with a new crossing into Council Bluffs. This concept would connect the central portion of downtown Omaha, such as the Heartland of America Park, to an east-west corridor along I-480 or a new alignment through the north side of Dodge Riverside Golf Club.



SOUTH

This corridor includes Missouri River crossings along a new crossing north of the Union Pacific Railroad bridge or along the UP Bridge itself. This would connect the southern end of downtown Omaha near the Old Market and tie into Council Bluffs near Harrah's Council Bluffs Hotel and Casino.

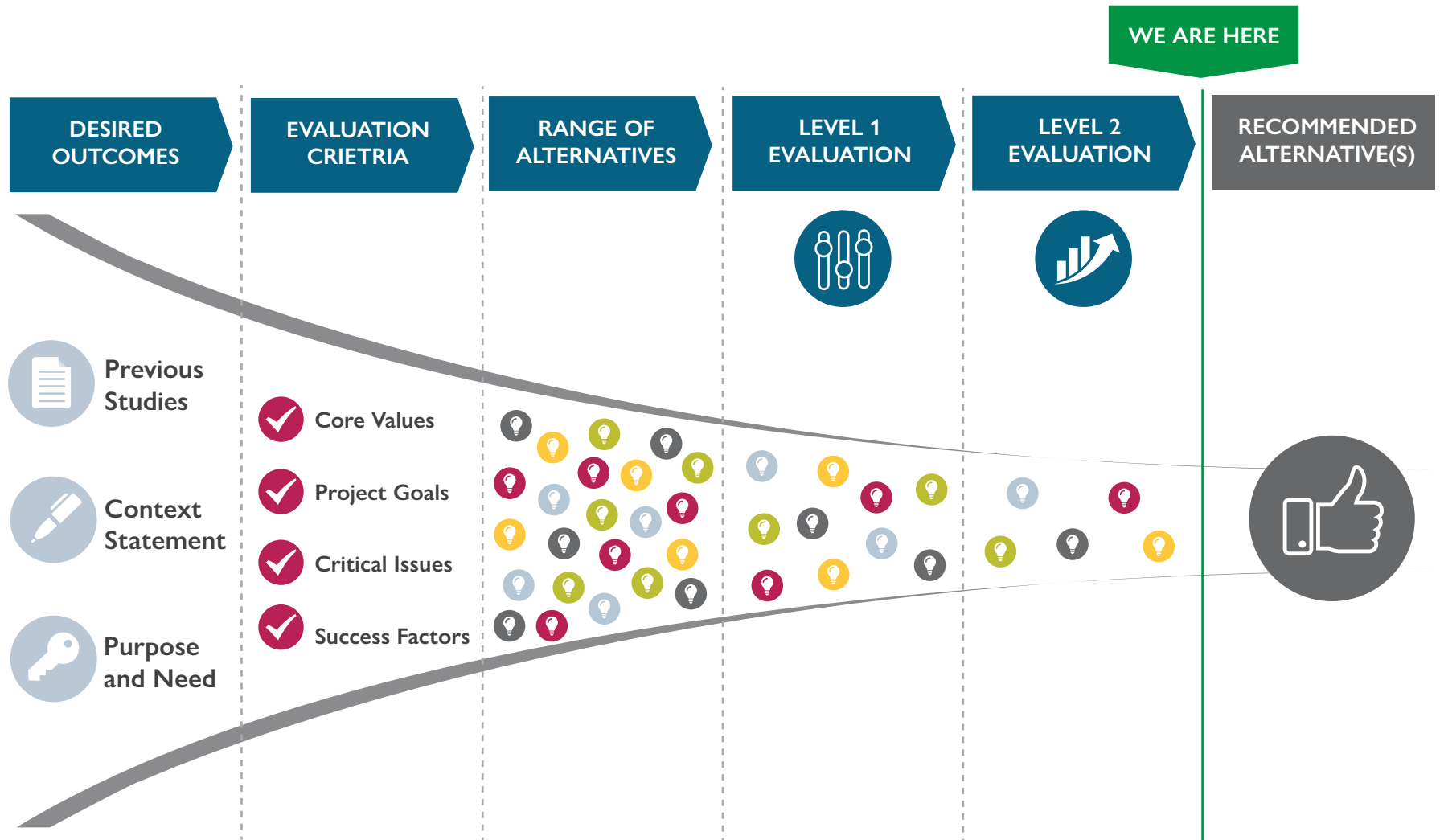
I-29

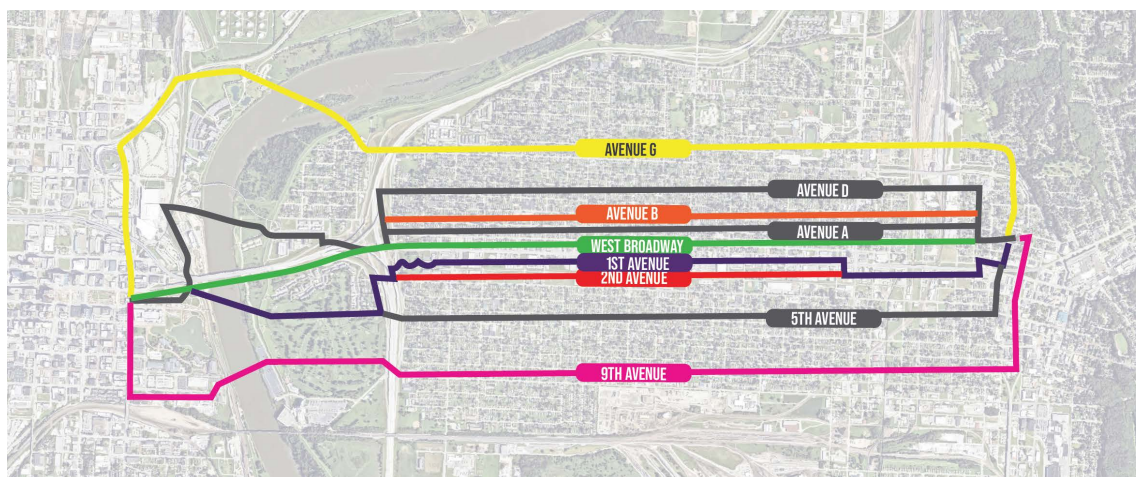
Existing crossings at West Broadway, 2nd Avenue, Avenue G, and 9th Avenue were evaluated. West Broadway and 2nd Avenue provide the most direct downtown-to-downtown connections, while Avenue G and 9th Avenue would require significant out-of-direction travel.

RAILROAD TRACKS

Existing viaducts at Avenue G and West Broadway provide grade-separated Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) / Canadian Northern Railway (CN) crossings. Several other crossings are at-grade, which are less desirable for BRT and highly discouraged for streetcar alternatives. West Broadway offers the most direct downtown connection.

PEL SCREENING PROCESS





Potential alignments were evaluated based on how well they met the project's purpose and need, as well as feasibility, access, community input, and economic development potential.

INITIAL SCREENING CRITERIA

MISSOURI RIVER CROSSING

Could the alternative use an existing crossing, or would it require a new Missouri River crossing?

I-29 CROSSING AVAILABILITY

Could the route safely and realistically cross I-29?

RAILROAD TRACKS

Would the route require an at-grade railroad crossing, a new crossing, or use an existing grade-separated crossing?

OUT-OF-DISTANCE TRAVEL

How directly would the route connect Downtown Council Bluffs and Downtown Omaha?

COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC FACTORS

Would the corridor support economic development potential, opportunities for new housing, access to jobs, access to key destinations, and the level of community support?

WHAT WAS RULED OUT

ALIGNMENTS ELIMINATED

AVENUE D (NORTH CORRIDOR)

Screened out due to:

- No viable Missouri River, I-29, or railroad crossing
- Significant out-of-direction travel
- Limited transit and redevelopment potential

AVENUE B (CENTRAL CORRIDOR)

Screened out due to:

- No viable connection to the Missouri River
- No I-29 crossing or UPRR viaduct
- Limited transit and redevelopment potential

5TH AVENUE (SOUTH CORRIDOR)

Screened out due to:

- No viable Missouri River crossing
- Limited transit and redevelopment potential
- Did not meet community and economic development objectives

CONCEPT COMPARISON MATRIX



Following the initial screening, six alignments advanced to the Refined Alternatives Screening, where they were evaluated against the project's Purpose and Need. Avenue G, Avenue A, and 9th Avenue did not sufficiently meet the evaluation criteria and were eliminated from further consideration. West Broadway, 1st Avenue, and 2nd Avenue best addressed the project's Purpose and Need and were selected as the final alternatives for further study.

Alternatives	Key Factors from Initial Alternatives Screening	Purpose and Need Factors								
		Enhance Accessibility & Safe Travel				Improve Mobility for Transportation Access-Burdened Populations		Provide Community Economic Development Opportunities		
		Provides access to healthcare facilities within ½ mile of route	Provides direct access to downtown CB & downtown Omaha	Provides access to entertainment complexes within 1/2-mile of route	Provides access to parks & recreation areas within ½ - mile of route	Provides service to community resources	Number of persons in access-burdened populations* located within ½ mile of route	Maximize development opportunities consistent with West Broadway Corridor Design Ordinance in close proximity to the modal alignment (650 feet)	Maximizes projected population, dwelling units, employment and developable acres in close proximity to the modal alignment	Promotes infill or new development of tax-generating land uses such as commercial, industrial, and residential uses. (½ mile)
Measurement		Number	Yes/No	Number	Number	Number	Score*	% of Buffer Area Developable	Yes/No	% of Buffer Area Developable
Avenue G	Out-of-Distance, Lack of Reasonable Missouri River Bridge crossing. Existing viaduct over railroad.	14	No	7	14	56	232.41	15.5%	No	19.7%
Avenue A	Discontinuous through I-29	16	No	8	12	55	226.19	44.0%	No	29.0%
W. Broadway	High volume vehicular roadway	16	Yes	7	11	53	219.68	56.2%	Yes	30.8%
1st Avenue	Dedicated corridor	19	Yes	7	13	52	225.05	54.4%	Yes	31.3%
2nd Avenue	At-grade rail crossing x2	18	Yes	7	13	51	220.46	49.2%	Yes	31.1%
9th Avenue	At-grade rail crossing, out-of-distance, lack of reasonable Missouri River Bridge Crossing	7	No	7	13	39	218.1	14.9%	No	22.5%

*Access-burdened populations are groups that experience barriers to reliable, safe, and affordable movement to routine destinations. Populations typically include those who are older than 60 years old, are a low-income household, and are an individual with a disability.

*These are study findings not recommendations.

MODAL OPPORTUNITIES: BUS RAPID TRANSIT (BRT)

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is an enhanced bus service designed to provide faster, more reliable, and higher-capacity transit connections between major destinations and activity centers. BRT incorporates features commonly associated with rail transit into a bus system, which decrease travel times and provide a more “rail-like” experience and feel.

This study considers two types of BRT:

Shared Right-of-Way BRT that operates in mixed flow traffic (similar to ORBT along Dodge Street west of downtown Omaha). This requires a lower infrastructure investment and has the potential for faster implementation.

Dedicated Right-of-Way that features a transit guideway similar to a rail corridor. This premium transit service allows for faster and more reliable travel times and creates a stronger transit identity that is more likely to attract development.



Fort Collins, CO Dedicated Right-of-Way BRT

WHAT MAKES BRT DIFFERENT?

- Improved stations and rider amenities
- Faster, more reliable service
- Modern, accessible vehicles
- Encourages growth and development

BRT IN ACTION

- Nationally, BRT has been adopted successfully in areas such as Kansas City, Fort Collins, Denver, Indianapolis, and elsewhere.
- In Omaha along the "ORBT" Corridor, development permit values nearly doubled in the years following opening in 2020
- A zoning overlay promoting transit-friendly development has reduced parking costs for developers
- Hundreds of additional housing units have been added within close proximity to ORBT stations

49th & Dodge - 2014



49th & Dodge 2023



Transit-friendly development along Dodge Street near the ORBT Dundee Station

*These are study findings not recommendations.

MODAL OPPORTUNITIES: STREETCAR

Streetcar systems provide reliable, high-capacity transit connections between major destinations and activity centers, which encourage redevelopment and economic growth

WHAT MAKES A STREETCAR DIFFERENT?

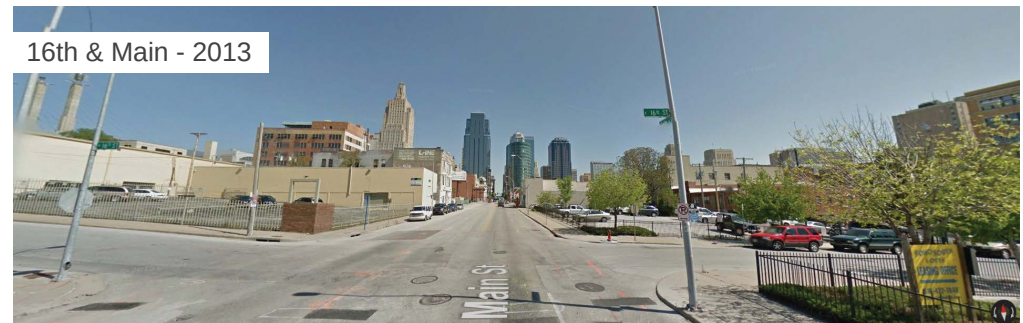
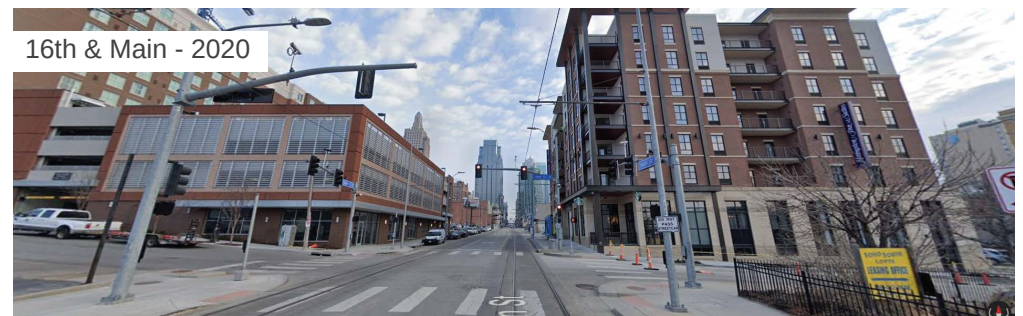
- Permanent infrastructure
- Frequent, accessible service
- Can operate in a dedicated guideway or in street
- Boosts walkability and compact urban development

KANSAS CITY STREETCAR IN ACTION

- Building permits doubled in the corridor
- KC Streetcar expanded
- Transformed downtown and expanded development both north to the riverfront and south to UMKC



Kansas City, MO Streetcar



POTENTIAL CONNECTIONS TO OMAHA

CONNECTING TO OMAHA BRT

A BRT project in Council Bluffs could connect to the Omaha Bus Rapid Transit (ORBT). Uniting smart technology and streamlined travel, Metro Transit's "orange buses" provide faster, more frequent transportation along an eight-mile route on Dodge and Douglas streets from downtown Omaha to Westroads Mall. Primarily in mixed traffic, east of 30th Street bus-only lanes give ORBT dedicated lanes. In recent months, ORBT has carried 50,000 – 60,000 riders per month.



Omaha, NE Shared ROW BRT

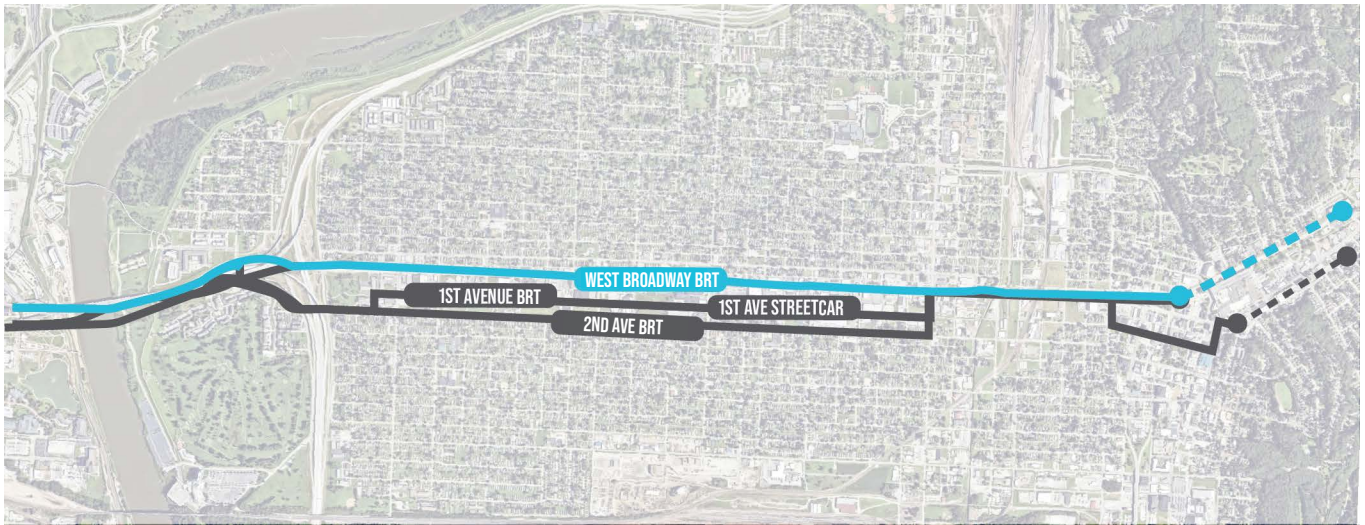


CONNECTING TO OMAHA STREETCAR

A streetcar project in Council Bluffs could connect to the Omaha Streetcar, which will travel from Midtown Omaha to the Riverfront area. The Omaha Streetcar is anticipated to open service in 2028 and is sparking more intense development along the corridor, with recent estimates of development to reach nearly \$4 billion over the next 20 years. These investments pay for the streetcar and provide additional tax revenues and Tax Increment Financing proceeds for services and housing.



WEST BROADWAY BRT ALTERNATIVE



West Broadway serves as the principal east-west vehicular corridor and performs well on many criteria, including travel time connecting the core downtown destinations, access to jobs, housing and community services. BRT service on West Broadway would operate in mixed traffic and have minimal traffic impacts as BRT systems reduce travel times through a smaller number of stops with upgraded stations. Shared right-of-way BRT usually have modest economic development impacts.

BENEFITS:

- Meets Purpose and Need
- Provides direct downtown to downtown connection
- Utilizes existing key crossings, including I-480 Bridge across Missouri River
- Commercial corridor with direct access to businesses and services
- Regional connectivity with ORBT connects to Westroads Mall in Omaha
- Enhanced, more frequent service increases ridership

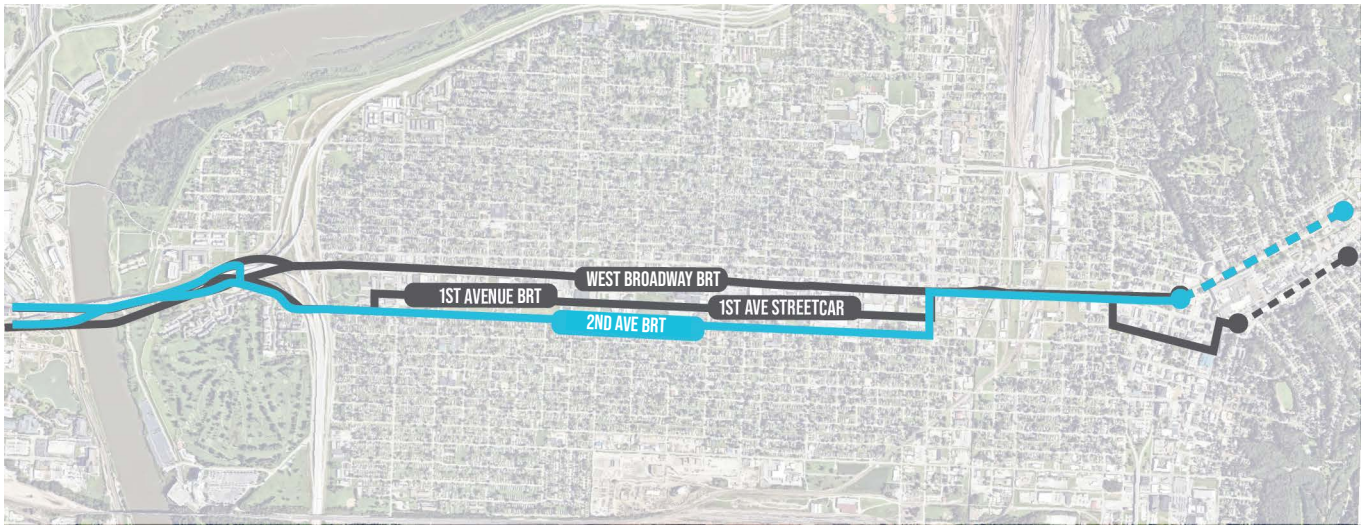
COST ESTIMATES:

- Annual Operations & Maintenance Estimate: \$1 - 3 M
- Shared ROW BRT System, approx.. 5 miles: \$40 – 75 M
- (\$8 - \$15 M / mile, including additional vehicles)
- Growth Impacts: Modest
- Potential Housing Growth over next 30 years: 7,000 - 9,000 units
- Potential Jobs added: 900 – 1,000
- Potential New Business and Office Space: ~ 1,000,000 square feet
- Ridership Forecast: 600 - 1,000 riders per day

Opposed	Concerned	Neutral	Support	Strongly Support
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Place a sticker along the spectrum below to show how you feel about this alternative overall.

2ND AVENUE BRT ALTERNATIVE



Running BRT along Second Avenue would provide a third BRT alternative that would run in shared right-of-way. This corridor is more residential with single family housing along the south side of the corridor. The wide right-of-way (50 feet or more) would easily accommodate BRT. While it avoids some of the potential conflicts of Broadway and First Avenue, it is also further from some of the businesses and services, as well as being less accessible to people that live and work north of Broadway.

BENEFITS:

- Meets Purpose and Need
- Utilizes existing key crossings, including I-480 Bridge across Missouri River
- Avoids West Broadway traffic and First Avenue complexity
- Regional connectivity with ORBT connects to Westroads Mall in Omaha
- Enhanced, more frequent service increases ridership

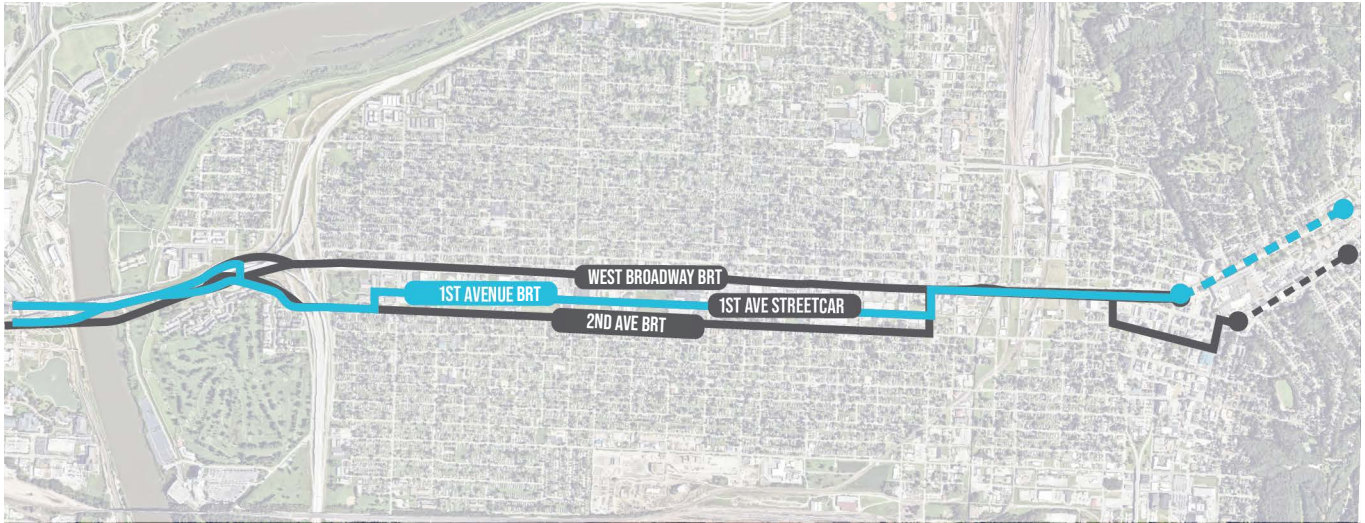
COST ESTIMATES:

- Annual Operations & Maintenance Estimate: \$1 - 3 M
- Shared ROW BRT System, approx. 5 miles: \$40 – 75 M
- (\$8 - \$15 M / mile, including additional vehicles)
- Growth Impacts: Modest
- Potential Housing Growth over next 30 years: 4,000 - 6,000 units
- Potential Jobs added: 500 – 750
- Potential New Business and Office Space: ~ 400,000 square feet
- Ridership Forecast: 500 - 900 riders per day

Opposed	Concerned	Neutral	Support	Strongly Support
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Place a sticker along the spectrum below to show how you feel about this alternative overall.

1ST AVENUE BRT ALTERNATIVE



Running BRT along First Avenue is the only dedicated right-of-way BRT alternative, providing a transit guideway between I-29 and 16th Streets. A new busway would be constructed along the corridor and leave the existing trail intact, although some potential conflicts have been identified that require additional study. Station spacing and features could be located near the existing rest areas along the trail. Traffic analysis would determine whether additional signals or safety features are required at cross-streets. Dedicated right-of-way BRT have a moderate economic development impacts.

BENEFITS:

- Meets Purpose and Need
- Dedicated transit guideway keeps buses separate from mixed traffic and increases “rail-like” feel of the BRT
- Utilizes existing key crossings, including I-480 Bridge across Missouri River
- Location 1 block south of West Broadway provides access to businesses and services
- Regional connectivity with ORBT connects to Westroads Mall in Omaha
- Enhanced, more frequent service increases ridership

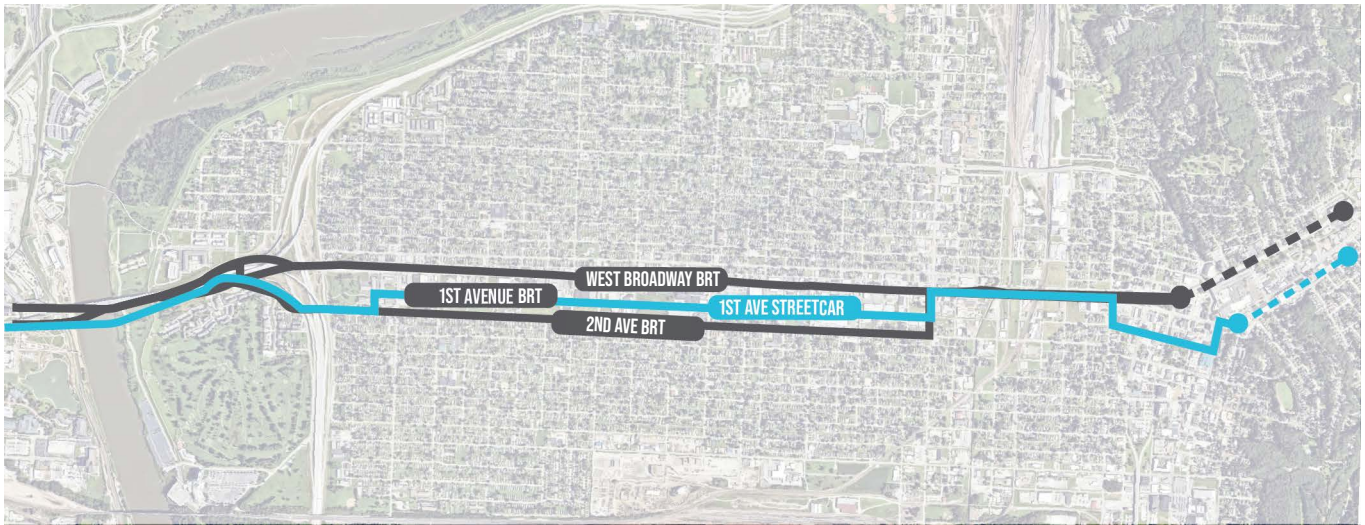
COST ESTIMATES:

- Annual Operations & Maintenance Estimate: \$2 - 4 M
- Dedicated ROW BRT System, approx.. 5 miles: \$60 – 100 M
- (\$12-20 M per mile, including additional vehicles)
- Growth Impacts: Moderate
- Anticipated Housing Growth over next 30 years: 10,000 - 12,000 units
- Anticipated Jobs added: 1,500 – 1,800
- Potential New Business and Office Space: ~ 1,200,000 square feet
- Ridership Forecast: 750 - 1,100 riders per day

Opposed	Concerned	Neutral	Support	Strongly Support
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Place a sticker along the spectrum below to show how you feel about this alternative overall.

1ST AVENUE STREETCAR ALTERNATIVE



Streetcar represents a unique alternative to BRT. While it presents additional complexity and challenges, such as the Missouri River crossing, it also presents unique opportunities to spark economic development. This alternative would cross the Missouri River along a new bridge south of I-480. Another option may be to convert 1 vehicle lane in each direction along the I-480 Bridge into barrier-separated streetcar lanes. While streetcar systems can be expensive, the lack of conflicting infrastructures such as utilities along 1st Avenue will reduce costs.

BENEFITS:

- Meets Purpose and Need
- Connectivity to Omaha streetcar system that extends past Downtown Omaha to Midtown and UNMC areas
- Turbo charges development and property values, potentially reducing tax burden on residents
- Appeal of rail service attracts new riders, including some that will not otherwise use transit

COST ESTIMATES:

- Annual Operations & Maintenance Estimate: \$3 - 6 M
- Streetcar System, approx. 5 miles: \$200 – 350 M
- (\$40 - \$70 M / mile including new vehicles, without bridge cost)
- With Missouri River Bridge: \$350 – 500M
- Growth Impacts: Strong
- Potential Housing Growth over next 30 years: 15,000 - 25,000 units
- Potential Jobs added: 3,500 – 5,500
- Potential New Business and Office Space: ~ 1,800,000 square feet
- Ridership Forecast: 750 - 1,500 riders per day*

*Streetcar estimates are difficult to forecast due to the many trips being non-work trips, and are often underestimated. For instance, the Kansas City streetcar forecast initial ridership of 2,500 - 3,000 per day, but 2017 (2nd full year of operation) averaged 5,600 riders per day.

Opposed	Concerned	Neutral	Support	Strongly Support
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Place a sticker along the spectrum below to show how you feel about this alternative overall.

The study team developed conceptual service plans to understand how each transit option could operate between Downtown Council Bluffs and Downtown Omaha. This included identifying potential routes and stops, estimating travel times, and developing service frequency and operating assumptions based on existing transit conditions and comparable BRT and streetcar systems.

Mock Service Stop Schedule

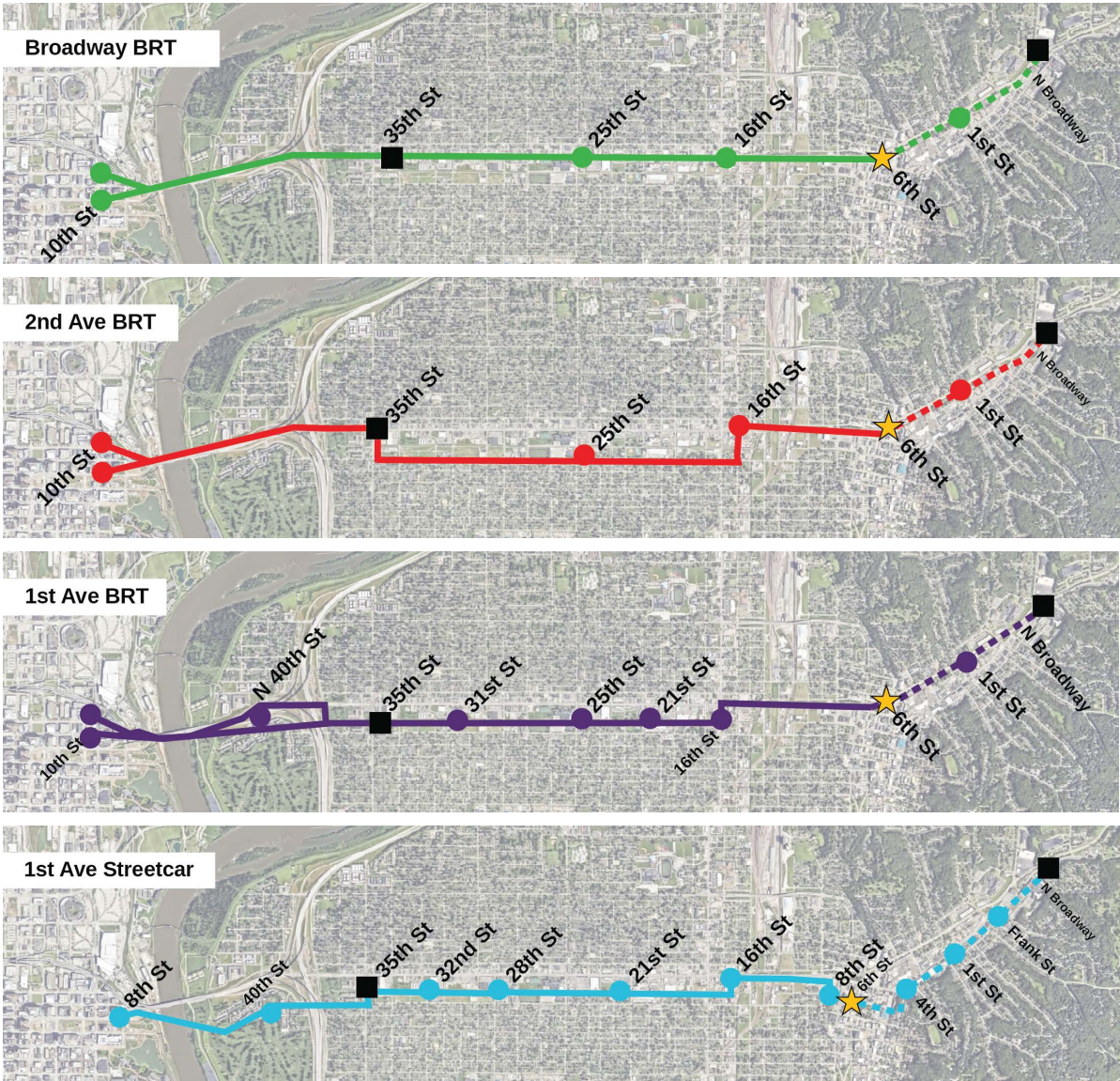
Service Day/Type	Early 5-6 AM	Early 6-7 AM	AM Peak 7-10 AM	Midday 9 AM-4 PM	PM Peak 4-7 PM
BRT Mondays-Friday	10	10	10	10	10
BRT Fridays	10	10	10	10	10
BRT Saturday	20	20	20	12	12
BRT Sundays/Holidays	0	20	20	15	15
Streetcar Mondays-Thursday	0	14	14	10	10
Streetcar Friday	0	14	14	10	10
Streetcar Saturday	0	0	20	10	10
Streetcar Sunday/Holidays	0	0	20	10	10
1st Ave BRT Monday-Friday	20	10	10	10	10
1st Ave BRT Saturday	20	20	20	12	12
1st Ave BRT Sundays/Holidays	0	20	20	15	15

Service Planning Process at a Glance

- Develop Routes & Stops
- Estimate Travel Times
- Create Frequency & Service Span Assumptions

Transit Stop Routes

These potential transit routes would operate in conjunction with existing bus routes.



Legend: ■ Feeder Service ★ Potential Transit Center

*These are study findings not recommendations.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU?

Use the numbered stickers provided to rank each priority from 1 (most important) to 6 (least important) by placing one sticker in every category and using each number only once.

 Promoting development and infill & increasing the City's tax base	 Providing access to jobs	 Improving access to healthcare services
 Connecting recreation, parks & trails	 Improving mobility for residents without reliable transportation and those who prefer transit, walking, or biking	 Improving connections between Council Bluffs & Omaha

*These are study findings not recommendations.

NEXT STEPS

 We are here!

PHASE A

- Existing Conditions & Initial Concepts
- Public & Stakeholder Engagement
- Corridor & Modal Screening

PHASE B

- Alternatives Analysis
- Technical Evaluation
- Narrowing to Final Alternatives

PHASE C

- Public Open House & Community Feedback
- Review of Final Alternatives
- Online Comment Period Open Through July 5

NEXT STEPS

Review and incorporate public and stakeholder feedback into the final study recommendations

Work with the City and regional partners to refine the recommendations and identify potential future considerations

Following completion of the study, the City will determine whether any alternatives should move forward into future study, environmental review, funding, or implementation discussions



Public Commenting Period Closes
JULY 5, 2026

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