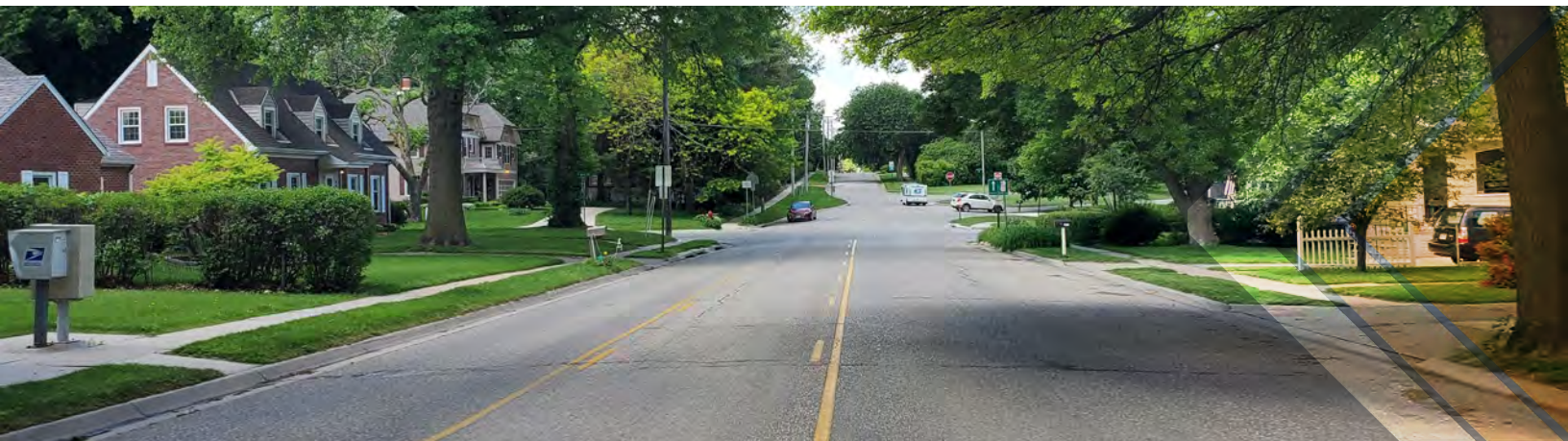


PLAN forward

2050 Transportation Plan
2026 Update



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

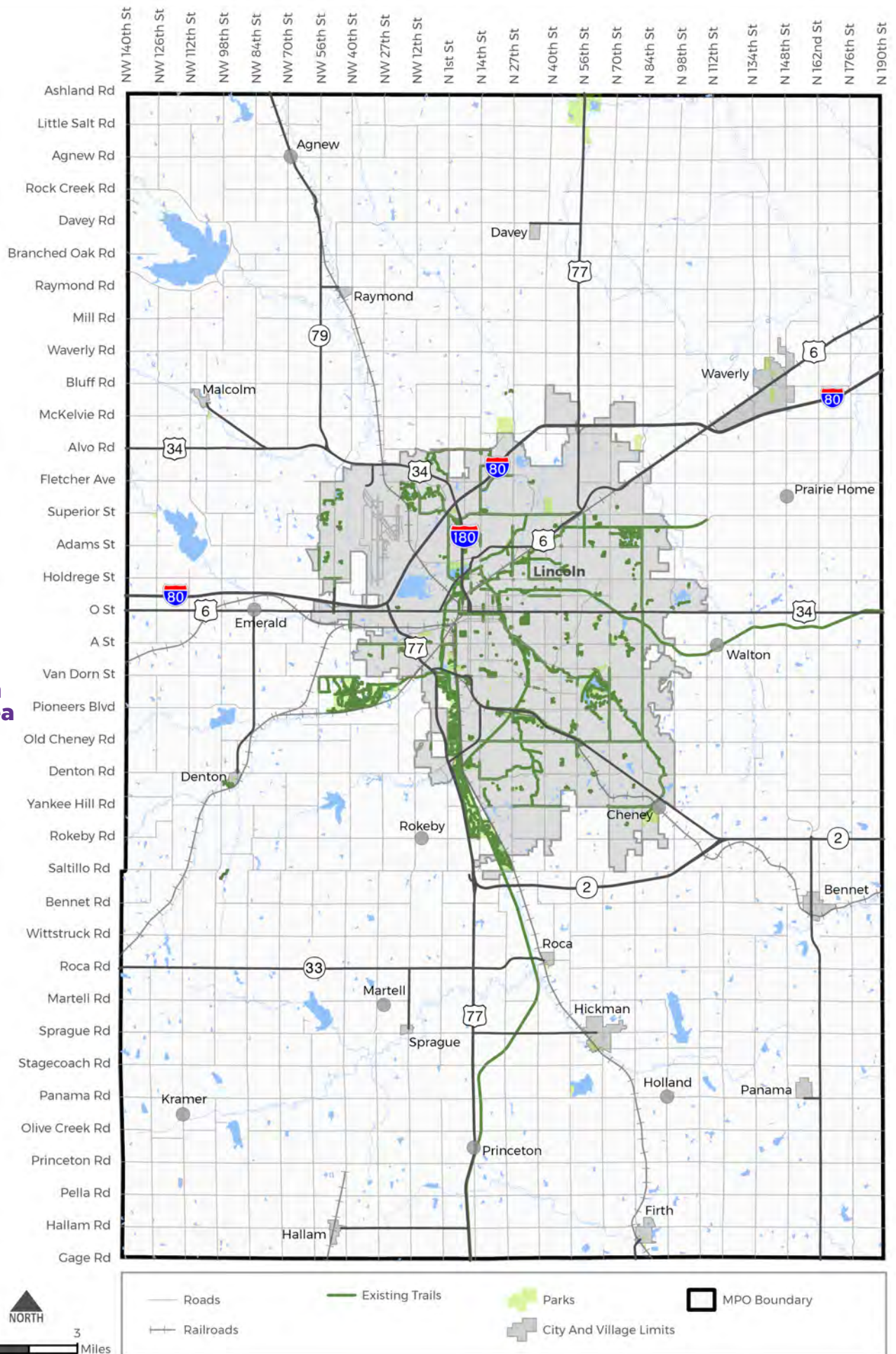


DRAFT September 2026

LINCOLN
MPO
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

 **FELSBURG
HOLT &
ULLEVIG**

Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Area





IMPORTANCE OF THE LRTP

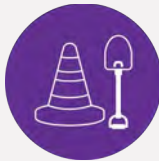
The 2050 Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Long Range Transportation Plan (Lincoln LRTP) establishes the vision, priorities, and investment strategy for the region's multimodal transportation system through 2050. The plan was developed through a collaborative partnership among the City of Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT), and other local, state, and federal agencies. The plan combines technical analysis, public input, and agency collaboration to identify transportation priorities, investment strategies, and implementation recommendations for the Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA). The LRTP meets all federal planning requirements and establishes the goals, objectives, and investment strategies to meet the community's vision for the system. Federal regulations require that MPOs update their LRTPs every five years, providing an opportunity to reflect changing conditions, coordinate with other planning efforts, reassess community priorities, and respond to evolving travel patterns, development trends, and transportation needs. This update ensures the plan remains relevant, fiscally constrained, and aligned with the region's vision for the future.

The Vision: a safe, efficient, and sustainable system that expands mobility choices, strengthens community connections, and enhances quality of life and economic vitality for Lincoln and Lancaster County.

Context

The LRTP builds on a strong foundation of adopted plans, policies, and programs that guide transportation, land use, redevelopment, safety, and public investment across the community. This plan was developed concurrently with the Lincoln Mobility Plan and updates to the Lincoln-Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan to create an integrated approach to land use, transportation, and mobility planning. The Comprehensive Plan establishes the long-range vision, growth strategy, and population and employment forecasts that informed the LRTP's travel demand analysis, while the Lincoln Mobility Plan identifies multimodal mobility needs and strategies. Together, these planning efforts provide a coordinated framework for guiding future transportation investments, mobility improvements, and land use decisions across Lincoln and Lancaster County.

LRTP GOALS



Maintenance: A well-maintained transportation system.



Mobility & System Reliability: An efficient, reliable, and well-connected transportation system that leverages innovation and technology for moving people and freight.



Livability & Travel Choice: A multimodal system that provides convenient and affordable travel options to support a more compact, healthy, livable urban environment.



Safety & Security: A safe and secure transportation system.



Economic Vitality: A transportation system that promotes economic vitality and sustainable growth for residents and businesses.



Environmental Sustainability: A transportation system that minimizes negative impacts on and strives to enhance the natural, cultural, and built environment.



Funding & Cost Effectiveness: Collaboration in funding transportation projects that maximize user benefits and local funding and embrace innovative funding approaches.



Access & Opportunity: A multimodal transportation system that expands access to opportunities and enhances connections for communities with limited transportation options.



Public involvement played a key role in shaping both the Lincoln 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.

Phases of Outreach

To inform the updates to the 2050 LRTP, Lincoln Mobility Plan, and Comprehensive Plan, the project team conducted three series of public engagement. **Phase 1** focused on understanding community values, transportation needs and priorities. Focus group discussions were convened 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 the fall of 2025, providing valuable insights on transportation challenges, opportunities, and priorities across Lincoln and Lancaster County. Input from these discussions helped shape the plans' goals, strategies, and recommendations. **Phase 2** incorporated the input from Phase 1 and presented draft recommendations to the public for review. Through in-person and online formats, the public was invited to prioritize proposed projects and weigh in on funding strategies. **Phase 3** shared the recommended plans and funding approach and offered opportunities for input and review prior to adoption.

Purpose of the Outreach: Create a shared vision for the future of transportation and mobility in Lincoln and Lancaster County.



Community Input

Focus groups, open houses, pop-up events, a community survey, and an online engagement tool generated thousands of interactions. These interactions provided valuable insight into transportation challenges, opportunities, and community priorities. Input played a critical role in guiding plan recommendations and establishing a transportation vision that reflects the needs of Lincoln and Lancaster County.

Recurring Themes

Input gathered through L RTP community engagement revealed several recurring themes:

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. Stakeholders 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 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 initiative.

Growth and Accessibility: Stakeholders emphasized the need for transportation investments that not only support future 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.

FUTURE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The LRTP is grounded in an understanding of the transportation challenges facing Lincoln and Lancaster County today and those expected to emerge over the next 25 years. Together, these challenges shaped the plan's goals, investment priorities, and recommendations. Key challenges include:

- **1 Keeping Up with Growth:** Long-term infrastructure investment across Lincoln and Lancaster County is necessary to accommodate increased travel demand, maintain acceptable travel times, and support safe and efficient movement across all modes of transportation.
- **2 Maintaining Streets and Bridges:** Proactive investment in Lincoln and Lancaster County streets and bridges is necessary to maintain infrastructure in good condition and avoid higher costs and closure risks associated with delayed improvements.
- **3 Improving Transportation Safety:** Targeted safety improvements are needed to reduce serious crashes, particularly near downtown and along corridors such as O Street, 13th Street, 27th Street, and 48th Street, with attention to people walking, biking, and using transit.
- **4 Maintaining Reliable Travel on Key Corridors:** Investments in Lincoln's key corridors are needed to manage growing congestion and maintain reliable travel times, particularly along O Street, Cornhusker Highway, 27th Street, 84th Street, Highway 77, and I-80 interchanges.
- **5 Expanding Transportation Access:** Reliable transportation options are needed across the community to provide access to jobs, schools, healthcare, and other important destinations.
- **6 Connecting the Bicycle Network:** Closing network gaps and improving challenging crossings are needed to create a more continuous, connected citywide system of trails and bikeways.
- **7 Making Short Trips Easier Without a Car:** Improvements to sidewalks, arterial crossings, rail crossings, and other barriers are needed to make walking and biking safer and more comfortable for short trips throughout the community.
- **8 Improving Transit Connectivity and Flexibility:** Improvements to the transit network are needed to provide more convenient cross-town travel and connections while reducing travel times and inconvenient transfers.
- **9 Improving First- and Last-Mile Transit Connections:** Safe and convenient connections to StarTran stops are needed. Some StarTran stops are not as easily reached using other modes.
- **10 Improving Rail Crossings:** Improvements at rail crossings are needed to reduce delays and safety risks, particularly at high-impact locations such as 33rd Street and Cornhusker Highway.



Between 2027 and 2050, approximately \$5.9 billion in transportation revenues can reasonably be expected for roadway, transit, active transportation, and mobility investments throughout the Lincoln metropolitan area.

FUNDING OUTLOOK

Many federal, state, local, and private revenue sources fund the transportation projects and programs included in the LRTP, such as:

- City Wheel Tax
- Lincoln on the Move ¼ cent sales tax
- General Revenues (Lincoln and Lancaster County)
- Arterial and Trail Impact Fees
- Gambling and Keno funds
- Railroad Transportation Safety District (RTSD) funds
- Highway Allocation Funds (gas tax)
- Federal Surface Transportation Block Grant Program
- Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)
- Federal Funds Purchase Program
- Directed funding (Earmarks)
- State Train Mile Tax
- Federal Transit Administration funds
- Transit fares, advertising, UNL contract
- Transportation Alternatives Set Aside
- Lower Platte South Natural Resources District
- Private contributions



Flexible Funding

The 2050 LRTP forecasts approximately \$5.9 billion in transportation revenue through 2050. Approximately two-thirds of this funding is either committed to specific projects and ongoing programs or restricted by federal, state, or local funding requirements. In addition, the first four years of the plan (2027–2030) are programmed through the MPO’s adopted Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), leaving approximately \$1.9 billion in flexible funding available to support new transportation investments between 2031 and 2050.

Of the available flexible funding, approximately \$1.62 billion is allocated to projects within the city of Lincoln, while approximately \$285 million is available for Lancaster County projects. Consistent with the previous Lincoln LRTP, the plan recommends maintaining the existing 70 percent (Lincoln) / 30 percent (Lancaster County) allocation of Surface Transportation Block Grant funds. This approach provides federal funding for priority projects within the urban area, supports improvements in developing areas that are expected to be annexed into the city, and maintains funding for critical transportation improvements in rural Lancaster County.

Funding Strategy

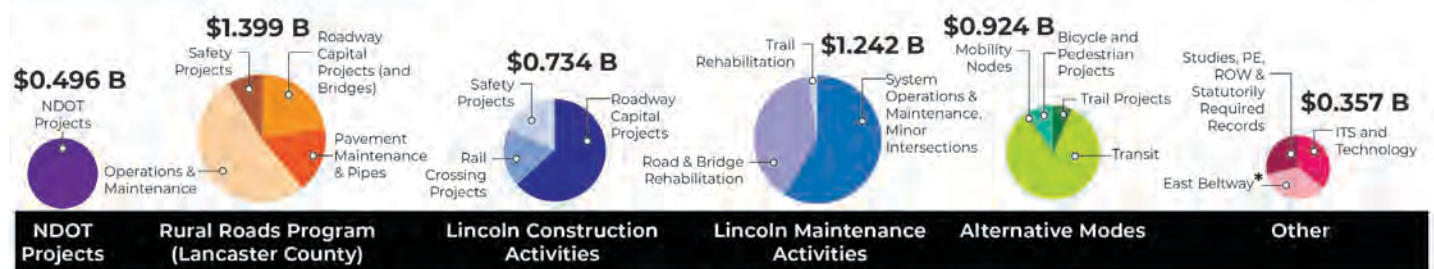
Because transportation needs continue to outpace available funding, the L RTP establishes a strategic investment approach that balances system preservation, safety, mobility, and targeted system expansion. Informed by technical analysis and extensive public and stakeholder input, the recommended funding strategy prioritizes investments that preserve the existing transportation system while advancing the community's highest transportation priorities within available funding.



The plan recognizes the importance of maintaining and operating the existing transportation system, along with making strategic, incremental investments that improve safety, expand travel options, and support future growth. The recommended funding strategy includes:

- Continued emphasis on preservation through investment in roadway, bridge, and trail rehabilitation to protect existing infrastructure.
- Incremental increases in funding for safety to address high-crash locations and improve safety for all transportation users.
- Expanded investment in multimodal transportation, including transit, trails, bicycle and pedestrian projects, and the new Mobility Nodes program identified in the Lincoln Mobility Plan.
- Continued support for strategic roadway improvements, including key capital projects, operational improvements, and regional mobility initiatives.
- Positioning the East Beltway for future implementation through increased local investment from both Lancaster County and the City of Lincoln, demonstrating regional commitment while leveraging future state and federal funding opportunities.

\$5.15 B in Revenue Forecasts (2031-2050)



* East Beltway funding represents an initial investment from both the City of Lincoln and Lancaster County toward advancing the project; additional funding will be needed for full design and construction.



Beyond the recommended funding allocations, the L RTP proposes two key policy recommendations to strengthen implementation of the plan:

Implement a Complete Streets Funding Policy for Roadway Capital Projects: A minimum of three percent (3%) of the total street improvement Project cost shall be allocated to the installation of new multimodal infrastructure within the Project limits. The percentage calculation may be made, if necessary, as an average across projects annually or during the five (5) years following adoption of the L RTP. Eligible multimodal infrastructure includes, but is not limited to, sidewalks, shared-use paths, bicycle lanes, separated bicycle facilities, pedestrian crossings, curb ramps, pedestrian refuge islands, traffic control devices that improve pedestrian or bicycle safety, transit stops and passenger amenities, and other facilities that improve access and mobility for pedestrians, bicyclists, or transit users. Expenditures for the repair, replacement, or reconstruction of existing multimodal infrastructure shall not count toward this minimum requirement unless they result in the addition of new multimodal facilities or a measurable increase in multimodal capacity, connectivity, or accessibility.

Establish an Annual Bicycle and Pedestrian Project Funding Pool: Establish a dedicated annual funding program for standalone bicycle and pedestrian projects that are not directly tied to roadway capital improvements. This program would provide a predictable source of funding for smaller-scale projects that improve safety, connectivity, and accessibility.

Increasing Construction Costs. A project that costs \$10 million today will cost \$15 million in 2040, and more than \$21 million in 2050—more than double the current cost.* Transportation revenues, however, are projected to grow at only about 80 percent of the rate of construction cost inflation, making it increasingly difficult for available funding to keep pace with project costs.

*Assumes a 5 percent annual inflation in the first two years and 3 percent annually thereafter, consistent with recent trends. Transportation revenues are projected to increase by approximately 2.5 percent per year.

FISCALLY CONSTRAINED PLAN

Although available funding is insufficient to address all identified transportation needs, the recommended funding strategy maximizes available resources by prioritizing investments that preserve the transportation system, improve safety and mobility, and support future growth. The following pages highlight the projects and initiatives that can be advanced with anticipated funding through 2050.

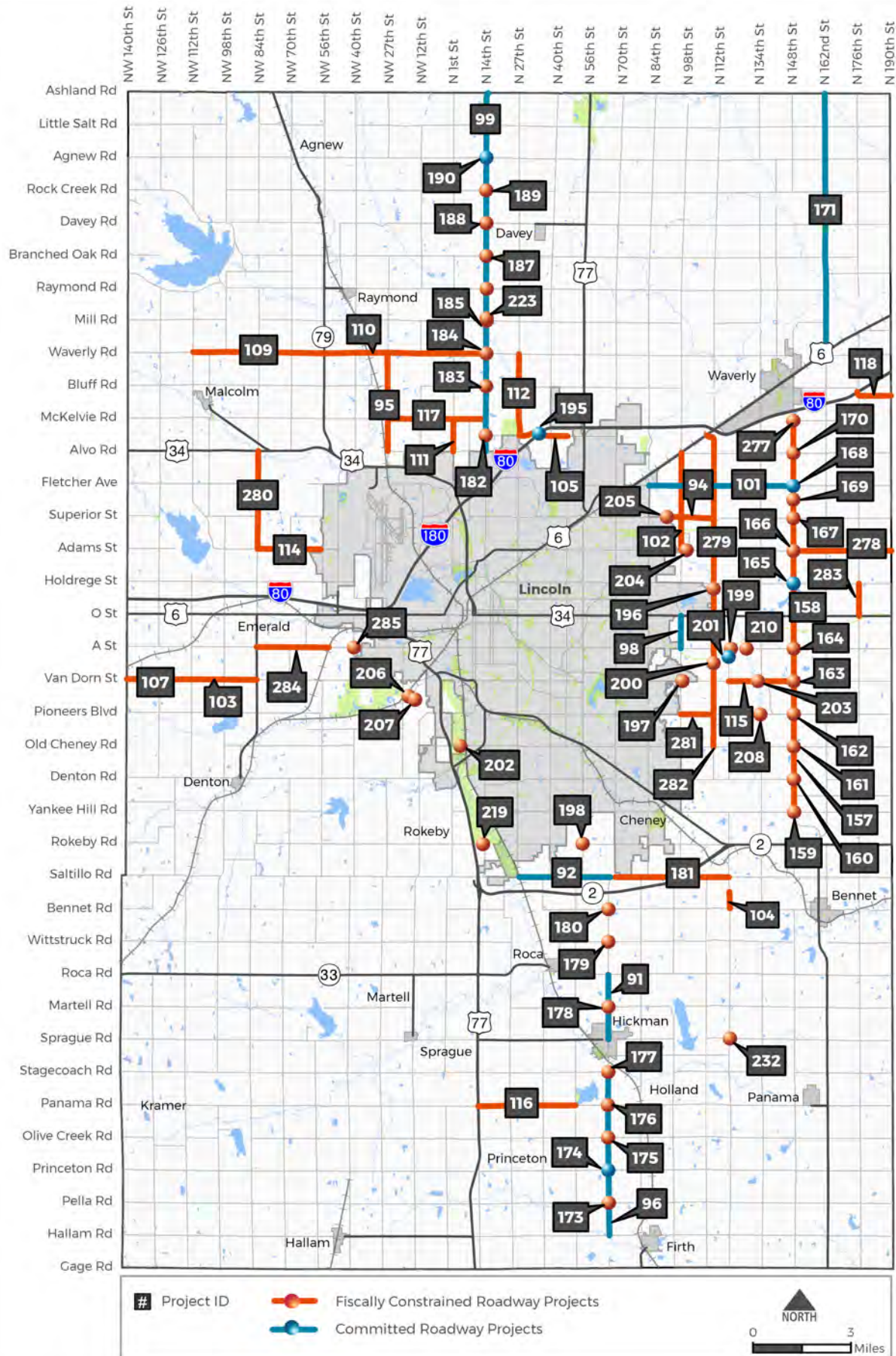
NDOT Highway Program

The recommended funding strategy allocates approximately \$496.4 million to NDOT highway projects within the Lincoln metropolitan area. This funding supports four priority projects identified by NDOT, including continued investment in asset preservation and strategic improvements to key Interstate and US Highway corridors. Together, these projects will enhance regional mobility, improve safety, and maintain the long-term performance of the state transportation system.

Lancaster County Rural Roads Program

The recommended funding strategy provides approximately \$1.40 billion for Lancaster County's Rural Roads Program, including \$315.2 million for roadway and bridge capital projects, \$231.2 million for pavement maintenance and drainage improvements, \$734.2 million for operations and maintenance, and \$118.3 million for safety projects. The allocation fully funds all 69 identified roadway and bridge capital projects, in addition to the 13 projects already programmed in the TIP. The dedicated safety program will provide funding to implement recommendations from the Lancaster County Safety Action Plan, which is currently under development. Together, these investments will preserve and improve the County's rural transportation network, as well as enhance safety and support continued agricultural, residential, and economic growth. Refer to the map on page 13 for the locations of the funded capital projects.

Lancaster County Funded Capital Projects





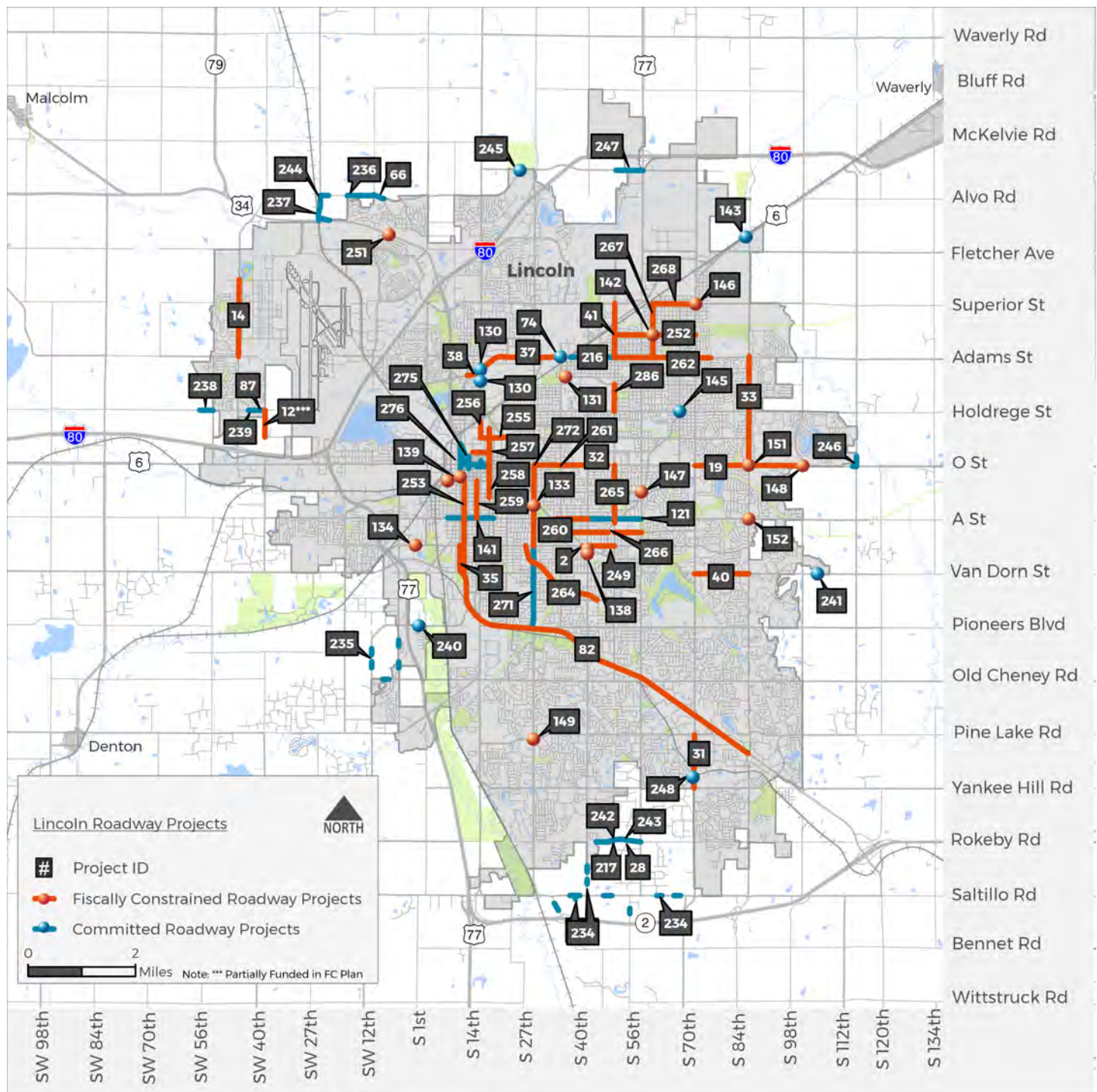
Lincoln Construction Activities

The recommended funding strategy allocates approximately \$734 million to Lincoln Construction Activities, including \$466.6 million for roadway capital projects, \$134.2 million for rail crossing improvements, and \$133.4 million for safety projects. This funding supports the construction of 43 priority roadway capital projects identified through the LRTP, in addition to the 25 projects already programmed in the TIP. The dedicated safety program is a new investment category that advances the recommendations of the Lincoln Vision Zero Action Plan by funding improvements that reduce crashes and create a safer transportation system for all users. Refer to the map on page 15 for the locations of the funded capital projects.

Lincoln Maintenance Activities

The recommended funding strategy allocates approximately \$1.24 billion to Lincoln Maintenance Activities, including \$728.7 million for system operations and maintenance, \$482.9 million for roadway and bridge rehabilitation, and \$30.2 million for trail rehabilitation. These investments ensure continued operation and preservation of the transportation system through activities such as snow removal, pavement maintenance, traffic operations, bridge rehabilitation, and replacement of aging infrastructure. The plan also includes an increased investment in trail rehabilitation to address the growing need to reconstruct and maintain Lincoln's aging trail network, helping preserve this important community asset.

Lincoln Funded Capital Projects



Alternative Modes

The recommended funding strategy allocates approximately \$924 million to alternative transportation modes, including \$60.0 million for trail projects, \$774.4 million for transit, \$1.6 million for mobility nodes, and \$88.3 million for bicycle and pedestrian projects. Compared to previous LRTPs, the recommended funding strategy includes targeted increases across all four programs to expand transportation choices and improve multimodal connectivity throughout the community.

Trails. The recommended funding supports construction of 25 priority trail projects, in addition to the 4

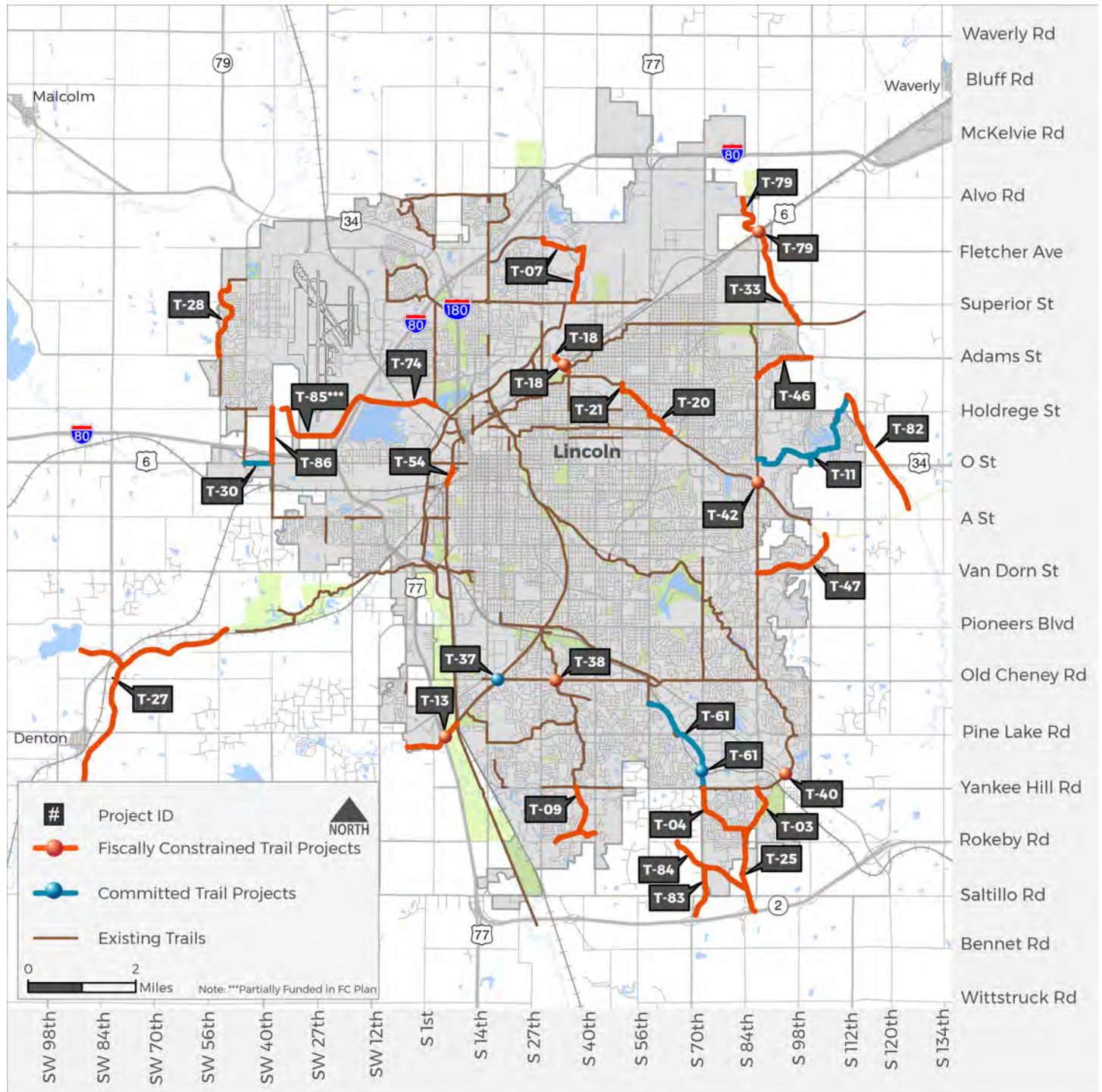
projects already programmed in the TIP (refer to map on next page). These investments will continue to expand Lincoln's trail network, improve connectivity between neighborhoods and destinations, and provide additional opportunities for walking and bicycling.

Transit. The recommended funding supports continuation of StarTran's existing transit services, ongoing maintenance and replacement of vehicles and passenger amenities, and additional funding to implement service enhancements identified through the Transit Development Plan. Potential improvements include expanded Sunday service and increased service frequency on select routes.

Mobility Nodes and On-Street Bicycle and Pedestrian Projects. The LRTP establishes Mobility Nodes as a new investment category to implement recommendations from the Lincoln Mobility Plan. Mobility nodes are strategically located places where people can conveniently connect between transportation modes, such as walking, bicycling, transit, and shared mobility services. Together with increased funding for bicycle and pedestrian projects, these investments will improve first- and last-mile connections, close gaps in the multimodal network, and make it easier for people to safely and conveniently access destinations without relying solely on a personal vehicle.



Capital Trail Projects





Conceptual image of a neighborhood bikeway recommended in the Mobility Plan.

Other Transportation Programs

The recommended funding strategy allocates approximately \$357 million to support technology, long-range project implementation, and essential transportation planning activities. These investments improve the efficiency of the transportation system, advance major regional initiatives, and ensure projects remain ready for implementation as funding opportunities arise.

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) and Technology. The recommended funding allocates \$130.0 million to ITS and technology improvements, including traffic signal modernization, connected transportation technologies, and other operational improvements that enhance safety, improve traffic flow, and maximize the performance of the existing transportation system.

East Beltway. The recommended funding allocates \$126.1 million to advance implementation of the East Beltway, including approximately \$90 million from Lancaster County, \$17.5 million from the City of Lincoln, and \$18.2 million from Lancaster County's Keno/Gambling revenues. This increased local commitment reflects growing regional support for the project and provides funding for continued corridor preservation, environmental review, design, and early implementation activities. Although the East Beltway is currently estimated to cost approximately \$775 million, these local investments demonstrate regional commitment and position the project to compete for future state and federal funding needed for construction.

Studies, Preliminary Engineering, Right-of-Way, and Statutorily Required Records.

The recommended funding allocates \$101.3 million to support planning studies, project development, right-of-way activities, and other essential functions that ensure transportation projects remain ready for implementation as funding opportunities arise.

LOOKING AHEAD

The recommended funding strategy provides a balanced, financially constrained approach that both preserves the existing transportation system and makes strategic investments in safety, multimodal transportation, and regional mobility. By prioritizing the community's highest transportation needs, the LRTP advances projects and programs that will improve safety, reliability, connectivity, and quality of life through 2050.

While the recommended funding strategy addresses many of the region's highest priorities, additional transportation needs remain beyond anticipated revenues. The LRTP, therefore, includes an Illustrative Plan that identifies roadway, transit, trail, and other transportation improvements that are desirable but cannot be funded within the planning horizon. These projects provide a vision for future investment opportunities and position the region to pursue additional state, federal, and local funding as it becomes available.

Next Steps

Next Steps

Following adoption of the LRTP, the local governments will coordinate with state and federal partners to carry out the plan. While the LRTP covers a 20-year horizon, the plan is reviewed and monitored regularly as projects advance toward implementation. The MPO supports and encourages early and continuous participation and input by the public to the planning process.

In addition to the LRTP, the MPO produces a shorter-range Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and a Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The MPO generates other planning reports and engages in activities such as transportation data collection, safety promotion and public participation efforts. For questions or comments, please contact the Lincoln MPO:

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