

# **BRIDGING THE GAP:** *Multimodal Connections over the Oklahoma River*

Oklahoma Department of Transportation  
**Active Transportation Infrastructure  
Investment Program Grant Application**

June 17, 2024



**OKLAHOMA**  
Transportation

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## Project Description

Since 2016, residents, stakeholder, planning studies have identified the need for a multimodal bridge adjacent to the I-35 bridges over the Oklahoma River in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

**Bridging the Gap: Multimodal Connections over the Oklahoma River** is a marquis project in Oklahoma City (OKC) that will have tremendous community impacts to historically disadvantaged communities. The Project features a new shared use multimodal bridge which will be constructed west of the I-35 southbound bridge. The multimodal bridge will connect to the recently constructed Oklahoma River Trail system on both sides of the Oklahoma River and provide safe active transportation connections to work, schools, housing, entertainment, and cultural opportunities in downtown OKC.

Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) is requesting \$10,850,000 in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program (ATIIP) funds to construct a new multimodal bridge west of the I-35 southbound bridge in the urban area of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The Project cost totals \$21,696,120. In addition to the \$10,850,000 requested in ATIIP funds, ODOT will contribute 50 percent or \$10,846,120 of state funds ([Funding Commitment Letter](#)). More detailed budget information is included in the **Grant Funds, Sources, and Uses of all Project Funding** section.

ODOT is dedicated to supporting a safe and effective transportation system that provides multimodal opportunities for active transportation users of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. Consisting of sidewalks, bikeways, multimodal trails, and other infrastructure, Oklahoma's growing active transportation system provides and promotes health and safety for users which benefits Oklahoma's environment and economy. Increased access to multimodal transportation makes Oklahoma a better place to live, work, and visit. In 2022/2023 ODOT worked with stakeholders to create the state's first [Active Transportation Plan](#) with statewide policies and resources that will support and guide local communities' active transportation efforts. In consultation with stakeholders in the Project area, ODOT identified a terrific opportunity to build a multimodal bridge west of the I-35 southbound bridge.

The multimodal bridge project is a priority project for ODOT. If awarded ATIIP funding it will be included in the 8-year Construction Work Plan (CWP) and Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and scheduled for construction in 2027. The multimodal bridge is part of a larger ODOT effort to also improve accessibility and mobility over the Oklahoma River by replacing the I-35 bridges which will benefit passenger, freight, and transit users as illustrated in **Figure 1**. However, this application funding request is for the separate multimodal bridge project which is illustrated in **Figure 1**.

## Project Location

As shown in **Figure 2**, the Project is located 1.5 miles east and 0.5 miles south of downtown Oklahoma City and is in the Census-designated Urbanized Area of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Oklahoma City, located in central Oklahoma, is the state capital, the state's largest city, and the 20<sup>th</sup> largest city in the US. There are numerous employers, restaurants, parks, entertainment districts, and neighborhoods including Bricktown, the historically Black South of 8<sup>th</sup> Community,

the primarily Hispanic Capitol Hill District, and the Innovation District which will be accessible via the Project, as shown in **Figure 2**.

Figure 1: Multimodal Bridge and I-35 Bridges



Figure 2: Project Location and Accessible Destination Highlights



Source: Google Maps



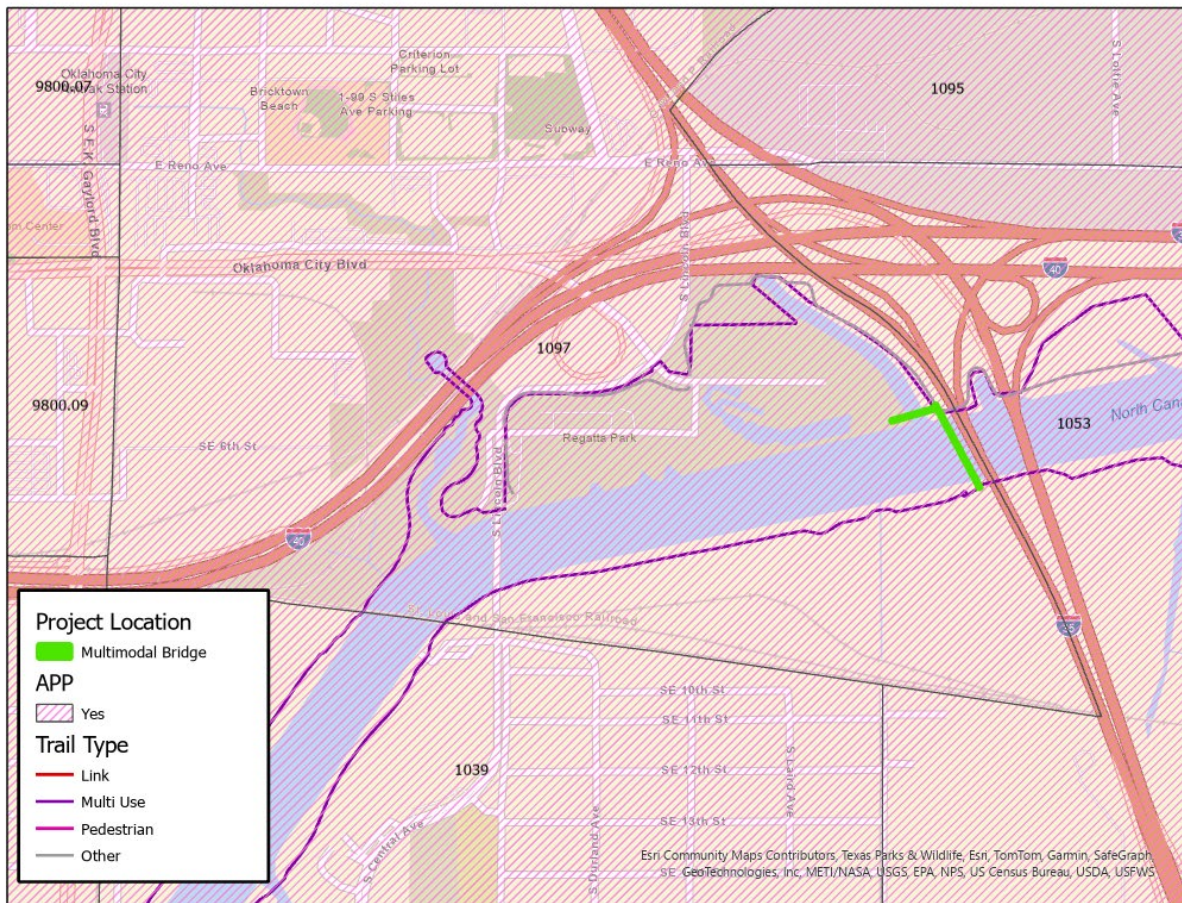
### Areas of Persistent Poverty

Based on USDOT’s Transportation Disadvantaged Census Tract mapping tool and as shown in **Figure 3**, the multimodal bridge is in Census Tract 1097 which is designated as an Area of Persistent Poverty. While the multimodal bridge is fully in Census Tract 1097, it is directly adjacent to the boundary with Census Tract 1053 which is both an Area of Persistent Poverty and a Historically Disadvantaged Community. While the bridge is not located in Census Tract 1053, it will directly benefit residents in this community.

### Federally Designated Opportunity Zones

Based on data provided by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the White House Opportunity and Revitalization Council, the Project location is in Opportunity Zone 40109105300. There are also 11 Opportunities Zones in downtown Oklahoma City just north of the Project area. Also present in the Project area are Oklahoma City Empowerment Zones, which are part of an economic development initiative created by the Department of Housing and Urban development (HUD) to facilitate self-sustaining, long-term revitalization.

*Figure 3: Areas of Persistent Poverty*



Source: Grant Project Location Verification Tool<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://maps.dot.gov/BTS/GrantProjectLocationVerification/> Persistent Poverty Census Tracts

## Project Parties

The Project is led by ODOT. As a state transportation agency, ODOT plans, constructs, and maintains the highway system in Oklahoma and manages a large portfolio of Federal funds that are programmed within its Eight-Year Construction Work Plan. While ODOT will lead the Project, there is significant support from local, regional, and Tribal officials as evidenced from the following [letters of support](#) from the City of Oklahoma City, Greater OKC Chamber of Commerce, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, OKC Riverfront Redevelopment Authority, Riversport, Oklahoma Bicycle Society, EMBARK (Oklahoma City transit agency), American Canoe Association, and Skyline Urban Ministry.

## Grant Funds, Sources, and Uses of all Project Funding

ODOT is requesting \$10,850,000 in ATIIP funds to contribute to the construction of the multimodal bridge and connections to the Oklahoma City Trails on both sides of the Oklahoma River. ODOT intends to utilize \$10,846,120 in state dollars to fund the remainder of this Project. The future eligible cost for the multimodal bridge and trail connections covered in this ATIIP grant application totals \$21,696,120.

Cost estimates were developed by ODOT based on estimated quantities and recent similar projects. **Table 1** includes a 30 percent preliminary design estimate for the Project with the cost breakdown of the anticipated components, which does not include the \$100,000 of incurred costs. A 30 percent contingency was used to develop the Project budget. **Table 2** shows how non-federal (state) and ATIIP will be allocated to the budget. As noted in Executive Director Gatz's [funding commitment letter](#), the non-federal sources will be provided by the State of Oklahoma. ODOT will provide a total of \$10,846,210 to be used for construction. As shown in **Table 3**, 100 percent of the Project is Census Tract 1097, which is an Area of Persistent Poverty.

Design and environmental costs for all components of the Project will be covered 100 percent by ODOT's state transportation funds. ODOT will use 50 percent ATIIP and 50 percent state funds to construct the Project, which exceeds the statutory cost-sharing/matching requirements of 20 percent. The source of the \$10,846,120 in non-federal funds (state funds) is the Rebuilding Oklahoma Access and Driver Safety (ROADS) Fund created by Title 69, Section 1521, Oklahoma Statutes. This state funding has no limit or conditions to satisfy.

Future maintenance of the multimodal path will be shared between ODOT and the City of Oklahoma City. ODOT and City of Oklahoma City have successfully negotiated maintenance agreements on previous projects and intend to execute an agreement with the City of Oklahoma City to maintain the multimodal bridge. ODOT is responsible for maintenance for on-system facilities throughout the state. As such, ODOT has a \$500 million 4-Year Asset Preservation plan which is both federally and state funded to address pavement and bridge condition throughout the state. ODOT and the City of Oklahoma City have dedicated funds for maintenance and ODOT has an approved Transportation Asset Management Plan (TAMP). The TAMP dedicates funding to improving surface conditions, rehabilitating bridges, and providing access improvements. ODOT and the City of Oklahoma City have successfully negotiated

maintenance agreements on previous projects and intend to execute an agreement with the City of Oklahoma City to maintain the multimodal bridge.

*Table 1: Multimodal Bridge Project Budget*

Description	Total Cost
Approach Slab	\$43,500
Concrete Parapet	\$178,500
Structural Steel	\$6,900,000
Stainless Steel Fixed Bearing Assembly	\$22,500
Stainless Steel Expansion Bearing Assembly	
Class AA Concrete	\$364,000
Class A Concrete	\$231,000
Epoxy Coated Reinforcing Steel	\$389,500
Drilled Shafts	\$200,000
Type 1-A Plain Riprap	\$48,000
MSE Retaining Wall (North Bank)	\$3,400,000
Multimodal Trail (North Bank)	\$244,000
Multimodal Ramp (North Bank)	\$650,000
Multimodal Trail (South Bank)	\$97,600
Multimodal Ramp (South Bank)	\$650,000
Multimodal Ramp (South Bank OKANA Extension)	\$109,800
Handrailing	\$84,000
Construction Total	\$13,612,400
30% Contingency	\$4,083,720
Bridge Aesthetics	\$4,000,000
<b>Multimodal Bridge Total</b>	<b>\$21,696,120</b>

*Table 2: Multimodal Bridge Project Funding Sources*

Funding Source	Multimodal Bridge	Total Funding
	Funding Amount	
ATIIP Funds	\$10,850,000	\$10,850,000
Other Federal Funds	\$0	\$0
Non-Federal Funds	\$10,846,120	\$10,846,120
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$21,696,120</b>	<b>\$21,696,120</b>



*Table 3: Multimodal Bridge Project Budget by 2020 Census Tracts*

2020 Census Tract	Project Costs per Census Tract
1097	\$21,696,120
	<b>Total Project Cost: \$21,696,120</b>

*Table 4: Multimodal Bridge Project Budget by Urban and Rural*

Urban/Rural	Project Costs
Urban	\$21,696,120
Rural	\$0
	<b>Total Project Cost: \$21,696,120</b>

## Merit Criteria

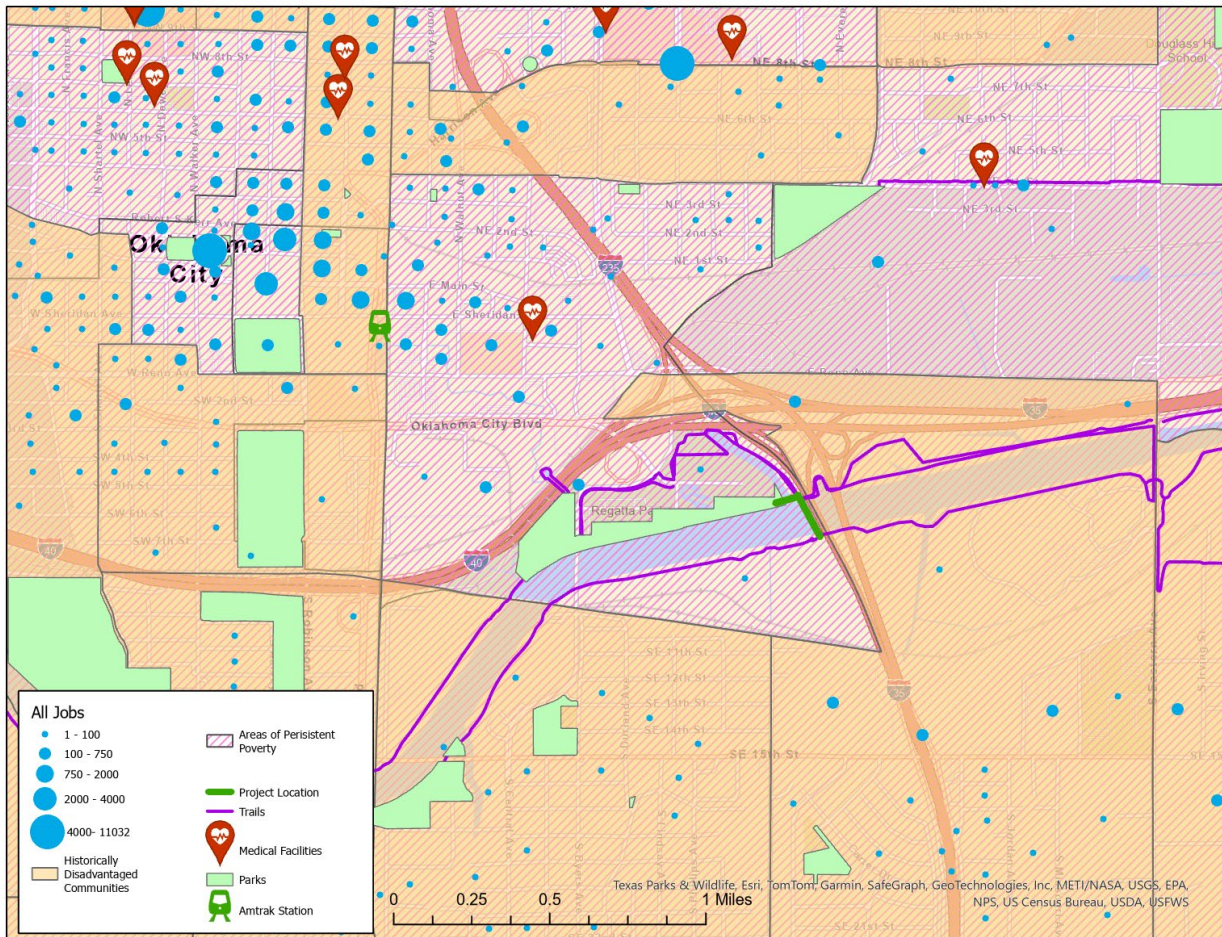
### Criterion #1: Mobility and Community Connectivity

Residents and visitors in Oklahoma City currently rely on a network of trails, bike lanes, sidewalks, and transit to access jobs and other important destinations without the use of a personal vehicle. While local and statewide planning have supported and expanded these critical networks, important gaps remain, particularly safe and comfortable access over barriers including the Oklahoma River. Thus, the Project has been identified among the top six unfunded pedestrian bridge project needs in Oklahoma City’s most recent *bikewalkokc*, updated in 2024. The Project will provide a key connection in the active transportation network to improve access to jobs, schools, and key destinations as well as the transit system.

Currently, residents south of the Oklahoma River must primarily rely on vehicles to directly access opportunities, jobs, parks, medical facilities, and other amenities and destinations which are concentrated North of the Oklahoma River less than a mile (as the crow flies) away. When the Project is built, those residents will be able to safely and comfortably access jobs, medical facilities, parks, Amtrak station, transit center, and other destinations more directly through affordable active transportation modes.

The Project will connect the Oklahoma River trails on the south side of the river with the recreation amenities and job opportunities in the Boathouse District and the Bricktown entertainment district (including a range of hospitality, retail, fitness, food and beverage, and entertainment job opportunities). This Bricktown River Walk Park has walking and biking trails that lead from the Project location, through Bricktown to OKC’s bustling downtown, passing by a light rail stop and the city’s Amtrak station. This Project, therefore, improves walkability and the accessibility of a growing area of OKC for pedestrians and bikers. As shown in **Figure 4** the multimodal bridge provides a new, safe, and accessible pedestrian and bike connection to the employment centers in downtown OKC.

Figure 4. Employment, Medical Facilities and Parks



Source: US Census Bureau, OnTheMap, 2020 total jobs<sup>2</sup>

## Criterion #2: Community Support

The Project has been identified among the top six unfunded pedestrian bridge project needs in OKC’s most recent *bikewalkokc* active transportation plan. In addition, the Project has been under development for several years as part of a broader study of the area and the I-35 bridges which also cross the Oklahoma River near the Project location. Key community members have been consistently involved in the project’s development and the community’s input directly influenced ODOT’s decision to develop the multimodal bridge as a standalone structure, fully separated from the I-35 bridges and directly connected to Oklahoma City’s existing active transportation network.

ODOT’s engagement on the larger I-35 bridge replacement project has been ongoing and extensive, and community input has significantly impacted the Project plans as summarized below.

<sup>2</sup> <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>

- **August 2016:** ODOT commissioned an Interchange Capacity Study. As part of the study, a multimodal pathway crossing the Oklahoma River was introduced as a design element within one of the concept alternatives. The initial multimodal pathway concept utilized a shared substructure of one of the I-35 bridges.
- **October 2017 – November 2022:** ODOT conducted a variety of public and stakeholder meetings to evaluate the I-35 bridge crossing and options for active transportation connections on one of the I-35 bridges.
- **May 2023:** ODOT held a stakeholder meeting with Oklahoma City Leadership and the Chickasaw Nation to discuss the multimodal bridge form and aesthetics. The result of this meeting was a recommendation to develop a multimodal bridge as a separate structure from I-35 bridges.
- **June 2023:** ODOT met with the Oklahoma City Engineering Department to discuss the multimodal bridge.

In addition, Oklahoma City's *bikewalkokc* plan also identified the Project as a top priority. The plan development process included a range of community and stakeholder engagement, including through its stakeholder advisory group. The stakeholder advisory group for *bikewalkokc* includes organizations representing a range of local communities and interests including the Institute for Quality Communities, the Neighborhood Alliance, OKC Public Schools, as well as community and stakeholder experts and a range of elected and appointed officials representing several wards in OKC. Key engagement activities included:

- **January 2021:** *bikewalkokc* advisory group meeting.
- **February 2021:** *bikewalkokc* Advisory Group requested that the neighborhood south and west of the I-35 Oklahoma River bridges be added as "Pedestrian Priority Area".
- **May 2021:** *bikewalkokc* advisory group meeting.
- **Winter 2021-2022:** Public survey conducted, and data collected.
- **May 2023:** The Advisory Group added Project location included as an area for a pedestrian bridge.
- **September 2024:** *bikewalkokc* public comment period.

Additionally, the Project has dedicated support from the Chickasaw Nation, the First Americans Museum, and OKANA as demonstrated by their repeated support of similar funding grant applications.

### **Criterion #3: Commitment to Increasing Walking, Biking, and Other Types of Active Transportation**

This multimodal bridge forms an integral part of Oklahoma's and Oklahoma City's commitment to increasing walking, biking, and other types of active transportation. The multimodal bridge also uses the **Safe Systems Approach** of anticipating human error and subsequently separating vulnerable road users from vehicular traffic on a separate facility.

In 2017, Oklahoma City voters approved bond propositions and sales tax initiatives, together known as the Better Streets, Safer City initiatives. These projects include sidewalk and trail construction, street enhancements, and bicycle lanes. Many of these projects are outlined in *bikewalkokc*, which identifies safe crossings of the Oklahoma River and particularly bicycle and



pedestrian bridges as priorities. *Bikewalkokc* also identifies the area directly south of the Project as the Southeast I-35 Pedestrian Priority Area (PPA) and the adjacent area as the Capitol Hill PPA, ranked second in priority among all PPAs in the city. The designation of a PPA involves programming sidewalk improvements (26.3 miles in the Southeast I-35 PPA and 14.6 miles in the Capitol Hill PPA), including an upgraded connection from SE 15<sup>th</sup> Street to the Oklahoma River trails and the new multimodal bridge.

“To have the city we all want, we have to prioritize pedestrians and cyclists in ways that we did not for a long time. There are a lot of residents and potential residents who want those options, and it is important that we provide them... We will ultimately be a city that offers options and meets the needs of pedestrians and cyclists”.

- David Holt, Mayor of Oklahoma City

Beginning in 2022, ODOT’s Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) established a goal of an annual 2% reduction in fatalities for the next five years, the first step in its goal of achieving zero roadway deaths and serious injuries together on all roads and for all road users across Oklahoma. This Project is a crucial step in achieving that goal, particularly for the disadvantaged communities living south of the Oklahoma River.

#### **Criterion #4: Financial Completeness**

ODOT will use 50 percent ATIIP and 50 percent state funds to construct the Project, which exceeds the statutory cost-sharing/matching requirements of 20 percent. As noted in Executive Director Gatz’s [Financial Commitment Letter](#), ODOT will provide \$10,846,120 in non-federal funds for this Project. The source of the state funds is the Rebuilding Oklahoma Access and Driver Safety (ROADS) Fund created by Title 69, Section 1521, Oklahoma Statutes. This state funding has no limit or conditions to satisfy. ODOT recognizes the need for contingency funding and the Project budget includes a 30% contingency to cover unanticipated cost increases.

#### **Criterion #5: Equitable Development**

The primary purpose of the multimodal connection across the Oklahoma River is to remove barriers and reconnect communities. This Project sits on the edge of three census tracts, connecting Census Tracts 1039 and 1053 on the south side of the Oklahoma River with Census Tract 1097 on the north side. Both Census Tracts 1039 and 1053 are residential and are Justice40 disadvantaged tracts as defined by the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) and Areas of Persistent Poverty. Tract 1053 is also a Historically Disadvantaged Community. Tract 1097 is an Area of Persistent Poverty. The populations of both Tracts 1039 and 1053 are over 60 percent Hispanic/Latino, compared to a countywide average of 18 percent and a statewide average of 11 percent. On the USDOT Equitable Transportation Community (ETC) Explorer, both Tracts 1039 and 1053 rank as disadvantaged for Climate and Disaster Risk Burden, Environmental Burden, and Social Vulnerability, while Tract 1039 ranks as disadvantaged for Transportation Insecurity, and Tract 1053 also ranks as disadvantaged for Health Vulnerability. Meanwhile, the CEJST identifies Tract 1053 as disadvantaged in health, housing, and transportation, while Tract 1039 is disadvantaged in health, housing, and workforce.



The multimodal bridge provides a new pedestrian and bicycle connection to the employment centers in downtown OKC. The multimodal bridge will connect the Oklahoma River trails on the south side of the river with the recreation amenities of the Boathouse District, as well as with the Bricktown River Walk Park. This park has walking and biking trails which lead to Oklahoma City's bustling downtown, passing by a light rail stop and the city's Amtrak station. This Project, therefore, provides increased affordable and accessible transportation choices for the disadvantaged communities south of the Oklahoma River, improving walkability and the accessibility of a growing area of Oklahoma City for pedestrians and bicyclists.

The multimodal bridges will increase affordable and healthy transportation choices in the Project area and reduce transportation cost burdens by reducing congestion and expanding active transportation options. The multimodal bridge may potentially help reduce auto dependence for residents who do not own a vehicle in this underserved community. The Project will provide a new accessible active transportation connection between two brownfield grant redevelopment sites which now feature green space and trails on the banks of the Oklahoma River: the Riversport Rapids in Regatta Park and the First Americans Museum (FAM). The First Americans Museum is a one-of-a-kind center highlighting the trials and triumphs of the Indigenous People of North America. Its unique landscaping and architecture provide a place of cultural history and a sanctuary for learning and solitude. The Project will provide further access to free and accessible green space surrounding the First Americans Museum and the OKANA development, the north and south Oklahoma River trail system, as well as Regatta Park and the Bricktown River Walk Park on the north side of the Oklahoma River. The Bricktown River Walk Park provides green space and access to the Bricktown District, an entertainment and dining district reconstructed from an underused warehouse district.

In addition, the Project provides access to Skyline, a nonprofit organization located a mile southwest of the bridge in one of Oklahoma's largest food deserts, which provided food to over 58 thousand individuals last year. Katy Leffel, Skyline's CEO, reported that, **"Many of our patrons walk and bike to reach our facility. Expanded infrastructure across the Oklahoma River would increase safety and access to the Skyline facility, thus helping tens of thousands of struggling Oklahomans reach essential food resources each year."**

This Project fills a major gap in OKC's active transportation network, particularly for disadvantaged communities. Most of the Oklahoma River Trails pass through disadvantaged areas, but there is currently no bicycle connection across the Oklahoma River that is not in mixed traffic with motor vehicles. The closest crossing is more than six miles away, over 30 minutes by bike, at South Meridian Avenue. The bridge will also create a safer alternative for vulnerable road users from disadvantaged communities. As ODOT's *Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessment* points out, 52% of pedestrians and 51% of bicycle fatalities and serious injuries are in disadvantaged areas, which have only 34% of the state's population.

## **Criterion #6: Other DOT Goals and Priorities**

### **Safety**

Today, residents and visitors in Oklahoma City who wish to cross the Oklahoma River to access opportunities, entertainment, and amenities near the existing I-35 bridges have few safe bicycle or pedestrian crossing options as noted throughout this application. According to a 2022 Smart

Growth America analysis, Oklahoma ranks 15<sup>th</sup> worst state and OKC is 33<sup>rd</sup> worst metro for pedestrian safety.<sup>3</sup> There have been multiple pedestrian and cyclist fatalities and serious injuries on the existing I-35 bridges, even though pedestrians are not permitted, which may indicate demand for a safe crossing for active transportation users near the interstate bridges.

Currently, residents and visitors who want to access both OKC downtown amenities and opportunities, as well as the new developments and attractions south of the Oklahoma River have limited safe and direct active transportation options. Residents and visitors who wish to use active transportation to access opportunities in OKC's downtown core and along both sides of the Oklahoma River must travel to the closest existing facilities on South Lincoln Boulevard or First Americans Boulevard to cross. South Lincoln Boulevard, which is over .6 miles or 1 km west of the Project location, is a four-lane undivided bridge with minimal shoulders; the bridge has a sidewalk, but it is narrow and minimally separated from vehicular traffic (**Figure 5**). First Americans Boulevard is one mile or 1.6 km west of the Project location and has a similar design (**Figure 6**).

*Figure 5: S. Lincoln Boulevard Sidewalk (facing North)*



*Source: Google Street View, August 2023*

Constructing a multimodal bridge across the Oklahoma River will protect non-motorized travelers from safety risks. ODOT recorded nine fatal or serious injury collisions involving pedestrians or pedal cycle users on the I-35 bridges illegally crossing the Oklahoma River between January 1, 2012, and December 31, 2021 (latest available data) as shown in **Table 5**. The two pedestrian fatalities represent 10% of all fatalities (20) in the area.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design/>

*Table 5. Types of Collisions on the I-35 Bridges*

Type of Collision	Fatality	Injury	Property Damage	Total
Pedestrian	2	6		8
Pedal Cycle		1		1
<b>All Collisions</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>1,130</b>	<b>3,221</b>	<b>4,371</b>
<i>SOURCE: ODOT</i>				

*Figure 6: First Americans Boulevard Sidewalk (facing South)*



*Source: Google Street View, February 2024*

Although Interstates do not permit pedestrians and cyclists, the I-35/I-40 interchange has had nine collisions involving pedestrians or cyclists, two of which resulted in fatalities. With the newly constructed Oklahoma River trails along the north and south banks of the Oklahoma River, there is the potential for a greater number of pedestrians or cyclists trying to cross one of the I-35 bridges which could increase the number of collisions and fatalities. The Project would provide a safe connection for non-motorized travelers between the north and south sides of the Oklahoma River and would be the primary crossing within a mile of the current riverfront development at the First Americans Museum and Riversport development. The Project would help eliminate future pedestrian and cyclist crashes on the I-35 bridges.

## **Economic Competitiveness**

### **Facilitate Tourism Opportunities**

The Oklahoma River was dammed in 2004 as part of OKC’s first Metropolitan Area Projects (MAPS) capital improvement program for new and upgraded sports, recreation, entertainment, and cultural facilities. The \$54 million project, supported by a self-imposed sales tax increase, rejuvenated the dry riverbed of the former North Canadian River by creating a dam-controlled river segment flanked by landscaped recreation Oklahoma River trails that connect to the larger OKC Trails network. This transformative public investment led to the privately funded construction of the Chesapeake Boathouse in 2006. There are now numerous boathouses, including the University of Central Oklahoma Boathouse and the \$10 million Devon Boathouse which is home to the U.S. Rowing National High Performance Center.



The Project will include spectator viewing areas providing exceptional pedestrian-accessible observation opportunities for residents and visitors. The previous investments and the continued economic success of OKC will benefit from having a multimodal bridge over the Oklahoma River. Riversport has estimated the economic impact of the races announced through 2025 will exceed \$10 million, with each competition drawing 400 to 800 athletes from more than 60 countries for pre-event training weeks before the competitions. Executive Director Mike Knopp states, “Hosting international races at this level means that some athletes and coaches will move to OKC to live, work, and train ... You will also have officials, coaches, and family members as well as media. We will see the impact on our hotels, restaurants, transportation, tourism, and entertainment. That is not even considering the economic ripples that happen when a city is elevated like this on the world stage.”

The Project will provide access to OKC Parks Department’s Regatta Park on the north side of the Oklahoma River and will directly connect to OKC’s extensive bicycle and pedestrian recreational and transportation trail network illustrated in the Reduce VMT by Modal Shifts section.

### Promote Private Investment

The Chickasaw Nation is developing a \$300 million private [OKANA resort](#) next to the First Americans Museum on the downtown riverfront shore and adjacent to the Project (Figure 10). In addition to an 11-story, 404-room hotel riverfront hotel, the private resort will include a spa, outdoor adventure lagoon, indoor waterpark, gold center, conference space amphitheater, restaurants, Native American marketplace, and retail outlets. The Project will provide a direct walking or biking connection to and from downtown OKC and the OKANA Resort, which should increase tourism in downtown OKC and at the OKANA Resort.

The OKANA resort is a mixed-use development and is projected to have a \$97 million impact on OKC within one year of completion and a billion-dollar impact within the next decade. It is estimated that within the first decade, OKANA Resort will create 800 full-time jobs.

The Project will enhance tourism connectivity between downtown OKC and OKANA Resort.

*Figure 7. OKANA Resort Site and Rendering*



Source: United for Oklahoma

Project Area 

### Quality of Life

The Project will also provide a new affordable accessible active transportation connection between two brownfield grant redevelopment sites which now feature green space and trails on the banks of the Oklahoma River: the Riversport Rapids in Regatta Park and the First



Americans Museum. The First Americans Museum is a one-of-a-kind center highlighting the trials and triumphs of the Indigenous People of North America. Its unique landscaping and architecture provide a place of cultural history and a sanctuary for learning and solitude. The Project will provide further access to free and accessible green space surrounding the First Americans Museum and the OKANA development, the north and south Oklahoma River trails, as well as Regatta Park and the Bricktown River Walk Park on the north side of the Oklahoma River. The Bricktown River Walk Park provides green space and access to the Bricktown District, an entertainment and dining district reconstructed from an underused warehouse district. The multimodal bridge will enable residents and visitors to access jobs, healthcare, shopping, parks, and events on the Oklahoma River.

## **Project Readiness and Environmental Risk**

### **Technical Feasibility**

#### **Transportation Challenges**

There is a parallel effort to replace the I-35 bridges across the Oklahoma River which ODOT has been developing since 2016. Since the I-35 river bridge replacement project was first conceived and particularly during the stakeholder meetings in 2022, ODOT and its local partners and community stakeholders emphasized the need to address local and non-motorized transportation challenges. Currently, the Oklahoma River is a barrier for residents to access jobs, healthcare, shopping, and events on the Oklahoma River. Over 20 percent of households near the Project area do not have access to a vehicle and therefore cannot safely utilize the existing I-35 bridge crossing nearest their homes to access jobs, education, healthcare, and other opportunities in central Oklahoma City by non-motorized means. In parallel, pedestrian and bike trips in the project Census Tract have increased. As a result, ODOT plans to construct a separate multimodal bridge to reflect priorities in Oklahoma City's regional transportation plans, and to connect local neighborhoods and improve safe, local non-motorized travel options for this Area of Persistent Poverty.

#### **Statement of Work**

The multimodal bridge will be 20 feet wide and 820 feet long with a primary span extending at least 360 feet. The multimodal bridge will be offset west of the I-35 southbound bridge.

To connect the multimodal bridge to the Oklahoma River Trail system, ADA-compliant ramps will branch off the existing Oklahoma River trail to provide pedestrians and cyclists access to the multimodal bridge. Vertical abutments will be used at the north bank to allow adequate clearance and spacing for the trail to run under the bridge. The Mechanically Stabilized Earth (MSE) walls will be used to tie to the vertical abutments so that the alignment of the existing trail will not require extensive alteration. The MSE walls will also assist in minimizing the amount of additional right-of-way acquisition needed for the Project. Handrailing will be used along the extent of the paths under the I-35 bridges on both banks of the river to deter pedestrians from straying toward the I-35 traffic. Lighting and other aesthetic enhancements will be provided on the multimodal bridge and along the trail pathway to enhance the user experience and provide additional safety.

## Technical Capacity

ODOT has the technical capacity to successfully complete this Project. ODOT has a close partnership with the FHWA Oklahoma Division through which it receives its federal aid allocation and discretionary grant funding. ODOT has been awarded discretionary grants from various programs and is familiar with developing grant agreements, administering the funding, and providing the necessary reporting. ODOT has the technical expertise and resources dedicated to the project to provide quality control over all aspects of design and construction, ensure the project meets all federal requirements, and keep the public informed of the project's progress. ODOT's Contract Compliance Division oversees the Department's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program and ensures that ODOT and all its consultants and contractors comply with applicable Civil Rights requirements.

## Civil Rights and Title VI

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is the main legal authority for ODOT's external nondiscrimination programs. ODOT ensures that no person or groups of persons shall, on the grounds of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, retaliation or genetic information, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any and all programs, services, or activities administered by ODOT, its recipients, sub-recipients, and contractors. ODOT complies with Title VI by conducting internal and external compliance reviews, conducting training for staff, suppliers, vendors, contractors, local governments, and other ODOT sub-recipients of federal funds, and developing Title VI compliance information for internal and external dissemination.

## Environmental Risk Assessment

### Project Schedule

As shown in **Figure 8**, the preliminary study for the Project is ending, and the survey update and design process are being started. The Project designer has been selected by ODOT and public involvement meetings will begin in January 2025 and 65 percent construction plans for right-of-way and proposed NEPA process will begin in June 2025. Right-of-way acquisition is scheduled to be completed in early 2026. A final Plans, Specifications, and Estimates (PS&E) submittal is scheduled for July 2026. ODOT intends to obligate the Project in September 2026 and let the Project in November 2026. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2027 and be completed by the end of 2029. The Project is sufficiently advanced to begin plan development on time and construction completed within the funding deadlines for the ATIIIP program.

ATIIIP funds are in little danger of expiring prior to the obligation and expenditure deadline. ODOT has sought input on the Project through public involvement, which included features of meaningful public involvement identified in U.S. DOT's *Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-making* to engage the underrepresented communities adjacent to the Project area.

## Required Approvals

### Environmental Permits and Reviews

ODOT will apply for NEPA approval from the FHWA Oklahoma Division to construct the Project once preliminary plans have been approved in 2025.

Figure 8: Project Schedule

TASK DESCRIPTION	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Notice to Proceed						
Independent Path Bridge & Trail Connection Concept						
Survey (Surface)						
Preliminary Plan Review Submittal (30%)						
Right-of-Way and Utility Review Meeting Submittal (60%)						
Public Involvement						
Final Right-of-Way Submittal (65%)						
NEPA Document						
Final Field Review Submittal (90%)						
PS&E Submittal						
Auth. & Letting						
Construction						

For this Project, a Documented Categorical Exclusion (DCE) is the anticipated level of analysis to obtain environmental clearance for this Project. A Section 4F statement will be required for the multimodal bridge since it connects to existing trails, but since it is an enhancement to those facilities ODOT is not anticipating any conflicts with this improvement. The NEPA documents are anticipated to include a biological assessment, a cultural resources survey, an initial site assessment for hazardous waste, a detailed noise study, and a socioeconomic and environmental justice review.

#### Right-of-Way Acquisition and Relocation Plan

Relocations will not be required for this Project. Minor right-of-way acquisitions are identified in the ongoing preliminary study. All right-of-way acquisitions will be completed according to the Uniform Relocation Act and applicable regulations.

#### Public Engagement

ODOT has performed preliminary stakeholder engagement in the early concept development for this Project. ODOT initially presented the Project to key stakeholders in 2016 and then reinitiated stakeholder engagement in 2023 as part of the preliminary engineering study. The 2016 meeting presented three I-35 bridge concepts for spanning the Oklahoma River; the idea for a multimodal path built on the same structure as the I-35 southbound bridge was initially included in these meetings. After years of concept development, two additional stakeholder meetings were held in 2023 to discuss the separate multimodal bridge and finalize bridge aesthetics and potential funding partnerships. The public engagement will follow the ODOT Public Involvement Plan (PIP) and include features of meaningful public involvement identified in U.S. DOT’s *Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-making*. The Project has widespread community support.

#### State and Local Approvals

If the Multimodal Bridge Project receives ATIIP grant funding, ODOT will amend and include it in the Eight-Year CWP and the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

#### Federal Transportation Requirements Affecting State and Local Planning

**Oklahoma Active Transportation Plan:** The [Oklahoma Active Transportation Plan \(ATP\)](#) includes policies, programs, design tools, and resources to support active transportation planning, design and implementation so residents and visitors may safely and comfortably walk, bike, and use active modes across Oklahoma. The Project aligns with the ATP principles and goals of

Safety, Equity, Mobility, Livability, Connectivity, and Coordination. The ATP identifies that statewide annual fatalities of pedestrians and bicyclists have increased from 88 in 2017 to 115 in 2021, and that OKC has had the highest number of bicycle and pedestrian fatalities and serious injuries in Oklahoma.

***bikewalkokc***: In 2023 and 2024, Oklahoma City updated the original [bikewalkokc](#), which has served as Oklahoma City's comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian plan since its adoption by the City Council in May 2018. *Bikewalkokc* has been successful as a tool for directing OKC's capital investment programs into bicycle and pedestrian improvements across the city. The 2024 update of *bikewalkokc* addresses current issues that were identified in the process of implementation of the original plan. The 2024 update focuses on continuing the work by identifying the next set of priority projects. With the incorporation of a new round of public input and a new advisory board, the 2024 update proposes the addition of new pedestrian priority areas, the reprioritization of the bike and trail network, and many other improvements. *Bikewalkokc* proposes six bicycle and pedestrian bridge projects, including this multimodal bridge requesting ATIIP grant funding.

***Adaptokc***: Oklahoma City's first sustainability plan, [Adaptokc](#), recognizes OKC's need and ability to leverage scarce resources, create new partnerships, and use new tools and technologies to meet their needs and deliver a more equitable community not just for today's residents but for generations to come. The Oklahoma River is a barrier for residents to access jobs, healthcare, shopping, and events on the Oklahoma River. The Project will provide a multimodal option that will connect residents that live in an area of persistent poverty to jobs, healthcare, and shopping.

**Regional Active Transportation Plan (RATP)**: The Association of Central Oklahoma Governments (ACOG) is the metropolitan planning organization for OKC. The [ACOG RATP](#), includes the I-35 River Bridge Project, which aligns with the 2045 goals related to safety, infrastructure condition, congestion, freight movement and economic vitality, and environmental viability and resilience.

**Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)**: The [ODOT LRTP 2020-2045](#) is a policy document that provides a strategic direction for the development of the Oklahoma multimodal transportation system. This Project aligns with ODOT's long-range strategic direction.

**Transportation Asset Management Plan (TAMP)**: The Project improves system resilience and reliability and is consistent with the goals set out in ODOT's 2022-2031 [TAMP](#) with the intent of maintaining and preserving Oklahoma's transportation network.

**Carbon Reduction Strategy**: The [ODOT Carbon Reduction Strategy \(CRS\)](#) documents ODOT's existing carbon reduction efforts and provides guidance for future ODOT transportation system investments. The Project is consistent with advancing the ODOT CRS goals related to safety and security, mobility and accessibility, economic vitality, and environmental responsibility.

**Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)**: The [ODOT STIP](#) incorporates the first four years of the ODOT Eight-Year CWP. If this Project receives ATIIP funding, ODOT will include it in the biennial update for the 2026-2029 STIP that will be developed in 2025.



### Assessment of Project Risks and Mitigation Strategies

Potential Project risks and mitigation strategies to minimize the potential impact of the risks are summarized in **Table 6**. References to other sections of this application are included.

Environmental and right-of-way related risks are significantly reduced given that minimal right-of-way acquisition is required, and the Oklahoma River is a controlled waterway. Meaningful public involvement will be conducted to engage the environmental justice and disadvantaged communities affected by the Project. ODOT has sufficient capacity to implement the proposed activities according to the schedule presented in **Figure 8**. ODOT has committed \$10,846,120 (50%) in state matching funds. This match will ensure ODOT can begin construction on time until grant funds are reimbursed.

*Table 6. Project Risk and Mitigation Strategies*

Project Risk (Probability of Occurrence)	Mitigation Strategies
<b>Delays Securing Right-of-Way (Minimal)</b>	1) Minimal Right-of-Way acquisitions are anticipated. Retaining Walls are anticipated to minimize required acquisition.
<b>Section 404 Permitting Delays (Moderate)</b>	1) The Project is anticipated to fall under an Individual Permit. Work in the Oklahoma River will be required for the construction of the bridge piers and superstructure. 2) ODOT has a liaison in place at the USACE to accelerate and streamline approvals if needed.
<b>Weather Related Construction Delays (Moderate)</b>	1) ODOT collaborates closely with contractors to renegotiate project time while still meeting project commitments.
<b>Issues with City of Oklahoma City Maintenance Agreement (Low)</b>	1) ODOT and the City of Oklahoma City have negotiated numerous maintenance agreements on previous projects and have standard language and terms.
<b>Public Opposition (Low)</b>	1) ODOT has initiated key stakeholder involvement through the preliminary study process. 2) The Project will provide additional connectivity and mobility to the Oklahoma River Trail system, which will directly benefit the local community. 3) Stakeholder involvement participants have been extremely supportive of the Project.
<b>Contamination from Industrial Use/Underground Storage Tanks (Moderate)</b>	1) ODOT has a well-defined, successful approach for addressing potential contamination and LUST sites. Locations where these issues may arise are identified and included within the construction plans as “Areas of Environmental Concern” to put the contractor and their employees on alert.
<b>Earthquakes (Low)</b>	1) Oklahoma’s drilling practices have reduced the number of earthquakes in the state. All structures have seismic designs.

## Administration Priorities & Departmental Goals

Table 7 addresses the Administration’s Priorities and Departmental Strategic Goals.

*Table 7: Administration Priorities and Departmental Strategic Plan Goals*

Administration Priorities and Departmental Strategic Plan Goals	Section Addressed and Details
<p><b>Safety</b></p>	<p>Constructing a multimodal bridge across the Oklahoma River will protect non-motorized travelers from safety risks. ODOT recorded nine fatal or serious injury collisions involving pedestrians or pedal cycle users on the I-35 bridges illegally crossing the Oklahoma River between January 1, 2012, and December 31, 2021 (latest available data) as shown in Table 1. The two pedestrian fatalities represent 10% of all fatalities (20) in the area.</p>
<p><b>Climate Change and Sustainability</b></p>	<p>The Project addresses the disproportionate negative environmental impacts of transportation on disadvantaged communities both by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and by providing active transportation options to central Oklahoma City.</p>
<p><b>Equity</b></p>	<p>As discussed in <b>Project Location</b>, the Project is in an Area of Persistent Poverty. <b>Criterion #5: Equitable Development</b> covers ODOT’s commitment to build a new multimodal bridge to connect disadvantaged communities south of the Oklahoma River to jobs and hospitals in Downtown Oklahoma City. It also reduces transportation costs by reducing congestion and expanding active transportation options. The public engagement process involved various stakeholders to arrive at a consensus on the bridge's design, ensuring it meets the needs of the community.</p>
<p><b>Workforce Development, Job Quality, and Wealth Creation</b></p>	<p>The <b>Considerations to Support Good-Paying Jobs and Strong Labor Standards</b> section discusses ODOT’s commitment to support good paying jobs and strong labor standards while complying with both Federal and Oklahoma laws. ODOT offers DBE Supportive Services to help DBE firms develop into self-sufficient businesses, capable of competing on federally funded highway projects.</p>

### Considerations to Support Good-Paying Jobs and Strong Labor Standards

#### Oklahoma Unified Certification Program for Disadvantaged Business Enterprises

ODOT serves as the Unified Certification Program (UCP) for the State of Oklahoma, providing a one-stop-shop where disadvantaged businesses that meet the DBE certification requirements and become certified are eligible to be used to meet the DBE goal requirements on any project with funding from the USDOT. ODOT’s 2023-2025 Triennial DBE goal is 16.0 percent and the FFY 2023 goal attainment was 17.33 percent. Total dollars to DBEs increased almost 40 percent from 2022 to 2023. Oklahoma’s project-level goal setting is data-driven utilizing current DBE certification information and historical DBE pay item performance to identify the project goal achievement possibility. ODOT offers DBE Supportive Services to help certified DBE firms in

Oklahoma develop into self-sufficient businesses, capable of competing on federally funded highway projects. These services, provided under FHWA guidelines, aim to increase the number of active minority businesses in the highway program and contribute to their growth and self-sufficiency. ODOT's commitment includes offering various forms of training and technical assistance, all free of charge.

ODOT strives to ensure equal opportunities and to level the playing field for Disadvantaged Business Enterprises by providing full and meaningful participation opportunities on federally funded projects. ODOT conducted a [Disparity Study](#) in 2021 to evaluate DBE opportunities and the Department is using the input to develop innovative solutions to strengthen the DBE program.

### Transportation Assistance Program

The ODOT Contract Compliance Division recently hosted a Transportation Assistance Program (TAP) at Eastern Oklahoma County Technology Center on Oct. 30-Nov. 3, 2023. TAP is a free, week-long, job training program that prepares women and people of color seeking jobs for entry into the transportation and construction job market. TAP provides valuable certification training opportunities that businesses look for when hiring individuals in the transportation and construction trades. The program includes direct experience and free certification in forklift operation/safety, work zone flagging, CPR/First Aid/Bloodborn Pathogen training, OSHA 10-Hour Construction, and workforce skills.

## FHWA Priority Selection Considerations

### Connecting Key Community Institutions

As stated in **Criterion #5: Equitable Development** section, the Project will provide a new accessible active transportation connection between two brownfield grant redevelopment sites which now feature green space and trails on the banks of the Oklahoma River: the Riversport Rapids in Regatta Park and the First Americans Museum, which is particularly important as an icon of the Native communities of both Oklahoma and the entire United States. The Project will provide further access to free and accessible green space surrounding the First Americans Museum and the OKANA development, the north and south Oklahoma River trails, as well as Regatta Park and the Bricktown River Walk Park on the north side of the Oklahoma River. It will also provide safer access to Skyline, a nearby nonprofit that provides free groceries to Oklahomans experiencing food insecurity.

### Benefits to Disadvantaged Communities

This Project provides important benefits to disadvantaged communities living south of the Oklahoma River, as it provides a safe connection to jobs and opportunities north of the Oklahoma River. As stated in **Criterion #5: Equitable Development** section, the multimodal bridge will increase affordable and healthy transportation choices in the Project area and reduce transportation cost burdens by reducing congestion and expanding active transportation options. The multimodal bridge may also help reduce auto dependence for residents not owning a vehicle in this underserved community and improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists.