The Stillman Bridge Project

Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program Submission

Safety · Mobility · Economic Opportunity

City of TUSCALOOSA

Grant Program: FY 2026 BUILD Grant

Applicant: City of Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Grant Request: $22,641,209

Matching Funds: $4,000,000

Total Project Cost: $26,641,209

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3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project Title: *Stillman Bridge Project* – Tuscaloosa, Alabama

1. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The City of Tuscaloosa, Alabama is requesting U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant funding to redesign and reconstruct the Stillman Boulevard Bridge, a critical west-side connector that supports Tuscaloosa's role as the primary service, employment, and institutional hub for West Alabama. Additional information on the Stillman Bridge Project can be found at **www.tuscaloosa.com/BUILD2026**.

Over the past two decades, Tuscaloosa has experienced significant growth and revitalization, driven by the expansion of the University of Alabama, major investments in healthcare and advanced manufacturing, and the emergence of downtown and riverfront districts as regional destinations for dining, entertainment, tourism, and mixed-use development. These investments have strengthened Tuscaloosa's position as the economic and institutional center of West Alabama and have generated measurable gains in employment, visitor activity, and private investment.

However, this growth has not been evenly distributed across the city or the broader West Alabama region. While downtown, the university area, and eastern corridors have benefited from sustained reinvestment, portions of West Tuscaloosa--despite their proximity to these growth centers--have remained physically and functionally separated by aging infrastructure and constrained transportation connections. The Stillman Boulevard corridor illustrates this condition: it sits only minutes from downtown and major activity centers yet relies on a bridge constructed in 1938 that no longer meets modern standards and limits safe, efficient access across a major rail corridor.

The Stillman Boulevard corridor is anchored by Stillman College and supported by long-standing churches, professional offices, and neighborhood-scale retail and service businesses that generate consistent daily travel demand. The corridor functions as a key link between West Tuscaloosa and downtown's higher-intensity commercial, dining, entertainment, and riverfront destinations. As Tuscaloosa continues steady growth driven by higher education, healthcare, advanced manufacturing, logistics, and tourism, the reliability and performance of this west-side gateway has become increasingly important to the City's overall economic competitiveness and opportunity.

Load restrictions, substandard geometry, inadequate pedestrian facilities, and clearance deficiencies over an active freight rail line impose daily inefficiencies, increase travel times, and weakens the corridor's ability to support institutional activity, small business vitality, and access to regional services. These conditions represent not only a local transportation

challenge but also a missed opportunity to more fully integrate West Tuscaloosa into Tuscaloosa's ongoing growth and into the regional economy of West Alabama.

By addressing these constraints, the *Stillman Bridge Project* supports the City's strategy to extend the benefits of revitalization westward, strengthen internal connectivity, and ensure that West Tuscaloosa can more fully participate in and contribute to the economic momentum of the City and the broader West Alabama region.

2. SCOPE OF WORK

The *Stillman Bridge Project* will remove the existing bridge structure and replace it with a modern, resilient, multimodal bridge designed to current structural, geometric, and safety standards. The replacement bridge will be widened to a conceptually proposed width of approximately 75 feet, with coordination and approvals obtained from the Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC) Railroad during the design phase. The project will restore the corridor to a state of good repair, eliminate load and clearance deficiencies over the active rail line, and improve safety, comfort, and reliability for all users.

The replacement bridge will include:

- An 11' wide shared-use path on the north side of the bridge, providing generous space for pedestrians and cyclists
- A 5'-6' wide shared-use path on the south side of the bridge, improving accessibility and separation from vehicular traffic
- Modern barrier systems meeting current crash standards, enhancing safety and visual consistency
- Roadway and pedestrian-scale lighting to improve nighttime visibility, personal safety, and corridor aesthetics
- Required utility relocations to support the upgraded infrastructure

3. CURRENT DESIGN LEVEL

The *Stillman Bridge Project* has advanced beyond concept planning and is currently at the preliminary engineering/design stage, with approximately 60% design completion as of the date of application. The anticipated completion date for 100% for preliminary engineering/design stage is March 2026. The City of Tuscaloosa matching funds for the BUILD Grant project will be financed through an innovative approach that leverages the City of Tuscaloosa's General Fund Reserve for Future Improvements (RFFI).

Key activities completed to date include:

- Development of a concept-level bridge replacement layout meeting current structural, geometric, and multimodal standards
- Preliminary roadway and vertical alignment design along Stillman Boulevard between Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Nick's Kids Avenue
- Coordination with the Canadian Pacific Kansas City Railroad regarding horizontal and vertical clearance requirements and bridge configuration

- Identification of required utility relocations and right-of-way needs
- Initial cost estimating and constructability review

The City expects to advance final design upon receipt of BUILD funding. Right-of-way acquisition and utility coordination will continue in parallel with final design to support timely project delivery. This level of design readiness reflects the City's commitment to delivering a shovel-ready project and ensures that BUILD funds can be obligated and expended efficiently within program timelines.

4. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT LOCATION

The Stillman Boulevard Bridge is in west Tuscaloosa, Alabama, on Stillman Boulevard where it crosses the Canadian Pacific Kansas City Railroad (operated by Watco Companies as the Alabama Southern Railroad). The bridge lies between Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Nick's Kids Avenue and serves as a primary east–west gateway connecting West Tuscaloosa neighborhoods, Stillman College, and local businesses to downtown Tuscaloosa, the University of Alabama, healthcare facilities, and regional services.

Tuscaloosa functions as the economic hub for West Alabama, serving surrounding counties as the center for education, healthcare, professional services, retail, and government activity. The efficiency of this hub-and-spoke regional economy depends on reliable internal connectivity within the city itself. When west-side corridors such as Stillman Boulevard are constrained by outdated infrastructure, the resulting inefficiencies—longer travel times, unreliable trips, and higher operating costs—affect not only local users but also regional workers, students, commercial traffic, service providers, and visitors.

Figure 1. Overview of Stillman Bridge Project area

The *Stillman Bridge Project* directly supports the City of Tuscaloosa's goal of strengthening west-side connectivity as a foundation for economic expansion. By removing a long-standing infrastructure bottleneck, the project improves access between West Tuscaloosa institutions and neighborhoods and downtown employment, retail, and tourism destinations. This improved connectivity supports institutional operations at Stillman College, enhances access for neighborhood-scale businesses, and allows downtown establishments to draw customers more easily from west-side neighborhoods.

The project's pedestrian and bicycle components further advance walkability and quality of life in ways that support economic competitiveness. Safer, wider sidewalks and shared-use paths improve daily travel for students, employees, and residents, reduce conflict between travel modes, and make short trips more feasible without a vehicle. These improvements enhance the overall travel experience, support workforce reliability, and contribute to a corridor environment that is more attractive for reinvestment and long-term use.

5. BEFORE AND AFTER RENDERINGS

Before: **Figure 2.** Photo of the current Stillman Boulevard Bridge

After: **Figures 3 and 4.** Renderings of the replacement Stillman Boulevard Bridge

6. TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES THE PROJECT WILL SOLVE

Constructed in 1938, the Stillman Boulevard Bridge has far exceeded its useful service life and no longer provides safe, reliable, or efficient service for the traveling public or freight movement. The structure carries two westbound and two eastbound lanes with substandard four-foot sidewalks that fail to meet modern safety, accessibility, and user-experience expectations for pedestrians. The 7,053-square-foot deck is classified as both structurally deficient and functionally obsolete, reflecting advanced deterioration that cannot be addressed through routine maintenance alone.

The most recent inspection on November 2, 2024, documented ongoing structural distress and confirmed that the bridge's load rating must remain restricted to 30 tons, a 20 – 30 percent reduction in carrying capacity that has been in place since 2012. This constraint directly undermines the bridge's role as a critical connector in Tuscaloosa's roadway network, forcing heavy vehicles, including freight trucks, service vehicles, and some emergency and utility vehicles, to detour approximately 1.5 miles to alternative crossings. These detours increase travel times and operating costs, add unnecessary vehicle miles and fuel consumption, and shift heavy traffic onto parallel routes that are already experiencing congestion and wear.

The current condition of the Stillman Boulevard Bridge imposes measurable economic costs on the region and limits the community's ability to attract and sustain private investment. Approximately four percent of daily traffic, or more than 150,000 truck trips annually, is diverted due to weight limits, reducing the efficiency of local and regional freight corridors that serve downtown Tuscaloosa, the University of Alabama, and surrounding employment centers. The existing structure is no longer capable of safely supporting modern truck traffic volumes or future growth, and any further degradation could require even more restrictive weight limits or closure, with severe consequences for local businesses, workers, and families.

The bridge also fails to meet current railroad clearance requirements. Horizontally, the bridge provides only 43' of clearance between bents and lacks required crash walls, significantly below the current standard minimum of 66' 9". Vertically, the bridge provides 22' 6" clearance, compared to the required minimum of 23' 6". These deficiencies increase operational risk at the rail crossing and complicate coordination with active freight rail operations that are critical to West Alabama's regional supply chains.

A BUILD grant to replace Stillman Bridge will advance federal priorities by improving safety with a modern, structurally sound crossing; expanding capacity for freight and passenger vehicles by removing load limits and inefficient detours; and strengthening economic opportunity by restoring reliable access to jobs, education, healthcare, and commerce, supported by clear evidence of need and project readiness.

Replacing the Stillman Boulevard Bridge is not a discretionary enhancement; it is an urgent, high-impact investment that will eliminate a failing bottleneck, support long-term economic growth, and deliver safer, faster, and more affordable transportation for the community and the region.

7. RELATIONSHIP TO BROADER CITY AND REGIONAL INVESTMENTS

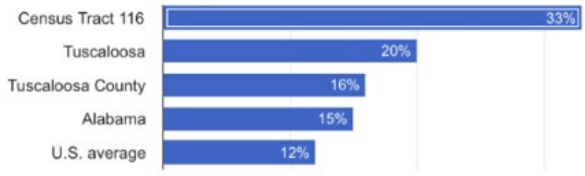
The *Stillman Bridge Project* is one of several coordinated capital project investments intended to broaden economic activity westward. Prior Riverwalk phases have demonstrated the City's ability to leverage public infrastructure investments into substantial adjacent private development. The Stillman Boulevard Bridge is not a single keystone project, it is a vital supporting connector that increases the reach and effectiveness of these larger initiatives by improving access, perception, and functional integration between West Tuscaloosa and the City's core economic and amenity centers. The project will result in increased prosperity and quality of life for rural West Alabamians.

4. PROJECT LOCATION

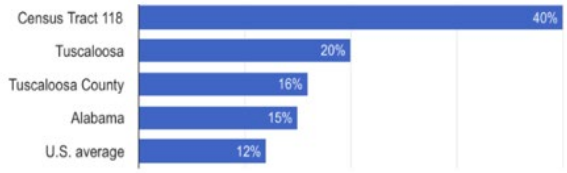
The *Stillman Bridge Project* is **located** within the City of Tuscaloosa which has a defined population of 110,600 according to 2022 Census estimates. This would define the project designation as Rural.

The Stillman Boulevard Bridge encompasses both Census Tracts 116 and 118 in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, which are also considered Opportunity Zones.

Opportunity Zone 01125011600 (Tract 116) has a median household income of $28,000. This is 46% lower than the median income for the state of Alabama, which is $52,000. The poverty rate is approximately 33 percent, which is higher than the state average of 14-15 percent.



Opportunity Zone 01125011800 (Tract 118) has a median household income of $24,000. This is 54% lower than the median income for the state of Alabama, which is $52,000. The poverty rate is 40 percent, which is significantly higher than the state average.



Overall data suggests that both tracts are economically disadvantaged relative to the surrounding area. These indicators include low median household incomes, higher poverty rates, lower educational attainment, and the Opportunity Zone/Low-Income Tract designation.

Tuscaloosa is a regional center for education, employment, and health care opportunities. These include the University of Alabama, Stillman College, Mercedes Benz USI (North American factory for Daimler), the DCH Health System (DCH), and the Alabama Department of Mental Health Bryce Hospital. The table below shows some of their key characteristics.

Project Location			
Noted Facilities	**Characteristics**		
University of Alabama	7,100 Employees	42,360 Students (Tuscaloosa Campus)	
Stillman College	290 Employees	740 Students	
Mercedes Benz USI	6,100 Employees	9,000,000 Square Feet	
Hunt Refining Company	300 Employees	52,000 Barrel-Per-Day-Refinery	
Alabama Dept. of Mental Health	1,300 Employees	593 Beds	577 Patients
DCH Health System	4,700 Employees	583 Beds	462 Patients (per day)

5. PROJECT BUDGET

2020 Census Tract	Project Costs per Census Tract
116	$19,505,907
118	$7,135,302
Total Project Cost	**$26,641,209**

Urban and Rural	Project Costs
Urban	$0.00
Rural	$26,641,209
Total Project Cost	**$26,641,209**

Sources, Use and Availability:

Funding Source	Component 1	Total Funding
BUILD Funds	$22,641,209	$22,641,209
Other Federal Funds	$0.00	$0.00
Non-Federal Funds	$4,000,000	$4,000,000
Total Project Cost	**$26,641,209**	**$26,641,209**

Funds will be provided by the City of Tuscaloosa as authorized by the City Council. The $4 million matching funds for BUILD Grant projects will be financed through an innovative approach that leverages the City of Tuscaloosa's General Fund Reserve for Future Improvements (RFFI). At the end of each fiscal year, any surplus funds remaining in the General Fund are transferred into the RFFI account.

Contingency Amount and Plan: The City has contingency planning for any cost overruns and has taken a conservative approach to all cost estimates using a professional engineering firm with many years of experience. Any cost overruns in the design phase will be borne by the City. Any delays due to weather will be minimal, and no significant supply chain disruptions are anticipated.

The City of Tuscaloosa's extensive experience with large capital improvement and infrastructure projects shows a successful track record that demonstrates a thorough understanding of project risks, ongoing strategies to manage schedule and cost uncertainties,

and a sound plan that will address any cost overruns through the contingency funding in the budget and local match plans.

Level of Design: The current completed design phase is at sixty-five percent and will be completed later this year. The City's approach will be a design-bid-build phased approach with the City incurring all costs associated with design, environmental assessment, and permitting.

Cost Estimates: Cost estimates were provided by Volkert Inc., a professional services firm including engineering and construction selected by the City through a competitive procurement process. Estimates provided are current as of January 2026 and include an inflation factor. Estimates include construction, preliminary engineering, right-of-way, and traffic management costs, based on historical bridge replacement data and judgment from experienced bridge engineers and cost estimators.

Budget Cost Classification Narrative

Cost Classification	BUILD Funds	Other Federal Funds	Non-Federal Funds	Total Project Cost
Utilities	$3,526,905	$0.00	$623,095	$ 4,150,000
Construction	$14,413,358	$0.00	$2,546,394	$16,959,752
Contingency	$1,979,210	$0.00	$349,665	$ 2,328,875
Construction Engineering and Inspection	$1,319,473	$0.00	$233,110	$ 1,552,583
Right of Way Acquisition	$1,402,264	$0.00	$247,737	$ 1,650,000
Total Funding	**$22,641,209**	**$0.00**	**$4,000,000**	**$26,641,209**

Utilities: Utilities will have to be relocated, and water and sewer improvements will be made as well due to the relocation of the footprint of the bridge and adjoining retaining walls. ($3,526,905 – Federal and $623,095 – local match)

Construction: Construction will be a design-bid-build phased approach with the City of Tuscaloosa paying for all design and preliminary engineering costs. The construction will include rail and bridge improvements at approximately $250/sq ft to $350/sq ft. Railroad flagmen (mandatory) cost will be approximately 270 to 360 days at a cost of $1,500/day. ($14,413,358 – Federal and $2,546,394 – local match)

Contingency: The contingency costs are budgeted to ensure any materials or other cost overruns will be covered by the grant. This is included at only 15 percent of construction. All

other contingency costs will be borne by the City. ($1,979,210 – Federal and $349,665– local match)

Construction Engineering and Inspection (CE&I): Services ensure infrastructure projects—roads, bridges, and buildings—adhere to contract specifications, quality standards, and timelines. CE&I personnel manage construction oversight, monitor installations, conduct material testing, and handle project closeouts. These services are critical for project compliance and safety. These services will be performed by a qualified third-party consultant. ($1,319,473 – Federal and $233,110 – local match)

Right of Way: The Right of Way Acquisition will be required with the construction of retaining walls. There are approximately 16 parcels that will need to be acquired. ($1,402,264 – Federal and $247,737 – local match)

Cost Share: Although a local cost share is not required due to the City's Rural designation under this application, the City of Tuscaloosa is demonstrating its strong commitment to the project by contributing a 15% cost share of $4 million. In addition, the City has already invested $2 million in project design, further underscoring its dedication and readiness to deliver the project successfully.

6. MERIT CRITERIA

Stillman Bridge Project

1. SAFETY

Rubric bullets addressed:

- Protects motorized and non-motorized travelers from known safety risks

Safety is the primary driver of the Stillman Boulevard Bridge replacement and the improvement of multi-modal access. The existing bridge reflects age-related deterioration and outdated geometric design that do not meet current safety standards. Narrow travel lanes, limited shoulders, constrained sight distances, and insufficient pedestrian facilities elevate crash risk for motorists and create unsafe conditions for pedestrians and cyclists. Given the proximity to several elementary schools and two universities, pedestrian safety challenges are more dire given the number of children and teenagers utilizing the bridge.

The Stillman Boulevard Bridge, constructed in 1938, has reached the end of its useful service life as documented through recent structural inspections. These inspections indicate accelerating deterioration that cannot be addressed through routine maintenance alone. Without timely replacement, the City will be forced to impose more restrictive weight limits in the near term and may ultimately have no choice but to close the bridge entirely, severing a critical transportation link for residents, businesses, and emergency services. Bridge inspection noted cracking and abrasion damage in all spans of the deck, heavy spalling in multiple girders in spans 2 and 3, and heavy spalls on bent caps 2 and 3 with exposed rebar. The barrier rail on the north side of the bridge has been damaged by a vehicle collision, with missing concrete and exposed rebar. Safety concerns extend beyond bridge users to the broader community. Weight limitations create restrictions and subsequent delays for first responder vehicles, in some cases precluding the most direct and fastest response route. The *Stillman Bridge Project* will provide needed safety improvements for motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists, with significant reductions in crashes and accidents anticipated.

In addition to structural issues, the bridge is also functionally obsolete. This bridge provides grade separation for the CPKC Railroad operated by Watco Companies as the Alabama Southern Railroad. The bridge does not provide the current minimum horizontal and vertical clearances. Horizontally, the bridge provides just 43’ clearance between the bents with no crash walls. Crash walls are required where there is less than 25’ from the center of the track to the face of the bridge column. Current regulations require a minimum clearance between bents of 66’ 9”. Vertically, the existing bridge provides 22’-6” clearance, where current regulation requires 23’-6” minimum. Additional functional deficiencies include deck width (4-10’ lanes as opposed to 4-11’ lanes), width of the sidewalks (4.5’ as opposed to 5’ minimum), and bridge barrier rail. As a result, the post-and-beam barrier rail does not meet current crash test safety requirements and replacing it will address the safety issue.

Stillman Boulevard is one of the more travelled roads in Tuscaloosa, particularly during large events. Traffic volume data for the Stillman Boulevard Bridge reveals that the annual average daily trip (AADT) is 10,588 as of 2023. The Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) has estimated that the AADT will increase to 15,733 by 2045. Between 2016– 2024, the City of Tuscaloosa recorded 116 crashes along Stillman Boulevard Bridge in the project area. The City recorded from this total the following breakdown of accident types:

Crash Summary (Type)	Quantity
Fatality	1
Suspected Serious Injury	2
Suspected Minor Injury	13
Possible Injury	16
Property Damage Only	84
Total	**116**

Table 1. Crash Data for Project Area

Stillman Boulevard Bridge requires replacement and improvement of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. The *Stillman Bridge Project* will provide needed safety improvements for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists and significantly reduce crashes and accidents.

The replacement project will directly advance USDOT safety objectives by:

- Designing the bridge to meet current American with Disabilities Act and American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials standards.
- Providing dedicated, protected pedestrian facilities and improved separation between motorized and nonmotorized users.
- Enhancing structural capacity to safely accommodate emergency vehicles and transit.

These improvements will reduce the likelihood and severity of crashes, improve emergency response reliability, and address safety concerns that disproportionately affect rural and underserved populations.

2. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Rubric bullets addressed:

- Improve the resilience of at-risk infrastructure to be resilient to extreme weather events and natural disasters

The project supports USDOT environmental sustainability and resilience goals by replacing an aging structure that requires frequent maintenance and emergency repairs, which increase environmental disturbance and lifecycle emissions. It also facilitates the use of cycling and pedestrian alternatives, reducing the number of vehicles on the roadway and, subsequently, vehicle emissions. Despite being the most direct route for many large trucks transporting goods to a major industrial and commercial area, the bridge's state of disrepair has limited its ability to accommodate large trucks, resulting in longer routes to accommodate detours. The project prioritizes environmental sustainability using materials and designs that reflect sustainable practices.

Environmental benefits include:

- Durable materials and resilient design that extend service life and reduce future emissions.
- Improved traffic operations that reduce congestion, idling, and vehicle emissions.

Bridge replacement represents a sustainable, long-term investment that minimizes environmental impacts while improving transportation reliability in a rural serving corridor.

The project also enhances resilience to increasingly frequent and intense severe weather events common to west Tuscaloosa including heavy rainfall, flash flooding, and high windstorms by replacing an undersized, deteriorated 1930s structure with a modern bridge designed to current safety and load standards. By incorporating a wider cross-section, improved drainage, and upgraded foundations and retaining structures, the new bridge is better able to withstand storm related erosion, ponding, and wind loads, reducing the risk of weather-related closures and emergency repairs over its service life. This added resilience not only protects the public and critical freight movements but also reduces the environmental and community impacts associated with repeated storm damage, detours, and unplanned maintenance activities.

Tuscaloosa intends to protect, preserve, and enhance important and fragile ecosystems within developed portions of the community. It will strive to use its natural and open lands for parks and for passive and active recreation.

3. QUALITY OF LIFE

Rubric bullets addressed:

- Beautify transportation infrastructure
- Make transportation more affordable

The *Stillman Bridge Project* will transform an aging 1938 structure into a safer, more attractive, and welcoming gateway that reflects community pride and enhances the visual quality of a key corridor in West Tuscaloosa. Improved wayfinding and upgraded shared-use paths will

beautify this critical crossing, replace deteriorated infrastructure with a modern, cohesive streetscape, and create a more pleasant experience for families, students, and workers. By strengthening a key link between jobs, healthcare, recreation, commerce, and education, the project will also boost community confidence in local infrastructure and support ongoing public and private investment in the area.

At the same time, the project makes transportation more affordable by reducing detours and eliminating the current low-weight restriction which will allow trucks and other vehicles to travel directly across the bridge rather than detouring 1.5 miles, improving fuel efficiency and lowering operating costs. In addition, the enhanced shared-use path and safer crossings will reduce reliance on higher-cost single-occupant vehicle trips, lowering transportation burdens for households that walk, bike, or use mobility devices.

4. MOBILITY AND COMMUNITY CONNECTIVITY

Rubric bullets addressed:

- Improve vehicular roadway capacity

The *Stillman Bridge Project* will significantly enhance mobility and community connectivity in West Tuscaloosa by replacing a structurally deficient bridge and expanding multimodal transportation options along a primary corridor that links residential areas, educational campuses, employment centers, and neighborhood commerce. The existing bridge lacks adequate pedestrian and bicycle accommodations, limiting safe movement for non-motorized travelers and disrupting continuity of the local sidewalk network. The expanded pedestrian and bicycle network supports safe, convenient travel for walkers, bicyclists, and other non-motorized users, reducing barriers to access and providing alternatives to vehicle travel.

By improving connectivity along Stillman Boulevard, the *Stillman Bridge Project* advances the City of Tuscaloosa's adopted ***Framework: A Dynamic Guide for Tuscaloosa*****,** which calls for a multimodal transportation system that is coordinated with land use and neighborhood character. The project closes a critical gap in the active transportation network by linking existing sidewalks, trails, and bike facilities and adding an 11-foot shared-use path along Stillman Boulevard between MLK Boulevard and Nick's Kids Avenue. Together, these improvements create a safer, more comfortable corridor for people walking, biking, and using mobility devices, consistent with the plan's emphasis on connected, safe, and accessible streets that support active transportation and community interaction.

5. ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS AND OPPORTUNITY

Rubric bullets addressed:

- Promote economic growth

The City of Tuscaloosa and the greater West Alabama region are poised for rapid economic growth, provided the area can keep up with infrastructural demands. Business sources including *Forbes* and *Kiplinger's Personal Finance* magazines rank the Tuscaloosa/Birmingham region as among the best locations in the nation to start and grow a business. The region has a myriad of colleges, universities, and trade schools for undergraduate and graduate study while also providing training and education for skilled professionals in a vast array of industries. Healthcare and medicine play significant roles in employment, economic growth, and innovation with four major hospitals in the region. Tuscaloosa has a large workforce of 95,000. Of those, approximately 30% are non-agricultural, employed in government, healthcare, and education. 16% are employed in manufacturing. Automotive, electronics, plastic injection molding, steel, wood products, food products, and chemicals are just some of the many industries that make up West Alabama's manufacturing core. Quality of life and livability are essential to attracting new businesses, and growing lucrative industries, in addition to attracting both bright students and skilled workers. Dependable infrastructure helps to ensure a strong supply chain and distribution system security. These couple together to attract, retain, and grow industries.

As Tuscaloosa continues to expand, it is expected to grow faster than most places in Alabama. The City has increased its population by 24% since 2000. This is at a greater rate than the five largest cities in Alabama. This substantial past growth has been attributed to an increase in University of Alabama enrollment, which is projected to stabilize in the coming years. While the city is forecasted to grow, that growth will likely be slower than that which occurred over the past 20 years. Forecasts suggest that the Tuscaloosa Metropolitan Statistical Area (Tuscaloosa, Hale, and Pickens Counties) will grow by 21.4% between 2010 and 2040, the second-largest growth rate in Alabama after Huntsville (39%).

The City's demographics are shifting as they are heavily influenced by the student population, which can mask needs among the permanent resident population. For instance, nearly 19% of the non-student population (and 28% of the City's under-18 population) struggle with poverty. Other demographic challenges include projections of a growing proportion of seniors and slower growth in family households. The slowest growth has been forecasted for the 25 – 34-year-old population. This slow growth is of concern for the long-term population, as this age group typically includes families with young children and first-time homebuyers.

The *Stillman Bridge Project* will strengthen economic competitiveness and opportunity in West Tuscaloosa by restoring a reliable, direct east–west connection that underpins daily economic activity. By eliminating the risk of closures or restrictions associated with a failing structure from the 1930s, the project provides the transportation stability needed for households, employers, and institutions to plan and grow.

For freight and commercial activity, the project restores a direct route for large trucks serving nearby industrial and commercial areas, reducing detours that currently lengthen trips and raise transportation costs. Reliable truck access improves the efficiency of goods movement,

supports just-in-time operations, and makes adjacent commercial and industrial parcels more attractive for reinvestment.

Residents also benefit from shorter, more predictable travel times to work, school, healthcare, and shopping, which reduces fuel use and vehicle operating costs and frees household income for other needs. A modern structure with a long design life lowers the likelihood of disruptive emergency repairs and weight limits, offering long-term reliability that supports property value growth and encourages private investment along the Stillman Boulevard corridor. Together, these improvements position the bridge as a durable, multimodal backbone for economic opportunity in this rural-serving, small urban community.

6. STATE OF GOOD REPAIR

Rubric bullets addressed:

- Restores a critical asset to a state of good repair
- Eliminates deferred maintenance liabilities
- Reduces long-term lifecycle costs

The existing bridge has exceeded its intended service life and is functionally obsolete, having been constructed in 1938, resulting in increasing maintenance costs and the risk of unplanned closures. Due to substructure deterioration, the Stillman Boulevard Bridge has been under a reduced load mandate and weight restrictions for safety concerns for several years.

Stillman Boulevard Bridge provides grade separation for the CPKC Railroad operated by Watco Companies as the Alabama Southern Railroad; however, the bridge does not provide the current minimum horizontal and vertical clearances for safe and compliant use. Additional functional deficiencies include deck width (4-10’ lanes as opposed to 4-11’ lanes), width of the sidewalks (4.5’ as opposed to 5’ minimum), and bridge barrier rail. The post-and-beam barrier rail does not meet current crash test requirements.

Figures 5 and 6. Deteriorated condition of the Stillman Boulevard Bridge

The Benefit-Cost Analysis (BCA) demonstrates that the project produces measurable economic benefits through improved travel time reliability, reduced vehicle operating costs, and enhanced multimodal access. Continued rehabilitation is no longer cost-effective, and the safety and utility of the bridge will continue to erode without the proposed project and its associated repairs.

Transportation reliability is foundational to sustaining and expanding economic opportunities in small, rural communities. The Stillman Boulevard Bridge serves as a critical connector within West Tuscaloosa, supporting access to dozens of local businesses, workforce destinations, three primary public schools, and Stillman College and the University of Alabama, both important higher-education institutions that contribute significantly to the regional economy. As a primary east–west corridor in this growing commercial and education district, the bridge plays an essential role in linking residents to employment, education, services, and daily commerce.

Replacement of the structurally deficient bridge will enhance corridor reliability by reducing travel delays, minimizing detours and uncertainty for commuters and service providers, and ensuring dependable access to jobs and workforce training opportunities. Modernizing this critical infrastructure will strengthen long-term economic competitiveness, attract and retain private investment, and provide the reliable transportation foundation necessary to support sustained economic growth in a rural-serving area, consistent with BUILD's emphasis on expanding access to economic opportunity.

The proposed replacement will eliminate deferred maintenance liabilities, restore the asset to a state of good repair with a substantially extended service life, and reduce lifecycle costs through modern design and materials.

Stillman Boulevard Bridge experiences excessive speeding and high traffic volume for a four-lane divided highway with multiple intersections. This road configuration has resulted in severe crashes and a high number of accidents. Between 2016–2024, the City of Tuscaloosa recorded 116 crashes along Stillman Boulevard Bridge in the project area which included one death. Crash data reveals that there are many rear ends crashes every year along this route. These types of crashes can be caused by driver distraction, tailgating, panic stops, and reduced traction in wet weather. Improvements to bridge design and the addition of protected pedestrian/bicycle lanes will decrease the rate and severity of crashes that lead to injuries and fatalities.

The City of Tuscaloosa is committed to maintaining the *Stillman Bridge Project* as it will become a critical and unifying part of the community infrastructure. The investment made to improve the City's mobility components will only increase the opportunities for continued economic development, which will, in turn, continue to provide additional tax revenue for the City of Tuscaloosa. The increased revenue will provide additional opportunities to raise the budget for future maintenance needs.

7. PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

Rubric bullets addressed:

- Demonstrates coordinated planning and implementation
- Leverages institutional and intergovernmental partnerships

The *Stillman Bridge Project* reflects strong collaboration among the City of Tuscaloosa, regional planning partners, state transportation agencies, and community stakeholders, including educational institutions and nearby neighborhoods. Throughout all stages of planning, the City of Tuscaloosa has engaged residents and community-based organizations to ensure those who live and work in the project area are meaningfully engaged and will continue to do so throughout the lifecycle of the project. Several opportunities for public input were facilitated, including public listening sessions and a phone and web-based portal.

These partnerships and collaborations ensure:

- Consistency with local and regional transportation plans.
- Community informed design responsive to local needs.
- Coordinated implementation that leverages technical expertise and funding resources.

Local commitment and intergovernmental coordination strengthen the project's readiness and long-term success.

Letters of support for the *Stillman Bridge Project* reflect broad public-private partnerships, including the Governor of Alabama, Stillman College, the West Alabama Chamber of Commerce, the Tuscaloosa County Economic Development Authority, the Druid City Bicycle Club, and local, state, and federal legislators. Letters of support may be found **here.**

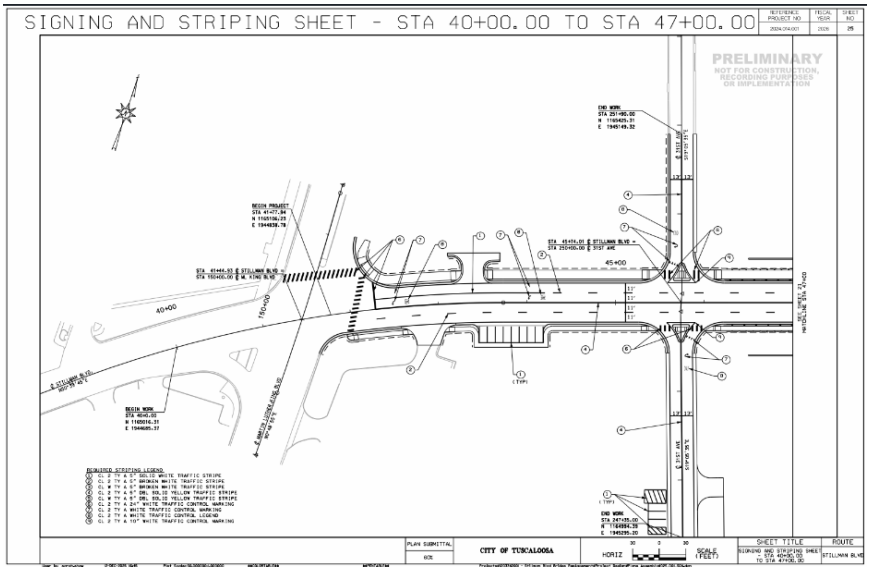
8. INNOVATION

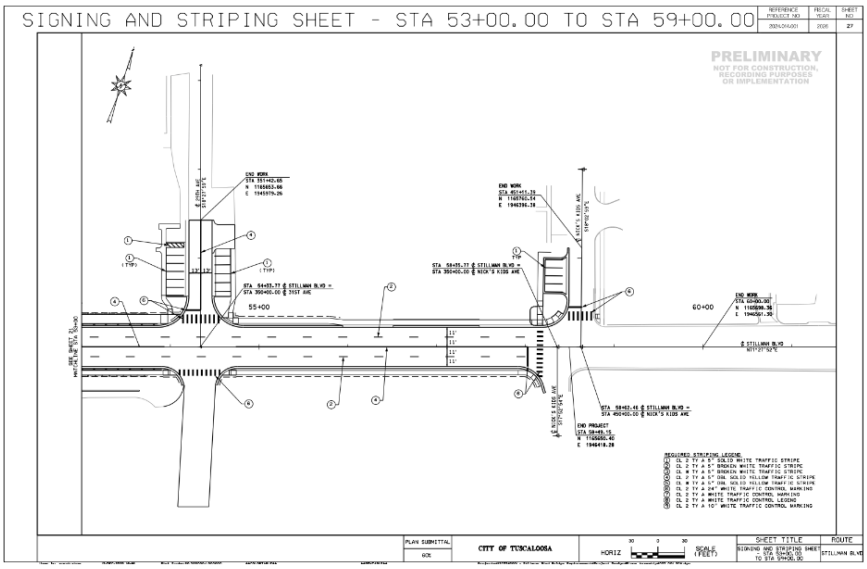
Rubric bullets addressed:

- Applies scalable, context-sensitive innovations
- Improves safety, resilience, and long-term performance

Innovative Technologies: The *Stillman Bridge Project* applies practical, scalable innovation appropriate for a rural-serving community, emphasizing performance, resilience, and multimodal access rather than experimental risk. The context-sensitive bridge design balances safety, mobility, and community character while accommodating projected traffic growth and reducing long-term maintenance needs.

Innovative technologies enhance the project's resilience and operational efficiency. Resilient engineering features strengthen durability and reduce vulnerability to climate related stressors, improving lifecycle performance and reliability. The project also constructs a multimodal shared use path that is protected from vehicular travel on the northbound side of Stillman Boulevard Bridge. Crosswalks will be installed on east side of MLK Boulevard and west side of Nicks Kids Avenue, and security cameras will be installed and monitored in real-time.





Innovative Project Delivery: Our goal is to use innovative project delivery to reduce construction time, improve quality and safety, minimize traffic impact and be cost efficient while enhancing structural durability. Using drone technology, the City will use aerial data acquisition from digital as-built to record the completed construction to successfully maintain the lifecycle of the Stillman Boulevard Bridge.

Innovative Financing: The $4 million matching funds for BUILD Grant projects will be financed through an innovative approach that leverages the City of Tuscaloosa's General Fund Reserve for Future Improvements (RFFI). At the end of each fiscal year, any surplus funds remaining in the General Fund are transferred into the RFFI account. By capturing and reinvesting these residual resources, the City creates a sustainable funding stream for strategic projects without requiring new appropriations or debt issuance. This model transforms year-end savings into long-term capital investment, ensuring that operational efficiencies directly support infrastructure modernization and service enhancements. Utilizing this reserve mechanism reflects a forward-thinking financial strategy that maximizes existing assets while maintaining fiscal discipline. Doing so provides an innovative vehicle to leverage general funds that will optimize the impact and long-term effectiveness of BUILD projects.

Conclusion: The *Stillman Bridge Project* is a necessary and high impact investment that strongly aligns with the FY 2026 BUILD grant merit criteria, with relevance to rural and underserved community needs. The project improves safety, restores a critical asset to a state of good repair, enhances mobility and quality of life, and expands access to economic opportunities through a sustainable, collaborative, and forward-focused approach.

7. PROJECT READINESS

The City of Tuscaloosa's *Stillman Bridge Project* is well defined, fully scoped, and capable of advancing expeditiously to construction upon receipt of FY 2026 BUILD grant funding. The project has completed foundational planning and preliminary engineering activities, has identified required environmental approvals, and is supported by an experienced project delivery team and committed local resources. Consistent with the BUILD Notice of Funding Opportunity, the City is prepared to obligate funds promptly and meet all federal obligations and expenditure requirements.

1. PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTABILITY

The *Stillman Bridge Project* is well defined and supported by complete planning and preliminary engineering activities. The City has finalized the project purpose and need, established clear project limits, and identified the preferred bridge replacement concept. Preliminary engineering is approximately 60 percent complete and has confirmed the feasibility of the proposed design, construction approach, and right-of-way. The project has been structured to minimize construction complexity and avoid unnecessary staging or detours while maintaining access for residents and emergency services. These early constructability assessments reduce risk during final design and construction and support timely project delivery.

The *Stillman Bridge Project* is contained in the Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's Transportation Improvement Program for FY 2024-2027 (MPO Resolution MPO 2025-6 as amended). At the regional level, the *Stillman Bridge Project* is consistent with the **Tuscaloosa Area MPO Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) 2045,** adopted in 2022. The LRTP prioritizes preservation of existing transportation assets, reduction of safety risks, and improvement of multimodal connectivity across the region. The plan specifically emphasizes addressing structurally deficient bridges, improving pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and enhancing access within economically distressed communities.

At the local level, the project aligns with **FRAMEWORK - A Dynamic Guide for Tuscaloosa**, adopted in 2021, which establishes the City's long-range vision for growth, infrastructure, and mobility. This plan emphasizes reinvestment in existing infrastructure, improving safety for all users, and enhancing connectivity between neighborhoods and key destinations. It also prioritizes addressing deficient transportation assets and advancing multimodal corridors that improve access to opportunity, particularly in historically underserved areas and supports the MPO's performance-based planning framework by contributing to improved bridge conditions, enhanced safety outcomes, and increased accessibility. By modernizing an aging structure and incorporating multimodal elements, the project advances federally required performance measures related to infrastructure conditions and safety while supporting local and regional mobility objectives.

Right of way acquisition will commence once funding approval is procured by the City of Tuscaloosa within three months. There are sixteen parcels consisting of commercial

residential that will need to be acquired, and appraisals have already been conducted. No special ROW permits or approvals are needed for this project.

For construction techniques and phasing, the proposed improvements will be a standard design-bid-build approach.

2. PROPOSED SCHEDULE

The City of Tuscaloosa has developed a realistic and achievable Project Schedule that aligns with BUILD program requirements and demonstrates the ability to obligate and expend funds expeditiously following award.

Project Schedule

Project Meetings	January 2025-December 2027
Field Survey	February 2025-February 2026
Public Involvement	January 2025- July 2026
Preliminary Design	February 2025-March 2026
Preliminary Structure Design	June 2025-March 2026
Environmental Documentation	January 2025-March 2026
Right of Way Acquisition	January 2025-December 2027
Design Reports	April 2025-October 2026
Utility and Railroad Coordination	February 2025-September 2027
Utility Relocation	February 2025-December 2027
Final Structure Design	April 2026-December 2026
Final Design PS&E	March 2026-September 2027
Construction	January 2028-December 2029

The Development Phases to be funded with BUILD include ROW acquisition and construction. Upon receipt of BUILD award, the City will immediately advance final design activities, which are expected to be completed within six months. Environmental approvals and permitting activities will proceed concurrently with final design to maintain schedule efficiency. The project is expected to be advertised for construction bids within nine to ten months of award, with construction commencing within twelve months.

This schedule reflects the City's experience delivering similar federally funded transportation projects and meets USDOT's preference for projects that can initiate construction quickly and demonstrate near-term readiness.

3. NEPA AND PERMITTING

A **project kickoff meeting** with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) was held on January 15, 2025, establishing initial direction for the environmental review and part of the NEPA consultation process. Early agency coordination was initiated by the City of Tuscaloosa on March 3, 2025. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Airport District Office confirmed the project would not create environmental conflicts with nearby FAA facilities and declined participation as a joint or cooperating agency. Section 7 consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) began on March 10, 2025, and USFWS concurred on April 4, 2025, that the project would not adversely affect federally listed threatened or endangered species. Public involvement was conducted through a Public Involvement Meeting held on July 26, 2025.

Environmental and cultural reviews were completed in coordination with FHWA, State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), and Tribal partners. A Hazardous Materials Report was submitted to FHWA on July 11, 2025, and was determined sufficient for use in the **Categorical Exclusion (CE).** The Cultural Resources Report was initially submitted to SHPO on July 8, 2025, revised to address comments, and received SHPO concurrence on August 8, 2025. Tribal coordination was initiated by FHWA on August 11, 2025; at the request of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, additional field investigations were completed in October 2025 with no artifacts identified. The revised Cultural Resources Report received SHPO concurrence on December 12, 2025, and the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma concurred on January 9, 2026, requesting inclusion of an inadvertent discovery clause in all permits and applicable 100 percent construction drawings.

NEPA Class of Action: Categorical Exclusion

NEPA Status and Milestones: **NEPA analysis** has been underway and is almost complete. The draft CE is currently being reviewed by the City and FHWA. The FHWA will then have to sign the document to be completed. Two appendices are yet to be completed and are expected to be completed soon.

Reevaluation and Post-Approval Changes: Minor re-evaluations may be necessary and could be triggered if the Fish and Wildlife Service adds endangered species or if minor changes occur in design. Categorical Exclusion requires re-evaluation every three years and must be conducted through the FHWA. Assuming no major changes, the re-evaluation should cause very few (if any) issues. The City is well experienced in the NEPA process and is well poised to make any necessary adjustments.

Permits and Approvals: The City is not expecting any Clean Water Act Section 404 permitting actions as there are no streams or waterways near the bridge. No Section 7 permit will be needed. Only a stormwater permit from the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM) will be needed and will be obtained by the contractor before construction begins.

Coordination with DOT/FHWA: The City has already coordinated with the FHWA in multiple meetings, and there are no joint lead agencies. Other agencies currently reviewing documentation include USFWS and SHPO. Other local transportation agencies and stakeholders include the Railroad and the Metropolitan Planning Organization through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

4. PROJECT SUPPORT

The City of Tuscaloosa implemented a robust, inclusive public engagement program during the NEPA process for the *Stillman Bridge Project* to ensure transparency, meaningful input, and attention to communities most affected, including persons with disabilities. Two open-house public meetings were held on **June 26 and July 24, 2025**, with public comment periods extending through **July 11 and August 8, 2025**; comments were accepted online, by email,

voicemail, and mail, in ADA compliant facilities with advance accommodations available, ensuring broad access in helping shape a replacement bridge that meets local mobility, safety, and accessibility needs.

The *Stillman Bridge Project* serves West Tuscaloosa and supports access to educational institutions, employment centers, and essential services. The City has coordinated with internal departments and external partners to align the project with broader transportation and economic development goals. Community members and public and private stakeholders have expressed broad support with no opposition to date, with ongoing feedback to be incorporated as the project advances. Letters of support can be found **here**.

5. RISKS AND MITIGATION

The City has identified potential project risks and developed mitigation strategies to ensure successful implementation. Schedule risks will be minimized through early advancement of design and concurrent environmental review. Cost risks will be addressed through conservative cost estimating practices, independent cost review, and inclusion of appropriate contingencies.

Regulatory and permitting risks will be mitigated through early and ongoing coordination with permitting agencies and adherence to established federal processes. Utility coordination and right-of-way needs have been identified early in the project development process to reduce the potential for unforeseen delays. As plans progress, we have met multiple times with Alabama Power Company Transmission and Distribution Division leads to coordinate on utility relocation. The City will use established project controls to monitor schedule, budget, and performance throughout design and construction, ensuring accountability and timely corrective action if needed.

6. APPLICANT CAPACITY REVIEW

The City of Tuscaloosa has the technical, managerial, and financial capacity to successfully administer and deliver the *Stillman Bridge Project* in full compliance with applicable federal requirements. City staff have remained a good stewardship of Federal resources and have extensive experience delivering federally funded transportation and infrastructure projects and maintaining established systems to ensure compliance, accountability, and timely project delivery.

Roles and Responsibilities: The City of Tuscaloosa will serve as the grant recipient and will be responsible for overall project administration, compliance, and delivery. Day-to-day project management will be led by the City's Engineering and Public Works staff, who will oversee design coordination, procurement, construction administration, and reporting. Responsibilities include grant administration, consultant and contractor oversight, schedule and budget management, coordination with the Canadian Pacific Kansas City Railroad, and compliance with all federal requirements.

Project leadership will be provided by licensed professional engineers within the City's Engineering Division, supported by qualified consultants as needed. **Resumes** or key personnel, including John Clint Bradford, P.E., William Butler, P.E., and Zachary O'Neal, P.E., are included with the application and demonstrate direct experience managing projects of similar size, scope, and complexity. Upon award, Carly Standridge, CPA, the City's Chief Financial Officer, will be responsible for overseeing all financial components, drawdowns, and compliance reporting.

Federal Funding Experience: The City has a strong record of administering federally funded transportation projects. This includes the 2020 BUILD Moorings/Western Riverwalk Project ($15 million), which involved construction of a pedestrian bridge, shared-use paths, and multimodal improvements in West Tuscaloosa. The City recently closed out a grant from the Federal Aviation Administration ($5.27 million with a $300 thousand local match) to reconstruct the terminal apron at the Tuscaloosa National Airport.

In addition, the City of Tuscaloosa is currently managing a grant from the Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization ($10 million federal with $2.5 million local match) in partnership with the Alabama Department of Transportation, overseeing roadway reconstruction, pedestrian enhancements, underground utilities, and stormwater improvements. Also, the City is currently administering more than $60 million in CDBG-DR funding for rebuilding and upgrading infrastructure across multiple corridors following the 2011 tornado.

Federal Regulations and Compliance: City staff routinely manage federal procurement, contract administration, and reporting requirements and are experienced in complying with Buy America provisions, the Davis-Bacon Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act, and applicable environmental and civil rights requirements. The City maintains robust financial management systems and internal controls to ensure proper stewardship of federal funds.

Project Planning and Delivery: The City of Tuscaloosa regularly advances transportation projects through adopted long-range plans and the metropolitan planning organization process, as applicable, and coordinates closely with regional and state partners. Its recent project portfolio demonstrates the ability to deliver projects comparable in size, complexity, and risk to the *Stillman Bridge Project*, including coordination with railroads, utilities, and multiple public partners. This experience underscores the City's readiness to successfully deliver a BUILD funded bridge replacement project on schedule and in compliance with all federal requirements.

8. COST EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW: BENEFIT-COST ANALYSIS

The City of Tuscaloosa's *Stillman Bridge Project* evaluated existing road conditions as the baseline condition or No-Build scenario to the Build Scenario which represents the proposed road improvements. The BCA spanned a 33-year project period. Years one through three have been modeled to reflect the project's construction period. Project costs have been accounted for during those years. Project benefits begin to accrue in 2029, which is the first year after construction completion. Project benefits have been modeled over a 30-year period. This period was selected based upon the City's plan to undertake significant operation and maintenance activities throughout the 30-year operational time period. Based on these operations and maintenance plan, the City believes that a 30-year project's useful life is appropriate for this BCA modeling exercise.

The City believes that the four-lane road network on Stillman Boulevard Bridge will be used for at least 60 years with the required operations and maintenance. Therefore, the City has included a Residual Value and Remaining Service Life in the computation of project benefits but limited the residual benefit to an additional 10 years or a total useful life of 40 years.

Project benefits were collected by various methods and consistent with US DOT BCA 2025 Guidance. The City collected transportation data for accidents over a nine-year period in the project area and applied a crash modification factor based on planned road improvements to determine project benefits.

Current Status and Problem to be Addressed	Proposed Project to Address Problem	Example Impacts
Due to age and deterioration, the current carrying capacity of the Stillman Boulevard Bridge has been reduced by 20 – 30%.	Replace Stillman Boulevard Bridge to meet current regulations and standards and to remove restrictions on trucks.	Elimination of truck detours, reducing average travel distances by approximately 1.5 miles per trip.
The Stillman Boulevard Bridge does not provide adequate grade separation for the Railroad.	Replace Stillman Boulevard Bridge to meet current horizontal and vertical clearances for safe and compliant use.	Improved freight movement efficiency, lowering transportation costs, and fuel consumption.
Width of the sidewalks does not meet the current minimum standard.	Replace Stillman Boulevard Bridge to add additional access to bikes and pedestrians.	Improved safety and capacity for pedestrians and cyclists.