

AmericaWalks/Safe Roads Alliance Community Change Grant - 2023

Briefly describe your community, its demographics and some key data points about the pedestrian activity of your community members. Max. 800 characters.*

Springfield is Massachusetts' third largest city and the major metropolitan area of western MA. Its population of 156,000 is 45% Latino-primarily Puerto Rican, 21% African American, 31% Caucasian, 3% other. The City is among the poorest in Massachusetts with a median household income of \$34,311-U.S.\$53,046 and per capita income of \$18,133-U.S.\$28,155.

In 2021 there were 8 pedestrian fatalities, the highest per capita in MA! There are 18 active neighborhood councils, with reducing speeding a major concern of all. The City suffers from a historic street grid of very wide, generally four lanes, arterials that enable vehicles to travel through residential areas at very high speeds. Nearly a quarter of Springfield residents are without a car, increasing transit and walking dependency.

Please provide a brief description of your organization and the capacity it has to accomplish the intended project. Max. 800 characters.*

[WalkBike Springfield](#) are residents who have been working to improve conditions for walking and bicycling in Springfield, MA since 2015. We work closely with our DPW, regional planning agency, and community organizations to identify and advise on roadway projects so they are truly designed for pedestrian safety. WalkBike Springfield is recognized by government, neighborhood councils, and residents as Springfield's go-to authority on pedestrian safety issues. We can accomplish this project because of our partnerships. Our track record includes Complete Streets-funded citywide sidewalk repairs and crosswalk repainting with enhanced "zebra" pattern; Shared Streets-funded sidewalk widening and pedestrian signalization; and Safe Routes to School installations of new improved crosswalks.

Briefly describe 2 things your organization has worked on in the past related to promoting walking or walkable communities. Max. 800 characters.*

WalkBike Springfield is responsible for our City passing a Complete Streets policy. We had a major role in developing the Prioritization Plan accepted by MassDOT. We conducted two Complete Streets Demo Days to educate residents and gain support for the projects. We wrote the proposals for implementation funding, and closely tracked DPW's implementation for best practices.

We advocate for improving the condition and the accessibility of our existing off-road Riverwalk and for the implementation of a new rail to trail that would provide a walking connection through the central sections of the City. As a result, there is now a designated point person for Riverwalk conditions, and newly installed historic sign markers to enhance the walking experience.

Please describe and explain any existing partnerships or support your organization has that would add to the success of the project. *

- We have the support of the allied statewide organizations [WalkBoston](#) and [MassBike](#). WalkBoston has conducted 13 walk audits in Springfield that have informed our advocacy, the Safe Routes to School initiatives, and the Mass in Motion program. WalkBike Springfield chair, Betsy Johnson, is the current president of WalkBoston. The Connecticut River MassBike chapter assisted WalkBike Springfield to update Springfield's bicycle network plan.
- In Springfield, we work closely with neighborhood councils on efforts to reduce speeding. Once MA law permitted, we got the City to pass the 25mph default speed limit and install noticeable signage. Then we raised the funds to create "Try to Drive 25 – It's the Law" yard signs. Working with neighbors throughout the City, these signs were placed in yards along numerous "speedways." We have worked with the Police to increase the number of speed detection signs.
- We also work closely with community organizations such as Wayfinders Community Advocates initiative to improve citywide streetlighting and improve sidewalk conditions. We are part of the Livewell Springfield coalition, a project of the Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts.
- We have strong working relationships with City Councilors who have been key in working with us to get safety projects implemented. A prime example is State Street. There is no safe pedestrian crossing of State Street to the Central Library from the parking lot that is across the street -- two pedestrians have been recently killed. In November 2021, on the National Day of Remembrance we honored the 38 fatalities, including 8 pedestrians in 2020-2021 on the Library steps. Together with City Councilors a new crossing is now being designed.
- We work with Springfield DPW engineering to review project plans to advice on pedestrian and bicycle safety issues. Projects have been modified because of our input.
- We work with the pedestrian specialists at the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission's (PVPC is our regional planning agency). PVPC assisted Springfield with its Complete Streets program. Betsy Johnson is the pedestrian representative on the Joint Transportation Committee.

Please note potential steps to focus on the diversity of your partnerships and community engagement.* Our proposed project is entirely based on the expansion of partnerships and community engagement through outreach. We believe that implementation of a comprehensive 3.3-mile corridor-long pedestrian safety improvement project, including a Multi Use Path, new crosswalks, signals, a variety of "pedestrian safety measures", and other walkability improvements including signage, benches, lighting, and items of interest will only happen when there is a diverse consensus and advocacy for the project. This necessitates involvement of the school communities from two colleges, four high schools, two middle schools, an elementary school, as well as from seven major employers, numerous smaller businesses, three neighborhood councils, the City Senior Center, large public open

space users (including an ice rink and swimming pool), two churches, a hospital, the National Guard, advocacy organizations, transit authority, as well as our federal, regional, state and local government agencies and elected officials.

Please describe the project or strategy that you will implement. Max. 800 characters.*

*let's talk about this one

Our Complete Streets project prioritization outreach conducted by the regional planning agency in 2020 identified comprehensive corridor-long initiatives, rather than the current focus on intersection by intersection improvements. We identified a 3.3-mile length of Roosevelt Ave. as a top priority. We recognize that it will take the combined voices of the many residents, businesses, and institutions to have local and state government find a way to fund such a project. Our project will

- Engage an organizer to conduct outreach to the dozens of entities along the roadway, including a survey and targeted walk audits
- Organize a charette forum to develop a consensus for pedestrian safety improvements
- Work with federal, regional, state, and local officials to begin an implementation plan.

Please identify one or two challenges facing your community that this project will address. Max. 800 characters.

In the past 5 years there have been 319 fatal and serious crashes, including 66 pedestrian deaths in Springfield. Our roadway design encourages speeding. Despite education campaigns to “slow down” and increased police enforcement, engineering solutions are overdue. Although the Roosevelt Ave corridor includes numerous schools, major places of employment, a large park, churches, etc. the roadway is unwalkable and dangerous to cross. This includes from a senior housing development to the City Senior Center across the street. Our challenge is to develop a united voice for a comprehensive redesign so that the roadway serves pedestrians as well as vehicles! A corridor long project will not happen unless there is demand from the full diversity of Roosevelt Ave.

How will your proposed project focus on equity and bring walking/walkability to underserved populations? Max. 800 characters.*

Springfield is the definition of “underserved populations.” The purpose of the project is to involve seniors, youth, and neighborhood residents along with employers to become a unified voice for action for change. Currently, because of no sidewalks, limited, substandard crosswalks, speeding vehicles, these populations are NOT able to walk to and from destinations along Roosevelt Avenue – Children/youth need to be able to walk to school, get to the park, including a swimming pool and ice rink. Workers should have the option of being able to safely walk to work, including from the bus stops. As mentioned, nearly 25% of Springfield residents do not own a car, needing to walk to and from transit.

What is your definition of a successful project? Max. 800 characters.*

- At least 50 participants, representing each of the target constituencies attend the Charette forum
- At least 200 surveys from all target constituencies demonstrate a serious need and desire for improving Roosevelt Ave walkability
- We are able to demonstrate to Federal, State and Local officials that action on corridor-long walkability improvements must move forward. This includes actual project design for the entire corridor, including a funding plan, hiring of design consultants along with continued community participation
- Expanded involvement by students and Springfield residents in pedestrian safety advocacy
- A new commitment to "corridor" projects by Federal, State and Local transportation agencies.

How do you plan to evaluate and track the project? Max. 800 characters.*

To track the project, we will develop a three month timeline for contacting our detailed list of schools, businesses, agencies, etc. We will track both the direct contacts and collection of surveys related to Roosevelt Ave walkability.

The qualitative evaluation includes:

Results of the survey

Level of government follow-up commitment, including proceeding to develop a schematic design and seeking implementation funding

Degree of commitment of those contacted to improving Roosevelt Ave walkability.

The quantitative evaluation includes:

Level of financial support for the Charette forum

Number of Charette participants

Amount of government involvement

Diversity of the participants in the Charette forum

Number of additional WalkBike Springfield participants, especially students.

Please provide budget details for this project. How will you use the resources (materials, staff, etc.)?

Max. 800 characters.*

Outreach staff: 60 hours @ \$25/hour = \$1,500

Printing & charette materials: in-kind donations, including:

- Existing conditions aerial maps will be supplied by the Pioneer Valley Planning Agency and the Springfield DPW.
- Food for the charette will be supplied by Big Y Supermarket Company (one of the companies along Roosevelt Ave.)
- Space for the charette will be at one of the Roosevelt Ave. schools.