

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Cortez Safety Action Plan** outlines a strategic approach to implementing safety projects and programs with the goal of eliminating fatal and serious injury crashes in Cortez. The plan is guided by **Vision Zero**, a global effort to achieve zero traffic deaths, and the **Safe System Approach**, the Federal Highway Administration’s comprehensive transportation safety framework.

In alignment with Vision Zero and the Safe System Approach, the plan focuses on fatal crashes and crashes that resulted in serious injuries. These are known as **Killed or Serious Injury Crashes**, or KSI crashes. It also emphasizes the protection of **Vulnerable Road Users**—pedestrians, cyclists, and motorcyclists—who are at greater risk of severe injury in a crash.

By adopting this framework, Cortez will be positioned to apply for implementation funding through the **U.S. Department of Transportation’s Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) program**, helping turn safety initiatives into actionable improvements.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EQUITY

Outreach for the Cortez Safety Action Plan focused on identifying safety concerns, generating ideas for solutions, and gauging support for various safety countermeasures and programs. Outreach efforts included:

- Back to School focus group
- Hispanic/Latino roundtable focused on Spanish speakers
- Public open house
- Survey in English and Spanish
- Website with interactive comment map
- Presentation to City Council

Cortez and Montezuma County residents were highly engaged in the plan: 44 residents attended in-person engagement events (focus groups/open house), 797 people responded to the survey, and residents left 409 comments on the interactive map.

Figure 1: Safe Streets Open House



THEMES

Some consistent themes emerged from outreach efforts surrounding safety issues and potential solutions.

Safety Issues

- Several safety issues were mentioned frequently, including speeding, running stop lights and stop signs, distracted driving, poor yielding to pedestrians, intoxicated driving, lack of road striping, and visibility issues.
- Bicycle and pedestrian issues included a lack of quality infrastructure, including inconsistent sidewalks and bike lanes. Pedestrian crossings, especially across Main St, were mentioned often.
- The most frequently mentioned locations with safety issues included:
 - Hwy 491 (Broadway) and 160 (Main St), especially in front of schools and popular pedestrian crossing locations.
 - Locally-owned roads that were mentioned frequently included Empire St and Mildred St.
 - Participants noted issues with speeding in front of elementary, middle, and high schools.

Figure 2: Open House Feedback Boards



Safe Streets Solutions

- Programming interventions received strong support, especially Safe Routes to School programming. Other programming ideas, including DUI reduction campaigns, stricter enforcement, and safety education campaigns were also broadly supported.
- Specific safety countermeasures that were strongly supported included better street lighting, sidewalks, and pedestrian crossings. New or modified traffic lights received support from over half of survey respondents, while bicycle facilities received slightly less than 50% support.
 - The need for improved street lighting was mentioned frequently in focus groups, the public meeting, survey, and interactive map comments.
- Traffic calming measures received less support than other types of countermeasures. The only traffic calming measure included on the survey that received more than 50% support was speed humps. Only about one third of respondents supported traffic circles, medians, and road diets.
- Two types of countermeasures appeared highly controversial: roundabouts and the medians on Main Street. Participants generally disliked the medians on Main Street. Roundabouts were mentioned frequently: participants either strongly supported or strongly opposed them.

Figure 3: Hispanic/Latino Roundtable



PROMOTING ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

The high level of public involvement in the safety planning process was driven by extensive outreach efforts. The Cortez Police Department (CPD) played a key role, leveraging social media, official websites, and community events to raise awareness and encourage participation.

CPD distributed information at Third Thursday events and the Farmers’ Market, distributed mailers in utility bills, and visited local businesses to share surveys and flyers. Special efforts were made to engage seniors, the Hispanic/Latino community, and schools. Surveys were distributed at a Hospice of Montezuma meeting and emailed to over 600 residents, primarily seniors. The City also hosted its first-ever Spanish-language roundtable, and local schools helped promote the survey and Back to School focus group.

SAFETY ANALYSIS

536 crashes occurred on Cortez’s roadways from 2018 – 2022. Five people were killed in crashes and 21 were seriously injured. Pedestrians were disproportionately affected, accounting for three of the five fatal crashes and five of the 21 serious injury crashes. Table 1 describes Cortez crashes by severity and mode of transportation.

Table 1: Cortez Crash Severity

	ALL CRASH SEVERITY	PEDESTRIAN- INVOLVED CRASHES	BICYCLE- INVOLVED CRASHES	MOTORCYCLE- INVOLVED CRASHES
Fatal	5	3	0	2
Serious Injury	20	5	0	2
Other Injury	102	2	5	2
Property Damage Only	409	1	1	1
Total	536	11	6	7

A review of Cortez’s crash history over the past five years reveals which factors may contribute to fatalities or serious injuries. Factors that **play a strong role** in KSI crashes include:

- **Mode:** Pedestrians and motorcyclists are highly at-risk if they are involved in a crash. Bicyclists are also at a higher risk of being injured in a crash.
- **Type of roadway:** State highways have much higher overall crash rates and KSI crash rates than City roads. The top two crash corridors are both state highways. 69% of KSI crashes occur on these corridors, which represent just 6.3% (4.6 miles) of the City’s road miles.
- **Intersections and driveways:** Crashes occur more frequently at intersections or driveways than midblock locations.
- **Lighting:** KSI crashes are more likely than non-KSI crashes to occur in dark conditions or at dawn/dusk.
- **Alcohol or drugs:** Alcohol or drugs are involved in 12% of all crashes but 40% of fatal crashes and 25% of serious injury crashes.

Figure 4 maps the location of KSI crashes in Cortez, and Figure 5 maps total crashes and crashes by mode.

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Figure 4: Cortez KSI Crashes, 2018 -2022

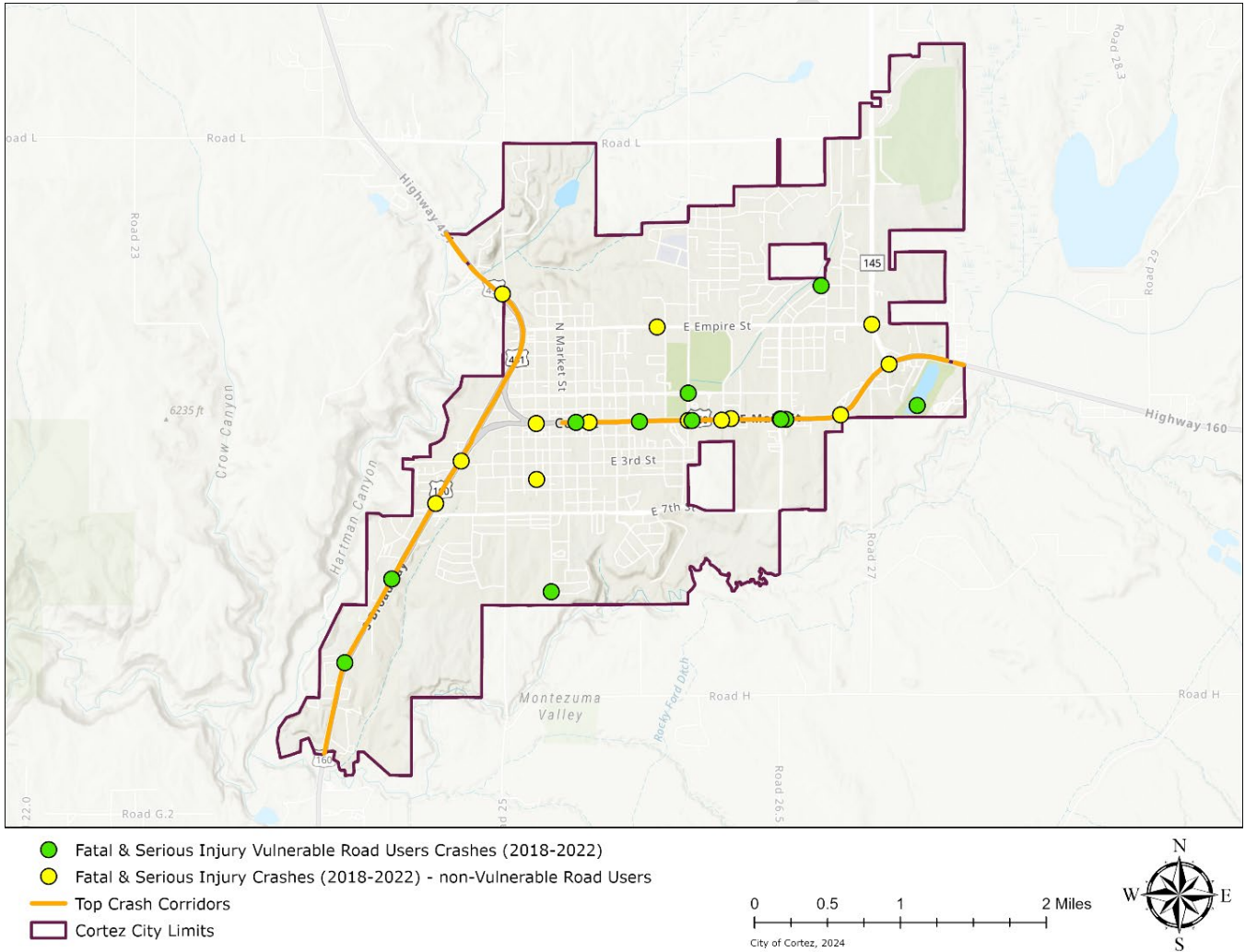
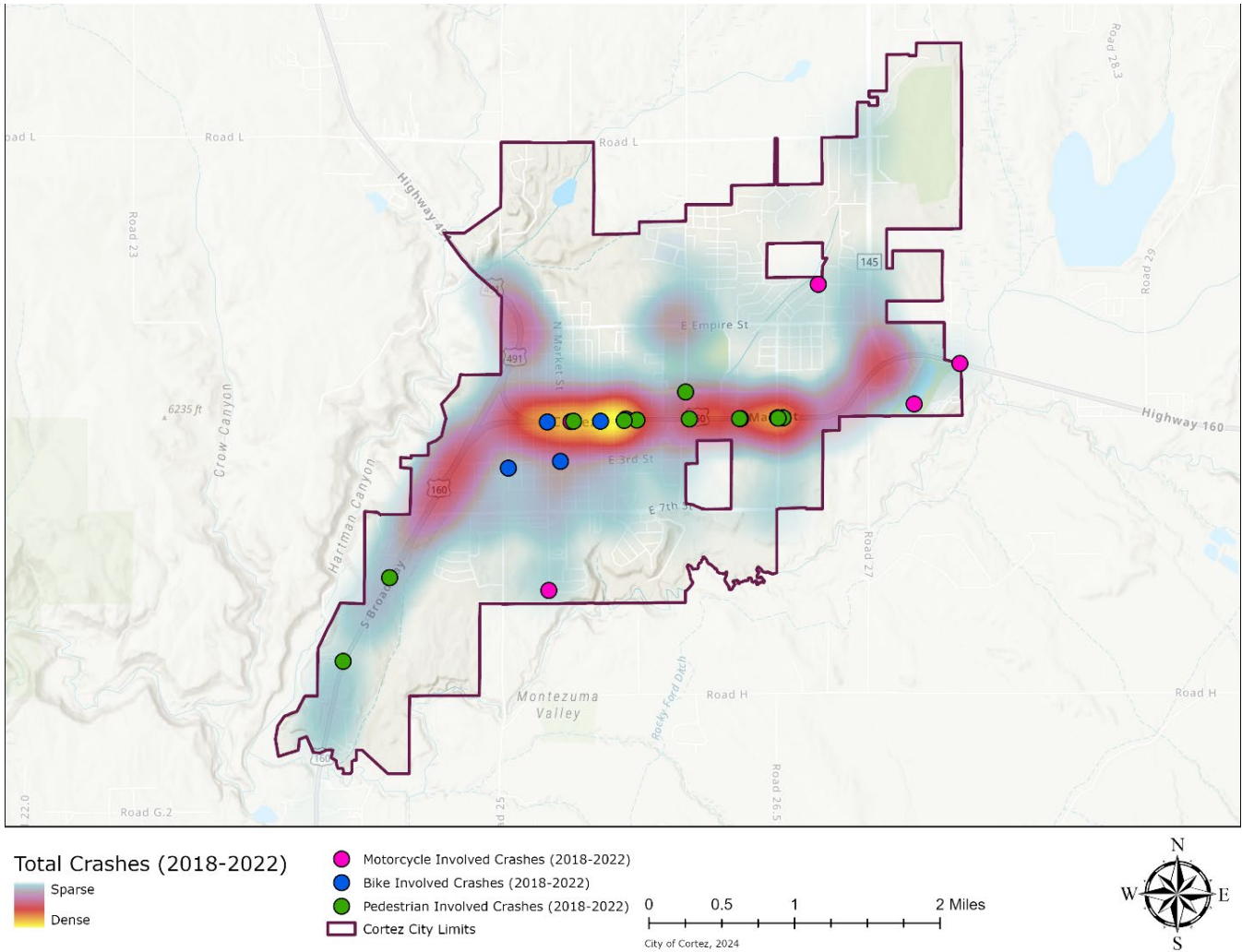


Figure 5: Cortez Total Crashes, 2018 - 2022



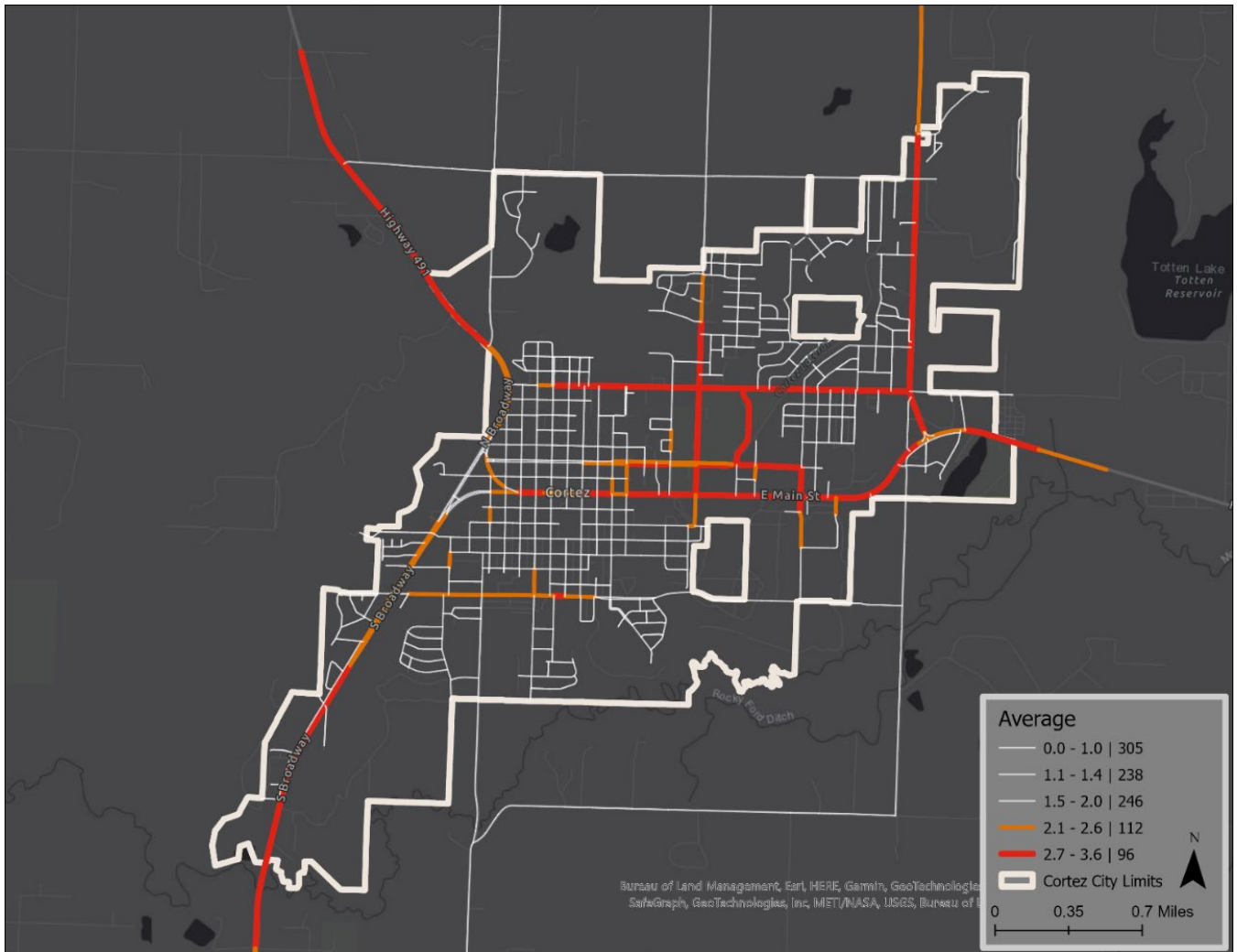
HIGH RISK NETWORK

Cortez’s High Risk Network (HRN) identifies streets where safety issues could occur in the future. This proactive approach to safety planning attempts to identify issues before fatalities or severe injuries occur. The HRN, mapped in Figure 3, analyzes the following risk factors for crashes:

- Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) estimates
- Bicycle volume estimates
- Pedestrian volume estimates
- Average speed estimates
- Light truck volume estimates

Main St, Empire St, Roger Smith Ave, and Hwy 145 are Cortez’s highest-risk streets. Other streets with risk factors include Hwy 491, Montezuma Ave, Mildred Rd, and 7th St.

Figure 6: Cortez High Risk Network



RECOMMENDATIONS

This Safety Action Plan recommends three types of interventions to align with the Safe Systems Approach and achieve the goal of zero traffic fatalities and serious injuries in Cortez:

1. **Site-Specific:** Changes to the built environment at locations with identified safety risks. These interventions focus on building safer roads and promoting safer speeds.
2. **Systematic:** Changes that can be applied on a broader scale such as changes to City policy and practice into the future. These types of changes can create safer roads, safer speeds, and better post-crash care.
3. **Programmatic:** Events and programs that educate residents, create a culture of safety, and address dangerous behaviors. Programmatic efforts work to foster safe road users and responsible behaviors.

SITE-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Access control: set clear guidelines and boundaries to manage the flow of vehicles and pedestrians.

Intersection geometry changes: Alter intersection geometry to slow vehicle speeds and reduce pedestrian exposure.

Bike facilities: Provide separate spaces for bicycling while slowing traffic speeds.

Sidewalks or ADA compliant walkways: Give pedestrians separated space for walking, allow access for wheelchairs and mobility devices.

Trails: Provide separate space for walking and biking, increase recreational opportunities.

Signalized pedestrian crossings: Improve safety for people crossing at locations with a traffic light.

Unsignalized pedestrian crossings: Improve safety for people crossing the street at locations without a traffic light.

Speed limit compliance and traffic calming: Slow vehicle speeds in areas with high pedestrian and bicycle activity.

Median islands and community gateways: Slow speeds as vehicles enter Cortez, improve aesthetics, and communicate community identity.

New traffic signals or roundabouts: Provide safer and more efficient traffic flow at busy intersections.

SYSTEMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Develop and adopt a Complete Streets Policy or Resolution.

Develop and adopt a Bicycle/Pedestrian Master Plan.

Establish a Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program.

Update pedestrian facilities throughout the city to comply with ADA and PROWAG guidelines and develop a local ADA transition plan.

Consider the completion of a sidewalk inventory and gap analysis.

Develop a plan for striping maintenance and regular resurfacing projects.

Install speed feedback signs.

Develop a road safety audit (RSA) program and engage with relevant agencies to understand implementation.

Prioritize improvement projects in regional and local budgets.

Conduct a transit feasibility study to examine whether fixed-route transit could be operated in Cortez, potentially with connections to nearby communities.

Lower all residential speed limits to 20 mph.

PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- Host a Cycle Safety Summit
- Implement targeted education campaigns for drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists.
- Coordinate with the school district to host a children's/youth/adult bicycling workshop.
- Build upon Safe Routes to School (SRTS) efforts.
- Pilot automated enforcement, such as red-light cameras and speed cameras.
- Continue the MioVision program to install and enhance video monitoring systems.
- Host targeted events and educational Vision Zero campaigns for the general public that promote safe behaviors and increase awareness of traffic laws.
- Implement targeted education campaigns for driving under the influence.
- Implement targeted education campaigns for teens and young adults.
- Create changes in striping and raised medians to provide visual cues to drivers regarding desired travel speeds benefiting the surrounding development intensity.
- Create gradual step-downs in posted speed limits.
- Enforce Colorado's new ban on phone use while driving.
- Enforce no parking in bike lanes, especially adjacent to schools.
- Identify and/or create a safety action plan coordinator position
- Create a multi-agency Transportation Safety Task Force
- Prioritize collaboration with CDOT
- Support a continued transparent and data driven safety crash analysis
- Promote transparency by keeping the public informed on the status of the plan, project implementation, and safety trends.
- Continue to build relationships with the Hispanic/Latino community and distribute Spanish-language outreach materials.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Plan Implementation section of this Safety Action Plan outlines the criteria used to prioritize location-specific recommendations and identifies priority projects. 52 potential projects were scored based on safety, equity, public priority, and feasibility. Table 2 describes the projects with the highest prioritization scores.

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Table 2: Prioritized Project List

PROJECT	PROJECT TYPE	RELATIVE COST (\$ - \$\$\$)	TIMEFRAME	PRIORITIZATION SCORE (MAX 5)
Sligo St Corridor	Bike lanes/lane narrowing	\$	Near-Term	5.0
Mildred Rd Corridor	Bike lanes/lane narrowing	\$	Near-Term	4.5
Empire St Corridor	Bike lanes/lane narrowing	\$	Near-Term	4.2
Main St/Mildred Rd Intersection	Signalized crossing improvements	\$	Near-Term/ Medium-Term	4.2
Empire St/Mildred Rd Intersection Crossing Improvements	Unsignalized crossing improvements	\$	Near-Term/ Medium-Term	4.2
7 th St Corridor	Bike lanes/lane narrowing	\$	Near-Term	4.0
Main St Midblock Crossing between Roger Smith Ave and Edith St	Unsignalized crossing improvements	\$\$	Medium-Term	4.0
Montezuma Ave Corridor	Bike lanes/lane narrowing	\$	Near-Term	3.8
Main St/Elm St Intersection	Unsignalized crossing improvements	\$\$	Medium-Term	3.7
Main St/Market St Intersection	Signalized crossing improvements	\$	Near-Term	3.7
Empire St/Park St Intersection	Unsignalized crossing improvements	\$	Near-Term/ Medium-Term	3.7
Main St/Sligo Intersection	Signalized crossing improvements, intersection geometry	\$\$\$	Near-Term/ Long-Term	3.5
Main St/State St Intersection	Signalized crossing improvements, intersection geometry	\$\$\$	Near-Term/ Long-Term	3.5
Sligo St/Cactus St Intersection	Unsignalized crossing improvements	\$\$	Medium-Term/ Long Term	3.5
Sligo Midblock Crossing Between 1st St and Cactus St	Unsignalized crossing improvements	\$\$	Medium-Term/ Long Term	3.5
Cactus St Corridor	Traffic calming	\$	Near-Term	3.5

Projects that add bike lanes scored highly because of their low costs and safety benefits. Pedestrian crossing improvement projects also scored highly, especially the crossings on Main St, which were a top public priority. Many of these crossing improvement projects can be implemented in the near-term by making signal modification and/or adding low-cost safety improvements like better signage and striping. Other treatments, such as rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFBs), pedestrian hybrid beacons (PHBs), pedestrian refuge islands, curb extensions, geometry changes, and pedestrian illumination could be added as medium- or long-term solutions.