

Streets For Everyone – 3/20/23 Council Study Session Testimony

Good evening,

My name is Gary Shaff, [REDACTED] and I'm here representing Streets For Everyone, a volunteer Action Team of the Ashland Climate Collaborative, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Streets for Everyone submitted a written recommendation to the city's Administration Department on 3/10 with a request that our recommendation be included in this evening's meeting packet. It wasn't so I'm submitting that information now.

Streets for Everyone believes the draft CIP's dedication of almost all of the city's transportation revenues to maintaining or repairing street asphalt ignores other community needs. We respectfully suggest that the Council invest instead in transportation projects that address the mobility needs of all residents - people of all ages and abilities.

The Council's priorities support this approach. Of the Council's 32 priorities only one, priority number 6, "street maintenance and repair" is reflected in the draft CIP. That is contrasted with the creation of a practical and safe bicycle transportation network which not only address "street maintenance and repair" but also 12 of the Council's other priorities including:

- Emergency Response
- Protect the Community's Character
- Community and Land Use Planning
- Create social equity and racial justice
- Downtown revitalization and beauty
- Affordable workforce housing
- Multi-modal transportation
- Implement Climate Energy Action Plan
- Diversify the local economy
- Expand employment opportunities
- Broaden options for tourism/visitors
- Attract more families to live in Ashland

Time prevents addressing the relationship between a practical and safe bicycle network and the Council's priorities but I've included this detail in my written remarks. My point here is, that the Council should be leveraging every opportunity to achieve its priorities while focusing on the community's needs and not on the asphalt condition alone.

Streets for Everyone's is recommending just four changes to the draft.

- 1) Include "protected bike lanes" in the description of major road projects that are currently listed in the draft CIP,
- 2) Include "traffic calming" in the description of minor road projects,
- 3) Change the category of projects entitled "bicycle boulevard" to "walk/bike streets" to better reflect the objective of these types of projects, and
- 4) Schedule and fund, in either fiscal year 2024 or 2025, protected bike lane improvements on A Street, Hersey, S. Mountain, and Wightman using city fees and rates.

These changes will ensure that the city has a functional bicycle transportation network that people of all ages and abilities can safely and confidently use for every day, in-town travel.

**Council Priorities and Their Relationship
to a Practical and Safe Bicycle Transportation System
in Ashland**

The relationship between the Council's priorities and a functional bicycle transportation network that people of all ages and abilities can safely and confidently use for everyday, in-town travel are detailed below.

Emergency Response: Wide bike lanes on N. Main and Siskiyou Boulevard south of Walker can be used by people driving cars in the event of an evacuation; reducing the total evacuation time by 20 minutes.

Street Maintenance: People riding bicycles have little impact on pavement condition. If a substantial number of in-town trips are made by bike it will reduce wear.

Protect the Community's Character: People on bikes are happy, friendly, and healthy—all characteristics of how Ashland sees itself.

Community and Land Use Planning: Creating a safe and convenient bike network is a requirement of Oregon's Climate Friendly and Equitable Communities Planning Rule.

Create social equity and racial justice: Bikes are social and racial equalizers. Almost everyone can ride a bike and avoid the high cost of car/truck ownership.

Downtown revitalization and beauty: People on bikes will shop locally and many people riding bikes in downtown would make it uniquely picturesque.

Affordable workforce housing: Transportation accounts for the second most costly expense of Ashland households. Residents who forgo auto ownership or own one fewer car will have a larger budget.

Multi-modal transportation: Making it safe and convenient to bicycle in town could lead to 40 percent or more of all travel within the city occurring by walking or bicycling.

Implement Climate Energy Action Plan: Reducing auto/truck use (i.e. vehicle miles of travel) is recognized in the CEAP as an essential outcome in order to meet Ashland's climate goals. Making it safe and convenient to bicycle is the surest and most cost effective way to achieve that outcome.

Diversify the local economy: A green economy is a diversified economy. Making bicycling a viable and safe way to get around will attract families, entrepreneurs, educators, and people with skills that are critical in coming decades.

Expand employment opportunities: A diversified economy (as above) will increase employment opportunities.

Broaden options for tourism/visitors: Tourists love places that are unique. With a transportation system that promotes bicycling, Ashland will be even more attractive than it is now. It will also compliment the already famous road and mountain biking attractions in the region.

Attract more families to live in Ashland: Creating a place where kids can bicycle to visit friends and family, go to the library, visit a park, grab a snack with a friend, get to school or soccer practice is a dream most parents have given up on in Ashland and every other city in the U.S. Creating an all ages and abilities bicycle network can help parents achieve one of their most important goals, to raise their children to be independent and self-reliant people.



To: Ashland City Council
From: Streets for Everyone, an Action Team of the Ashland Climate Collaborative
Date: March 10, 2023
RE: Recommendations for the 2024-2029 Transportation Capital Improvement Program

Thank you for the opportunity to share these recommendations. We'd be pleased to discuss this matter further with you. To do so, please contact us at info@ashlandclimate.org.

Executive Summary

Background: This memorandum includes recommendations regarding the draft Transportation Capital Improvement Program (CIP). These suggestions will help the City of Ashland achieve goals laid out in the current Transportation System Plan and the Climate and Energy Action Plan. They will also ensure a safe and accessible walking and biking network.

Opportunity: Ashland's City Council has an opportunity to ensure that it is practical, safe, and convenient to walk or bike from anywhere to everywhere in Ashland for people of all ages and ability. This, in turn, will cut vehicle miles of travel and carbon emissions.

Funding: Funding for the current draft CIP is structured in a way that does not guarantee that the pedestrian and bicycle network will be improved. These improvements will rely on outside funding sources such as competitive grants to administer plans included in the CIP. Relying on grant funding would produce slow and disconnected improvements to biking and walking infrastructure and miss prime opportunities to create a functionally cohesive multi-modal transportation system.

Policy Recommendations: Include protected bike lanes in the description of major road projects that are currently listed in the draft CIP. Include "traffic calming" in the description of minor road projects. In either 2024 or 2025, schedule and fund protected bike lane improvements on A Street, Hersey, S. Mountain, and Wightman using fees and rates. Identify additional revenue sources to be approved to guarantee funds for street projects to promote safety for all users.

About us: Streets for Everyone is a volunteer Action Team of the Ashland Climate Collaborative (www.AshlandClimate.org), a 501c3 organization. ACC serves as a hub for community collaboration to reduce our climate impact and build a more equitable and resilient Ashland. The vision of Streets for Everyone is that people of all ages, abilities, and means can choose to bike, walk, and roll throughout Ashland for their everyday travel needs, because it is safe, convenient, and efficient. ACC and its Action Teams are supported by local charitable contributions. Learn more at StreetsForEveryone.net.



Recommendations for the 2024-2029 Transportation Capital Improvement Program

Background

The city's current Transportation System Plan (TSP) and the Climate and Energy Action Plan have called for the reduction in vehicle miles of travel (VMT). The City Council has a great responsibility and opportunity before them to make investments in the city's future that will help to realize this outcome. Transforming the existing transportation system to make bicycling and walking practical, safe, and convenient is fundamental to reducing VMT.

We know from surveys in other metropolitan areas that approximately half of the city's residents are interested in bicycling but don't. They are afraid to share the road with autos/trucks, due to the risk of being seriously injured or killed. Improvements, described below, will add protection between people riding bikes and passing cars/trucks to eliminate that obstacle.

The 2024 - 2029 Transportation Capital Improvement Program (CIP), as currently drafted, includes dedicated funding (fees & rates) for projects that preserve or rehabilitate street surfaces (i.e pavement management). While these projects might include improvements to pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, it is not guaranteed that they will be implemented and largely rely on federal or state grants. The competition for these funds is fierce and must be distributed among Oregon's 36 counties and 241 cities, making it unlikely for many of the city's projects to be funded. As an example, the city of Medford's TSP, updated in 2019, identified \$277,719,000 of needed bicycle improvements. It is obvious that there are too many projects chasing too few dollars for the CIP's grant strategy to succeed. To substantially improve our pedestrian and bicycle network, we should edit the draft to allocate dedicated CIP funds rather than rely on uncertain future grants.

Postponing one repaving project for just one year will allow the city to complete four essential protected bike lane (PBL) projects in 2025 (on Hersey, A Street, South Mountain, and Wightman - all of which have adequate curb-to-curb distance to include a PBL without altering the curb, gutter or drainage). Those improvements plus the addition of PBLs to repaving projects already listed in the draft CIP (on North Mountain, Ashland, Oak, and Siskiyou) will create a functional bicycle network on the city's major street system. Reports from other cities suggest that these projects will greatly increase the amount of bicycle traffic, which in turn will contribute to the reduction of VMT per capita. Much more will need to be done to ensure that people of all ages and abilities can get from anywhere to everywhere in town on a bicycle. But the addition of PBLs, as detailed above, during the next two years, will represent a huge leap forward.



Recommendations for the 2024-2029 Transportation Capital Improvement Program

Opportunity

The city's decision to include PBLs on Ashland Street represents the kind of leadership and vision that is crucial to the city's future. Similar leadership is needed to ensure that it is practical, safe, and convenient to walk or bike from anywhere to everywhere in Ashland for people of all ages and abilities.

Other urban areas have demonstrated that people walking and biking can account for a high percentage of in-town travel, potentially as much as 40 percent compared to nine percent now ([Personal Travel in Oregon](#), Table RV-5, page 112). Only by making bicycling and walking safe and practical is there any potential for a shift in mode, from auto/truck to other low-carbon modes of travel.

The Council has the opportunity to accelerate the development of an equitable bicycle network, suitable for all ages and abilities, and enhance the existing pedestrian network by making several minor changes and one significant change to the current draft CIP.

Funding

Since 2015, the CIP has been structured to allocate almost all city transportation funds to pavement management and rely upon grants and system development charges to make additional improvements to the pedestrian and bike network. This is understandable, as street life cycles are relatively short and expensive to repair. As stated previously, while pavement management projects may include multi-modal transport infrastructure, this leaves no additional funds to improve the bike/ped network on streets that aren't up for repair. By adjusting the funding, the city could meet goals 1 and 2 of the current TSP.

Goal #1: Create a "green" template for other communities in the state and nation to follow.

Goal #2: Make safety a priority for all modes of travel.

These goals, and others that will be developed with the upcoming update of the city's TSP, to make walking and bicycling practical and safe, cannot be realized without local funding. Relying upon grant funds, as the current draft CIP proposes, doesn't guarantee a functional bike/ped network and may result in isolated improvements that serve few. Ashland needs a completely functional and accessible bike network, for people of all ages and abilities. This will provide citizens with a choice in how they travel, and an opportunity to not depend on cars.

Sidewalks, access ramps, PBLs, and traffic calming features must be included, where warranted, on every city project. All revenue sources, including gas tax, system development charges, franchise fees, food and beverage taxes, and utility fee funding must be used for these types of improvements and not reserved exclusively for pavement management projects.



Recommendations for the 2024-2029 Transportation Capital Improvement Program

Oregon's constitution provides that revenue from taxes on motor vehicle use and fuel "shall be used exclusively for the construction, reconstruction, improvement, repair, maintenance, operation and use of public highways, roads, streets, and roadside rest areas in this state," without restrictions on the mode of travel (Article IX Section 3a). The city's allocation of state gas taxes, approximately \$1.6 million / year, can and should be used for creating a balanced transportation system. The other sources of city revenues should also offer flexibility in their use and, if restricted, the Council should amend local codes to allow their use to address transportation safety, independent of the mode of travel.

Policy Recommendation

The use of traditional painted bike lanes or sharrows on major streets within the city does not provide the essential safety for bikers of all ages and abilities. Goals 1 & 2, above, reflect the community's desire

to fundamentally change the transportation system. PBLs are currently not included in the City's Streets Standards Handbook or the Ashland Municipal Code 18.4.6. Changing this is essential to provide the technical tools to achieve the citizen developed goals and policies. We have before us a prime opportunity to truly change the attitude and mode in which we travel.

The City Council can ensure creation of an equitable transportation system by 2030 through the following:

- 1) Including protected bike lanes on major road projects already included in the staff prepared draft 2024 – 2029 Transportation CIP.
- 2) Scheduling and adding protected bike lanes on streets under Ashland's jurisdiction that include adequate curb to curb width.
- 3) Applying to ODOT for Carbon Reduction Program or Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funds to rebuild E. Main from Siskiyou to Walker, and Walker from Ashland Street to E. Main to include protected bike lanes. These streets are too narrow to add protected bike lanes without modifying the curb, gutter and drainage.
- 4) Exploring jurisdictional exchange to add protected bike lanes on streets that are under the jurisdiction of Jackson County or the Oregon Department of Transportation. The implications on the city's future maintenance liability must be analyzed, additional revenue sources identified, and a funding mechanism(s) put in place/approved.

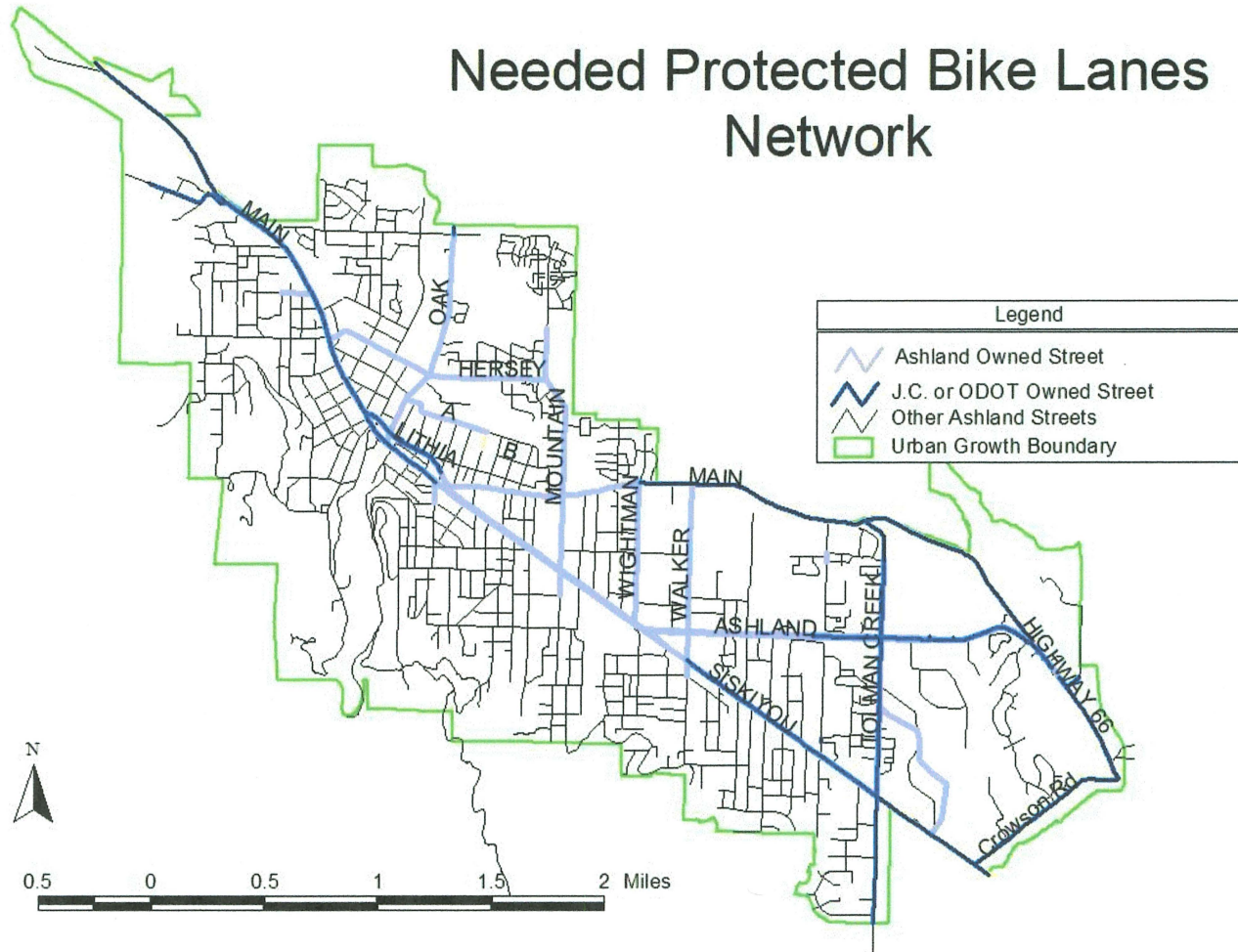
The figures that follow illustrate the breadth of the challenge. Figure 1 shows streets, by roadway jurisdiction, that warrant (due to either speed or traffic volume) protected bike lane improvements. Figure 2 identifies streets under Ashland's jurisdiction that lack adequate curb to curb width to include protected bike lanes, and those streets that are currently scheduled for improvement in the draft 2024 – 2029 CIP and which warrant protected bike lanes. Figure 3 includes our recommended changes to the draft CIP which are highlighted in yellow.

This memorandum demonstrates the opportunities available to improve the city's transportation infrastructure. Your consideration of these recommendations to the CIP is a sound investment in the future of Ashland. These changes will help to make our streets safer and more inclusive, while also reducing traffic congestion and carbon emissions. If you would like additional information or further advice, please do not hesitate to reach out to us at streets4everyone@gmail.com.



Recommendations for the 2024-2029 Transportation Capital Improvement Program

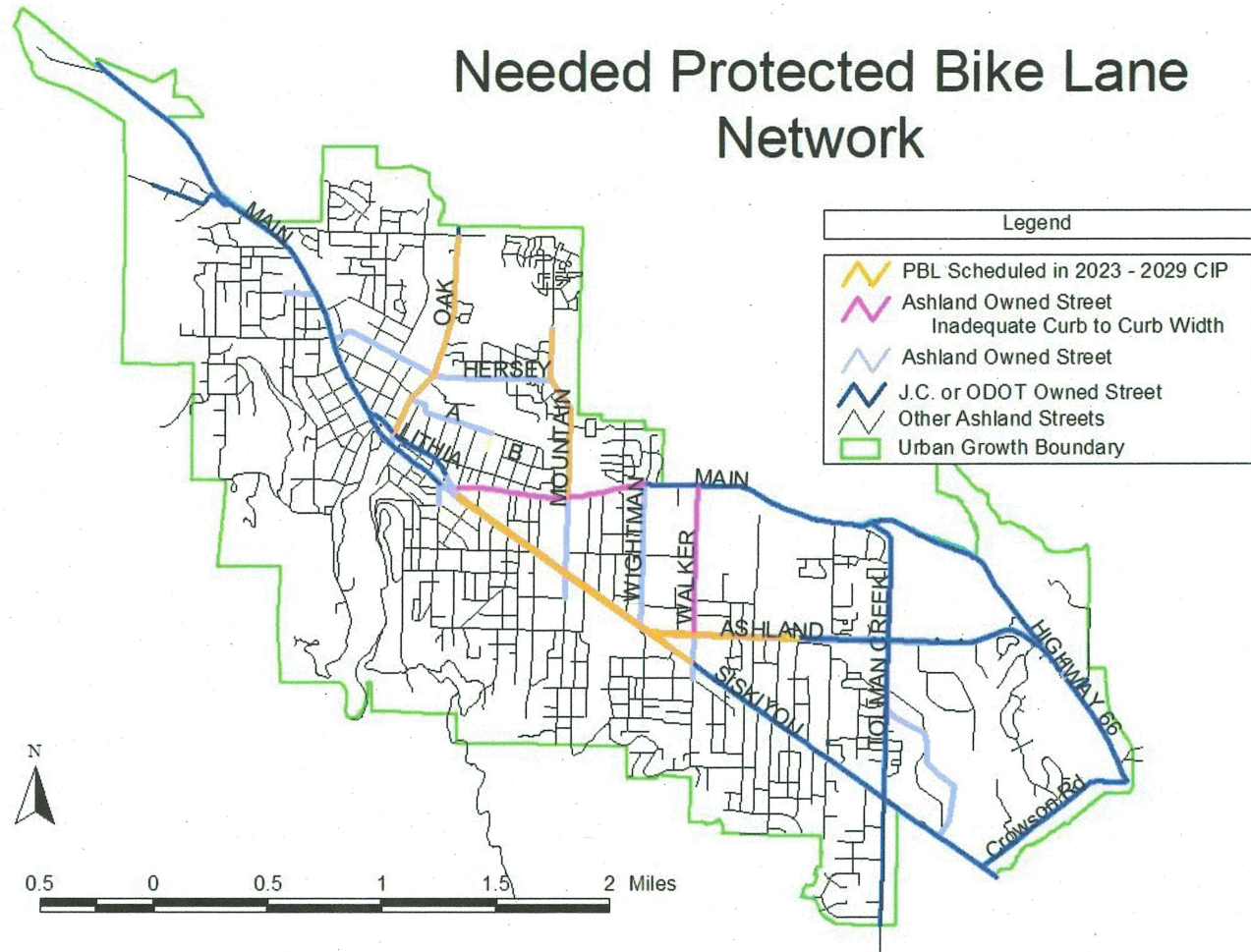
Figure 1





Recommendations for the 2024-2029 Transportation Capital Improvement Program

Figure 2





Recommendations for the 2024-2029 Transportation Capital Improvement Program

The attached recommended transportation capital improvement program, Figure 3, includes the following changes:

- 1) It explicitly notes that protected bike lanes will be included on street/overlay projects on major streets (i.e. boulevards and avenues as identified in the city's functional classification map).
- 2) It explicitly notes that traffic calming will be included on street/overlay projects when they occur on minor streets.
- 3) It retitles the section "bicycle boulevards" to "walk/bike" streets to better reflect the desired function of important, low-volume residential streets.
- 4) It removes Lithia Way – Oak to Helman bicycle boulevard project. Lithia, like N. Main through downtown, is unsuitable for a shared-lane treatment due to the high volume of motor vehicles using the street. Sharrows do not increase safety for people riding bicycles and waste precious resources. The city needs to add protected bike lanes on major streets, rather than paint and stencils. The savings can be diverted to creating bike/walk streets on Helman and Iowa Streets.
- 5) It postpones the paving/reconstruction of W. Nevada Street from 2029 to 2030 in order to construct protected bike lanes on four city owned streets (see #6 below).
- 6) It shifts funding for W. Nevada Street, as above, to four protected bike lane projects on; a) Hersey - N. Main to N. Mountain, b) A Street - Oak to 5th, c) S. Mountain - E. Main to Henry and d) Wightman - E. Main to Siskiyou. All of these streets have sufficient curb-to-curb width to add protected bike lanes without modifying the curb, gutter or drainage



Recommendations for the 2024-2029 Transportation Capital Improvement Program

Figure 3

Recommended Transportation Capital Improvement Plan 2024 - 2029 Construction Years													
Project Description		FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	Project Total	Street SDC	Other (grants)	Fees & Rates	
Roadway													
Hardesty Site Development & Equipment Storage			\$80,000	\$80,000					\$160,000			\$160,000	
Micro-sweeper			\$200,000						\$200,000			\$100,000	
City wide chip seal		\$145,000		\$255,000					\$255,000		\$400,000		
Clay Street - Father Avenue to Siskiyou Boulevard (STBG/CMAQ)			\$579,754	\$1,000,000	\$1,125,000				\$2,704,754			\$209,022	
Where is Father Ave??											\$6,981,195		\$209,022
Subtotal Roadway		\$145,000	\$859,754	\$1,335,000	\$1,125,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$3,119,754	0	7,381,195	\$469,022	
Street Overlay/Reconstruction													
Ashland St - Siskiyou Blvd to Faith Ave (inc. PBL*)		\$1,000,000	\$2,500,000						\$2,500,000			\$2,500,000	
N. Mountain Ave - I-5 overpass to E. Main St (inc. PBL**)		\$500,000	\$5,000,000	\$5,500,000					\$10,500,000			\$10,500,000	
Oak St - City Limits to E. Main St (inc. PBL*)				\$1,000,000					\$8,000,000			\$8,000,000	
Siskiyou Blvd - E Main to Walker Ave (inc. PBL*)					\$1,000,000	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000		\$11,000,000			\$11,000,000	
Park St - Siskiyou Blvd to Crestview Dr (inc. traffic calming)							\$500,000	\$2,500,000	\$3,000,000			\$3,000,000	
W Nevada St - Vansant St to Oak St (inc. traffic calming)								\$500,000	\$500,000			\$500,000	
* buffered bike lanes w/ conversion to PBL upon sweeper purchase													
** PBL from E. Main to Bear Creek Bridge													
Subtotal Reconstruction		\$1,500,000	\$7,500,000	\$6,500,000	\$8,000,000	\$5,000,000	\$5,500,000	\$3,000,000	\$35,900,000			\$35,900,000	
Sidewalk / Pedestrian													
Beaver Slide - Water Street to Lithia Way				\$285,000					\$285,000	\$276,792			\$8,208
Walker Ave - Oregon St to Woodland Dr					\$300,000				\$300,000	\$75,000	\$225,000		
Ashland Street - Liberty St to S. Mountain Ave						\$400,000			\$400,000	\$100,000	\$300,000		
Clay St - Siskiyou Blvd to Mohawk St								\$425,000	\$425,000	\$106,250	\$318,750		
Lincoln St - E. Main to Iowa St								\$300,000	\$300,000	\$75,000	\$225,000		
Subtotal Pedestrian		\$0	\$0	\$285,000	\$300,000	\$400,000	\$425,000	\$300,000	\$1,710,000	\$633,042	\$1,068,750	\$8,208	
Walk / Bike Streets													
B St B - Oak to N. Mountain			\$50,000	\$75,000					\$125,000	\$42,375	\$12,500		\$70,125
8th St - A Street to E Main				\$35,000					\$35,000	\$11,865	\$3,500		\$19,635
Water Street - Hersey St to N. Main						\$50,000			\$50,000	\$16,950	\$5,000		\$28,050
Ashland St - Morton to University Way					\$50,000				\$50,000	\$16,610	\$5,000		\$28,390
Oregon/Clark St - Indiana to Harmony Lane						\$65,000			\$65,000	\$21,593	\$6,500		\$36,465
Walker Ave - Siskiyou Blvd to Peachey Road						\$65,000			\$65,000	\$22,035	\$6,500		\$36,907
Helman St - Nevada to N. Main							\$80,000		\$80,000	\$27,120	\$8,000		\$44,880
Iowa - Central Bike Path to S. Mountain								\$80,000	\$80,000	\$27,120	\$8,000		\$44,880
Lithia Way - Oak to Helman St							\$80,000	\$80,000	\$80,000	\$0			\$80,000
Subtotal Walk/Bike Streets		\$0	\$50,000	\$110,000	\$100,000	\$130,000	\$80,000	\$160,000	\$680,000	\$185,668	\$55,000	\$309,332	
Protected Bike Lane - retrofit													
Hersey - N. Main to N. Mountain		4567		\$648,722					\$648,722				\$648,722
A Street - Oak to 5th		2127		\$302,131					\$302,131				\$302,131
S. Mountain - E. Main to Henry		2335		\$331,676					\$331,676				\$331,676
Wightman - E. Main to Siskiyou		2952		\$419,318					\$419,318				\$419,318
Subtotal Protected Bike Lane		\$0	\$0	\$1,701,847	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,701,847				\$1,701,847
* Estimated Cost Per Mile (bollard protected)				\$165,000									
* Estimated Cost Per Mile (cement curb protected)				\$750,000									
TOTAL		\$1,645,000	\$8,409,754	\$9,931,842	\$4,325,000	\$5,840,000	\$6,005,000	\$3,460,000	\$42,861,801	\$818,730	\$8,504,945	\$37,988,405	