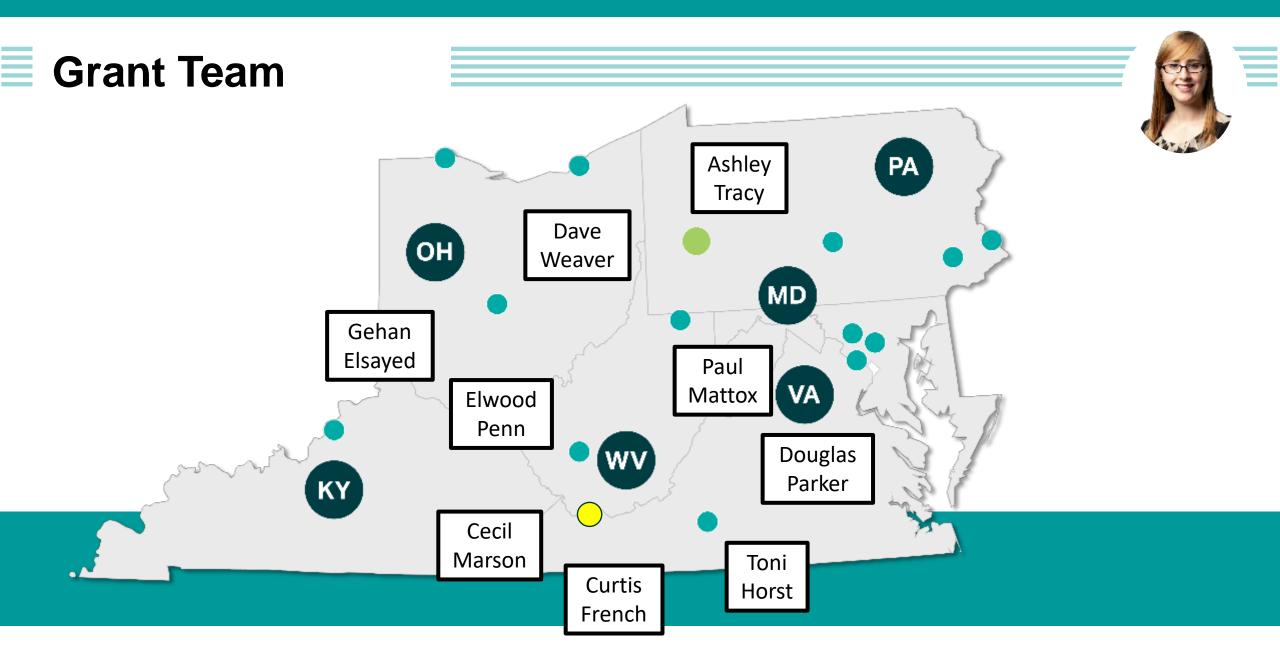
Reconnecting Bluefield West Virginia Division of Highways Planning Grant Application to the Reconnecting Communities Pilot Ashley Tracy, PE, PTOE, AICP



Presented at the WVAMPO Conference | Huntington, West Virginia | May 22, 2024

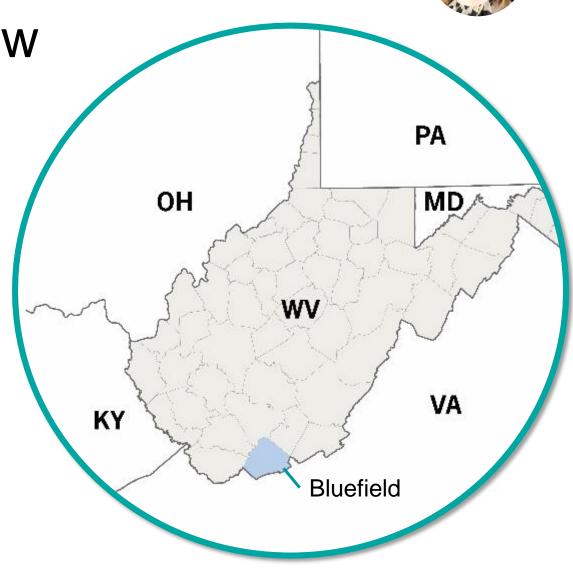


- Grant Team
- City of Bluefield Context
- Reconnecting Communities Program
- Grant Application
- Lessons Learned
- Q&A

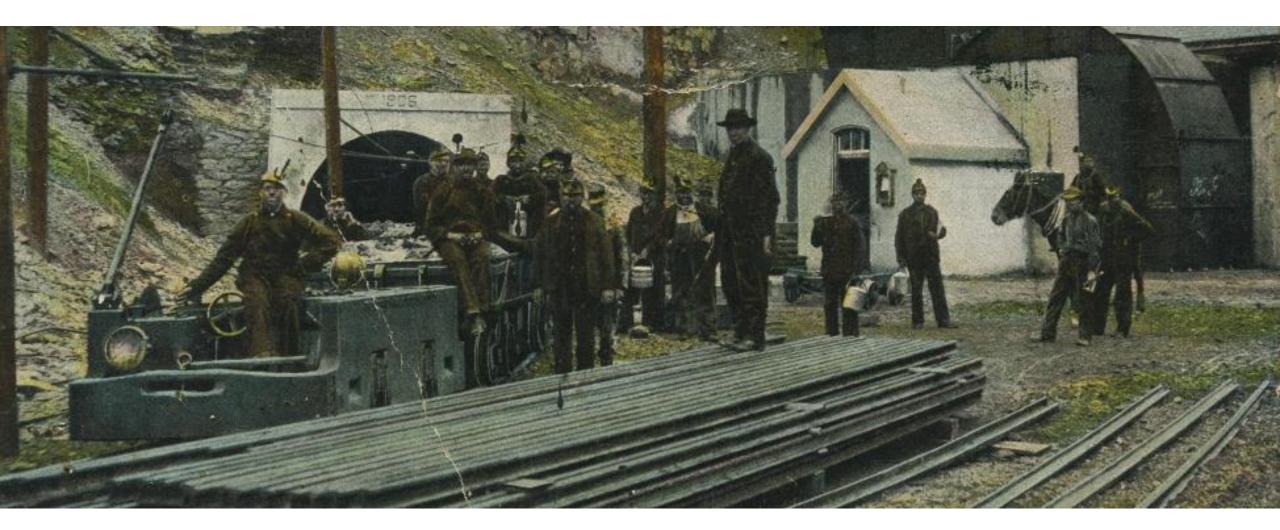


City of Bluefield

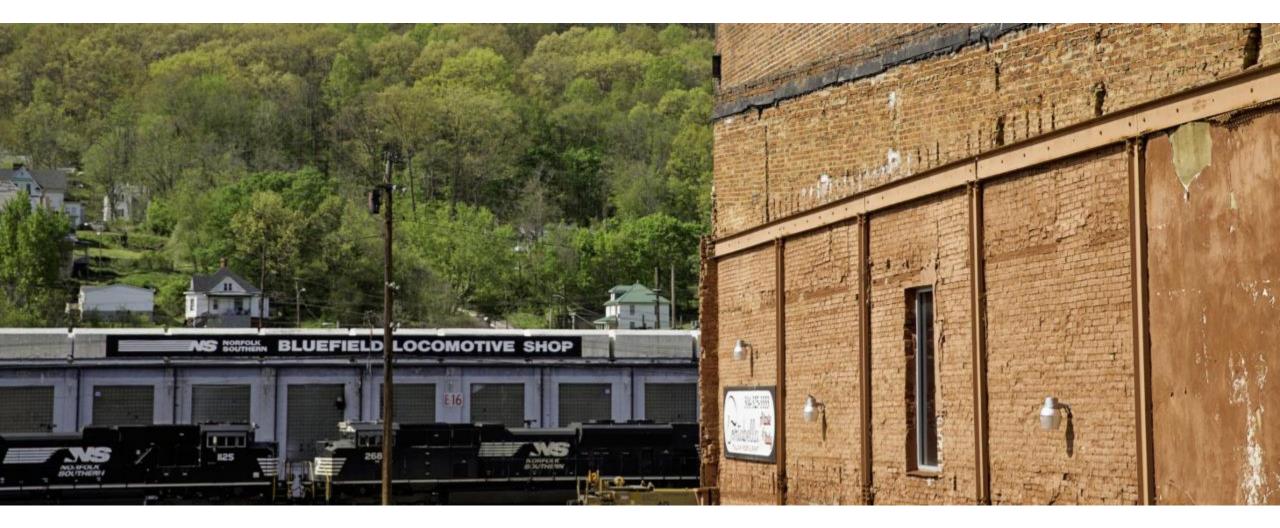
- Fast Facts Then and Now
- Establishment 1889
- Location Southern WV
- 10,000 Population



Establishment 1889



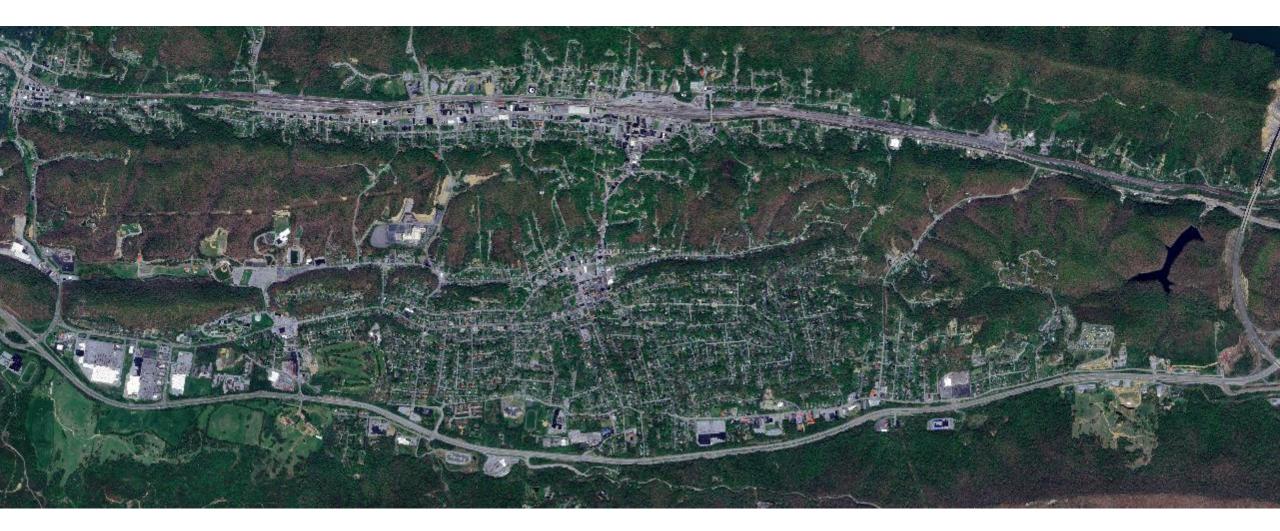
Existing Conditions



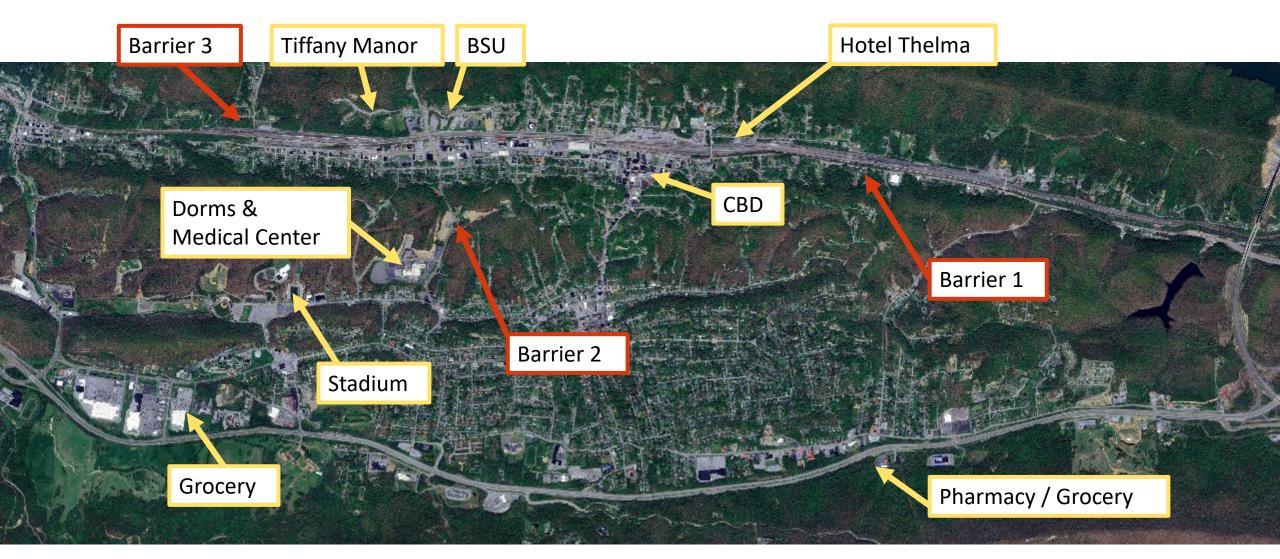




Project Location

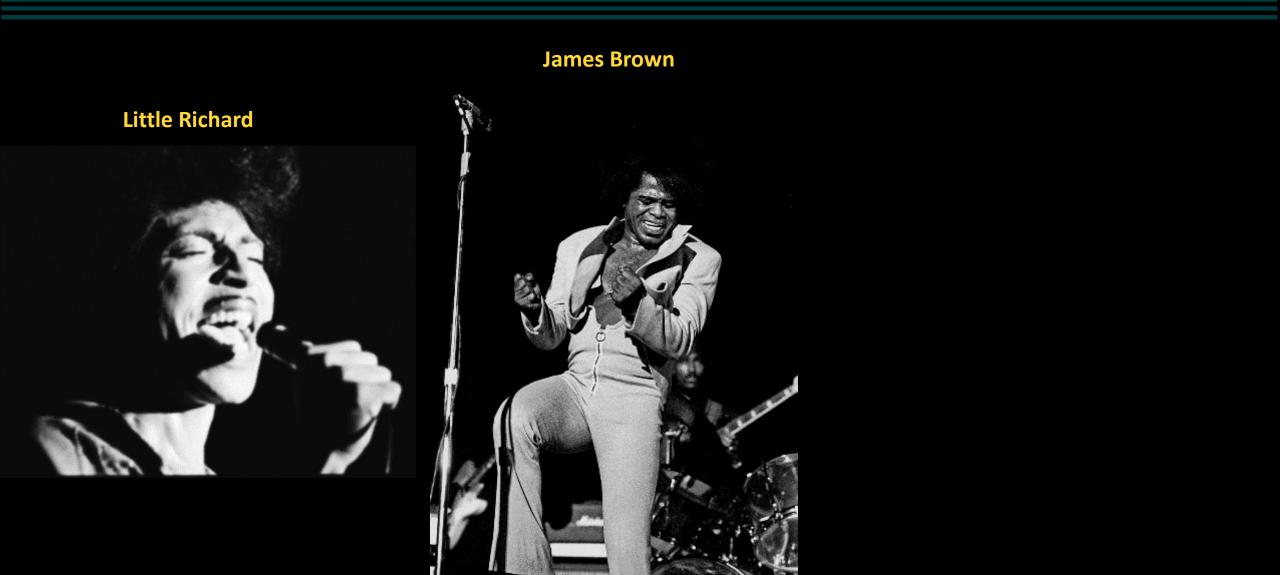


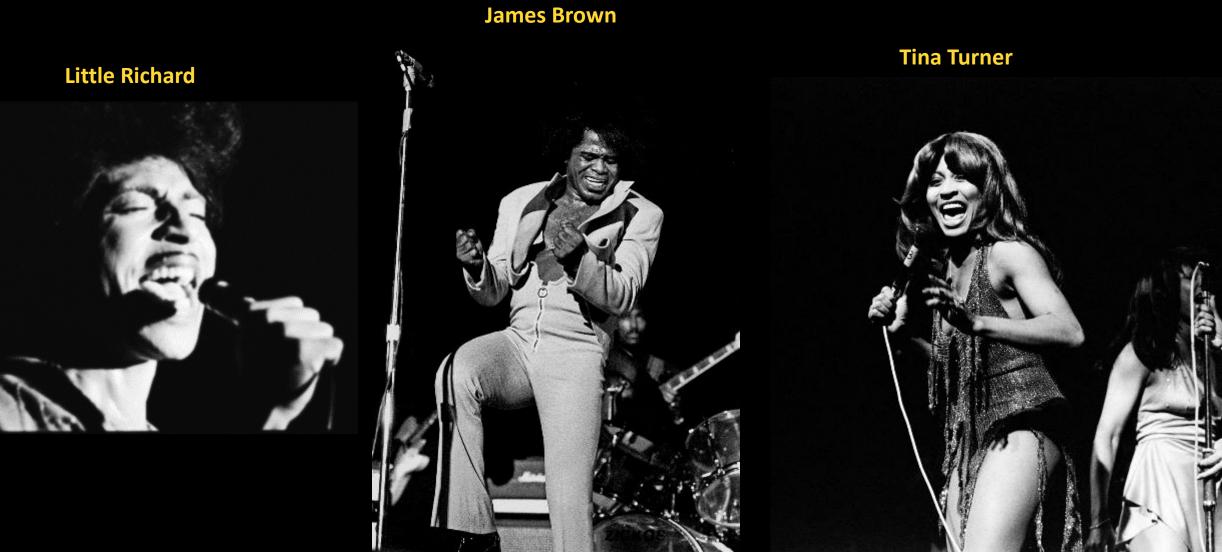
Community Anchors and Barriers





James Brown





East End History

The East End community has a rich history as a center of African American life and culture. When Bluefield State University had active dormitories, numerous famous African American musicians, such as James Brown, Little Richard, Duke Ellington, Tina Turner, Joseph Arrington (aka "Joe Tex"), etc. performed for the students. These musicians stayed in one of two hotels while in the East End, either Thelma's or Traveler's, both of which were listed in the "Green Book," a travel guide that listed safe places for African American travelers to stay.² The East End's Hancock Mansion (aka the "Alpha House") is on the National Register of Historic Places.

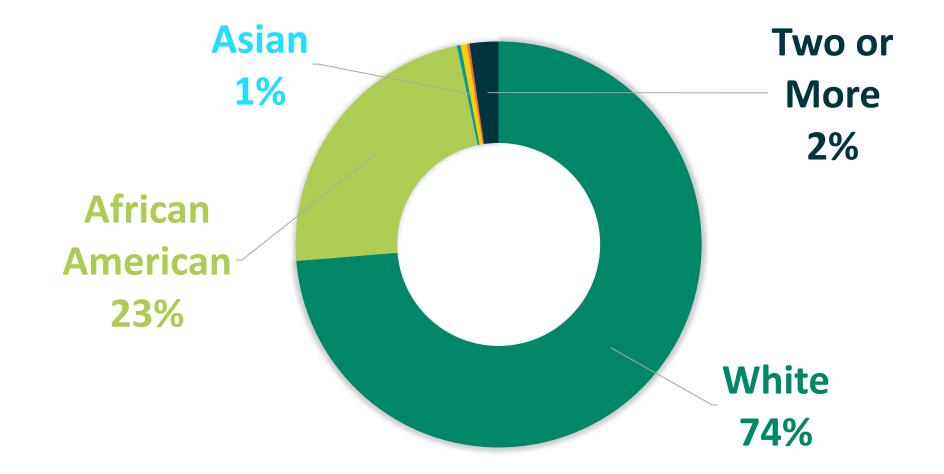
There is a strong desire in the community to honor its rich cultural history by investing in its preservation. As such, the community would like to see the:

- Preservation and restoration of Thelma's Hotel,
- Placing of Thelma's Hotel on the National Register of Historic Places,
- Preservation and restoration of the Traveler's Hotel, and
- Preservation and restoration of the Old Hancock School (currently apartments).

Historically, the East End community also provided basic services such as shopping to Bluefield State University students. Residents maintain that the loss of the dormitories and football program contributed to the East End's decline. Current plans to re-establish those dormitories is, therefore, a boon to the revitalization of the East End community. The construction developed by this Project's planning effort will directly support such economic development by improving safety and circulation for pedestrian and bicycle travelers, opening up options for transit, and creating a better connection between the East End, downtown, and Bluefield State University.

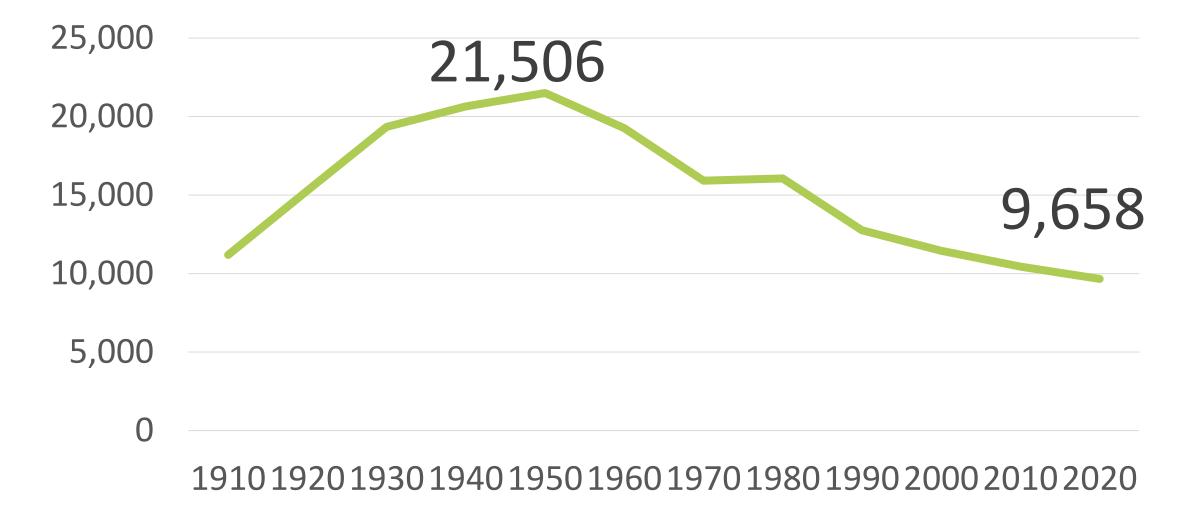
Bluefield State





https://datausa.io/profile/geo/bluefield-wv





Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods

Repairing the harm caused by infrastructure choices of the past

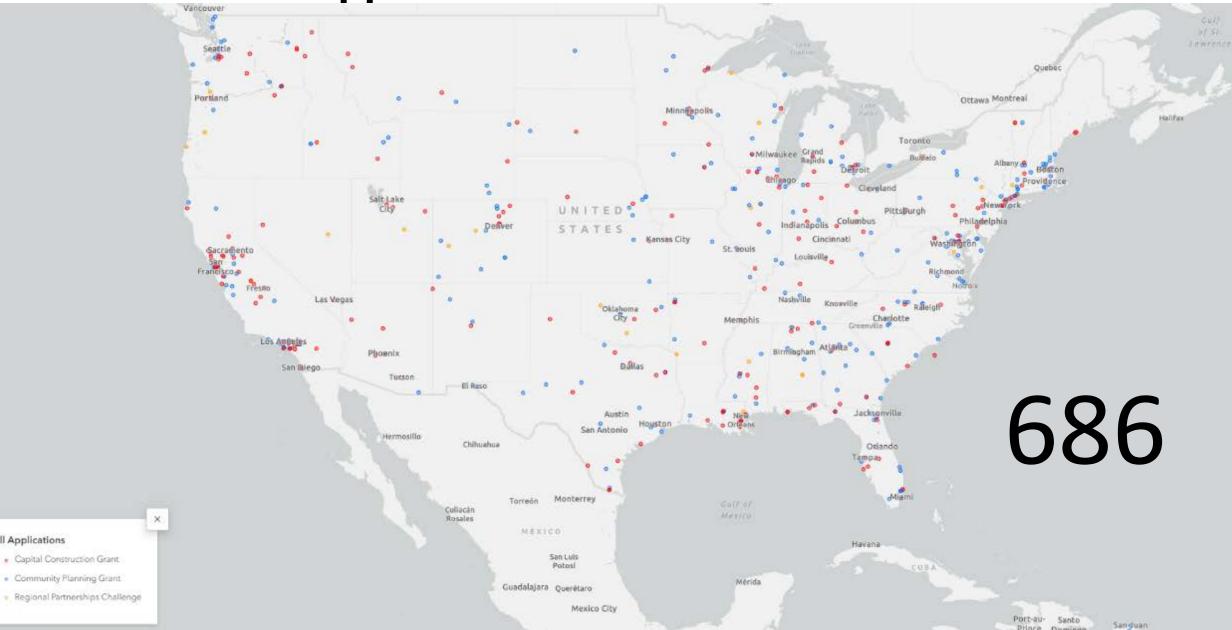
U.S. Department of Transportation

Reconnecting Communities Program

- Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) FY2022
- Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) FY2023+
- Types of Awards
 - Planning
 - Construction
 - Regional Partnerships
- Competitive 686 submitted, 132 awarded

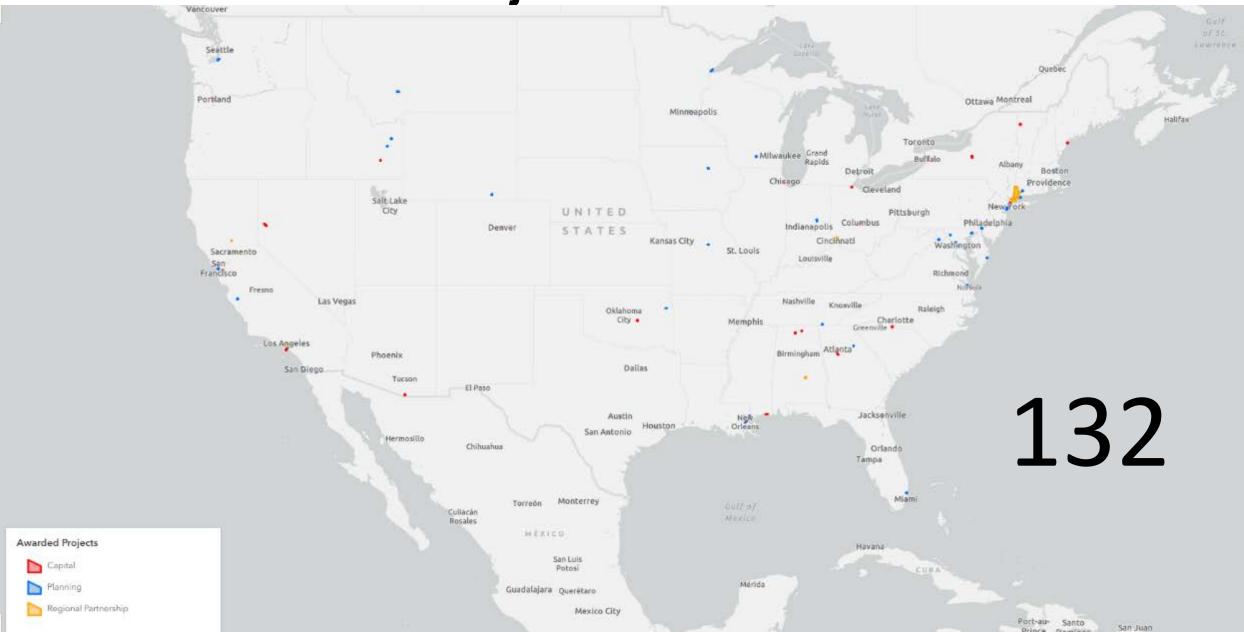
RCN FY23 All Applications

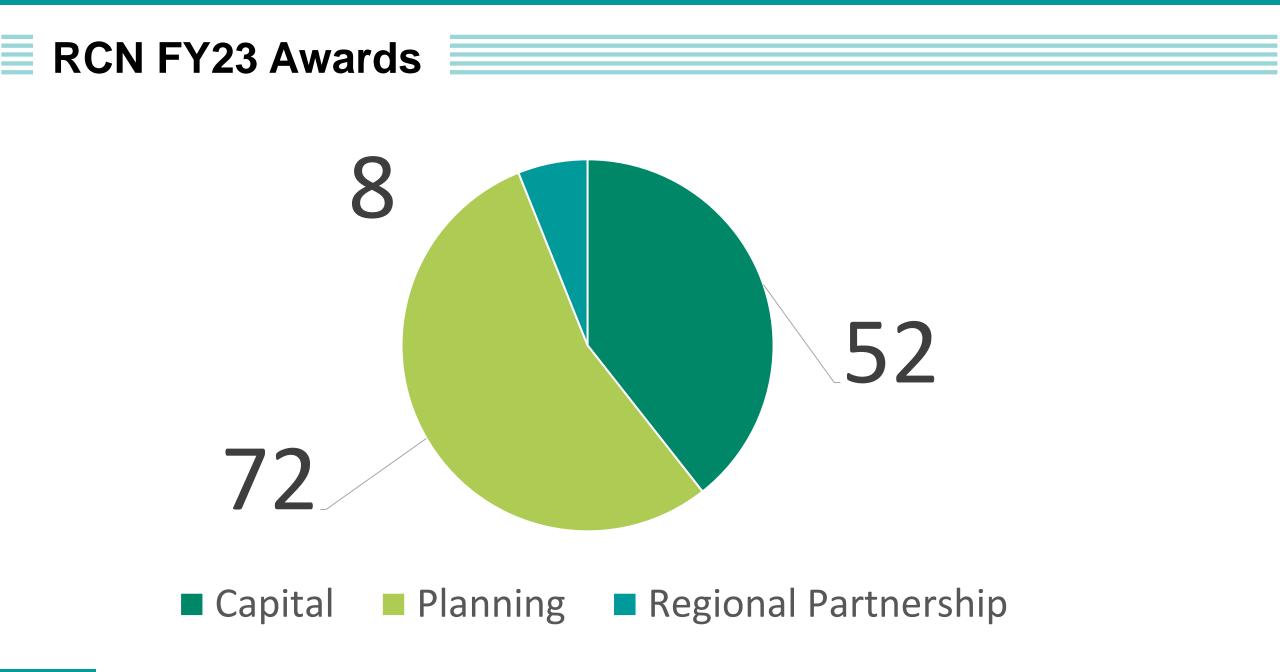
All Applications



RCN FY23 Awarded Projects

 $\dot{\langle}\dot{\langle}$





RCN FY23 Grantees

Applicant Type	Total
Unit of local government	82
State or U.S. territory	17
Higher education institution	10
Special purpose district or public authority	7
Metropolitan Planning Organization	5
Nonprofit organization	5
Special purpose district or public authority	4
Political Subdivision of a State	1
Federally recognized Tribal government	1
Total Awarded Applications	132

Reconnecting Bluefield Grant Timeline

- Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP)
 - June 30, 2022 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)
 - October 13, 2022 Grant Submitted
 - February 28, 2023 Announcements
 - Summer 2024 Obligation*

Grant Submission Format

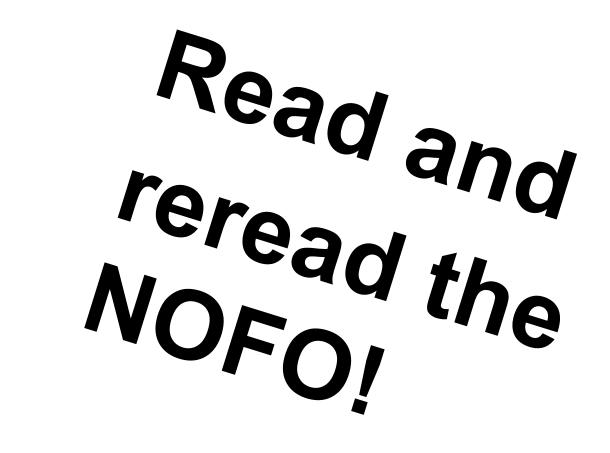
- Merit Criteria Narrative
- Budget Narrative
- Key Information Table
- SF 424
- Supplemental Information
 - Letters of Commitment
 - Photos and Article
 - Study Area Map





Grant Submission Format

- Merit Criteria Narrative
- Budget Narrative
- Key Information Table
- SF 424
- Supplemental Information
 - Letters of Commitment
 - Photos and Article
 - Study Area Map



Grant Application

Reconnecting Bluefield

Applicant: West Virginia Department of Transportation



October 13, 2022

Application to U.S. DOT's Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program





1. OVERVIEW

1.1 The Barrier

An active nullyard, mountainon-tensin, and the social lepucy of segregation divide the heart of Disefield, West Virginia's historic African American community "the last Lnd,"¹⁴ from the acty's generified commercial center. The Appalechian Mountains, which provide the region with its magnal backence and social tensin, serve as a graphysical moninder of the racial and demographic scheme between these two sections of the city.

Bluefield's commercial center scengies a relatively flat, well-developed area that is preformantly wills and of middle or upper middle class socioecocomic attainment, while the East End new, prodommantly Black and lower-mercine. Its agrown up 'on the other side of the tracks," quite literally nerves a rollment heat and neuther in summaring hills. Residents of these two areas of Bluefield experience wastly different qualities of life, life expectancies, and economic prospects (as shown in Figure 1).

Bluefield's Chy Denter Powerty Rate: 28° percentile 25 Avg Life Exp. 75.9 years

Bluefield's Last Lod Powerty Rate: 91° percentile US Avg Life Exp. 64.1 years



Figure 1: Two Halves of Bluefield

1.2 How the Project Could Overcome the Barrier

Approximately 19 trans travel daily though the 300° wide Norfolk Southern malyard, which divides the dity of Diorfold. This gami application seeks funding for a planning study and prediminary engineering margines (hereafter tellse, "the Project") that will drive the development of Projecting Study and Devinemental Datamentation that would support the future development of a "1" shaped consider that would expand and enhance access and transit between the bast Edd, downnown Bluefield, and local amonities. (See map in Section 2.) This Project"

¹ Is provide for the total Morth asymptotic, if a bright two contents to mixed for view of they detected to: which Tackford auto-where iterations commands. Supported are operford in the command of a property and the Weyner and to any Arstholder, there are an experimental provide and and the ford two investigations of of the effort. These two answerses where iterations in the interface of the view and the section of the effort. A section of the effort of t

Delater Store



Reconnecting Russield Application to U.S. DOT's Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program



B. RESPONSE TO MERIT CRITERIA

This section addresses the Project's ment onteria in the order that they are listed in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

3.1 Equity, Environmental Justice, and Community Engagement This Project spins Censis Traces 19 and 20 in Bloefield, WV. Neither is Historically Disadvarraged, is defined by the U.S. DOT (experienceing herr or more types of disadvarrage); nondheles, residents of each tract still face challenges related to these of the four types of disadvarlage. Temportation, Health, and Descume.

In addition, Mercer County, where Bhrefield is located, is considered an "rt risk county" by the Appalachum Regional Commission (ARC) for fircal year 2025, Census Tinets 19 and 20 are also designated as distressed areas as theoremed below.

- Census Tract 19, in Mercer County, West Vingnin, is designated as a distense area in fiscal year 0223 heraise it hera madian family income of \$43,322 (54.1% of U.S. area), a powerly note of 28.05% (217.7% of U.S. area), and is invatial into a deside some.
- Consus Frant 20, in Mercer County, West Vingmin, is designated as a distressed area in fiscal year 2023 herasas it hava madian family menne of \$26,797 (33.5% of U.S. arg.), a powerty rule of \$24,4% (352.1% of U.S. arg.), and is installal in a theritk sounty.⁴

This Project's planning work will engage significant levels of public outranch nerves the Bloefield community, with a special emphasis on discourse with residents of the tast their as in perfaints to their travel handshaps. This nutreed approach will build on lessons teamed from stateholders advised the Grant Street project team to use two approaches to reach community nembers—making single-marked by public events for younger groups, and a frequent public scenario theoring in the Das. End for other members. Additional groups, and a frequent public scenario theoring in the Das. End for other members. Additional groups, and a frequent public scenario theoring in the Das. End for other members. Additional groups, and a frequent public scenario theoring in the Das. End for other members. Additional groups, and a frequent public scenario theoring in the Das. End for other members. Additional groups, and a frequent public scenario theoring in the Das. End for other members. Additional groups, and a frequent public construction will likely proceed using similar methods.

Figure 4 illustrates the importance of outwach matheds for engaging least End residence. Between 15 to 50 percent of East End residents live in a household without a cur, and thus rely in walking, bliking, struk, finals, or gubbic immorphation. This sengments to a mage of 5 to 15 \pm

An existing a difference of control between the total angle factor of all the low controls. The expectation of that moves, in the Markoff of the Markoff and the set of the low control of the interpret of the set of the set of the set of the South the Term ACK interpretive map or regional charges. An extended is the weather the set of the set of the control of the set o

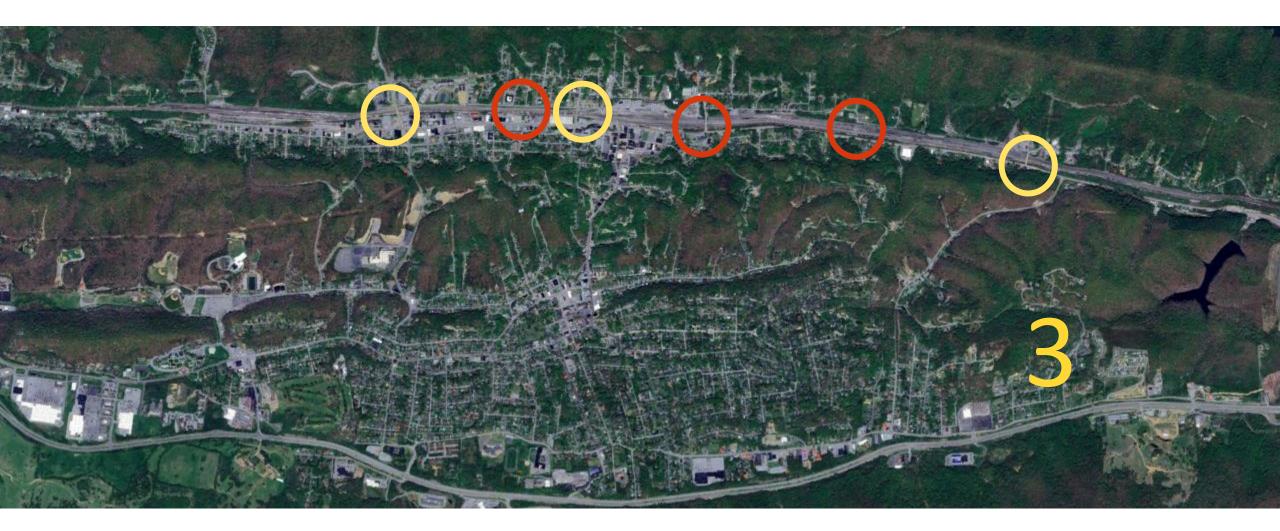
Interview conducted for small Street Bildge namesh, Mr. evald, Orniler 17, 2020.

Databas 1002





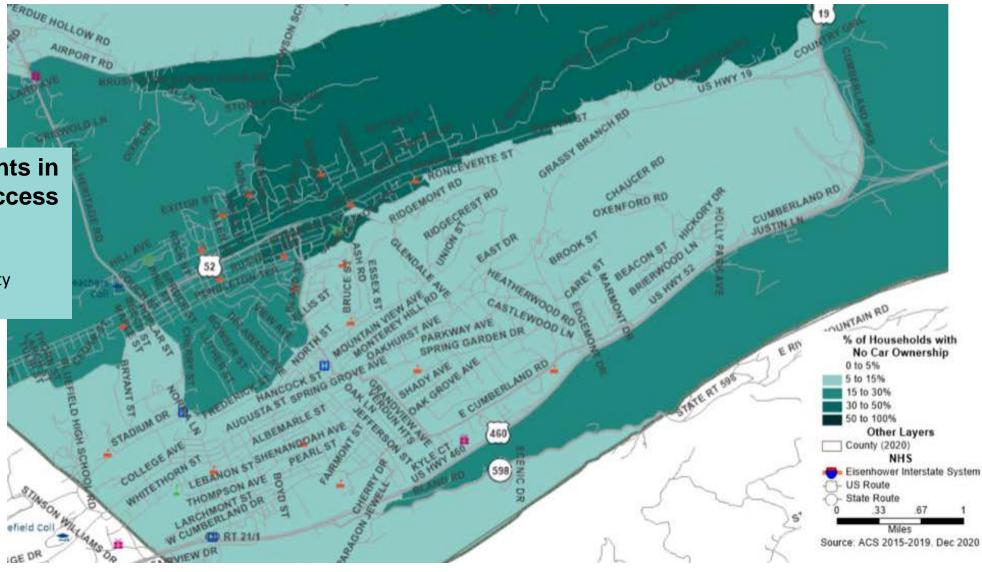




Percent Households with No Car Ownership

Up to 50% of residents in East End have no access to private vehicle –

FHWA Screening Tool for Equity Analysis of Projects



Sidewalk Conditions

Pulaski St.





Hardy St.











Bluefield, WV Reconnecting Communities Grant

The Barrier

An active rail yard, mountainous terrain, and the social legacy of segregation divide the heart of Bluefield, West Virginia's historic African-American community "the East End,"¹ from the city's gentrified commercial center. The Appalachian Mountains, which provide the region with its rugged landscape and varied terrain, serve as a geophysical reminder of the racial and demographic schisms between these two sections of the city.

Bluefield's commercial center occupies a relatively flat, well-developed area that is predominantly white and of middle or upper-middle-class socioeconomic attainment, while the East End area, predominantly Black and lower-income, has grown up "on the other side of the tracks," quite literally across a railroad bed and nestled in surrounding hills. Residents of these two areas of Bluefield experience vastly different qualities of life, life expectancies, and economic prospects (as shown in Figure 1).

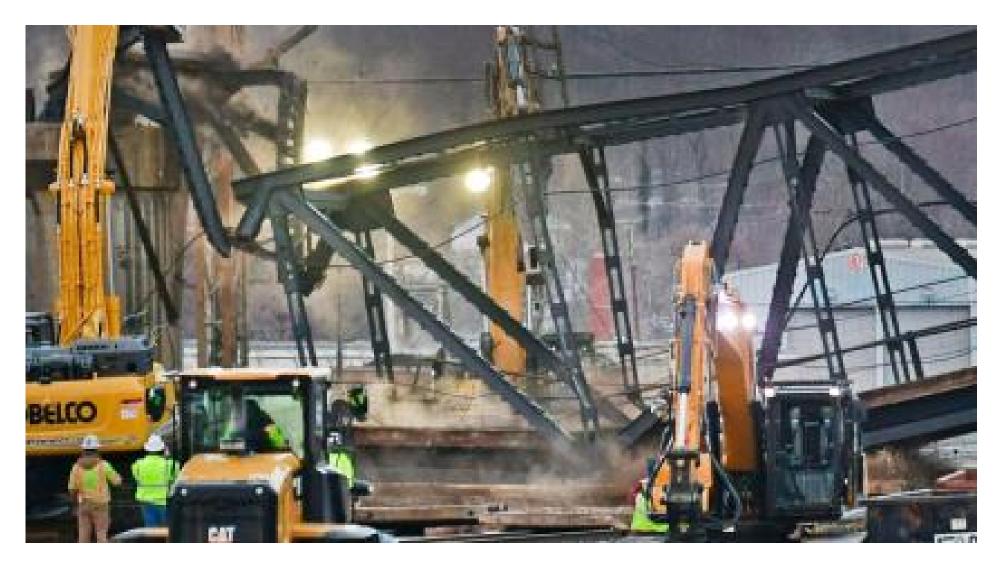
Bluefield's City Center Poverty Rate: 28th percentile US Avg Life Exp: 75.9 years Bluefield's East End Poverty Rate: 91st percentile US Avg Life Exp: 64.1 years

300' wide

Grant St. Bridge Urgency



Grant St. Bridge Demolition



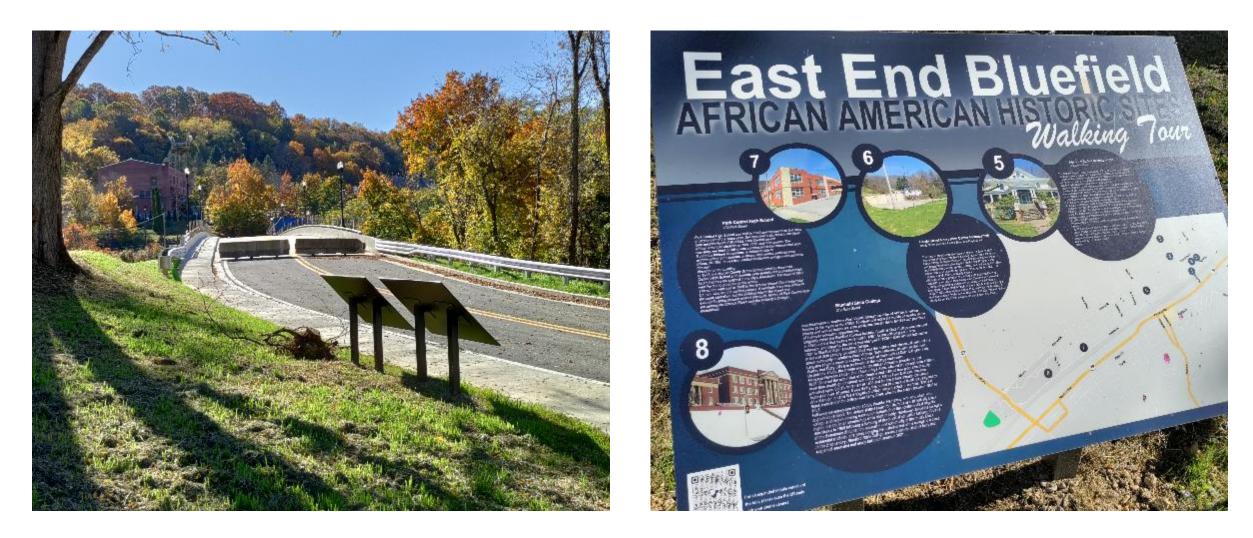




Grant St. Bridge Re-Construction



Grant St. Bridge Re-Construction



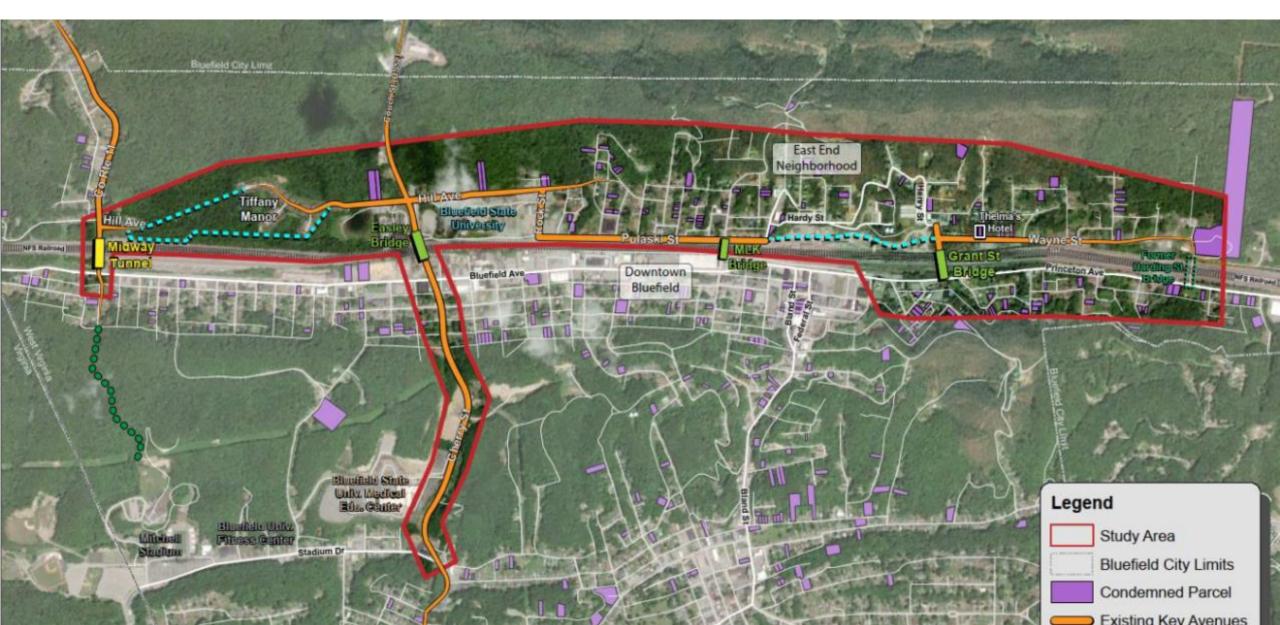
Past Investment Summary

Table 1: Summary of Past Investment to Build Physical Connections Between the East End and Downtown Bluefield

Bridge	Bid Date	Cost (YOE)
Easley Bridge	October, 1999	\$7,585,000
Martin Luther King, Jr. Bridge	November 2014	\$5,877,000
Grant St. Bridge	March 2021 (under construction)	\$8,097,000
Total		\$21,559,000

Source: WVDOT

Reconnecting Communities Study Area



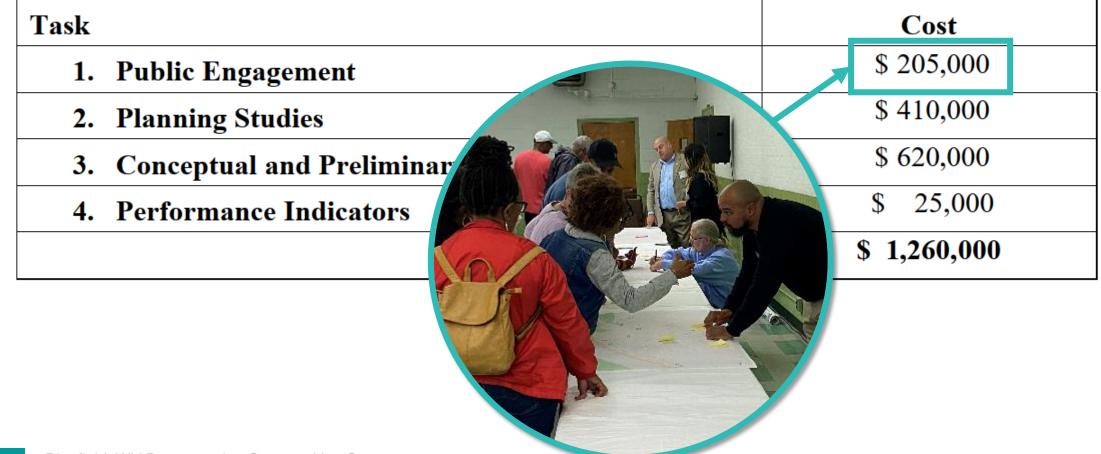


Reconnecting Bluefield RCP Budget

Task	Cost
1. Public Engagement	\$ 205,000
2. Planning Studies	\$ 410,000
3. Conceptual and Preliminary Engineering	\$ 620,000
4. Performance Indicators	\$ 25,000
	\$ 1,260,000



Reconnecting Bluefield RCP Budget



41

Planning Study

2. Planning studies to further assess the feasibility of the project

Planning studies to document the existing conditions on Bluefield's East End, study alternative corridors and alignments of the proposed East End connections, and examine traffic operations of the roadway network after the reconnection will be performed to initiate the project. The result of the planning studies will be a Design Study Report in general compliance with the WVDOT Project Development Process and are anticipated to include:

- Current traffic patterns on the facility and the surrounding street network.
- Capacity of existing transportation networks to maintain mobility needs.
- Alternative roadway and tunnel structure designs.
- The project's impact on mobility of freight and people.
- The project's impact on safety.
- The estimated cost to restore community connectivity.
- The project's environmental, public health, and community impacts.



Task / Year	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
RCN Program Funded									
Award									
Agreement									
Planning Study									
Final Engineering									
NEPA									
Construction					_				















If you have a project idea, tell someone

Meaningful public engagement is key

Listen to the webinars and pay attention to the Q&A





Look at last year's NOFO and winners to strategize

Tell the human story, use data





Questions?

Thank you for listening!

Contact Information

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Ashley Tracy, PE, PTOE, AICP ashley.tracy@aecom.com