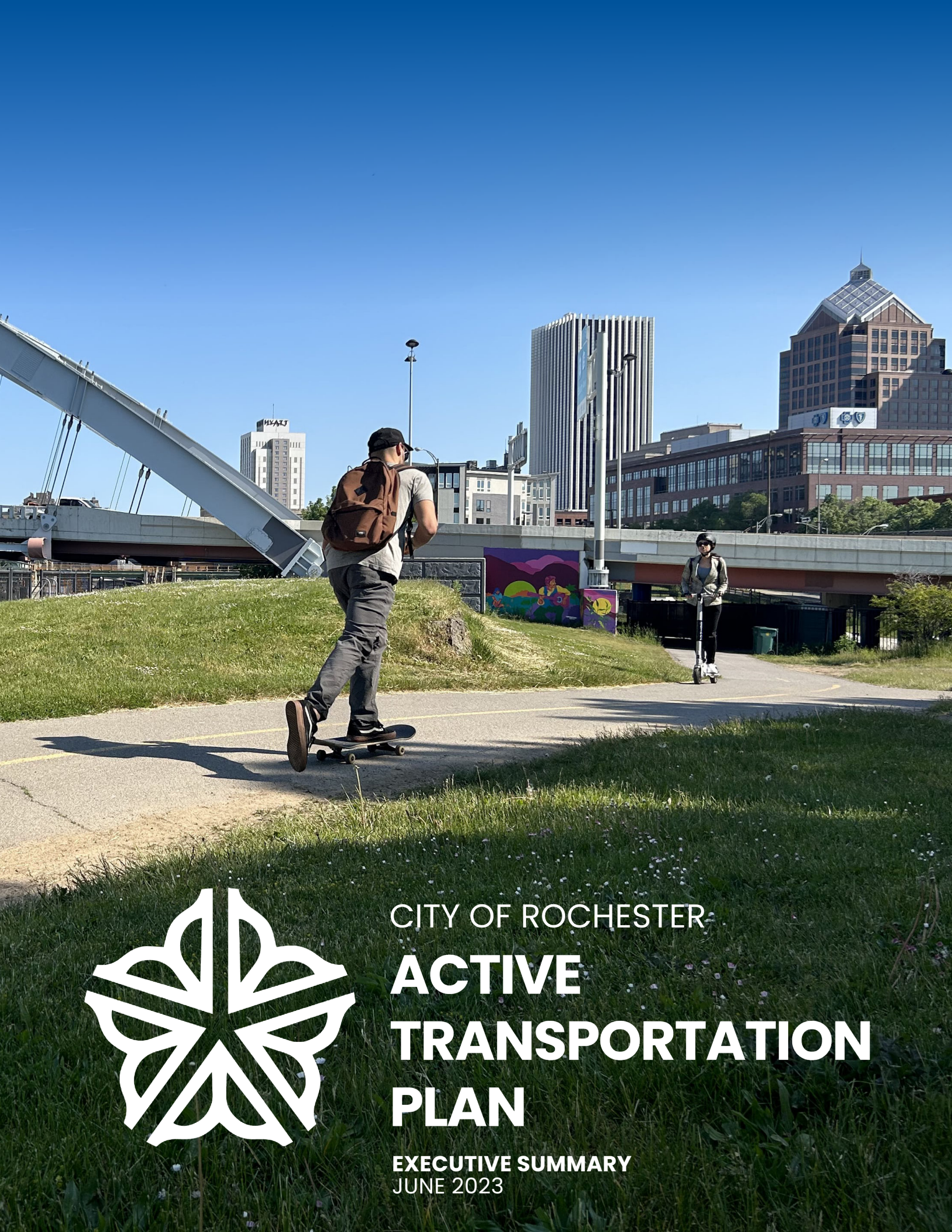

CITY OF ROCHESTER

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

JUNE 2023

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the many Project Advisory Committee participants, Neighborhood Consultants, and members of the public in Rochester who generously shared their time and insights to shape the Rochester ATP.

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- **Andrea Walton** - U of R Department of Transportation and Parking Management
- **Anita O'Brien** - Rochester Accessible Adventures
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- **Bill McDonald** - United Way of Rochester
- **Bob Williams** - Genesee Transportation Council
- **Brennon Thompson** - Rochester Association of Realtors, Inc.
- **Brian Potvin** - Arc Alliance
- **Eric Hansen** - Rochester City School District
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- **Sara Lynn-Scott** - Rochester Department of Recreation and Human Services
- **Thomas Polech** - MC DOT
- **Valerie Douglas** - Center for Youth
- **Yixuan Lin** - Monroe County Planning and Development

Rochester 2034: Moving Forward

This plan is one of many ways that the City of Rochester is implementing the *Rochester 2034* Comprehensive Plan. Many of the guiding principles, goals, and strategies of *Rochester 2034* helped shape this planning process.
Learn more at: www.rochester2034.com

Neighborhood Consultants

- **Anderson Allen** - Wellness/Youth Advocacy
- **Matt Drouin** - Real Estate Professional
- **Melanie Funchess** - Mental Health Professional
- **Brittan Hardgers** - Trans/BIPOC/LGTBQ+ Advocate
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Executive Summary

In Rochester, driving a car is seen by most as the “normal” way to get around. However, one out of every four households in Rochester doesn’t have access to a car and instead relies on walking, biking, friends/family, and the bus for daily travel. In addition, many Rochesterians choose to or desire to get around without driving as much as they can, but improvements need to be made to encourage those choices. Navigating around the city can also be extremely challenging for people who use mobility aids, such as wheelchairs, or have other disabilities. And over 20% of Rochester’s residents are children, most of whom are too young to drive.

The Rochester Active Transportation Plan (Rochester ATP) is an initiative to make our city safer and more accessible for **active transportation**, including people walking and using mobility aids, riding bikes and scooters, rollerblading or skateboarding, and more. Everyone in Rochester deserves access to safe and dependable choices for getting where they need to go. Active transportation offers residents affordable, healthy, and non-polluting ways for people to move around the city.

The plan is a blueprint for making smart investments that will make walking, biking, and public transit a safe, accessible, and preferred option for people in Rochester. It includes:

- A **Summary** which provides a concise round-up of the planning process for the Rochester ATP and key outcomes
- An overview of **Existing Conditions** that highlights past work that the Rochester ATP will build from and establishes baseline conditions throughout the City
- An **Action Plan** that charts a course for the City of Rochester to achieve its active transportation goals through integrated and mutually reinforcing policy, program, and process actions and infrastructure projects

Rochester's Goals for Active Transportation

The strategic direction set for this action plan by past plans and studies can be summarized into three main objectives:

Traffic Safety: Move toward zero traffic deaths and serious injuries through proactive planning, monitoring, and street design that slows traffic and prioritizes pedestrians and bicyclists

Accessibility: Achieve a fully accessible environment for pedestrians of all ages and abilities, with a special focus on the needs of people with disabilities

Transportation Options: Invest in pedestrian and bike networks to make active transportation a safer, more dignified, and enjoyable option for people to move around Rochester

The Rochester ATP Planning Approach

The following are key elements of the approach to the Roc ATP, which shaped the planning process and outcomes at every step.

Building on Past Work

This is Rochester's first citywide initiative dedicated to comprehensive active transportation, and the first pedestrian-focused plan in particular, but the City is not starting from scratch. Past plans and studies, including those completed in recent years like the *Rochester 2034* Comprehensive Plan and the *Comprehensive Access and Mobility Plan* (*CAMP*), represent an important starting point for this effort. The Rochester ATP builds on past work by clarifying active transportation goals, deepening citywide analyses, and bringing together previous recommendations and new ones into a comprehensive citywide strategy for active transportation. Where many previous plans and studies have established high-level goals and objectives for active transportation, the Rochester ATP provides the City with a prioritized action plan for achieving those goals. The connections between the Rochester ATP and past planning work are more fully explored in the Existing Conditions chapter and in Appendix A.

A Focus on Transportation Justice

Like all planning initiatives, the Rochester ATP presents an opportunity to work toward rectifying injustices. Within the context of transportation, a wide range of past decisions and investments have resulted in inequitable access to safe, reliable, and affordable transportation options. Highway construction completed decades ago displaced and disconnected predominantly Black and immigrant neighborhoods to facilitate fast connections between white suburbs and jobs in the city. Disinvestment in public transit in favor of car-centric systems led to low-quality service that is seen by many as a last resort for people who cannot afford or are unable to drive a car.[1] And entrenched racism and other biases can make sidewalks, bus stops, and other public spaces unsafe for people to navigate depending on their race, gender identity, immigration status, and more. Beyond transportation and mobility, these same legacies of disinvestment and injustice have left many neighborhoods without places like community amenities or vibrant commercial corridors for people to walk or bike to.

The City of Rochester has begun the important work of acknowledging its role in perpetuating past harms and taking corrective actions. In support of that work, this plan strives to make transparent the active transportation disparities felt across Rochester and prioritize reparative action to create a more just transportation system. This includes using data and community feedback to explore the ways the existing transportation network is experienced by Rochester's most marginalized communities including:[2]

- **People with disabilities**, who navigate physical and social worlds that rarely center their needs. In Rochester, 19% of people have one or more disabilities.
- **Black, Brown, and other people of color**, who are disproportionately affected by past and ongoing discrimination, resulting in less access to transportation resources like safe bike lanes and greater exposure to transportation impacts like air pollution. In Rochester, the population is 64% people of color.
- **People without access to a car**, who rely on walking, biking, and transit for their transportation needs. In Rochester, 24% of households don't have access to a vehicle.
- **Low-income people**, who are less able to afford a car. In Rochester, income disparities are significant and geographically concentrated. In the poorest neighborhoods, the median household income is under $9,000 per year. In the wealthiest neighborhoods, the median household income is over $120,000 per year.

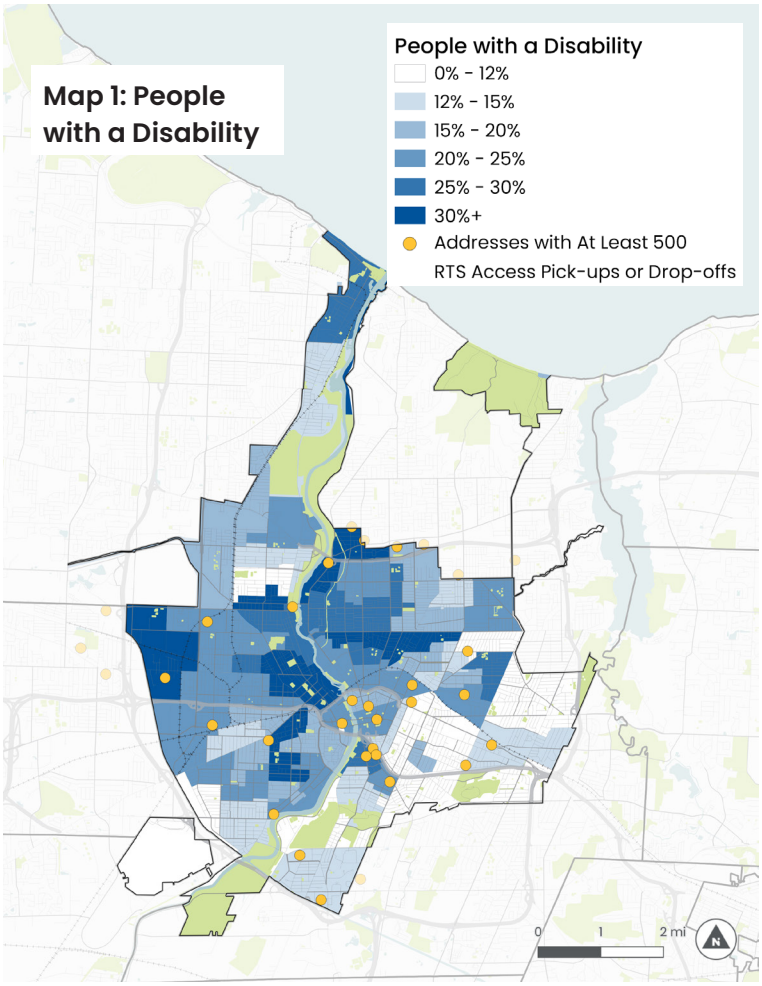
People belonging to Rochester's most marginalized groups make up the "priority populations" for the Rochester ATP. In addition to incorporating analyses that uncover inequities in existing active transportation systems, the engagement process for this project has actively sought out feedback from people belonging to these priority populations.

Map 1 through Map 4 provide an overview of where people from Rochester's priority populations live and form a foundation for understanding geographic disparities in Rochester's active transportation networks. These maps also demonstrate that many of these communities and identities overlap, creating compounding needs and barriers for active transportation.

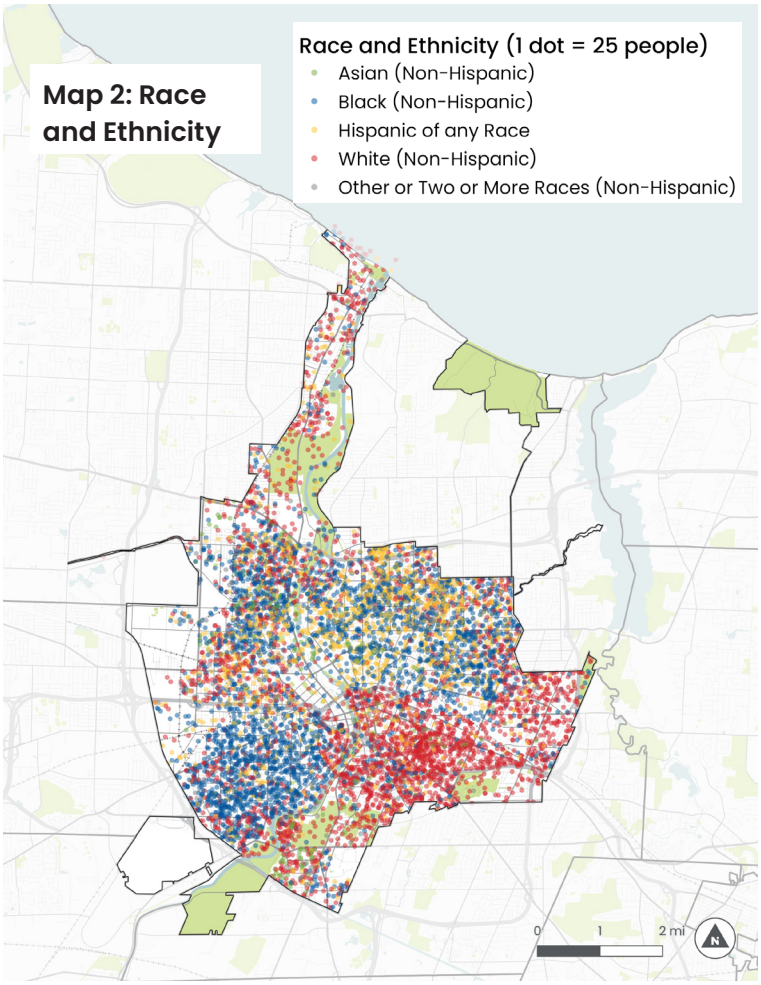
1 According to the "Transportation and Poverty in Monroe County" report, public transit riders in Rochester are much more likely to be living in poverty compared to drivers; 29% of transit riders live in poverty, compared to 10% of drivers.

2 Data from 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

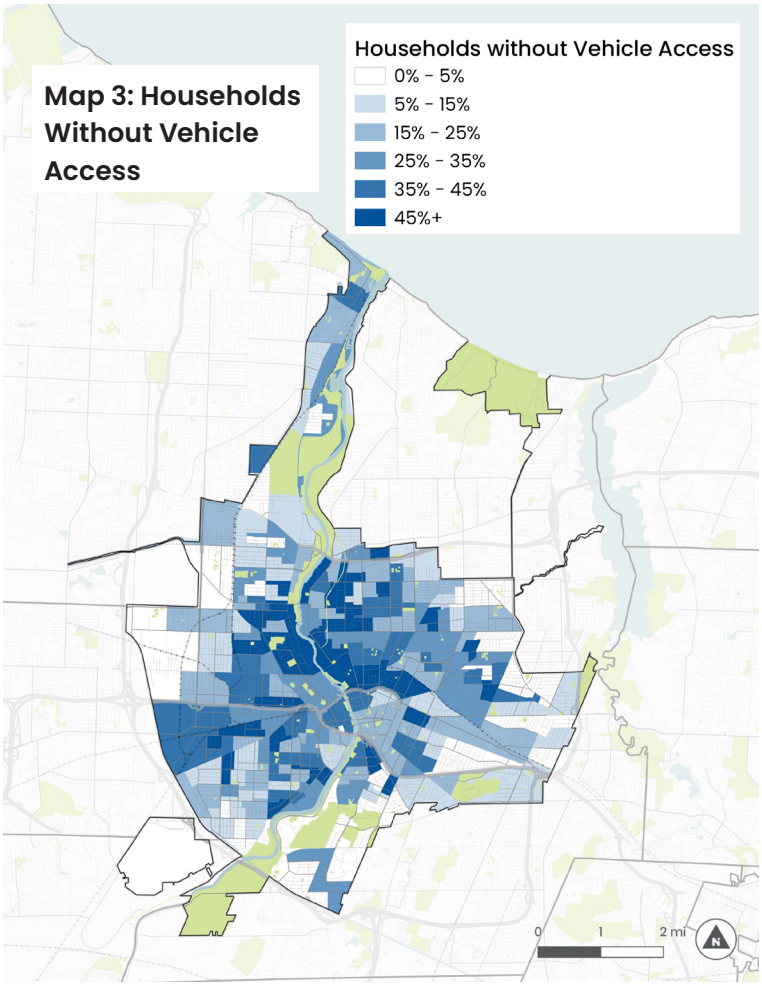
Map 1: People with a Disability



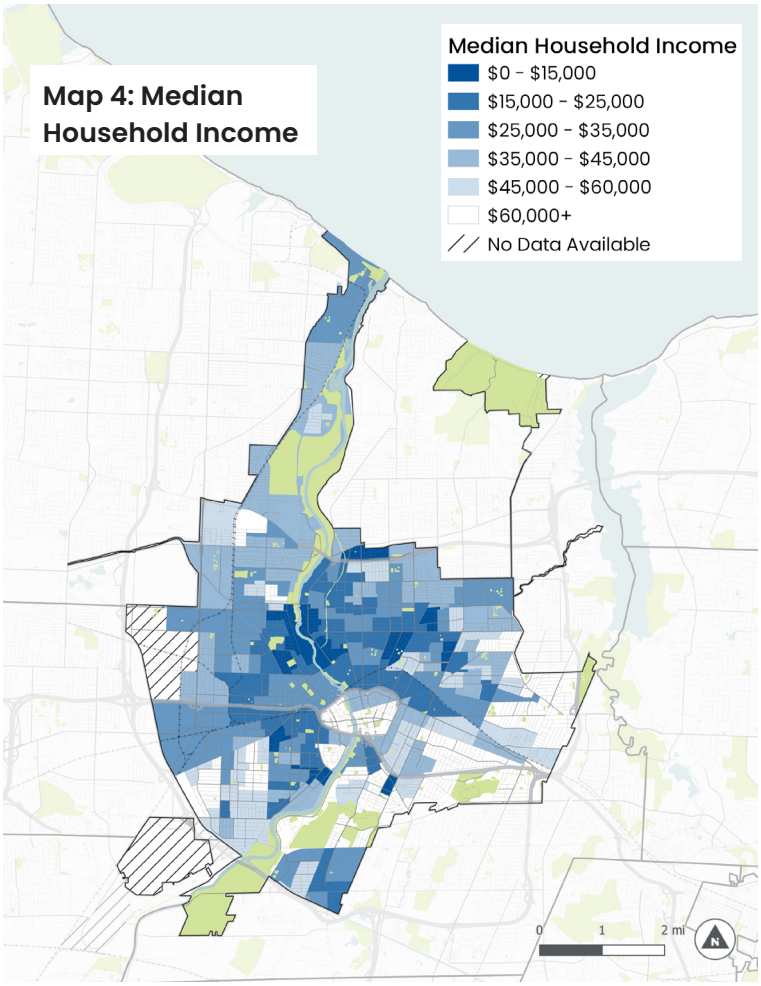
Map 2: Race and Ethnicity



Map 3: Households Without Vehicle Access



Map 4: Median Household Income



Inclusive Design and Accessibility

Accessibility – which refers to a site, facility, environment, service, or program that is easy to approach, enter, operate, participate in, and/or use safely and with dignity by a person with a disability – is often thought of in terms of compliance with standards and regulations. Today, requirements, regulations, and guidance laid out by the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act), state architectural access boards, and the PROWAG (Public Rights-of-way Accessible Guidelines) help ensure that the needs of people with disabilities are incorporated into street and building design.[3] While these standards and landmark legislative victories are important for ensuring baseline accessibility in the built environment, truly inclusive design encompasses every aspect of how people of all ages and abilities experience their environments – building upon regulatory compliance to anticipate the full range of physical, sensory and brain-based functional limitations common today.

Inclusive design also goes farther in the sense that it aims to make a space, environment, service, etc. welcoming and comfortable for all users in addition to accessible. For example, while an unprotected bike lane next to fast-moving traffic on a major road may be technically accessible to all, it is not inclusive. Children, older adults, and less experienced riders are not likely to feel comfortable using it.

Inclusive design is just as much about the design process as it is the outcome. In the case of the Rochester ATP, this meant incorporating input about challenges, opportunities, and priorities related to walking and biking from all kinds of people who use Rochester's streets in all kinds of ways today. The implementation mechanism for a large share of the pedestrian recommendations also involves deeper engagement youth and older adults in each area, typically the users with the most specific needs.

Acknowledging this context, the Rochester ATP seeks to situate the City to build inclusive design into its transportation networks and respond to unmet accessibility needs on multiple fronts. This includes identifying opportunities for high-impact investments in pedestrian accessibility, charting a course for the City to carry out an ADA transition plan, and integrating inclusive design principles into the background policies and processes that shape Rochester's built environment.

3 PROWAG, which in general outlines higher-quality accessibility standards and requirements for streets and sidewalks than ADA, is currently in draft form. Once adopted by the federal government, local and state governments will be responsible for building to these standards.

Rochester ATP community pop-up event

Community Engagement

Community engagement for the Rochester ATP was built around methods and communication styles intended to center the priority populations described above. Throughout the process, the City used engagement strategies designed to:

- Invite the public to confirm and deepen the project team's analysis, findings, and recommendations, providing direct inputs to the planning process at the existing conditions phase
- Augment public engagement efforts of previous planning processes with a focus on centering the most impacted and marginalized
- Establish culturally competent communication that emphasizes the collective benefits of investing in active transportation and shifting trips away from vehicle travel
- Deepen trust around transportation investments with members of communities that have been negatively impacted by past decision making and disinvestment, including Black and brown people, people with disabilities, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community

These objectives drove the engagement methods, which were focused on meeting people where they are. Rochester ATP engagement activities, which primarily took place during the summer of 2022, included:

- Working with a group of 10 Rochester community leaders who were sought out and paid to help design a citywide survey for the project, produce advertising material for the project, participate in focus group sessions, and spread the word about the project to their communities. An overview of work completed with these community leaders can be found in Appendix D.
- Circulating a citywide multilingual survey focused on active transportation that was promoted through custom videos on social media, through radio ads, and in local publications. Survey respondents were presented with the opportunity to share their email for a chance to win a $25 gift card to a local restaurant. Full survey results can be seen in Appendices B and C.
- Holding over 20 pop-up events at key destinations and events throughout Rochester.
- Hosting four listening sessions focused on key topics including walking and biking culture in Rochester, needs of residents with disabilities, and priorities for the future. A summary of focus group findings can be found in Appendix E.
- Working with a 20+ person steering committee comprised of City officials, partner agencies, and local transportation, health, and youth advocates.

- Mailing promotional postcards to households in City water bills.
- Developing an online landing page for the project to host all project materials (www.cityofrochester.gov/atp).

Around 1,200 community members responded to the community survey, which was open for two months and collected community feedback on existing transportation patterns, concerns, and priorities. While the survey reached a significantly more diverse group of respondents than in similar past efforts, survey respondents were still not fully representative of Rochester's population. In particular, the demographic composition of survey respondents suggests that most priority populations for the Rochester ATP are still underrepresented in these data. Of the people who filled out the survey:

- 25% have a household income below Rochester's median household income, compared to 50% of the city's population
- 19% identify as Black or African American, compared to 39% of the city's population
- 36% identify as people of color, compared to 64% of the city's population
- 8% speak Spanish at home, compared to 14% of the city's population
- 33% have a disability, compared to 19% of the city's population
- 12% do not have access to a vehicle, compared to 24% of the city's population
- 11% identify as transgender/non-binary/genderqueer compared to approximately 1.6% nationwide[4]

4 Brown, Anna. "About 5% of young adults in the U.S. say their gender is different from their sex assigned at birth." Pew Research. June 7, 2022.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendations to help Rochester achieve its active transportation goals are broadly organized into two primary categories.

Policies, Programs, & Processes:

Recommend actions that move forward through policy change, new or updated City programs, and changes to internal City processes

Achieving Rochester's active transportation goals will require creating sustained change in how the City approaches safety, accessibility, and multimodal transportation projects from almost every angle. Changes to policies, programs, and processes can both support and reinforce infrastructure changes. These recommendations focus on both strengthening the City's ability to implement projects that are consistent with its goals and moving forward active transportation through avenues beyond physical street design. Synthesizing and deepening recommendations from past planning efforts and responding to needs documented in the Existing Conditions chapter, this plan proposes that the City pursue policy, program, and process actions in the following areas:

- **Develop capacity within City Hall** to oversee implementation of the Rochester Active Transportation Plan
- **Engage Rochester residents** in the City's implementation of the Active Transportation Plan
- **Establish a traffic safety program** to comprehensively and equitably advance the City's goal of eliminating serious and fatal crashes
- Align design standards, routine processes, and operations with **active transportation goals**
- Develop additional pathways for identification and implementation of **pedestrian and accessibility projects**
- Forge stronger connections between **active transportation and land use**

Specific actions for fully realizing these recommendations are explored in more detail in the Action Plan chapter and in Appendix J.

Projects:

Recommend specific kinds of safety and accessibility enhancements for streets and intersections across the City

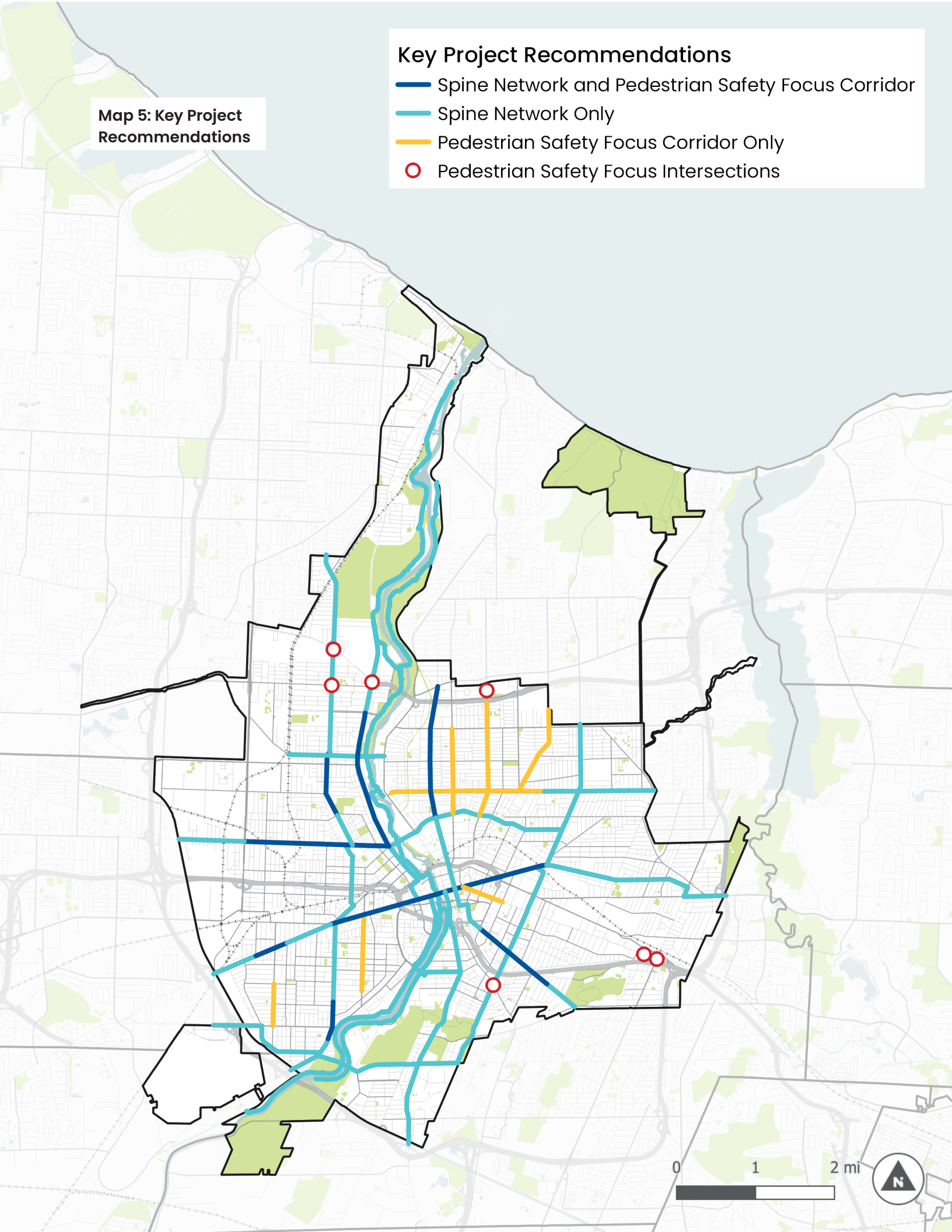
The Rochester ATP identifies project-level recommendations to help the City jumpstart critical pedestrian safety and accessibility work and implement a priority network of high-quality bike routes that connect residents seamlessly across the entire City. These recommendations are structured to guide the City in advancing its goals on multiple tracks at once and are prioritized to ensure that the greatest needs are addressed first. The purpose, structure, locations, and prioritization for the project recommendations are elaborated upon in the Action Plan chapter and in Appendix K.

Key Pedestrian and Accessibility Projects

- 29 street and intersection projects
- 19 miles of safety-focused pedestrian improvements
- A quarter of City streets covered in priority areas for additional safety and accessibility planning

Key Bike Network Projects

- 63 miles of Spine Network projects providing comfortable, predictable connections
  - 44 miles of new project corridors
  - 19 miles of existing infrastructure


Map 5: Key Project Recommendations
Key Project Recommendations
Spine Network and Pedestrian Safety Focus Corridor
Spine Network Only
Pedestrian Safety Focus Corridor Only
Pedestrian Safety Focus Intersections
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