

US Department of Transportation
Rebuilding American Infrastructure
with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE)
Grant 2024



CREATING CONNECTIONS:

MLK Boulevard/South Little Creek Road Bicycle and Pedestrian Connector



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Submitted February 28, 2024 Delaware Department of Transportation

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The purpose of this grant application is to fund the construction of bicycle and pedestrian improvements along South Little Creek Road, MLK Boulevard and where they intersect Bay Road and US13.

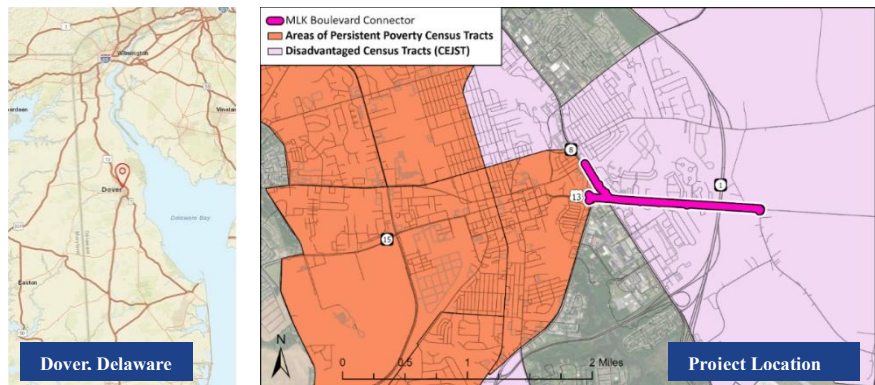
Known as the **MLK Boulevard/South Little Creek Road Bicycle and Pedestrian Connector**, this project was identified as a priority in the 2015 and 2020 City of Dover Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans, which the Dover/Kent County Metropolitan Planning Organization assisted in developing. Once complete, it will provide a primary east-west bicycle and pedestrian route connecting central Dover to the residential and commercial areas on the eastern limits of the city.

The project will include the installation of approximately 1.2 miles of 10-foot-wide shared-use path with a 3-foot buffer on the north side of South Little Creek Road, from Horsepond Road to the intersection of Bay Road. The path will continue for approximately 250 feet northbound on Bay Road and will stop at an existing sidewalk utilized by shoppers walking or bicycling to the Target store.

Also included in this project are improvements to where South Little Creek Road, MLK Boulevard and the two 4-lane highways of Bay Road and US13 intersect. These improvements will include signalized crosswalks, median refuge islands, median fencing, and ADA-compliant curb ramps. A shared use path approximately 400 feet in length will also be installed on the northside of MLK Boulevard in between Bay Road and US13. The path will then connect to an existing pathway on the southern side of MLK Boulevard. This existing pathway is part of the Capital City Trail and other bicycle and pedestrian trail networks that connect to various places within the City of Dover including government buildings, shopping centers, parks, museums, a transit center, schools, etc.

PROJECT LOCATION

The project is located in the southeastern part of the City of Dover in Kent County, Delaware. Dover is a historic city that has been the capital of Delaware since 1777. It is Delaware's second most populous city with an estimated population of 39,403 as per the 2020 US



Census. The project is located **within Census Tract, 410 identified as Historically Disadvantaged Community, and Census Tract 413, identified as both an Area of Persistent**

Poverty and Historically Disadvantaged Community. The area is **outside** a census-designated urban area with a population greater than 200,000.

PROJECT HISTORY

The construction of a pedestrian path to fill critical sidewalk gaps along South Little Creek Road was identified and ranked 1st in the [2015 City of Dover Pedestrian Plan](#) (p. 30). In a separate document, the [2015 City of Dover Bicycle Plan](#) (p. 59), the need for a shared use path on MLK Boulevard in between US13 and Bay Road was ranked 7th. In 2020, the need for the two projects was reiterated in the consolidated [City of Dover Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan](#) (pp. 91 & 104). All together, the City of Dover and Dover/Kent MPO conducted 14 public meetings and public workshops to develop the three plans and to identify and rank projects.

In 2019, due to the increasing pedestrian crashes along US13 within the City of Dover, DelDOT’s Traffic Section conducted a Pedestrian Safety Audit of the corridor and published its findings and recommendations in a [June 2020 report](#) (pp. 81-85). For the intersection of US13, Bay Road and MLK Boulevard, their recommendations were to install crosswalks, median refuge islands, and median fencing at various locations within the intersection.

Hence, the MLK Boulevard/South Little Creek Road Bicycle and Pedestrian Connector, which is the subject of this grant application, is the combination of projects identified in the three planning documents and one pedestrian safety audit.

DESIGN STATUS

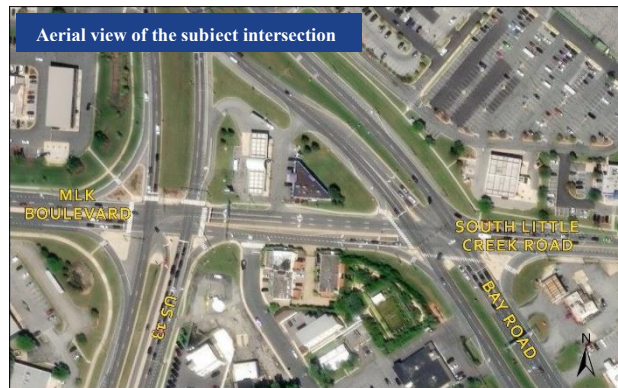
DelDOT completed the conceptual design and cost estimate for this project in February 2024. Due to funding constraints, the project is only currently funded to do preliminary engineering for the shared use path on South Little Creek Road from Horsepond Road to Babb Drive (approximately 1 mile). Survey for this portion of the project is scheduled to start in March 2024.

If awarded the RAISE grant, DelDOT is committed to funding the design for the rest of the project with the anticipated start of construction in Spring 2027. Below is the proposed schedule if the RAISE grant is awarded.

Project Phase	Date (*Anticipated)
Survey Plans	October 2024
Preliminary Plans	February 2025
Semi-Final Plans	July 2025
Final Plans	March 2026
PS&E	October 2026
Construction	Spring 2027-Fall 2028

TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES

Martin Luther King Boulevard/South Little Creek Road are two roads that compose a primary east-west route connecting the central part of Dover with residential and commercial areas on the eastern limits of the city. In between these two roads are two major 4-lane highways – US13 and Bay Road.



The existing land use along South Little Creek Road between US13 and Horsepond Road is marked by a mixture of high-density apartments, single-family residential homes, light industrial areas, and commercial uses. There are also an elementary school, two churches, and 4 bus stops within the project area. Based on this mixture of land uses, and proximity to a wide variety of destinations, there is a steady volume of pedestrians that walk along South Little Creek Road.

There are some sidewalks on South Little Creek Road but there are critical gaps and they end at Barrister Place, creating a disconnection to the sidewalk network for approximately 290 mobile home units in two large communities. Most of the sidewalks, which were developed incrementally since the 1990s, do not comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and fall below current standards. Some of the older segments of sidewalks are deteriorated.

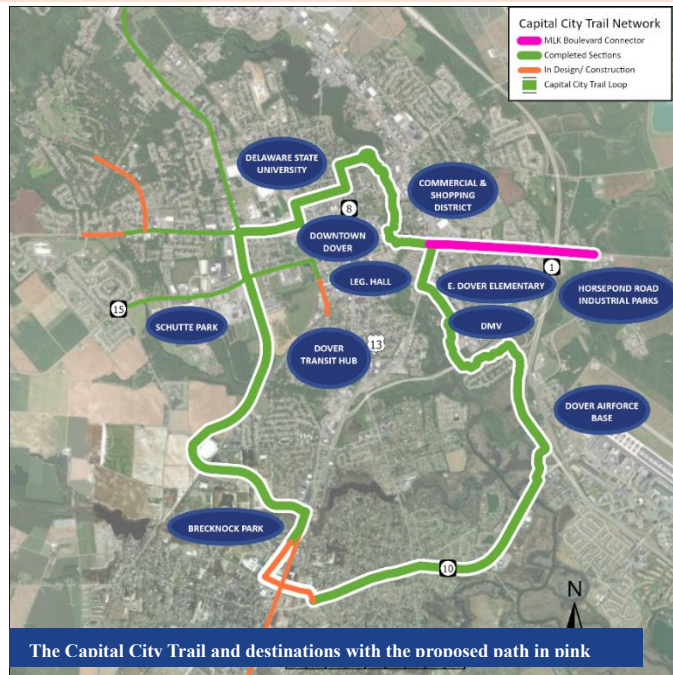
From South Little Creek Road, those wishing to cross Bay Road and US13 safely using signalized pedestrian crosswalks, must traverse between 3 and 5 separate crossing phases, navigating a zigzag path and enduring considerable delays. This increases their exposure to the hazards of crossing high-volume, high-speed roadways.

From a bicycling perspective, South Little Creek Road generally falls within the Level of Traffic Stress 3 (LTS3) category, featuring an Average Annual Daily Traffic of 5775 vehicles and an estimated free flow of 40 mph. However, certain segments elevate the stress level to 4 (LTS4) conditions when the shoulder transitions to a right-turn lane without dedicated or advisory space for bicycling.

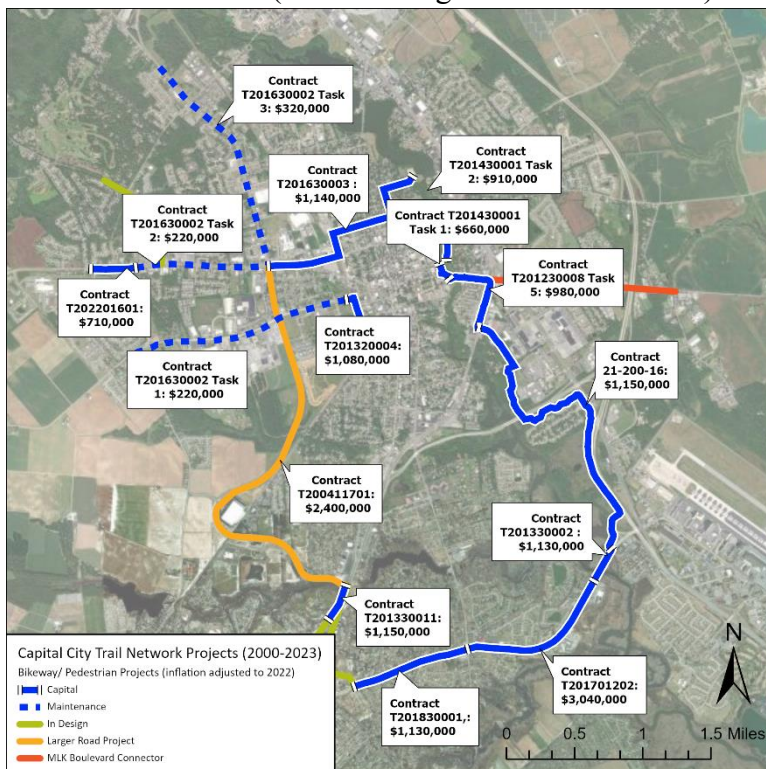
Clearly, the biggest transportation challenge in the project area is the absence of a direct, safe, and comfortable route for pedestrians, cyclists, and users of micromobility devices along South Little Creek Road, portion of MLK Boulevard and where they intersect US13 and Bay Road. This lack of such route hinders safe travel to jobs, shopping, family and friends, and community resources. Many individuals may opt to drive for short local trips if available, forego trips they might have taken, or, for those without the means to drive, face onerous detours or potentially hazardous unsignalized crossings of arterial roads.

CREATING CONNECTIONS

It is difficult to talk about the MLK Boulevard/South Little Creek Bicycle and Pedestrian Connector without mentioning the network it would connect to, which is known as the Capital City Trail. Since 2000, DeDOT, the City of Dover, and Kent County have been working cooperatively to develop the Capital City Trail Network. The Capital City Trail Network is a series of ADA accessible shared use pathways and low-stress, on-road bikeways which circumnavigate the City of Dover and the nearby towns of Camden and Wyoming. **The map on the right** shows the Capital City Network with some of the destinations it connects to.



This trail network has been built out with significant local, state, and federal resources – which were delivered as part of park projects, Transportation Alternatives projects, large-scale roadway projects, and other DeDOT capital projects. **The map below** shows a breakdown of the various DeDOT funded or administered projects that have helped build out the Capital City Trail Network, as well as the construction costs (not including PE or CE activities) associated with the contract, adjusted to 2022 dollars. A total of over \$17 million of construction funding have been spent to develop the foundational loop-network around the City of Dover, and the towns of Camden and Wyoming.



Now that the primary trail loop is constructed or programmed to be constructed, the next phase of the development of this extensive network is driven by one main goal: connect more households to the trail network. The proposed shared use pathway on MLK Boulevard and South Little Creek Road will provide almost 1,400 homes with a direct connection into the Capital City Trail Network, unlocking a world of non-

motorized travel opportunities to numerous destinations via safer, low stress cycling and walking facilities. A thorough analysis of the modeling used to ascertain these benefits can be found in the Bicycle Network Analysis in **Appendix A**.