

## Application for Federal Assistance SF-424

\* 1. Type of Submission:

- ☐ Preapplication  
☒ Application  
☐ Changed/Corrected Application

\* 2. Type of Application:

- ☒ New  
☐ Continuation  
☐ Revision

\* If Revision, select appropriate letter(s):

\* Other (Specify):

\* 3. Date Received:

Completed by Grants.gov upon submission.

4. Applicant Identifier:

5a. Federal Entity Identifier:

5b. Federal Award Identifier:

### State Use Only:

6. Date Received by State:

7. State Application Identifier:

### 8. APPLICANT INFORMATION:

\* a. Legal Name:

City of Hastings

\* b. Employer/Taxpayer Identification Number (EIN/TIN):

47-6006221

\* c. UEI:

EL29BJC4KB19

### d. Address:

\* Street1:

2727 W. 2nd Street, Suite 424

Street2:

\* City:

Hastings

County/Parish:

Adams

\* State:

NE: Nebraska

Province:

\* Country:

USA: UNITED STATES

\* Zip / Postal Code:

68901-0000

### e. Organizational Unit:

Department Name:

Division Name:

### f. Name and contact information of person to be contacted on matters involving this application:

Prefix:

\* First Name:

Lee

Middle Name:

\* Last Name:

Vrooman

Suffix:

Title: Director of Engineering

Organizational Affiliation:

City of Hastings

\* Telephone Number:

402-462-3657

Fax Number:

\* Email:

lvrooman@cityofhastings.org

## Application for Federal Assistance SF-424

### \* 9. Type of Applicant 1: Select Applicant Type:

C: City or Township Government

Type of Applicant 2: Select Applicant Type:

Type of Applicant 3: Select Applicant Type:

\* Other (specify):

### \* 10. Name of Federal Agency:

69A345 Office of the Under Secretary for Policy

### 11. Assistance Listing Number:

20.933

Assistance Listing Title:

National Infrastructure Investments

### \* 12. Funding Opportunity Number:

DTOS59-25-RA-RAISE

\* Title:

FY 2025 National Infrastructure Investments

### 13. Competition Identification Number:

Title:

### 14. Areas Affected by Project (Cities, Counties, States, etc.):

Add Attachment

Delete Attachment

View Attachment

### \* 15. Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project:

South Hastings Neighborhoods, A Stronger, Connected Community

Attach supporting documents as specified in agency instructions.

Add Attachments

Delete Attachments

View Attachments

<b>Application for Federal Assistance SF-424</b>			
<b>16. Congressional Districts Of:</b>			
* a. Applicant	<input type="text" value="NE-003"/>	* b. Program/Project	<input type="text" value="NE-003"/>
Attach an additional list of Program/Project Congressional Districts if needed.			
<input type="text"/>	<input type="button" value="Add Attachment"/>	<input type="button" value="Delete Attachment"/>	<input type="button" value="View Attachment"/>
<b>17. Proposed Project:</b>			
* a. Start Date:	<input type="text" value="07/01/2025"/>	* b. End Date:	<input type="text" value="06/30/2027"/>
<b>18. Estimated Funding (\$):</b>			
* a. Federal	<input type="text" value="980,000.00"/>		
* b. Applicant	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>		
* c. State	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>		
* d. Local	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>		
* e. Other	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>		
* f. Program Income	<input type="text" value="0.00"/>		
* g. TOTAL	<input type="text" value="980,000.00"/>		
<b>* 19. Is Application Subject to Review By State Under Executive Order 12372 Process?</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> a. This application was made available to the State under the Executive Order 12372 Process for review on		<input type="text"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/> b. Program is subject to E.O. 12372 but has not been selected by the State for review.			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> c. Program is not covered by E.O. 12372.			
<b>* 20. Is the Applicant Delinquent On Any Federal Debt? (If "Yes," provide explanation in attachment.)</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No			
If "Yes", provide explanation and attach			
<input type="text"/>	<input type="button" value="Add Attachment"/>	<input type="button" value="Delete Attachment"/>	<input type="button" value="View Attachment"/>
<b>21. *By signing this application, I certify (1) to the statements contained in the list of certifications** and (2) that the statements herein are true, complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I also provide the required assurances** and agree to comply with any resulting terms if I accept an award. I am aware that any false, fictitious, or fraudulent statements or claims may subject me to criminal, civil, or administrative penalties. (U.S. Code, Title 18, Section 1001)</b>			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ** I AGREE			
** The list of certifications and assurances, or an internet site where you may obtain this list, is contained in the announcement or agency specific instructions.			
<b>Authorized Representative:</b>			
Prefix:	<input type="text"/>	* First Name:	<input type="text" value="Lee"/>
Middle Name:	<input type="text"/>		
* Last Name:	<input type="text" value="Vrooman"/>		
Suffix:	<input type="text"/>		
* Title:	<input type="text" value="Director of Engineering"/>		
* Telephone Number:	<input type="text" value="402-462-3657"/>	Fax Number:	<input type="text"/>
* Email:	<input type="text" value="lvrooman@cityofhastings.org"/>		
* Signature of Authorized Representative:	<input type="text" value="Completed by Grants.gov upon submission."/>	* Date Signed:	<input type="text" value="Completed by Grants.gov upon submission."/>

## ATTACHMENTS FORM

**Instructions:** On this form, you will attach the various files that make up your grant application. Please consult with the appropriate Agency Guidelines for more information about each needed file. Please remember that any files you attach must be in the document format and named as specified in the Guidelines.

**Important:** Please attach your files in the proper sequence. See the appropriate Agency Guidelines for details.

1) Please attach Attachment 1	FY 2025 BUILD Project Informa	Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment
2) Please attach Attachment 2	Project Description.pdf	Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment
3) Please attach Attachment 3	Project Location File.zip	Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment
4) Please attach Attachment 4	Project Budget.pdf	Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment
5) Please attach Attachment 5	Funding Commitments.pdf	Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment
6) Please attach Attachment 6	Merit Criteria Narrative.pdf	Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment
7) Please attach Attachment 7	Project Readiness.pdf	Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment
8) Please attach Attachment 8	City of Hastings RAISE Letter	Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment
9) Please attach Attachment 9	copier@hpstigers.org_20241212	Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment
10) Please attach Attachment 10		Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment
11) Please attach Attachment 11		Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment
12) Please attach Attachment 12		Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment
13) Please attach Attachment 13		Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment
14) Please attach Attachment 14		Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment
15) Please attach Attachment 15		Add Attachment	Delete Attachment	View Attachment

**The following attachment is not included in the view since it is not a read-only PDF file.**

**Upon submission, this file will be transmitted to the Grantor without any data loss.**

**FY 2025 BUILD Project Information Form.xlsx**

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION FILE

The proposed project is to conduct a detailed and comprehensive study of the various modes of transportation available to the residents, customers, and businesses in South Hastings neighborhoods. The study will work to identify and develop/design specific projects and programs to address deficiencies in existing transportation infrastructure that create barriers for the residents and businesses within these neighborhoods to be better connected physically and socially to employment, shopping, healthcare, recreation, and other neighborhoods in Hastings.

Hastings, Nebraska, population 25,152 (2020 Decennial Census), was founded in 1872 at the intersection of two major railroads. As a transportation hub in the south-central region of Nebraska, Hastings quickly grew as an industrial leader in the state for agriculture, manufacturing, healthcare, education, and a regional retail center. Hastings is the birthplace of Kool-Aid, the popular childhood drink. It is home to Hastings College, a small private college, and the Central Community College, Hastings Campus. Mary Lanning Memorial Healthcare System, a regional leader in healthcare, is located in Hastings. The City has a vibrant and growing downtown and several recreation facilities, including a regional softball complex that is the location for the Nebraska High School Softball Championships. These institutions and more have established Hastings as a desirable place to live, work, and play.

Like many cities west of the Mississippi River, Hastings' establishment and growth followed the railroad. At one point, Hastings had at least 10 different companies with rail lines leading to and from the City. These rail lines have ultimately merged into two major lines: the BNSF Railway, which runs through the heart of the City, and the Union Pacific Railroad, located on the northern end of the City. Hastings is a stop for Amtrak's California Zephyr line on the BNSF Railway.

The BNSF Railway has a daily average of 20 trains passing through Hastings. This major rail line has fifteen crossings within the City limits. Fourteen of those crossings are at grade, and one is a subgrade underpass at Burlington Avenue. As many as 40 times per day, these crossings can be blocked by slow or stopped trains switching cars on the siding tracks on the mainline. During intense rainfall events, the lone underpass can sometimes be closed due to deep, standing water caused by the overwhelmed drainage infrastructure. This stormwater is pumped out quickly once the intense rains subside, but the underpass can be closed for up to an hour.

Like many cities, Hastings's growth has followed highways and major roadway expansions in recent decades. United States Highway 281/34 runs north/south through the center of Hastings. This five-lane urban section sees an annual average daily traffic of 20,180 vehicles. As it travels to the north, it becomes a limited-access expressway to Interstate 80 and Grand Island. Of the 32 intersections along U.S. 281/34 in the City limits, 15 are signalized.

U.S. Highways 6/34 runs on the south end of Hastings. This highway has an annual average daily traffic of 8,995. Through most of the City, this major roadway is a five-lane urban section, with the southeast portion planned for construction to a three-lane roadway in 2026 and 2027.

Most road intersections along this stretch are not signalized, as there are fewer intersections and fewer developments to the south of the road.

Hastings' land use patterns and the built environment are similar to those of other cities across the region and country. The original founding of the community was in a grid pattern emanating from the railroads, central business district, and commercial/industrial districts adjacent to the rail lines. Sidewalks accompany this grid network of roadways throughout the adjacent residential neighborhoods. Recent auto-oriented developments have followed a curvilinear design with fewer sidewalks. The layout of Hastings today includes a vibrant Downtown in the heart of the community, a strong commercial corridor along U.S. Highway 281/34 through most of the community, industrial land uses along the BNSF and Union Pacific rail lines, and along U.S. Highway 6/34. The City has an overall residential density of 2.7 dwelling units per gross acre. South Hastings has a denser residential development pattern of 3.1 dwelling units per gross area.

The BNSF Railway predominantly divides the community north to south, both physically and socially. Although there are quality businesses and community services south of this rail line, most shopping, education, healthcare, places of worship, community services, and recreation centers are located north of the BNSF tracks. The tracks diminish these neighborhood's quality of life and community connectivity.

Today, no grocery stores provide fresh produce, meats, or dairy products in the South Hastings Neighborhoods. Although convenience stores and other stores, such as Dollar General, try to provide household grocery necessities, such as dairy products, there is no substitute for a grocery store. Different types of shopping, such as clothing, home goods, and other retail stores, are predominantly located north of BNSF Railway in the Downtown Area or along the U.S. Highway 281/34 commercial corridor on the City's north end.

The majority of Hastings children attend Hastings Public Schools. The School District has an early learning center, five elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school. Hastings Middle School (201 N. Marian Rd) is located north of the BNSF tracks, so many middle schoolers from South Hastings cross the BNSF line to attend school. Most elementary-age students in the South Hastings Neighborhoods attend the Lincoln Elementary School, a neighborhood school in southwest Hastings (720 S. Lincoln Avenue). Some elementary-age students in the southeastern portion of the community attend school at Alcott Elementary, a neighborhood school to the north of the BNSF tracks (313 N. Cedar Ave). Hastings also has a strong parochial school system, with the Hastings Catholic Schools System. The Catholic Schools are all located to the north of the BNSF Railway. Anecdotally, there have been accounts of school-aged children crossing the railroad tracks and through railcars as a shortcut to the schools and other community amenities, such as the Hastings Aquacourt (community swimming pool), that are north of the railroad tracks.

Most of Hastings' healthcare, community support services, and places of worship are located on the north side of the BNSF Railway. Many of Hastings' healthcare providers are located at Mary Lanning Memorial Healthcare, north of Downtown, or in a growing healthcare area on the far north side of town. Other nonprofit organizations and religious institutions are located near Mary Lanning Memorial Healthcare or even further to the north and provide a wide variety of support for those in need through free meals, food banks, health services, and social services.

Several quality parks and recreation centers, including Lincoln Park, are in South Hastings. However, most recreation centers, such as the Hastings Aquacourt, the Community Center, and the Hastings Family YMCA, are located north of the BNSF Railway lines. Most of these amenities, including grocery stores, other retail stores, and healthcare, are within a 15- to 20-minute walk from most South Hastings homes. Unfortunately, there are limited, safe pedestrian and bicycle routes that overcome the barriers of the BNSF Railway.

*The auto-oriented roadway and limited safe crossings of the railroad tracks create safety issues for all transportation system users.*

Finally, the railroads can also create life-or-death situations in some situations. Because BNSF Railway's lines are primarily at grade crossings, when a train is stopped on the tracks due to rail traffic, cargo loading, or switching, several of these crossings are blocked for an extended period. If a health emergency at a home or structure fire would occur, emergency response will be delayed as the responders have to re-route several blocks to find an open crossing. The only grade-separated crossing with the BNSF Railway is the Burlington Avenue underpass near 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. This is a reliable crossing, except during heavy rain or other inclement weather, where the underpass may not be navigable because of the ponding water.

Although the location of these community amenities in the northern half of the City can be explained for various reasons, the South Hastings Neighborhoods appear to be adversely impacted by the barriers that the BNSF Railway lines and federal highways create, in addition to the travel distance from the amenities. South Hastings is located within two census tracts, Tract 9660 and Tract 9661. The neighborhoods within these census tracts are identified as areas of persistent poverty, as shown by the 2018 American Community Survey Estimates (ACS). Census Tract 9660 has 21.9% of the population below the poverty line, and Census Tract 9661 has 32.2% of the population below the poverty line.

#### *Past Studies*

The City of Hastings has conducted several recent studies to address multimodal issues for the community, including the South Hastings Neighborhoods. In 2019, the City completed the Hastings Barriers to Universal Mobility study and the Hastings Walkability and Connectivity Study. The Barriers to Universal Mobility study, conducted by Olsson, used field data collection to determine what physical impediments are present in the existing infrastructure that may pose a risk to the health and safety of Hastings residents. This study identified limitations, such as dilapidated sidewalks, inadequate ADA-accessible intersections, obstructions within the public



sidewalk, or missing sidewalks. The study culminated in an implementation plan to address these barriers to having appropriate and safe sidewalks for all.

The Hastings Walkability and Connectivity Study determined the future of walking and biking. The study, conducted by JEO Consultant Group, Inc. and Toole Design, evaluated the various transportation systems and engaged the community to create a multimodal vision and implementation plan for the walking and biking network in the City. The study's implementation plan identified several projects to complete the City's Pioneer Spirit Trail system. The largest project identified is the Southern Crosstown Connection, which has been designed and approved for funding, with construction to begin in 2025. This will extend the trail system by 2.65 miles with an 8 to 10-foot-wide concrete trail that connects the existing trailhead in the Downtown area to Brickyard Park. A portion of the trail will utilize an abandoned railway and road rights-of-ways (ROW) through the South Hastings neighborhoods. The trail will also innovatively use road ROW to give the roadway a diet by eliminating some on-street parking, moving the curb line, and establishing the trail network in this area. Once this phase is complete, the trail will total 12.5 miles. Future phases are intended to close the trail loop with additional segments on the west and north sides of the City.

The 2022 Transportation and Parking Master Plan, conducted by Kimley Horn, expanded the study of multimodal transportation in Hastings with an added focus on Downtown's ADA accessibility improvements and needed roadway improvements to create a comprehensive implementation plan for different modes of travel.

The City has made significant strides to implement the priority projects identified in these past studies, including \$3 million for the Pioneer Spirit Trail Southern Crosstown Connection, a 2022 CDBG grant project to improve ADA accessibility and sidewalks in the Downtown, and work with the Nebraska Department of Transportation upgrade traffic signals along Burlington Avenue. Although improvements have been made to improve the bike and walking infrastructure, significant transportation barriers remain. Each planning document noted the barriers the railroads and highways create throughout the City. However, due to the significant design, construction, and financial undertaking, solutions were not provided to overcome these barriers that have yet to be implemented. The City wants to change this mindset and the future of multimodal connectivity for the South Hastings Neighborhoods with this planning grant application.

The City will hire a consultant team with extensive experience engaging with the community and studying and designing transportation infrastructure. The study will work with the community to find the needed infrastructure and routes to overcome the previously noted transportation barriers. These will most likely include intersection improvements along U.S. Highways 281/34 and 6/34 to improve the safety of pedestrian and bicycle crossings and multimodal infrastructure over the BNSF Railway. No exact routes have been identified.

The City intends to use an Asset-Based Community Development approach to reach the leaders of South Hastings Neighborhoods and associations that support these neighborhoods. By working with and through these community leaders and organizations, the City feels it is the best approach to reaching the wider community to inform, engage, gain input and feedback, and get a consensus on where and what the system improvements should be.

The Asset-Based Community Development engagement effort was kicked off on December 18, 2024, with a meeting of neighborhood and community leaders representing associations that serve South Hastings. The effort continued with a community open house on January 23, 2025, with neighborhood members and associations to discuss the grant application, seek feedback about transportation issues in South Hastings, and gain ideas for a vision for how residents can travel throughout South Hastings and the community.

The study will culminate with a detailed implementation plan that identifies the specific improvements needed to overcome the transportation barriers and improve the connectivity of the South Hastings Neighborhoods to the rest of Hastings. As part of the implementation plan, initial designs of the identified infrastructure improvements will be created. This study and its subsequent implementation are designed to improve the transportation infrastructure to protect all travelers from safety risks, including at railroad intersections, improve the quality of life and community connectivity, and improve air and water quality for those in South Hastings.

One limiting factor present in Nebraska is State Statutes 18-617 through 18-627, which require procedural processes that culminate in a vote of the citizens of the City to approve a viaduct over or subway under a railroad. This statute will likely limit the ability to fully design any viaduct or bridge infrastructure that would overcome the barriers of the rail line that will coincide with the timelines of this grant. The City will complete the study with initial conceptual designs of these improvements, which the community can use to initiate the procedural processes needed to satisfy the state statute. If the public vote is successful, the City will endeavor to complete the design and secure the funding required to move forward.

**The following attachment is not included in the view since it is not a read-only PDF file.**

**Upon submission, this file will be transmitted to the Grantor without any data loss.**

**Project Location File.zip**

## PROJECT BUDGET

Funding Source	Scoping & Engineering Study	Environmental	Community Engagement	Total Funding
BUILD Funds:	\$637,000.00	\$98,000.00	\$245,000.00	\$980,000.00
Other Federal Funds:	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Non-Federal Funds:	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total Project Costs:	\$637,000.00	\$98,000.00	\$245,000.00	\$980,000.00

2020 Census Tract(s)	Project Costs per Census Tract
9660	\$490,000.00
9661	\$490,000.00
	Total Project Cost: \$980,000.00

\*Due to the broad-scope planning activities, cost estimates were split evenly between all census tracts within the components scope.

Urban and Rural	Project Costs
Urban (2020 Census-designated urban area with a population greater than 200,000)	\$0.00
Rural (Located outside of a 2020 Census-designated urban area with a population greater than 200,000)	\$980,000.00
	Total Project Cost: \$980,000.00

### Overview

No costs have been previously incurred for this project, and it is not expected that any costs will be incurred prior to notice of award obligations. The project budget is based on conversations with a local consultant who is experienced in completing projects with a scope similar to our project. The broad nature of the project scope, a complex urban environment, a high level of community engagement, and desk top environmental review drive the cost.

### Sources, Uses, and Availability

This project seeks to fund three components of a large planning effort: community engagement, scoping and engineering study, and environmental review. These components aim to identify solutions to existing barriers the railroad tracks and US Highways present to multimodal transportation. Through a robust community engagement effort, the project will seek input from the public on existing deficiencies and proposed solutions. Scoping and engineering will gather data, evaluate solutions, and provide conceptual designs for chosen solutions. A desktop environmental review will determine, at a high level, any impacts that may lead to additional costs or the inability to construct a solution. Since the project is fully funded through BUILD dollars, no funds are restricted during this time, and it is desired that all components are funded through BUILD.

### Contingency Amount

Per the Notice of Funding Opportunity, this planning project does not require a contingency amount to be included in the budget. In the incidence of exceeding the budget due to unanticipated cost increases, the City can secure additional funds from its Professional Services account in the Street Fund. In the 2024/2025 City Budget, \$100,000 is committed to this project.

### Level of Design

Per the Notice of Funding Opportunity, consideration of the Level of Design is not applicable for planning projects. However, the project will include conceptual planning design for proposed solutions.

### Cost Estimates

The project budget is based on conversations between the City's Director of Engineering and local consultants about the scope of the project. The consultants provided budgetary estimates for the project's scope. The City also looked at the scope and cost of similar efforts in other Nebraska communities to develop a project budget.

### Cost Share or Non-Federal Funding Match

This project is 100 percent located within a rural area, areas with persistent poverty, and historically disadvantaged communities, as shown in the American Community Survey 2014-2018 5-year dataset. Due to these three factors, it is permitted to request more than 80 percent in federal funds per the Notice of Funding Opportunity. Hastings is proposing no local cost share or non-federal funding match.

## **FUNDING COMMITMENT DOCUMENTATION**

This project is 100 percent within a rural area, areas of persistent poverty, and historically disadvantaged communities under the BUILD classifications. Full project costs are being sought through the BUILD grant program; therefore, no funding commitment documentation from the City of Hastings is required.

## MERIT CRITERIA

### Safety

This planning project addresses safety risks for motorized and non-motorized travelers by identifying locations for and designing multimodal infrastructure that expands travel choices. The City of Hastings has two significant transportation barriers that divide the community's southern portion: the BNSF Railway and US Highway 281/34. The railroad tracks divide the north and south half of the community, with only one grade-separated crossing at Burlington Avenue. Additionally, US Highway 281/34 is a five-lane highway that divides the community east/west with an Average Annual Daily Traffic count of 20,180 vehicles in 2021, according to the Nebraska Department of Transportation. These transportation barriers present traffic hazards for both motorized and non-motorized travelers that this planning project will address.

- Protect non-motorized travelers from safety risks: This application has a primary purpose of protecting non-motorized travelers from safety risks through developing several improvements. As part of this planning effort, the City of Hastings seeks to understand the need for safety improvements to the railroad and highway crossings and develop multimodal improvements for the safety of non-motorized travelers. The south half of the City of Hastings (census tracts 9660 and 9661) is disconnected from key amenities such as groceries, healthcare, recreation, places of worship, and schools by the railroad tracks and federal highways, which present challenges to the safety of non-motorized travelers, as shown in Figure 1, Page 3.

Additionally, the most recent crash data from the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) indicates that 387 motor vehicle traffic accidents occurred in Hastings in 2020. Also, NDOT's report for 2014-2023 county crash rate per 100 million miles shows that Adams County (the county the city is in) had a crash rate that is nearly 45% higher than the statewide rate. While the majority of these traffic accidents involved motor vehicles, this poses an increased risk to all travelers. These data points indicate a need for safety considerations on Hastings' streets, which are intended to be addressed by developing multimodal infrastructure to protect both motorized and non-motorized travelers while traversing the community.

- Incorporate and cite specific actions and activities identified in the USDOT National Roadway Safety Strategy: This project and future construction projects born from this planning study will incorporate several actions and activities identified in the USDOT National Roadway Safety Strategy. First and foremost, this effort aligns with the Strategy vision to strive for zero roadway fatalities. By addressing dangerous intersections and providing infrastructure (e.g., needed pedestrian bridges), the implementation of the City's planning study will work to eliminate roadway fatalities and serious injuries for all users of the roadway - walkers, bikers, and drivers. This project and future infrastructure improvements will create safer roads, safer speeds, post-crash care, and help decrease transportation-related emissions.

This planning study and subsequent construction projects will address safer roads by implementing improved intersections, sidewalks, trails, and infrastructure to overcome barriers that do not currently provide quality access and do not feel safe for all users. These improvements will naturally include infrastructure that will improve the main railroad crossings in the heart of Hastings, which are currently non-existent or are not conducive to a safe crossing of the rail lines. As noted in the strategy, 70% of pedestrian fatality hotspots occur on roadways with five or more lanes of traffic that pedestrians need to cross. This type of roadway runs through the middle of South Hastings. The study and the implementation plan will pay particular attention to this pedestrian/vehicle conflict.

In 2013, the City of Hastings adopted a Complete Street Policy, which emphasizes the need for a transportation corridor for all users, including pedestrians and cyclists, and requires all street projects to consider ways to accommodate and encourage travel by bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages and abilities. By focusing on planning, designing, and implementing safer roads and streets through the development of Complete Streets, the City of Hastings is aligned with the principles of the USDOT National Roadway Safety Strategy.

It is anticipated that the intersection and roadway improvements that will be identified in this project will ultimately create safer speeds by vehicles. A natural outcome of the City's Complete Street Policy is to reduce vehicle speeds by removing the focus from the automobile and placing it evenly to all roadway uses. The refocus of the design of the road reduces the vehicle lane width and introduces more amenities for other users; this will equate to a lower vehicle speed because of the roadway improvements driver's perceptions of the roadway.

In the unfortunate event of a crash, this study intends to ensure expedient emergency response to the site and access to the City's emergency room. The study will research the need for improvements to the transportation system to ensure that emergency response is not limited when responding to a crash or transporting the crash victims to the emergency room. These reduced response times could occur because of railway crossing closures due to stopped or slowed trains.

Finally, although not a specific objective of the National Roadway Safety Strategy, this project will do its part to improve environmental sustainability by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, the opportunity will be presented to provide more landscaping and trees along sidewalks and trails, which will improve air and water quality.





## Environmental Sustainability

This planning project will work to address environmental sustainability, providing broader travel options, which should reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air and water quality. Additionally, these envisioned transportation infrastructure improvements will make it more convenient for all travelers to drive, walk, or bike to work, school, worship, or shop. South Hastings is already a dense neighborhood, with a variety of different housing types to provide affordable housing. Historically, these neighborhoods and the layout of the street and sidewalk networks allowed for easy travel to daily destinations. This planning project aims to find ways to provide these time-tested infrastructure amenities to provide more travel choices for the neighborhoods in South Hastings.

- Reduce transportation-related air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions in communities:  
This planning grant is intended to expand transportation choices by developing multimodal infrastructure. The EPA estimates that transportation-related air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from a passenger vehicle account for 4.6 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> annually. Approximately 2,573 households in the South Hastings Census tracts have access to one vehicle; this would generate approximately 11,840 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> annually. If the opportunity to choose a different mode of transportation would create a five-percent modal shift, this could reduce emissions to approximately 11,320 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year in South Hastings, a reduction of 520 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year. The development of multimodal infrastructure with this grant could reduce transportation-related air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, which avoids adverse impacts from air quality issues that could affect the communities in South Hastings.

### Passenger Vehicle Greenhouse gas emissions per year

$$\begin{aligned} \text{CO}_2 \text{ emissions per vehicle} &= \frac{\text{CO}_2 \text{ per gallon}}{\text{MPG}} \times \text{miles} = 4.6 \text{ metric tons} \\ &= \frac{8,887}{22.2} \times 11,500 \\ \text{Greenhouse gas in South Hastings} &= \text{Vehicle emissions} \times \text{number of households} \\ 11,840 \text{ metric tons} &= 4.6 \text{ metric tons} \times 2,573 \text{ households} \end{aligned}$$

### Five Percent Modal Shift Passenger Vehicle Greenhouse gas emissions per year

$$\begin{aligned} \text{CO}_2 \text{ emissions per vehicle} &= \frac{\text{CO}_2 \text{ per gallon}}{\text{MPG}} \times \text{miles} = 4.4 \text{ metric tons} \\ &= \frac{8,887}{22.2} \times 10,900 \\ \text{Greenhouse gas in South Hastings} &= \text{Vehicle emissions} \times \text{number of households} \\ 11,320 \text{ metric tons} &= 4.4 \text{ metric tons} \times 2,573 \text{ households} \end{aligned}$$

Source: EPA, 2023 ACS, & City of Hastings

- Implement transportation-efficient land use and design, such as drawing on the features of historic towns and villages that had a mix of land uses, compact and walkable development patterns, accessible green space, and neighborhood centers that make it convenient to take fewer or shorter trips: The older neighborhoods of Hastings, including those in South Hastings were developed with a traditional grid-pattern of streets and developed blocks. Historically, sidewalks lined the commercial and residential blocks, providing easy travel throughout the community for all travelers. As the railroad tracks and highways expanded, this grid development pattern was disrupted, creating significant barriers to critical daily destinations. This project will work to find and implement infrastructure improvements to re-establish historic connections, allowing residents to take shorter and fewer trips by all modes of transportation.

### Quality of Life

As a primary purpose of this planning application, quality of life will be addressed by expanding travel choices with the development of multimodal infrastructure to address transportation and housing cost burdens and reduce vehicle dependency. Additionally, expanding multimodal travel options will improve access to daily destinations. The Pioneer Spirit Trail provides a dedicated bike trail that will create a looped system through the community. The trail system currently consists of 9.8 miles of constructed trails, with an additional 2.65 miles planned to start construction in 2025. However, most of the constructed trail and daily destinations are in north Hastings. Although excellent for recreation and access around the city, the trail network does not provide direct access to amenities near South Hastings, and it is significantly blocked by railroad tracks or highways. By focusing on developing safe and accessible transportation infrastructure that allows for walking or biking directly to nearby amenities, such as shopping, dining, healthcare, and recreation centers, the quality of life for the residents of South Hastings will improve.

- Increase affordable transportation choices: The development of multimodal infrastructure in South Hastings will expand travel choices by providing new connections to North Hastings that are currently impacted by transportation barriers, such as the railroad tracks and federal highways. These improvements will directly affect the neighborhoods in South Hastings, which are located in a disadvantaged community and area of persistent poverty. According to the 2018 American Community Survey Estimates (ACS), 21.9% of the population is below the poverty level in Census Tract 9660, and 32.2% of the population is below the poverty level in Census Tract 9661. By improving safety and expanding transportation infrastructure in these neighborhoods, the opportunity to reduce the transportation cost burden of these households will be possible. These expanded travel choices can also reduce the expenses incurred for gas, vehicle maintenance, and insurance costs.
- Reduce transportation and housing cost burdens by integrating mixed-use development and a diversity of housing types, including affordable housing, with multimodal transportation infrastructure: The Neighborhoods in South Hastings are already relatively affordable compared to other parts of Hastings. The average home is valued at approximately \$130,000, compared to \$186,000 in neighborhoods in North Hastings. Additionally, South Hastings Neighborhoods are relatively denser, with a residential density of 3.1 dwellings per gross

acre compared to 2.7 dwellings per gross acre in the rest of the City. This is directly related to the broad mix of dwelling types in South Hastings, including single-family homes, duplexes, large apartment complexes, and everything in between.

According to the 2018 American Community Survey Estimates (ACS), 11.6% and 13.8% of households do not have a vehicle available in Census Tracts 9660 and 9661, respectively. These percentages are higher than the City of Hastings overall, with about 6.5% of households not having a vehicle available. This lack of vehicle access could be mitigated by the availability of multimodal infrastructure that broadens the modes of travel throughout the community, which this planning application intends to develop. Based on these data points, it is evident that the limited opportunities to safely drive, walk, and bike play a role in the impact on households in these neighborhoods.

- Coordinate and integrate land use, affordable housing, and transportation planning to create more livable communities and expand travel choices: The South Hastings Neighborhoods are already relatively dense, have a diverse mix of housing types, and offer affordable housing. The City and regional developers also continue to plan and develop a variety of homes that add to the mix of affordable housing. The refocus of the transportation infrastructure will enhance the already vibrant and livable neighborhoods in South Hastings by expanding safe and efficient opportunities to walk, bike, and drive throughout the community. This refocus will help support and enhance the new, affordable housing options being built in South Hastings.

This planning project intends to identify gaps and needs in the existing transportation network and develop a multimodal infrastructure system. This system will reconnect existing affordable housing in the south of the community with daily destinations, such as grocery stores, healthcare, places of worship, recreation centers, and schools, in the north of the community. The railroad tracks and federal highways present a transportation barrier for residents in South Hastings to reach these destinations.

- Improve access to daily destinations like jobs, healthcare, grocery stores, schools, places of worship, recreation, or parks: The southern portion of the community is disconnected from daily destinations, including healthcare, grocery stores, places of worship, schools, jobs, and recreation centers. There are anecdotal stories of school-aged children crossing through the rail yard and rail cars as a shortcut to the schools and recreation centers to the north of the railroad tracks. Stories like this should emphasize the need for improvements to the transportation infrastructure to provide safe and efficient access to these daily community destinations. This planning application will identify and develop safe multimodal infrastructure to reconnect South and North Hastings.

### **Mobility and Community Connectivity**

This planning application intends to focus on mobility and community connectivity as a primary project purpose. The City recognizes that community connectivity is not just a physical improvement but also a social effort to make better connections among neighbors. This planning project will heavily focus on community engagement to learn more about the gaps in the transportation network and to create meaningful projects and programs that will remove both the

physical and social barriers to allow South Hastings residents and businesses to reconnect to community amenities and each other.

Currently, railroad tracks and federal highways are significant transportation barriers for community members in South Hastings. With most daily destinations, such as grocery stores, healthcare, places of worship, recreation, and schools in North Hastings, the City of Hastings needs to identify and develop multimodal infrastructure to address this physical disconnect. Improving travel choices will improve these physical connections and will likely also improve community connections. Walking and biking are slower, more communal forms of transportation than personal vehicles. The slower, more engaging form of transportation should enhance the individual and neighborhood connections, creating a stronger, more resilient neighborhood.

- Implement plans, based on community participation and data, that addresses gaps identified in the existing network: The City intends to use an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach to meet and engage community members for this project. The ABCD approach strives to meet and engage community leaders, neighborhood “doers,” and community associations throughout the project. By seeking assistance from the community leaders and doers to help inform, guide, and encourage more participation from their neighbors within South Hastings, the City feels that the project’s implementation plan will be easier to accomplish. With a strong effort to engage community members where they are at, with the help of these community leaders, the ABCD approach should develop solutions that gain consensus quicker and that political leaders and staff will be more supportive of the solutions.
- Remove physical barriers for individuals by reconnecting communities to direct, affordable transportation options: As previously mentioned, the railroad tracks and federal highways are transportation barriers for community members in South Hastings. Today, there are no grocery stores in South Hastings. Also, there is less access to medical facilities and recreation centers compared to the neighborhoods in North Hastings. Although these grocery stores, other retail stores, healthcare centers, places of worship, and recreation centers can be reached by a 15-minute walk by most residents of South Hastings, the transportation barriers are significant. The development of multimodal infrastructure, focused on gaps in the transportation network, should reconnect South Hastings to daily destinations in North Hastings and provide affordable transportation options for living, working, and playing in these neighborhoods.
- Include transportation features that increase the accessibility for non-motorized travelers: This planning application will identify and address the accessibility of non-motorized travelers in South Hastings by developing multimodal infrastructure to remove transportation barriers created by the railroad tracks and federal highways. The development of multimodal infrastructure should increase the accessibility of non-motorized travel options for community members, providing more affordable transportation methods for those living, working, and shopping throughout the community.

## **Economic Competitiveness and Opportunity**

This planning application will address economic competitiveness and opportunity by facilitating tourism opportunities and promoting wealth building by providing safer, more accessible non-motorized routes to employment centers and reducing transportation costs.

- Facilitate tourism opportunities: The League of American Bicycles' study, *Bicycling Benefits Business*, provides several American studies supporting the claim that bicycle tourism financially benefits communities. A 2017 study by the Outdoor Industry Association stated that "bicyclists spent \$83 billion in 'bicycle tourism' and generated \$97 billion in retail spending in 2017." A study conducted by western North Carolina communities found that "bicycle tourists tend to stay in lodging for an average 3.7 nights, more than the average standard tourist who stays 2.5 nights."

The Hastings community hosts the annual Kool-Aid Classic Bicycle Tour, which averages 250 participants. A 2020 Nebraska Department of Transportation and U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration study found that the Kool-Aid Classic Bicycle Tour contributes \$110,294 to the economy in Adams County. According to event organizers, the annual biking event also has raised over \$37,000 for the Pioneer Spirit Trail during its 22-year history. The study noted that event organizers pointed out road maintenance as one of the features that had the most significant impact on the event's planning, with the route needing to be changed due to deteriorating road conditions in previous years. This shows the need to plan and develop bicycle infrastructure to support bicycle tourism.

Currently, the Kool-Aid Classic mainly follows roads in Hastings rather than a bike trail before continuing in the countryside near Hastings. The Pioneer Spirit Trail is a 9.8-mile dedicated bike trail throughout the community but currently has limited access in South Hastings. This planning application intends to improve connectivity between south and north Hastings by providing multimodal infrastructure to address transportation barriers such as the BNSF Railway and federal highways. These improvements should facilitate tourism opportunities by supporting the existing Kool-Aid Classic Bicycle Tour and providing the potential for expanded bicycle tourism.

- Promote wealth building: This shows the need for affordable transportation options, such as walking or biking, that are currently limited by the lack of connectivity in the transportation network. This planning application will address the railroad and federal highways as a significant barrier to connectivity. More affordable transportation options will also promote wealth building by reducing the amount of a person's income that is spent on transportation-related costs. The savings realized by a household using non-motorized modes of transportation rather than a personal vehicle for some trips could be used for saving, purchasing property, or starting a business.

## State of Good Repair

The City of Hastings is focused on maintaining its existing infrastructure. The City budgets for ongoing road and sidewalk maintenance throughout the City. Capital improvement funds are also annually budgeted to improve safety and modernize roadways and transportation infrastructure, such as traffic signals.

- Restore and modernize (such as through road diets and complete streets approaches) the existing core infrastructure assets that have met their useful life: As a part of this planning application, the City of Hastings intends to identify intersections and roadways that need improvements, which could include modernization efforts such as a complete streets approach. This effort will be realized in South Hastings in 2025 when the Southern Crosstown Connection is constructed. A portion of the next phase of the Pioneer Spirit Trail is to give the local streets a road diet to build a separated multi-use trail in the place of on-street parking. This kind of effort will continue to be explored with this planning project to provide safer and better access within the South Hastings Neighborhoods and over the barriers that limit non-motorized transportation options throughout the community.
- Address current or projected transportation system vulnerabilities for communities: As previously mentioned, most crossings at the BNSF Railway are at-grade crossings. These crossings can be blocked up to 40 times throughout the day due to stopped or slow-moving trains. This creates vulnerabilities in the transportation system for the neighborhoods in South Hastings, especially during emergency situations.

This vulnerability is further exacerbated when the only grade-separated crossing of the BNSF Railway can become impassable during heavy rains that overwhelm the underpass's pumping and drainage systems. This vulnerability could be life-threatening in the right conditions, with closed crossings due to a stopped train and the flooded underpass.

This study and subsequent projects are intended to reduce or eliminate this vulnerability by appropriately overcoming the railway barrier with needed transportation infrastructure improvements.

- Prioritize improvement of the condition and safety of existing transportation infrastructure within the existing footprint: This planning grant is intended to improve the condition and safety of transportation infrastructure, including within the existing footprint of the roadway and trail networks. The City has experience in providing a multimodal improvement within the existing footprint of the road. The Southern Crosstown Connection to be built in 2025 gives the existing streets a road diet and provides for an 8- to 10-foot paved multi-use trail in the place of existing on-street parking. The City recognizes the need to limit costly right-of-way acquisitions to achieve the network improvements.

## Partnership and Collaboration

Partnership and collaboration are essential components of developing a multimodal infrastructure system that addresses gaps and needs. As part of this planning application, the City of Hastings intends to engage residents and partner with community groups and organizations to ensure that the improvements to the infrastructure system have a positive impact on the communities in South Hastings. The City will use an Asset-Based Community Development approach to meet and involve these project partners to develop better outcomes.

- Engage residents and community-based organizations to ensure communities are meaningfully integrated throughout the lifecycle of the project: Throughout the planning project, the City will use an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach to engage the residents of South Hastings and the associations that work in the neighborhoods. The ABCD approach is designed to build quality relationships in the neighborhoods to directly understand the needs and wants of those residents. The points of engagement will be made in one-on-one, small groups, and community meetings throughout the life of the project.

This approach was initiated during the application development processes by meeting with neighborhood leaders, formal organizations (e.g., School District, Chamber of Commerce), and informal community groups, such as neighborhood watch groups, at small meetings and a larger community open house. The City intends to use this community engagement approach for a number of projects in the future, including this planning project and future implementation projects.

Additionally, the City employs an online engagement platform, [www.Engage.CityofHastings.org](http://www.Engage.CityofHastings.org), which allows residents to actively participate in projects through ideation, information, and asking questions in the comfort of their homes when schedules or life events prevent a community member from attending a meeting.

- Partner with communities or community groups to develop workforce strategies: As part of the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, both formal and informal community organizations will be enlisted to engage residents and businesses further. These groups include formal organizations, such as places of worship, the Chamber of Commerce, or the United Way, and informal groups, which include gardening clubs and neighborhood watch groups. This approach will be utilized throughout the planning project and subsequent implementation projects. The City recognizes that several important organizations help the neighborhoods in South Hastings that can be valuable partners in this project.

The City initiated the ABCD approach during the application development process by meeting with both organizations working in South Hastings and concerned residents during two separate meetings. These small group and larger community meetings will continue throughout the project, if awarded.



## Innovation

Using innovative approaches and technologies will be a vital part of improving the safety and access of the transportation system in South Hastings to connect those neighborhoods with over areas of the City by overcoming the barriers of the railroad tracks and highways. The City has consistently strived to bring innovative solutions to problems that it faces, including a road diet for the Southern Crosstown Connection trail expansion, an award-winning, first-of-its-kind groundwater treatment system for water quality, and innovations in downtown planning and streetscape design. The City intends to explore how real-time monitoring of intersections and railroad crossings can improve safety and efficiency at intersections. The City also wants to explore innovative programs encouraging travel choices for work, school, shopping, and dining.

- Use sensors to monitor real-time conditions of pavement quality, signage, crosswalks, transit headways, or other public infrastructure: The opportunity exists to incorporate monitoring systems at intersections, crosswalks, and railroad crossings to provide a safer and more responsive experience for the roadway users. The City plans to explore all technologies, such as detection technology at intersections to identify pedestrians and bicyclists and engage crosswalk or intersection signals to improve the safety, effectiveness, and efficiency for participants in all modes of travel.

The opportunity also exists to use mobile apps and innovative signage to help find the safest and most effective route for walking or riding. The signage does not need to be expensive or elaborate. Several communities have explored using simple signage to inform residents and potential customers how close a business area, school, or park is to that potential walker or biker.

- Use active grade crossing detection systems: The City is actively improving at-grade crossings on the BNSF Railway to “quiet crossings,” which is necessary to keep the peace in the heart of the City when roughly 20 trains pass through it. Incorporating the latest technologies of active grade crossing detection systems, coupled with the anticipated crossing improvements to overcome the barriers created by the railroad tracks, can create a significantly safer environment between the trains and vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists. These and other technologies will be explored to develop the safest transportation system possible for the Hastings community.

## References

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- “Why should people be active?”. Centers for Disease Control, 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/active-people-healthy-nation/php/why-be-active/index.html>

## PROJECT READINESS

The City of Hastings is prepared to initiate the project upon award notification. The City has a core group of staff that will use their expertise in Planning and Engineering to work with a consultant to complete this project.

- Lee Vrooman, Director of Engineering, is a professional civil engineer with 27 years of experience in completing public infrastructure projects.
- Steve Riehle, Lead Engineer Public Works, is a professional civil engineer with 42 years of experience in completing public infrastructure projects at the City, County, and State levels.
- Chad Bunger, Director of Development Services, is a professional planner, certified grant administrator, and floodplain manager with 17 years of experience in planning and development.
- Ember Batelaan, City Planner, has 3 years of experience in planning and development, recently leading the City's efforts to establish a Creative District for downtown Hastings.

This group will be supported by additional staff in the City's Engineering, Environmental, GIS, Parks, and Development Services Departments. The City of Hastings also has a good working relationship with NDOT, which will provide grant administration support for this project.

### Federal Funding and Regulations

The City completed a federally funded hike and bike trail in 2015. This project added 3.4 miles of trail to the City's trail system and was designed and managed by City staff. Staff is familiar with federal contract and procurement requirements, Build America Buy America, Americans with Disabilities Act, Davis Bacon, and related Acts, and NEPA requirements from completing past CDBG (Community Development Block Grants), BRIC grants (Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities), and the federal trail grant.

### Project Planning

The City of Hastings is committed to planning for the future, as evident by the completed studies and planning that add value and relevance to this project.

- 2019 Hastings Barriers to Universal Mobility
- 2019 Hastings Walkability and Connectivity Study
- 2022 Transportation and Parking Plan
- 2023 Comprehensive Plan Update

These studies have identified the need to connect the southern part of the City with the northern parts of the City.

Hastings' One- and Six-Year Street Improvement Program includes a viaduct project over the BNSF Railway, a study for a pedestrian bridge over the BNSF, and multiple street projects on the south side of the City that promote connectivity.

#### Project Delivery

In 2022, the City received CDBG funding for the construction of ADA-compliant curb ramps and sidewalk repair within a seven-block radius of City Hall. The City successfully completed this \$519,775 project within the grant's time parameters in partnership with the South Central Economic Development District on grant administration.

In 2023, the City received BRIC funding for three flood control and drainage projects. The project included a Phase 1 scoping study and conceptual design to determine the best solution for each area. If the benefit to cost analysis is met, the projects can move onto Phase 2, full design. The City successfully completed Phase 1 with each of the three projects and qualified one of the projects for Phase 2 (complete design), which is currently underway. City staff have provided grant management and reporting for the projects. The total cost of Phase 1 was \$248,050. Phase 2 is under contract for \$506,538.

In 2024, the City worked with two different consultants. One was to complete a traffic flow and efficiency study for a five-mile section of 12<sup>th</sup> Street. The second was a study that looked at switching the downtown area from one-way traffic to two-way traffic. Both studies were successfully completed with multiple improvement projects proposed from each. Two specific projects are budgeted for completion in the 2024/2025 budget.

Recently, the City received a \$250,000 Nebraska Game and Parks Commission grant to assist with funding the construction of a 2.65-mile hike and bike trail on the south side of Hastings. City staff completed the NEPA review, and the FHWA is in the process of reviewing the report. The total projected cost of this trail project is \$3,000,000.

The City also recently received confirmation of the award for three CDBG grants totaling \$1.25 million.

## Project Schedule

- July – December 2025
  - Coordination with the Local Projects Division of NDOT to update the scope of work and finalize grant agreement.
  - NDOT Request for Qualifications and Consultant Selection
- January 2026 – June 2027
  - Project kickoff meeting
  - Consultant information gathering
  - Public Engagement
  - Conceptual design
  - Desk top environmental review
  - Draft and final report



United Way  
Of South Central Nebraska

Re: Support for the City of Hastings' Grant Application for the US DOT Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Program

*Board of Directors*

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Casey Molifua

Lauren Overmiller

Cristian Perez

Shayne Raitt

Colleen Schukei

Lauren Slaughter

On behalf of United Way of South Central Nebraska, I am writing to express my strong support for the City of Hastings' application for the US Department of Transportation's Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant. This grant will fund a comprehensive planning study to address the transportation needs of residents in South Hastings.

The proposed planning study represents a vital step toward understanding and resolving the community's transportation challenges, particularly for underserved populations who may need to rely on alternative modes of travel. By focusing on sustainable, equitable, and efficient transportation solutions for all, the study aligns with our shared goals of enhancing mobility, improving safety, fostering economic growth in the community, and better connecting the residents of South Hastings to amenities throughout the City.

As an organization dedicated to improving community health, education, and financial stability, we recognize that reliable transportation is fundamental to achieving these outcomes. Our work with local families has consistently shown that limited transportation options create significant barriers to accessing employment, healthcare services, educational opportunities, and essential resources. Through our programs and community partnerships, we have observed firsthand how transportation challenges disproportionately affect South Hastings residents, impacting their ability to maintain stable employment, attend medical appointments, and participate fully in community life. A comprehensive transportation study will be crucial in developing targeted solutions that address these barriers and create more equitable access to opportunities for all residents, directly supporting United Way's mission of building stronger, more resilient communities.

We strongly encourage your support for this grant application, as it will bring much-needed resources to a community striving to improve the quality of life, safety, and resiliency of its residents. This planning study is an investment in the City of Hastings and in the broader goal of sustainable and equitable infrastructure development.

Thank you for your consideration and for supporting this critical initiative. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 402-461-8414 or [jodi@unitedwayscne.org](mailto:jodi@unitedwayscne.org) if you have any questions or require additional information regarding our support for this project.

With Gratitude-

Jodi Graves, Executive Director  
United Way of South Central Nebraska  
402-461-8414 or [jodi@unitedwayscne.org](mailto:jodi@unitedwayscne.org)



# Hastings Public Schools

## Administrative Offices

1515 West 8th Street • Hastings, NE 68901 • Phone (402) 461-7500 • Fax (402) 461-7509

December 11th, 2024

To the Members of the Hastings City Council:

I appreciate your ongoing discussions regarding potential initiatives to enhance our community for all residents of Hastings. As the Superintendent of Hastings Public Schools, I would like to urge you to consider measures that would improve the safety of our young people, particularly concerning the railroad tracks on Laird Avenue.

Hastings Middle School and the Waterpark are significant destinations for many students in this area, in addition to several other local attractions. While our offices were located at 1924 South A Street, I observed numerous students crossing the tracks by boarding stationary trains, which poses a serious safety risk.

I recognize the importance of balancing budget considerations alongside other community needs. However, our youth represent our future, and I am grateful for any attention you can give to enhancing safety in this specific area. Please feel free to reach out if I can provide any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Jeff Schneider  
Superintendent  
Hastings Public Schools