



# LINC Project Description

## A. Local Intermodal Network Connection (LINC) Norfolk

The City of Norfolk respectfully submits a request for funding in the amount of \$2,086,411 under the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Grant Program for the Local Intermodal Network Connection (LINC) Norfolk planning project.

The LINC Norfolk planning project will provide a 60% design for a 4.8 mile multi-modal path and other necessary infrastructure to accommodate the 10' wide path. The path will provide an additional safe, accessible route for the active transportation network in the community and will connect Skyview Park, from the northwest area of town, to the Cowboy Trailhead and Ta-Ha-Zouka Park in the southeast area of town, passing through the heart of Norfolk to provide a vital connection to the historically disadvantaged areas of town. The design will include enhanced landscaping, trees, street and trail lighting, trail signage, and new curb ramps at all intersections.



Figure 1: Photograph of the Cowboy Trail located in Norfolk, Nebraska. Credit to Visit Norfolk Area.

### Project Location

This project is located in Northeast Nebraska, in the city of Norfolk. Norfolk is located two hours from both Lincoln and Omaha. Norfolk is considered a regional hub for the area, however, much has been done over the past ten years to improve economic opportunity in the community. Norfolk is characterized by a “big city, small community” feeling, at least in terms of the other cities, towns, and villages nearby.

Four out of the five census tracts that LINC Norfolk will be directly located in are considered Historically Disadvantaged Census Tracts according to the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST).<sup>1</sup> These tracts have been identified as such because of the effects of long term marginalization by underinvestment and pollution overburden. Census Tracts, 9607, 9609, and 9610 have household median incomes of at least \$10,000 below the Norfolk Micro Area median household income of \$63,350.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, four of these census tracts have poverty levels above the Norfolk Micro Area rate.



Figure 2: Photograph of underpass path reconstruction on Norfolk Avenue and 1st St. Credit to City of Norfolk Engineering Department

<sup>1</sup> Climate & Economic Justice Screening Tool . (n.d.-b).

<https://maps.dot.gov/BTS/GrantProjectLocationVerification/>

<sup>2</sup> Census Data: ACS 5-year Estimates 2018-2022

## Area of Persistent Poverty

**Census Tract 9607:** located east of Hwy 81 and north of Norfolk Ave., Norfolk’s unofficial division between north and south of town, is considered an area of persistent poverty.

Census Tract 9607 has median household income of \$41,395. This is close to \$20,000 less than the median household income for the Norfolk Micro Area, \$63,350, and approximately 57% of the median household income in the state of Nebraska, \$71,722. Figure 4 compares the rate of the population in Census Tract 9607 that is considered to be living in poverty and households utilizing SNAP benefits compared to the Norfolk Micro Area, Nebraska and the United States overall. As you can see, this tract faces substantially high rates of poverty and SNAP benefits, especially when compared to the Norfolk Micro Area. Additionally, Census Tract 9607 is marked by much higher minority population and households that

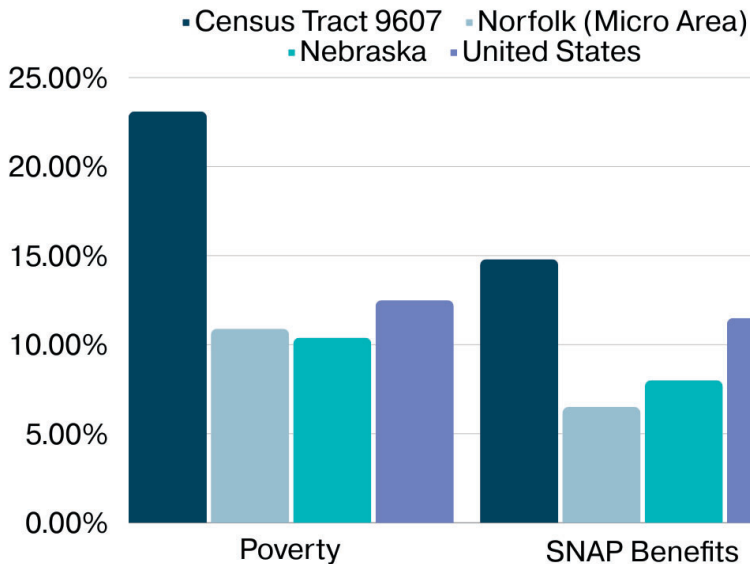


Figure 3: Census Data ACS 5-year Estimates from 2018-2022

speak languages other than English both across the state of Nebraska and Norfolk Micro Area. Census Tract is 24.6% minority, with 18% speaking a language other than English.

## Historically Disadvantaged Census Tract

**Census Tract 9607:** This Census Tract is also a Historically Disadvantaged census Tract. According to the CEJST, it is in the 97th percentile in the category of proximity to superfund sites and 91st percentile for proximity to risk management plan facilities.

**Census Tract 9609:** This tract is the most geographically central location of Norfolk. This tract is 90th percentile in proximity to risk management facilities, 99th percentile proximity to superfund sites, and 92th percentile for underground storage tanks and releases.

**Census Tract 9610:** Located in the mid eastern section of town, this census tract stood out for negative affects faced by the community in environmental concerns. For example, it is in the 99th percentile for proximity to superfund sites, 96th percentile proximity to risk management plant facilities, and the 91st percentile for

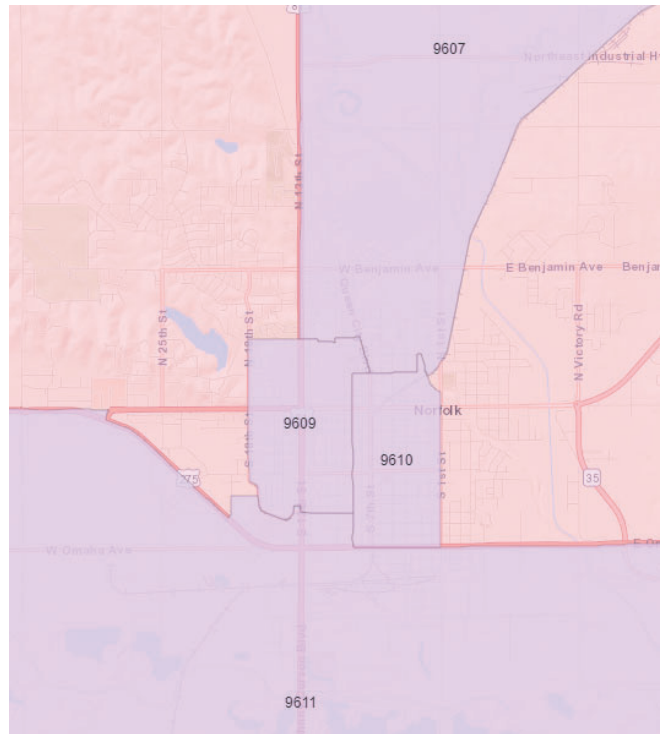


Figure 4: U.S, DOT RAISE Project Verification Tool Screenshot.



lead paint concerns due to the age of the homes in the area.

**Census Tract 9611:** This census tract is often referred to as “South Norfolk”. This encompasses the area between Hwy 275 and Ta-Ha-Zouka Park. This Census Tract also stood out for the climate and environmental burdens it faces when compared to the United States. Most notable it is in the 95th percentile in the category of expected population loss rate as a result of fatalities and injuries resulting from natural hazards. It is in the 99th percentile proximately to superfund sites and 94th percentile for proximately to risk management plan facilities.

## Project History & Current Design Status

LINC Norfolk is in the pre-planning phase, but this is a concept that has been discussed for several years by Norfolk elected officials, the community, and City staff, particularly the Engineering and Parks Departments. In anticipation the City had previously surveyed and began a preliminary design for a portion of the trail along 7th St. from Madison Ave. south to Pasewalk Ave. Street segments and infrastructure improvements as part of this LINC project have been identified by the City’s asset management system, Street Logix, as in need of repairs.



Figure 6: Photo at Michigan Ave. and 7th St. During Reconstruction.

Additionally, the City has already acquired the extra right of way necessary on the east side of 7th St. from Madison Ave. south to Hwy 275 to construct a 10’ wide trail. A 10’ trail from Madison Ave. north to Braasch Ave. has already been completed. Previously, the City completed a drainage study to begin to assess some of the water concerns for the area of 7th St. Madison Ave. from Hwy 81 east through the intersection of 7th St. was reconstructed in 2023, this area is located directly on the LINC Norfolk path.

Over the years, the City has utilized the resources available to it at the time, to reconstruct parts of the Norfolk trail system bit by bit. Portions of LINC Norfolk have been identified in Norfolk’s Bicycling and Walking Network Plan completed in 2020 by Toole design.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, in Norfolk’s recent Parks and Recreation master planning survey, presented to City Council in February 2024, identified that the community enthusiastically receptive to improving path infrastructure and also found that it was a top priority for the community overall.<sup>4</sup>

## Detailed Statement of Work

LINC Norfolk will connect the Ta Ha Zouka Park on the south side of Norfolk to Skyview Lake on the northwest side of Norfolk. The route will begin in south Norfolk on 1st St. trail at Ta-Ha-Zouka and the trailhead for the Cowboy Trail. The route will continue north and west crossing Hwy 275 near 7th St., continue north on 7th St., which becomes Queen City Blvd. Then LINC Norfolk head west across Highway 81 to Skyview Lake.

<sup>3</sup> Toole Design Norfolk Bicycling & Walking Network. (n.d.-c). <https://norfolkne.gov/assets/site/documentcentral/engineering/cityprojects/norfolk-ne-assessment-preview-compressed.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Norfolk’s Parks & Recreation Community Survey Results Report July 2023



LINC Norfolk will require detailed planning to be the necessary first step to create the physical infrastructure needed to support a safe, connected transportation network that will connect Norfolk's historically disadvantaged areas to all of Norfolk's community destinations. This project will be completed to 60% design phase.

## Technical & Engineering Aspects of the Project

### Conceptual Design

LINC Norfolk will begin with a conceptual design to present to City staff and elected officials, along with the public, the overall plan. This conceptual design will include roadway and trail cross sections, and aesthetic elements. This design phase will include traffic studies, drainage studies, and alternatives analysis.

### Schematic Design

The second stage will be 30% Schematic design . This will define the project scope, create renderings and design plans to share during the meaningful public engagement phase. The schematic design will also include developing a preliminary cost estimate, schedule for the construction project, finalize design criteria and determine land acquisition needs.

### 60% Design Phase

The 60% design phase would finalize the expectations and objectives of the project, confirm the constructibility of the project, implement value engineering, if applicable and determine construction permit requirements, and completing NEPA documents and submitting them for approval will be a part of this phase.

The proposed LINC Norfolk design includes:

- ◆ 4.8 miles of a new 10' wide concrete multi-use trail;
- ◆ 16,000 SY of concrete pavement street improvements;
- ◆ 27,000 SY of street asphalt overlay;
- ◆ 7,000 feet of enhanced landscaping, new street and trail lighting;  
\* *This will include added trees and trail signage along the entire route*
- ◆ 1 new pedestrian refuge crossings at Hwy 275;
- ◆ 1 new pedestrian trail undercrossing at Hwy 81.

## Transportation Challenges

There is no safe way for those traveling by active transportation to access the Cowboy Trailhead or Ta-Ha-Zouka park. Currently, that area is an island and if someone wanted to walk from this area north into Norfolk they will encounter streets with no sidewalks, unmarked crosswalks, inadequate lighting and very little signage. It is also a challenge for those seeing to cross Hwy 275 and Hwy 81, near Skyview Lake. Additionally, most of the intended path has various serious safety challenges and concerns including incomplete or no sidewalks, no crossings or unmarked crossing on busy streets and highway, low, if any, lighting and so forth.

The area of south Norfolk along Northwestern Ave. has faced the effects of a lack of investment and economic growth. One reason for this is the isolation of this area from other areas in Norfolk that have seen economic growth, for example, the downtown district, is because it is difficult to navigate to this location. Businesses seeking to locate where there is more foot traffic, due to events, and location, and those seeking to see growth from the extensive Johnson Park project, will not located in this area.



The area between Hwy 275 and Northwestern Ave., from 1st St. to 7th St. is defined by a history of flooding. In this area, all of the storm water from the area south of the highway drains into 5th Street, north of Hwy 275. This occurs up to 5 times a year and the water will be 4" deep across the road and will spread out over 12' into Hwy 275 lanes. This causes serious safety issues for drivers and pedestrians.

## Transportation Solutions

One of the major components of LINC Norfolk is connecting Norfolk. Building a multi-modal path through Norfolk will allow pedestrians and bicyclists to easily travel to south Norfolk and for residents of south Norfolk to travel north to schools, jobs, recreation and more.

An alternative analysis will be performed to design a new protected crossing across Hwy 275 at 7th St. A new, safer, and protected pedestrian/bike crossing at Hwy 275 is necessary to improve safety. This safe crossing will result in the movement of people from the southern part of town to have safe, direct, and designated access to central and north Norfolk. The LINC Norfolk design will most likely incorporate a pedestrian refuge area within the vicinity of the railroad crossing located at Hwy 275 and 7th St.

7th Street is a significant corridor between Hwy 275 and Benjamin Avenue located 2 miles north. It is a major collector carrying semi traffic and higher volumes of vehicular traffic to local businesses, schools and the downtown area. This corridor is also a major thoroughfare for emergency vehicles with the fire and police stations located at 7th Street and Braasch Avenue.

A new pedestrian/bike underpass at Hwy 81 and Georgia Avenue will be designed to provide a safe crossing at the Hwy. Alternative analysis will also be performed at Hwy 81. This will reduce traffic related delays that impair the efficient movement of people and improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists. Constructing a trail along this corridor will give pedestrians safer routes for getting around Norfolk.

LINC Norfolk will also solve problems related to street parking off of 7th Street that often results in damaged property or accidents. Several intersection improvements will need to be incorporated into the plan to facilitate the trail crossings. New ADA curb ramps will be constructed at each intersection. An intersection study is planned for 7th Street and Madison Avenue and an alternative analysis will look at the feasibility of a new roundabout at this intersection.



Figure 7: From left to right: Photo of Northwestern Ave. on LINC Norfolk proposed path, Photo of Crossing at Hwy 275 at 7th Street on LINC Norfolk Proposed Path, Photo of Crossing at Hwy 81 and Georgia Ave. on LINC Norfolk Proposed Path