

1. Project Description

Please provide a summary of the purpose and need for the proposed project. Provide a detailed description of the project activities that would be funded with Access Program funds. Describe the overall design concept, any unusual design elements, design standards, and any work affecting structures (bridges and major culverts). Include widths, surfacing type, earthwork needs or roadside safety features. Include options and funding breakdown for scaling/phasing the project, if applicable.

The purpose of this project is to advance phased construction of a shared-use path along Frankfurst Avenue to provide safe and direct multimodal access to the Masonville Cove Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership (UWRP) and Environmental Education Center (MCEEC) in Baltimore City, Maryland. The UWRP is currently separated from surrounding neighborhoods by CSX rail lines and Interstate 895 (I-895), creating significant barriers for pedestrians and cyclists. This project advances long-term efforts to safely and efficiently connect local residents, students, and visitors to Masonville Cove while also supporting broader regional trail network and waterfront access.

The Masonville Cove Connector is planned to accommodate multiple modes of transportation, including bicycles, runners, walkers, scooters, strollers, and wheelchairs that will connect neighborhoods in this industrial area to the refuge as well as the National Park Service (NPS) Star-Spangled Banner (STSP) National Historic Trail (NHT) and Fort McHenry National Monument (NM) & Historic Shrine (HS). The increased access will allow the neighboring communities of Brooklyn, Curtis Bay, and Cherry Hill, as well as those from the greater Baltimore area to enjoy their local cultural, historical, and natural resources from which they are currently disconnected.

Masonville Cove encompasses 70 acres of open water and 46 acres of restored wetlands, upland habitat, and nature trails (Attachment A), managed through a nontraditional partnership led by the Maryland Port Administration in collaboration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and partners from non-government organizations (Attachment B). This partnership transformed a once contaminated and inaccessible shoreline into the nation's first Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership, offering environmental education and stewardship opportunities to thousands of visitors annually. Additionally, in 2025 Masonville Cove was officially granted designation to be part of the Chesapeake Gateways Network, recognizing its unique ecological, cultural, and educational value within the Chesapeake Bay region. This designation strengthens ongoing conservation, public access, and environmental education efforts at the nation's first Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership site. Despite its proximity to the neighborhoods of Brooklyn, Cherry Hill, and Curtis Bay, access to the site remains limited due to the absence of safe pedestrian and bicycle facilities along Frankfurst Avenue, which is a designated truck route.

Baltimore City has formally supported the MCC (Attachment C) concept and endorsed advancing a shared-use path along Frankfurst Avenue, recognizing the need for safer multimodal access on this roadway.

The proposed MCC will construct a 0.72-mile shared-use path along the south (eastbound) side of Frankfurst Avenue, extending from South Hanover Street to the entrance of the MCEEC (Attachment A). The path is proposed to be 10 feet wide, narrowing to 8 feet in constrained areas, with a landscaped buffer and appropriate traffic control measures to enhance user safety.

Improvements will propose a reduction of the roadway from four to two travel lanes, installation of turn lanes at key industrial driveways, and a protective fence adjacent to CSX property. The design minimizes utility impacts by utilizing existing right-of-way and drainage infrastructure while improving overall corridor safety for all users (Attachment D).

This construction phase builds directly upon the design work currently underway and aligns with regional access priorities identified in the [Middle Branch Master Plan](#) and the [Baltimore City Department of Transportation Complete Streets Ordinance](#). The following construction phases for the MCC are anticipated:

- Phase 1 will involve the removal of the existing concrete median and reconstruction of the roadway pavement to accommodate the shared-use path.
- Phase 2 will include installation of the curb, the shared-use path, stormwater inlets, retaining walls, driveway improvements, lighting, utility relocation as needed, and landscaping.
- Phase 3 will complete the project with milling and resurfacing Frankfurst Avenue, final striping, and signal modifications to ensure safe connections for all users.

In addition to the construction phases described above, coordination with other major infrastructure projects is underway to ensure compatibility and avoid conflicts. Baltimore City Department of Public Works is currently advancing a sewer line improvement project (Attachment E) in the same corridor, and the Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) is progressing with planned toll reconfiguration work associated with the I-895 & Frankfurst Avenue Interchange (Attachment F). Both projects influence timing, sequencing, and final design elements of the MCC project schedule; ongoing coordination is ensuring that grading, drainage, utility placement, and construction access remain compatible with these adjacent efforts. No impacts to bridges or major culverts are anticipated as part of the MCC project scope.

In addition to pursuing Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) funds to support construction efforts, additional grant opportunities are actively being explored to help supplement the overall funding strategy for the phased construction of the MCC. These supplemental grants may include state infrastructure programs or other federal sources aimed at supporting transportation and community access improvements. The goal is to leverage multiple funding streams to ensure the project remains financially viable and can progress through each phase without delay.

By advancing construction of the Masonville Cove Connector, the UWRP and its partners will deliver tangible improvements in safety, accessibility, and connectivity. The project will strengthen the regional trail network (including the East Coast Greenway), expand public access to federal lands and heritage resources, and create lasting multimodal connections between Baltimore's waterfront and surrounding communities.

2. Safety Benefits

Please describe how this project addresses issues related to safety. Will the project improve safety for all user groups (pedestrians, bicycles, motor vehicles, etc.)? Will this project improve identified crash sites or hazardous conditions (road safety audits or engineering assessments)? Please provide crash data if available.

The MCC will directly address documented safety challenges along Frankfurst Avenue, a four-lane corridor with an average traffic volume of approximately 8,000 – 10,000 vehicles per day (Attachment G) and no dedicated pedestrian or bicycle facilities. Current conditions force pedestrians and cyclists to travel near and occasionally within lanes reserved for truck traffic, with access further constrained by the CSX rail line and I-895 (Attachment H). These barriers contribute to unsafe travel behavior and limit opportunities for non-motorized access to Masonville Cove.

The MCC project addresses these hazards through multiple targeted interventions. A dedicated 10-foot-wide shared-use path (narrowing to 8 feet in constrained areas) with a landscaped buffer will separate pedestrians and cyclists from vehicular traffic, including large trucks. At key intersections and industrial driveways, the proposed design incorporates turn lanes, signage, and other traffic control measures to minimize conflicts between trail users and vehicles. A protective fence adjacent to CSX property will prevent unauthorized access to the rail corridor, further reducing the risk of pedestrian incidents.

Crash data along Frankfurst Avenue from 2019–2024 indicate an average of 2.17 injury crashes and 4.83 property-damage-only crashes per year (Attachment I). Applying established Crash Modification Factors (CMFs) for the proposed interventions—including lane reductions, traffic signals, crosswalks, sidewalks, and shoulder improvements—reduces projected crash costs from \$723,163 per year under no-build conditions to \$21,695 per year with the build scenario, representing \$701,468 in anticipated safety benefits (Attachment J).

By implementing these measures, the MCC will provide a safe, continuous multimodal corridor, addressing both known crash locations and hazardous conditions while improving overall safety for all users and supporting long-term roadway and trail operational goals.

3. Accessibility and Mobility Benefits

Please describe how the proposed project routes are connected to a FLMA inventory route. Describe how the project addresses the need on FLMA plan, State or County Comprehensive Plan. Include any public involvement efforts to date. Describe how the proposed project will fill missing links in the network, remove travel restrictions or bottlenecks. How will the plan improve mode choice, explore and enhance transit systems (i.e. operation and maintenance of transit facilities, etc.)? Will the project reduce traffic congestion; enhance visitor mobility and accessibility?

The proposed MCC shared-use path will provide a safe, direct connection to key sites associated with the National Park Service Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail, most notably Fort McHenry National Monument & Historic Shrine, linking south Baltimore neighborhoods to these federally managed historic resources as well as to regional trail systems, including the proposed Baybrook Connector and the Gwynns Falls Trail (Attachment K). The project addresses access priorities identified in the Middle Branch Master Plan and supports the City of Baltimore’s Complete Streets Ordinance, filling a critical gap in the multimodal network by providing a continuous pedestrian and bicycle facility along Frankfurst Avenue, where sidewalks and safe crossings are currently limited.

Public input through a previous FLAP-funded feasibility study (Attachment L) and extensive stakeholder engagement has highlighted the need for safer, more accessible routes to the Masonville Cove UWRP and MCEEC. The MCC removes existing travel barriers by providing a fully separated shared-use path that accommodates walkers, cyclists, strollers, and wheelchairs, ensuring that local residents from Brooklyn, Cherry Hill, and Curtis Bay, as well as visitors from the greater Baltimore area, can access the refuge and regional trails safely and efficiently.

By constructing this key segment, the project fills a missing link in the regional trail network, improves pedestrian and bicycle mobility, and enhances accessibility to waterfront and cultural resources. The MCC supports multimodal choices for local residents, encourages safe active transportation, and strengthens connections to the surrounding trail and transit network. Phased construction along Frankfurst Avenue ensures that improvements are integrated with roadway safety upgrades, driveways, and crossings, further enhancing accessibility for all users.

4. Preservation Benefits

Will this project improve a National Bridge Inventory System (NBIS) deficient bridge rating? How will the project improve surface conditions? Will the project reduce operating costs? How will the project contribute to the protection or enhancement of specific natural, cultural, historic, and/or scenic resources?

The MCC project does not involve any structures listed in the National Bridge Inventory System (NBIS) and will therefore not impact NBIS bridge ratings. The project will, however, improve surface conditions along the corridor by replacing deteriorated pavement, upgrading drainage features, and constructing a new ADA-compliant shared-use path. These improvements will extend pavement life, increase resilience, and reduce the frequency of near-term maintenance interventions.

The project is also designed to reduce operating and maintenance costs over time by incorporating low-maintenance landscaping, durable surface materials, and stormwater features that better manage runoff and minimize erosion.

The MCC will significantly enhance natural, cultural, and historic resources associated with Masonville Cove, an area with a long heritage of community settlement, industrial transformation, and recent environmental renewal. The Masonville area was once a thriving early Baltimore community shaped by railroads, immigration, and industrial expansion in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Although the original neighborhood was displaced by mid-century industrial growth¹. The MCC will provide modern residents with safe access to the waterfront and nature-based educational opportunities, strengthening community ties to a culturally important place and supporting ongoing stewardship of the nation's first UWRP.

The project also strengthens public access to a site that has undergone extensive environmental cleanup and community-led stewardship. Since 2007, restoration efforts have removed derelict vessels and more than 61,000 tons of historic debris, and now Masonville Cove UWRP supports over 280 bird species, including Baltimore's first returning nesting bald eagles, and remains an important resting habitat for migratory birds.

¹ Masonville Cove Partnership. 2025. Masonville Cove. <https://www.masonvillecove.org/history>

5. Economic Development Benefits

Please describe how this project will attract tourism/visitation. Will the project address more than one Federal Land Management Agency (FLMA) area? How will this project influence economic development? How will this project address visitor mobility, access, and experience? Explain if/how the local or regional community is economically dependent on access to the federal land and the proposed transportation facility.

The MCC will directly support economic development and tourism by creating a safe, multimodal connection to Masonville Cove, an access point to two National Park Service resources: the Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail and Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine. Masonville Cove is also a newly designated 2025 National Park Service Chesapeake Gateways site, strengthening its role as a regional visitor destination. The project will allow visitors, students, and trail users to access these federal heritage resources safely and directly from surrounding neighborhoods and existing trail corridors.

By constructing a shared-use path along Frankfurst Avenue, the MCC will remove long-standing physical barriers created by CSX rail lines, I-895, and the absence of pedestrian facilities. This will significantly improve visitor mobility and create a seamless connection from the Cove to the Middle Branch Trail, proposed Baybrook Connector, and the broader Baltimore regional trail network (including the East Coast Greenway) which links to major waterfront destinations including the Inner Harbor and Fort McHenry. These new multimodal linkages will enhance the visitor experience by providing continuous, safe, and attractive non-motorized access to natural, cultural, and historic sites along the Patapsco River.

The project also supports ongoing economic revitalization efforts along Baltimore's Middle Branch waterfront. Increased access to the UWRP, the MCEEC, and adjacent shoreline amenities is expected to draw more visitors for birding, environmental education programs, waterfront exploration, and connection to National Park Service historic resources. Improved access encourages longer stays, greater participation in outdoor recreation, and increased use of nearby parks, providing indirect economic benefits to local businesses and institutions.

While the local community is not economically dependent on Masonville Cove in a traditional sense, improved access to the UWRP strengthens tourism potential for the region by linking neighborhoods, schools, and visitors to nationally significant National Park Service resources. The site's role as an educational and recreational destination, combined with its new Chesapeake Gateways designation, positions the Cove as an anchor for heritage and nature-based visitation within the South Baltimore region. Plans are also underway to pursue the installation of cultural signage with Baltimore City Department of Transportation along local travel corridors, with the intention of helping to draw more visitors to both the MCC, MCEEC, and thereby the National Park Service Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail and Fort McHenry National Monument & Historic Shrine. The MCC will enable this growth by providing the safe, reliable transportation connection required for increased visitation and long-term site sustainability.

6. Sustainability and Environmental Quality Benefits

Please describe how the proposed project contributes to the environmental goals and objectives of the Federal Land Management Plan or other applicable land management plan. How will the proposed project avoid/minimize/mitigate potential impacts to environmental or cultural resources? Will the project improve fish passage and/or wildlife connectivity? How does the proposed project contribute to the use of sustainable energy sources for transportation?

The MCC directly supports the environmental goals of the Masonville Cove UWRP, led jointly by the Maryland Port Administration, Living Classrooms Foundation, National Aquarium, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. As the nation's first UWRP site, Masonville Cove has long prioritized habitat restoration, environmental education, and low-impact public access. The proposed shared-use path advances these objectives by providing a safe, non-motorized connection that guides visitors to the refuge without encouraging increased vehicle traffic or creating new disturbances to the surrounding habitat.

The project has been designed to avoid and minimize impacts to environmental and cultural resources by remaining entirely within the existing Frankfurst Avenue right-of-way. Preliminary natural resources reviews indicate no direct impacts to wetlands or waters of the U.S., and forthcoming National Environmental Protection Act documentation and permitting coordination with the United States Army Corps of Engineers, the Maryland Department of the Environment, and the Maryland Critical Area Commission will ensure continued avoidance, minimization, and mitigation of any resource concerns. Planned stormwater management features, low-maintenance landscaping, and the use of resilient materials will help manage runoff, reduce localized flooding, and support long-term environmental quality along the corridor.

Although the MCC will be in an industrial corridor rather than an ecological migration route, the project enhances wildlife connectivity at Masonville Cove by channeling visitors to designated access points and reducing informal footpaths through sensitive habitat areas, supporting ongoing refuge restoration and protection efforts. The refuge is an important habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife and improved controlled access complements more than a decade of restoration work that has removed over 60,000 tons of debris, established native plant communities, and re-established functioning wetland and shoreline habitat.

The project also contributes to sustainable transportation goals by providing a high-quality facility for walking, bicycling, and other non-motorized modes. By enabling local and regional visitors to reach Masonville Cove, the Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail, and connecting greenway corridors without relying on motor vehicles, the MCC supports reductions in vehicle miles traveled, associated emissions, and roadway congestion. Guidance from the Baltimore City Department of Transportation Complete Streets Manual and American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) shared-use path standards is incorporated throughout the design to promote long-term environmental performance, multimodal mobility, and reduced reliance on carbon-intensive forms of travel.

Overall, the MCC strengthens low-impact access to a protected federal partnership site, aligns with ongoing habitat restoration and environmental stewardship goals, and provides a sustainable transportation link that will enhance environmental quality for years to come.