

# MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** January 11, 2023

**TO:** Dr. Thomas Bell, Associate Professor, K-State Libraries

**FROM:** Nick Saia, 2022 Morse Family and Community Public Policy Scholarship Recipient

**SUBJECT:** Pursuing Federal Grant Funding for Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure

This memo serves to document my experience as a recipient of the Morse Family Community Public Policy Scholarship.

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

In March of 2022, I was selected as the Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator for the City of Manhattan. In this role, I was responsible for managing business for the City's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, performing research and analysis on transportation as it relates to ongoing city planning projects, and assorted administrative duties.

Early into my experience, I received a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) grant program, which dedicated \$1 billion per year for five years through the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to safety-related infrastructure improvements.

In May, I was authorized to pursue this grant for the September deadline.

## PART I: AMENDING THE BPSP

Not every improvement project was eligible for the SS4A grant; rather, they must be selected from a menu established by an "Action Plan", as defined by the NOFO.

As Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator, I was already familiar with the City's Bicycle and Pedestrian Systems Plan (BPSP), a broad strategy for mobility and recreation needs in Manhattan. In total, it identifies 130 improvements to biking and walking infrastructure.

I noted that this plan, though not safety focused, met the majority of the requirements necessary to constitute an Action Plan. I theorized that if the BPSP's project list were to be winnowed in accordance with SS4A priorities, a slate of grant-eligible improvements could be generated.

I modeled a staged scoring system around the major selection criteria for the SS4A grant: safety impact, equity considerations, and effective strategy. The City's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee helped to refine these criteria.

All BPSP projects were scored according to parameters within the "safety" (for example, number of crashes within the project area over a ten-year span). The top scorers advanced to the "equity" stage and repeated the process. The final stage rendered a list of nine projects—the menu from which to select SS4A candidates.

"Plans" are physical documents, so amending the BPSP meant articulating this analysis process in a written format. When it was complete, I presented this format to the Manhattan Urban Area Planning Board for approval.

## **PART 2: APPLYING FOR THE SS4A GRANT**

When the amendment was approved, I transitioned to the application itself. This targeted SS4A funds for the top-scorer in the analysis process: North Manhattan Avenue. The project included a two-way protected cycle track on the west side of N. Manhattan from Bluemont Ave. to Vattier St., alignment of Campus Creek Rd. and Petticoat Ln. with Bertrand St. through an on-campus roundabout, and signalization of the Vattier/N. Manhattan, Thurston/N. Manhattan, and Bertrand/N. Manhattan intersections.

The heart of the grant application was the "narrative", a written explanation of why these improvements are necessary. I also collected timeline estimations from City staff to build a projection of major milestones and distilled cost evaluations provided by an engineering firm to assemble a budget overview.

As of the writing of this memo, the status of Manhattan's application is unknown. If I am successful, the improvements should be complete by the end of 2023.

## **PROJECT REFLECTION**

I consider this experience to be the most difficult I have yet undertaken.

In the past ten years, twenty people walking or biking have suffered serious injuries after being struck by a motor vehicle on N. Manhattan—just on the segment that borders K-State's campus. I felt the real potential of my work on the community.

At many points, I found myself to be the only person available to complete application tasks: concept drawings, maps, and financial projections that stretched my skill level beyond its limit.

I would like to extend my deep gratitude to the Morse family for such an intensely fulfilling challenge. It is my hope that the community can gain from my work as much as I have.