



TOWN OF SKOWHEGAN

Master Plan Transportation Study

Accessibility, Safety and Economic
Development Improvements

March 12, 2024

Public Meeting



VPI Public Meeting Agenda – March 12, 2024

- Welcome and Introductions
- Project Background
- Purpose and Need
- Study Process and Timeline to Date
- Alternatives Evaluated
- Draft Recommendations
- Public Input
- Next Steps

Transportation in Skowhegan

- Transportation in Skowhegan is unique and challenging
- Under active study for over 25 years through 3 distinct and major studies
 1. Skowhegan Bridge and Bypass Study
(started in 1998 and discontinued in 2010)
 2. Second Bridge Feasibility Study (completed Nov. 2021)
 - 3. Skowhegan Master Plan Transportation Feasibility Study**
(current study was requested and jointly funded by Town of Skowhegan)
 - i. deep dive into Village and Downtown features, including 2nd opinion on a second river crossing
 - ii. adjust travel demand models with development currently underway
 - iii. help identify ways to improve transportation safety and accessibility for all transportation modes
 - iv. intent to help resolve outstanding questions from prior study(ies) and move toward implementation

Project Background

Upon completion of the ***Second Bridge Feasibility Study*** in late 2021, the Town of Skowhegan asked MaineDOT to partner with the Town for further study to better understand a second bridge in Skowhegan in the context of changes underway.

Skowhegan also asked MaineDOT to help identify ways to improve transportation safety and accessibility for all transportation modes with particular attention to how planned and ongoing development in Skowhegan will change transportation with or without a second bridge.

Why are we doing this Study...

- **Skowhegan 2016 Strategic Plan for Community Transformation:**

The plan's goal is to *make Skowhegan a **thriving** economic, cultural, and recreational destination where residents enjoy a **high quality of life**.*



- With a number of major projects underway that will impact mobility, traffic, parking, community development, and economic growth, the next logical steps are to **consider all current and future infrastructure initiatives comprehensively, engage residents in the process, develop a master design plan, and implement projects accordingly.**
- A placemaking initiative at its core, the goal of a VPI collaboration between the Town of Skowhegan and MaineDOT is to **develop and implement a master design plan for Skowhegan's commercial core that will improve the quality of life for residents while promoting economic growth, enhancing the visitor experience, and guiding future development of Skowhegan.**



DRAFT Purpose & Need

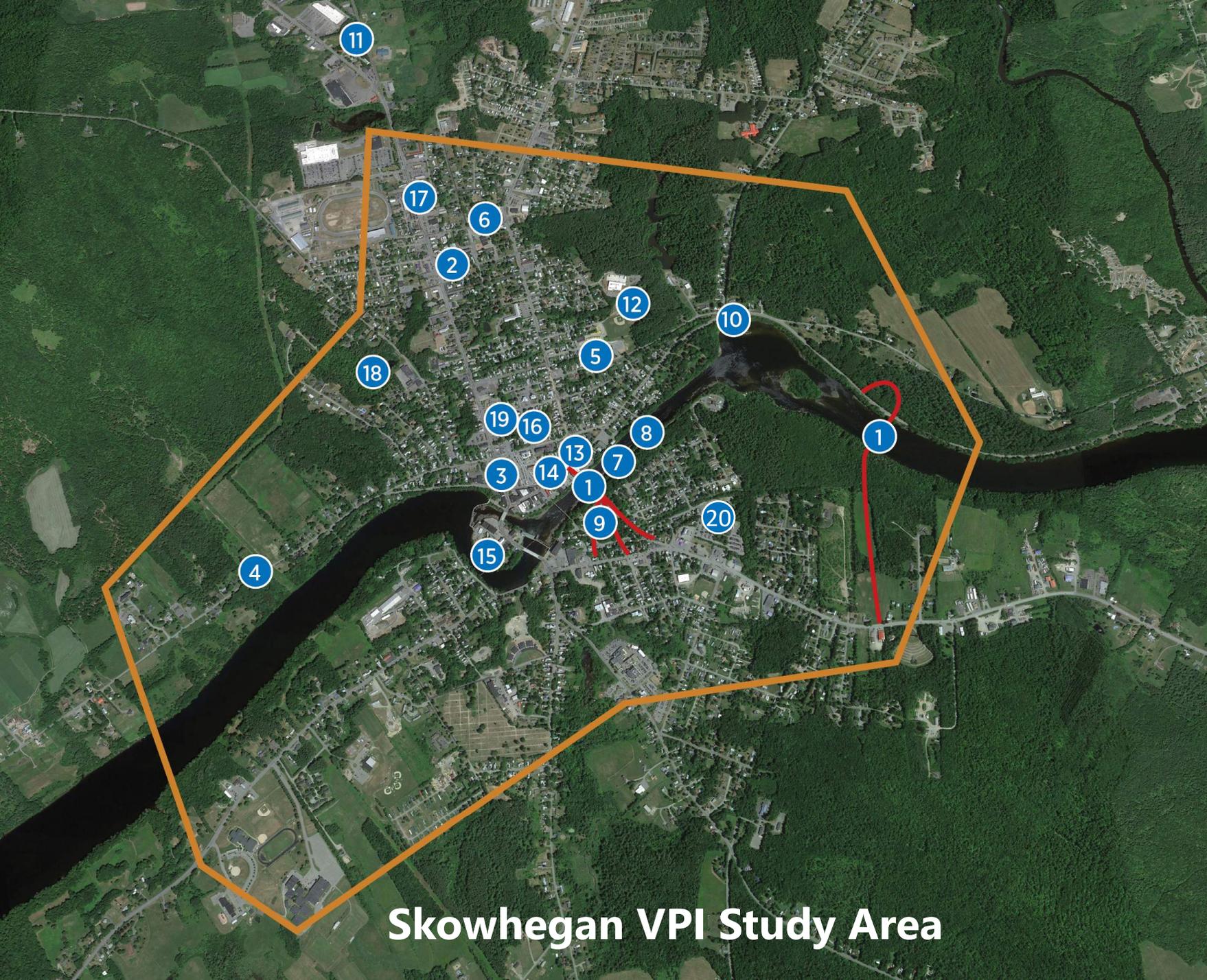
Primary

- Improve transportation safety and accessibility in downtown Skowhegan.
- Provide transportation improvements to compliment existing and planned economic development.
- Maintain acceptable transportation mobility.
- Identify implementable transportation solutions compatible with municipal plans and goals and supportable by reasonable transportation funding, regulations and requirements.

Secondary

- Consider the long-term resiliency and redundancy of the state and local transportation system.
- Improve safety and accessibility within greater Skowhegan in addition to the downtown.
- Minimize impacts associated with future improvements needed on the existing Margaret Chase Smith Bridges.
- Improve transportation mobility for through traffic.





Skowhegan VPI Study Area

- 1 Second Bridge Planning
- 2 Jewett Street/Madison Avenue MPI
- 3 Commercial Street/Madison Avenue Traffic Signal
- 4 Norridgewock Avenue Sidewalk
- 5 New MSAD 54 school (Heselton Street)
- 6 Bus Garage (Jewett Street)
- 7 Skowhegan River Park and Riverfront Development
- 8 Two-mile Riverfront Promenade
- 9 Trail Master Plan
- 10 New Maine Appalachian Trail Center
- 11 New Public Safety Building
- 12 New Ballfield Compound
- 13 Revitalization Historic Opera House
- 14 Downtown Mural Project
- 15 Mixed use Redevelopment at 7 Island Ave
- 16 Mixed use new construction project on Court Street
- 17 Madison Avenue Drainage and Paving
- 18 Whitten Brook project through Conservation Commission
- 19 Possible New parking garage
- 20 New Balance

— Town of Skowhegan
— Bridge options



VPI Committee Members (+ 5 TAC members)

1. Steve Gould (local business owner, former Planning Board)
2. Don Skillings (local business owner, former Select Board)
3. Chad Whittemore (local business owner, south side of town)
4. Peter Carrier (Trucking industry representation)
5. David Bucknam (Police Chief/Interim Town Mgr.)
6. Mike Lambke (doctor + Active Transp.)
7. Jessica Brown, Transp. Rep. (School District MAD54 rep)
8. Amanda White (Downtown business member)
9. Kim Leo (second downtown business)
10. Erin Binghalib, KVCAP rep (Transp.)
11. Todd Smith, 2nd Select Board member
12. Derek Chretien (Planning Board Member)
13. Tom McCarthy, Veterans Representation
14. Kate Drummond (Somerset Woods rep)

- ✓ Advisory role to the Selectboard (non-decision making)
- ✓ Provide Study Team with substantive comments at each step in the process

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Members

Member

1. David Bucknam
2. Kristina Cannon
3. Jason Finley
4. Steve Govoni
5. Joel Greenwood
6. Marty Rooney
7. Matt Drost
8. Tony Grande
9. Jason Ready/Mike Cristiani

Affiliation

Police Chief/Interim Town Mgr.
Main Street Skowhegan
Skowhegan Road Commissioner
Skowhegan Select Board
Town Planner, KVCOG
MaineDOT
MaineDOT
VHB
VHB

- ✓ Advisory role to the Study Team
- ✓ Provide input, guidance and direction at each step in the process

Timeline to Date

- 12/13/22 – 1/29/24 Project Kickoff/TAC Meeting (6)
- 12/20/22 Conducted Road Safety Assessment (RSA)
- 1/31/23 – 2/13/24 VPI Committee Meetings (5)
- 2/24/23 and 8/22/23 Conducted Parking Studies
- 2/25/23 Pop-up @ Skijor Skowhegan
 - Online Survey – 441 responses (*Overwhelming support for 2nd River Crossing 74%*)
- 7/31/23 Open House (River Fest)
- 6/9/23 DOT (Traffic/Safety) and 8/30/23 (Highway/Traffic)
- 2/13/24 Board of Selectmen Meeting
- 3/4/24 Veterans Meeting at American Legion

Summary of Alternatives

Study Team has looked at over 30 alternatives including:

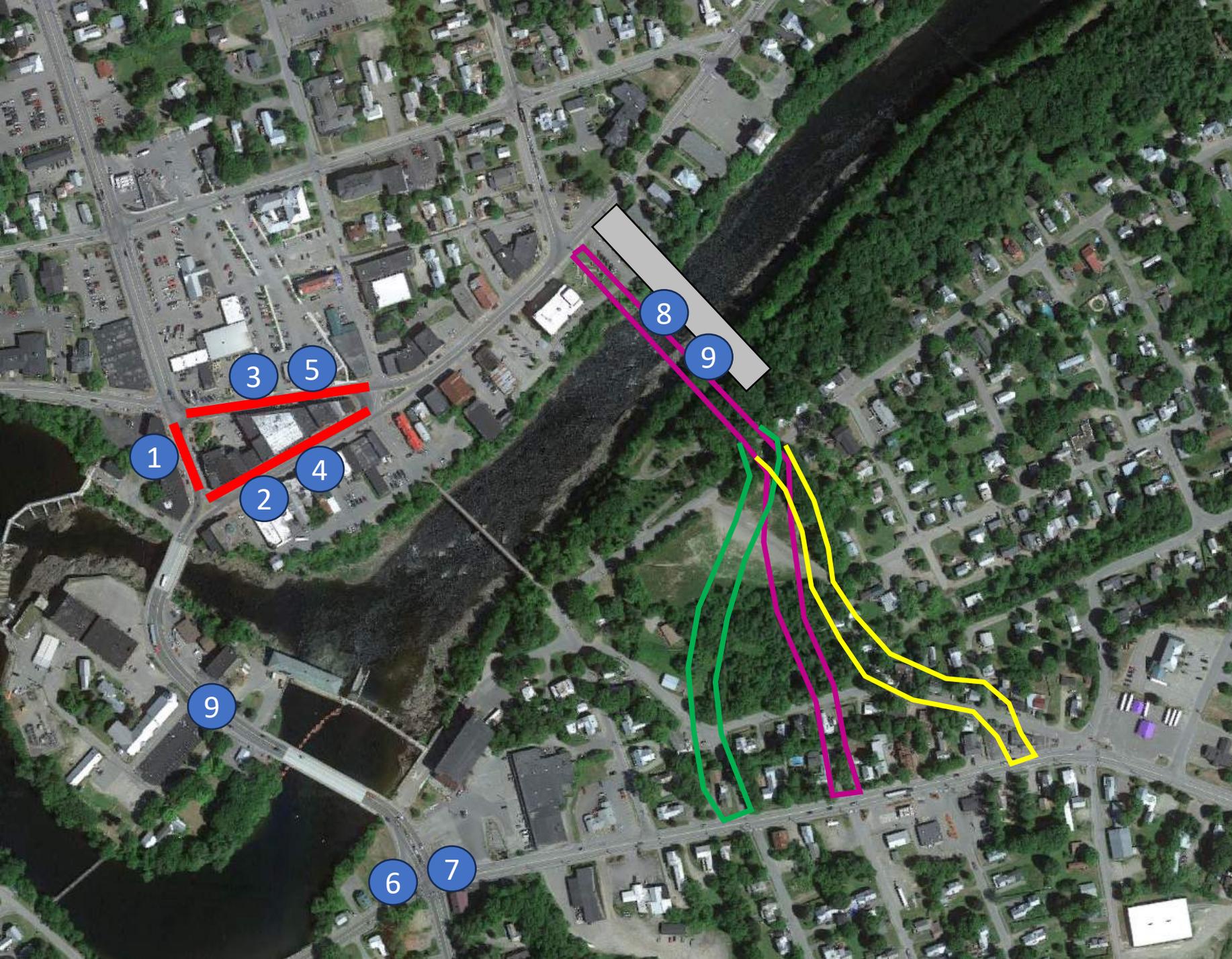
- Multiple alternatives at several intersections
- Lane Direction Changes (2-Way to 1-Way, 1-Way to 2-Way, Change in Directions)
- Number of Lane Use Changes on Various Streets
- Second Opinion related Prior Bridge Study (*updated traffic model*)

All alternatives have pros and cons.

Alternatives Explored

All alternatives based on 2045 AM and PM peak hour conditions

- 2045 No Build (With signal at Madison / Commercial) – ***This is the base condition for all alternatives evaluated***
 - 2-Way Madison Avenue
 - 2-Way Water Street
 - 2-Way Commercial Street
 - Single Lane Water Street
 - Single Lane Commercial Street
 - Single Lane Roundabout at Island Ave / Main Street
 - Multi Lane Roundabout at Island Ave / Main Street
- Downtown Bridge
 - Downtown Bridge with single or multi-lane lane roundabout at Island Ave / Main Street
 - Downtown Bridge with all 2-Way Downtown Circulation (Madison, Water, and Commercial)
 - Downtown Bridge with two 1-way bridges or existing MCS 1-way new 2-way



- 1 2-Way Madison Avenue
- 2 2-Way Water Street
- 3 2-Way Commercial Street
- 4 Single Lane Water Street
- 5 Single Lane Commercial Street
- 6 Single Lane Roundabout at Island Ave / Main Street
- 7 Multi Lane Roundabout at Island Ave / Main Street
- 8 Downtown Bridge
- 9 Downtown Bridge with two 1-way bridges or existing MCS 1-way new 2-way

Alternatives Explored

Other Alternatives/Considerations

- Route 201 Road Diet north of High Street
 - Reducing from 4 lanes to 3 lanes with a TWCLTL
 - Potential uses for lane width reduction
 - ✓ Wider sidewalks
 - ✓ Wider shoulders/bike lanes
 - ✓ Green space buffer
- Main Street at Heather Street and Fairview Avenue
 - Road reconfiguration and greenspace addition to park
- Route 201 at Jewett Street
 - Consider additional lanes for Jewett Street
 - Crosswalk through intersection
 - Signalize Park Street



- 10 Route 201 Road Diet north of High Street

 - Single NB and SB lane with 2-way center left turn lane
 - Room for additional bicycle/pedestrian accommodations
- 11 Route 201 at Jewett Street

 - Consider additional lanes for Jewett Street
 - Crosswalk through intersection
 - Signalize Park Street
- 12 Main Street at Heather Street and Fairview Avenue

 - Consider removing lanes from Main Street to expand the park.
 - Promote pedestrian connectivity and access to downtown by using the pedestrian bridge.

Common Themes for Recommendations

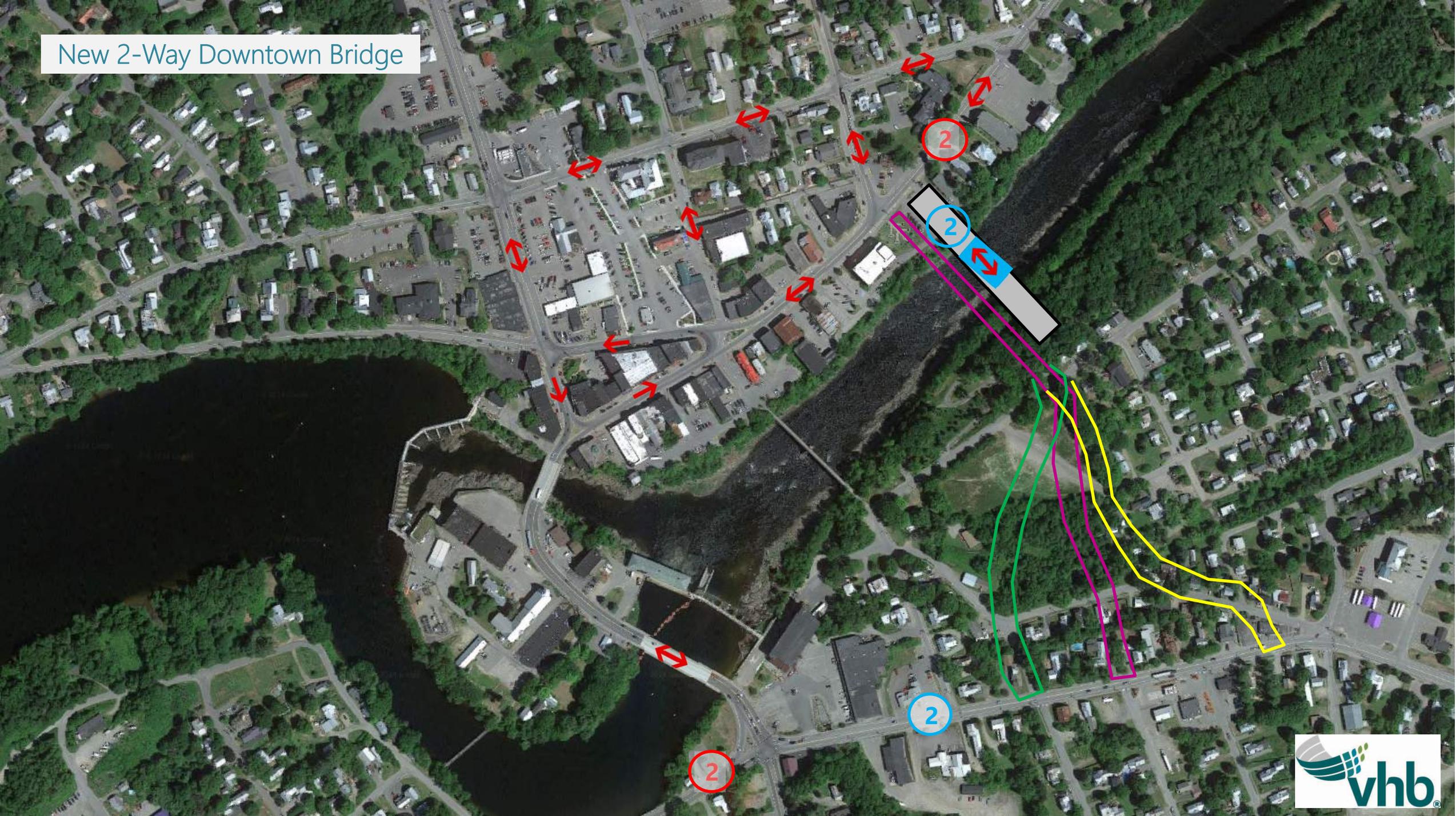
- Traffic safety and calming – potential for improved safety and reduced speeding, creating a more pedestrian-friendly environment.
- Accessibility and walkability – wider sidewalks, bike lanes, and improved pedestrian infrastructure can attract more foot traffic and promote a healthier and more active lifestyle.
- Aesthetics and community appeal – narrowing streets, enhancing the overall appearance, and fostering a sense of community can make Skowhegan more attractive to residents, visitors, and businesses.
- Positive Economic impacts – increased foot traffic, improved business visibility, potential property value appreciation, job creation, and increased tourism and visitor spending.

Draft Recommendations

- A 2nd River Crossing close to Downtown at North Avenue/Route 150
- 2-Way Traffic on Madison Avenue from Commercial/Elm to Water Street (*LT from Madison SB to Water St. prohibited*)
- Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements
- Single Lane Water Street
- Intersection Improvements at 2/201/Main Street
- Route 201 (Madison Ave) Road Diet north of High Street
- Improvements at Route 201 at Jewett Street
- Improvements to triangle of Main Street at Heather Street and Fairview Avenue

Note: If a second river crossing were to be a recommendation from the VPI Committee, with various bike/ped improvements, that would not preclude other improvements later, including potential demonstration projects.

New 2-Way Downtown Bridge



2

2

2

2

Where do we go from here...

- 2nd River Crossing

- ✓ Meets study purpose, and based on previous study, reduces Downtown traffic by more than 30%
- ✓ Overwhelming support based on online survey (74% in favor)
- ✓ Provides resilience based on recent storms/closures
- ✓ Existing bridges will require maintenance within 7–10 years, which will require a temporary bridge (\$20M)
- ✓ Does not preclude future changes or additional downtown sidewalk, lighting, parking, etc. improvements
- ✓ Specific bridge location would be the focus of an environmental study with a goal of avoiding and minimizing impacts

2nd River Crossing – Potential Financial Responsibility

System Resiliency and Redundancy

- Local
- Regional
- State
- National
- International

Design and Construction

- Still years away
- Decision-making subject to available funding and policy constraints

State and Federal Funding

- Will most likely pay all or majority of bridge costs:
 - all associated costs
 - basic lighting for safety
 - bicycle and pedestrian accommodations

Downtown Village Improvements

- Local cost share
 - 10% local
 - 10% State
 - 80% Federal

2nd River Crossing – Potential Implementation Schedule



- Better understand and minimize impacts
- Work with and receive input from Permitting Agencies

Public Input

- Questions or Comments??



Next Steps

Public Meeting Follow up:

- Collect and summarize all feedback and ideas from today's meeting
- Continue Stakeholder and Public engagement process
- Finalize list of VPI Committee recommended improvement alternatives

Proposed Project Schedule:

- Tonight – Public Meeting #2
- Spring 2024 – VPI Committee Meeting #6/Selectboard Meeting #2 (draft proposed recommendations)
- Late Spring/Early Summer 2024 – Selectboard Meeting (final proposed recommendations)



Advisory Committee Meetings





Thank You

Please send any additional questions or comments to:

Tony Grande, agrande@vhb.com or
Marty Rooney, martin.rooney@maine.gov

Comments received through March 26, 2024

Skowhegan Public Meeting

Master Plan Transportation Study
Accessibility, Safety and Economic Development

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