



Washington Street boasts wide sidewalks, a smooth roadway, and excellent nighttime lighting, enhancing safety and convenience for pedestrians.



Legion Park's beauty is overshadowed by limitations such as uneven gravel, flooding, and limited parking at large events.



The T-Bone Trail connects Exira to neighboring towns and the trailhead makes it convenient to park and walk.



Potholes, the crowned roadway, flooding, and inferior sidewalks make Kilworth Street hard to navigate for all modes of travel.



City Park is a popular gathering space that offers wide sidewalks, shaded areas, a pavilion, and ample lighting at night.



Turning onto Washington Street in downtown Exira is challenging because parked cars and buildings situated too close to intersections create blind spots.

What Factors Affect Transportation in Exira?

Transportation is integral to small-town life and a vibrant economy. In the context of the Community Visioning Program, we recognize walking, biking, and driving as quintessential modes of travel to various destinations important to residents and visitors. Access to these destinations is crucial for many everyday activities—getting to work and school, participating in community events, and providing for basic needs such as food, health care, and healthy activity.

In this participatory assessment, we want to find out which factors and conditions affect transportation use in Exira, where these factors and conditions are most prevalent, and how they influence route and transportation choices locally. Because residents have the best knowledge of how Exira's transportation system works, we use focused, small-group conversations, mapping, and photos of the best and worst to understand local transportation.

Different Users = Different Needs

To capture insights about transportation from a variety of perspectives, we invited Exira residents with different transportation needs to participate in focus groups. A total of 56 residents attended Exira's workshop. Participants were separated into five user groups and the Exira steering committee.



(6 participants): This user group represents those in the community who engage in outdoor recreation, including cycling, walking, running, swimming, skiing, etc. The availability of multiple venues for outdoor recreation matters to this group.



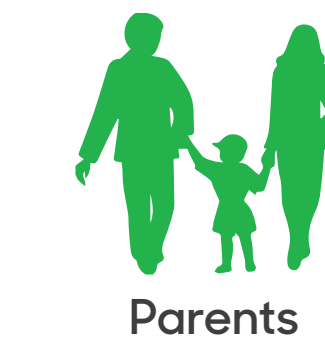
(2 participants): This user group is directly affected by accessibility barriers such as high curbing and uneven sidewalks that make it difficult to operate mobility-aiding equipment effectively. Handicapped parking, curb ramps, and smooth surfaces are critical transportation features.



(8 participants): Accessibility—both in terms of physical access and proximity—is a major concern for this user group. Because some people in this user group do not or are unable to drive, having goods and services within walking distance is important.




(19 participants): This group uses primarily non-motorized modes of transportation, so pedestrian- and bike-friendly streets and sidewalks are important. These users value the ability to get to destinations on foot or via bicycle and having goods and services within walking distance.



(13 participants): Safety of their children is a primary concern of this user group. Access to safe and easy routes to school activities is another significant factor to this group. Parents of young children desire smooth, wide surfaces for strollers.



(8 participants): The common denominator for this user group is that their observations are influenced by special knowledge of the transportation system acquired during the Community Visioning assessment process. As a result, this group is more representative of decision makers.



Actives


"We've got a beautiful trail down here on [Hwy 71]. It would be really nice...if...we could have... safe access [to it]...whether you're walking, running, riding a bike, because...you have to drive...or you have to ride in the streets [to get to the trailhead]."

"I want a concrete trail all the way around [town], like Stanton has... just a path we can walk that will tie the parks [and the trailhead] together."

"[The intersection of] Jefferson and Washington Street...is a terrible blind [spot]. You cannot see anybody coming from the east...because the...street's offset... So the buildings [on the north side of Washington] do stick out farther [on] the east side."

"A [person]...fell [on the bridge over Davids Creek on South St]...They were exercising and...went off to get out of the way of a vehicle, but there [are] no sidewalks..."

"I feel like that sidewalk [on Carthage St] is horrendous...we have a ton [of little kids walking on that street]...to the school and...to practice down at [Legion Park]..."



Youth


"...when we walk down to the trail...in the summer... [on W Washington St the sidewalk is] really grassy and sometimes you can't even see [it]...and you're walking on the road..."

"I want to get this bridge [on Jefferson St] back in business... because...if that bridge was there, we [wouldn't] have to go all the way to [Carthage St to get to] our friend's...house..."

"Potholes are a big thing in Exira. There [are] a bunch of them all over, because some of roads... just get forgot[ten] about. But when you ride your bike, it's fun."

"I really do like the speed tracker [on E Washington St], and I think we should put more...[on] every road to get into Exira."

"We should make more trees for the squirrels...at the school [and Legion Park]...because we had to cut down two trees in the last year."



Parents


"...[lighting is] a huge issue. Even on the main thruways, there's not great lighting. So if you're a morning [or nighttime] walker, runner...it's...a major issue...there [are] streetlights here and there, but...very few."

"I think if there was a pedestrian bridge [on Jefferson St across Davids Creek]...a lot of kids...[would] go across that bridge instead of going along...busy streets [to get to and from school]..."

"A bike trail [that would]...follow [Davids] Creek all of the way up... would be neat."

"I usually walk... the [T-Bone Trail]; it's very pretty walking in there...It's smooth [and] that's the only trail you can ride safely..."

"W Elm Street has no sidewalks...And that road is so [crowned]... every time I walk the kids to the park [in the stroller] I've got [new] muscle[s working]... one arm is totally pushing way more than the other."



Older Adults


"...the streets are quite [crowned]...A friend of mine... told me a couple of years ago, 'Do you have an issue with your hip when you walk on the side of the street?...[that's] because you're walking on a slant'...so when [we] go on those streets with no sidewalks, we always walk in the middle."

"[At intersections downtown with Washington St] you have to start pulling out to see what's coming... [because of] the parking... if you took...two or three spots...[and] make them into handicapped parking [so] it wouldn't be used all of the time [that would be helpful]."

"...it would be great to have some information down at the [trailhead] so [trail users] know what they can expect... [and] get some information like where is a place to eat..."

"...downtown [on Washington St]...the curb is...tall...If you use a cane, high curbs [feel] just plain [unsafe]. If you have an arm to help you up it, that's fine; but if you're there by yourself, you've got to find some way else to get up because the curb's are too high."

"...[at the] assisted living/ care center complex... there's a paved trail all of the way around the building that people [who] live [there]...[or] anybody can...walk on..."



Mobility Challenged

"...for me to get [to shops on Washington St], I have to...park down on the corner... [because] it's [hard] getting up on the sidewalks...[the] curb is this high...it's over a foot."

"...[some people] use their electric wheelchairs to go... uptown to toodle around... and they always have to be on the street...[because] a lot of the areas don't have sidewalks on either side..."

"There's no signage to the park. I was here a long time before I figured out where Kickapoo Park was."

"If you want to get to the [T-Bone Trail]... that can be difficult at times [because] along [Washington St] from downtown...out to the walking trail...there [are] not sidewalks..."

"...[City Park] is nice and offers some good things for families [and] for other people; and... it's nice to stop and rest there."



Steering Committee

"[On] Edgerton Street... there is a bridge...as you get [close to]...the school [where] the sidewalk is the same level as the road. [It feels very unsafe]...There's no curb...and it's not wide enough either."

"Our cemetery has kind of serpentine driveways that all loop and connect to each other, [and] a lot of people... walk...through the cemetery because it's...relatively trafficless."

"...I think one of my big dreams would definitely be to see a trail...whether that would be [a] trail out by the cemetery, [a] trail to [connect to] the T-Bone Trail, [or a] trail if we eventually get Kickapoo Park developed... get all of those little stems connected into what could be a larger trail system."

"[We] a hundred percent [need] way-finding. I hear about that...a lot. 'Where do I find this?' 'How do I find this?' 'Where is that?'"

"...you never quite know how to get [into Legion Park]...There's no sidewalk. It's half gravel, half paved... and for the use that Legion Park gets, I feel like that should be [in] much better condition."

User Types



Actives



Mobility Challenged



Older Adults



Youth



Parents



Steering Committee

Valued Destinations, Activities, and Qualities

Undesirable Qualities and Features

Most Desired Improvements and Activities

	Downtown	Community Parks	T-Bone Recreation Trail	Smooth Surfaces	Washington Street Visibility Issues	Seasonal Challenges	Pedestrian/Cyclist Linkage to T-Bone Trail	Steeply Crowned Roads	Inadequate Sidewalk Infrastructure	Limited Way-finding Signage	Complete, ADA-Compliant Sidewalks	Trail Connections	Trailhead & Trail Amenities	Way-finding & Traffic-control Signage	Roadway Repairs
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Actives	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Mobility Challenged	●	●		●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●		●	
Older Adults	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	
Youth	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●		●
Parents	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Steering Committee	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Actives walk and bike for recreation and/or exercise and walk and drive to destinations. They want the Jefferson Street bridge repaired and reopened to vehicles and pedestrians to ease school and event traffic congestion. Actives also think that a mile of the T-Bone Trail should be cleared in one direction to provide an easy winter walking route.

Mobility-challenged individuals drive and use their electric wheelchairs to navigate Exira. This group finds it difficult to fully enjoy City Park because of the lack of handicapped accessibility to the gazebo. They appreciate that Legion Park has convenient bathrooms open to the public.

Older adults walk and drive to get around. This group appreciates the view of natural beauty from the N Kilworth Street bridge. They have a hard time stepping up on the one-foot curb on Washington Street downtown and consider addressing this problem as a major priority.

Youth walk, bike, and ride the bus to their destinations. Older youth also drive. Speeding traffic is an issue for youth, and they want to see more measures to reduce speeding throughout town similar to the speed tracker on Washington Street. They also want the speed limit on Edgerton Street to be lowered.

Parents walk and drive. They are primarily concerned with the safety of their children. They find pickup and drop-off times at the elementary school confusing and would like the experience to be less hectic. Parents would also like additional parking at and around the school.

Steering committee members walk, bike, and drive vehicles, golf carts, and ATV/UTVs. They enjoy walking the "serpentine driveways" that loop around the cemetery and driving their ATV/UTVs on the trail along Davids Creek. This group noted that the exit and entrance to Legion Park are not marked, causing confusion for both drivers and pedestrians.

Spacious and smooth streets and sidewalks, good lighting, and intersections with curb ramps make downtown pleasant for all user types. Residents appreciate access to the downtown businesses and ample parking that allows them to "support local" with ease. People of all ages and abilities enjoy Exira's local parks. City Park is host to the farmers market, and features a beautiful gazebo, a sidewalk network, and great shade for users. The consistent flow of people on the trail at all hours of the day is a testament to its popularity. Participants in all user groups identified smooth trails, sidewalks, and roads—for example, the paths around the care center, the school track, and the trail's convenient to bike on smooth roads, such as those on the school grounds. Visibility issues exist at intersections with Washington Street through the downtown, and W Washington Street for both pedestrians and drivers. Seasonal challenges affecting travel were discussed in all focus group types. Heavy rains result in flooding at Legion Park and many streets in town. Several groups mentioned that the T-Bone Trail is not cleared in the winter, making it inaccessible to users in snowy conditions. All groups expressed their frustration that there is not a good pedestrian/cyclist connection from Exira to the T-Bone Trail. Many residents reported that they just drive along the overgrown, dirt sidewalks along Washington Street. Excessive road crowns are problematic for all modes of transportation. The steep pitch of roads forces people to walk in the center of the street to avoid hip pain, hitting their bumpers and difficulties for plows. Broken uneven and missing sidewalks hinder walkability. High curbs and the absence of ramps create problems for wheelchair users and parents pushing strollers. People named many streets with these sidewalk issues such as Washington Street downtown and the streets near the school community spaces. Residents want consistent and well-maintained sidewalks with curb ramps to accommodate wheelchairs and strollers. Specific streets cited for sidewalk upgrades include Washington Street to the trailhead, Kilworth Street, and Edgerton Street, among others. Developing new trails is a priority among most user groups. People want a loop trail in town connecting the elementary school, and the T-Bone Trail trailhead, as well as a trail link to Littlefield County Park. The need for additional trail amenities was a common theme across different user types. Participants said they want lighting, trees and vegetation, a story walk, and benches along the trail to enhance their experience. Adult participants think that way-finding signage is needed to guide both locals and visitors to the T-Bone Trail, Legion Park, and the school. Residents also believe traffic control and speed limit signs should be updated for safety reasons. Steering committee members, parents, youth, and active recreationists want better road conditions throughout town to make it easier, safer, and more enjoyable to bike and walk on the streets. Parents suggested that all the streets be constructed from concrete.