

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
Monday, July 15, 2024

TRAFFIC, PARKING, AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY IMPACT AND OPTIMIZATION STUDY
FOR EASTERN BOULEVARD IN ESSEX

Overview

Essex Community Development Corporation (Essex CDC), with support from Baltimore County Government, is issuing this Request for Proposals (RFP) to identify qualified consulting teams to develop and conduct a Traffic, Parking, and Pedestrian Safety Impact and Optimization Study for Eastern Boulevard in Essex, Maryland 21221.

We are seeking a consultant/firm to prepare and conduct a study to review traffic patterns, traffic volume, speed and crash data, noise levels, parking layout and density, pedestrian safety measures, traffic calming measures, and other data and strategies to provide recommendations to improve traffic, parking, and pedestrian safety conditions on Eastern Boulevard to support the transition of Essex into a thriving, walkable business corridor. The area of focus for this study is Eastern Boulevard (Maryland Route 150) in Essex, Maryland in Eastern Baltimore County from Back River Bridge to Maryland Route 702.

Background

The mission of Essex CDC is to build a strong, vibrant, economically viable community in Essex. With support from Baltimore County Government and the State of Maryland, Essex CDC is driving revitalization efforts in the community. The primary focus of the organization's work is to support and improve conditions so businesses can grow and thrive, while also addressing quality of life issues for residents and community members, business owners, employees, customers, and visitors such as blight, beautification, community engagement, safety, sense of pride, and traffic/roadway safety.

In the mid-twentieth century, Eastern Boulevard in Essex was a thriving business district and a community hub for local shopping, dining, and entertainment. When Eastpoint Mall, and later Middlesex Shopping Center, were built, retail options shifted away from the business district. Residents and visitors flocked to Eastpoint and Middlesex where stores were both new and consolidated allowing for one-stop shopping easily accessible by car. Over the years, shops, restaurants, and entertainment businesses along Eastern Boulevard closed, storefronts became vacant, and properties were neglected leading to overgrowth, dumping, blight, rat infestation, and safety concerns. In addition, as manufacturing and industrial jobs transitioned out of the area, Essex residents lost their jobs and struggled to find new means to support their families. Morale decreased as Essex fell into decline in post-industrial America.

There have been several attempts made to revitalize Essex dating back to the 1970s. Without a consistent champion and stable funding, proposed improvements have lagged. Since 2018, the Chesapeake Gateway Chamber of Commerce has proposed, received funding for, and implemented projects to support streetscaping and other enhancements to the Essex business district on Eastern Boulevard. The Chamber hosted the Urban Land Institute's Essex Technical Assistance Panel in 2022 which provided tangible recommendations to help revitalize the business district. In January 2023, a full-

time employee was hired to focus specifically on Essex revitalization efforts and a new organization was formed in September 2023: Essex Community Development Corporation.

Essex CDC has embarked on a major step to improve conditions for businesses in Essex by conducting a Retail Gap Analysis and developing a Business Retention and Recruitment Plan. This study, completed in early 2024, has laid out a clear path to support economic stability and growth along Eastern Boulevard. As a next step, Essex CDC has received funding from Baltimore County Government to conduct a Traffic, Parking, and Pedestrian Safety Impact and Optimization Study to consider and address concerns around how Eastern Boulevard is structured, ways to make it more pedestrian-friendly and safe and include parking and amenities that make it a place where people want to come to shop and enjoy a variety of activities.

Challenges and Opportunities

Eastern Boulevard, Maryland Route 150, runs through the heart of the Essex business district in Eastern Baltimore County. As drivers approach Essex from either direction, the speed limit quickly changes from 45 MPH to 35 MPH to 30 MPH with no clear indication of the rapid decrease. Cars speed along Eastern Blvd. through Essex even though the speed limit on this length of the road from Back River Bridge to Maryland Route 702 is 30 MPH.

The layout of Eastern Blvd. through Essex also poses some significant challenges to drivers and pedestrians. There are frequent breaks in the median that divides cars going East and West on Eastern Blvd. These breaks in the road exist to allow drivers to turn left across traffic so they can enter streets or businesses on the opposite side of the road. When these turning vehicles slow down, and especially when their drivers neglect to turn on their turn signal or are being followed by speeding vehicles, drivers who are following too closely must slam on their brakes and risk running into the back of such vehicles. Also, many of the parking lots for businesses on the opposite side of the street do not line up with the cut outs in the median making it challenging for drivers to turn directly into businesses.

In addition, pedestrian markings on Eastern Boulevard are few and far between. The only existing crosswalks are located at the intersections of Virginia Avenue, Riverside Drive, and Taylor Avenue. The four-lane, straight roadway with no bump outs or speed cameras, limited crosswalks, and no community amenities to encourage drivers to slow down means that cars are driven at high speeds and there are frequent accidents.

In the 400-500 blocks of Eastern Blvd., parking is configured so that drivers are required to pull into parking spaces headfirst. While this layout may provide more parking spots than simple parallel parking along the street, it creates a frightening and unsafe scenario for drivers of the parked cars when they need to back out of their space into oncoming traffic.

In 2025, the Maryland State Highway Administration and Baltimore County Government are planning to conduct a major roadway project to upgrade water and sewer lines beneath Eastern Boulevard in Essex. By conducting a Traffic, Parking, and Pedestrian Safety Impact and Optimization Study now before the water and sewer line construction project moves forward, we have the opportunity to collect, review and share data and recommendations which serve to improve traffic patterns, increase public safety and create a more walkable, enjoyable Eastern Boulevard corridor for residents and visitors.

Scope of Work

In a 2022 study conducted by the Urban Land Institute, traffic, speed and pedestrian concerns were identified as major barriers to economic growth along The Boulevard. The high speeds at which cars travel down Eastern Boulevard was listed as the top safety issue. Residents expressed a need for traffic calming mechanisms and increased pedestrian safety. The high speed of traffic also contributed to high noise levels and inhibited restaurants from having outdoor seating and deterred people from walking along the Boulevard. The current configuration of the diagonal, head-in parking also was a concern for residents as a safety hazard when backing out of parking spaces into fast-moving traffic.

By conducting this Traffic and Pedestrian Safety Impact and Optimization Study on Eastern Boulevard in Essex, Essex CDC aims to do the following:

- Collect, review and evaluate traffic data along Eastern Blvd.
- Collect, review and evaluate crash data along Eastern Blvd.
- Inventory, review and evaluate public and private parking along Eastern Blvd.
- Review and evaluate vehicle and pedestrian safety measures in place.
- Review and evaluate traffic calming measures in place.
- Review and evaluate roadway configurations in place.
- Review and evaluate pedestrian friendly measures that allow for walkability and safety.
- Review and evaluate access to highways and interstate roadways from Eastern Blvd.
- Review existing transport infrastructure on Eastern Blvd. including walking, cycling and public transportation.
- Identify roadway development constraints both from on site assessment and using utility records.
- Develop and evaluate alternative solutions to improve traffic flow, roadway configuration, pedestrian safety, walkability, and noise reduction on Eastern Boulevard.
- Compare alternatives to existing conditions, develop pros and cons, and prioritize recommendations.
- Prioritize recommendations and offer alternative solutions to improve traffic flow, roadway configuration, pedestrian safety, walkability, and noise reduction on Eastern Blvd.
- Provide estimated costs for recommendations and alternative solutions.
- Identify recommendations to secure short and long-term funding to support these projects.

The traffic study and recommended alternatives must be in compliance with the following:

- Maryland Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices
- Maryland Bicycle Policy Design Guidelines
- Accessibility Policy and Guidelines for Pedestrian Facilities along State Highways
- Pedestrian Lighting Policy
- Any other relevant local, state and/or federal requirements

NOTE:

- Available existing traffic counts may be used in the study if they are less than two years old.
- All new counts should be collected on a Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday when public schools are in session.

Location

The primary area of focus for data collection, analysis and recommendations is Eastern Boulevard (Maryland Route 150) between Back River Bridge and Maryland Route 702.

Proposed Budget

As proposed, we anticipate the study to cost somewhere between \$150,000.00 - \$200,000.00.

Proposed Project Timeline

Activity	Anticipated Date
RFP issued	Monday, July 15, 2024
RFP Interest Zoom Call	Monday, July 21, 2024, at 12:00 pm
Deadline for Proposal Submission	Friday, August 30, 2024, at 5:00 pm
Consultant Teams Selected for Interviews	Monday, September 16, 2024
Interviews Conducted	Wednesday, September 18, 2024 – Wednesday, September 25, 2024
Consultant Team Selected	Monday, September 30, 2024
Agreement Executed	Friday, October 11, 2024
Study Begins	Wednesday, October 16, 2024
Study Ends	TBD
Receive Report & View Presentation	TBD

Resources

Essex CDC expects that consultants submitting proposals will have reviewed and carefully considered the following documents in their proposal planning and research process:

- Context Driven Guide:
- 2030 Baltimore County Master Plan
- 2023 Baltimore County Sustainable Community Action Plan for Essex
- 2023 Baltimore County Pedestrian and Bike Master Plan
- 2022 Essex-Eastern Boulevard Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) Report completed by the Urban Land Institute
- 2021 Essex Commercial Revitalization District Map
- 2020 Essex Sustainable Community Map

Other recommended reading includes:

- 2018 Essex Market Study Summary
- 2006 Gateway to the Water: A Vision for the Future of Essex-Middle River completed by the Urban Design Assistance Team (UDAT)
- 1996 Eastern Baltimore County Revitalization Study
- 1991 Essex Commercial Business District Revitalization Strategy
- Documentation from all Essex TAP Implementation Steering Committee Meetings and Essex CDC Board and Committee Meetings including Agendas, Minutes and supplemental materials.

Essex
Community
Development
Corporation

Contact Information

For more information, or if you have questions about this Request for Proposals, please contact:

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