

# Safe Routes to School Study

Watertown-Jefferson County Transportation Council

December 2025



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The WJCTC Highway Technical Committee was integral in the drafting of this WJCTC Safe Routes to School study through the contribution of their time, energy, and knowledge. They met regularly to review draft documents, discuss progress and next steps, and ensure that local perspectives were reflected in the Study's recommendations.

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The WJCTC would also like to thank all members of the WJCTC Policy Committee, community members, and stakeholders who contributed to the vision for this Study and helped shape its contents by participating in the project's development and voicing their concerns and priorities. Your input will help drive multi-modal transportation safety improvements across the WJCTC region.



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# Executive Summary

The Watertown Jefferson County Area Transportation Council (WJCTC) initiated this Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Study to advance the goals of the 2022 Bicycle & Pedestrian Connectivity Study. By focusing on the critical links between residential neighborhoods and regional schools, the Study identifies specific safety deficiencies and provides implementable solutions. Utilizing the Federal Highway Administration's SRTS framework, the report offers a toolkit for multi-modal enhancements including new sidewalks, shared-use paths, enhanced crossings, and traffic calming measures—complete with conceptual designs and cost estimates to facilitate future funding and project delivery.

The Study's findings are rooted in a comprehensive analysis of crash data, traffic patterns, and existing infrastructure, bolstered by stakeholder feedback. Input from school districts, technical committees, and public surveys helped the project team narrow an initial list of 30 locations down to 12 high-priority areas. Each area was evaluated for technical feasibility, property impacts, and utility constraints to ensure that the proposed improvements are both impactful and realistic for the community to implement.

The Study provides a phased roadmap for the WJCTC and its partners, categorizing improvements into near-term on-street enhancements and long-term capital projects. By prioritizing safety-based interventions like speed management and expanded off-street paths, this roadmap serves as a strategic guide for creating a more connected, accessible, and secure environment for students and pedestrians throughout Jefferson County.

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Public Square

# 01

## Introduction

### 1.1 THE WJCTC

The Watertown Jefferson County Area Transportation Council (WJCTC) serves as the appointed Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the urbanized area within Jefferson County. Its primary duty is to oversee a collaborative and inclusive regional transportation planning and funding process for all relevant projects and initiatives eligible for financial support from the Federal Highway and Federal Transit Administrations. Established in 2014 following the recognition of Watertown's urbanized population surpassing 50,000 according to the 2010 census, the WJCTC operates to ensure ongoing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning efforts in the area.

The WJCTC comprises three key operational units: the Policy Committee (PC), the Highway Technical Committee (HTC), and the Transit Technical Committee (TTC). The PC holds the responsibility of evaluating and endorsing all planning endeavors conducted by the WJCTC and its personnel. Meanwhile, the HTC and TTC are tasked with orchestrating transportation planning efforts and offering expert guidance to the PC. These committees consist of professional and technical staff members representing each participating government entity in the urbanized region including the City of Watertown, Jefferson County, and NYS Department of Transportation Region 7. Specifically, the HTC concentrates on matters related to highways and

bridges, while the TTC addresses transit concerns within the jurisdictional boundaries of WJCTC.

### 1.2 PROJECT PURPOSE

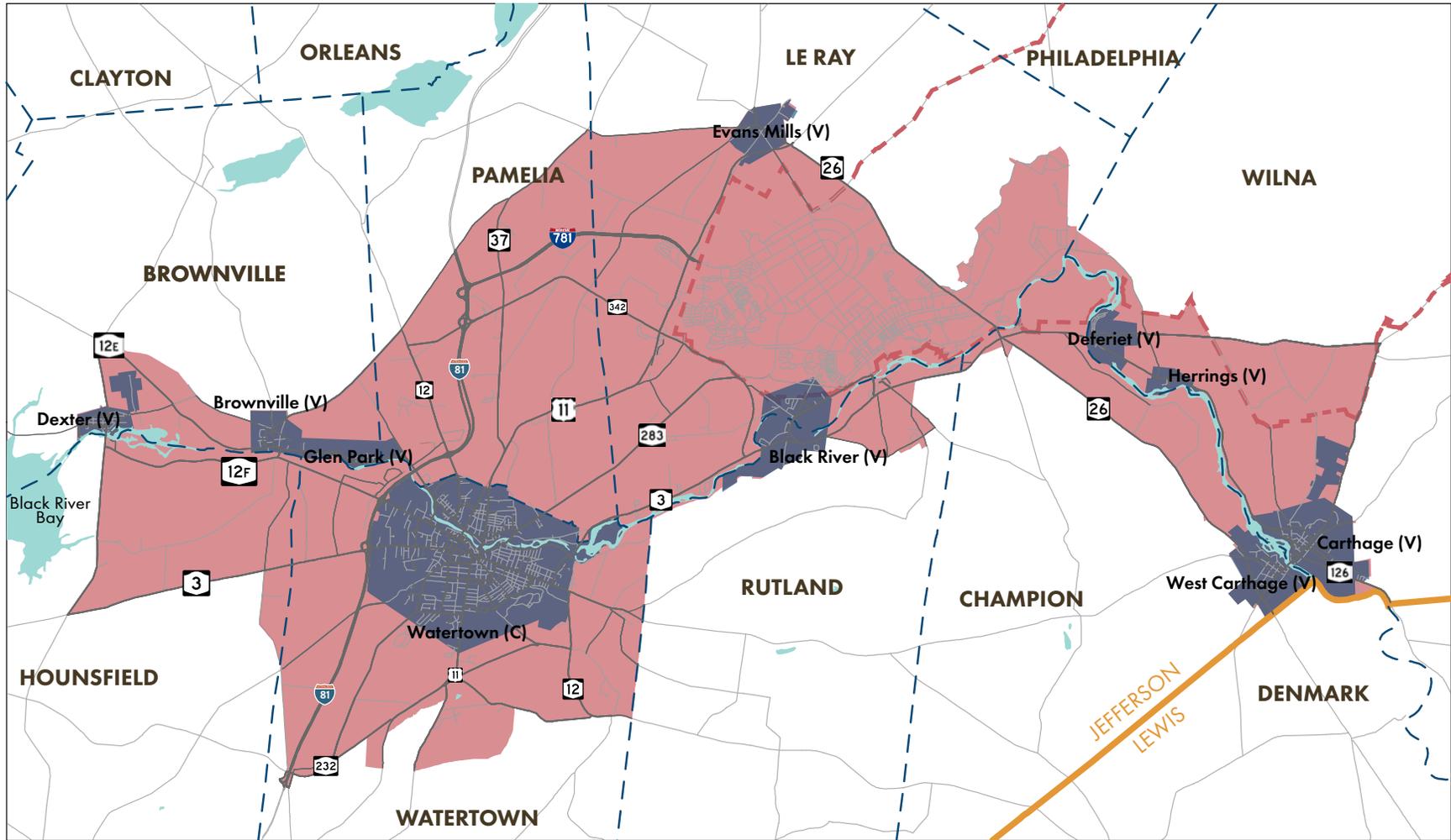
In 2022, the WJCTC completed a Bicycle & Pedestrian Connectivity Study to identify gaps in the bicycle and pedestrian network within the region, and guide future investments that enhance transportation connectivity and accessibility for all users. The Study offers region-wide recommendations, identifying routes and infrastructure that could be utilized to connect distant assets via pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The Study identified five priorities, two of which were:

1. Fostering connections between activity centers
2. Providing safe connections between residential areas and schools

This Safe Routes to School Study serves as a direct response to the Bicycle & Pedestrian Connectivity Study by focusing in more detail on these two goals. This Study identifies specific priority areas where deficiencies in the multi-modal transportation infrastructure were noted, and provides detailed recommended operational and safety improvements, including conceptual designs and planning-level cost estimates. In doing so, the WJCTC and its host-community partners will be prepared to pursue funding for future design and construction of proposed improvements outlined in this report.

While this Study's priority areas include a variety of local assets and high pedestrian activity areas (apartment complexes, schools, shopping centers, etc.), the framework of the Study generally follows FHWA's Safe Routes to School program goals. Over the past several decades, the proportion of students walking and biking to school has

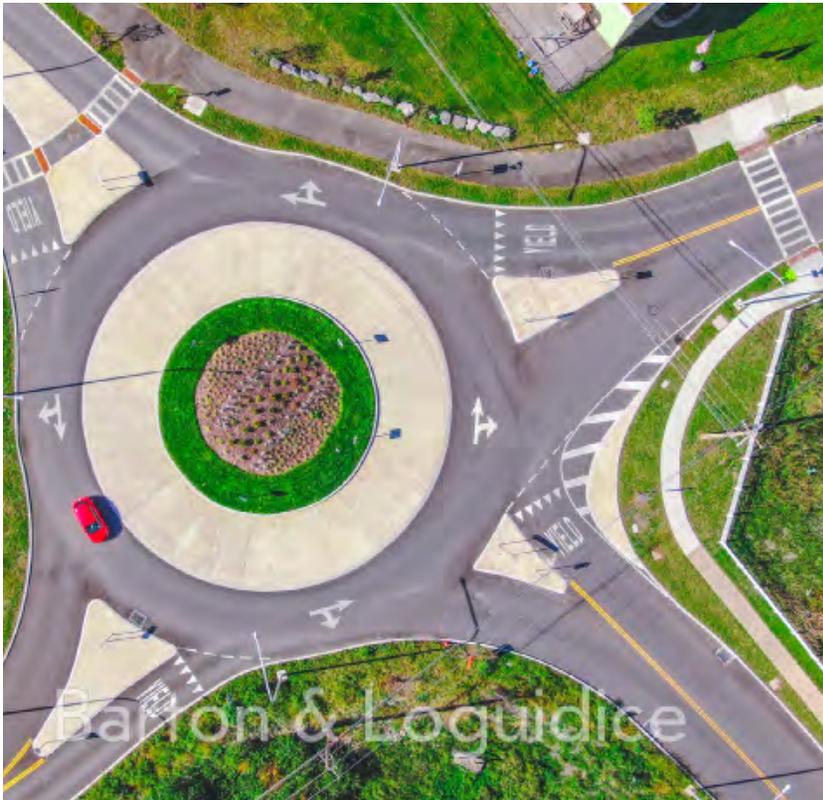
# WJCTC BOUNDARY



- Town Boundaries
- Fort Drum Installation Area
- County Boundaries
- WJCTC MPO Boundary
- Village/City
- Water Bodies

Source: WJCTC Boundary data provided by HTC

declined, resulting in air quality, traffic, and health impacts. As defined by the NYS DOT, Safe Routes to School is “a federal, state and local effort to enable and encourage children, including those with disabilities, to walk and bicycle to school and to make walking and bicycling to school safe and appealing.” Safe Routes to School interventions typically include one or more of the following approaches: engineering, enforcement, education, and encouragement. This Study focuses on the engineering aspect by offering detailed active transportation infrastructure improvement recommendations that would make walking and biking safer and more attractive.



## 1.3 PROJECT PROCESS



## 1.4 RELATED PLANS & STUDIES

### 1.4.1 2025-2026 Unified Planning Work Program

The Watertown Jefferson County Area Transportation Council (WJCTC) Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) 2025–2026 serves as the blueprint for coordinated transportation planning across the Watertown metropolitan area.

The UPWP outlines tasks, studies, and administrative actions to be carried out between April 1, 2025, and March 31, 2026, funded primarily through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Its key goals include maintaining and improving transportation safety, system preservation, mobility, and resiliency; supporting economic vitality and environmental sustainability; and ensuring equitable access for all users.

Major initiatives include studies on bicycle and pedestrian connectivity, electric vehicle infrastructure, highway resiliency, transit route improvements, and intersection and corridor evaluations. The program also emphasizes performance-based planning, public participation, and compliance with federal emphasis areas such as climate resilience, equity, and complete streets.

Overall, the UPWP ensures coordinated, data-driven, and sustainable transportation planning that aligns local priorities with state and federal goals—enhancing safety, accessibility, and quality of life for Jefferson County residents.

### 1.4.2 2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan, June 2024

The WJCTC's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) provides a comprehensive vision for the region's transportation

network, covering major roads, bicycle and pedestrian paths, and multi-modal facilities.

Guided by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), the LRTP allocates federal, state, and local funds to regional projects, aiming to create an integrated, multi-modal transportation system that meets regional, state, and national objectives. Covering at least 20 years, the plan ensures financial feasibility by aligning costs with expected revenues. The 2024 LRTP, based on current transportation data and future projections, identifies three main challenges:

- Traffic congestion around Public Square in downtown Watertown due to truck routes.
- Limited access to the Watertown Public Safety Building and City Industrial Park.
- Opportunities for enhanced shared and active transportation systems.

Public input contributed to shaping the LRTP, with stakeholder engagement and community participation.



The plan outlines future projects and programs to achieve goals like preserving the existing regional transportation system including City of Watertown, supporting regional economic vitality, increasing transportation safety and security, improving accessibility and mobility for people, focusing on system preservation, and new mobility. Although not committing to specific projects, it provides strategic recommendations to guide decision-making, fostering collaboration among stakeholders toward a shared transportation vision for the next 20 years.

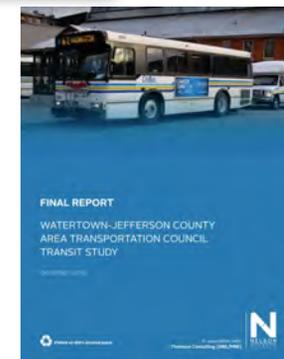
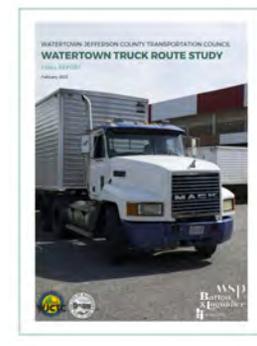
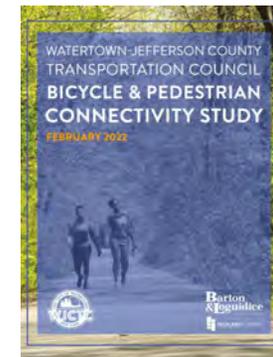
### 1.4.3 2022-2027 Transportation Improvement Program, 2022

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a comprehensive five-year capital improvement strategy aimed at allocating federal funds for highway and transit projects selected through the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) process. This plan helps signify approval for specific project development, design, and construction activities to utilize federal funding within a predetermined timeline. Covering the period of 2022 to 2027, the TIP furnishes details on federal funding assistance and project expenditures.

The WJCTC falls within the purview of NYSDOT Region 7, encompassing Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence, Franklin, and Clinton Counties. This plan has been collaboratively devised with Region 7 personnel to anticipate available funding resources. The TIP serves as a tangible demonstration of progress toward achieving established performance metrics across various areas, including pavement quality, bridge maintenance, system performance, transit infrastructure, asset management, and transit safety.

### 1.4.4 Bicycle & Pedestrian Connectivity Study, February 2022

The WJCTC Bicycle & Pedestrian Connectivity Study, released in February 2022, was a collaborative initiative involving WJCTC, Jefferson County, and the City of Watertown. The primary objective was to enhance the connectivity, accessibility, and safety of pedestrian and bicyclist networks by facilitating easy travel to and from key destinations within the region and catering to individuals of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds without the need for personal motorized vehicles. By promoting biking and walking as viable transportation and recreational options, the Study sought to benefit both residents and visitors of Watertown and the surrounding MPO areas.



Priority areas were identified based on specific objectives, including creating linkages between existing pedestrian and bicyclist facilities, fostering connections between activity centers, and ensuring safe routes between residential areas and schools. The study provided region-wide recommendations for pedestrian and bicyclist facilities, identifying key activity centers and points of interest; these are further discussed in Section 4.1.

#### 1.4.5 Truck Route Study, 2022

The WJCTC Truck Route Study, unveiled in February 2022, was a collaborative venture between WJCTC and the City of Watertown. Its primary aim was to conduct a comprehensive examination of truck routes throughout the City, encompassing not only Watertown itself but also immediate surrounding areas, including I-81. The Study's objective was to delve deeper into the challenges and opportunities associated with truck traffic, including their destinations and impacts on nearby land use and properties.

By evaluating the existing designated truck routes between I-81 and Public Square, the Study sought to explore alternatives that could better accommodate trucks and other vehicles, ultimately enhancing safety for multi-modal transportation in downtown areas. To achieve this goal, the study proposed several recommendations structured around five distinct categories: routing adjustments, administrative actions, infrastructure treatments, signage enhancements, and technological solutions.

Through its findings and recommendations, this study serves as a valuable resource for identifying routes with significant truck traffic within Watertown, thereby guiding efforts to establish safer and more efficient routes for both trucks and other modes of transportation within the City.

#### 1.4.6 Transit Study, 2019

The 2019 WJCTC Transit Study, developed in collaboration with the New York State Department of Transportation, aims to propose transit strategies that connect the rapidly expanding Fort Drum population with Watertown and neighboring communities. Focusing on the challenge of limited and disjointed transit services in the area, the Study endeavors to identify key corridors in Watertown and Jefferson County, along with immediate adjacent areas, for potential new, improved, or coordinated transit and mobility services.

Within the Transit Study Area, three public transit operators serve Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence Counties. While Lewis County Public Transit and St. Lawrence County Public Transit operate county-wide, Watertown CitiBus serves exclusively within the City limits. The Study rigorously evaluates, ranks, and optimizes these identified corridors to enhance their performance, ensuring that the most effective corridor services are considered.

One notable recommendation from the Study involves determining optimal corridors, schedules, and budgetary allocations, alongside establishing the most suitable organizational structure for regional transit. This approach aims to foster more cohesive and efficient transit systems, better meeting the evolving needs of the community and facilitating enhanced connectivity throughout the region.

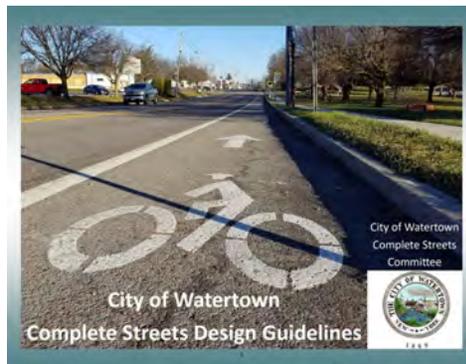
#### 1.4.7 City of Watertown Comprehensive Plan, 2019

The Watertown Comprehensive Plan, adopted in December 2019, serves as a blueprint for guiding sustainable growth and development, ensuring the continued prosperity of the community. Structured around several key objectives, the Plan aims to provide a vision for future growth, identify areas suitable for development and preservation, recommend

appropriate land use types, advise on the character of development, and preserve natural and agricultural resources.

Furthermore, the Plan outlines the need for transportation and community facilities to accommodate future population growth and land use changes. It also emphasizes fostering economic development based on the City's unique assets, directing investments in housing and commercial sectors, and promoting intergovernmental cooperation with neighboring jurisdictions.

Within the transportation section, the Plan offers a comprehensive overview of the City's transportation system, identifying areas for facility expansion and developing strategies to ensure the safety and efficiency of transportation for residents. Specific recommendations for pedestrian and bicycle facilities include projects such as expanding street paved shoulders, creating new bicycle lanes, enhancing facilities on bridges, and establishing connections between existing multi-use paths and the City's infrastructure. These initiatives aim to promote alternative modes of transportation, improve accessibility, and enhance the overall quality of life for Watertown residents.



### 1.4.8 City of Watertown Complete Streets Design Guidelines, 2021

The City of Watertown Complete Streets Design Guidelines, adopted in December 2021, serve to establish and uphold a safe, accessible, and well-connected multimodal surface transportation network that caters to the diverse needs of all users. These Guidelines were implemented in alignment with the City of Watertown Complete Streets Policy. The document categorizes Watertown's streets into eight distinct classifications, each with specific design considerations tailored to its function:

- Low-Volume Residential
- School Safety Corridor
- Neighborhood Connector
- Radial Collector
- Radial Arterial
- Downtown Core
- Rural Transition
- State-Maintained Arterial

Each street classification includes recommended parameters such as target speed, number of lanes, lane width, parking provisions, sidewalks, bike lanes, street trees, margin width, and utilities. Notably, the design considerations for the School Safety Corridor aim to provide guidance for optimizing street design along school corridors. This includes prioritizing street segments immediately adjacent to school campuses, which are identified as some of the priority areas for this Safe Routes to School Study. By implementing these Design Guidelines, the City of Watertown aims to enhance safety, accessibility, and overall usability of its streets for all residents and visitors.

## 1.5 PUBLIC & STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

### 1.5.1 Public Participation Plan

A Public Participation Plan was developed as one of the initial steps in the overall project, serving as a foundational guide for engaging the community throughout future phases of the planning process. The plan outlined a structured approach to ensuring public involvement strategies are inclusive, transparent, and meaningful. By establishing early methods for two-way communication with residents, stakeholders, and local agencies, the plan aimed to inform and influence the direction of the project. It functioned as a living document that could evolve based on ongoing input and changing conditions, ensuring that subsequent project activities are guided by community needs and feedback.

The Public Participation Plan is available in Appendix A.

### 1.5.2 Highway Technical Committee Meetings

The WJCTC Highway Technical Committee (HTC) served as the primary project contact and managed the project for the WJCTC throughout the planning process. The HTC was responsible for reviewing draft deliverables, infusing the project with local knowledge, informing and assisting with stakeholder engagement efforts, and guiding next steps. Regular meetings, approximately monthly, were held between the HTC and the consultant team to track project progress, collect feedback from the HTC, and plan next steps.

### 1.5.3 School District Interviews

As an early engagement step in the planning process, stakeholder interviews were conducted with school district

representatives. The objective of the interviews were to identify key pedestrian and bicycle safety concerns around the schools, collect data on school busing ranges and how many students are walking and bicycling to school, and gather insights on effective ways to engage parents and students in the plan development process.

The interviews took place in September and October of 2025 and included representatives from the General Brown, Indian River, Watertown, Carthage, and Sackets Harbor school districts. A detailed summary of the interviews is available in Appendix A.

### 1.5.4 Public Open House & Webinar

Two public meetings were held to introduce the WJCTC Safe Routes to School Study to the public and solicit community feedback on potential project priorities. The meetings provided an opportunity for participants to learn about the goals of the study, review initial data analysis and potential focus areas, and share local knowledge to help shape the direction of future recommendations.

The in-person meeting took place on January 22, 2025, at the Watertown High School gymnasium, and a virtual meeting followed on March 5, 2025, via Zoom. The meetings were promoted through press releases, social media, and email outreach to stakeholders. The meetings included a presentation covering the study's purpose, methodology, and thirty proposed focus areas. In-person attendees were invited to review project boards and leave written comments, while virtual participants were encouraged to complete an online survey. A total of six community members attended the two meetings combined.

A detailed summary of the Public Open House and Webinar is available in Appendix A.

### 1.5.5 Public Survey

In March of 2025, a public survey was conducted to identify high-priority areas for pedestrian and bicycle improvements, gather location-specific active transportation safety concerns, and inform recommendations for improving walking and biking conditions for students and the broader community. The survey was first introduced at the Public Webinar (described above) and made available online to reach a wide audience. The survey was advertised through both a press release and flyer.

In the survey, participants were asked to rate their level of concern about pedestrian and cyclist safety across 30 pre-identified focus areas and were invited to provide comments, suggest improvements, and recommend additional locations for consideration. The survey received a total of 50 responses.

A detailed summary of the survey is available in Appendix A.



Public Responses from Survey

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# 02

## Regional Setting

### 2.1 TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

#### 2.1.1 Key Facts

##### 2.1.1.1 Functional Classifications

Within the WJCTC MPO boundary, roadways are classified using New York State urban and rural functional classification codes, as shown in the map on the next page. I-81, I-781, NY-3, NY-11, NY-12, and NY-26 serve as the principal arterials within the WJCTC area, moving large amounts of traffic and connecting to regional destinations. Minor arterials and collectors link areas within the WJCTC and neighboring municipalities. Local roads, as well as those within Fort Drum, facilitate more compact, neighborhood-scale travel.

##### 2.1.1.2 Roadway Jurisdiction

Within the WJCTC MPO boundary, roadway jurisdiction is shared among several entities: Jefferson County, the New York State DOT, local municipalities, and the US Army (Fort Drum). Local municipalities, including villages, towns, and cities, possess the largest portion of the roads which also include internal roads falling under each jurisdiction. The New York State DOT is responsible for the second largest portion of the roads, which includes I-81, Route 37, Route 11, and other roads falling under WJCTC boundary. There are only a few roads that are owned by the County. The

road segments falling under the Fort Drum are managed by the US Army.

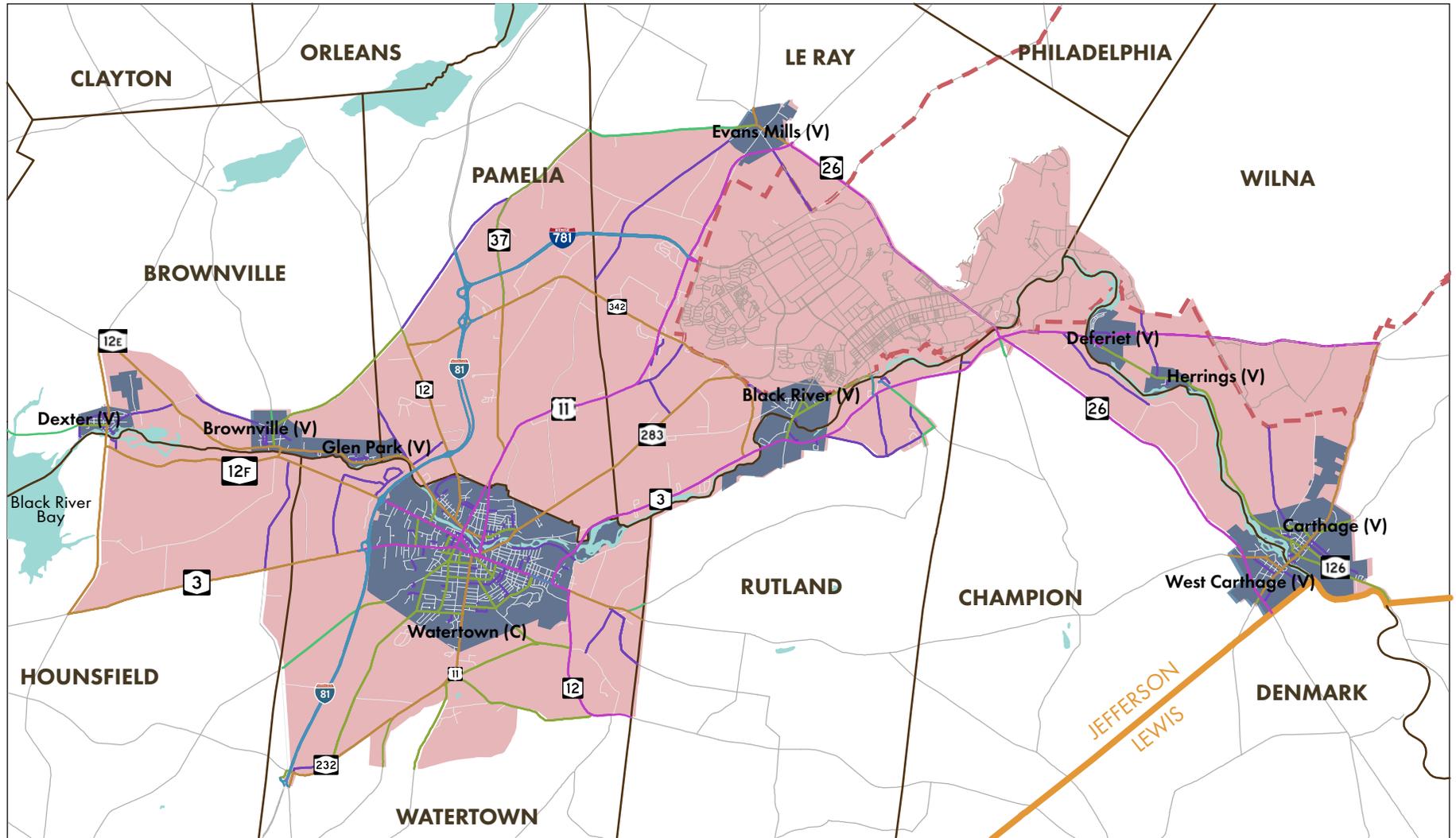
#### 2.1.2 Traffic & Jurisdiction Patterns

Roadways with the highest Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) of 20,000 or more vehicles predominantly include the interstate network (I-81 and I-781), New York State routes, and select County routes. These high AADT segments account for 59% of road miles within the WJCTC area, often leading to or passing through denser regions like the City of Watertown and nearby Villages. The majority of these roads fall under New York State jurisdiction, with a few managed by the County, highlighting the need for inter-municipal and regional collaboration to address local transportation concerns. Roads with the second-highest AADT (10,000-20,000 vehicles) include segments of State Routes 12 and 3, as well as some Town-owned, City-owned, and Village-owned roads, which make up 23% of the total road miles within the WJCTC boundary. While these heavily trafficked roads present safety challenges for pedestrians and cyclists, they also provide opportunities to introduce dedicated spaces for non-motorists, improving access to local goods and services. Additionally, over 12% of the road miles see less than 5,000 vehicles daily, comprising mainly Town-owned roads and internal streets within the villages or City.

#### 2.1.3 Active Transportation Facilities

Recognizing the central importance of the City of Watertown within the WJCTC region, as well as the availability of extensive data on pedestrian and cyclist networks within the context of the greater MPO boundary area, this section focuses on examining the City's amenities. With that, it also includes several separated off-road trail systems in the MPO area that are important to consider while improving the existing pedestrian and bicyclist

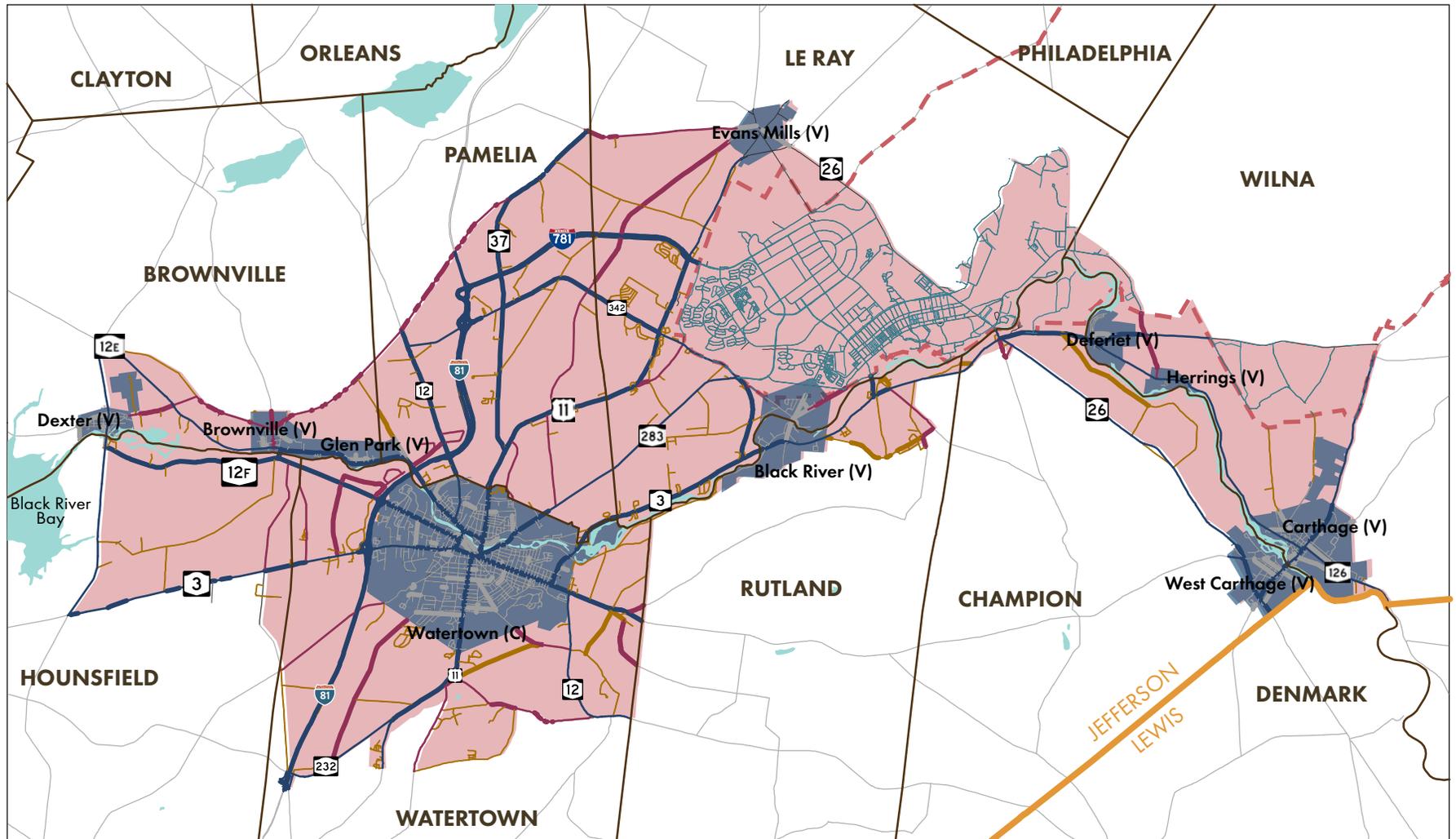
# FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION



- |                      |                             |                                           |                     |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Municipal Boundaries | Fort Drum Installation Area | <b>Functional Class - NYS Urban Codes</b> | 18- Minor Collector |
| County Boundaries    | WJCTC MPO Boundary          | 11 - Principal Arterial - Interstate      | 19 - Local          |
| Village/City         | Water Bodies                | 14 - Principal Arterial - Other           | Army                |
|                      |                             | 16 - Minor Arterial                       | Not Classified      |
|                      |                             | 17 - Major Collector                      |                     |

Data Source: NYS DOT, March 2023

# JURISDICTION & AADT



- Municipal Boundaries
- Fort Drum Installation Area
- County Boundaries
- WJCTC MPO Boundary
- Village/City
- Water Bodies

- Jurisdiction**
- NYS DOT
  - County
  - Town
  - Village or City
  - Not Classified
  - Army

- AADT**
- <5,000
  - 5,001-10,000
  - 10,001-20,000
  - 20,000+

Data Source: NYS DOT, Traffic Data Viewer, 2022

network. The availability of pedestrian and bicycle facilities is also described for each priority area.

Watertown offers a variety of facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, including traditional sidewalk infrastructure, shared roadways, dedicated bike lanes, pedestrian trails, and multi-use paths. The City is in the process of improving the connectivity of this multi-modal network in order to provide safer and better access within Watertown and to neighboring areas. The following generally describes existing active transportation infrastructure throughout the MPO boundary area.

### Greater MPO Region

- Great Bend to Felts Mills Rail – Trail: Three Miles along the former rail line along the south side of the Black River
- Great Bend to Felts Mills Trails: About three miles of trail parallel to the rail trail but located on the north side of the Black River.
- Kanik Nature Trail: Four-mile out-and-back gravel trail extending west from Calcium.

### City of Watertown

- JCC trails: One-mile loop trail behind Jefferson Community College

### Shared-Use Paths

The City features numerous paths and trails that are accessible to bicyclists, pedestrians, and other non-motorized users. Most of these shared-use trails are located within Thompson Park. However, several additional trails can be found throughout the City, particularly along the waterfront. These trails include:

- Thompson Park

- Black River Trail
- Waterwork Park
- Veterans Memorials Riverwalk Park
- Bicentennial Park

### Pedestrian Trails

Certain trails within the City are specifically accessible to pedestrians, often due to elements such as stairs or their integration with existing sidewalk networks. These pedestrian-only trails cater to foot traffic by necessity, given the terrain or design of the area. However, the City's overarching goal is to ensure accessibility for all users, which has led to a strategic decision to limit the development of new pedestrian-only trails in favor of more inclusive pathways that can accommodate a broader range of users.

Parks naturally serve as key destinations for both bicyclists and pedestrians, making them essential components in planning for active transportation networks. As a result, this study includes an inventory and analysis of parks within the WJCTC planning area. The parks, ranging from local community parks to larger county parks, provide critical recreational spaces and contribute to the overall connectivity of the area's bike and pedestrian routes. Understanding the location, size, and accessibility of these parks is crucial for developing efficient and safe connections for non-motorized travel. Below is a summary of the key parks identified within the WJCTC planning area:

#### *Dexter*

- Dexter Bandstand / Memorial Bell
- Dexter Memorial Field
- Fish Island Park

*Black River*

- Maple Street Park

*Carthage*

- Carthage Recreation Park
- Long Falls Park/Guyots Island
- Monument Park
- Riders Edge Skateboarders Park
- Turning Point Park

*Deferiet*

- Local Park/Playground

*Evans Mills*

- Jack Williams Community Park

*Herrings*

- Village of Herrings Playground

*Rutland*

- Jefferson County Forest

*West Carthage*

- Donald J. Getman Memorial Park

*Watertown*

- Adams Recreation Park
- Alex Duffy Fairgrounds
- Bicentennial Park
- Factory Square River Park
- Gair Park

- Kostyk Field
- Lansingdorf Park
- Lauchner Memorial Park
- Marble Street Park
- Peanut Park
- SPCA Dog Park
- Thompson Park
- Veteran's Memorial Riverwalk Park
- Waterworks Park
- Whitewater Park



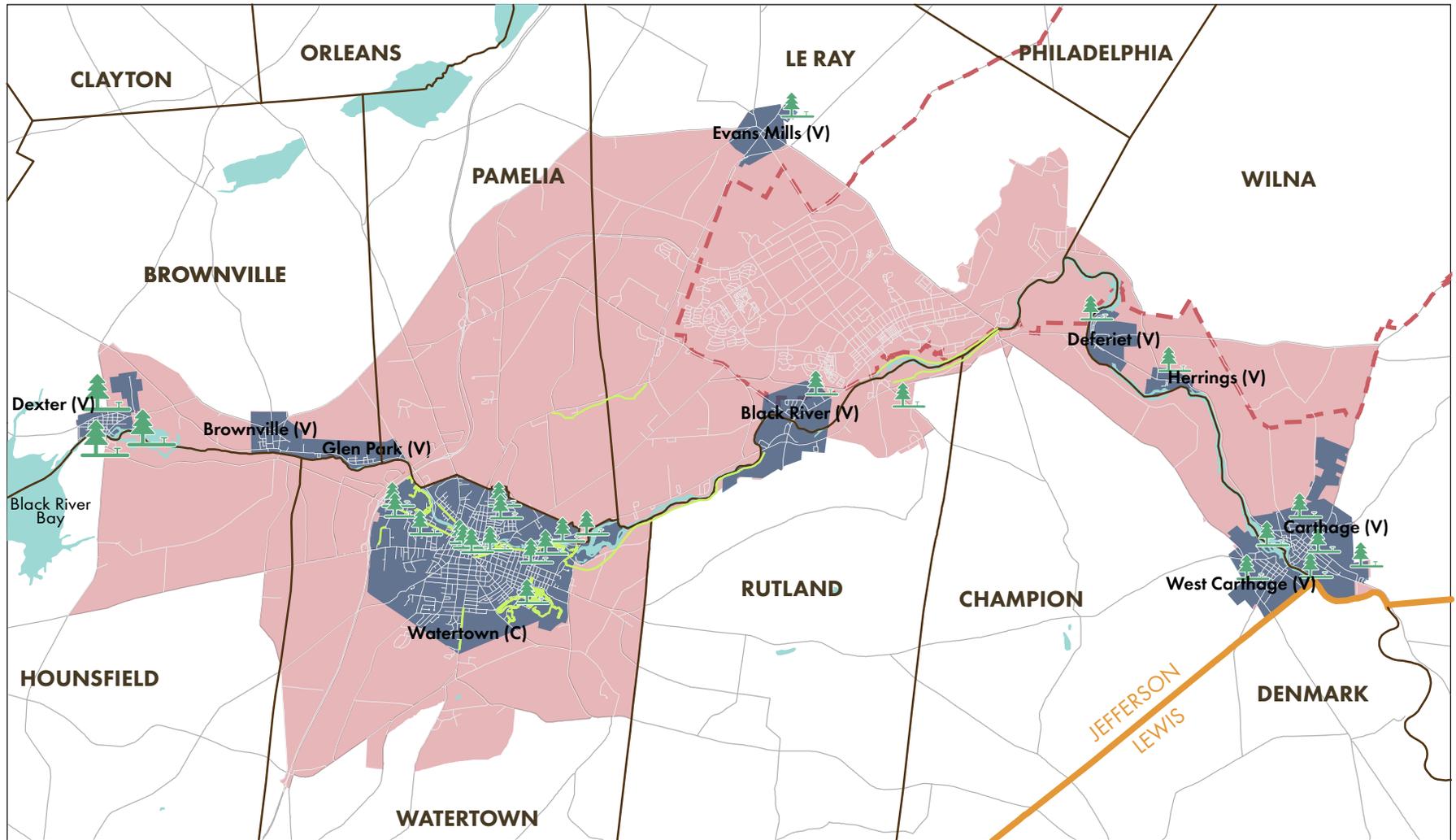
Source: Village of Deferiet

### 2.1.3.1 Sidewalks, Bike Lanes, and Sharrows in the City of Watertown

#### Sidewalks

The City of Watertown has an historic grid network of sidewalks, designed for pedestrians. Their primary function is to provide a safe and dedicated space for people to walk, separated from vehicular traffic. They can enhance accessibility within the community, encouraging walking as a mode of transportation while promoting safety, connectivity and active living. It is advisable that all existing

# PARKS & TRAILS



- Municipal Boundaries
- Fort Drum Installation Area
- Village/City
- County Boundaries
- WJCTC MPO Boundary
- Water Bodies
- Parks
- Trails

Data Source: Bike & Pedestrian Connectivity Study, 2022

and future sidewalks within the study area be compliant with the Americans with Disability Act (enacted on July 26, 1990, and updated 15, 2010) and the US Access Board's Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG). When planning for sidewalk repairs or the construction of new sidewalks whether in the City, Villages or rural areas of the WJCTC MPO area, a typical sidewalk should exhibit a minimum 5-foot width, and separated from the adjacent roadway by a curb and/or a minimum 4 to 5-foot offset from the travel lane.

### Bike Lanes

Three segments of roadways in the City are equipped with designated bike lanes, offering safe passage for bicyclists to travel alongside motorists without conflicts. These segments include:

- Main Street West, extending from the railroad overpass to Bradley Street
- Coffeen Street, spanning from Gaffney Drive to Black River Parkway



- Washington Street, running from the Watertown City School District to Chestnut Street

These bike lanes enhance safety and convenience for both cyclists and drivers by clearly delineating their respective spaces within the road right-of-way.

### Sharrows

The City features one roadway with shared lane markings, often referred to as sharrows. These markings signify that the roadway is intended for joint use by both bicyclists and motorists. Sharrows, while less preferable than separated bike lanes, may be appropriate for roads that are too narrow to allow bicyclists and motorists to travel side by side safely and where the posted speed limits are 35 MPH or lower. This setup raises driver and bicyclist awareness of the shared use of the roadway. Currently, Factory Street is the only roadway in the City with these shared lane markings.

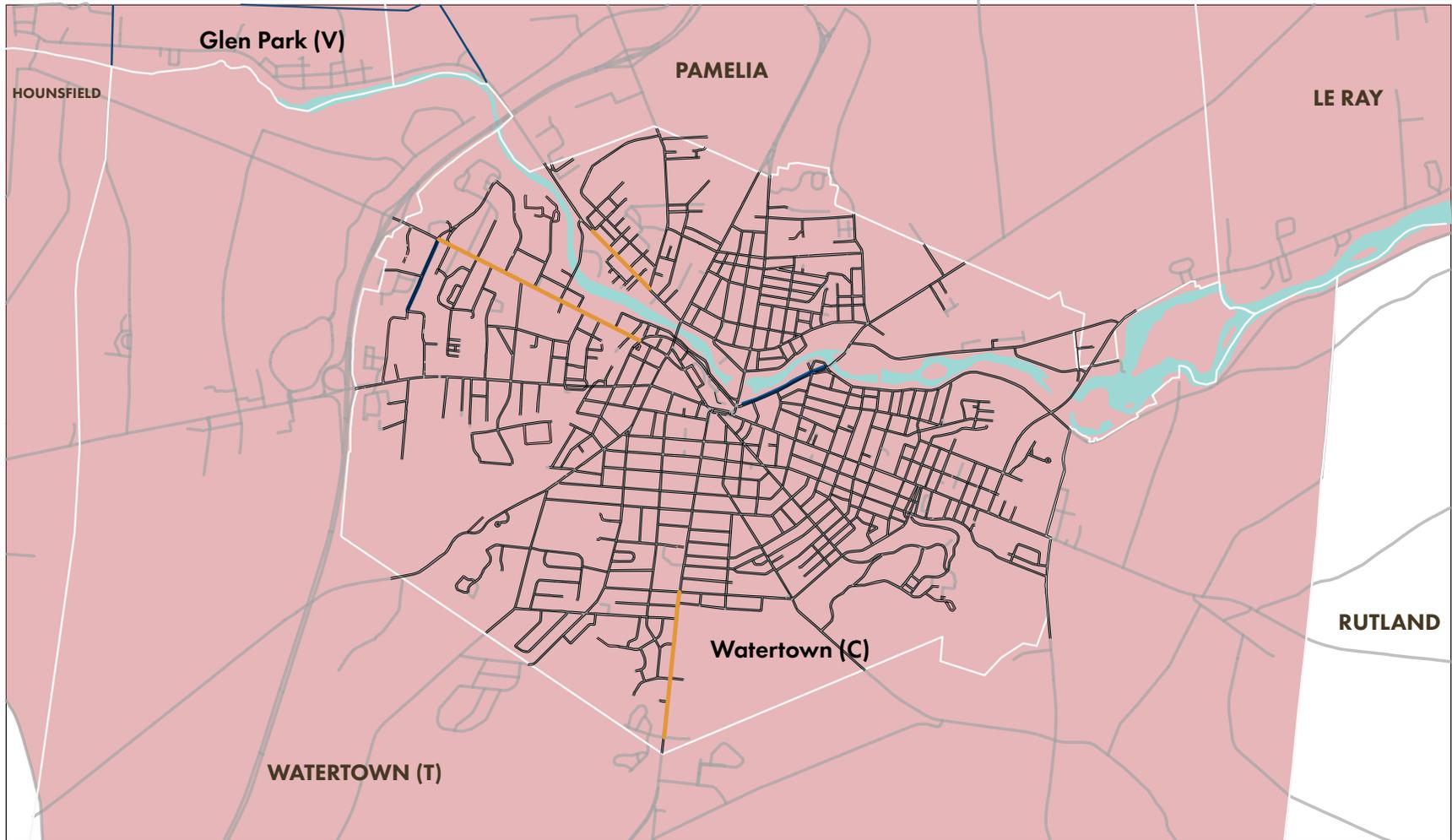
#### 2.1.3.2 Public Transit

Public transit in the City of Watertown is managed by CitiBus, which operates both fixed routes and paratransit services. The fixed-route buses run every 40 minutes, departing from the transfer station at 117 Arsenal Street Arcade near the downtown public squares from Monday through Saturday. Major stops are scheduled at key locations, while additional stops can be made along the route as needed. In addition to regular routes, they also offer special services. Paratransit is available by appointment for individuals with disabilities. Although not free, CitiBus serves as an affordable transit option for City of Watertown residents and visitors.

#### 2.1.4 Crash Statistics

Concentrations of pedestrian and bicycle crashes can be indicative of problem areas where there is conflict between motorized and non-motorized modes of transportation. A spatial analysis of pedestrian and bicycle crashes within

# SIDEWALKS, BIKE LANES & SHARROWS IN THE CITY OF WATERTOWN

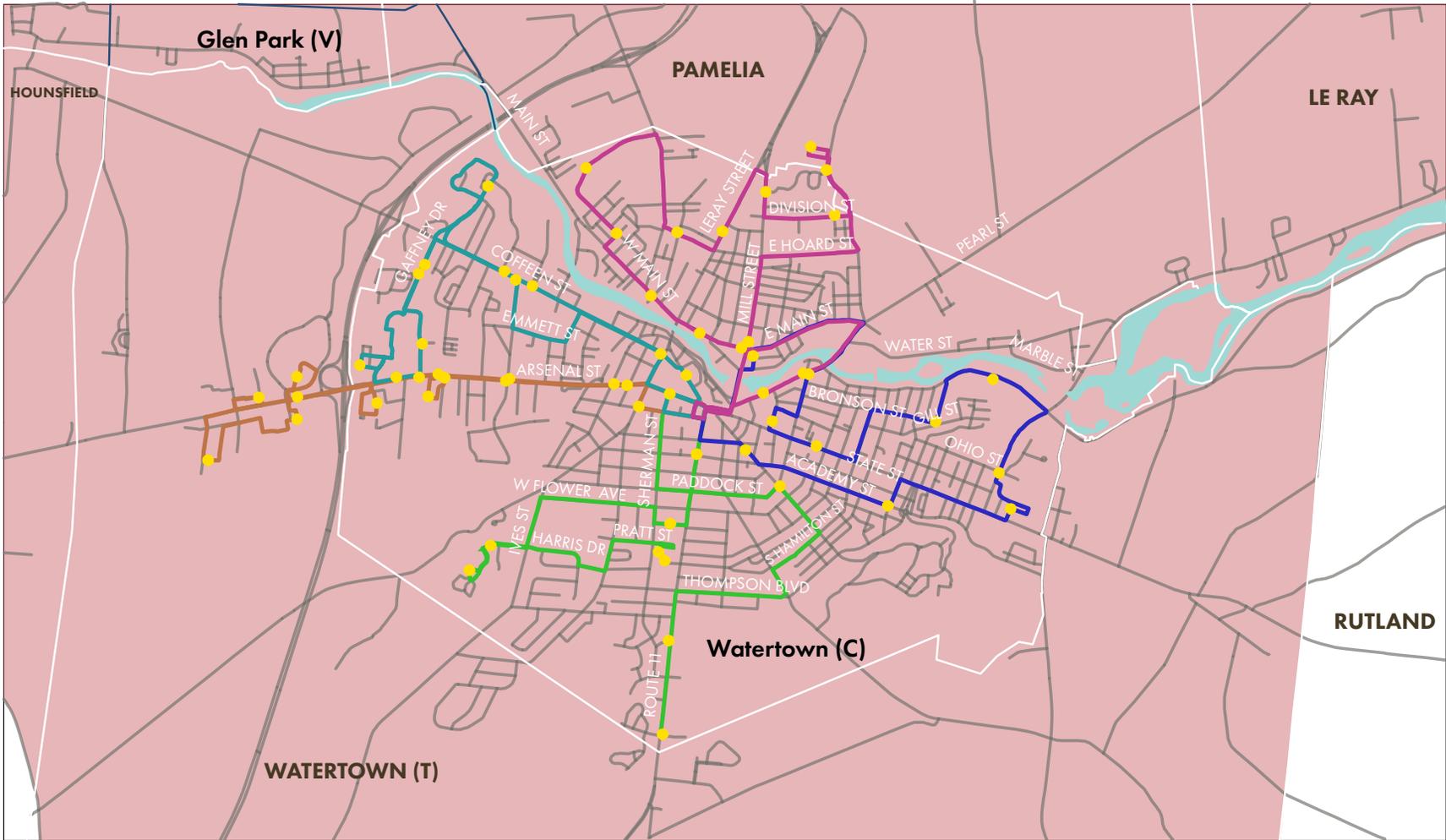


- Municipal Boundaries
- WJCTC MPO Boundary
- Black River

- Sidewalks
- Sharrows
- Bikes Lanes

Data Source: Bike & Pedestrian Connectivity Study, 2022

# PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IN THE CITY OF WATERTOWN



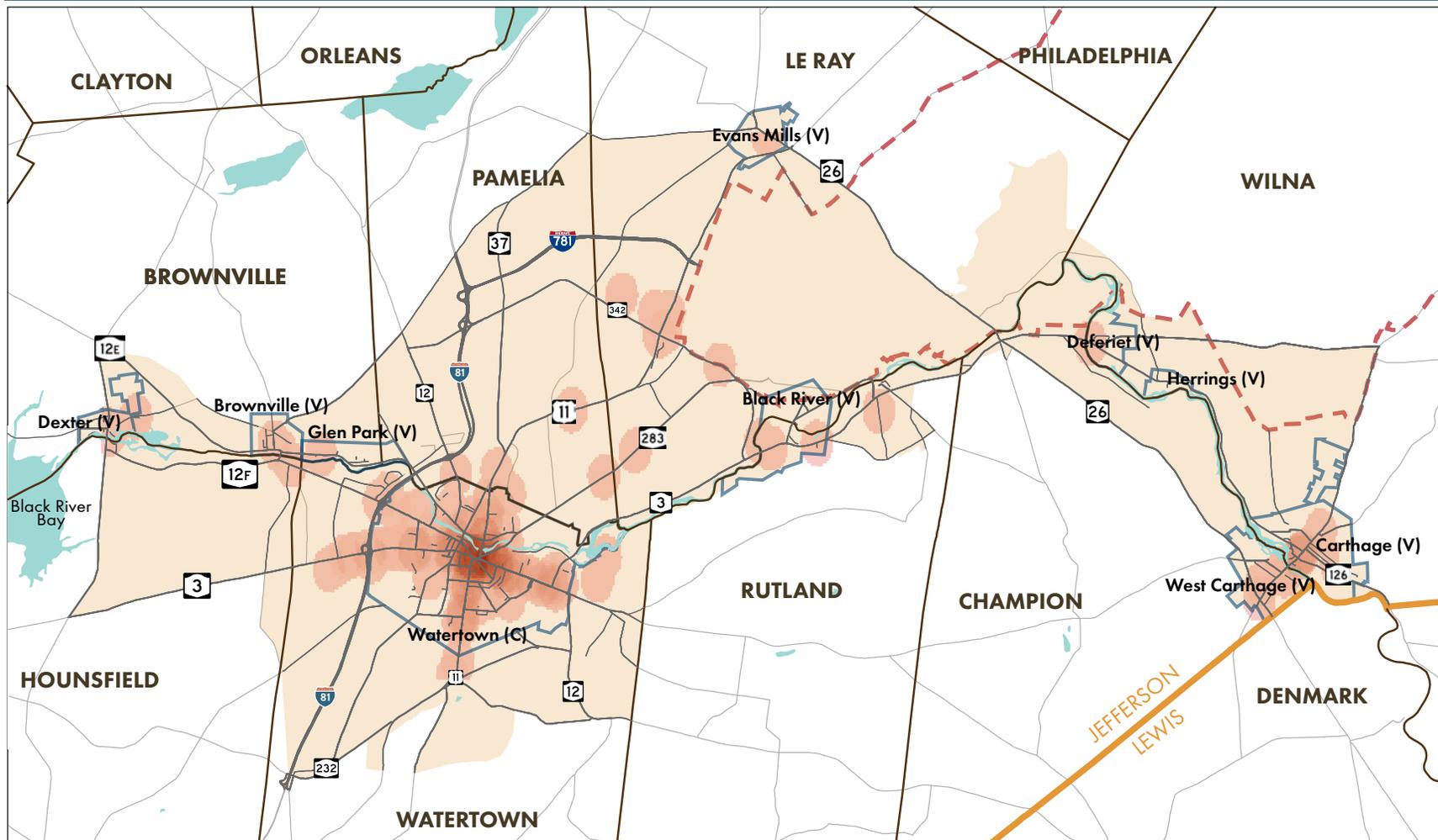
- Municipal Boundaries
- WJTC MPO Boundary
- Water Bodies

### Bus Routes

- A-1
- A-2
- B
- C-1
- C-2
- Bus Stops

Data Source: Bike & Pedestrian Connectivity Study, 2022

# CRASH DATA ANALYSIS



- Municipal Boundaries
- County Boundaries
- V Village/City
- Fort Drum Installation Area
- WJCTC MPO Boundary
- Water Bodies



Note: Crash Data only includes data for bike and pedestrian crashes  
 Source: NYS DOT Clear Crash Data Viewer, 2017-2022

the WJCTC area reveals that most occur within the City of Watertown's downtown, spreading outward along key corridors and tapering off near the City boundary. Other hotspots include the Villages.

## 2.2 COMMUNITY ASSETS

### 2.2.1 Educational Facilities

#### 2.2.1.1 Public School Districts

The MPO region includes seven distinct public school districts:

- South Jefferson
- Sackets Harbor
- Watertown
- General Brown
- Carthage
- Indian River
- Copenhagen (only includes one property in the WJCTC area)

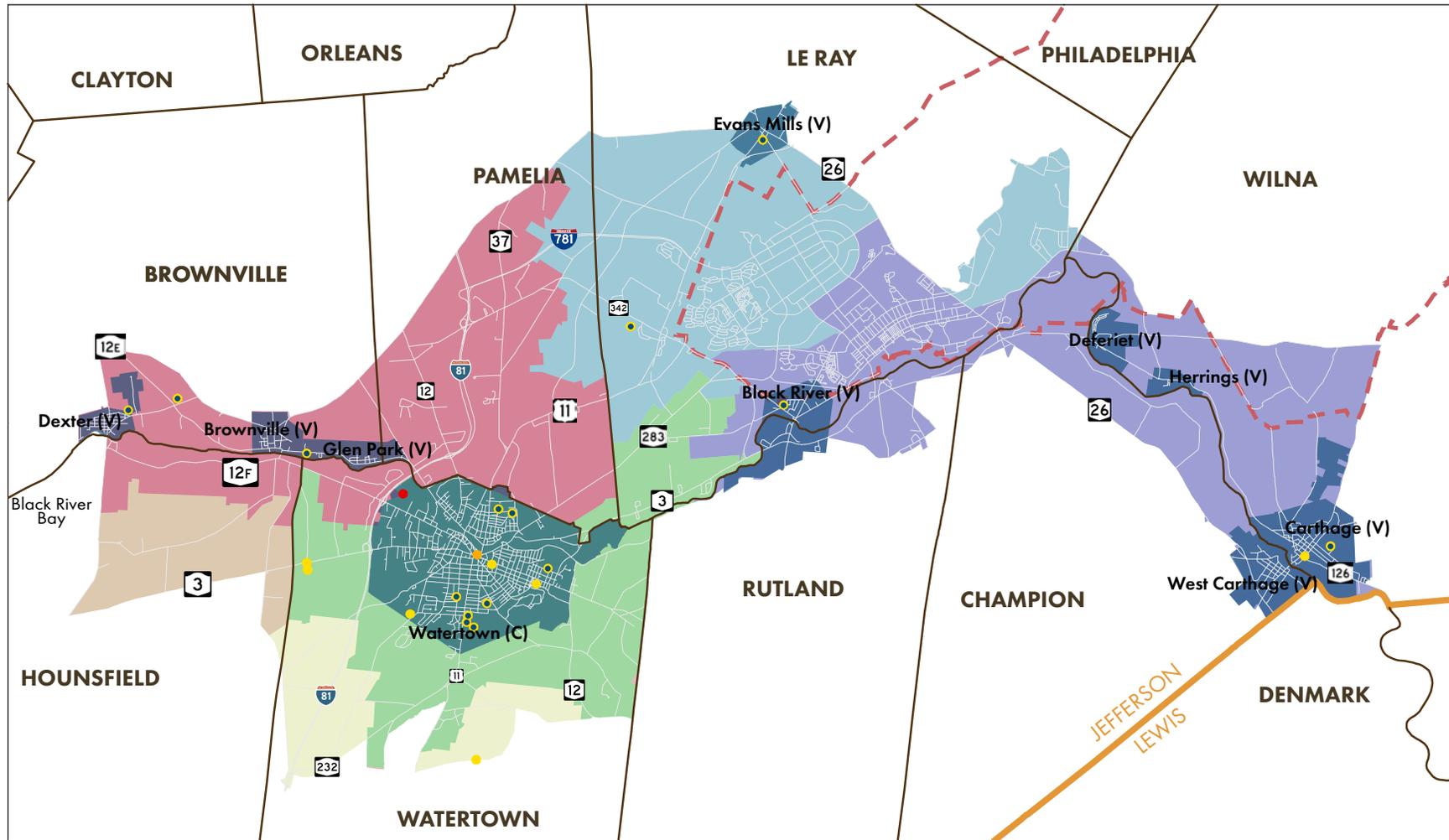
These districts collectively encompass 15 K-12 public school facilities within the WJCTC area, in addition to BOCES facilities throughout the region, private schools, a proprietary school and Jefferson Community College.

Among the 15 public schools, 9 are elementary schools, 4 are junior/middle schools, and 2 are combined junior/senior high schools. Eight of these public schools are within the Watertown City limits and are well-connected to the City's pedestrian network, making it convenient for children to walk to school. Additionally, several area Villages have schools within their boundaries that are connected via local sidewalk networks providing a safe means for local children to walk or bike to schools.

However, several of the schools located in rural areas of the MPO region are a further distance from residential areas and lack adequate pedestrian and bicycle facilities. This deficit makes it challenging for non-motorized access to schools such as West Carthage Elementary, Carthage Middle School, General Brown Junior-Senior High School, and Calcium Primary School.



# PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS & SCHOOLS



- |                      |                             |                        |                 |                             |                    |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Municipal Boundaries | Fort Drum Installation Area | <b>School District</b> | Sackets Harbour | Private K-12 School         | Public K-12 School |
| County Boundaries    | WJCTC MPO Boundary          | Carthage               | Watertown       | Proprietary School          |                    |
| Village/City         | Water Bodies                | General Brown          |                 | Jefferson Community College |                    |
|                      |                             | Indian River           |                 |                             |                    |

Data Source: NYS Education Department, 2022

### 2.2.1.2 Students Walking & Bicycling

According to New York State Education Law Section 3635, public school districts must provide sufficient transportation for all students residing within the district to and from the school they legally attend. Specifically, transportation should be provided for students in kindergarten through eighth grade who live more than two miles from school, and for students in grades nine through twelve who live more than three miles away (see Figure on next Page). However, each public school district within the WJCTC has opted to provide transportation services at a shorter distance threshold than is mandated by State law, which may be due to a number of factors including North-Country winter weather, safety factors and the general proximity of residential areas from respective school buildings.

Among the public schools within and adjacent to the WJCTC boundary, there are four distinct distance requirements set by their respective school districts, within which students are required to walk, bike, take public transit, or drive to school.



Transportation services (i.e. school buses) are provided to students living beyond these thresholds:

#### *100 feet from the school building (0.02 miles)*

- Black River Elementary School
- Carthage Elementary School
- Carthage Middle School (located just outside the WJCTC boundary)
- West Carthage Elementary School (located just outside the WJCTC boundary)

#### *Quarter mile radius (0.75 miles)*

- Knickerbocker Elementary School
- Sherman Elementary School
- Starbuck Elementary School
- North Elementary School
- Ohio Elementary School
- Evans Mills Primary School
- Calcium Primary School

#### *One-mile radius (1 mi)*

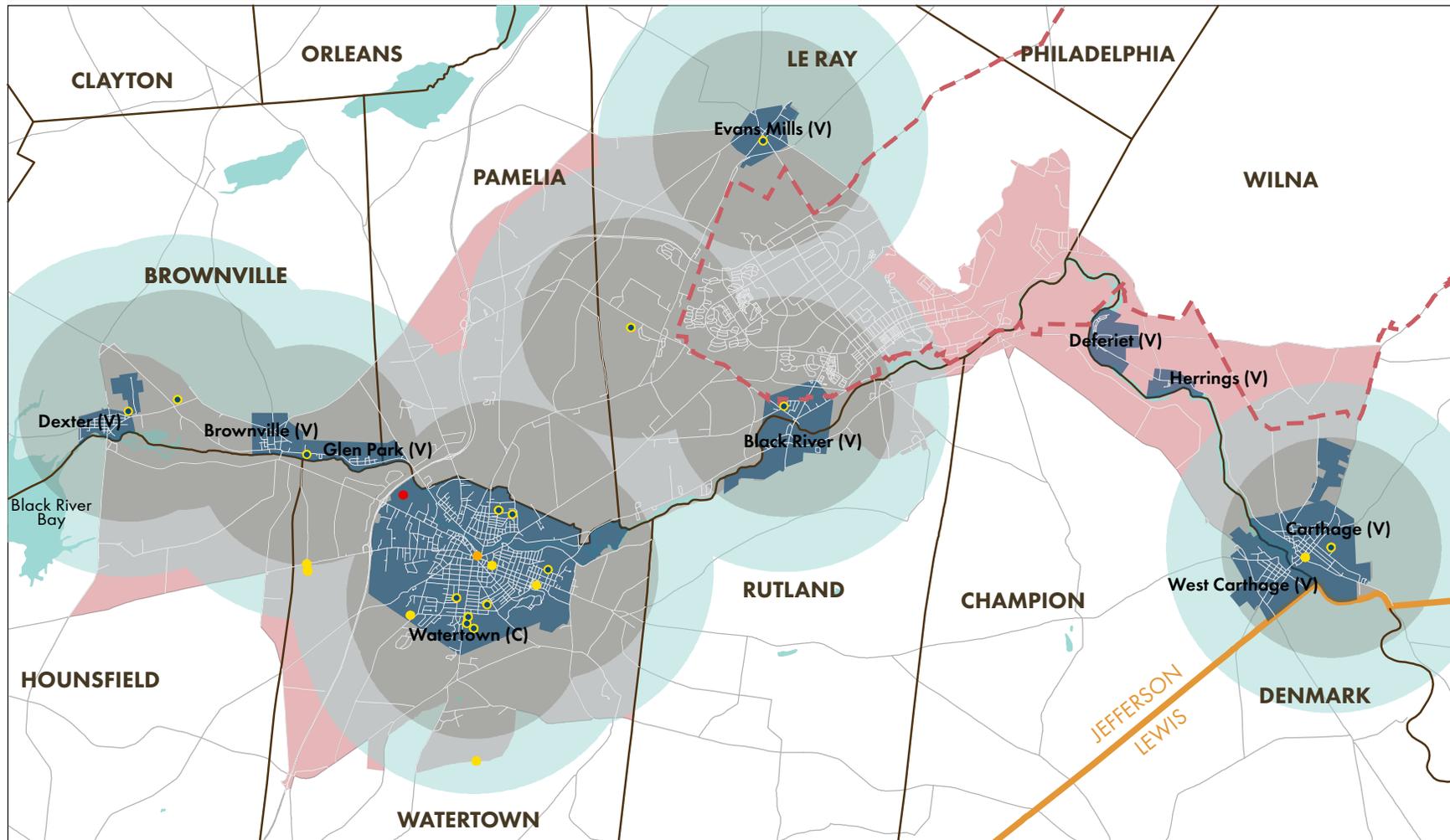
- Case Middle School
- H.T. Wiley Intermediate School

#### *One and a half-mile radius (1.5 mi)*

- Watertown High School

The General Brown Central School District - which includes Brownville-Glen Park Elementary School, Dexter Elementary School, and General Brown Junior-Senior High School - provides transportation services to all students.

## 2 MILE & 3 MILE RADIUS AROUND PUBLIC K-12 SCHOOLS



- |                      |                             |                    |                             |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Municipal Boundaries | Fort Drum Installation Area | Public K-12 School | Private K-12 School         |
| County Boundaries    | WJCTC MPO Boundary          | 2 Miles Radius*    | Proprietary School          |
| Village/City         | Water Bodies                | 3 Miles Radius*    | Jefferson Community College |

Data Source: NYS Education Department, 2022

\*New York State requirement - does not necessarily reflect local school



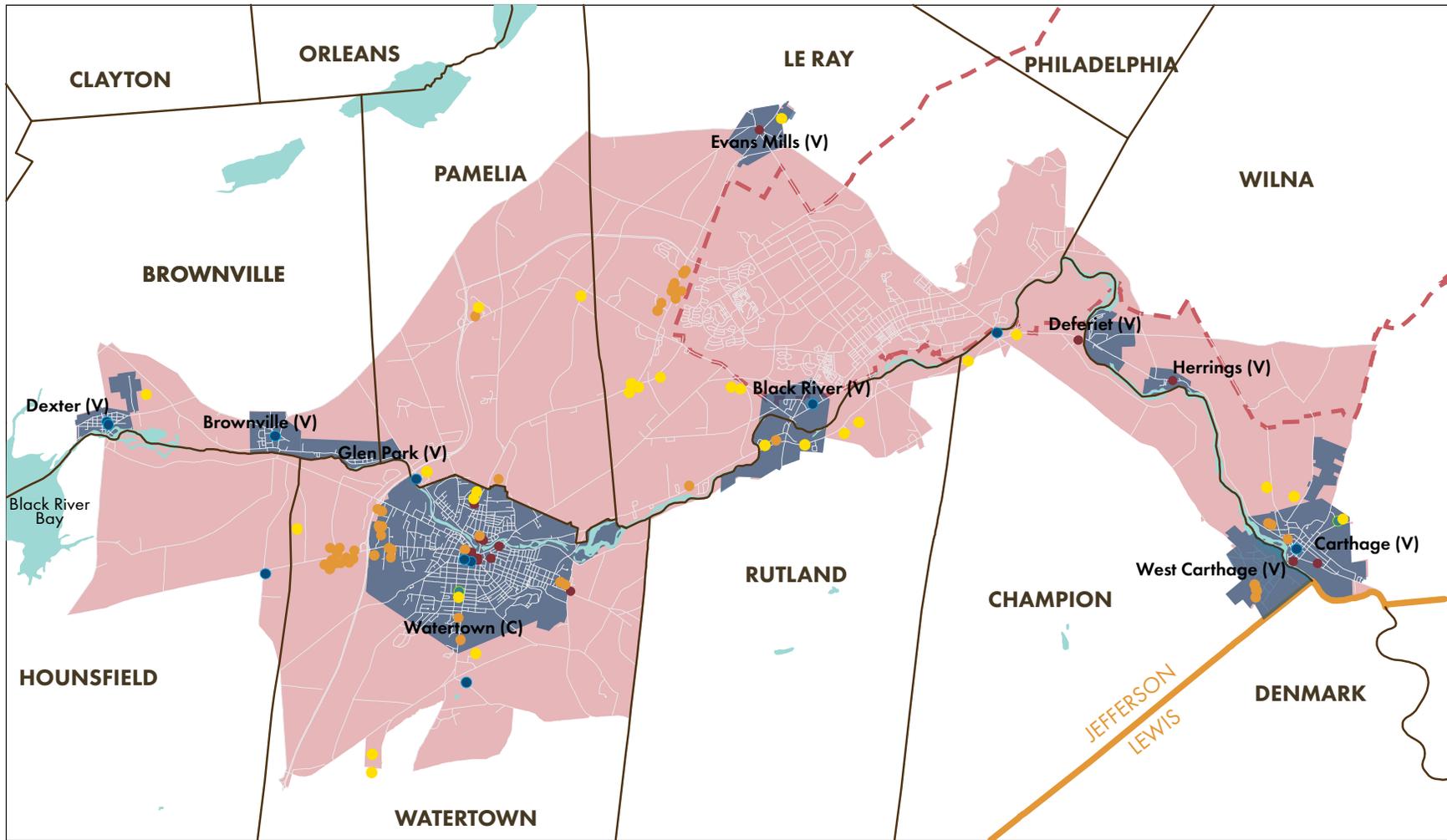
Route 3 - Salmon Run Mall

### 2.2.3 Other Points of Interest

In addition to the park and school facilities already identified in Sections 2.1.3 and 2.2.1 respectively, the locations of other key points of interest and destinations within the MPO were assessed as part of this Study. These include activity hubs, such as event venues, shopping centers, high-occupancy apartment complexes, medical centers, and major employers. Such key points of interest include:

- Samaritan Medical Center
- Public Square (City of Watertown)
- Carthage Farmers Market
- Salmon Run Mall
- Watertown International Airport
- The 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Museum
- Zoo New York
- Creekwood Dr apartment Complex with Shopping center to the North
- Watertown Housing Authority

# OTHER POINTS OF INTEREST



- Municipal Boundaries
- County Boundaries
- Village/City
- Fort Drum Installation Area
- WJCTC MPO Boundary
- Water Bodies
- Highrise Row Apartments
- Shopping Centers and Large Retail Stores
- Mobile Home Parks, Homes for Aged, and Highrise and Row Apartments
- Hospitals
- Libraries and Cultural facilities

Data Source: Jefferson County Tax Parcel Data, 2023

# 03

## Priority Area Identification

### 3.1 OVERVIEW

This chapter outlines the methodology used to identify and refine priority areas for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvement. The process began with selecting 30 initial priority areas based on community survey results, input from the WJCTC Highway Technical Committee, discussions with local school district superintendents, and a technical analysis of existing conditions, as detailed in the memorandum provided in Appendix A.

### 3.2 METHODOLOGY

The potential Priority Areas listed in this plan were identified based on four steps:

1. Initial research from the existing **Bicycle & Pedestrian Connectivity Study**, which identified several areas of concern
2. **Recommendations from the Highway Technical Committee** based on historical issues or concerns
3. **Interviews with school district** representatives
4. **Analysis of existing conditions**, such as areas with high crash rates, and community assets that have major footfall (schools, parks, commercial corridors, and other points of interest) but lack adequate safe bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure

#### 1. Bicycle & Pedestrian Connectivity Study

Within the Bicycle & Pedestrian Connectivity Study, a few locations of concern were identified based on their pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure needs and the opportunity to provide safe connections between residential areas and schools. Specifically, two schools were identified that lack sidewalks or pathway connections immediately outside of the school building areas:

- General Brown Junior-Senior High School
- Calcium Primary School (Intersection of Route 342 & Route 11)

The study further identified locations based on region-wide recommendations to improve pedestrian and bicyclist facilities. The MPO area was broken into two general sections: West of the City and East of the City (due to the Black River) to connect these centers of activity and promote a regional pedestrian and bicyclist network. On the western side, three key activity centers and points of interest were identified:

- Jefferson County Fairgrounds/Bicentennial Park
- Jefferson County Community College
- Fish Island Park

On the eastern side, 6 key activity centers and points of interest were identified:

- Millich Village Park in Deferiet (on Riverside Drive)
- The Carthage Farmers Market
- Long Falls Park
- Turning Point Park
- The Paper Mill in Deferiet – 400 Anderson Avenue, Deferiet

The Study further identified locations based on other key points of interest or destinations within the MPO for recommending pedestrian and bicyclist improvements.

- Samaritan Medical Center
- Public Square
- Salmon Run Mall
- Watertown International Airport
- The 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum Museum

## 2. Highway Technical Committee Recommendations

There were seven locations that were identified by the Highway Technical Committee based on their professional experience of concerns and opportunities within the WJCTC area:

- Jefferson-Lewis BOCES
- Jefferson Community College
- Connect Starwood Apartments to the Seaway Plaza (City of Watertown)
- Zoo New York
- Jefferson County Fairgrounds
- Connect Creekwood Dr apartment Complex with Shopping center to the North
- Connect Commerce Park Dr and the Post Office to Riva Ridge Rd
- Commercial area on Rt 26 in Carthage (from Champion St to Bridge St)

## 3. School District Interview

In the fall of 2024, stakeholder interviews were conducted with local school district representatives to assist in the identification of potential priority areas. Such potential priority areas are listed in the table in next section, and

a summary of the interviews is provided in Appendix A. Important to note is that no priority areas were identified for the Copenhagen Central School District, Sackets Harbor Central School District, and South Jefferson Central School District because they do not have any school buildings within the WJCTC boundary.

### *General Brown Central School District*

- Junior-Senior High School – Intersection of Rt 12E and Cemetery Rd

### *Indian River Central School District*

- Calcium Primary School – Connection to Eagle Ridge Village to the west and Woodcliff Community Townhomes to the east

### *Carthage Central School District*

- Carthage Elementary School – Connection to Washington Court Apartments
- Black River Elementary School – Connection to Pine Dr

### *Watertown City School District*

- Case Middle School – Traffic light and crosswalk at the intersection of Washington Ave, Thompson Blvd, and Chestnut St
- Watertown High School - Traffic light and crosswalk at the intersection of Washington Ave and Brook Dr

## 4. Technical Analysis

Priority areas were also identified based on a comparison of the location of activity centers (schools, local/regional shopping centers, high-occupancy apartment complexes, parks, other points of interest) and substantial pedestrian/bicyclist crashes. Activity centers with high crash rates within a quarter mile included:

- Immaculate Heart Elementary School
- Augustinian Academy Elementary
- Watertown Housing Authority
- City of Watertown Library
- Jefferson Co Historical Society

## 3.3 SELECTION PROCESS

### 3.3.1 Selected Priority Areas

The table below highlights the 30 selected potential priority areas initially identified throughout the Study. Each site was evaluated against initial selection criteria and the average score they received through the community survey. Locations with that met the most selection criteria and in consideration of their respective average survey score were considered as those with the highest need for enhanced pedestrian and bicycle safety features.

### 3.3.2 Community Survey

The community survey received 50 responses. Through written comments, survey respondents identified the following areas of concern beyond the 30 included in the survey:

- Intersection of West Main, LeRay, and Massey
- Intersection of Vanduzee Street and West Main
- Intersection of Ball Avenue and Pratt Street
- Intersection of Haley Street and Myrtle Avenue
- Washington Street
- Thompson Park
- Fairgrounds
- Ohio Street School
- Sherman Street



Washington Street Looking South

Table 1: Initial Site Identification Criteria

ID	Location	Bicycle & Pedestrian Connectivity Study	HTC Recommendation	School District Interviews	Technical Analysis	Tally Total	Avg Survey Score
1.	Connect Creekwood Dr. Apartments Complex (with the Shopping center to the North) & Connect Starwood Apartments to the Seaway Plaza		X			1	4.2
2.	Zoo New York*		X			1	4.8
3.	Watertown Housing Authority (140 Mechanic Street) *				X	1	4.6
4.	Immaculate Heart Elementary School*				X	1	4.8
5.	Public Square*	X	X			2	6.3
6.	Jefferson Co Historical Society (228 Washington Street) *				X	1	4.7
7.	City of Watertown Library (229 Washington Street) *				X	1	5.7
8.	Washington Street Manor Apt*				X	1	4.0
9.	Samaritan Medical Central*	X				1	5.6
10.	Case Middle School			X		1	6.6
11.	Watertown High School			X		1	7.4
12.	Jefferson Community College*	X				1	4.4
13.	The Fairgrounds/Bicentennial Park*	X	X			2	3.7
14.	Connect Commerce Park Dr & the Post Office to Riva Ridge		X			1	4.3
15.	Salmon Run Mall*	X				1	5.1

ID	Location	Bicycle & Pedestrian Connectivity Study	HTC Recommendation	School District Interviews	Technical Analysis	Tally Total	Avg Survey Score
16.	Jefferson-Lewis BOCES*	X	X			2	5.0
17.	General Brown Junior-Senior High School	X	X	X		3	6.8
18.	Watertown International Airport*	X				1	5.6
19.	Fish Island Park*	X				1	4.1
20.	Black River Elementary School			X		1	5.4
21.	Calcium Primary School	X		X		2	5.2
22.	10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum*	X				1	4.4
23.	Millich Village Park in Deferiet*	X				1	3.3
24.	The Paper Mill in Deferiet*	X				1	4.1
25.	Long Falls Park*	X				1	4.1
26.	The Carthage Farmer's Market*	X				1	3.6
27.	Carthage Elementary School			X		1	4.4
28.	Augustinian Academy*				X	1	4.2
29.	Turning Point Park*	X				1	3.8
30.	Commercial area on Rt 26 in Carthage (from Champion St to Bridge St)		X			1	4.8

\* Represents a general area of concern. Specific needs/recommendations had yet to be identified for this analysis.

### 3.4 FINDINGS

From the initial 30 Priority Areas identified, some areas were either dropped from further consideration based on various parameters, while several were combined together to simply make larger more impactful multi-modal improvements in their respective areas. For example, we know that the Washington Street corridor in the City of Watertown will be the focus of a future infrastructure and feasibility analysis that will be evaluated in and of itself in more detail than the scope of this Safe Routes to School Study would allow. As such, Washington Street was dropped from further consideration within this Study.

The priority areas that were carried forward for further evaluation underwent a conditions assessment which included posted speed limits, sidewalks, crosswalks, curb ramps, pedestrian signals, asphalt conditions, stormwater and utilities, property impacts, and other infrastructure elements. The 12 priority areas for which a needs assessment and resultant recommendations are provided include:

1. Plaza Drive - Division Street Connector
2. S. Hycliff Dr - Commerce Park Connector
3. Calcium Primary School
4. Autumn Ridge-Town Center-Boces Connector
5. Carthage Elementary School
6. Carthage N. Broad Street Connector
7. Carthage - Downtown Waterfront
8. General Brown Junior-Senior High School
9. Black River Elementary School - Leray St. to Main Street
10. Sherman Elementary School
11. Deferiet Waterfront
12. Vanduzee Street and West Main

A summary table in the next chapter highlights the specific criteria considered in this review. In addition, each selected area was evaluated for the feasibility of implementation, taking into account roadway jurisdiction, potential land acquisition needs, and the availability of funding for recommended improvements.



# 04

## Priority Area Needs Assessment and Recommendations

### 4.1 SELECTED PRIORITY AREAS

As outlined in the previous chapter, 12 priority areas were identified and assessed through a desktop review across the WJCTC boundary, stakeholder discussion, and community input. This chapter provides a more detailed analysis of each priority area, including an overview of existing conditions, key issues, proposed improvements, cost estimates, and illustrative concept plans with cross-sections of existing and recommended pedestrian and/or bicycle infrastructure.

Using the safety matrix table about the bike/pedestrian facilities at each priority area as a guide, both on-street and off-street recommendations were developed to create safer, more walkable, and pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly environments around schools, plazas, grocery stores, and other destinations. These recommendations range from near-term, easily implementable actions to longer-term strategies that may align with capital improvement schedules or other investment opportunities.

On-street recommendations focus on roadway operations and study feasibility to implement safety enhancements

Table 2: List of 12 Priority Areas Evaluated Through Different Initial Input Metrics

ID	Location	Bicycle & Pedestrian Connectivity Study	HTC Recommendation	School District Interviews	Community Survey	Tally Total
1.	Plaza Drive - Division Street Connector		X			1
2.	S. Hycliff Dr - Commerce Park Connector		X			1
3.	Calcium Primary School	X		X		2
4.	Autumn Ridge-Town Center-Boces Connector	X		X		2
5.	Carthage Elementary School			X		1
6.	Carthage N. Broad Street Connector		X			1
7.	Carthage - Downtown Connector	X				1
8.	General Brown Junior-Senior High School	X	X	X		3
9.	Black River Elementary School - Leray St. to Main Street			X		1
10.	Sherman Elementary School				X	1
11.	Deferiet Waterfront	X				1
12.	Vanduzee Street and West Main				X	1

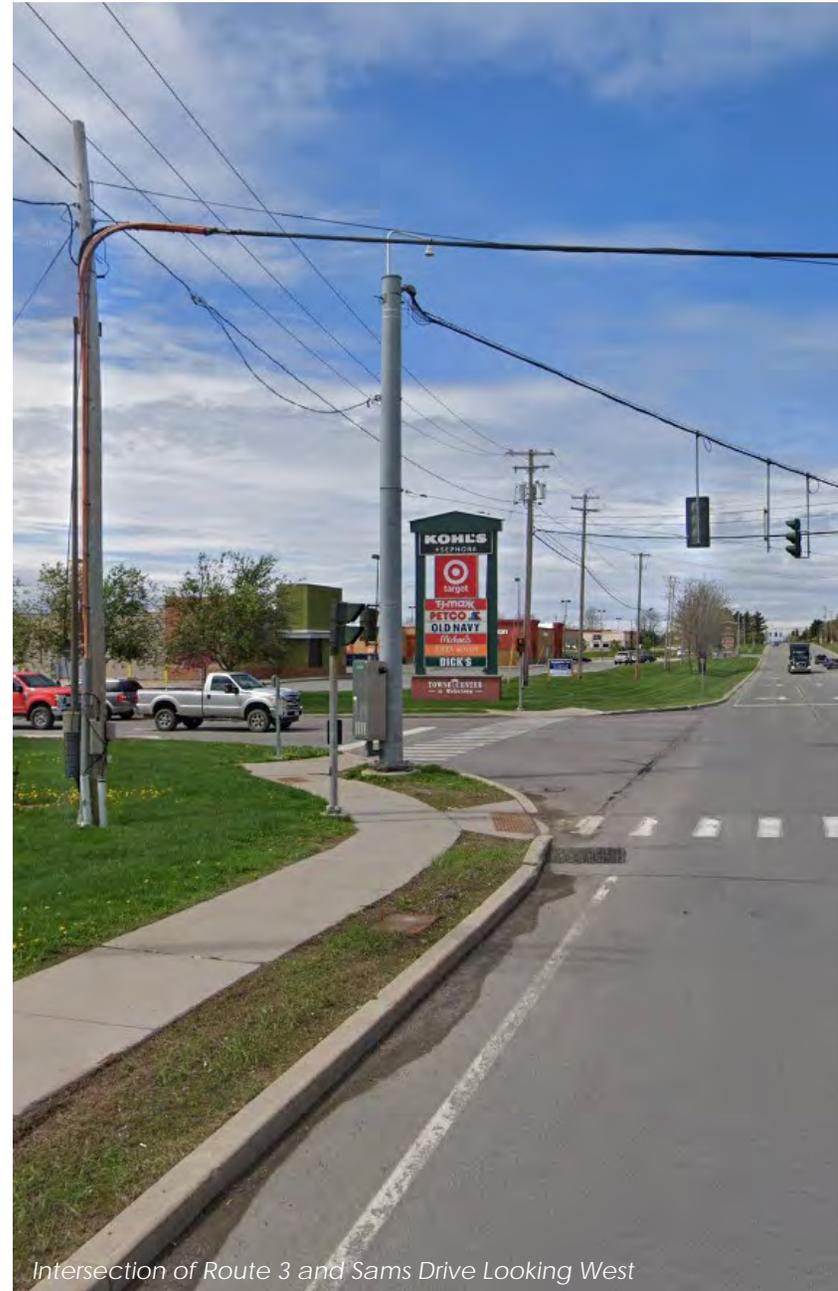
Table 3: List of 12 Priority Areas Evaluated Through A Safety Criteria Matrix

ID	Location	Posted Speed Limit(s) (mph)	Sidewalk(s)	Bike Lane(s)	Crosswalk(s)	Curb Ramp(s)	Pedestrian Traffic Signal(s)	Adequate Signage	Lighting	Shoulder(s)
1.	Plaza Drive - Division Street Connector	55	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
2.	S. Hycliff Dr - Commerce Park Connector	30	Partial	No	No	Yes	No	No	Partial	
3.	Calcium Primary School	15	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
4.	Autumn Ridge-Town Center -Boces Connector	35,45	Partial	No	Partial	Partial	Partial	Yes	Yes	No
		20,45	No	No	No	No	No	No	N/A	Partial
5.	Carthage Elementary School	15	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
6.	Carthage N. Broad Street Connector	40	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
7.	Carthage - Downtown Connector	30	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
8.	General Brown Junior-Senior High School	45,55	No	No	No	No	No	N/A	No	Yes
9.	Black River Elementary School - Leray St. to Main Street	20,30	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
10.	Sherman Elementary School	15,30	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
11.	Deferiet Waterfront	30	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
12.	Vanduzee Street and West Main	30	No	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No

such as crosswalks, restriping, and speed management. The goal is to improve comfort and safety for pedestrians and bicyclists by reducing vehicle speeds and increasing driver awareness of non-motorized users.

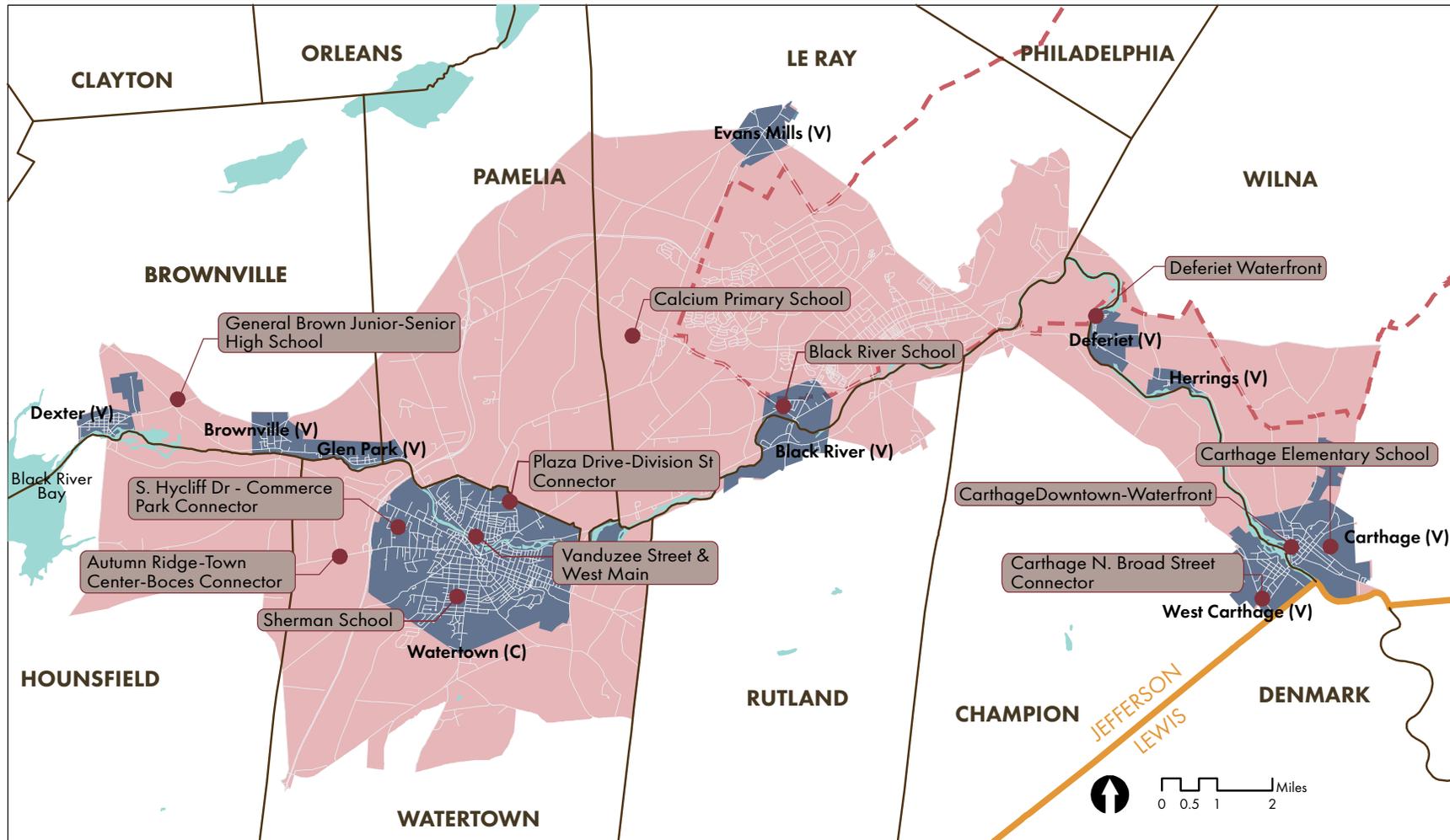
Off-street recommendations, in contrast, do not alter roadway operations. Instead, they emphasize facilities such as sidewalks and shared-use paths. Shared-use paths are especially important in areas with narrow rights-of-way—often near schools and residential neighborhoods—where there is limited space to provide separate bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.

The Alternatives Toolkit presented in the following chapter should be consulted alongside these recommendations to better understand design and cost considerations as well as the benefits and trade-offs of various on- and off-street active transportation facilities for different user groups.



*Intersection of Route 3 and Sams Drive Looking West*

# PRIORITY AREAS



## LEGEND

- Municipal Boundaries
- Water Bodies
- Priority Areas
- WJCTC MPO Boundary
- Fort Drum Installation Area

# PLAZA DRIVE - DIVISION STREET CONNECTOR

## Project Area Overview

Starbuck Drive, which becomes Plaza Drive north of the Division St. intersection, is a local road that provides direct access to local residents in Starwood and Creekwood Apartments, Seaway Plaza, and the nearby Adams Recreational Park.

## Project Area Issues & Needs

- No pedestrian or bicycle facilities from Division Street to Seaway Plaza.
- A gap in the in the sidewalk system on Division Street remains along the frontage of Adams Recreational Park due to utility conflicts.
- Asphalt along Division Street and at intersection of Plaza Drive is deteriorated, cracking/crumbling.



## CONCEPT PLAN

