



City of Peekskill, NY, SS4A FY24 Planning & Demonstration Grant Application
“Peekskill Pedestrian & Cyclist Safety and Connectivity Plan”
Project Narrative

Peekskill, NY, is a historic Hudson River city noted for its diversity, urban characteristics, historic homes, and hilly topography in the foothills of the Hudson Highlands. With its compact downtown, Peekskill serves as a regional commercial center in Westchester County. However, Peekskill's irregular street grid, steep terrain and constant commercial truck traffic contribute to a challenging pedestrian environment. Deferred maintenance has left sidewalks and crosswalks inconsistent across its neighborhoods, and despite a strong trail network along the waterfront, Peekskill lacks a bike network. The City of Peekskill (“City”) has taken steps to improve connections between its downtown, upland residential neighborhoods, schools, and waterfront through its New York State-funded Downtown Revitalization Initiative (“DRI”), but must now undertake a Comprehensive Traffic Safety Action plan to overcome historical disinvestment and achieve zero traffic fatalities and serious injuries.

Background

Peekskill serves a considerable low- and moderate-income population.¹ An influx of new residents and expansion of remote work have inflated housing costs and exacerbated inequalities between homeowners and renters, and residents with and without personal vehicles. The average annual percent of owner-occupied homes decreased to just 55% between 2017 and 2021, and 82% of Downtown households are renters.² Immigration from Central and South America has also shifted the City's demographics (45% of residents are Hispanic) and created new centers of economic activity. Four of five census tracts in Peekskill are considered disadvantaged under DOT Equitable Transportation Communities (“ETC”) criteria, with transportation vulnerability as high as 72% in certain tracts. Peekskill knows developing safer streets will support its economy and serve its most vulnerable residents.

Increased commercial truck traffic and unsafe conditions for pedestrians and cyclists have challenged the City. Peekskill recorded 38 crashes between vehicles and pedestrians or cyclists in 2023, compared to 23 incidents in 2022 (there were twelve roadway fatalities in Peekskill between 2017 and 2021 according to DOT's Fatality Analysis Reporting System, “FARS”). In response, the Peekskill Common Council authorized a [Traffic Safety Task Force](#) to derive community-based solutions and formulate a Comprehensive Traffic Safety Action Plan (“Peekskill Pedestrian & Cyclist Safety & Connectivity Plan”).

The Task Force identified a high-injury network Downtown, which experienced 14 vehicle-pedestrian collisions in 2023. New York State Department of Transportation, working with the Task Force and City Officials, committed to incorporating Peekskill's Safety & Connectivity Plan into the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (“STIP”) once completed, so the City is well prepared to act on the plan's recommendations. A \$280,000 SS4A grant will help translate political will into concrete action by funding the Safety & Connectivity Plan, improving connections to regional public transit, neighborhoods, and public schools, and eliminating traffic fatalities and serious injuries.

¹ The American Community Survey est. poverty rate in Peekskill is 10.8% compared to 9.4% countywide.

² American Community Survey 2022 estimates: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/peekskillcitynewyork>



Selection Criteria

Safety Impact: The primary purpose of the Safety & Connectivity Plan is to eliminate roadway injuries and deaths. Peekskill has experienced almost three crashes between vehicles and pedestrians per month since the beginning of 2022 – with two resulting in deaths – more than triple the annual rate from before the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Traffic Safety Task Force documented the types of impacts of all accidents in 2023 to determine that rear-end and sideswipe collisions are most frequent. This suggests that speeding and limited sight lines are the main contributors to accidents, which the Task Force corroborated with police reports. The Benefits of Complete Streets tool (“BCS”), a model developed by Smart Growth America, showed that Peekskill would avoid as many as 161 pedestrian injuries and 10 deaths over the next 20 years by investing in complete street measures Downtown.

Peekskill’s community relies on walking and micromobility. With recent immigration, convenience stores, hair salons, and childcare centers have opened closer to residential neighborhoods. This shift promotes walking but also contributes to congestion, parking shortages, and illegal parking. Downtown Peekskill currently has 569 units of public and subsidized housing for families and seniors. Middle and High School students do not receive public busing, so a large share of students walk or ride bicycles and scooters. The City seeks to invest in safer pedestrian routes and more organized parking and traffic solutions for these underserved communities.

Equity, Engagement, and Collaboration: The City will continue to publicize the Safety & Connectivity plan through social media, public broadcasting, and in person events in English and in Spanish. Through its ongoing Comprehensive Planning efforts, the City is already building useful communication networks with groups like the Hispanic Community Corporation, Catholic Church of the Assumption, Business Improvement District, and Peekskill Arts Alliance. The City will collaborate with a specialized outreach consultant to offer in-person events, online surveys, and small group discussions to meet residents where they are. To develop the project budget, the City consulted with experienced long-term planners to ensure that ample funding will be available for such a robust public engagement program. The City received an enthusiastic letter of support for the Safety and Connectivity Plan from Peekskill Walks, a representative, grassroots organization that advocates for pedestrian improvements.

Additional Safety Context: The City intends to integrate the Safety & Connectivity Plan with its updated comprehensive plan in order to ensure that its pedestrian safety recommendations are broadly accepted and reflected in development approvals and land use decisions in the near future. The City has already designed a bike-ped connection along Central Avenue through the DRI, which will start construction in early 2025 and provide an important proof of concept. The City also won a 2024 New York State Momentum Fund award to support intersection and streetscape improvements.

Demonstration Activities

Two-way dedicated bicycle lanes, an intervention identified by DOT’s National Roadway Safety Strategy (“NRSS”), will be a central element of the Safety and Connectivity Plan where feasible. Building on the DRI, Peekskill plans to use a portion of SS4A funding to pilot bicycle lanes and shared use trails in key corridors by early 2026, and collect trip data to incorporate into the Safety & Connectivity plan.