Brighton Core City Circulation Plan
Existing Conditions Summary

June 2025

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DENVER REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Brighton℠

Acknowledgments

The Brighton Core City Circulation Study is led and funded by DRCOG in close partnership with the City of Brighton. The study is part of DRCOG's Community Based Transportation Planning program after being nominated for the program by the City of Brighton.

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TOOLE DESIGN

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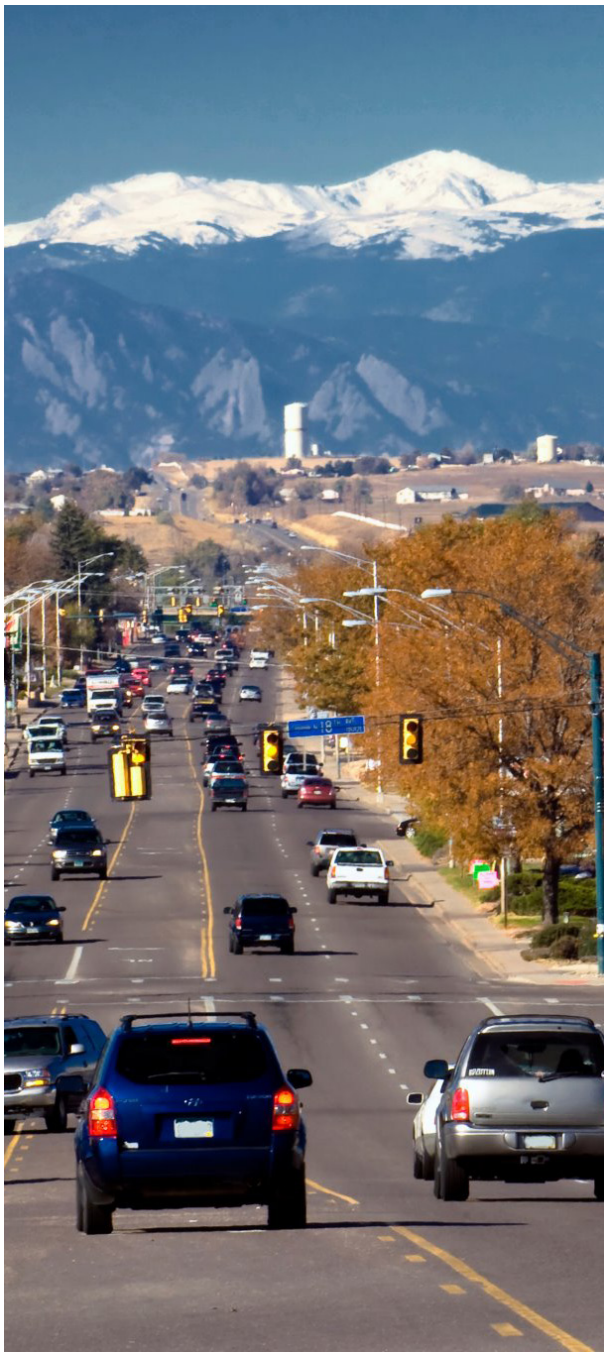


Credit: Scott Beitendorf

Introduction

Bridge Street was originally built as rural Colorado State Highway 7 (CO 7) to support the surrounding communities' local commerce and vehicular traffic. Rural highways were not typically designed to accommodate future right-of-way needs or travel modes other than driving. Times have changed for Brighton, including significant growth that transitioned the city from a small, rural community into a substantial stand-alone suburban area. Brighton's growth was a compelling reason for the city's decision to transition CO 7 into a locally-owned arterial street. This action allowed Brighton to better accommodate the community's desire to manage access and plan for more choices on how people move along the corridor, including walking, rolling, biking, and riding the bus.

Indicative of a former rural highway, previous planning efforts have repeatedly cited challenges such as inconsistent sidewalks, a lack of bikeways, and uncomfortable crossings as contributing factors for people not using any other mode besides driving along Bridge Street. The Brighton Core City Circulation Plan will build on these previous efforts while relying on today's best practices to help identify a set of practical transportation and safety improvements that can be implemented over the short, medium, and long-term. Step one in the process is to first understand the existing conditions along Bridge Street. Having a thorough understanding of a variety of variables from the historic number of car crashes to the types of current and future land uses are key inputs that the study will use to inform each subsequent step in the planning process. This will ultimately lead to a set of street cross sections that reflect realistic multi-modal and safety improvements. The study area includes Bridge Street between the South Platte River to the west and 22nd Avenue to the east, as well as the surrounding half-mile radius on either side of the corridor, which extends to Denver Street to the north and Southern Street to the south.

Public feedback collected for this plan and previous plans repeatedly highlight barriers to mobility, including how difficult it is to navigate the roundabouts on either side of US 85, the delays and safety concerns related to the active freight rail lines that bifurcate the Downtown Historic District and run parallel to US 85 to the east, and the uncontrolled, individual access points that increase conflict points between motorized and nonmotorized traffic in the eastern portion of the corridor.

Land use and development along Bridge Street

New planned development will spur significant growth in employment and households by 2040.

The types and ages of land uses present surrounding Bridge Street vary. Examining the study area from west to east, land use from the South Platte River to Miller Avenue is comprised of parcels zoned for agriculture and open space. Between Miller Avenue and the US 85 roundabouts, land use transitions to residential, strip commercial, and industrial uses. The Downtown district lies between the US 85 roundabouts and 4th Avenue. Between 4th Avenue and 22nd Avenue, the corridor primarily supports strip commercial uses adjacent to the roadway as well as residential in the remainder of the study area. 19th Avenue eastward includes higher density residential uses as well as Planned Unit Developments.

The study area contains several land uses that generate travel demand for goods and services. These uses include:

- Schools: Brighton High School, South Elementary School, Southeast Elementary School, Northeast Elementary School, North Elementary School
- Retail stores including several shopping centers
- Public/government facilities: Anythink Library, Brighton City Museum, Post Office, Adams County Business and Workforce Center, Adams County Sheriff's Detention Facility

According to the DRCOG Small Area Forecast for the study area, by 2040 there will be an approximately 30% increase in employment opportunities (from 6,606 in 2020) and a 20% increase in the number of households (from 5,860 in 2020) in the study area. There are several developments planned near the downtown core and on the east end of the study area.

Takeaway:

To accommodate travel demand today and the additional trips anticipated in the future, recommendations for improvements to Bridge Street must acknowledge the constrained right-of-way along the corridor and determine how to best allocate limited space to support a variety of travelers. This may include safety improvements, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities that efficiently facilitate trips.

Common travel origins and destinations & potential for mode shift

People make the most trips to and from the southwest portion of the study area, primarily by driving, but also by walking, biking, and taking transit.

This southwest area includes dense residential development, including apartment complexes and smaller lot sizes for single family homes. It also includes activity centers and open spaces including Carmichael Park, City Hall, the Brighton Pavilions shopping center, the Downtown Historic District, and the US 85 & Bridge Street Park and Ride, the City's main transit hub with the highest number of bus boardings in the study area.

The distance that is comfortably reachable within 10 minutes for someone walking, rolling, or biking within the study area is limited by narrow or missing sidewalks and high-stress bikeways or connectivity gaps in the network; as well as barriers like US 85 and the railroad tracks. There is a pedestrian bridge over US 85 near the south end of the study area that facilitates trips from the South Platte River Trail to the southern part of the study area. With a bicycle and pedestrian network designed for all ages and abilities – as set forth in the Brighton Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Multimodal Plan – much of Brighton and most transit stops could be accessible by walking, rolling, or biking from the corridor.

Credit: Toole Design Group

What it's like travelling along Bridge Street

By walking and rolling

In the central, more historic neighborhoods of the study area closest to downtown Brighton, many of the sidewalks along the local streets are four feet wide or narrower, which can be inaccessible for those using wheelchairs or assisted mobility devices, and uncomfortable for people walking side-by-side. There are also streets missing sidewalks altogether, which can make traveling inaccessible for someone using a mobility device, while dissuading others. Newer neighborhoods surrounding the study area have been required to build complete streets that include sidewalks to form a connected sidewalk network.

Crossings on this section of Bridge Street are between 1,000 feet (roughly a fifth of a mile) and 2,300 feet (just under a half mile) apart, which at the upper end can drastically increase out-of-direction travel for someone in between two crossings trying to reach a destination directly across the street. The largest crossing gap exists between 11th Avenue and 18th Avenue. Existing crossings of Bridge Street have wide crossing distances and place people

Figure 1. Missing and Deficient Sidewalk Conditions along Bridge Street

walking and rolling in close proximity to vehicles. Side street crossings are also wide due to large corner radii, which can increase vehicle turning speeds and make it more difficult for drivers to see people walking and rolling.

Physical infrastructure barriers like US 85 and the railroad tracks make it challenging for people walking and rolling to comfortably access Main Street and Brighton's Downtown Historic District and Veterans' Park on the western edge of the study area next to the South Platte River Trail.. US 85 runs north-south on the western side of the study area and presents an obstacle for pedestrians travelling east or west across the highway, due to limited available crossings and missing sidewalk infrastructure in the surrounding area. Crossings of US 85 are limited to the pedestrian bridge across the highway just north of Southern Street and intersections with major arterials like 168th Avenue, Bridge Street, and Bromley Lane. However, these intersections can be uncomfortable for people walking and rolling due to relatively narrow attached sidewalks adjacent to higher speed, high-volume traffic. The pedestrian bridge over US 85 accommodates people walking, rolling, and biking, but the structure needs a cleaning and a coat of paint, with better lighting to promote use.

Sidewalk quality varies within the study area, with some cracked, upheaving, crumbling, or in need of vegetation removal and maintenance. Deficient sidewalks can pose accessibility challenges for people rolling.

Street lighting along Bridge Street varies in quality, scale, and frequency. Along the west end of the corridor closer to Main Street, streetlights are spaced more regularly and are designed at a pedestrian scale, with City signage welcoming visitors to downtown. Lighting makes this section of Bridge Street feel more walkable and pedestrian friendly. However, on the eastern end of the study area, streetlights are spaced much further apart, and are at a more auto-oriented scale, which leaves dark sections of sidewalk at night and does not welcome evening strolling by pedestrians. Public feedback clearly indicated a desire for more lighting to not only make Bridge Street feel more walkable, but also increase the perception of personal safety.

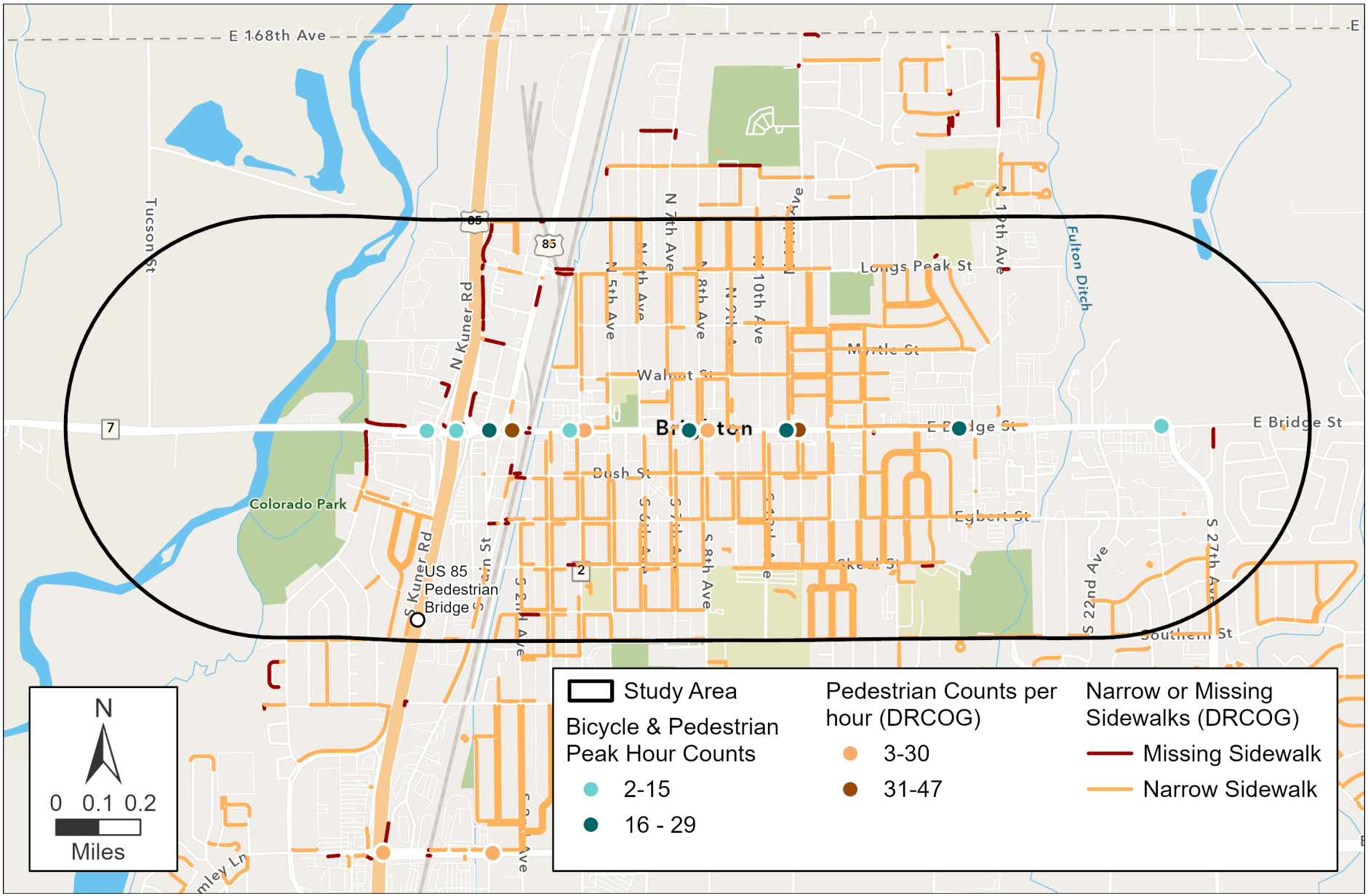


Figure 2. Pedestrian Network

By bike or micromobility

The study area today lacks protected spaces for people biking, scooting, or using other micromobility options. Streets with bike infrastructure like bike lanes and sharrows today, such as 4th Avenue, 8th Avenue, 11th Avenue, and 18th Avenue are not connected to one another. While they cross Longs Peak Street and Egbert Street, Bridge Street represents a large gap in the network, that if completed, could better integrate these facilities.

For a bicyclist traveling along Bridge Street, the options are the frequently narrow sidewalks which are shared with pedestrians or biking on the arterial roadway in mixed traffic, with heavy traffic volumes and high speeds. Narrow sidewalks are difficult to navigate via bike. However, there are short segments of wider sidewalks – some with a buffer between the roadway and sidewalk – where people biking can pass others more comfortably.

Additionally, the sharrows and striped bike lanes on adjacent streets are not comfortable for all ages and abilities. These facilities do not offer protection from people driving, with bicyclists either sharing a travel lane, or forced to ride directly adjacent to cars without a horizontal or vertical buffer. There are trails and sidepaths present on the eastern and western sides of the study area, which connect bicyclists to regional destinations. The Colorado Front Range Trail, which passes through Veterans' Park, connects bicyclists to Denver and major points in between, including Adams County's Riverdale Park and Fairgrounds, and the N-Line commuter rail station at 72nd Avenue. The Fulton Ditch Trail on the east end of the study area crosses Bridge Street at the pedestrian signal and connects to Brighton's broader recreational trail system. However, like the pedestrian network, both US 85 and the railway present barriers for bicyclists.

Takeaway:

Recommendations should prioritize installation of high-comfort sidewalks, sidepaths, and bikeways along Bridge Street and around bus stops to improve access to downtown and to transit; as well as high-comfort crossings of US 85 at the roundabouts and of the railroad tracks. By making it more comfortable and convenient to walk, roll, and bike for short trips in the study area, demand for roadway space and parking could be alleviated to better support long-distance trips.

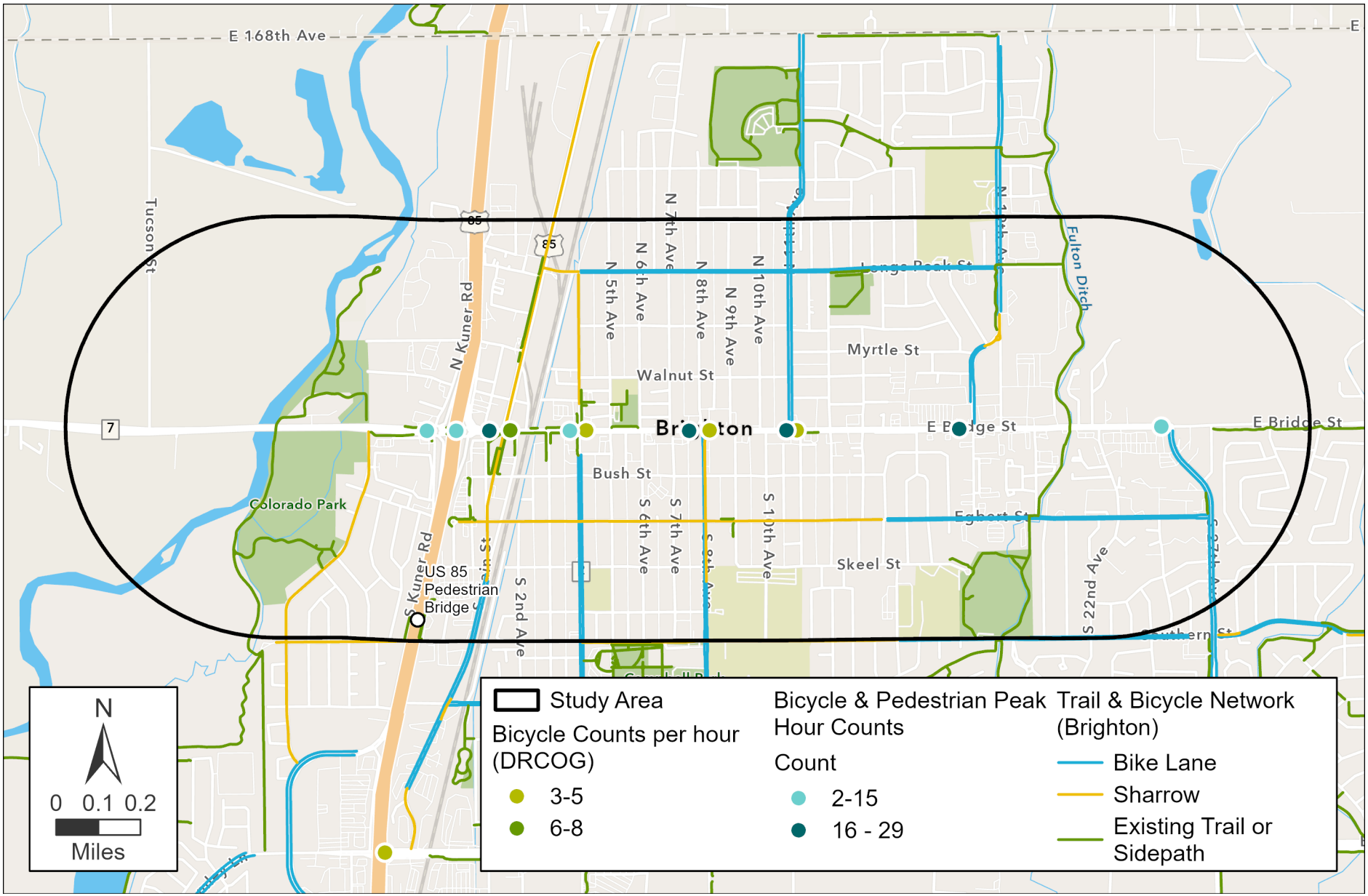


Figure 3. Bicycle Network

By bus

While fixed route bus service is relatively infrequent in Brighton, regional connections are available, and transit service will improve in the near-term with the implementation of microtransit service and CO 7 regional rapid bus starter service between Boulder and two stops in Brighton.

The study area, and Brighton at large, is served by four fixed route bus services – Route 120L (120th Avenue Limited), Route 520, Route 145X (Brighton / Denver Airport), and Route RX (Brighton Denver Express) – as well as the Brighton FlexRide. Existing services generally only run during peak hours between 6 AM and 6 PM, with hour frequencies. Ridership is highest at the US 85 & Bridge Street Park and Ride, Bridge Street & 4th Avenue, Bridge Street & 18th Avenue, and Bridge Street & 19th Avenue. However, most bus stops along Bridge Street lack basic rider amenities like a bench, bus shelter, and trash can. Several bus stops along Bridge Street are at locations without signalized crossings, making it nearly impossible for riders to safely access these stops.

In the near term, Brighton will start a three-year on-demand demonstration microtransit service in the Fall 2025. Service will initially concentrate in the north core city area, which encompasses the entire study area, with plans to expand throughout the city's growth area as demand rises. Additionally, Brighton is participating with the jurisidictions along CO 7 to launch a bus starter service between Boulder and Brighton during the first quarter of 2026. The CO 7 bus starter service is funded for the first two years and is accompanied by a conceptual design project that includes bus lanes, high quality stations, and transit signal priority. The route will connect the downtown of each city, with two stops in Brighton – one located in the Downtown Historic District and the far eastern terminus on 27th Avenue.

Takeaway:

The study should support transit by identifying signal timing improvements for bus reliability, crossing improvements for bus stop accessibility, and stop amenities to improve the rider experience.

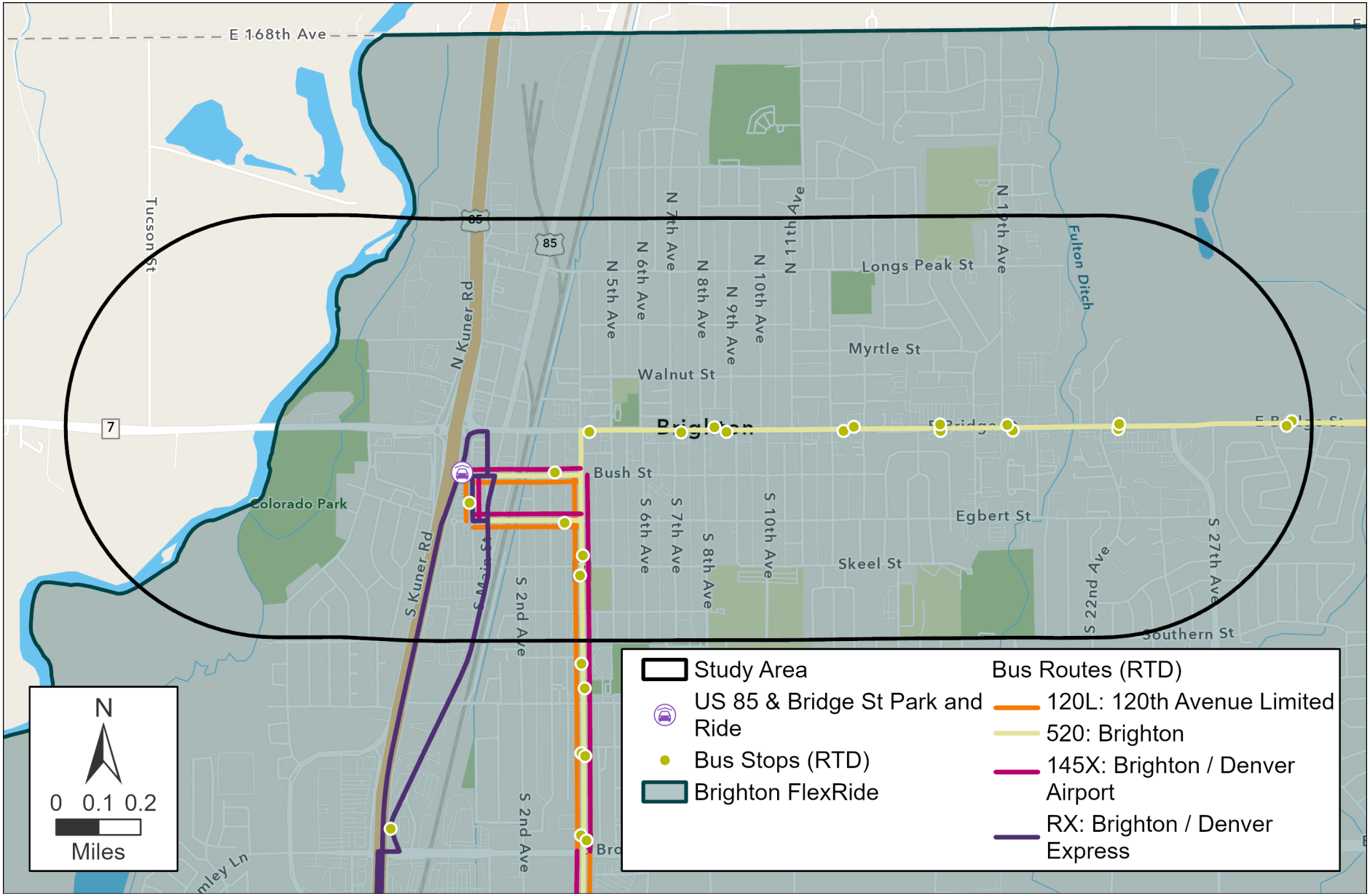


Figure 4. Existing Transit Routes

By car

The study area features six signalized intersections and two roundabouts along Bridge Street. The project team evaluated traffic operations performance on Bridge Street at the AM and PM peak, measured through Level of Service (LOS) ratings of A-F (Figure 5) and summarized in Table 1. The AM and PM peak represent worst-case conditions throughout the day, when most drivers are travelling along Bridge Street.

Bridge Street operates in free flowing or stable flow conditions during the morning peak, meaning there is minimal congestion. Delays tend to be longer during the afternoon peak period. Only one intersection experiences significant traffic delays, indicated via LOS scores of E and F, with drivers most likely to experience delays at the US 85 roundabouts. Drivers exiting US 85 at either roundabout and heading northbound on Kuner Road experience the most delay due to the high volume of traffic on the approaches and on Bridge Street, limiting the number of gaps available for a vehicle to enter the roundabout.

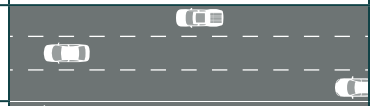
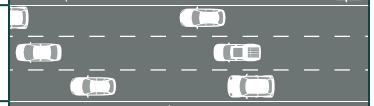
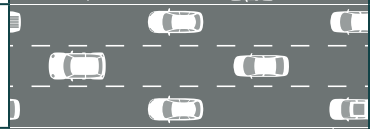
LOS	Definitions	Example
LOS A	Low volumes and no delays	
LOS B	Speeds restricted by travel conditions, minor delays	
LOS C	Speeds and maneuverability closely controlled because of higher volumes	
LOS D	Speeds considerably affected by change in operation conditions. High density traffic restricts maneuverability; volume near capacity	
LOS E	Low speeds; considerable delay; volume at or slightly over capacity	
LOS F	Very low speeds; volumes exceed capacity; long delays with stop-and-go traffic	

Figure 5. Level of Service Definitions
Source: Transportation for America

Intersection	AM Existing LOS	PM Existing LOS
Bridge St & US 85 SB Off-Ramp (Roundabout)	D	F
Bridge St & US 85 NB Off-Ramp (Roundabout)	B	D
Bridge St & Main St (Signalized)	B	C
Bridge St & 4th Ave (Signalized)	C	D
Bridge St & 8th Ave (Signalized)	B	C
Bridge St & 11th Ave (Signalized)	B	B
Bridge St & 18th Ave (Signalized)	C	C
Bridge St & Midblock Ped Crossing (Signalized)	A	A
Bridge St & 27th Ave (Signalized)	A	B

Table 1. Study Area Traffic Performance

The operational analysis found that eastbound and westbound vehicle movements on Bridge Street perform better than northbound and southbound (i.e., side street) movements crossing Bridge Street. This suggests that signal operations are currently optimized for vehicle throughput on Bridge Street, which may result in tradeoffs for people walking, rolling, and biking, such as longer wait times to cross Bridge Street.

The traffic operations analysis also simulated the impact of the at-grade railroad crossing east of Main Street to understand what disruptions from train crossings. Eastbound vehicles queue (i.e., back up) past Main Street and westbound vehicles queue approximately to 4th Avenue. It takes several traffic signal cycles for the corridor to resume normal operations once a train has passed.

Takeaway:

While Bridge Street currently experiences minimal congestion, travel delays are more common near both US 85 roundabouts and the at-grade rail crossing. The traffic signals along Bridge Street are optimized for east-west vehicle throughput, which can create tradeoffs for north-south travel, particularly for people walking, rolling, and biking. Based on this initial analysis, there is potential to evaluate signal timing changes that could improve comfort for people outside of a vehicle crossing the street and improve safety at intersections, while maintaining traffic operations.

Transportation safety along Bridge Street

Half of all crashes, crashes involving non-motorists, and crashes in which someone was killed or seriously injured in the study area occurred along Bridge Street.

An average of 120 crashes occurs each year in this segment of Bridge Street, with severe crashes steadily rising since 2019. Intersections with crashes occurring most frequently include both roundabouts at US 85, 4th Avenue, 18th Avenue, and 19th Avenue. Intersections with the most severe crashes and crashes involving non-motorists include the western roundabout, Main Street, and 18th Avenue.

The most common and severe crash types along Bridge Street – broadside crashes, rear-end crashes, approach turn crashes, and bicyclist and pedestrian-involved crashes – are related to speeding and drivers making left turns and right turns at these key intersections along the corridor.

Study Area		Bridge St	
1,221	Total crashes	566	Total crashes
82	Number of fatal or serious crashes	38	Number of fatal or serious crashes
6.7% of total crashes		6.3% of total crashes	
32	Number of crashes involving non-motorists	15	Number of crashes involving non-motorists
2.6% of total crashes		2.5% of total crashes	

Figure 6. Summary of Bridge Street and Study Area Crashes

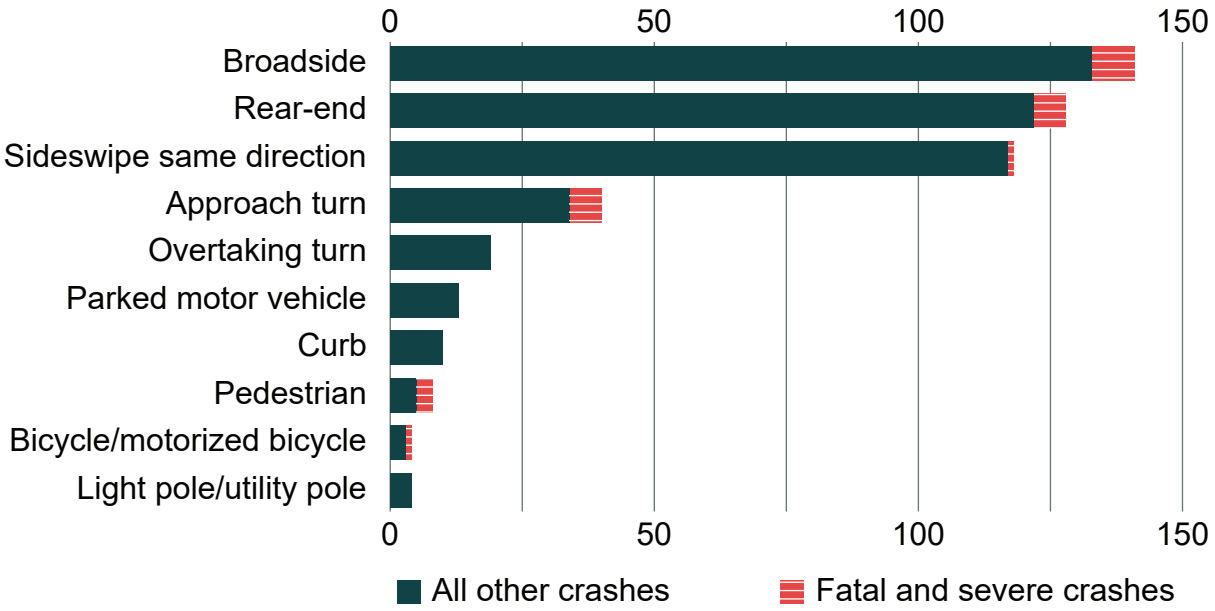


Figure 7. Most Common Crash Types along Bridge Street

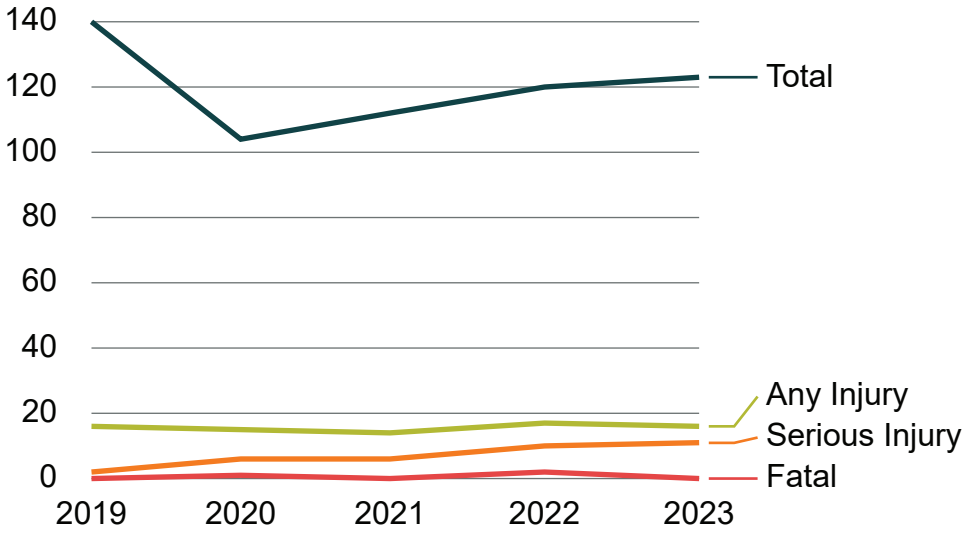


Figure 8. Crashes along Bridge Street between South Platte River and 22nd Avenue, 2019-2023

Source: DRCOG

Takeaway:

The next phase of the project should explore crash countermeasures including protected-only left-turns, no right on red, leading pedestrian intervals, intersection tightening, pedestrian refuge islands and curb extensions, access management, stop bars and marked crosswalks, and roadway realignment at each of these focus intersections and along segments of Bridge Street.

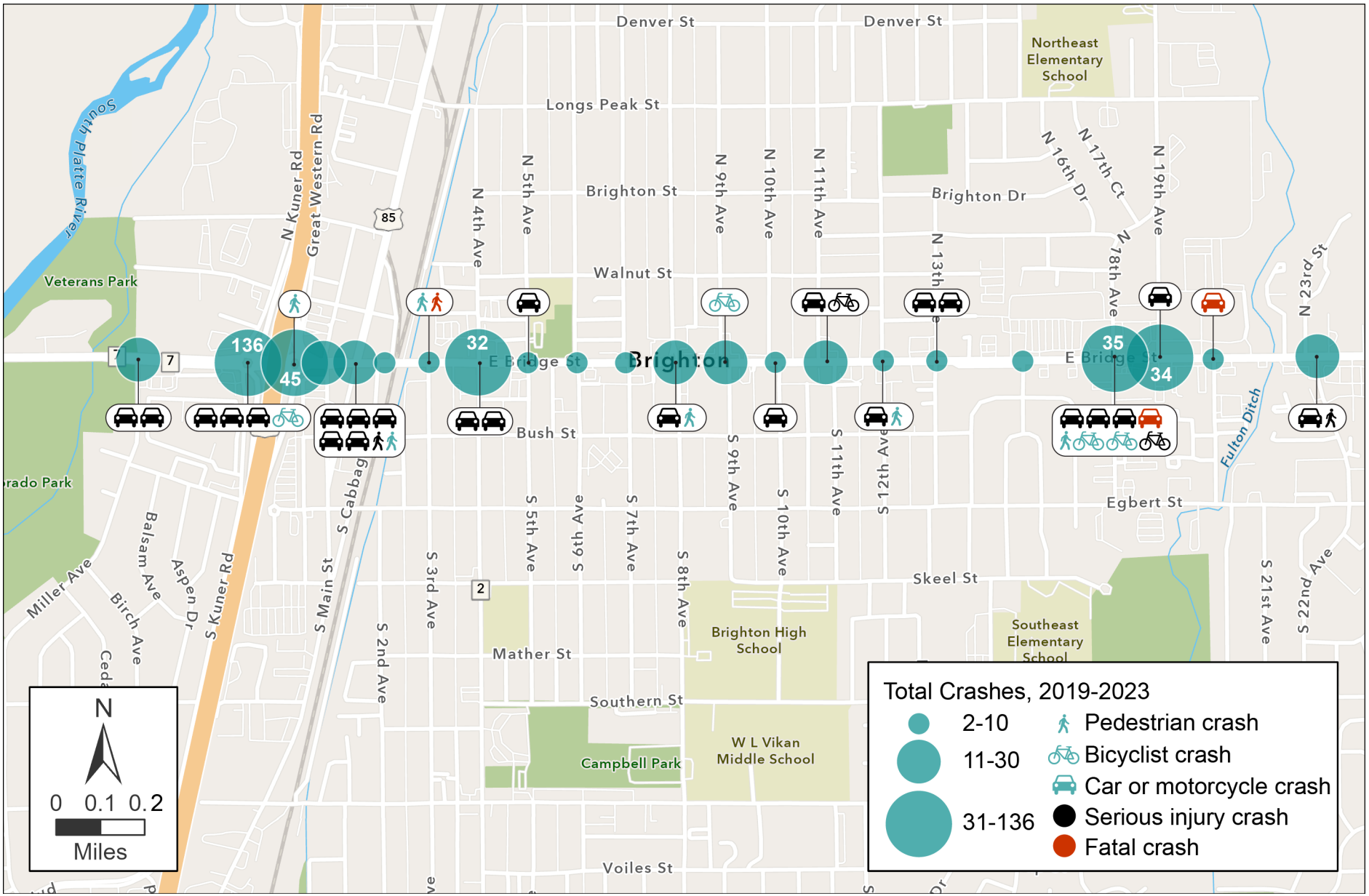


Figure 9. Crash Locations and Intersections

Next Steps

The project team will develop draft cross sections for Bridge Street based on feedback received from the steering community and the community during Phase One of public engagement. This phase of the project will also develop spot improvements at intersections along the corridor to address safety concerns.

The project team will return to the public during Phase Two of engagement in July and August of 2025 to collect feedback on each alternative and determine the preferred cross section for the corridor, then proceed with developing short, medium, and long-term project recommendations that the City can consider implementing after the plan is completed in Winter 2025-2026.

Stay updated on the project and upcoming input opportunities by visiting the project website.

Credit: Toole Design