

5. ENGAGEMENT AND COLLABORATION



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Incorporating public input from the Town of Highland residents plays an important role in shaping the Town’s Comprehensive Safety Action Plan. The engagement of the community in the planning process offers different benefits that extend beyond the confines of transportation planning. This inclusive approach enhances the overall quality and relevance of the safety plan and fosters a sense of community ownership and responsibility.

Public input catalyzes community awareness about transportation issues. It empowers residents to actively participate in discussions about safety concerns, infrastructure improvements, and overall transportation priorities. Community engagement not only promotes transparency in the planning process but also encourages a shared responsibility for the safety and efficiency of the transportation network.

Public involvement transcends the immediate scope of transportation planning, becoming a foundation for community engagement and collaboration. It empowers individuals to actively contribute to developing a safer and more responsive transportation system, fostering a shared vision for the future of the Town of Highland’s mobility infrastructure.

5.1 METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT

From October to late November, the Town conducted community engagement to better understand transportation safety challenges that people using roadways in the Town experienced. The Town of Highland, American Structurepoint, and sub-consultant Development Economic Finance Consulting, LLC (“DEF”) worked together to conduct several rounds of in-person public engagement to advertise the public survey.

Public engagement opportunities for the Comprehensive Safety Action Plan included the following components:

- Public engagement events were scheduled to gather information from residents and visitors attending these events. The Development Economic Finance Consulting team conducted public engagement at the following events:
 - Highland Public Safety Day/Community Car Show – October 5, 2024.
 - Highland Parks and Recreation Department Fall Craft Show and Vendor Fair – October 12, 2024.
- A survey was created on the platform SurveyMonkey.com to collect information from the public on the safety of the roads and intersections in the Town of Highland.



PUBLIC EVENTS AND PRESENTATIONS



317 TOTAL PUBLIC SURVEY RESPONSES



100+ PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPANTS

5.1.1 SURVEY

The consultant created an online survey to involve members of the public and stakeholder teams in creating the Town of Highland Safety Action Plan. The survey was created for people within the town and asked them questions about intersections/road safety issues for motorized and non-motorized users. Before being published, the survey was sent out to officials for approval. The survey was published on September 2 and remained open until November 8, 2024. The online survey was created using SurveyMonkey.com, and the link was shared on different social media platforms. The survey was also advertised on the town's website and in the newsletter.

The consultant created a Facebook advertisement to help inform the community of the Town of Highland about the project. The Facebook advertisement briefly introduced the project and distributed the survey link. The consultant team utilized Facebook's paid-for advertising service to ensure the link was placed into the Town of Highland residents' timelines. Facebook permits these ads to be "geo-fenced," meaning they are only inserted into Facebook users who live in the Town. This advertisement was created and distributed from American Structurepoint's Facebook page. The online survey received 317 total responses from all sources.

When the survey closed, the consultant team reviewed the SurveyMonkey results and identified key trends. The survey helped identify intersections/roadways that felt unsafe for drivers, bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit users and the primary reason for unsafety. Many locations mentioned by the public were also identified as High Injury Network segments or hotspot intersections through safety analysis. The survey also asked for demographic information to understand the backgrounds of the people responding to it. The following is a summary of the questions asked, and the answers submitted. **Appendix C** contains a more detailed report of the survey results.

The Town of Highland community comments highlight various issues related to intersections and roadways within the town.

- **Speeding:** Drivers frequently exceed speed limits, especially in residential areas and near schools, creating hazards for pedestrians and cyclists. Specific locations like Ridge Road and O'Day Drive are frequently mentioned as areas where speeding is a major issue.
- **Red Light Running:** Many drivers regularly run red lights, posing significant risks to both other drivers and pedestrians. Intersections with frequent red-light violations, such as Ridge Road and 45th Street, are dangerous.
- **Pedestrian Safety:** Few safe pedestrian crossings exist, especially in high-traffic areas. Major concerns include inadequate sidewalks, poorly lit intersections, and intersections where drivers fail to yield to pedestrians. Streets like Kleinman and areas near schools are identified as particularly hazardous.
- **Congestion and Traffic Flow:** Certain intersections and roadways are congested, particularly during rush hours, making them more dangerous for all users, including drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists. Intersections like the one at Meadows Park are mentioned for their high traffic flow and failure to address vehicle and pedestrian needs.
- **Pedestrian/Cyclist Infrastructure Needs:** Several responses call for installing pedestrian bridges or other dedicated safety features to allow pedestrians and cyclists to crossroads without risking themselves. These suggestions are made in response to the significant, dangerous intersections where cars and pedestrians frequently collide.

The key issues involve speeding vehicles, a lack of pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure (such as sidewalks, bike lanes, and crossing signals), poor road conditions, inadequate visibility, and unsafe intersections that fail to protect vulnerable road users. Addressing these issues could significantly improve safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers.

Figure 14: Safety Issue Types Perceived by Motorists in the Town of Highland, Indiana

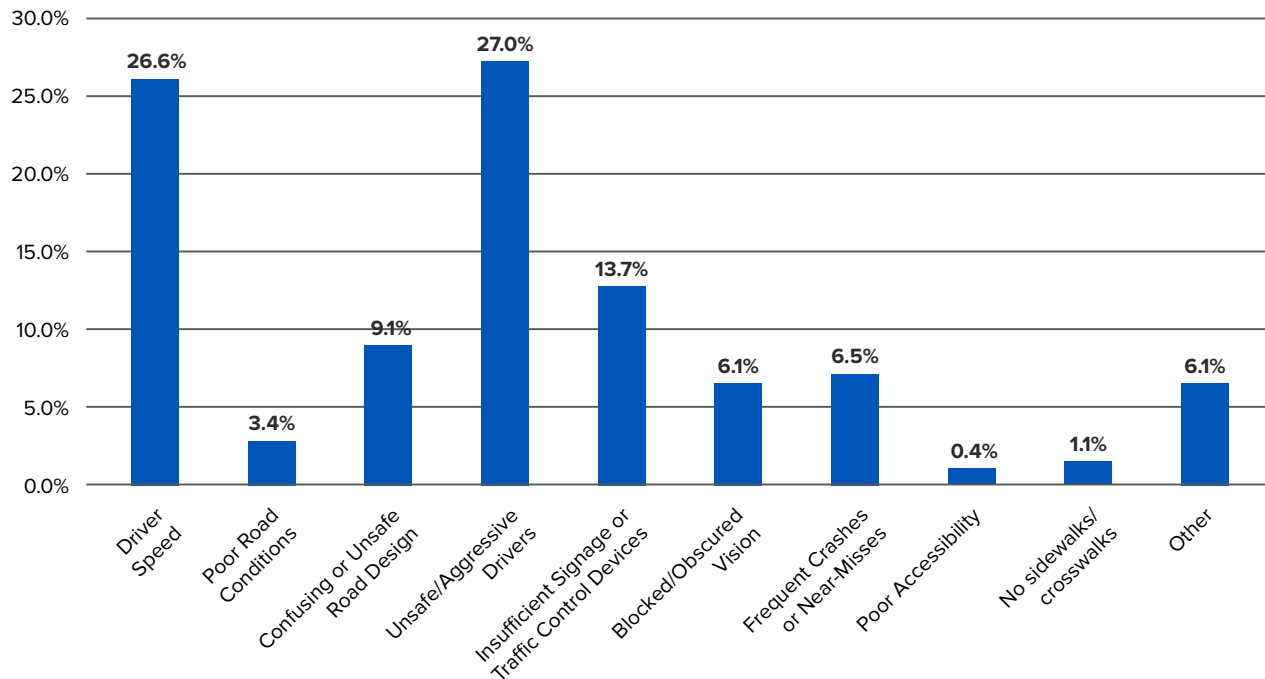


Figure 15: Safety Issue Types Perceived by Bicyclists/Pedestrians/Transit Users in the Town of Highland, Indiana

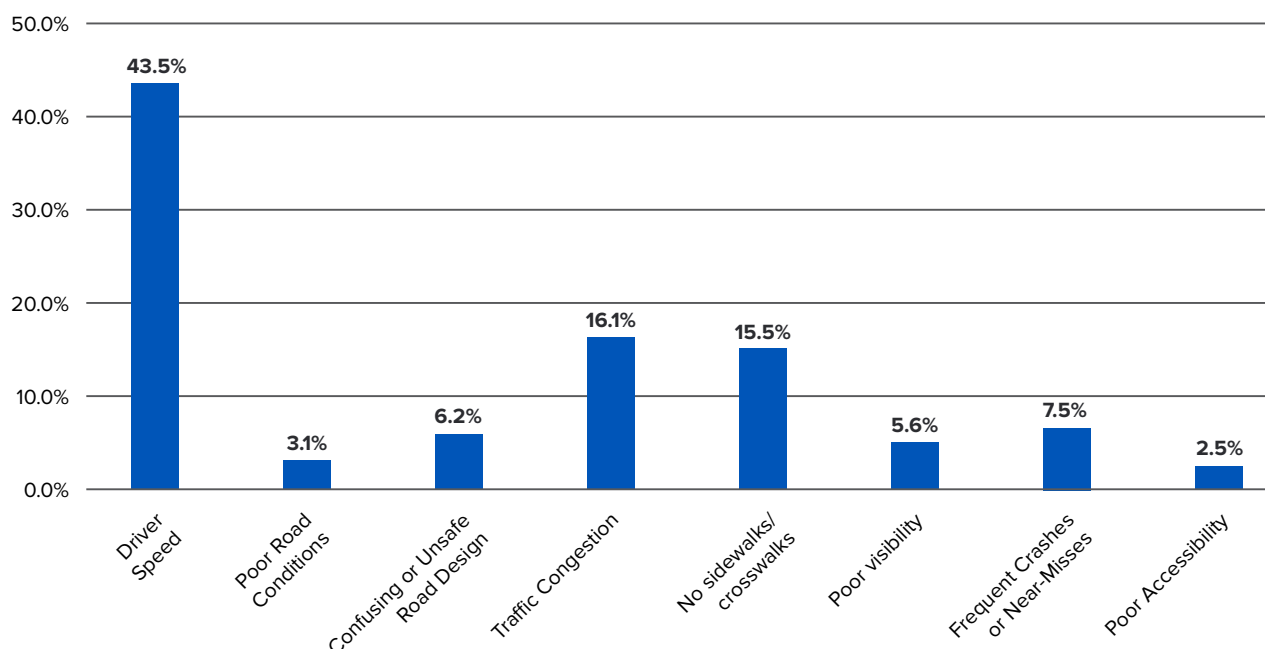


Figure 16: Unsafe Intersections Perceived by Motorists in the Town of Highland, Indiana



Figure 17: Unsafe Intersections Perceived by Bicyclists/Pedestrians in Highland, Indiana

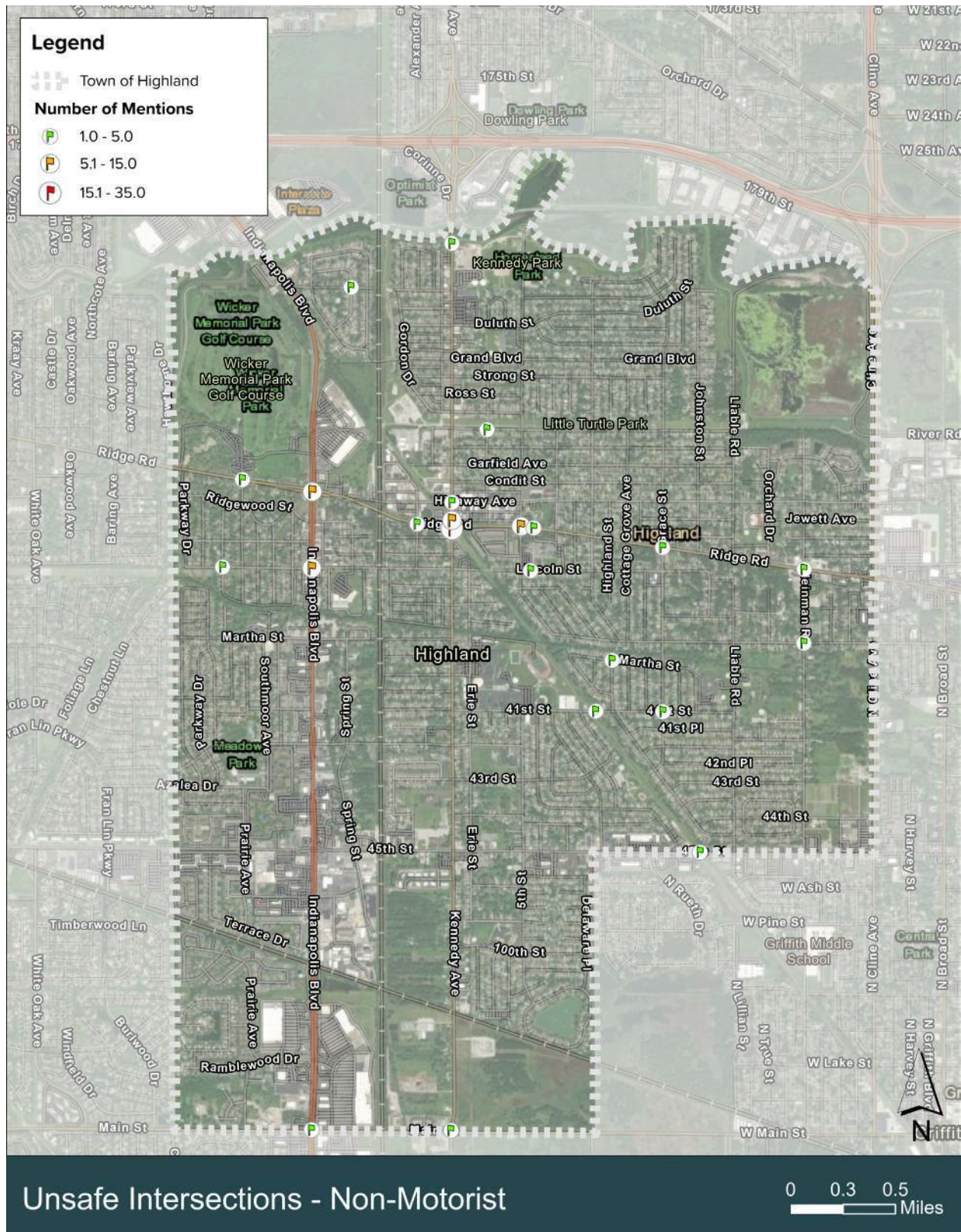


Figure 18: Unsafe Roadway Segments Perceived by Motorists in Highland, Indiana

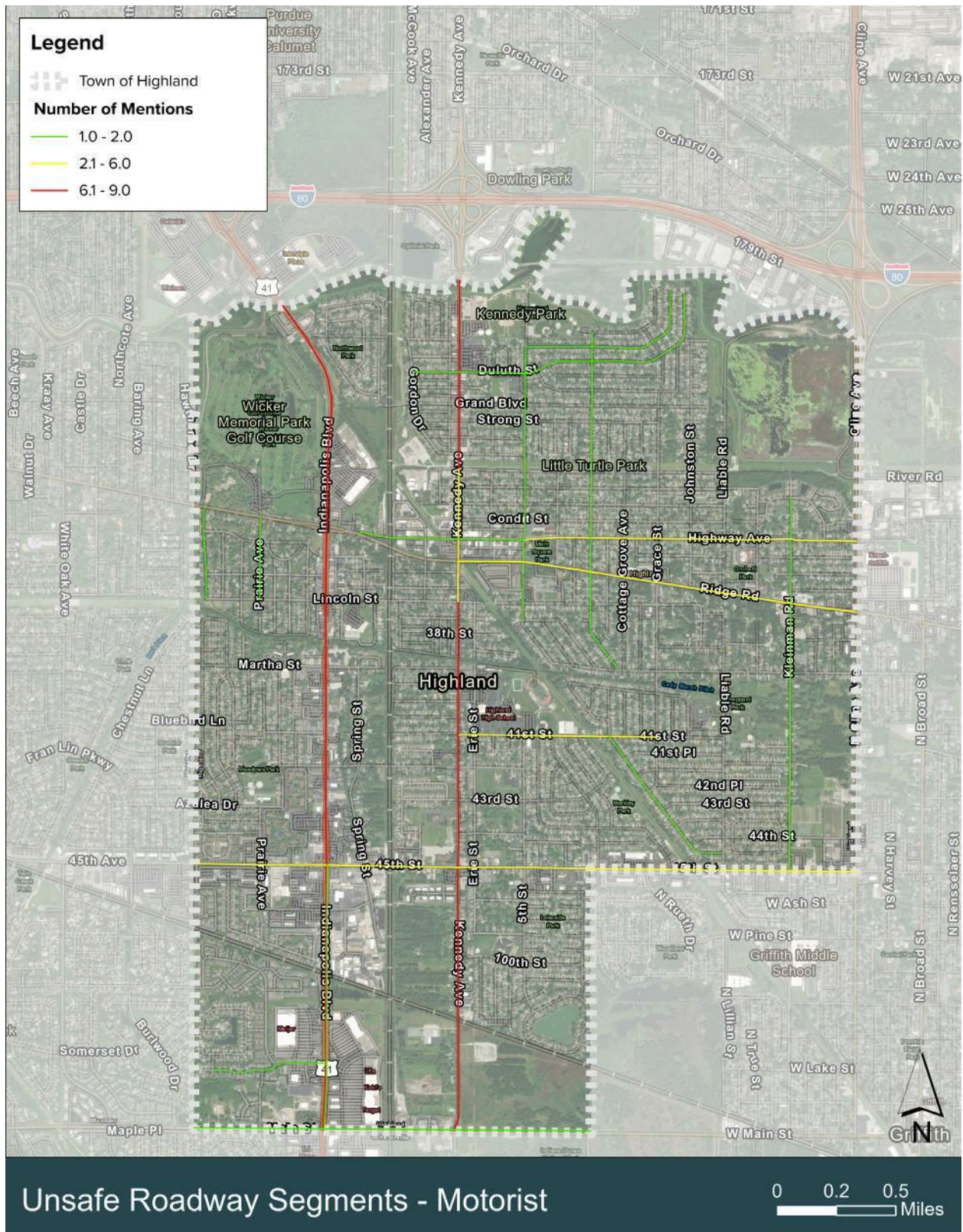
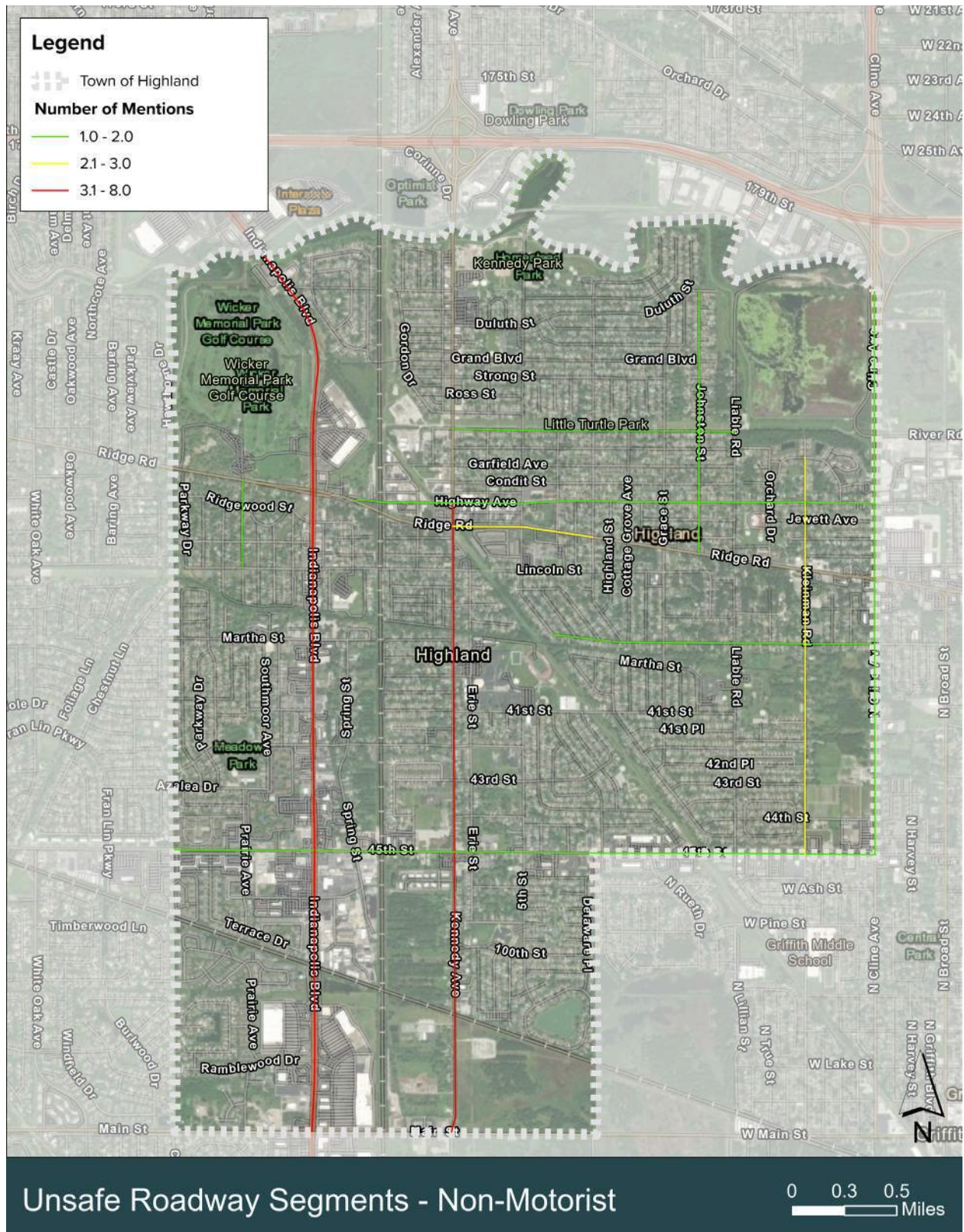


Figure 19: Unsafe Roadway Segments Perceived by Bicyclists and Pedestrians in Highland, Indiana



5.1.2 PUBLIC EVENTS

Highland Public Safety Day/Community Car Show – October 5, 2024.

DEF Consulting attended and participated in this Town of Highland-sponsored event in Downtown Highland. Representatives of DEF were available from 9:00 am through 3:00 pm for the entire event period. DEF distributed around 100 survey QR codes to the public and directly engaged with 55 and 60 individuals to discuss detailed safety issues to address and to identify the locations on the available maps with a color-coded sticker.

Figure 20: Highland Public Safety Day/Community Car Show – October 5, 2024. Source: Development Economic Finance Consulting.



Highland Parks & Recreation Department Fall Craft Show and Vendor Fair – October 12, 2024.

DEF attended and participated in this Highland Parks & Recreation Department-sponsored event at the Lincoln Center. The event included approximately 84 vendors of locally or regionally made crafts for purchase. DEF distributed around 80 survey QR codes to the public and directly engaged with 50 and 55 individuals to discuss detailed safety issues to address and to identify the locations on the available maps with a color-coded sticker.

Figure 21: Highland Parks & Recreation Department Fall Craft Show and Vendor Fair – October 12, 2024. Source: Development Economic Finance Consulting.



5.1.2.1 DETAILED COMMENTS SUMMARY

The number of direct interaction comments totaled 26. The topics addressed were identified under the following categories.

Safety Issue Level Categories:

- US 41 from Little Calumet River to 45th Street (north to south Corporate Limits), specifically at:
 - Ridge Road
 - Lincoln Street
 - Martha Street
 - Hart Road
 - 45th Street
 - Main Street
- Use of stop signs to control excess speeding
- Use of speedbumps (or alternative) speed control measures
- Kleinman Road speed (from Ridge Road to 45th Street): Alternative to Cline Avenue
- Liable Road speed (from 38th Place to 45th Street): Alternative to Cline Avenue
- Replacement of sidewalks in poor condition
- Continuity of sidewalks (especially on 45th Street and Main Street) / Accessibility safety issue
- Proper identification of crosswalks
- No roundabouts in the Town
- Bike path safety (crossings/location of traffic control buttons to ROW)

5.1.2.2 POTENTIAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The following policy recommendations were developed to address the comments recorded based on public engagement interactions and detailed discussions to identify safety issues and locations.

- Sidewalk Continuity and Conditions Assessment (for repair, replacement, and connectivity)
- Curb/Gutter Assessment (to address accessibility)
- Traffic Control Signage Assessment (effectiveness, applicability, and usefulness of traffic control signage)
- Traffic Control Signage Reflectiveness Assessment (determine replacement if necessary)
- Traffic Pavement Markings Assessment (effectiveness and applicability of pavement markings)
- Bike Path Vehicle Interactions Assessment (assess signage, pavement markings, controls and lighting)

5.2 HOW WAS PUBLIC INFORMATION USED?

The community identified intersections and roadways with safety concerns, which were analyzed and mapped using ArcGIS. This mapping exercise illustrates the precise locations of these safety issues. By pinpointing these problematic areas, the Town gained crucial insights into where to prioritize efforts in resolving road safety concerns.

This data serves as a roadmap for immediate action and facilitates identifying potential projects to address safety hazards for all road users, including drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users. With this information, the Town of Highland can strategically plan and execute initiatives that enhance safety and promote smoother traffic flow throughout the region.

5.3 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

To ensure that the concerns of all stakeholders were sufficiently addressed, the Town of Highland held additional meetings with various organizations and individuals to discuss the CSAP and its findings as well as to identify specific safety concerns in the Town. These meetings were held with the INDOT LaPorte District, NIRPC, the Town of Highland Parks & Recreation Department, and Richard Garza, a member of the Steering Committee and Highland resident. These meetings provided insight into planned studies and safety projects in progress, as well as specific and systemic safety concerns from the perspective of Highland citizens. Many of these stakeholders identified trail crossing, pedestrian crossing, and sidewalk interconnectivity as areas of concern that they wished to see addressed.

