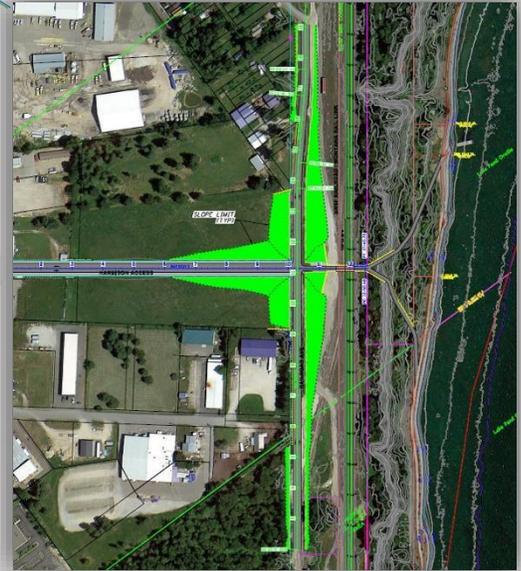


Lakeshore Connection Planning Project



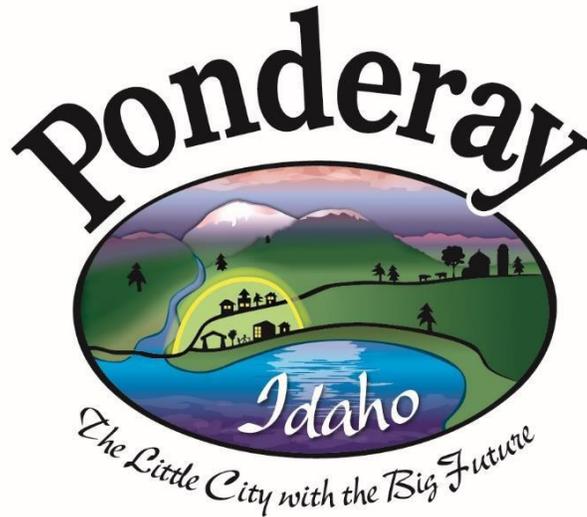
US DOT BUILD Transportation Discretionary Grant Application



Submitted by:
City of Ponderay, Idaho
288 Fourth Street
PO Box 500
Ponderay, ID 83852
(202) 265-5468



City of Ponderay
Idaho – USA
Lakeshore Connection Project



**US DOT BUILD Transportation Discretionary Grant Application
Lakeshore Connection Project Planning**

Type of Project: Public Transportation - Planning
U.S.C. Chapter 53, Title 49, D. Pedestrian Access and Walkways
Project Location: City of Ponderay, Bonner County, Idaho
Funding Amount Requested: \$ 1,399,786
Local Match: \$ 349,946
DUNS Number: 036419708
CAGE Code: 5EG03

<http://www.cityofponderay.org/> <http://pobtrail.org/>

City of Ponderay, Idaho Steve Geiger, Mayor
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ATTACHMENTS - <http://www.cityofponderay.org/2020-build-grant-lakeshore-connection-project/>

MAPS

ATTACHMENT A

Vicinity
Project Overview Study Area
Zone Map

TECHNICAL ANALYSIS FEASIBILITY STUDY REPORT

ATTACHMENT B

NON-FEDERAL COMMITMENTS

ATTACHMENT C

Letter of Match Commitment
City of Ponderay Resolution

LETTERS OF SUPPORT

ATTACHMENT D

United States Senator Mike Crapo	City of Sandpoint
United States Senator James E. Risch	City of Kootenai
United States Congressman Russ Fulcher	Greater Sandpoint Chamber of Commerce
Idaho State Senator Jim Woodward	Northside Fire District
Idaho State Representative Sage Dixon	Lake Pend Oreille School District #84
Idaho Transportation Department, District 1	Selkirks-Pend Orielle Transit Authority (SPOT)
Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, Brownfields Program	Friends of the Pend d'Oreille Trail
Local Highway Technical Assistance Council	Idaho Walk Bike Alliance
Bonner County Area Transportation Team	Idaho Operation Lifesaver
Bonner County Trail Mix	North Idaho Trails Coalition
Bonner County Economic Development Corporation	Montana Rail Link
Bonner General Health	BNSF Railway
	Kaniksu Land Trust

RESOURCE LINKS

[Pend d'Oreille Bay Trail Master Plan, 2015](#)
[New Mobility West, 2016, Quad Cities, Idaho Highway 2/200 Corridor](#)
[AECOM, Ponderay Undercrossing Technical Analysis Feasibility Study Report, 2017](#)
[AECOM, Ponderay Undercrossing Technical Analysis Land Capability Summary Report, 2015](#)
[Ponderay Sub Area Plan, 2017](#)
[Headwaters Economics, Benefit-Cost Analysis of the Ponderay Undercrossing, 2019 Update](#)
[Headwater Economics, Economic Diversification and Outdoor Recreation in Bonner County, 2018](#)

APPLICATION AT A GLANCE

Proposed Title:	Lakeshore Connection Planning Project
Geospatial Information:	48°17'57" N 116°32'07" W
County Demographics:	Population: 42,711 ¹ Median Household Income: \$48,710 ² Personal Per Capita Income: \$27,590 ³ Persons Below Poverty Level: 14.7% ⁴ Unemployment Rate March 2020: 3.4% ⁵
City Demographics:	Population: 1,179 ⁶ Persons Below Poverty Level: 20% ⁷
Congressional District:	Idaho 01
Economically Distressed:	2016 Per Capita Personal Income: 74.23% of U.S.
Special Considerations:	The project is located in a HUBZone
Project Classification:	Pedestrian Access and Walkways
Funding Request:	\$ 1,399,786
Matching Support:	\$ 349,946
Benefit to Cost:	N/A
Supporting Documentation:	http://www.cityofponderay.org/2020-build-grant-lakeshore-connection-project/

¹ American Community Survey, 2018 5-Year Estimates

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Idaho Department of Labor, Local Unemployment Statistics, 2020 Revised & Preliminary Data, https://lmi.idaho.gov/publications/2020/LAUS/2020_LaborForce.pdf

⁶ American Community Survey, 2018 5-Year Estimates

⁷ *Id.*

LAKESHORE CONNECTION PLANNING PROJECT
PROJECT NARRATIVE

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The City of Ponderay, Idaho, seeks \$1,399,786 in US Department of Transportation (DOT) BUILD grant funding matched with \$349,946 in local funds to the Lakeshore Connection Project. Sandwiched between the rugged Selkirk Mountains and picturesque Lake Pend Oreille in the Northern Idaho Panhandle, the City of Ponderay and neighboring communities of Kootenai and Sandpoint are poised to become major outdoor recreation destinations and regional economic engines. However, poor safety and connectivity along the lakefront and a lack of regional coordination on land use and transportation along the State Highway 200 (SH-200) corridor represent barriers to activating a multimodal network with the capacity to support the burgeoning local population and growing tourism industry. The Lakeshore Connection Planning Project will address these transportation challenges through:

- Design and engineering (100% level) of the Lakeshore Connector—a multimodal link that will provide safe, direct access from Ponderay to the existing Pend d’Oreille Bay Trail via a new complete street link to a new shared-use railroad undercrossing with frontage road upgrades;
- Preliminary design (30%) for multimodal upgrades to the local intersection and adjoining segment of SH-200, establishing a gateway to Ponderay.

Upon completion of the proposed planning project, the Lakeshore Connector will be shovel-ready and the preliminary design for upgrades to SH-200 corridor will tie the Lakeshore Connector construction into broader efforts to establish a multimodal network that balances the mobility needs of regional vehicle and freight traffic with the safety and access of local users. The resulting multimodal construction project will:

- Improve **safety** by preventing injuries and fatalities from pedestrians crossing the railroad tracks, establishing new pedestrian and bike-friendly facilities to popular destinations for recreation, and facilitating better emergency vehicle access to the lakeshore,
- Help maintain the City’s roads and trails in a **state of good repair** by constructing reliable, multimodal infrastructure that will optimize maintenance of the trail and street network and curtail overuse at the crowded Sandpoint lakeshore trailhead,
- Promote **economic competitiveness** and support **economic recovery** from the COVID-19 public health crisis by improving connectivity between Ponderay’s town center and the lakeshore shared use path and SH-200, which will foster the redevelopment of brownfields properties, support small business growth, and bolster the tourism economy,
- Enhance **environmental sustainability** by encouraging alternative travel modes for recreation and commuting among Sandpoint, Ponderay, and Kootenai,
- Boost **quality of life** by providing residents and visitors of Ponderay with direct access to the lakeshore—one of the community’s more cherished assets, and
- Advance **innovative technologies** such as the BEBO arch for the pedestrian underpass.

The planning project can begin immediately upon award, and US DOT BUILD grant funds will easily be obligated by September 30, 2020.

Transportation Challenges

Poor Connectivity and Mobility: A multi-modal gap severs Ponderay from the existing Pend d'Oreille Bay Trail that provides lakefront access and non-motorized connectivity to Kootenai and Sandpoint. Low- and middle-income residents are especially impacted by the lack of bike and pedestrian access to the City-owned lakeshore, which should be a major community asset. Lack of non-motorized connections between the communities prevents residents from commuting to jobs in neighboring towns by bike or by foot. While Ponderay residents have access to the Selkirks - Pend d'Oreille Transit system (SPOT), the lack of non-motorized connectivity to transit leads to underutilization.



Figure 1. Pend d'Oreille Bay Trail dead end

Unsafe Conditions: The lack of convenient access from Ponderay to the lakefront causes residents to cross the Montana Rail Link tracks, creating a major safety hazard. Ponderay anticipates that trespassing across the double tracks will increase, causing increased risk for injuries and fatalities. Not only do population projections indicate that will be more demand and pressure on existing access points to the lake, but as indoor activities continue to be curtailed by the slow reopening of the economy following COVID-19, more and more hikers are expected to flock to the trail to recreate while social distancing. In addition, there is currently no access for emergency vehicles from Ponderay directly to the Pend d'Oreille Bay Trail, which forces first responders to enter and egress from this segment of the trail by foot for incidents involving hikers, tubers, kayakers, and others. Further, the lack of trail access between cities pushes bicyclists and pedestrians into the narrow shoulders of SH-200, increasing the risk for vehicle-pedestrian and vehicle-bike collisions.



Figure 2. SH 200 in Ponderay as vehicles share road with cyclist on narrow shoulder

Barriers to Downtown Development: Ponderay – the “Little City with a Big Future” – currently lacks a cohesive downtown commercial district. Barriers to creating a vibrant downtown commercial district that ties into the trail network include poor walkability, the lack of direct connection to the waterfront, and environmental contamination of prime waterfront parcels. The City has room to grow, with 1,280 acres of undeveloped land within the City limits and environmental cleanup underway to ready waterfront parcels for redevelopment into a park, closely connected to a potential upland “main street” commercial area. As one of the more affordable locations in Bonner County to build a home or locate a business, the City’s population doubled from 2000 to 2010 and continues to grow. But without safe infrastructure to support a walkable downtown, Ponderay fails to capitalize on opportunities for small business attraction, tourism growth, and improved quality of life.

Solution to Transportation Challenges

Improved Connectivity and Mobility: The project will engineer and design a safe, convenient connection from the core of Ponderay to the Pend d'Oreille Bay Trail to include a new city street, a shared-use underpass, and upgrades to a frontage road. The new link will improve mobility and offer alternative modes of travel for commuting to Kootenai and Sandpoint when weather allows. Preliminary design for the access point to SH-200 will prioritize multimodal mobility.

Increased Safety: The design for the pedestrian undercrossing and fencing will eliminate the unsafe illegal trespass to get from the populated City center and residential areas to the City-owned shoreline property and the Pend d'Oreille Bay Trail. The undercrossing will also allow for entrance and egress of emergency vehicles. The shared use path will increase safety for bicyclists who are currently riding along busy SH-200 to avoid the circuitous existing bike paths. The project also includes planning for safety enhancements to SH-200 to include traffic calming measures and pedestrian and bike facilities.

Foundations for Downtown Development: This planning and design project is informed by local and regional land use planning to ensure that the new Lakeshore Connector and associated upgrades to SH-200 support economic development and attract new businesses to locate in Ponderay. In recent years, the City has secured over \$1 million in federal and state resources for environmental assessment and cleanup of the corridor of contaminated properties that prevent development and expansion of the recreational green space along the lakeshore. Non-motorized access to these City-owned properties will enable the City to develop a park and other shoreline amenities, which will spur outdoor recreation tourism and improve property values. Better non-motorized connections will promote infill development, catalyze transit-oriented development around the SPOT system, and attract a live-work-play labor force.



Figure 3. Preliminary design for Lakeshore Connector



Figure 4. Looking west from the project location, this conceptual design represents the development potential on the upside of the railroad tracks at the location of the proposed underpass (seen here in the bottom left), on city owned and private parcels in the area.

Project History

The Northern Pacific Railroad was built along the northwest shoreline of Lake Pend Oreille in 1896. From 1964 to 1975, and again in 1999 to 2011, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) spent nearly \$7.5 million on bank stabilization, installing rip rap along much of the shoreline through the project area to protect the railroad grade from flooding. This created the foundation for a rudimentary shoreline trail. For many years, this unofficial trail has been used by locals, even though it has traversed undeveloped private property and railroad right-of-way and involved dangerous access by crossing busy railroad tracks. Despite its limited and unsafe access, the trail became popular for walking, biking, jogging, watching wildlife, and reaching Lake Pend Oreille.

Since the 1980s, the cities of Sandpoint and Ponderay have been discussing opportunities for a safe, accessible public trail along this shoreline, anchored at the southern and northern ends by municipal parks. Planning for the trail corridor began in earnest in the mid-2000s and coincided with Idaho Department of Environmental Quality's (IDEQ) strategy for assessing and cleaning up contamination at historical sites within the trail corridor, including the large slag heap (aka Black Rock) at the site of the former Panhandle Smelting and Refining (PSRC) smelter that operated on the shores of the lake in Ponderay in the early 1900s. In 2006, following several decades of discussions between the cities of Sandpoint and Ponderay about a possible greenway and public parks on this stretch of lakeshore, Sandpoint's Mayor formed a broad-based committee of community leaders, residents, municipal officials, trail users, environmental interests, land-use planners, businesses, landowners, and government agencies. In 2008, members of the committee formed the Friends of Pend d'Oreille Bay Trail (Friends), which later organized as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

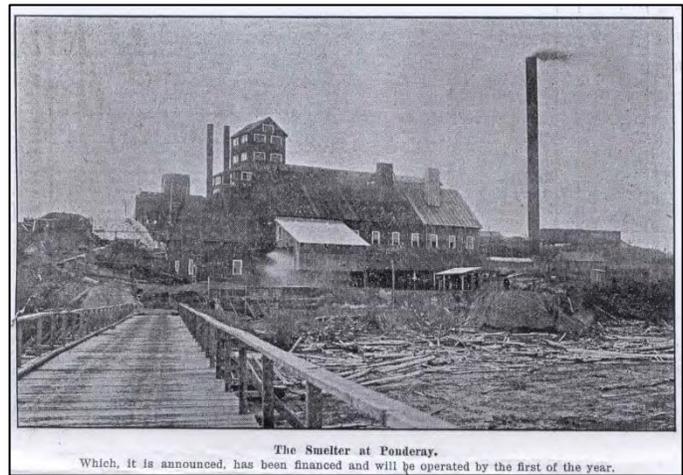


Figure 5. Panhandle Smelting and Refining (1908)

Also in 2006, the Friends secured the first of two technical assistance grants from the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program to engage the broader community in developing a trail concept plan. The two-year process involved many opportunities for public and stakeholder input including outreach events, surveys, open houses, and a comprehensive design workshop with more than 60 participants facilitated by the American Society of Landscape Architects, Idaho-Montana chapter. The result was the award-winning [Pend d'Oreille Bay Trail Concept Plan](#), published in 2010. Also, in 2010, the City of Ponderay partnered with USACE the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to host a community visioning workshop attended by nearly 80 citizens. The resulting plans and visions incorporated safe passage to the shoreline in Ponderay by way of a separated grade crossing.

On May 11, 2009, IDEQ received a \$650,000 EPA Brownfields Coalition Assessment grant in partnership with Kootenai, Ponderay, Sandpoint, and Bonner County to study the extent and nature

of contamination along the of the two-mile trail corridor on the northern shoreline of Lake Pend Oreille and resolve environmental barriers to redevelopment. Environmental assessments were undertaken on 19 properties and identified the need for cleanup at the site of the former PSRC. From 2011-2014, the Cities of Sandpoint and Ponderay made a series purchases to acquire four shoreline parcels along one mile of trail corridor, from Sandpoint's water treatment plant and the historic Humbird Mill ruins in the south up toward Black Rock. Inspired by this major step toward creating lakefront access, the Friends, IDEQ and the Trust for Public Land funded a Land Capability Report and a [Technical Analysis Feasibility Study](#) by AECOM to determine the feasibility of building a railroad undercrossing in Ponderay. The studies indicated the proposed location is suitable for a grade- separated trail crossing under the Montana Rail Link Corridor.

In 2014, the Friends hired Harmony Design and Engineering to develop a [Master Trail and Interpretive Plan for the Pend d'Oreille Bay Trail](#), building upon the earlier Concept Plan to provide preliminary design and cost estimates. This plan was developed with extensive community engagement and in concert with the City's [Ponderay Village Sub Area Plan](#), which developed special zoning codes to address the changes in neighborhoods likely to be affected by the construction of a railroad undercrossing and the planned brownfields cleanup. Private property owners, municipalities, the local museum, and state and federal agencies all identified a safe connection between Ponderay and the lakeshore trail as a top community priority. In 2016, the Trust for Public Land awarded \$240,000 to the City of Ponderay for acquisition of property on the upland side of the tracks, opposite the City's waterfront property, for the future railroad undercrossing access corridor. AECOM then examined four different alternatives for the undercrossing, consulted with Montana Rail Link, and developed preliminary engineering designs and cost estimates for three of those alternatives. In July 2019, Headwaters Economics conducted a [preliminary Benefit-Cost Analysis](#) (BCA) of the planned Lakeshore Connector construction, which using a conservative methodology and available data shows a positive cost-benefit ratio of 1.84.



Figure 6. Public input for trail master plan

This project has been bolstered by regional coordination on SH-200 transportation investment, including a 2016 [U.S. 2/SH-200 Transportation Corridor Study](#) (SH-200 Corridor Study) conducted by New Mobility West with the communities of Dover, Kootenai, Ponderay and Sandpoint. This study identified the need for the undercrossing and will guide the preliminary design component for multimodal upgrades to the local SH-200 segment and intersection.

Brownfields cleanup efforts on the contaminated parcels in the project area have also advanced. In the spring of 2019, the City of Ponderay was awarded an \$800,000 EPA Brownfields Multipurpose grant to conduct four Phase I and one Phase II Environmental Site Assessments and clean up the PSRC site, including Black Rock on the shoreline. IDEQ is currently developing options and costs for the cleanup on public and private property. With extensive community

engagement, preliminary design and engineering, regional coordination, and environmental remediation in place, US DOT BUILD funds will advance the Lakeshore Connection Planning Project toward construction.

Project Context & Benefit to Rural Areas

The Lakeshore Connection Planning Project is a key component of regional efforts to boost tourism and livability while balancing freight and vehicle mobility in the rural communities of Sandpoint, Ponderay, and Kootenai. Bonner County is characterized by its vibrant small towns, countryside, mountains, lakes, and rivers. Investments in trails and outdoor recreation will contribute to the region’s collective efforts to sustain a diverse rural economy through a strong tourism sector, which in turn fuels the area’s ability to recruit and retain businesses and skilled employees in other sectors such as advanced manufacturing, aerospace, and software.

The planning project is informed by the [SH-200 Corridor Study](#) recommendations for context-sensitive corridor planning that designates segments of SH-200 for highway function (higher vehicle speeds, infrequent crossings, parallel pathways), transition zone (traffic-calming, landscape medians to provide beauty and refuge), and street function (slower vehicle speeds, permeable corridor, platform for development and reinvestment). This project will advance the rural communities of Sandpoint, Ponderay, and Kootenai toward realization of a shared-use network with distinctive community gateways, flourishing commercial cores, high walkability and bike-ability, optimal freight mobility, safe railroad interfaces, accessible transit, efficient stormwater management, easy access to local businesses, and safer intersections with SH-200.



Figure 7. Rural communities surrounding Lake Pend Oreille

Statement of Work

With US DOT BUILD funds and local match, the City of Ponderay will procure an engineering and design professional and an environmental specialist to complete design and engineering (100% level) for the Lakeshore Connector (new street construction, underpass construction, and frontage road upgrades), as well as to complete preliminary design (30% level) for the associated Highway 200 Intersection and Multimodal Improvements. The City of Ponderay will engage the Local Highway Technical Assistance Council (LHTAC) to administer the grant and the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) Project Engineer to ensure compliance with all state permitting and design requirements. See Section [V.a\) Project Schedule](#) for a detailed project timeline.

II. PROJECT LOCATION

Geospatial Information: 48°17'57" N, 116°32'07" W



Figure 8. Project Map (See Attachment A. Project Maps for more detail)

The City of Ponderay is a rural community of approximately 1,179 residents located in Bonner County in the Northern Idaho Panhandle between the states of Montana and Washington. Bonner County has a higher poverty rate (14.7%) and lower median income (\$48,710) than the State of Idaho (13.8%; \$53,089) and the United States (14.1% poverty; \$60,293). According to the U. S. Economic Development Administration, Bonner County has met the “Area Distress” criteria—based on unemployment rate (1% or more above the national rate) and per capita income (less than or equal to 80% of the national average)—every decade since 1960. The project will primarily impact Bonner County Census Tracts 9502 and 9503 (a federally designated Opportunity Zone).

Ponderay sits at the intersection of the north-south U.S. 95/U.S. 2 corridor that connects the Pacific Northwest with the British Columbia and Alberta provinces in Canada and the SH-200 east-west highway that connects the regional economies of the Pacific Northwest and Northern Rockies with a freight route that avoids major mountain passes. SH-200 is a national scenic byway (named the Pend Oreille Scenic Byway). It travels along the north side of Lake Pend Oreille and the Clark Fork River between the Sandpoint area and the Montana border, where it continues as Montana Highway 200. The Montana Rail Link follows SH-200 from the Montana border to an interchange with BNSF in Sandpoint and has trackage rights on the BNSF mainline to Spokane, WA.

The project area includes SH-200 as it runs parallel to the Lake Pend Oreille shoreline from the Sand Creek Byway intersection to the south to the signalized intersection with Kootenai Cutoff Road to the north. The proposed new street construction will connect new city street from a SH-200 frontage road to a new bike and pedestrian underpass that will lead to the shoreline trail. (See Attachment A. Maps.)

III. GRANT FUNDS, SOURCES, AND USES OF ALL PROJECT FUNDING

A.) Project Costs: The total project cost for the Lakeshore Connection Planning Project is **\$1,749,732**, as outlined in item E, Budget, below.

B.) Source and Amount for All Funds:

Source	Amount	Percentage	Status
BUILD Planning	\$ 1,399,786	80%	Pending
Local option tax	\$ 349,946	20%	Committed
Total Project	\$1,749,732	100%	

C.) Non-Federal Funding Commitments:

The City has committed \$ 349,946 in non-federal match funds toward the completion of the design and engineering of the Lakeshore Connector from its 1% local option sales tax, which passed by a supermajority in the fall of 2019. (Please see *Attachment C. Non-Federal Commitments.*) This matching commitment represents a significant endorsement and prioritization of this project from the community and from the City Council.

The City of Ponderay’s annual budget has historically been just over \$1 million per year, with property taxes generating the majority of revenues. While Ponderay is a retail hub—home to Wal-Mart, Home Depot and car dealerships—very little sales tax revenue was returned to the community prior to the passage of the local option tax, as state sales tax distribution is determined by population. Ponderay sends between \$30,000 and \$40,000 per day in sales tax revenue to the State Capitol yet gets back only 4 days in produced revenue for the entire year. (This year the revenue that is returned from the State is a little less than \$120,000.) The City’s bed tax is its other substantial source of revenue; the State of Idaho allows resort cities with populations of less than \$10,000 to levy additional sales taxes over and above the state’s sales tax if approved by 60% of the City’s voters. Ponderay is considered a resort City in Idaho because of the nearby Schweitzer Mountain Resort ski area and Lake Pend Oreille (to which it currently has no access). The City’s “bed tax” is a sales tax on lodging. The City’s voters increased the City’s bed tax in November 2017 from 5% to 7%; while this increase generated a total of \$290,141 in bed tax revenues 2019, the 2020 bed tax revenue is anticipated to drop dramatically due to the impacts of COVID-19 on the local hospitality industry.

The City has opted to provide the full matching funds for the project from the local option sales tax, which the community passed to help advance critical infrastructure projects like the Lakeshore Connection Planning Project. The match will be applied only toward the Lakeshore Connector engineering and design portion of the project, for which City Council sought the match approval.

The financial realities of the City’s low property tax base, outflow of sales tax to the rest of the state, and budget impacts from COVID-19 underscore the need for federal funds to allow the City to establish safe access to the lakefront. These realities also highlight how important this project is to the economic health of the community that the City is willing to offer \$349,946 in match.

D.) BUILD Project Budget

Activity	DOT BUILD (80%)	Non-Federal (20%)	Other Federal (0%)	Total (100%)
Lakeshore Connector (Complete Street, Underpass, & Frontage Road Upgrades)				
Design & Engineering (100% level)	\$997,401	\$ 333,599	\$0	\$1,331,000
Idaho Transportation Department Project Engineer (0.4%)	\$3,990	\$1,334	\$0	\$5,324
Local Highway Technical Assistance (4.5%)	\$44,883	\$15,012	\$0	\$59,895
Subtotal Lakeshore Connector	\$1,046,273	\$349,946	\$0	\$1,396,219
Highway 200 Intersection and Multi-Modal improvements				
Survey & Mapping	\$110,000	\$0	\$0	\$110,000
Preliminary Design (30% level)	\$177,000	\$0	\$0	\$177,000
Environmental	\$10,000	\$0	\$0	\$10,000
Materials/Specs/Reports	\$40,000	\$0	\$0	\$40,000
Idaho Transportation Department Project Engineer (0.4%)	\$1,348	\$0	\$0	\$1,348
Local Highway Technical Assistance (4.5%)	\$15,165	\$0	\$0	\$15,165
Subtotal Highway 200 Intersection and Multi-Modal improvements	\$353,513	\$0	\$0	\$353,513
<u>PROJECT TOTAL</u>	\$1,399,786	\$349,946	\$0	\$1,749,732

Estimate sources:

The planning level estimate of probable cost for the Lakeshore Connector project was derived from a recent technical analysis of recent project bidding results and project information of historical data obtained from both the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) and the Local Highway Technical Assistance Council (LHTAC).

Costs for the SH-200 preliminary design activities are based upon a 2020 HMM Engineering estimate. Project administration costs were estimated by ITD and LHTAC.

IV. SELECTION CRITERIA

(1) Primary Selection Criteria

A.) Safety:

Trespassing: The Lakeshore Connection Planning Project will improve safety and prevent potential injury or death of residents and visitors who trespass across the double set of Montana Rail Link railroad tracks to access the lakeshore in Ponderay by constructing a pedestrian-only underpass to connect a new street from Ponderay to the lakeshore. For many years, people have been crossing the tracks in Ponderay’s oldest neighborhood, creating a well-worn path from frequent historic use that leads from the end of Cedar Street, across the track, and down to the lake. A recent summer count of rail crossing by the Friends of the Pend d’Oreille Bay Trail, using a motion-sensor camera set up along the footpath, recorded 260 trespassers in a two-week period in late June. Trespassers were of all ages and included people with bikes, dogs, inner tubes, coolers and kayaks.

High train speeds, blind curves and train noise echoing off the lake and mountains make it difficult to gauge a train’s proximity and extremely dangerous for trespassers in the project area. Trains can take a mile or more to come to a complete stop. Even if the engineer sees an oncoming trespasser, they are likely unable to stop in time. Walking on the ballasts makes fleeing oncoming trains difficult and walking close to the tracks is also dangerous because the train cars themselves overhand the tracks by at least three feet.

Montana Rail Link reports that an average of 24 trains per day travel on the double set of tracks through Ponderay and Kootenai, heading both directions, with speeds between 20 and 60 miles per hour. The Idaho Statewide Rail Plan projects a 61% increase in trains per day through the project area by the year 2040; this heavy train flow will leave very limited capacity to accommodate maintenance and recover from incidents. This project area is just a few miles north of one of the busiest stretches of Northwest rail lines. In Sandpoint, BNSF’s mainline traveling east from the rail hub in Spokane, WA, toward the Midwest track merges with Montana Rail Link, creating a bottleneck of multiple tracks merging into a single track to cross Lake Pend Oreille. An average of 60 trains per day move through this area, and since only one train can cross at a time, trains are often staged, leaving them idling and blocking local roadways while waiting to cross. The staging situation adds to the safety problem in that trespassers may not clear a stopped train before it quietly moves and gets up to speed. BNSF is currently underway with construction of a parallel bridge



Figure 9. Images of trespassers captured on motion sensor camera

to accommodate increased train traffic and decrease delays. When completed, trains would run in both directions across the bridges, reducing the need for engineers to slow down or stop as they wait for clearance to cross. As train flow increases, trespassers on the rail tracks may face higher risk for injury or death.

According to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), trespassing on railroad property is the leading cause of rail-related deaths, and the numbers are increasing. In just the past decade in Bonner County, there have been a total of ten railroad crossing incidents (including vehicular incidents) involving a total of 30 people and resulting in property damage, as well as four incidents of injury (ranging in severity) and an additional four incidents of fatality. The fatalities include a 19-year-old woman struck and killed in 2013 and a 23-year-old man struck and killed in 2016, both on the BNSF tracks north of Ponderay. Just over 20 years ago, a 37-year-old man on foot was struck and killed on the tracks in the project area in Ponderay; this occurred just three years after a tragic incident of a Sandpoint teenager racing on foot to beat a freight train across the tracks at Whiskey Jack Road and SH- 200, four miles east of Sandpoint. While the Cities have worked with Montana Rail Link and BNSF to install gates, flashing signals, and other safety features, illegal trespassing will continue to worsen on the segment of double tracks adjoining Cedar Street, risking injuries and fatalities, until the City addresses the need for a direct, non-motorized connection to the lakeshore in Ponderay. While the preliminary BCA performed by Headwaters Economics did not monetize the safety benefits from reduced risk for pedestrian injury and death, these benefits of a future construction project are anticipated to be positive and significant.



Figure 10. Photo from Sandpoint Magazine article, [“Danger on the Rails”](#)

Emergency Access: People also frequently access the lake and shoreline trail from a former temporary at-grade crossing that was built by the USACE to construct the bank stabilization in 2004. While the crossing is closed to vehicular traffic, this is the route favored by trespassing bicyclists and by Northside Fire District, which responds to emergencies on the Pend d’Oreille Bay Trail from this location by foot due to lack of direct access for emergency vehicle. Responding to emergencies on foot is extremely time consuming because of the difficulties in locating incidents in the vicinity. Mobile pumps must be carried across the tracks to the location of a fire, or a hose must be extended across the railroad tracks, making fire extinguishing very difficult. Like trespassers, emergency responders risk injury or death when walking across the uneven and coarse ballast.

In certain emergencies, Bonner County EMS will send a UTV (utility task vehicle) or brush truck from Sandpoint up the length of the trail, but this response takes significantly longer than if the Fire District were to have close access with a grade-separated crossing. The local Fire Chief has stated response times could be reduced by upwards of ten minutes with the ability to access the trail with emergency vehicles—ten minutes that could be a matter of life or death.

The proposed design for the undercrossing would be large enough to accommodate emergency vehicles, and emergency personnel would be equipped with keys for the barrier that otherwise

would prevent vehicles from accessing the shoreline trail. While non-emergency vehicles will be blocked from the lakeshore, people on foot or bikes will be directed with fencing and signage to the undercrossing for safe passage to the shoreline. A grade-separated crossing in Ponderay will provide emergency service personnel with a safe and efficient means of accessing the shoreline to respond to accidents, injuries, fire and other emergencies.

SH-200 Safety: The lack of trail access pushes bicyclists and pedestrians into the narrow shoulders of SH-200 where the speed limit is 45 mph, and shoulder widths range from 2” to 10” with deep swale ditches. The annual average daily traffic (AADT) count on the busy stretch of SH-200, mile post 30.64, in Ponderay in 2017 was 10,000. Not only will the direct connection to the trail reduce unsafe travel down the shoulders of SH-200, but the preliminary design for multimodal and intersection upgrades will prioritize the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists.

Health Benefits: Public health research demonstrates that living closer to trails is associated with increased physical activity, which translates into lower mortality rates and lower health care costs for a community. According to County Health Rankings data, 22% of Bonner County residents are currently inactive. Using the World Health Organization’s [Health Economics Analysis Tool](#), the [preliminary BCA](#) for the Lakeshore Connection estimates that the value of the expected mortality risk reduction and reduced health care expenses associated with 131 residents walking three additional miles per week (the length of a roundtrip on the Pend d’Oreille Bay Trail), is \$1,270,000 per year. The net present value of these benefits over 20 years is \$12.3 million. This figure is likely a significant underestimate because it only accounts for a conservative assessment of mortality risk reductions for Ponderay residents, while the project will inspire residents from other neighboring communities to increase their physical activity, as well.



Figure 11. Trail users

B.) State of Good Repair

The Lakeshore Connection Planning Project will advance construction of reliable, multimodal infrastructure that will optimize maintenance of local street networks and the existing Pend d’Oreille Bay Trail. The project will also help to curtail overuse at the crowded Sandpoint lakeshore trailhead. Recent years have seen steady population growth and an uptick in outdoor recreation tourism in the area, leading to crowds at the only legal access to the trail in the City of Sandpoint, approximately three miles by car from Ponderay. The COVID-19 public health crisis has generated even more trail traffic, as residents and visitors seek past-times that allow for proper social distancing. Even as the economy and local businesses reopen, outdoor activity will remain a safer alternative to crowded indoor environments. Maintenance of the private street that accesses the public trailhead in Sandpoint is managed by a private developer of condos near the entrance; however, once public use reaches a certain threshold, maintenance duties will be passed on to the city. Creating safe, legal, direct access to the trail in Ponderay will help to ease the crowding at the Sandpoint trailhead and allow the existing trail street network to operate at a full performance level. The planning project will include a trail maintenance plan that leverages public-private partnership and optimizes efficiency through interjurisdictional coordination.

The non-motorized connection from Ponderay to the neighboring communities of Kootenai and Sandpoint will help to encourage mode shift from single-occupancy vehicles (SOVs) to walking and biking when weather allows. This mode shift will reduce maintenance costs for the street network relative no-build alternative. Enhanced bike and pedestrian safety and connectivity and efforts to promote infill development are expected to result in increased transit use of the SPOT bus, which is currently an underutilized asset.

Finally, the SH-200 preliminary designs will consider impacts of intersection and multimodal upgrades on state of good repair for the regional road system, seeking to identify best alternatives for upgrades that reduce life-cycle costs and increase non-motorized mode share for short-trips.

C.) Economic Competitiveness

As the commercial core of Bonner County and the gateway to Schweitzer Mountain skiing, hunting, fishing, and rail tours, the City of Ponderay has strong potential for economic growth. The Lakeshore Connection Planning Project will advance the activation of a multimodal network along Lake Pend Oreille that will attract new and relocating businesses, create jobs, spur Opportunity Zone investment, enhance property values, grow tax revenues, and promote recovery from the COVID-19 economic dislocation. Construction of a downtown street and undercrossing will combine with SH-200 corridor planning and the recently funded lakefront brownfields cleanup to create the foundations of a vibrant town center connected to the waterfront and neighboring communities.

Outdoor Recreation Tourism: Outdoor recreation tourism is a major economic driver for the Bonner County area and for the State of Idaho, where 79% of citizens participate in outdoor recreation each year. Investing in outdoor infrastructure attracts employers and active workforces, which create the building blocks for thriving local economies. According to a 2017 Idaho Travel Report prepared for Idaho Commerce, direct spending on tourism in Bonner County was \$130 million in 2017, up 8.1% from the year 2016. This spending generated \$40 million in earnings, \$12.3 million in taxes, and 1,880 jobs (representing 8.4% of the economy) in Bonner County in 2017. The Lakeshore Connection Planning Project will help Ponderay to capitalize on its existing tourism-related infrastructure, including lodging, restaurants, gear shops, and charter fishing and guide services. While the Schweitzer Mountain Ski Resort provides a strong draw for winter tourism, the lack of non-motorized public access to the lake and the underutilized lakefront brownfields properties have prevented Ponderay from further leveraging its outdoor assets into a most robust, all-season economic engine. The Lakeshore Connector will spur spending at Ponderay’s lodging, restaurants, and shops, as day-trippers and overnight visitors eat and explore after visiting the trail.



Figure 12. View from Schweitzer Mountain Ski Resort

Transforming the Pend d’Oreille Bay Trail from a dead-end trail into a through trail will increase trail use by an estimated 133% or approximately 219 users per day in the summer and 83 per day in the winter who might access the trail from Ponderay, passing through its planned commercial corridor. A 2018 [Economic Diversification and Outdoor Recreation in Bonner County](#) report

estimates that investing in the local trail system could result in up to \$4.5 million in new annual spending by visitors, supporting up to 72 new jobs and \$1.6 million in earnings.

Commercial District and Brownfield Redevelopment: Ponderay has integrated the Lakeshore Connection Planning Project with the brownfields reuse planning and the [Ponderay Village Subarea Plan](#) to ensure that the new street and underpass will connect into the street grid in a way that fosters the development of a walkable commercial district adjoined by greenspace areas, transformed from former brownfields. This lakefront access, in combination street grid upgrades and land use changes from the Subarea Plan, will unlock the potential for infill development of the neighborhood and town center for historic Ponderay, increasing economic opportunities for small businesses and entrepreneurs. The project will leverage federal, state, and local investment in the lakefront brownfield redevelopment, as well as private investment in housing development.



Figure 13. A potential concept for future development in the project area;
Source: Ponderay Village Subarea Plan

Recruitment Value: Non-motorized public access to the waterfront will help to improve Ponderay’s ability to recruit businesses and talent, strengthening local industries and grow family-sustaining jobs. A 2015 [economic study of Bonner County](#) found that despite recessions and the loss of large employers such as mega-retailer Coldwater Creek, which was based in Kootenai, the economy has been resilient with steady growth. The report traces the resiliency of the local economy to the excellent quality of life, which helps support diverse industries through attracting and retaining a quality labor force. The report concluded, “Many businesses are in Bonner County because their leadership is committed to the community and its high quality of life. ... Although some disadvantages like distance to markets cannot be changed, the area can shore up its strengths like quality of life and existing breadth of employers to ensure ongoing economic success.” Ponderay and Kootenai are two of the more affordable communities for people to live in Bonner County, but they lack easy access to outdoor amenities that other areas in Bonner County enjoy—Walk Score (a popular real estate rating system) rates Ponderay as car-dependent with a score of

23/100. Improvements to walkability and access to the lake will help to ensure the economic resiliency of Ponderay. A resilient economy is especially important in light of the recent impacts of the COVID-19 public health crisis.

Property Values: Currently, homes in Ponderay lack safe, legal access to the nearby Lake Pend Oreille and to the terminus of the Pend d’Oreille Bay Trail. By providing access to the trail and lakefront, the Lakeshore Connector is expected to benefit local property values. Numerous peer-reviewed analyses demonstrate the value of proximity to trails and waterfront for homeowners. Using the average price premium from four studies, the [preliminary BCA](#) for the Lakeshore Connector estimates that the underpass will increase the median home value by 8.5%. Using the median home value of \$85,365 and 458 total housing units, this translates into a total one-time increase in value of \$2.7 million, allocated in the analysis across three years starting in project Year 3. In addition to providing lakefront access to the parcels on the northeast side of the tracks, the underpass will also provide access to five currently inaccessible properties, two of which are owned by the City of Ponderay and three of which are privately owned. In an appraisal conducted for a different section of land used for the Pend d’Oreille Bay Trail, analysts reviewed real estate transactions in the inland northwest for which access to the property was eliminated. Based upon a nearby appraisal of the value of lakefront access to similar properties, the BCA estimates that lakefront access will add \$630,727 to the value of the private properties, presently accessed at \$586,893. The preliminary BCA estimate for the net present value of the total property value benefits to housing and the inaccessible properties is \$3.2 million over the life of the project.

Transportation Options: The project will support enhanced transportation options, offering a reliable means of transportation for short distance trips that cuts fuel expenses and emissions. Establishing a Pend d’Oreille Bay Trailhead with an undercrossing in Ponderay will afford commuters between the Ponderay/Kootenai and Sandpoint communities with a healthy and cheap alternative mode to reach their place of work. Pedestrian and bike safety improvements will also help to encourage transit use by providing safe options for the “last mile.”

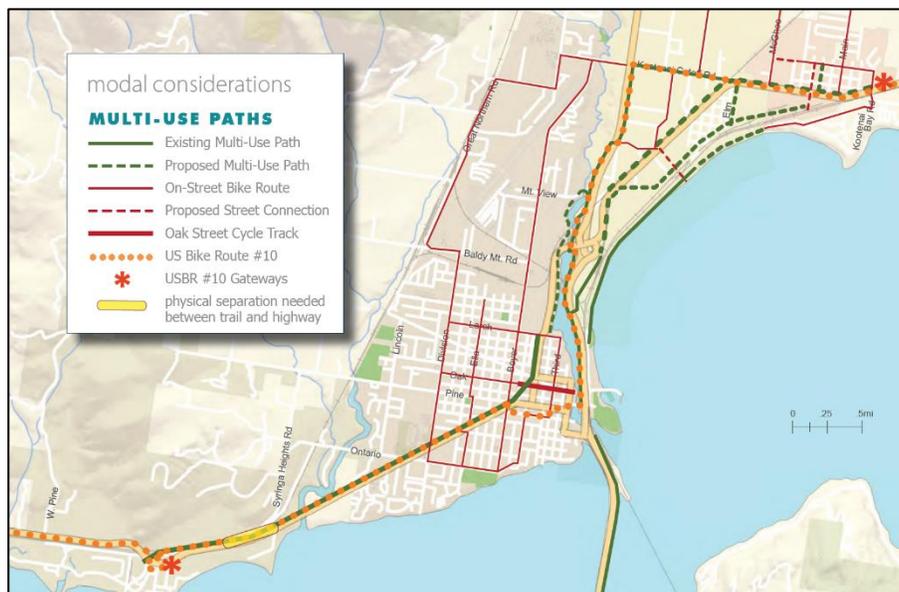


Figure 14. Proposed project (red dotted line, labeled “Proposed Street Connection”), in context of proposed multimodal improvements for the broader region

Improving the non-motorized connectivity between these cities and Sandpoint will help employers in the Ponderay and Kootenai communities to attract and retain talent. Major non-retail employers in the area include the Lake Pend Oreille School District, Litehouse Foods, Cygnus (a high accuracy machine parts manufacturer for the aerospace and aeronautics industry), and Dietrich Coffee Roasters (a metal fabricating plant).

Time Savings: The preliminary design for multimodal upgrades and intersection improvements to SH-200 will help provide a missing link to connect two major ITD improvement projects: the Sand Creek Byway completed in 2011, and Wayside Corner widening and signalization completed in 2006, as well as a recently funded construction project through the City of Kootenai just to the east. SH-200 through Ponderay is notorious for its congestion during peak commuting hours and dangerous walking and biking conditions. Traffic-calming measures, intersection upgrades, and multimodal improvements will help to ease congestion, which will generate travel time savings and vehicle maintenance savings for vehicles and freight on SH-200.

D.) Environmental Sustainability

The Lakeshore Connection Planning project will support environmental sustainability by encouraging non-motorized travel for short trips, enhancing stormwater management, and reducing congestion on SH-200.

Emissions Reduction: The project will encourage mode shift from driving to walking and biking for short local trips, reducing harmful emissions and improving local air quality. Instead of having to drive three miles to park at the Sandpoint trailhead, Ponderay residents will be able to walk down the new street and under the tracks to reach the trail. The preliminary BCA for the Lakeshore Connector conducted by Headwaters Economics in 2019 estimates that the construction of the undercrossing will result in 3.3% of Ponderay residents choosing to commute by bicycle, reducing CO₂ emissions by 617 metric tons over a 20-year project lifespan. Compact redevelopment in the expanded neighborhood grid off SH-200 will also enhance transit ridership for the Selkirks-Ponderay Transit (SPOT) bus without increasing service cost. In 2019, SPOT provided 103,222 rides, up 35,000 rides from 2018 following the addition of a Mountain route to Schweitzer Ski Resort. Preliminary design (30% level) for improvements to the SH-200 corridor and intersections between the Sand Creek Byway intersection and the signalized intersection with Kootenai Cutoff Road will aim to reduce congestion on the highway through traffic calming and modifications to turning patterns. These upgrades will also aim to promote mode shift to biking, walking, and transit through enhancing bike and pedestrian facilities and exploring new locations for SPOT bus stops.



Figure 15. Passengers board SPOT bus

Stormwater Management: Lake Pend Oreille lies in the Purcell Trench, a deep, glacially carved, U-shaped valley separating the Cabinet, Selkirk and Coeur d’Alene mountain ranges. The communities of Ponderay, Kootenai, and Sandpoint rely Lake Pend Oreille and Little Sand Creek for drinking water. Non-point source pollution from upland activities is one of the greatest threats

to water quality in Lake Pend Oreille and Little Sand Creek. The nearshore areas of Lake Pend Oreille are listed as water quality impaired under section 303D of the Clean Water Act due to elevated levels of nutrients. Increases in nitrogen and phosphorus pollution are causing algae growth in the lake. While these nutrients have a variety of origins, stormwater runoff is a common source. Capturing and treating stormwater is one of the prime strategies recommended in the state’s plan for improving water quality in the lake.

The Lakeshore Connection Planning Project will design and engineer innovative stormwater management facilities for the undercrossing and new city street, including the potential construction of an artificial wetland to treat stormwater and mitigate for impacts to other wetlands onsite. Such artificial wetlands constructed as mitigation for the U.S. Highway 95 bypass (Sand Creek Byway) project in 2011 have successfully supported wetlands-enhanced biofiltration. The preliminary design for SH-200 intersection and multimodal upgrades will also consider stormwater management alternatives to help improve water quality in Lake Pend Oreille.

E.) Quality of Life

The Lakeshore Connection Planning Project will enhance the quality of life of people living in Ponderay and the surrounding communities.

Access to Natural Amenities: Located on shores of Lake Pend Oreille, along the meandering Sand Creek, and near the base of Schweitzer Mountain ski resort, Ponderay should boast unrivaled public access to outdoor assets. The City owns property along Lake Pend Oreille, but the double set of busy Montana Rail Link tracks blocks access to the shoreline with the closest access in Sandpoint, three miles away by car. The City’s commercial strip along U.S. Highway 95 backs up along Sand Creek, making this natural corridor all but invisible to passersby. The town currently has no central “downtown” gathering spot or town center with clear views of Schweitzer Mountain or the lake. The vision for the Pend d’Oreille Bay Trail Concept Plan states:

The Pend d’Oreille Bay Trail enriches the lives of residents of Bonner County and its cities by providing a place within walking and cycling distance for personal renewal in nature, reflection on the area’s rich natural and cultural heritage, quiet recreation on and near the lake, and safe, non-motorized travel to and from work, school, play, shopping and social events.



Figure 16. Worn-in footpath along shoulder demonstrating demand for pedestrian facilities

However, without a connection to Ponderay, only a portion of this vision is realized. Barriers to access to Ponderay’s natural amenities disproportionately impact low- and middle-income residents. At the going price of over \$4,100 per linear foot, Lake Pend Oreille frontage is premium real estate, affordable only to the wealthy. This presents an environmental justice disparity in two ways: Lower income residents have been priced off the water; and private, exclusive developments have shut off direct access to the lake and its recreation opportunities to all but the wealthy. For the majority of residents, the Lakeshore Connection Planning Project will advance construction of the first close and affordable and convenient way to enjoy the region’s signature outdoor amenity, Lake Pend Oreille. Lake access means that residents will be able to fish off the shore, swim in the lake, or just walk along the shoreline and take in the stunning views across Idaho’s largest lake to the high peaks beyond.

Demand for Trail Improvements: This Lakeshore Connection Planning Project responds directly to the community’s desire for improved trails access. A county-wide survey conducted for [the Bonner County Trails Plan](#) found that trails are highly valued in the community. Of those surveyed, 75% used trails in the past year and more than 75% respondents support development of an expanded, better-connected trail system in the county. In addition, more than half the respondents said that proximity to trails and safe places to walk were important factors in choosing where to live. About 20% of respondents said they would use trails more if they lived closer to them. By transforming the Pend d’Oreille Bay Trail from a dead-end trail into a through trail, it is estimated that trail use would increase by 133% or approximately 219 users per day in the summer and 83 per day in the winter.

Social and Community Benefits: The Centers for Disease Control reports that parks and trails are an important part of a community, allowing people a chance to enjoy the outdoors, and in turn, receive physical and mental health benefits. Access to these facilities encourages residents and non-residents alike to participate in physical activity. Further, using a trail facility has “both environmental and personal health benefits, decrease[ing] air pollution and chronic disease rates and traffic-related injuries.” In turn, this “can reduce chronic disease rates and traffic-related injuries. Physical activity can also help control weight, reduce risks of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and some cancers, strengthen bones and muscles, improve mental health, and increase chances of living longer.” These trail benefits are promoted by the Park Rx Program, a nation-wide initiative to reduce chronic diseases in the U.S. by encouraging health providers to prescribe walks in nature to their patients. In Sandpoint, the Kaniksu Land Trust has sponsored this program, and has rated community trails for the purposes of Park Rx prescriptions. The Pend d’Oreille Bay Trail is one of the parks in the community where patients are directed to take walks for their physical and mental well-being. The undercrossing in Ponderay will give patients in that community easier access to a trail where they can pursue their prescribed outdoor activity.



Figure 17. Runner on the Pend d’Oreille Bay Trail

COVID-19 Quality of Life Benefits: Bonner County’s trails have offered an outdoor refuge from the isolation wrought by the COVID-19 public health crisis. The trail count statistics maintained by the Friends of the Pend d’Oreille Bay Trail reveal 13,250 visits to the trail from January 1st to May 10th of this year, which represents a 69% increase as compared to the same period of last year. The daily average for trail counts tends to be approximately 150 counts per day; the peak of this year’s trail usage saw a count of 509 on March 22nd, 2020. As a new normal sets in and recovery and reopening begin, Ponderay anticipates that the popularity of trail activities will continue to increase, with new visitors returning again and again. New access points will be critical to enabling visitors to adhere to social distancing guidelines and stay safe.

Educational Benefits: The Lakeshore Connection Planning Project will advance the potential for the Pend d’Oreille Bay Trail to be an outdoor classroom, as highlighted both in the trail’s Concept Plan and Master Trail and Interpretive Plan. The trail has a rich cultural history story to tell, including the railroads and timber industry, the hobos who made this shoreline a temporary home, and the Kalispel Tribe of Indians who traveled this shoreline as they moved from encampment to encampment. The

natural history story is multifaceted, from the native plants and animals and the impacts on them by the Albeni Falls Dam downstream, to the dramatic story of the ice age floods and how they carved this landscape. By opening up this trail with an undercrossing to Ponderay and Kootenai, students from the Kootenai Elementary School will be within walking and biking distance from this shoreline trail and afforded the opportunity to learn in nature and experience first-hand the cultural heritage of their home.

Enhanced Sense of Place: The new city street leading to the undercrossing has the potential to become Ponderay’s “Main Street,” creating a gateway and public center to this town that is otherwise known for Home Depot, Wal-Mart, auto dealerships and other shopping destinations. With an undercrossing and a new downtown street, the community will finally have a heart—a place for residents to connect with each other and the natural surroundings close to home. Appropriately, the anchor business for this street will be the Hoot Owl Café, a long-time local business that is known for its owners’ commitment to the well-being of the community, demonstrated by their weekly soup kitchen for those struggling to survive. As the new street and undercrossing encourage foot traffic through the area, existing small businesses will thrive and new businesses will arrive, strengthening the connections between people and place in Ponderay.

Affordable Housing: As outdoor recreation tourism continues to grow and quality of life increases, careful planning is needed to ensure that the working-class residents who keep the community running do not get priced out of Ponderay. In order to increase housing supply and provide housing prices to benefit the working class in our region, increased density and lower building costs are required. New proposed developments such as the Retreat at Bay Trail Subdivision with 79 planned parcels will assist in providing affordable workforce units that are desperately needed, but improvements to the SH-200 corridor will be needed to support increased traffic from proposed developments. The preliminary design for SH-200 upgrades will advance engineering and design of highway improvements that can support a higher density of housing options, helping to ensure that valued community members can continue to live where they work as Ponderay grows.

(2) Secondary Selection Criteria

A.) Innovation

i. Innovative Technologies: The engineering and design for the Lakeshore Connector and associated upgrades to SH-200 will deploy innovative technologies to improve the efficiency of design and construction and reduce the project delivery timeline. One potential innovative technology that may be incorporated into the final engineering and design plans is a BEBO arch for the undercrossing structure. BEBO arch units are high quality, low maintenance precast structures which can be used for bridges or under crossings. These precast concrete structures have all the durability advantages of high-quality concrete, without the concern of breakdown of protective coatings, corrosion, or other problems associated with other materials. In addition, the use of a prefabricated structure may reduce the construction timeline. Engineering and design plans will also contemplate innovative technologies that will allow the train system to continue to function during construction of the underpass without building a bypass or shoo-fly. Finally, the engineering and design

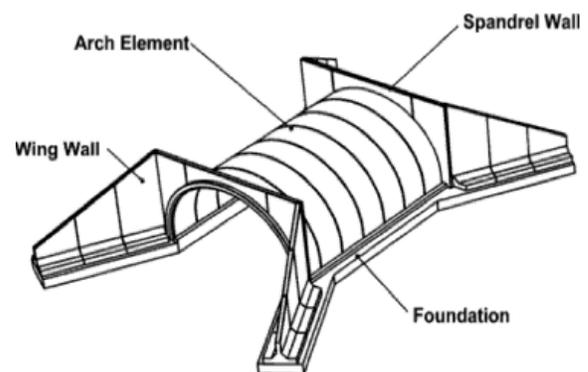


Figure 18. BEBO arch unit

plans will also incorporate innovative and effective stormwater treatment systems for runoff from impervious surfaces, such as artificial wetlands.

Performance of the project once constructed will be measured using the Friends of Pend d'Oreille Bay Trail's Eco-Compteur trail counter. The trail counter, which produces reports on daily, monthly, and yearly usage and monitors trends over time, will help to demonstrate the increase in trail usage associated with the new local access point in Ponderay.

ii. Innovative Project Delivery: The engineering and design plans will contemplate innovative methods to expedite project delivery, including through the proposed modernizations to the National Environmental Protection Authority (NEPA) review process (if approved). The engineering and design plans will provide recommendations for the potential to expedite project delivery of the roadway and underpass construction using the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA's) Special Experimental Projects No.14 and No.15, such as innovative contracting techniques, right-of-way acquisition methods, and project financing methods.

ii. Innovative Financing: The City of Ponderay successfully passed a 1% local option sales tax with dedicated funding for this grade separation in fall 2019. This new tax will provide 20% of the total project cost. Through the planning and design project, the City of Ponderay will coordinate with the railroad and local private business owners to determine if innovative financing approaches are viable for the resulting construction project.

B.) Partnership

As described in the "Project History" section of the Project Description, the Lakeshore Connection Planning Project is the outcome of years of extensive partnership and engagement between Ponderay, Sandpoint, Kootenai, Bonner County, LHTAC, IDEQ, the Friends of the Pend d'Oreille Bay Trail, local businesses, community groups, and the public. For over a decade, these partners have brought a broad array of interests, roles and talents to the project. Both railroads, Montana Rail Link and BNSF Railway, have been consulted throughout the planning process and will be engaged in this engineering and design project. Private developers have been directly engaged in the brownfields redevelopment planning and Ponderay Village Subarea Planning processes that will inform the Lakeshore Connection Planning Process.

With US DOT BUILD grant funds, Ponderay will strengthen and build upon its existing partnerships to complete design and engineering on the new street, underpass, and frontage road upgrades, as well as the preliminary design for future infrastructure improvements to the SH-200 arterial.

The following is a list of active partners in the development of this project. Those marked with an asterisk (*) have provided a letter of support:

- **Montana Rail Link* & BNSF Railway*:** Cooperating with planning efforts and expressing support for construction of a dedicated and safe undercrossing
- **Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ)*:** Working closely with City of Ponderay on Brownfields cleanup in coordination with undercrossing plans
- **Friends of the Pend d'Oreille Bay Trail (POBT)* :** Coordinating public outreach and soliciting private funding for trail and undercrossing planning and construction

- **Local Highway Technical Assistance Council (LHTAC)*:** Providing technical and logistical oversight and will act as project administrator for planning and construction of undercrossing
- **Northside Fire and EMS*:** Influencing design to address need for a more efficient means of responding to active emergencies on the lakeshore
- **Trust for Public Land:** Instrumental in securing property for the undercrossing location and research on public financing options
- **LOR Foundation:** Instrumental in securing property for the undercrossing location and funding grant preparation
- **Headwaters Economics:** Providing vital information about economics and trails in the region and preparing the preliminary BCA for the project

Additional contributing partners include:

Local/State/U.S./Tribal Government

Bonner County Board of Commissioners
 City of Kootenai*
 City of Sandpoint*
 Idaho Department of Commerce
 Idaho Department of Environmental Quality*
 Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation
 Recreational Trails Program
 Idaho State Representative Sage Dixon*
 Idaho State Senator Jim Woodward*
 Idaho Transportation Department*
 Kalispel Tribe of Indians
 National Park Service
 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
 U.S. Senator Mike Crapo*
 U.S. Senator Jim Risch*
 U.S. Congressman Russ Fulcher*

Organizations

American Society of Landscape Architects
 Avista Corp.
 Bonner County Area Transportation Team*
 Bonner County Economic Development Corporation*
 Bonner County Emergency Medical Services
 Bonner General Health*
 Bonner County Trail Mix Committee*
 Greater Sandpoint Chamber of Commerce*
 Idaho Walk Bike Alliance*
 Idaho Conservation League
 Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation
 Idaho Operation Lifesaver*
 Kaniksu Land Trust*
 Lake Pend Oreille School District*
 Local Businesses
 North Idaho Trails Coalition*
 Panhandle Area Council
 Private Landowners in the Trail Corridor
 Sandpoint Rotary Club
 Selkirk-Pend Oreille Transit*

V. ENVIRONMENTAL RISK REVIEW

The Lakeshore Connection Planning Project can commence upon grant award, with all necessary activities complete to allow BUILD grant funds to be obligated sufficiently in advance of the September 30, 2022 deadline.

(a) Project Schedule

The proposed schedule currently starts in November 2020, with all planning activities substantially complete by November 2023. While not part of this BUILD grant request, the City of Ponderay anticipates that construction of the Lakeshore Connector will be complete by 2024.

	Activity – Lakeshore Connection (100% Design & Engineering)	Timeframe
BUILD project	State and Local Planning Approvals	January 2021
	Environmental Specialist Procurement	March 2021
	Design Professional Procurement	May 2021
	30% Design	July 2021
	60% Design Review	December 2021
	Issue Draft Environmental Assessment	April 2022
	Hearing on Environmental Assessment	May 2022
	Issue Finding of No Significant Impacts	September 2022
	Railroad Agreement in Place	October 2022
	PS+E/Bid Package Final	May 2023
Future Construction	ROW Acquisition Complete	January 2023
	Advertise for Bids	June 2023
	Award Construction Contract	September 2023
	Construction Substantially Complete	February 2024

	Activity – SH-200 Intersection & Multimodal Upgrades (30% Design)	Timeframe
BUILD Project	State and Local Planning Approvals	March 2021
	Design Professional Procurement	June 2021
	Community Visioning	July 2021
	Alternatives Development	August 2021
	30% Design	October 2021

(b) Required Approvals

Environmental Permits and Review: NEPA review has not started, however, the Lakeshore Connection Project Team has engaged in conversations with the Idaho Division of FHWA for NEPA questions and requirements since May 2018. NEPA will be conducted in its entirety as part of the planning process for the undercrossing, including scoping and the appropriate review. The proposed timeline from solicitation of comments on environmental impacts to public comment and preparation of an Environment Assessment is provided in the Project Schedule section of this application. If no regulatory agency raises voices concern about the affected environment, then an environmental assessment (EA) is likely to be the correct type of review.

With DOT BUILD funds, the project team will advance the preliminary studies and analysis to conduct a thorough environmental analysis and ensure all appropriate permitting is provided. The environmental review will demonstrate compliance with National Historic Preservation Act, Floodplain Management, Wetlands Protection, Endangered Species Act, Sole Source Aquifers, Air Quality, Farmland Protection Policy Act and Environmental Justice. It should identify conformance and compatibility with local land use plans, show consistency with socioeconomic conditions and identify the impacts to the income patterns of the residents in the City. There should also be an analysis on the impacts to community facilities and services. Documentation for NEPA will include a Section 106 review of historic properties, Section 7 ESA (Endangered Species Act) consultation, geotechnical reports, and a revised Wetland Delineation Report (see ‘Other Studies’ below). Additional source documents include correspondence with regulatory agencies, evidence of site visits, maps/GIS information, photos, biological resources, hydrology, archaeology, and erosion control and stormwater management. A minimum of one public hearing will be held.

Other Studies:

- On November 10, 2016, IDEQ’s Brownfields program funded Wetland Delineation of the proposed Lakeshore Connection Project area. This approximate 20-acre site has Lake Pend Oreille along the south-east side and rises 50 vertical feet at slopes from 30 to 60 percent to the railroad grade. To the northwest of the railroad grade is relatively flat 10-acre hay field with a 0 to 2 percent slope. Based on the results of the test sites, the lack of hydrophytic vegetation and lack of hydric soil indicators, a potential wetlands map was made. The wetland boundary on the southeast side of the project area stops at the upper edge of the riprap armoring, the northwest boundary is approximately 80 feet on the lakeside of the railroad tracks. The report concluded that final determination of jurisdictional wetlands is subject to approval by the USACE.
- In IDEQ’s brownfield zone along the lakeshore adjacent to the project area, fourteen studies were completed from 2001-2014, including historic property inventories, Phase I and II Environmental Site Assessments, human health risk evaluations, groundwater seep investigations, and area-wide planning. Most of the environmental studies were conducted under the Brownfields Coalition Assessment Grant awarded to the coalition consisting of IDEQ, Bonner County and the cities of Kootenai, Ponderay and Sandpoint in 2009. Two of the fourteen studies were prepared by the USACE, Seattle District, prior to the Coalition Assessment Grant for the property directly adjacent to the project on the lakeshore side of the tracks:
 - *2003 Black Rock Draft Environmental Assessment for Bank Stabilization in Ponderay, Idaho* is an evaluation of construction of rock riprap stabilization along approximately 3,300 feet of shoreline. The proposed Lakeshore Connection Project area is located within this EA’s area of impact. The Corps concluded that based on the EA’s analysis, the Black Rock Bank Stabilization project was not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human or natural environment, and therefore did not require preparation of an environmental impact statement.
 - *2003 Albeni Falls Dam and Pend Oreille Lake Historic Property Inventory of Proposed Black Rock Bank Protection Project, Bonner County, Idaho* documents the results of a series of inventories for historic properties that took place in the 1990’s for the Black Rock Bank Protection Project. The inventory-level studies were conducted to support real estate

acquisition and environmental coordination for the proposed undertaking, including National Historic Preservation Act (HNPA) Section 106 consultation. The Corps identified the *area of potential effects (APE)* and concluded that the proposed erosion control measures would have no potential to affect historical properties (either by its very nature or restrictions in its APE).

Additional Phase I and Phase II environmental site assessments will be conducted in the vicinity of Black Rock in conjunction with the ongoing EPA Multipurpose Grant, awarded in spring 2019.

Community Engagement & Other Plans: See [Project History](#) for a detailed description of community engagement and planning efforts that have advanced the project to date. References to the project and to SH-200 multimodal and intersection improvements are identified in the following planning documents from the past six years:

[Ponderay Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, 2015](#)

This document discusses regional multi-modal network on and off-street improvements and shows need for both the lakeshore connection and SH-200.

[Ponderay Greenbelts and Pathways Plan, 2016](#)

This plan provides recommendations to define conservation areas, create transportation corridors along waterways, and extend the shared use pathway network City wide in harmony with the Sub-Area Plan and the Pend d' Oreille Bay trail master plan.

[Quad Cities Highway 2/200 Corridor Study, 2016](#)

Design principles in this plan promotes safe multimodal connections. Specifically, it identifies “connecting the Ponderay street grid to the Pend d’Oreille Bay Trail by a proposed grade-separated trail crossing under the Montana Rail Link corridor.” This plan also illustrates a business and pedestrian friendly SH-200 Cross Section and a shared use path along SH-200.

[Ponderay Village Subarea Plan, 2017](#)

This project is an extensive planning process that looks at land use, livability and transportation implications for our Brownfields impacted area including the traditional residential neighborhood and town center. The Ponderay Village Subarea Plan lays out a framework for compact traditional development between SH-200 and the proposed undercrossing.

[2020-2015 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, Panhandle Area Council](#)

The Region’s CEDS is facilitated by the Panhandle Area Council, a U.S. Department of Commerce recognized Economic Development District. A strategy-driven plan for regional economic development, the CEDS is the result of a locally grown, yet regionally owned planning process designed to build capacity and guide the economic prosperity and resiliency of an area or region. The 50+ member committee identified the need to optimize transportation systems for easier access to jobs, shopping, services & recreation through supporting the development of multi-modal communities and promoting/expanding walk paths, trail networks, and bike lanes (pg. 34).

State and Local Approvals: This project is supported by ITD and Bonner County Area Transportation Team and will be incorporated into the STIP when funded. Additional state and local approvals for the project will be secured as a result of the planning project, including an ITD encroachment permit for

where the access road intersects with SH-200, encroaching on ITD Right-of-Way. The project team will ensure that design and engineering of the encroachment meet all of ITD's criteria.

Federal Transportation Requirements Affecting State and Local Planning: The Lakeshore Connection Planning Project will ensure that all federal transportation requirements affecting state and local planning are met within the development of design and engineering of the Lakeshore Connector and associated upgrades to SH-200. This will include incorporating the project into the STIP once funded.

(c) Assessment of Project Risks and Mitigation Strategies

The project team has carefully evaluated the risks associated with the Lakeshore Connection Planning Project and concluded they are very few. The City Council has approved the local match for this project (see *Attachment C. Non-Federal Commitments* with resolution from May 4, 2020). Project partners are ready to be engaged and supportive of the project. (See *Attachment D. Letters of Support.*) With LHTAC administering this project from funding award through completion, the City is confident that bidding and permitting processes will go smoothly. LHTAC's involvement will ensure coordination between local, state, and federal transportation agencies, as well as provide expert oversight for all engineering and design activities. In addition, due to the extensive environmental assessment work already completed in the project area, meeting the NEPA requirements by September 2022 is easily expected. The project team will establish performance measures in order to track and share progress with key stakeholders and the community, including through posts to the City's and Friends of Pend d'Oreille Bay Trail's webpages. The City has never been cited for an adverse OMB Circular A-133 audit finding and has never been required to comply with "high risk" terms or conditions under OMB Circular A-102.

Both railroads, Montana Rail Link and BNSF Railway, have been consulted throughout the planning process and will be consulted in the engineering and design. The City has been in regular contact with both railroads, and railroad representatives have visited the City, toured the proposed undercrossing site, and reviewed engineering and other documentation about the project. Both railroads have expressed their earnest desire to assist in this project to resolve the ongoing trespassing problem in Ponderay. The City is assured this grant award will provide further impetus for the railroad to work expeditiously with the City to secure an agreement for ROW/easement acquisition by January 2023.

Project risks for the construction of the Lakeshore Connector and risk mitigation strategies will be evaluated throughout the engineering and design process. The project deliverables will include all necessary permitting and approvals to make the new city street, underpass, and frontage road upgrades shovel ready. The City will work with its partners to develop a project financing strategy for the full construction of the Lakeshore Connector, which is estimated to cost \$8,912,077. The City is in discussions with project partners about accessing Community Development Block Grant funds to support the final design, engineering, and construction of the SH-200 upgrades.

VI. BENEFIT/COST ANALYSIS

As a planning, engineering, and design project, the requirement for a BCA is not applicable to the Lakeshore Connection Planning Project. However, in 2019, Headwaters Economics put together a [preliminary BCA](#) that offers a conservative view on the potential benefits of future construction of the pedestrian underpass and new street based upon the extensive conceptual and preliminary design work on this project to date. The preliminary BCA estimates only those benefits for which reliable data is available at this early stage of the project. Based upon a previous cost estimation for construction of the Lakeshore Connector of \$8,642,231, the BCA projected benefits of \$15,911,566 at a 7% discount rate, resulting in a projected benefit-cost ratio of 1.84. The estimated benefits exceeded costs by \$7.2 million dollars. That includes increased property values estimated at \$3.2 million and reduced mortality due to increased physical activity valued at \$12.3 million. Among the largest non-monetized benefits identified in the analysis were avoided morbidity and mortality due to reduction in railroad trespass occurrences, economic competitiveness from new long-term jobs associated with increased tourism and facilitating Brownfield redevelopment. While this BCA for the construction project is preliminary and subject to changes in the cost estimates during this design and engineering project, the City anticipates that a more robust BCA analysis that incorporates safety benefits for prevention of injuries and fatalities, travel time savings, and other benefits upon completion of engineering and design will produce an even higher benefit-cost ratio for the project.