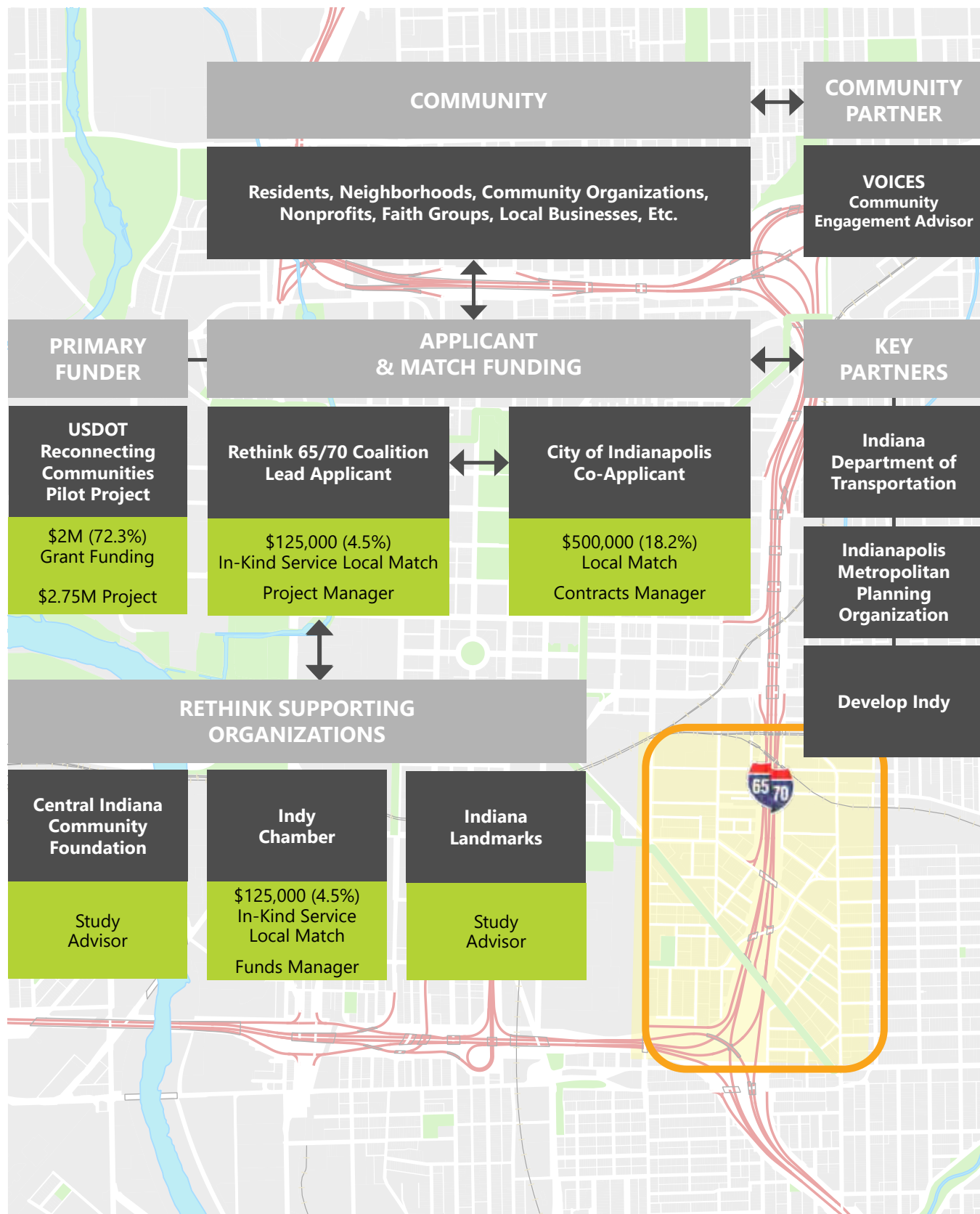




# USDOT Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program

Planning Study Grant Application [Abstract]





## Introduction

Indianapolis has an incredible opportunity to reconnect its neighborhoods in a way that dramatically improve prospects for long-term economic and social viability. *Rethink Coalition*, a 501c3 charitable organization, and the *City of Indianapolis* are partnering to explore how the Midwest's *Crossroads of America*, signified by eight converging interstate spokes, can be a model for equitable urban development, improved quality of life, and healing the injustices caused by original highway construction – without compromising interstate travel and commerce functions.

This application is for a *Planning Study* focused on the southeast leg of the Interstate 65/70 Indianapolis Downtown *Inner Loop* and the surrounding communities (the *Study Area*). The Study Area includes communities within the area reflected in Attachment 4, Map 2 that have experienced the impact of the Inner Loop as a barrier and would benefit from the deployment of mitigation and reconnection strategies. The Planning Study will build on two recent studies of the Inner Loop that examine how we can create more livable, reconnected communities, provide just and balanced development opportunities, and improve the overall environment in and around the highway, while maintaining equal or better interstate travel flow.

The Planning Study will produce a preliminary technical analysis that identifies design opportunities and constraints of capping the recessed segment of the Inner Loop in the Study Area. A robust community engagement process will invite residents and other stakeholders in the Study Area to shape the analysis by envisioning different lid options and their potential benefits in creating more livable, reconnected communities. The community engagement process will tap into an energized group of engaged researchers, leaders, and a Black-led organization in the Study Area eager to advance community healing, justice, and innovation.

## Study Need

The Study Area needs solutions to restore community connectivity, heal the scars caused by the original interstate construction, and create opportunities for (1) affordable housing and small commercial spaces lost to the original interstate construction, (2) balanced economic investment, and (3) community members to build relationships, lead healthy lifestyles, create, and innovate. The city and partners have already made substantial investments in the area through several efforts and initiatives, many of which were supported by Federal investments. These include, but are not limited to:

- Red Line Bus Rapid Transit
- Blue Line Bus Rapid Transit (estimated to open in 2026-27)
- Indianapolis Cultural Trail
- Pacers Bikeshare
- The Idle Overlook Park (looks over the interstate in the Study Area)

In addition to hard infrastructure investments, the City is making concerted land-use and zoning policy efforts that align with USDOT Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program priorities. On November 1, 2021, a new City zoning ordinance went into effect that makes significant changes to allowable land development patterns, enabling higher densities across most of the Pre-WWII parts of the City and establishing new design standards to prioritize pedestrians.



The new zoning code also includes a zoning overlay for transit-oriented development. This overlay is applied to all three of Indianapolis's planned and operational bus rapid transit corridors, with a 1,000-foot buffer from the centerline. This overlay encourages higher densities, holds developments to a higher standard for pedestrian frontages and other design elements, and prohibits or strongly regulates non-supportive land uses around transit such as automobile service and fueling stations, vehicle washes, commercial parking lots, and self-storage facilities.

The Planning Study will examine capping solutions building on these investments and efforts.

### **Study Purpose and Outcome**

The outcome of the Planning Study will be a preliminary technical analysis that identifies design opportunities and constraints of capping the Southeastern segment of I-70 between Washington and Virginia Ave. The analysis will include a range of development and structural alternatives and considerations for:

- Managing the interface between local streets and interstate traffic to reconnect the local street grid, enabling people to move about more freely and safely;
- Creating new development opportunities for workforce and low-income housing, institutional, commercial and employment centers that promote transportation justice and improve climate resilience, stormwater and flood risk management, public health, and other overall quality of life factors; and
- Generating viable economic models and district governance that can lead to implementation.

The outcome of the study will identify a preferred alternative that, depending on the availability of funds, could be developed to Preliminary Engineering (30% Design). Design development, if moved forward, would involve working closely with INDOT to provide guidance on design requirements.

### **Co-Applicants and Funding Responsibilities**

This application is for \$2M in USDOT funds. The City of Indianapolis will contribute \$500,000 in matching funds. Rethink Coalition and The Greater Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce & Foundation will contribute approximately \$250,000 of in-kind services to the Planning Study for a total project budget of \$2,750,000.

1. **Rethink Coalition** is the lead applicant and will be the project manager and in-kind funder. Rethink Coalition organized in 2017 as a community-led, broad coalition of diverse local leaders, residents, business owners, and others seeking to heal harm, restore communities, and reimagine dynamic, community-led redevelopment of urban spaces, transportation, and neighborhood connectivity. The Coalition is deeply embedded in the community and has the expertise to engage racially and economically diverse populations with urban design, economic development, environmental justice, grant management, research, and legal professionals who volunteer and consult with the Coalition.
2. **City of Indianapolis** is a co-applicant and will be the fiscal agent and financial match funder. The city has a long track record with INDOT and the MPO of implementing successful federal-aid projects and knowledge of Federal grant administration processes and obligations.
3. The **Greater Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce & Foundation** are key partners in the Planning Study. The Chamber, an organization Rethink Coalition legally supports as a 501c3



charitable organization, will donate professional staff time to support the Planning Study. The Foundation has agreed to be the sub-recipient and manager of the Federal funds, providing in-kind bookkeeping, accounting, and reporting services for the Planning Study. The Foundation is part of the Chamber's family of organizations, which includes *Develop Indy* (the city's economic development organization) and related organizations with Federal grant administration experience.

Together, these entities have the requisite experience and capacity to implement the Planning Study per the goals of the USDOT Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program (RCPP). If the grant is awarded, they will enter into a written agreement that sets forth their responsibilities and expectations with respect to the Planning Study and the flow of grant funds.

**Other Key Partners** include the Indiana Department of Transportation, who will participate in study development and provide guidance; the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), which will amend the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) to include the Planning Study; Develop Indy, who will assist with the development of the economic development and governance policy; and VOICES, a community engagement partner who can help represent, collect, and express the range of Black and brown experiences and aspirations for this project. A diverse range of community stakeholders and constituencies have also agreed to participate in the Planning Study and have executed signed letters of support.

### **History of Existing Interstate Facility**

The original Inner Loop constructed in the 1970s displaced 17,000 people and destroyed 8,000 or more businesses and homes. Businesses and services were disconnected from the urban core, creating fragmented neighborhoods and economic decline in many places. Alterations to traffic patterns and high-speed traffic entering and exiting the Inner Loop negatively impacted vulnerable neighborhoods along the interstates and limited access to adjacent neighborhoods. See Attachment 4 for graphics that further illustrate the history of the community and interstate facility in the area: 1) Regional Context Map, 2) Location Map, 3) Aerial Photo Timeline, 4) Existing Condition Photos, 5) Observations, 6) Impacts of Past Redlining, 7) Preliminary Historic Inventory, and 8) Transportation Disadvantaged Census Tracts in the Study Area.

### **Study Area Today**

The Study Area is in the south half of the east leg of the Inner Loop. This is a recessed section of the highway sandwiched between the nearly complete reconstructed raised section north of Washington Street (*North Split Project*) and the Safety & Efficiency Project (*SAFE Project*), which runs from 500 feet north of Fletcher Avenue south to the I-465 interchange. The current SAFE Project does not preclude the recessed interstate model.

**Rethink 65-70 Coalition-City of Indianapolis USDOT RCCP Grant Application  
Community Stakeholder Support Letters**

Congress of the United States, Andre Carson, House of Representatives (submitted directly to USDOT)	(33) Indianapolis City-County Councillor Vice President Zach Adamson
(1) A'Lelia Bundles	(34) Indianapolis City-County Councillor Kristin Jones
(2) Bates-Hendricks Neighborhood Association	(35) Indianapolis Colts
(3) Sharon Battista (Business Owner and Commercial Landlord, Bluebeard Restaurant)	(36) Indianapolis Cultural Trail
(4) Tom Battista (Business Owner, Amelia's Bakery)	(37) Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization
(5) Bean Creek Neighborhood Association	(38) Indy Chamber
(6) Benjamin Harrison Presidential Site	(39) IndyGo
(7) Big Car Collaborative	(40) IU Environmental Resilience Institute
(8) Central Indiana Community Foundation (CICF)	(41) IUPUI Office of the Chancellor
(9) Central Indiana Corporate Partnership (CICP)	(42) KHEPRW Institute
(10) City of Indianapolis, Department of Metropolitan Development	(43) Lockerbie Square Historic Neighborhood
(11) City of Indianapolis, Office of Sustainability	(44) Mass Avenue Cultural Arts District
(12) Cole-Noble Neighborhood Association	(45) Meridian-Kessler Neighborhood Association
(13) Connected Communities Initiative (CICF)	(46) Meridian Street United Methodist Church
(14) Cummins Inc.	(47) MIBOR Realtor Association
(15) Develop Indy	(48) North Square Neighborhood Association
(16) Downtown Indy Inc.	(49) Old Southside Land Use Committee
(17) Eli Lilly and Company	(50) Prospect Falls Neighborhood Association
(18) Fletcher Place Neighborhood Organization	(51) Reconnecting to Our Waterways
(19) Fountain Fletcher District Association	(52) Roberts Park United Methodist Church
(20) Fountain Square Alliance	(53) School 9, LLC
(21) Fountain Square Neighborhood Association	(54) Second Presbyterian Church
(22) Friends of the White River	(55) Southeast Community Services (SECS)
(23) Garfield Park Neighborhood Association	(56) Southeast Neighborhood Development (SEND)
(24) Health By Design	(57) St. Luke's United Methodist Church
(25) Historic Urban Neighborhoods of Indianapolis (HUNI)	(58) Stadium Village Business Association
(26) Holy Cross Neighborhood Association	(59) The Parks Alliance of Indianapolis
(27) Hotel Tango Distillery	(60) University Heights Neighborhood Association
(28) Indiana Landmarks	(61) University of Indianapolis
(29) Indiana Pacers	(62) Villaggio at Page Pointe Homeowners Association
(30) Indiana State Representative Blake Johnson	(63) Voices
(31) Indiana State Representative Justin Moed	(64) Young & Laramore
(32) Indianapolis City-County Councillor President Vop Osili	