
THOMAS D BOYD HALL

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CONDITIONS OF BIKING + WALKING IN BR

During completion of the original *EBRP Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan* (2020 PBMP) in 2020, the team gathered and reviewed data related to the existing conditions for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. They looked at latent demand associated with bicycle and pedestrian activities and reviewed plans and policies related to bicycle and pedestrian mobility solutions for the Baton Rouge community.

Current data shows that pedestrian and cyclist fatalities have increased since the publishing of the last plan, but demand for biking has also increased. The question remains—is it safer to walk and ride in BR?

The organization *People for Bikes* put out an international ranking of 1733 cycling cities in 2023. Baton Rouge received a ranking of 20 out of 100. The details of the ranking are listed below.

- **People** – Is there biking access to parts of the city where residents live? 23/100
- **Opportunity** – Is there biking access to jobs and schools? 26/100
- **Core Services** – Is there access to basic needs like hospitals and grocery stores? 9/100
- **Recreation** – Is there access to parks and trails? 28/100
- **Retail** – Is there access to major shopping centers? 28/100
- **Transit** – Is there access to major transit hubs? 5/100

Although there are more bike lanes in the parish, many of them don't connect, the markings for bike lanes or sharrows are not standardized, and frequently, these are on streets with high traffic volumes and speeds. Often, when approaching an intersection, the bicycle lane tapers down and disappears, leaving the cyclist to navigate the roadway with no basic safety standards in place. The fact is that we have more work to do.

If we look at crash data from DOTD, from 2011-2015 there were sixty-two pedestrian and cyclist fatalities in East Baton Rouge, and more recent data from 2018-2022 shows an increase to 130 fatalities. Considering that the second set of data was recorded during the COVID-19 Pandemic, when vehicle use was low and non-vehicle use was high, it is difficult to directly compare the data sets.

What can be stated is since the 2020 plan was published, the City-Parish has made strides to ensure the safety of vulnerable road users (VRUs), although the number of fatalities is not yet zero. The Capital Region Planning Commission (CRPC) has adopted a *Destination Zero Deaths* plan, while Mayor Broome announced that Baton Rouge would be joining the ranks of other cities by adopting the *Vision Zero* strategy, which aims to "eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries while increasing safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all." The City-Parish has set the goal of having zero serious injuries and fatalities for all road users by 2040. In addition to adopting the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan (2020 PBMP), the City-Parish has adopted a traffic calming initiative and an ADA Transition Plan to specifically address the need for safe accommodations of pedestrians, the most vulnerable of all users.

In this chapter, we will provide a snapshot of the current conditions for cyclists and pedestrians in BR, a summary of the three foundational plans for this document, review 2020 and 2024 data, summarize findings.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR PLANS DRIVING THIS DOCUMENT

There are three major plans that are the guiding documents that the steering committee reviewed at for this update—the *FUTUREBR Plan* update (2024), the Baton Rouge Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Action Plan (2020), and the LADOTD ADA Transition Plan (2018). The *FUTUREBR Plan* update is the catalyst for updating the 2020 PBMP, as it has been adopted by the City-Parish as an addendum to the *FUTUREBR Plan*. The goals and objectives and the GIS data from each of these plans has been incorporated into the network of walking and biking paths presented in this document.

FUTUREBR Plan

FUTUREBR is a comprehensive plan based on several core values that were expressed by the public—prosperity, equity, diversity, safety, strong neighborhoods and communities, convenient transportation, a healthy environment, and sustainability. The plan is currently under review, although the basic tenants of the plan should not change. The plan contains nine major elements listed below.

Land Use

The plan outlines goals to retain character of neighborhoods and district and to make each of these districts self-sufficient, so everything is within a short drive or a 20-minute walk.

Community Design and Neighborhood

The plan recommends building standards for the different types of "character areas," as well as pedestrian friendly design.

Transportation

Using equity as a guide, the goal is to incorporate "complete streets" into our transportation system to make it safer, more efficient, and improve overall connectivity.

Housing

Some goals include creating a balanced supply, coordinating planning within the region, and ensure existing neighborhoods are "stable and strong."

Parks and Recreation

The plan sets goals for increasing the quality of existing parks and recreation and improving the network of biking and walking paths while focusing on park connections.

Economic Development

The plan outlines goals to help retain and attract businesses that supply good jobs, to enable new ventures to "emerge and thrive," and to improve the quality of life for the workforce.

Public Services

The City-Parish's goals related to public service include enabling citizens to live safe, healthy, and satisfying lives, with access to good schools and public services.

Environment and Conservation

The goals outlined in the plan include preserving and enhancing environmental assets, protecting our water assets, tree canopy, land resources, and natural features, and improving air quality.

Infrastructure

Goals include collecting and treating wastewater in an environmentally sound way, reducing the impact of floods, improving drainage and water quality, and ensuring that public buildings are accessible and able to provide needed services.

Baton Rouge Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Action Plan

The second plan that the 2020 PBMP pulls from is the *Baton Rouge Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Action Plan* (PBSAP). The goal of this plan is to create a parish that is safer for pedestrians and cyclists within the City-Parish. A crash analysis was conducted, and geographic areas were identified to focus improvements where these would deliver the biggest impact. Heat maps showed the areas of LSU, Mid City, Downtown, and Plank Road as hot spots, i.e., the areas representing the greatest number of pedestrian crashes. Cyclist hot spots were identified in the same areas. The top ten recommendations for areas of safety improvements include by rank (1.) Highland Road, (2.) Plank Road, (3.) Bob Pettit Blvd, (4.) Florida Blvd/St, (5.) E. Boyd Avenue, (6.) Government Street, (7.) Burbank Drive, (8.) Dalrymple Street, (9.) S. Sherwood Forest Blvd., (10.) North Street (**Figures 3 – 1** and **3 – 2**).

LADOTD ADA Transition Plan

The final plan is *LADOTD's ADA Transition Plan,* which was created in collaboration with the FHWA's support and guidance. The plan identified 203 building/facility deficiencies that estimated at about $1,551,109 to resolve. A physical inspection of approximately 844 miles of right of way and state routes was conducted to determine ADA compliance, and a GIS compatible database was created to display the categories of impact. Conditions were ranked from low to high, with low items being residential and industrial areas, medium being intersection and roadway segments serving employment or retail sites, and high being intersection and roadway segments serving state/local government buildings, schools, hospitals, public housing, parks, high density residential areas, major commercial centers, and areas of public transportation access. At the time of writing this plan, portions of Government Street, Jefferson Highway, and Essen Lane have been completed, and ongoing projects include portions of Government Street, North Boulevard, Acadian Thruway, and Essen Lane. The public database can be accessed here on the LADOTD website.

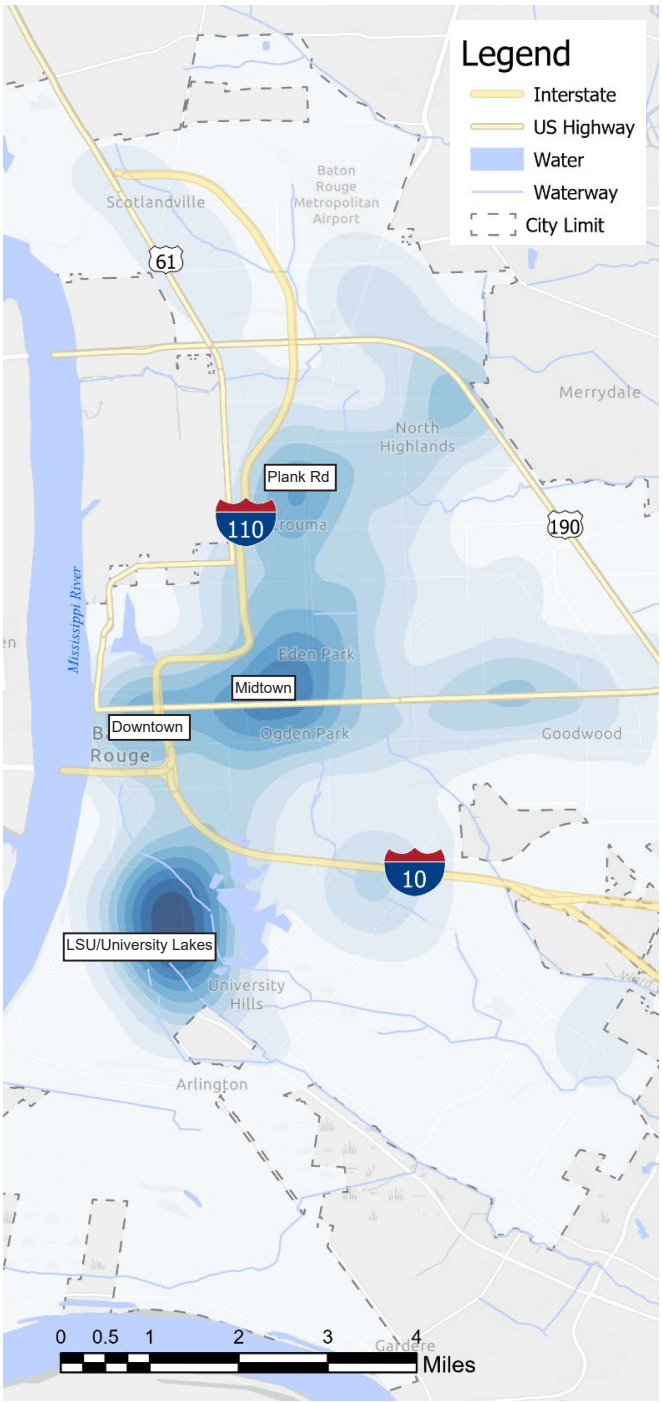

Figure 3 - 1 . Safety Action Plan Heat map showing bicycle crashes, with darker areas representing crash clusters.

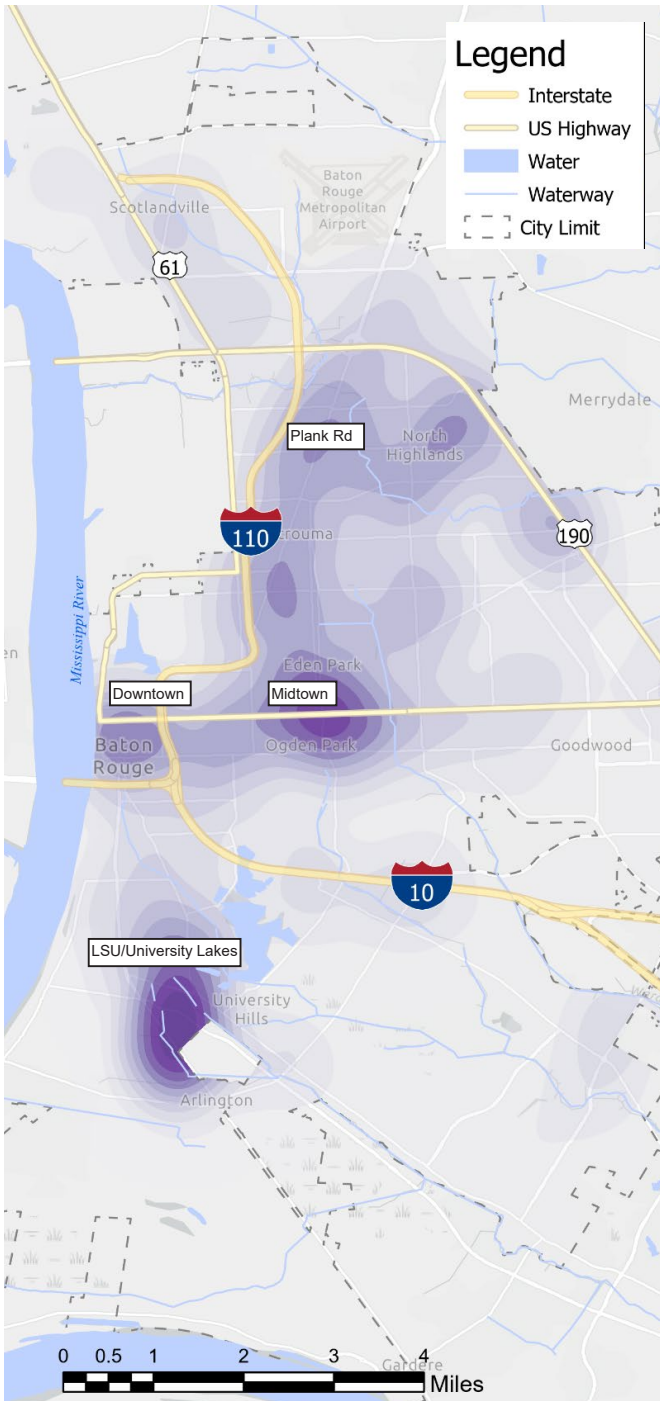

Figure 3 - 2 . Safety Action Plan Heat map showing pedestrian crashes, with darker areas representing crash clusters.

PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

The City-Parish has taken steps toward ADA compliance including developing an ADA Self-Evaluation Plan for Public Rights-of-Way, conducting an ADA Right-of-Way survey, and developing a Transition Plan to complete modifications to existing conditions. The City-Parish has also developed an ADA Task Force with the mission of advising the Mayor-President and Metro Council on federal, state, and city policies that would benefit people with disabilities. Additionally, there is a page on the City-parish website devoted to accepting requests, complaints, and grievances related to ADA incompliance.

Further, the ADA transition plan for EBRP is implemented on a project-by-project basis any time a street improvements project is implemented. The requirement is to upgrade the sidewalks and ramps *if* they exist. This process is consistent with federal policy, but it is not comprehensive or focused on the critical needs of pedestrians. Notably, the MOVEBR program set aside a separate fund for enhancements that include new sidewalks and implementation of Complete Streets (CS) projects on select roadways. In addition, all MOVEBR capacity projects must comply with the ADA transition plan, making the necessary improvements that will benefit all people who walk, roll, or use mobility aids.

Developing a comprehensive pedestrian program should be prioritized, so that completion of a useful network can be expedited. Currently, existing data is limited to GIS lines identifying existing sidewalks and noting which side of the street sidewalks are located (**Figure 3 – 3**). Condition data affecting the utility of existing facilities and new improvements from MOVEBR and ADA compliance has not been captured. Because this data is incomplete and is absent for large parts of the parish, the BPMP recommends that a comprehensive assessment of sidewalks be undertaken as the first step establishing a comprehensive pedestrian program. As a starting point, the 2024 BPMP update has mapped the sidewalks that are programmed within MOVEBR and other roadway improvement projects in GIS.

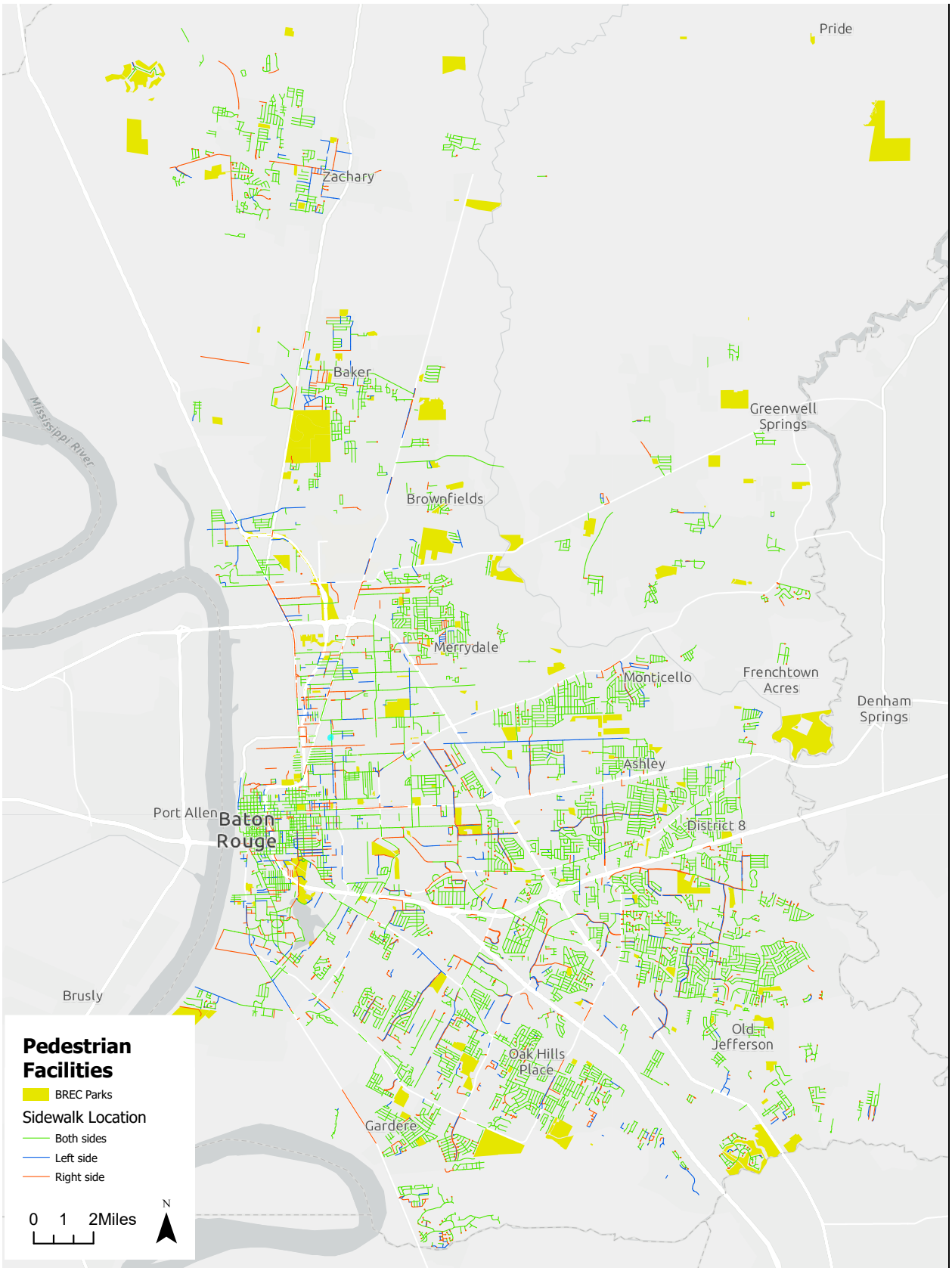

Figure 3 - 3 . Map of existing pedestrian facilities. Data courtesy EBRGIS.

Table 3 - 1 . Data collection summary chart 2024.

Data Collection Summary Chart 2024 Update

Addressed	Data Provider	Data Set Name	Notes
Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities	CRPC, EBRGIS Portal, BREC, **2022 BPMP, BikeBR route map, LSU Campus map, Strava/ Garmin maps, Geaux Ride route info**	Sidewalk, Planned Bicycle Routes and Existing Trails	**The 2020 BPMP GIS data had many inaccuracies, and was rectified during discussions with the BP Update Steering Committee.**
Derived Street Classification	LADOTD, EBRGIS Portal	Street Range	
Bicycle and Pedestrian Counts	LADOTD, CRPC, BikeBR	Strava Metro 2014, Ped Counts 2015, Bike Counts 2017	**No new count data utilized.**
Workers Commuting by Walking/Cycling	US Census Bureau	ACS 2015 five-year estimates by census block group	**No new count data utilized.**
Transit Stops	CATS	Bus Stops	**Updated file.**
Demographic Variables	US Census Bur eau, **Power Bi Dashboard, LADOTD**	ACS 2020 five-year estimates by census block group	
Existing Land Use, Facilities, and Destinations	EBRGIS Portal, **BP Update Steering Committee**	Land Use, Library, Tourist Venues, Hospitals	
Existing Statewide Bicycle Planning Tool/Other Relevant MPO Transportation Plans	LADOTD, CRPC	Statewide Bicycle Planning Tool, **Capital Region Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan 2022**	**The planning tool has not been updated since 2019, and has many inaccuracies.**
Other Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans	Various	Downtown Greenway Plan, LSU Master Plan, BREC CAPP Map, Health District Plan	**No new data utilized.**

DATA COLLECTION

The 2020 PBMP authors determined the state of the current pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure by reviewing the following data sets (**Table 3 – 1**). The 2024 BPMP update uses similar data that has been updated, with a few additions.

- Street functional classifications
- Bicycle and pedestrian counts, if available
- Workers commuting by walking and bicycling
- Transit stops
- Demographic variables, including age, zero-vehicle households, disability, and poverty
- Existing land use, community facilities, and destinations
- Existing bicycle and pedestrian policies, plans, and programs

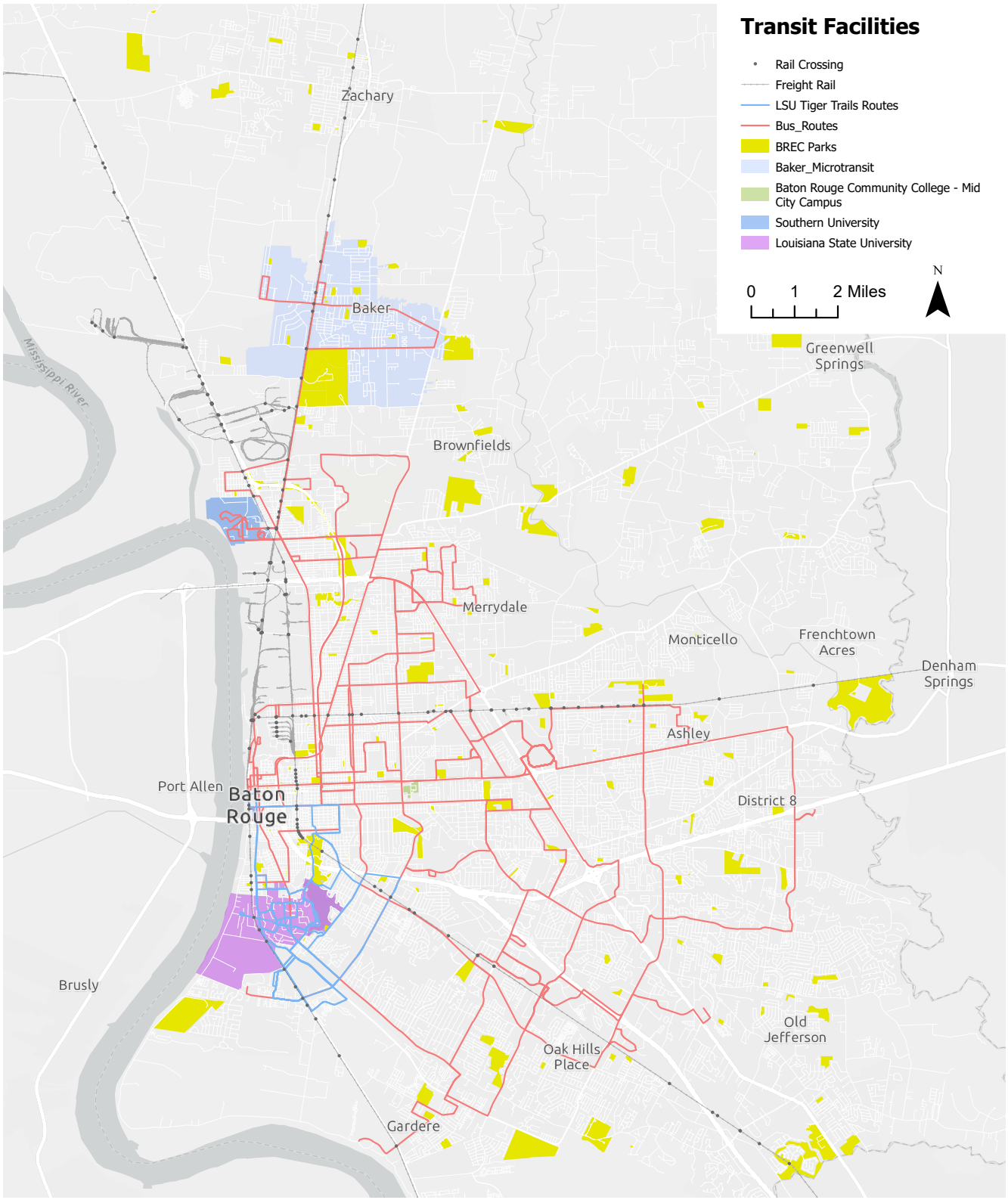

Figure 3 - 4 . Transit map showing CATS fixed bus routes, CATS Lynx Micro-Transit, CATS Bus Rapid Transit, LSU Tiger Trails, and Southern routes served by CATS.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Transit Routes

The Capital Area Transit System (CATS) provides bus service within Baton Rouge. One portion of the CATS system that has an expected completion date of 2025 is the MOVEBR Plank-Nicholson Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project, which will run from the planned CATS North Transfer Center near the Louisiana State University (LSU) Health North BR Clinic (near Airline Highway and McClelland Drive) down to North Stadium Road on the LSU main campus. This will link the north and south portions of the city to downtown. Additionally, the LSU Tiger Trails bus routes have been included. **Figure 3 – 4** illustrates the various transit options available in EBRP, although the CATS bus routes and stops are currently under assessment, and may change.

The 2024 FUTUREBR plan update is in draft form currently, and this document outlines a proposed rail line that will connect Baton Rouge and New Orleans with transit stops in the Health District and North Baton Rouge.

Street Classification

The organization Smart Growth America (SGA) created the Complete Streets Coalition, which is responsible for "the development and implementation of Complete Streets policies and practices." According to SGA, during the Covid-19 Pandemic in 2020 when driving was greatly reduced, over 6,500 pedestrians were hit by a vehicle, which was an increase of 4.5% over the previous year—that's roughly 18 people per day. In addition, deaths of people that were struck by a vehicle also increased by 4.7% that year. SGA lists speed as the main reason for these fatalities, and lists speed as the "best predictor" of injury or death in the instance of a collision. A 2017 study from the National Traffic Safety Board showed that if you were hit by a car that was traveling at 20 MPH, the chance of fatality was 5%, but those chances dramatically increased when the speed was increased to 30 MPH—45%, and 40 MPH—85% (**Figure 3 – 5**).

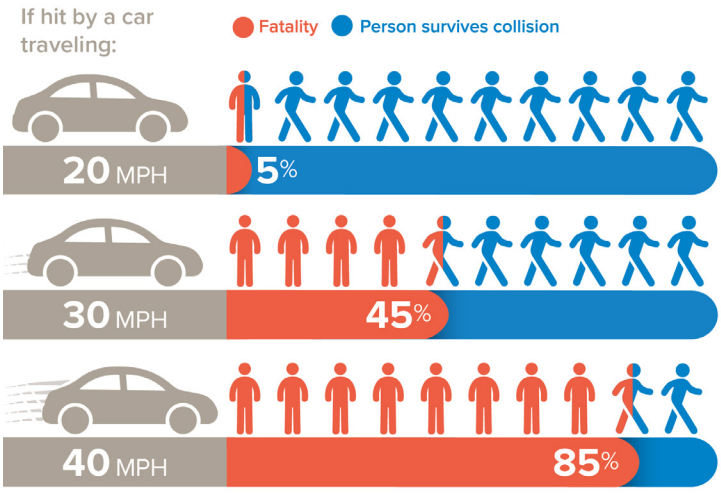

Figure 3 - 5 . This NSB graphic shows how vehicle speed correlates with fatalities for VRUs. Courtesy of Smart Growth America.

When the BPMP Update Committee began meeting, a member related this set of statistics to the group. Early on, it was determined that speed limits would be used to determine the threshold for the type of cycling facilities allowed on each street. For example, bicycle boulevards with share-the-road symbols painted on the roads are only allowed on streets that have a speed limit of 25 MPH or lower, and any streets with speeds over 30 MPH need to have separation and preferably a vertical barrier or buffer between vehicle and cycling lanes. There are currently several roads with share the road signage painted on the street that do not meet these standards, and these have not been included as cyclist amenities within this plan.

Demographic Indicators

According to Smart Growth America, "Older adults, people of color, and people walking in low-income communities are disproportionately represented in fatal crashes involving people walking—even after controlling for differences in population size and walking rates." The group also notes that accidents where Black people were struck and killed by drivers occurred at a rate eighty-two percent higher than white, non-Hispanic people. The 2020 PBMP included demographic characteristics for VRUs, including population, zero -vehicle households, and poverty and disability status. The 2024 BPMP update shows updated data for the parish and highlights trends, outliers, and major changes as can be seen in the following narrative and figures.

The American Community Survey (ACS) 2018-2022 five-year-estimate data sets published by the U.S. Census Bureau were used. The 2022 population of EBRP is approximately 450,544, and roughly 13.8% of the population had a disability, according to the data. The total population is up slightly with an increase of roughly four thousand people since 2015. **Figure 3 – 6** illustrates that the percentage of the population with a disability has decreased by about 6% in five years, from just under 66,000 to just over 62,000 people.

According to the USDOT, for the average American, housing and transportation costs comprise half of their household budget. Transportation and housing are the two highest household expenditures in the United States among all categories (**Figure 3 – 7**).[4] A focus on improving the ability of traditionally underserved communities to travel safely and conveniently by walking or bicycling is essential to achieving a balanced, equitable transportation system that can be used by everyone. When the 2020 PBMP was completed (2015 data), the ACS stated that 19.6% of the EBRP population live below poverty, and in 2022, the population below poverty decreased by about 1% to 17.9% (**Table 3 – 2**). Recently, the 2023 ACS numbers were released, and the percentage rose slightly with 18.4% of people living below the poverty line.

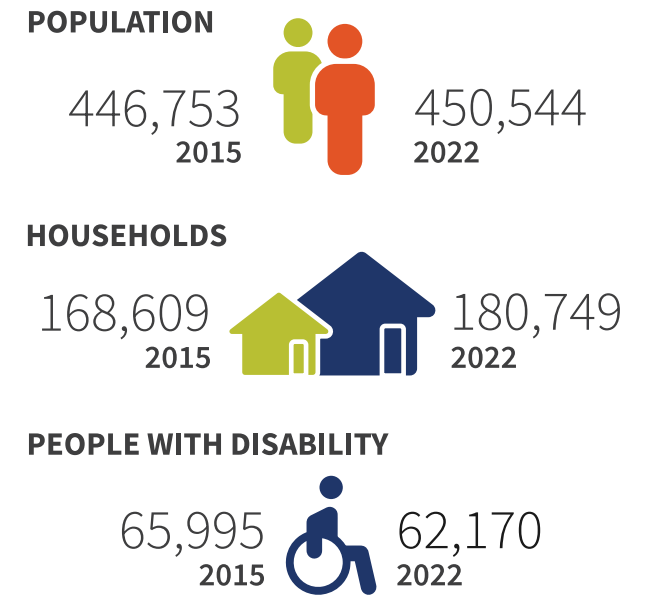

Figure 3 - 6 . Since 2015, there has been a decrease in population, an increase in households, and a decrease in population with a disability. ACS 2015, 2022.

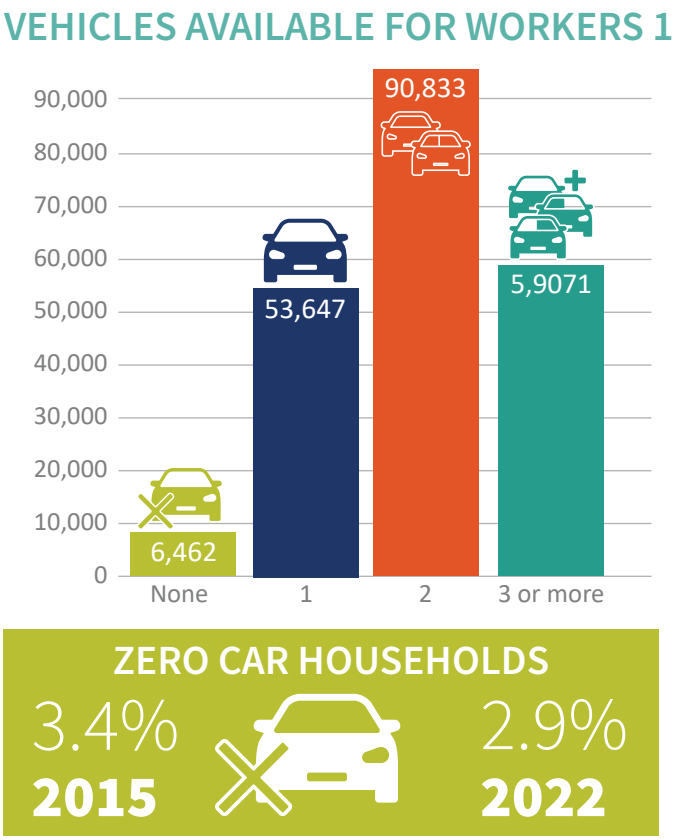

Figure 3 - 7 . Transportation costs are the greatest household expenditure and most households have two motor vehicles. ACS 2015, 2022.

Based on 2015 data, most workers aged sixteen and over in East Baton Rouge Parish (92.5%) were traveling to work by car, truck, or van each day; 82.9% of those commuters drove alone, while the remaining 9.6% carpool with other people. The numbers for these categories have not significantly changed with 92.7% overall driving to work; of those 78.1% drove alone and 8.7% carpooled (**Table 3 – 3**). According to the 2022 ACS 5-year estimates, 3% of workers aged 16 and over in the parish have no available vehicles (6,462), which is up by about 750 since 2015. This means that these people have no vehicle available for daily transportation needs. Nearly 26% of parish workers aged 16 and over share one vehicle, which is roughly the same as the 2015 numbers. These are individuals in need of a safe and connected Active Transportation Network (ATN).

Of all commuters, those directly affected by improvements to the pedestrian and bicycle network—the walkers, cyclists, and transit riders—comprised roughly 4% when the 2020 PBMP was written. 2022 ACS 5-year estimates show that number dropped to just under 4% (2.3% walking, 0.5% cycling, and 1.1% transit users), which is likely due to people working from home (increased to 6.1%) during the COVID19 Pandemic. The most recent ACA data for 2023 shows that the number of parish residents that use alternative modes of transportation has increased to 4.5%, with 3% of residents walking, 0.4% cycling, and 0.9% using transit. These statistics support further building and strengthening the ATN within the parish.

Table 3 - 2 . Since 2015, the percentage of the population below poverty has decreased slightly. ACS 2015, 2022

Population Below Poverty

	2015	2022
Population below poverty	85,254	78,833
Percent below poverty	19.6%	17.9%

Table 3 - 3 . Most of the parish drives to work alone, although there has been a slight decrease since 2015 because more people work from home. ACS 2015, 2022

Transportation to Work

	2015	2022
Drove Alone	82.5%	**80.5%**
Carpooled	9.8%	8.9%
Public Transportation	1.7%	1.1%
Walked	2.2%	2.3%
Cycled	0.4%	0.5%
Used Taxicab, motorcycle, other means	0.7%	0.6%
Work from Home	2.7%	**6.1%**

CRASH LOCATION ON ROADWAY FOR ALL ROAD USERS

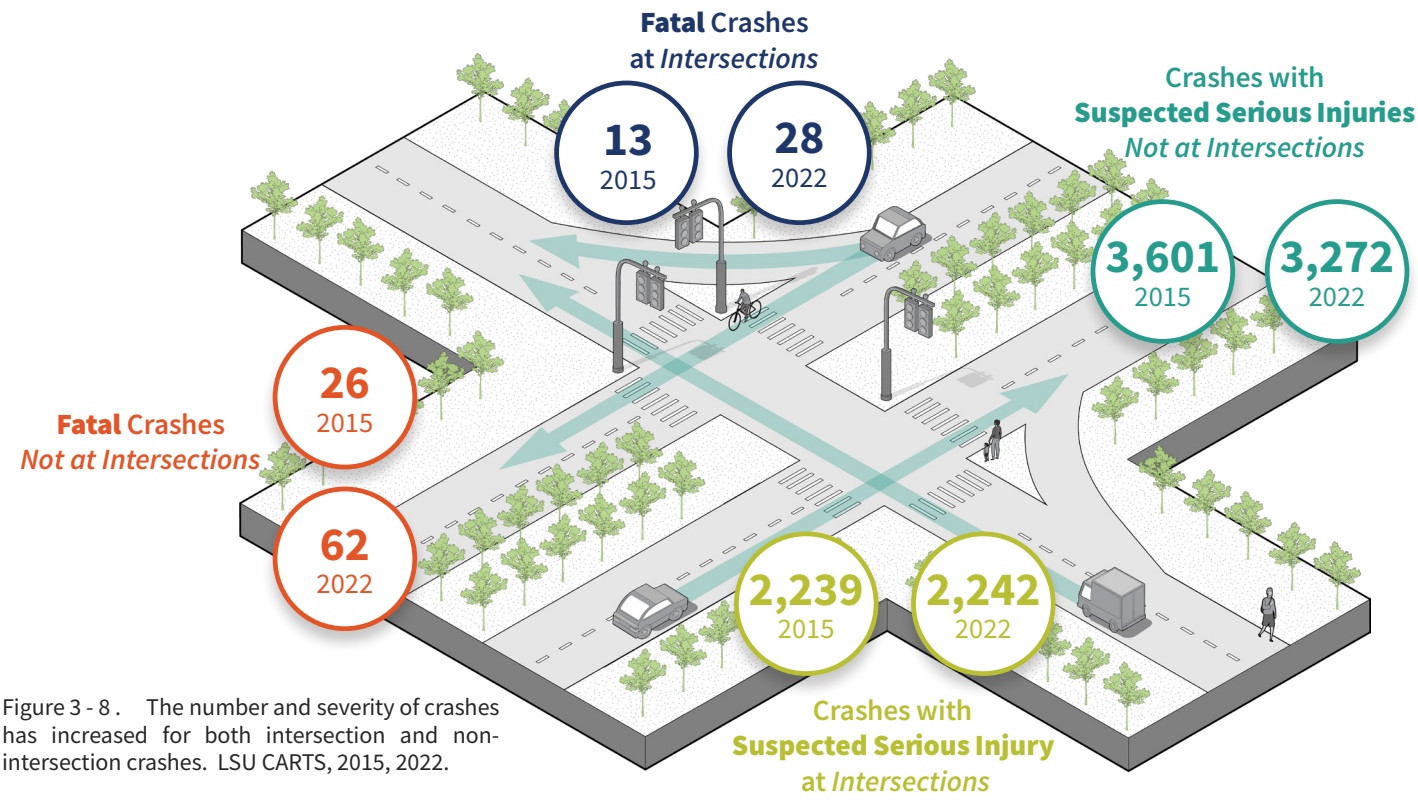

Figure 3 - 8 . The number and severity of crashes has increased for both intersection and non-intersection crashes. LSU CARTS, 2015, 2022.

STATISTICS FOR VULNERABLE ROAD USERS IN EBRP

When the 2020 PBMP was written, a companion interactive dashboard was developed to show socio-economic data representing key demographics related to VRUs in the parish. This data represented trends from 2011-2015. This dashboard is no longer available online (formerly www.ebrpedbike.org), however, the team was able to compile similar data for recent years.

The charts and figures on this and the following pages summarize crash data pulled from the LSU Center for Analytics and Research in Transportation Safety (CARTS). Based on this data, intersection safety is an area of concern. In both 2015 and 2022, there were more fatal and severe injury crashes at intersections than non-intersections for all road users, consistent with the overall trend of high-risk locations for road users. As shown in **Figure 3 – 8**, the number and severity of crashes has gone up for both intersection and non-intersection crashes.

In addition to classifying where crashes took place, pedestrian and bicycle crashes were categorized by the road classification on which they occurred (**Figure 3 – 9**). The classifications include local, state, and federal ownership. According to the data, local, city-owned roads saw the most crashes for pedestrians and bicyclists in both 2015 and 2022. Bicycle and pedestrian crashes can happen more frequently on city streets than on state and federal highways for several reasons, including the fact that city streets typically have a higher density of intersections and crosswalks, meaning that there are simply more points where conflicts can occur. Additionally, the narrower lanes and sidewalks typical of city infrastructure, combined with a greater variety of users (pedestrians, bus drivers, pedalcyclists) creates an environment more conducive to conflicts between VRUs and motorists.

CRASHES BY ROAD CLASSIFICATION

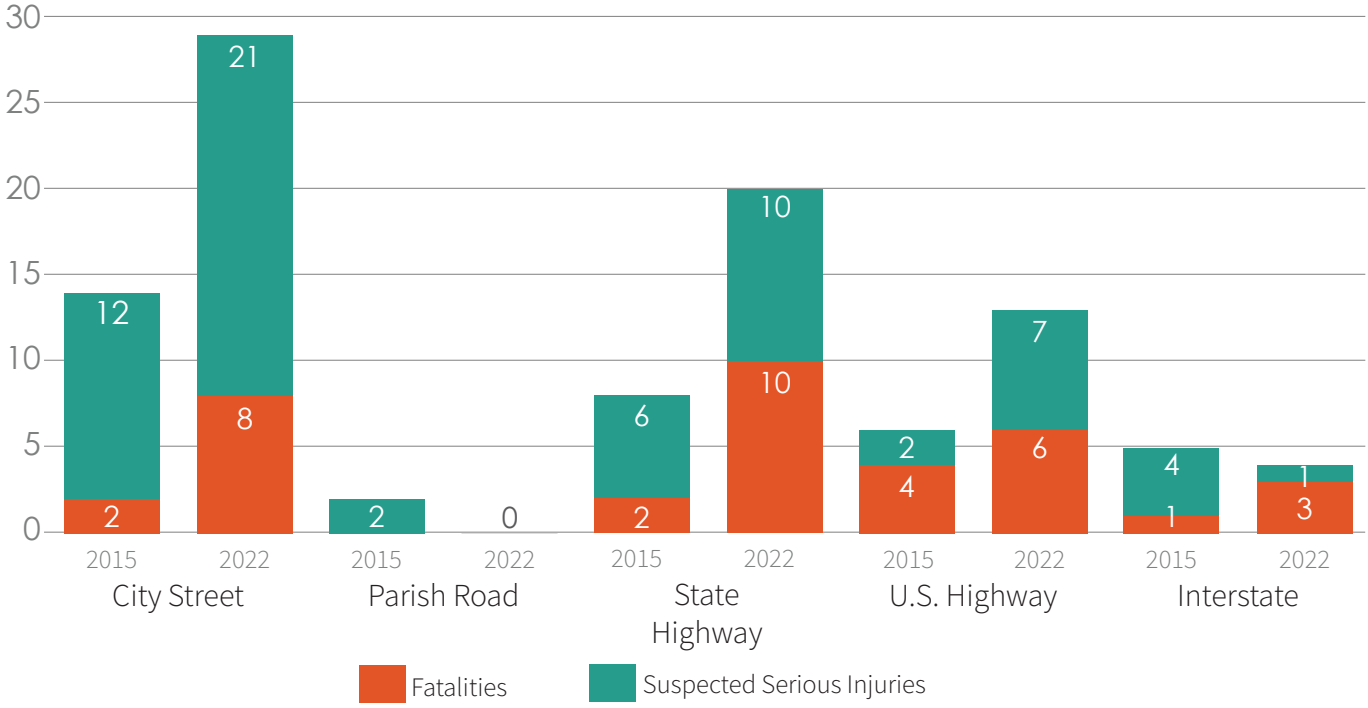

Figure 3 - 9 . Cyclists and pedestrians were more likely to experience a crash on local, city-owned roads. LSU CARTS, 2015, 2022.

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE CRASHES

Pedestrian

Cyclist

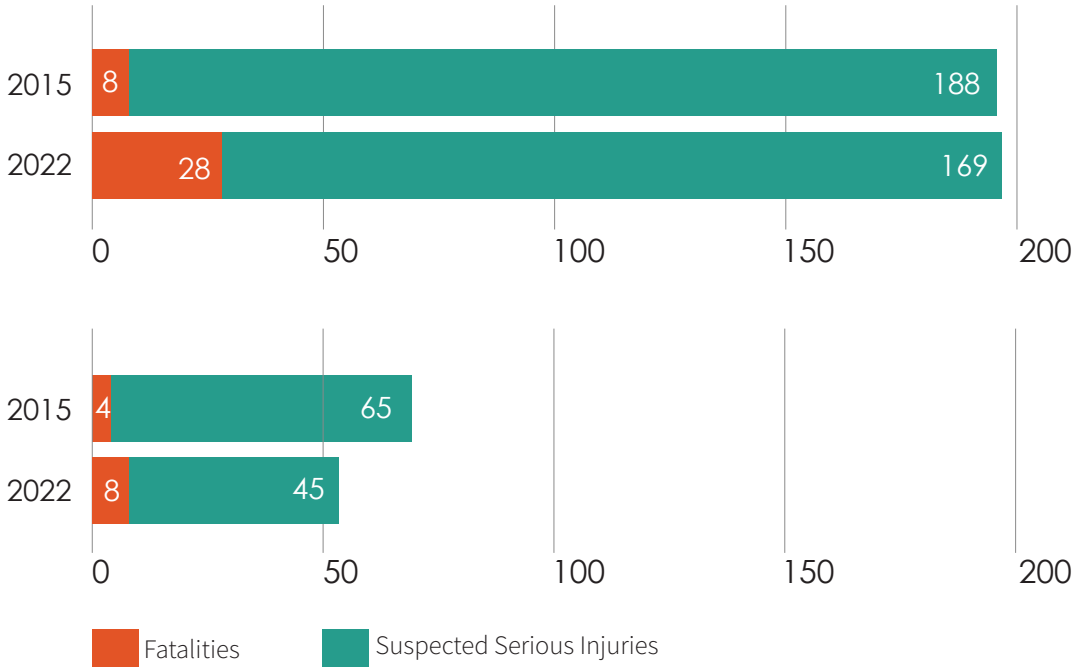

Figure 3 - 10 . Overall, fatal crashes involving pedestrians and cyclists increased since 2015, although crashes with serious injuries decreased. LSU CARTS, 2015, 2022.

RACE OF PERSONS IN FATAL AND SEVERE CRASHES

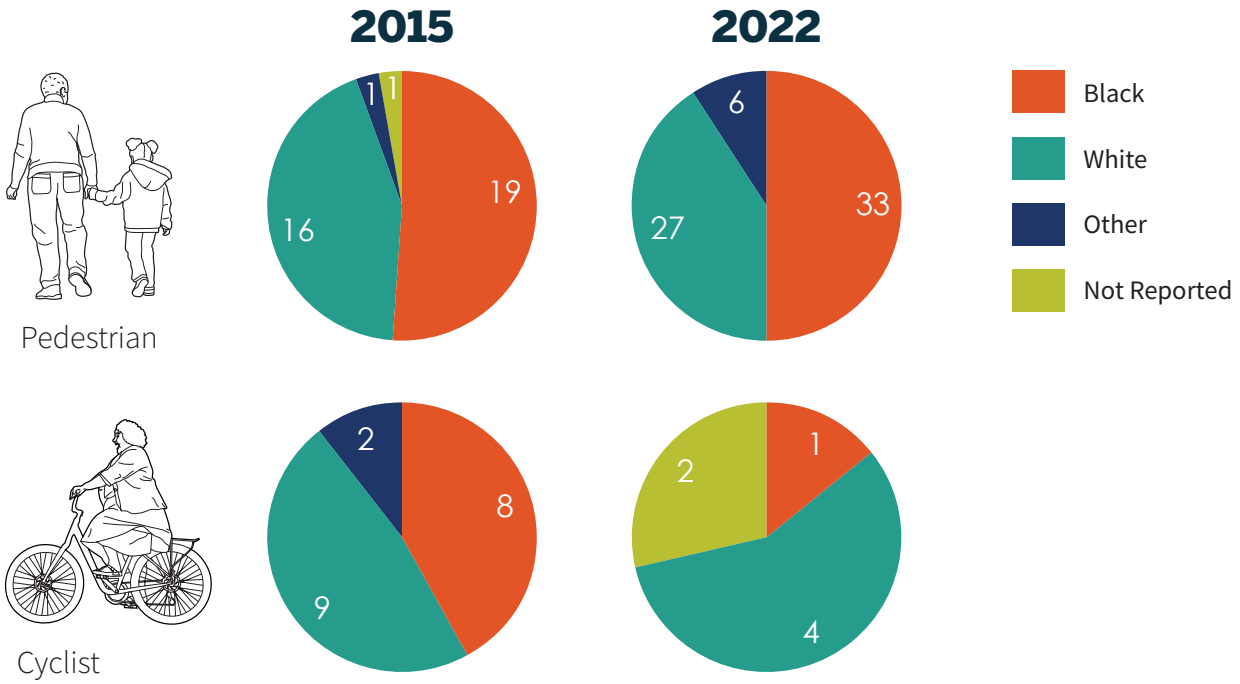

Figure 3 - 11 . Graphic illustrating that Black pedestrians experienced higher rates of crashes, while there was an overall decline in cyclist crashes. LSU CARTS, 2015, 2022.

Overall, fatal crashes involving pedestrians and bicyclists increased between 2015 and 2022 (**Figure 3 – 10**). In 2015, there were 8 fatal crashes involving pedestrians and 188 incidents resulting in suspected serious injuries. By 2022, the number of pedestrian crashes increased to 28 fatal pedestrian crashes and declined to 169 incidents with suspected serious injuries, showing that crashes became more severe during this time. For bicyclists, there were 4 fatal crashes and 65 serious injury incidents in 2015, while in 2022, fatalities rose to 8, accompanied by a decrease in serious injuries to 45.

Race can also impact the likelihood of being injured in crashes involving pedestrians or bicyclists. People in underserved and marginalized communities often face systemic disadvantages, with a higher percentage of individuals living in areas with heavy traffic, higher speeds, and less pedestrian infrastructure, such as sidewalks and crosswalks. This increased exposure raises the likelihood of crashes involving members of these communities. As shown in **Figure 3 – 11**, there were slightly more Black pedestrians involved in fatal and severe injury crashes in 2015 and 2022. For cyclists, there were slightly more white than Black or "other" individuals involved in the crash types.

Endnotes

[1] "Capital Projects." Capital Area Transit System. https://www.brcats.com/page/capital-projects. "FUTUREBR Updates." Document Center. City of Baton Rouge. December 6, 2023. https://www.brla.gov/DocumentCenter/View/18260/Transportation-2023.

[2] "Complete Streets." Smart Growth America. Accessed March 6, 2024. https://smartgrowthamerica.org/what-are-complete-streets/ .

[3] "Dangerous by Design 2021." Smart Growth America. 2021. https://smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design-2021-2/.

[4] "Housing and Transportation Affordability." US Department of Transportation. August 24, 2015. https://www.transportation.gov/mission/health/housing-and-transportation-affordability.

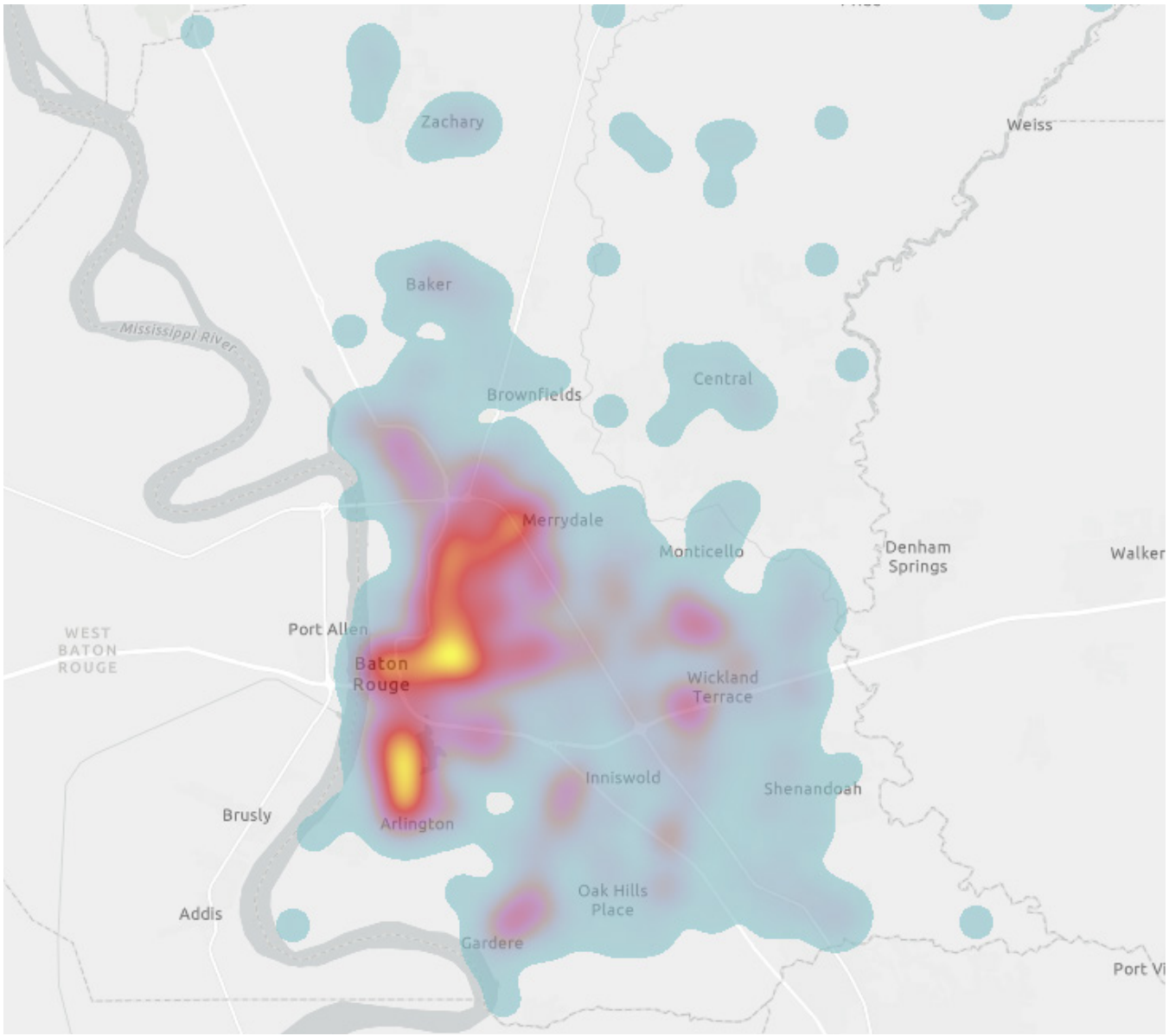

Figure 3 - 12 . Heat Map of East Baton Rouge Parish Based on Pedestrian- and Bicycle-Related Crashes (2011-2015) from the 2020 PBMP.

PRELIMINARY FOCUS AREAS

In the 2020 PBMP, the interactive dashboard was used to aggregate crashes across East Baton Rouge Parish based on their geographic location. **Figure 3 – 12** presents the bicycle- and pedestrian-related crash "heat map," where areas marked in red and yellow indicate a higher number of crashes occurring in the vicinity. At that time, the strongest heat indications occurred in the LSU area and near Baton Rouge General Hospital Mid City Campus, heading west toward Downtown and heading north toward North Baton Rouge. This data has not been updated for the 2024 BPMP, as the baseline data was not available to the team completing the update.