



Midtown Transportation Plan

PLANNING FOR A SAFE, VIBRANT, ACCESSIBLE, MULTIMODAL FUTURE



Midtown Transportation Plan

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

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Midtown Alliance would like to thank the Steering Committee, whose members selflessly gave of their time and expertise in order to make this plan a reality.

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ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

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Setting the Stage

Over the past twenty years, Midtown has become one of the region's defining urban places – a premier business location, a sought after residential neighborhood, a center of innovation and talent, and a thriving arts and entertainment district. This transformation has not happened by chance – it is the result of intentional planning, community action, and prudent investments.

Midtown's foundation is strong thanks to its tight grid of streets and rail transit running through the center of the district with stations every quarter mile. Building upon these foundational assets, the success of Midtown today has been shaped by the 1997 Blueprint Midtown master plan. This plan impacted Midtown in three ways:

1. Transformed Midtown's zoning code to create a more urban, walkable environment
2. Defined projects and programs to improve Midtown's public spaces, and
3. Created a shared vision that gave confidence to investors and developers.

Since 2000, Midtown has seen more than \$5B in private development, \$400M of investments in its streets and bridges, a doubling of its residential and retail space, and a

300% increase in commercial tax revenue. Since 2001, the Midtown Improvement District has leveraged funding from the special assessment on commercial properties to implement more than \$40M of infrastructure projects and programs aimed at improving and sustaining Midtown's competitive edge and quality of life. These initiatives include:

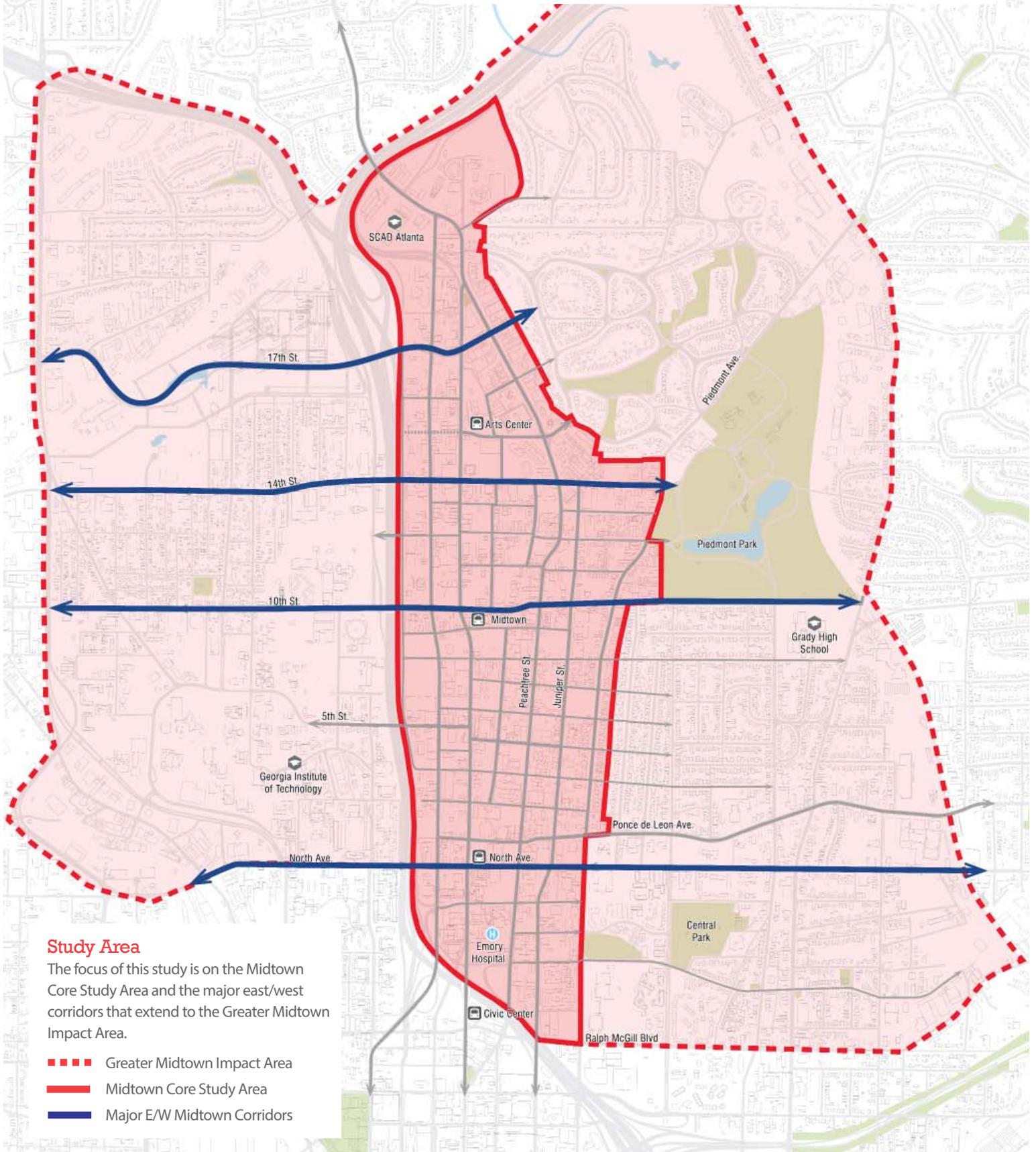
- Streetscape improvements
- Traffic improvements
- Bridge enhancements
- Parks and plaza projects
- Public safety programs
- Clean and Green programs
- Transportation demand management programs
- The creation of the Midtown EcoDistrict

This report summarizes the analysis that was conducted and highlights many of the issues and opportunities that were identified through the planning process. Most importantly, this document describes the projects, policies, and programs that will be implemented over time. The Action Plan document provides more detail on each project, identifies project partners, and offers a strategy for implementation. Finally, there is a Technical Appendix that details the analysis that was conducted and documents the results of the public





INTRODUCTION



MIDTOWN'S GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Safe, Vibrant, Accessible, Multimodal

While much work has been done, many opportunities exist to make Midtown even more vibrant and successful. Midtown's residents, workers, and visitors were actively engaged throughout the planning process to identify the issues and opportunities that matter to them. Analysis of these comments resulted in the following four guiding principles that chart the course for this plan:

- 1. Safe:** Safe streets for walking, biking, and driving is paramount in Midtown.
- 2. Accessible:** Midtown should make reaching destinations easy and convenient by capitalizing on its dense proximity of residential, commercial, institutional, and cultural land uses, its street grid, and its public transportation assets.

- 3. Multi-modal:** Midtown should have a balanced transportation system that reduces dependence on cars and provides a multitude of safe, convenient, and comfortable transportation options.
- 4. Vibrant:** Midtown's transportation system should support lively, active sidewalks and public spaces that support economic development.

While these principles are evident in some parts of Midtown, their application is both incomplete and uneven. For example, cars traveling at high speeds reduce public safety while narrow or broken sidewalks, an incomplete system of protected bike lanes, and a lack of convenient public transportation diminish travel options. This plan sets forth a path to continue to create the transportation options that the Midtown community needs and wants to sustain its success.

“Midtown is the city’s most walkable neighborhood and thriving business district, home to Fortune 100 companies, technology incubators, critically acclaimed arts institutions and acres of green space.”

*Ed Allen, VP Development, The Related Group,
Atlanta Business Chronicle, July 14, 2015*



FRAMING THE NEED

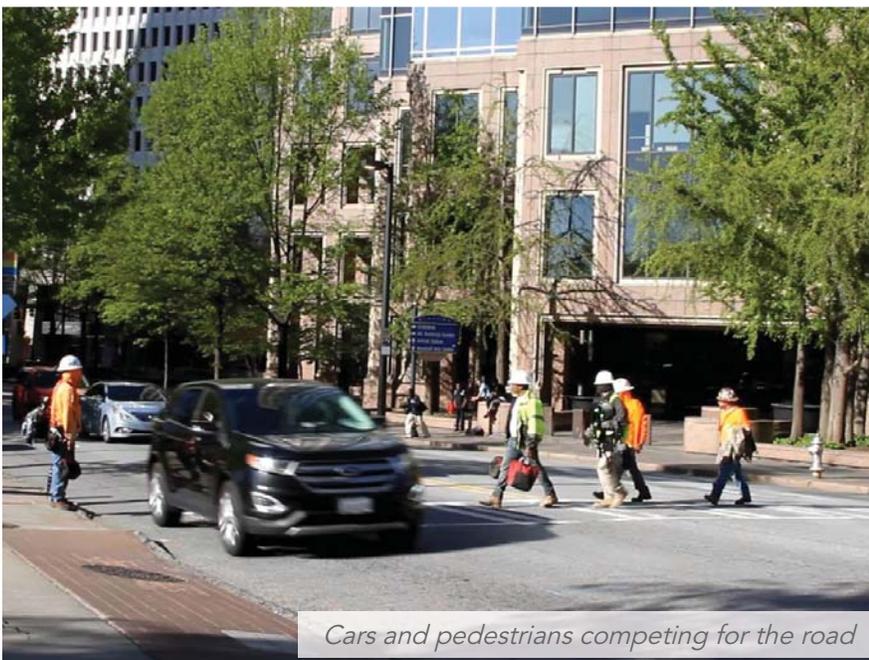
Evolution of the System

“The primary goal of pairing Spring and West Peachtree as parallel one-way streets is to make traffic flow more efficient.”

*Atlanta Journal Constitution Article.
February 6th, 1984*

This transportation plan comes at a critical time in Midtown’s evolution. Midtown is growing, faster than at any time in its history. At the same time, Midtown’s demographic profile is changing, welcoming more young people and empty nesters who have different travel preferences. Additionally, technology is quickly changing the way we travel by giving us better information about routes, modes and travel options. Together, these realities create a unique opportunity to develop and enhance mobility options that will support Midtown as a nationally recognized urban community.

Current conditions are not meeting needs. As the subsequent sections detail, Midtown has challenges that have yet to be met. Midtown is arguably the most walkable and bikeable district in the region, however, there remain safety issues and gaps in the network. Excessive vehicle speeds, primarily during off-peak times, is an issue that Midtown must deal with. Almost all of the Midtown core is within a 6 minute walk of a MARTA station, however, local and regional buses remain underutilized due to infrequent service and spotty coverage. Midtown suffers from regional and interstate issues of traffic congestion. While some of these root causes like congested interstates are not issues we can solve, there are several opportunities to improve traffic flow.



Cars and pedestrians competing for the road

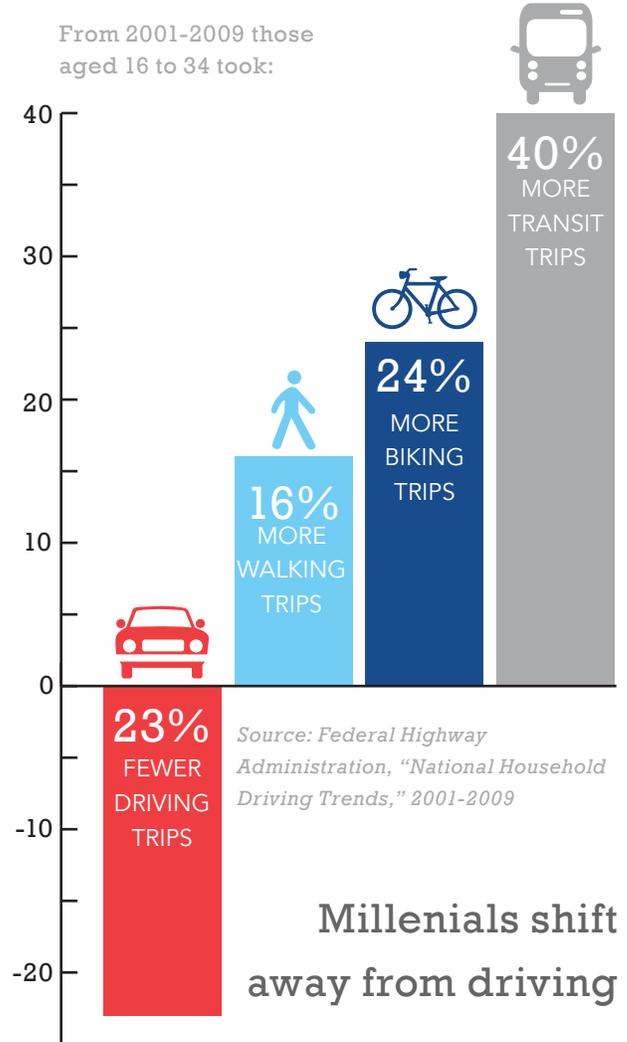
“It was important to have a location with an ability to walk to restaurants and shops and that was close to public transportation.”

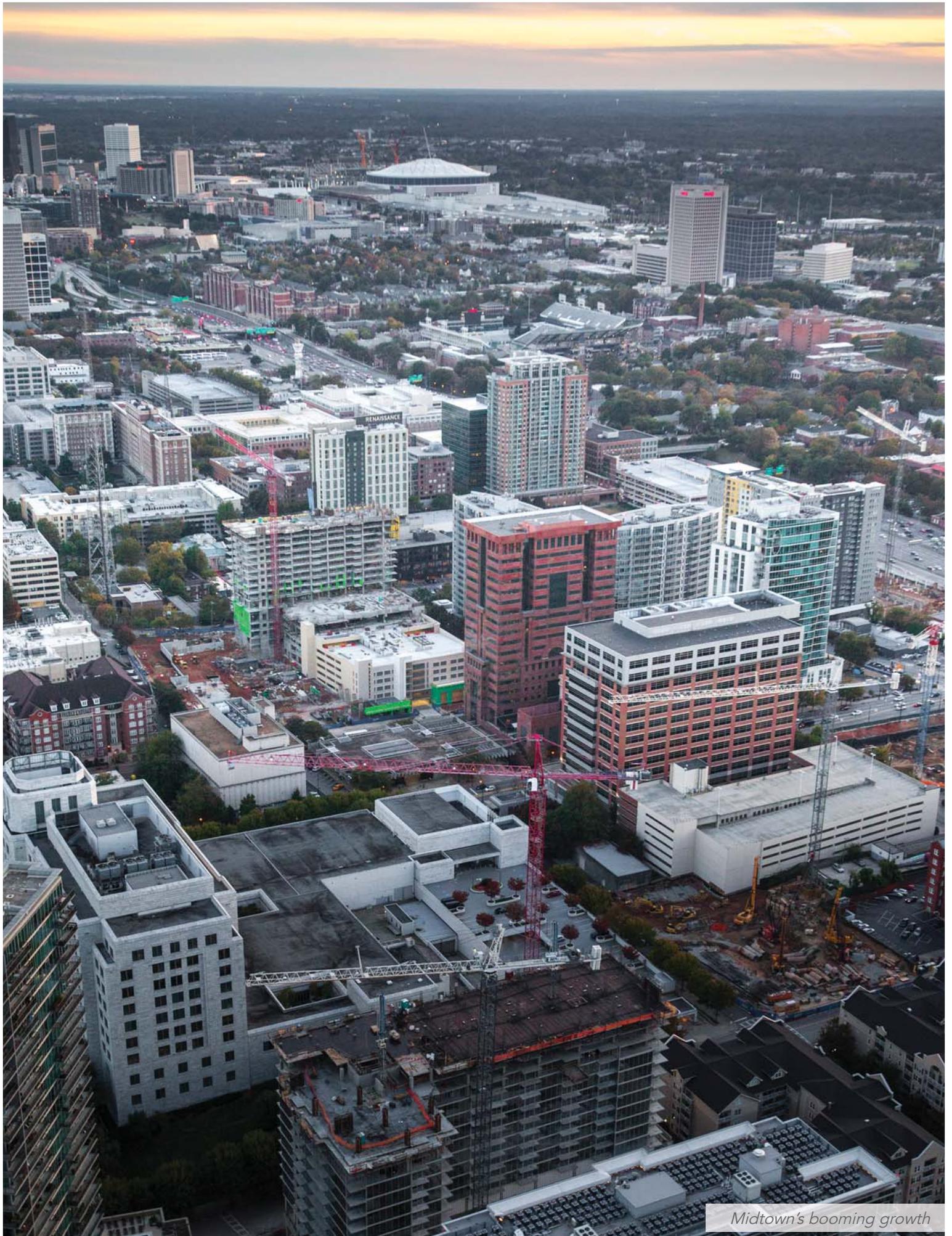
Kaiser Permanente CIO Dick Daniels, Atlanta Business Chronicle. April 17, 2015

Midtown is growing and will continue to grow. Midtown has 65,000 jobs inside a 1.2 square mile area and is experiencing the largest influx of new jobs in four decades – more than 10,000 jobs have been announced for Midtown since 2015. Corporate decision makers are increasingly seeking out urban environments that offer quality of life (walkability, transit, access to a deep talent pool). Even more significantly, Midtown’s residential population is projected to grow from 14,000 to over 25,000 by 2020 (a rate 5x faster than the City of Atlanta overall). Transportation projects and policies must be responsive to all of these users.



Mobile transit application





Midtown's booming growth

Travel preferences are changing. Midtown benefits from a diverse demographic, ranging from young people entering the workforce and seeking a dynamic community to downsizing individuals and couples returning to more connected parts of the region. A recent Midtown Community survey of more than 3,400 respondents showed that 93% of respondents want Midtown to be even more walkable, while about 75% indicated they would like Midtown to provide better bike infrastructure and improved public transportation options.

Technology is revolutionizing the way we travel. Better access to information has allowed people to make more informed decisions about the route they take, when to travel, and what mode they take. Shared and on-demand transportation services are already affecting decisions around vehicle ownership and the demand for parking. Midtown is a part of these changes, with 24 Zipcars located in Midtown's core and Atlanta's bike share program expanding to Midtown by the end of 2016. Autonomous vehicles will have a major impact on how we travel and their implementation is not a matter of if, but when. Planning is underway on the North Avenue corridor to test some of the many new "smart city" technologies including autonomous vehicles.

57% of Midtown residents use on-demand ride services 3 times per month*

**Midtown Community Survey, 2016*



Active 5th Street sidewalks

EVALUATION



PLANNING PROCESS

Building on Previous Success

An early stage of the planning process involved understanding the work that had come before. Midtown has made so much progress in recent years based on the hard work of many in the community. It was important that this plan build on that base. Some of the planning work that preceded this effort:

BLUEPRINT MIDTOWN

Midtown's master plan was updated in 2016 to reflect changing preferences, to take advantage of new opportunities, and to ensure that the plan is highly effective and actionable. It was developed with extensive input from more than 6,000 Midtown employers, property owners, residents, workers, visitors, public-sector partners and subject-matter experts in a robust discussion of Midtown's future.

DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMITTEE

The Development Review Committee has reviewed nearly 30 development projects in the past 2 years and offered input on transportation-related issues including parking, curb cuts, sidewalk access and other design considerations.

STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

Since the creation of the Midtown Improvement District in 2000, more than \$400 million has been invested in public improvement and infrastructure projects in the Midtown core. This includes both public and private funding to build more than 15 miles of new streetscapes and bridgescapes.

SIDEWALK REPAIR PROGRAM

The Sidewalk Repair Program fixes cracked, broken and damaged sidewalks in approximately 100 locations throughout the Midtown Improvement District

STREET NETWORK ENHANCEMENTS

6th, 7th, and 8th Streets were converted from one way to two way streets.

SIGNAL OPTIMIZATION

The Midtown Traffic Operations Program (MTO) is a multi-year initiative funded by the Georgia DOT and managed by Midtown Alliance to upgrade traffic signal equipment, improve signal timing, and maintain signals to improve traffic flow and pedestrian safety.

TRAVEL DEMAND MANAGEMENT

Midtown Transportation (MT) is a program of Midtown Alliance that engages employers, property managers, and employees around commute options like transit, carpooling, walking, biking, and telework.

PLANNING PROCESS

Focused on Implementation

Since 2000, the MID has contributed more than \$20 million to leverage more than \$400 million in public and private funding for infrastructure improvements, transportation network enhancements and public park spaces.

The likelihood that a plan is successfully implemented is a function of establishing a common vision, bringing stakeholders and implementation partners along in the process, and keeping a clear focus on implementation from the very beginning. This plan was developed in tandem with an update of Midtown's master plan, Blueprint 3.0. Much of the land use and urban design strategies that affect how people move around are addressed in Blueprint 3.0. Together, Blueprint 3.0 and the Midtown Transportation Plan recognize the inherent connection between land use, urban design, and transportation and shape a common vision for an exceptionally walkable, urban environment.

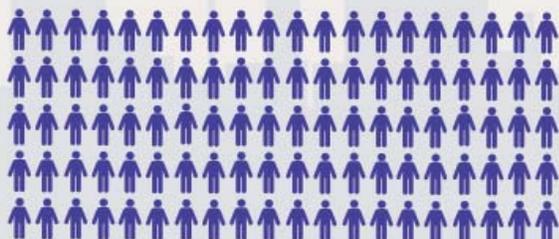
This planning process was grounded in facts and analysis and incorporated a layered and vigorous community engagement effort. Examples of best practices from around the world were brought to the table for consideration. Midtown has reached the stage where the opportunities for easy win interventions are limited. Therefore this planning process was often focused on trade-offs – for example, modest changes in the level of service afforded to drivers in order to achieve safer and more convenient options for people taking transit, walking, or biking.

MIDTOWN TRANSPORTATION PLAN PUBLIC INPUT SUMMARY

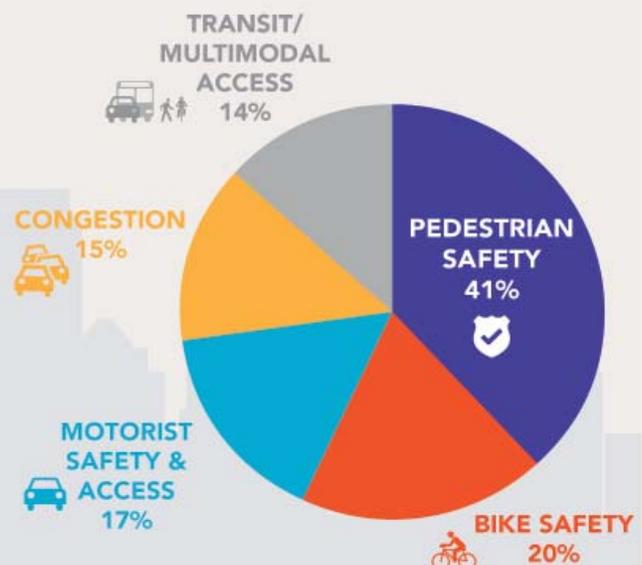
NUMBER OF PEOPLE REACHED

1,000+
PARTICIPANTS

1 person icon = 10 PEOPLE



BREAKDOWN OF COMMENTS BY ISSUE



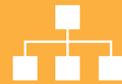
PLANNING PROCESS

How Did We Get Here?

Planning Process

1

Developed a steering committee to guide and inform the process. The Midtown Transportation Plan's steering committee included public and private implementation partners, representatives from business, residents, universities and attractions, property owners, and subject matter experts and was tasked with guiding the planning process and providing feedback.



2

Analyzed existing conditions and engaged the community to identify strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and opportunities. Detailed analysis and an abundance of community engagement activities identified issues and opportunities and provided an opportunity to educate the public on challenges and trade-offs.



3

Agreed upon core principles to which all projects should address. A key outcome of the community engagement and steering committee process was the development of shared principles that would be used as the basis for evaluating the effectiveness of project ideas.



4

Developed a list of preliminary project ideas and analyzed for feasibility. Put all ideas on the table and began to sort and aggregate project ideas based on their feasibility given known physical and financial constraints.



5

Measured projects against the plan's principles. Evaluated and began prioritizing projects based on how they address identified issues and aligned with the plan's established principles.



6

Considered tradeoffs of projects. A review and analysis of remaining project ideas considered positive and negative impacts to the District and other modes of transportation.



7

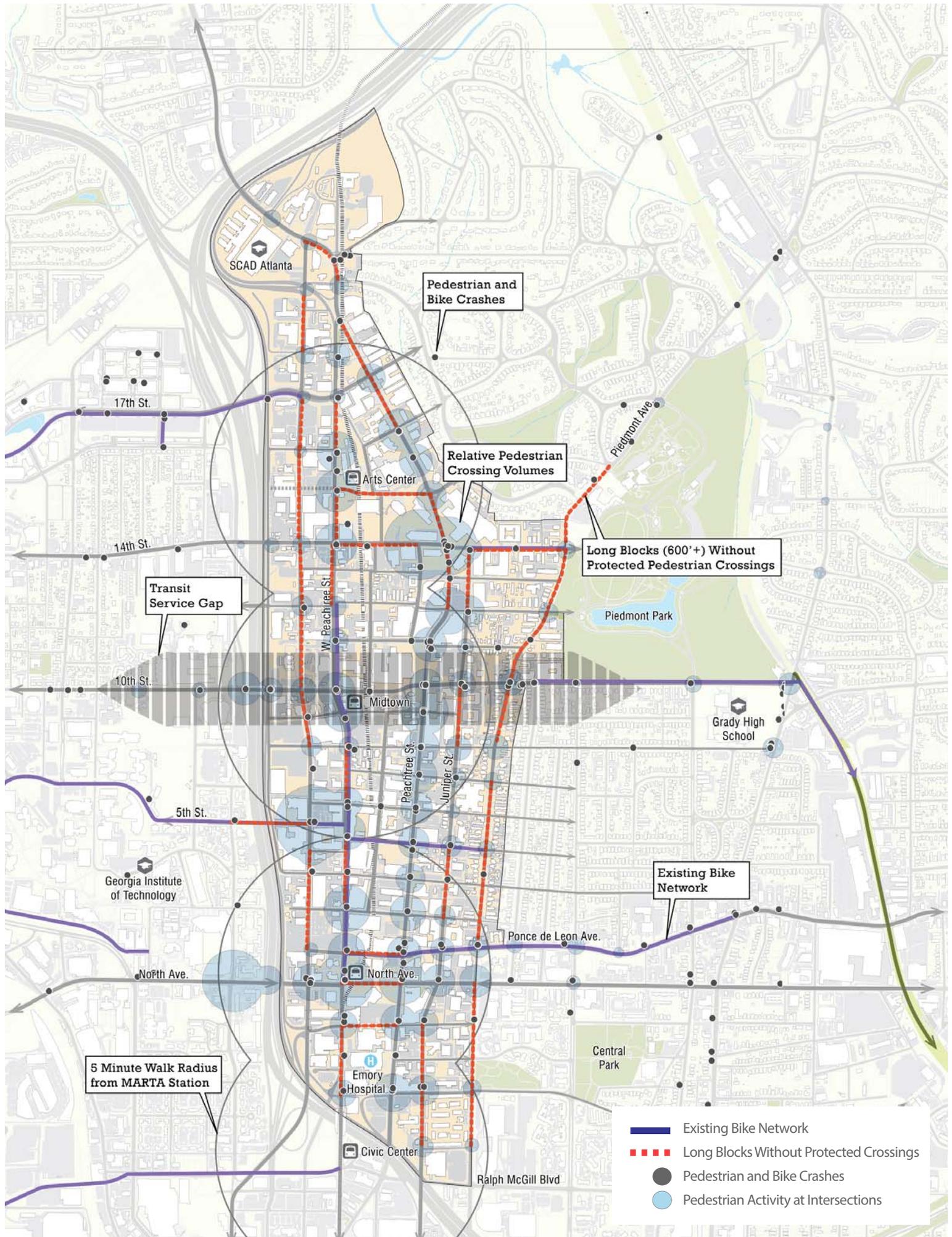
Consolidated and refined into project recommendations. Leading project ideas were shaped into a coherent package of recommendations that aligned with core principles, addressed key issues, and balanced the overall transportation system across all modes.



8

Developed an action plan for implementation. Key partners, project champions, funding sources and priorities were factored to lay out a pathway for implementation of recommendations. Given that Midtown Alliance will not likely be the lead agency developing and funding every project or policy, strategies were created to determine how Midtown Alliance could play a constructive role in helping to advance each project, either directly or through leveraging outside resources and working with partners.





5 Minute Walk Radius from MARTA Station

Transit Service Gap

Pedestrian and Bike Crashes

Relative Pedestrian Crossing Volumes

Long Blocks (600'+) Without Protected Pedestrian Crossings

Existing Bike Network

- Existing Bike Network
- - - Long Blocks Without Protected Crossings
- Pedestrian and Bike Crashes
- Pedestrian Activity at Intersections

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Existing Conditions

Midtown has made great progress on building out a transportation system that offers a safe and attractive pedestrian environment. Most notably, 15 miles of Midtown streetscapes have been built over the last 13 years. Midtown has taken great strides to better manage traffic flow through the Midtown Traffic Operations Program (MTOPT). We've begun to make changes to the configuration of some streets to make Midtown more user friendly. The Midtown Development Review Committee has influenced how new development addresses the public and private realms.

Progress to date has helped spur an unprecedented amount of new development. While this is entirely positive, this growth inevitably places additional demands on Midtown's transportation system. While much progress is being made, there are many opportunities to improve Midtown's system in a way that addresses today's and tomorrow's challenges.

There are seven specific challenges that significantly affect Midtown's core principles of safety, accessibility, multimodal transportation options, and vibrancy. The challenges highlighted in this section call to light the strategies, policies, and specific interventions which are needed to advance Midtown's transportation system.

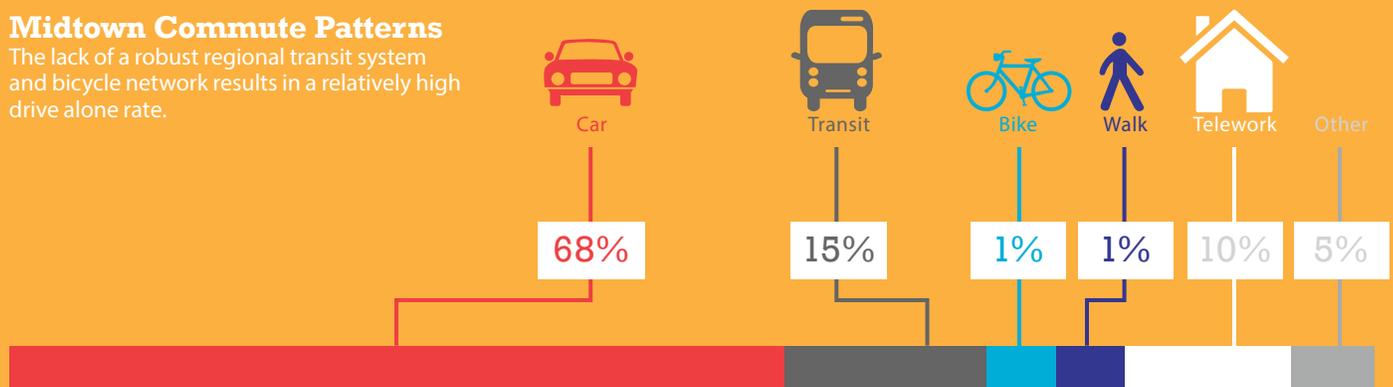
Midtown Inflow and Outflow

Significantly more people drive into Midtown for work than those Midtown residents that work in either Midtown or elsewhere.



Midtown Commute Patterns

The lack of a robust regional transit system and bicycle network results in a relatively high drive alone rate.



Source: 2013 Survey

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Inconsistent Walkability

Walking is safe and comfortable where streetscapes have been improved, but remains difficult and undesirable in many areas.

While Midtown has completed nearly 15 miles of streetscape improvements that provide safe, comfortable sidewalks, many parts of Midtown remain unimproved and fairly hostile to people on foot due to fast moving cars, long blocks and intersections without signalized crosswalks, and broken or narrow sidewalks. These shortcomings were highlighted by the fact that more than 40% of the comments collected through community engagement focused on concerns about safety for people on foot.

While many areas of Midtown are walkable, with frequent crosswalks, street trees, and active ground floors, many parts of Midtown have fast traffic, long stretches between crosswalks and barren sidewalks. For example, a person walking along portions of North Avenue, West Peachtree, Juniper Street, or Spring Street will experience cars traveling at 40+ MPH, infrequent signalized crosswalks, and narrow or broken sidewalks. Block size is another important factor that determines how walkable a city can be. While most blocks in Midtown are on average 400' x 400', there are many blocks that are much larger in size that promote high vehicle speeds, lack safe midblock crosswalks, and force pedestrians to take long detours to distant intersections to safely reach their destination.



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

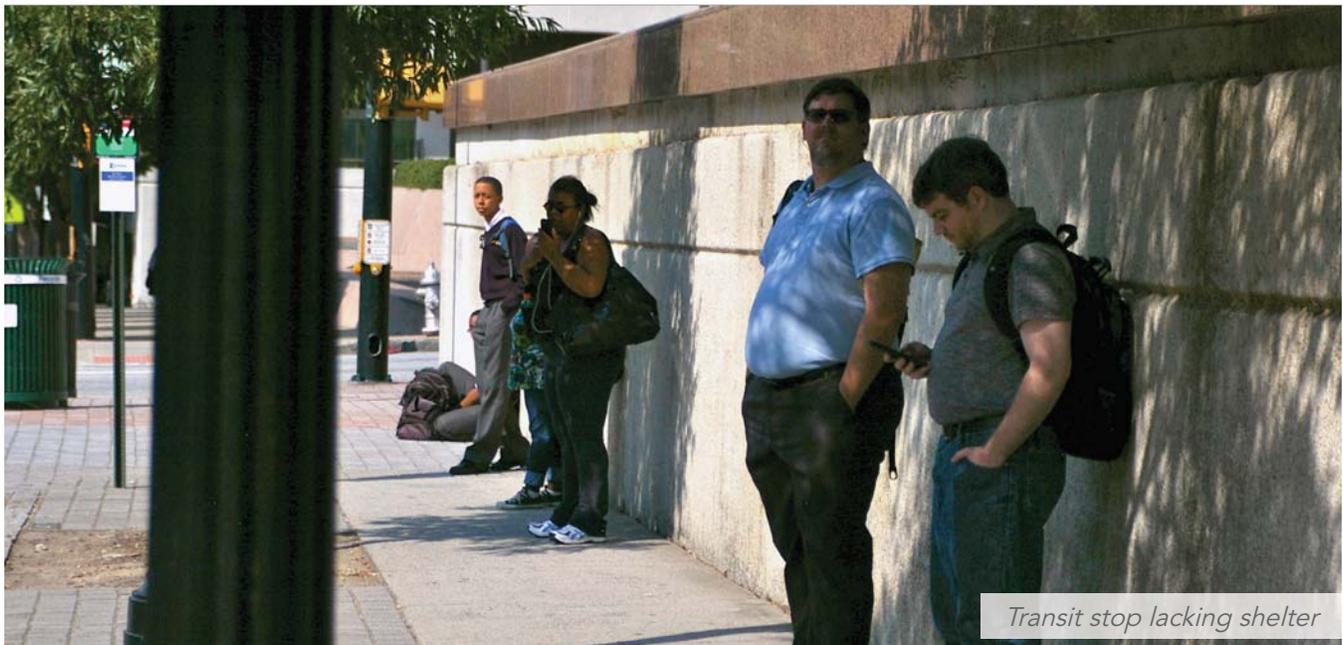
Gaps in Reliable Transit Service

Midtown is well served by four rail transit stations and local and regional buses, but is hindered by a lack of regional transit coverage and unreliable and infrequent service, especially while traveling east-west.

While Midtown is centrally located within the region and well served by four MARTA rail stations, the rail system's lack of regional coverage presents a challenge for many people commuting between Midtown and areas not served by convenient rail service. East-West travel is a particular challenge. For instance, there is no East-West rail service to provide access to burgeoning activity centers such as West Midtown and along the Eastside BeltLine. While 11 local MARTA bus routes and 14 regional buses serve Midtown, infrequent service with headways up to 40 minutes, unreliable schedules caused by buses having to operate amid regular vehicle traffic, and a lack of direct routes that requires bus transfers or layovers reduce the convenience of this service. Finally, a lack of bus shelters and activity in and around transit stations reduce comfort and the perception of safety.

Public Transit Access

96% of commercial and residential buildings are within a 6-minute walk to a MARTA station



Transit stop lacking shelter

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Gaps in Bike Infrastructure

Midtown's bike network is in its infancy and must be built into a complete network to achieve significant levels of ridership.

Midtown's street grid provides the potential to create a premier bicycle network, but there is currently a lack of safe and connected bike lanes. A significant percentage of community comments confirmed that the lack of safe bike lanes discourages many people from riding their bike. To achieve significant gains in ridership, Midtown needs to build off the success of protected, buffered bike lanes like the 10th Street cycle track, which has more than doubled ridership along 10th Street, and develop a network of protected bike lanes that provide opportunities to travel safely throughout the district.



Intimidating cycling conditions

94% INCREASE

Bike counts increased from a daily average of 345 to 786 after the cycle track extension

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Auto Congestion

Auto congestion stems from pinch points, mainly on- and off-ramps to the interstates and regional highways.

Unlike most parts of the region, Midtown has a street grid that provides opportunities for multiple route options. The Interstates, on- and off-ramps, and connecting surface streets are congested during peak travel times. Midtown's congestion issues stem from regional challenges – a congested Interstate system that bisects the district, lack of extensive regional transit across the Atlanta metro area, and sprawling development patterns make transit non-viable for many people. While Midtown can't tackle regional transportation and transit on its own, it can continue to improve signal timing, build out new street connections that help reduce traffic hot spots, and continue to encourage and incentivize commute options other than driving alone.



Midtown's congestion is tied to the Interstate

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Crash Rates and Driving Speeds

Design of some surface streets encourages speeding and creates safety issues as evidenced by a high number of crashes.

Many of Midtown's streets were redesigned in the 1970s and 1980s into multi-lane, one-way streets with the goal of moving cars as quickly as possible through Midtown. These design decisions have led to serious safety issues. For instance, per capita auto crashes on Peachtree and West Peachtree are 4-5x the statewide average for arterial streets. On Juniper Street, 84% of motorists are traveling above the speed limit. Motorists can frequently be clocked

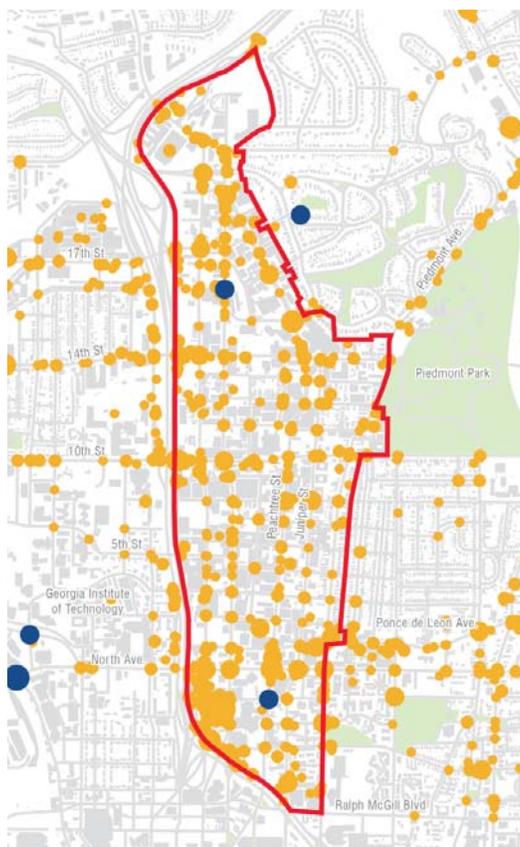
traveling in excess of 50 MPH on Spring Street and West Peachtree Street. These speeds create unsafe conditions for motorists and extremely perilous conditions for pedestrians and cyclists.

Midtown's streets need to be redesigned to slow vehicle speeds, create safer places to walk and bike, and support the growing street life in Midtown. Reducing the number of lanes on one-way streets, increasing the number of protected crossings, adding street trees as barriers, and improving sidewalks are examples of strategies that help to slow vehicle speeds, reduce crashes, and increase safety.

8800 crashes in the Midtown core between 2010-2014

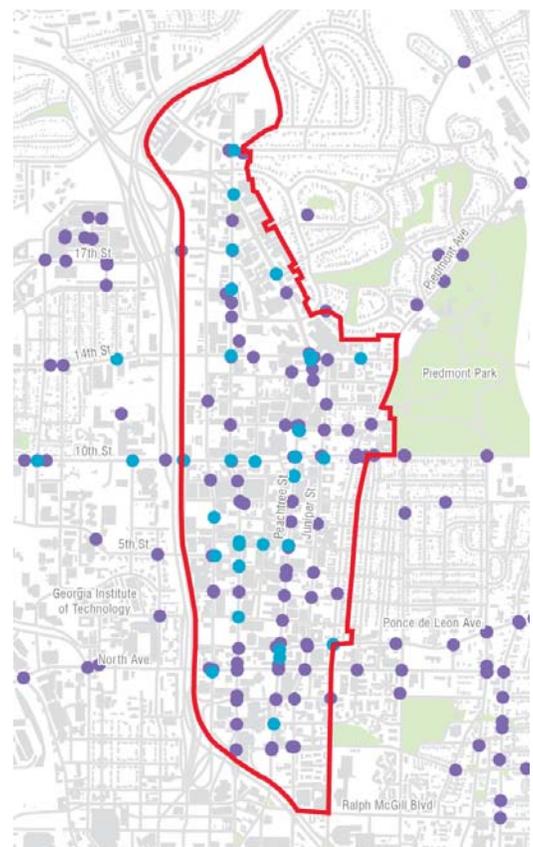
1000+ of these involved injury (5 fatalities)

4 x statewide crash rates for urban minor arterials



VEHICULAR CRASHES WITH INJURIES, 2010-2014

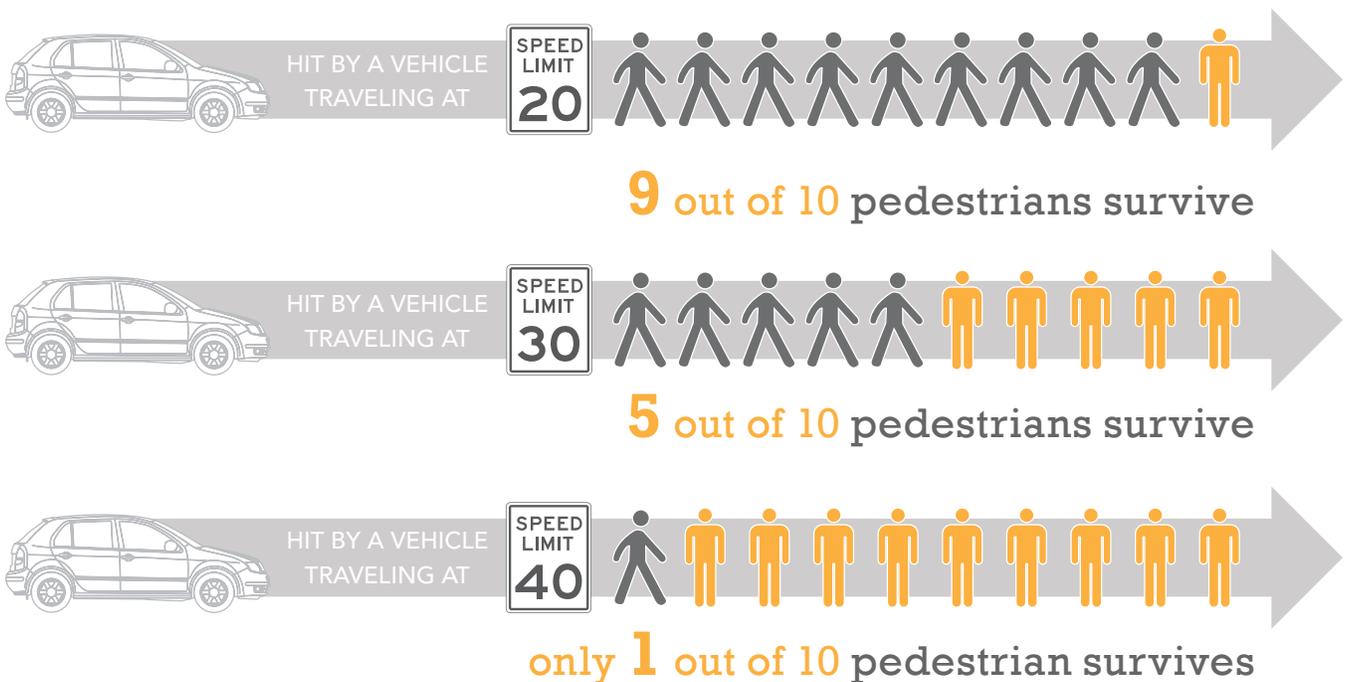
- Vehicle on vehicle crashes with an injury; dot size denotes the number of people injured
- Crash resulting in a fatality
- Crash involving a pedestrian injury
- Crash involving a cyclist injury





Midtown Traffic Speeds

- Posted speed limits are too high for a dense urban area – 30% of Midtown’s lane miles are posted at 35 MPH, 68% are posted at 30 MPH or more.
- Drivers are consistently exceeding posted speed limits - on Juniper Street, 84% of drivers are exceeding the speed limit.



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Gaps in Street Activity

New storefronts and streetscapes, along with a growing residential community, have increased the presence of people walking but many highway over and underpasses lack visual appeal and vibrancy creating a barrier between activity nodes.

The design of Midtown's streets and sidewalks play a significant role in creating vibrant street life and places where people and businesses want to locate. Midtown's street design should complement the character of Midtown's dense, urban built environment. Stretches of Spring Street, West Peachtree Street, North Avenue, and 17th Street represent opportunities to improve streetscapes with wider sidewalks, new trees and benches, slower vehicle speeds, and narrower crossing distances. These improvements will attract and sustain more people and business interest, and ultimately improve Midtown's reputation as a dynamic place to live, work, shop, and play.



Lack of street activity

STRATEGIES



TRANSIT IMPROVEMENTS
MARTA Station Enhancements



PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES
Midtown Art Walk



STREET CONNECTIONS
New Bike/Ped Bridge over Connector



INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS
New Traffic Signalization



STREET CONFIGURATION
One-way to Two-way Conversion



BIKE FACILITIES
One-way Cycle Track

STRATEGIES

Projects Overview

Streets make up the majority of public space in Atlanta, serving as front doors of homes, businesses, and shops. The look and feel of these streets express the values of each community. It is important that Midtown keeps pushing to create the most attractive and vibrant district in Atlanta.

The following transportation projects and policies are intended to help Midtown build upon its strengths and address the challenges identified in the previous chapter: inconsistent walkability, infrequent transit service and a lack of transit amenities, disconnected and unsafe bicycle infrastructure, auto congestion, excessive speeding, and a high crash rate.

These projects are housed under six transportation strategies which vary in scale of intervention and level of impact: Transit Improvements, Pedestrian Facilities, Street Configuration,

Intersection Improvements, Street Connections, and Bike Facilities. Most projects and policies include multiple strategies at once, but have been listed under the primary strategy that they address.

Though some projects will yield significant results on their own, particularly those involving “complete street” improvements along main corridors, they are intended to act as a layered and complete system which provides multiple options of travel to all users.

CHALLENGES



STRATEGIES

PROJECTS

POLICIES

PROGRAMS



GOALS

TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES AT A GLANCE

TRANSIT IMPROVEMENTS

New high-quality transit
Enhanced operation of existing systems

PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

Pedestrian facility improvements
Mid-block crossings
On-street Parking

STREET CONFIGURATION

Reallocation of travel lanes
One-way to Two-way Conversions

INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS

Signalized intersections
Street alignments
Interstate ramps

STREET CONNECTIONS

New pedestrian connections
New vehicular connections

BIKE FACILITIES

Cycle tracks
Bike lanes

Transit Improvements

Midtown has a wealth of access to transit in comparison to most parts of the region but still suffers from poor east-west transit access and infrequent service. The projects and policies listed below help to tie the existing system together and make transit more convenient and more attractive for current and prospective riders.

PROJECTS TO IMPLEMENT

- TR-01 Transit Station Enhancements
- TR-02 Midtown Core Transit Circulator
- TR-03 North Ave Complete Street
- TR-04 MARTA Route 110 Improvements

TR-01 Transit Station Enhancements

This project envisions improvements to the interior and exterior of the Arts Center, Midtown, and North Avenue MARTA stations. This would include a cleaning/maintenance program, real-time bus and train arrival information, vending options, station activation, and improved ped/bike connections. The results of these improvements would make riding transit more attractive, more convenient, and more enjoyable.



Pedestrian crossing at the Midtown Station

TR-02 Midtown Core Transit Circulator

This eastside transit circulator would mirror the quality of service that is already available on the west side of the freeway (with the Georgia Tech and Atlantic Station shuttles).



The Tech Trolley performs circulator role

TR-03 North Ave Complete Street

In advance of the City's planned "Crosstown" streetcar connection on North Avenue, this project includes targeted improvements that allow existing and future transit to work better and improve the pedestrian environment. Proposed improvements include the addition of bus shelters, "smart city" features such as real-time bus arrival information and transit signal priority at signalized intersections, and safer pedestrian crossings.

Existing Conditions



Proposed Improvements

TR-04 MARTA Route 110 Improvements

Doubling the frequency on this under used bus line could increase ridership by 50%. In addition to increasing the frequency of service, this project includes the installation of bus shelters and real-time arrival information, transit signal priority, and eliminating the layover at Arts Center Station.

POLICIES

Decrease Impacts of Commuter Buses on Pedestrian Environment: Commuter buses currently travel the length of West Peachtree and Spring Streets to pick up and drop off passengers, primarily at MARTA stations. This negatively impacts pedestrian and cyclist safety, congestion, economic vitality, and air quality along these corridors. Work with the City and transit agencies to develop a plan for feeding commuter buses into outlying MARTA stations or to a single station.

Encourage use of Transit Signal Priority Technology:

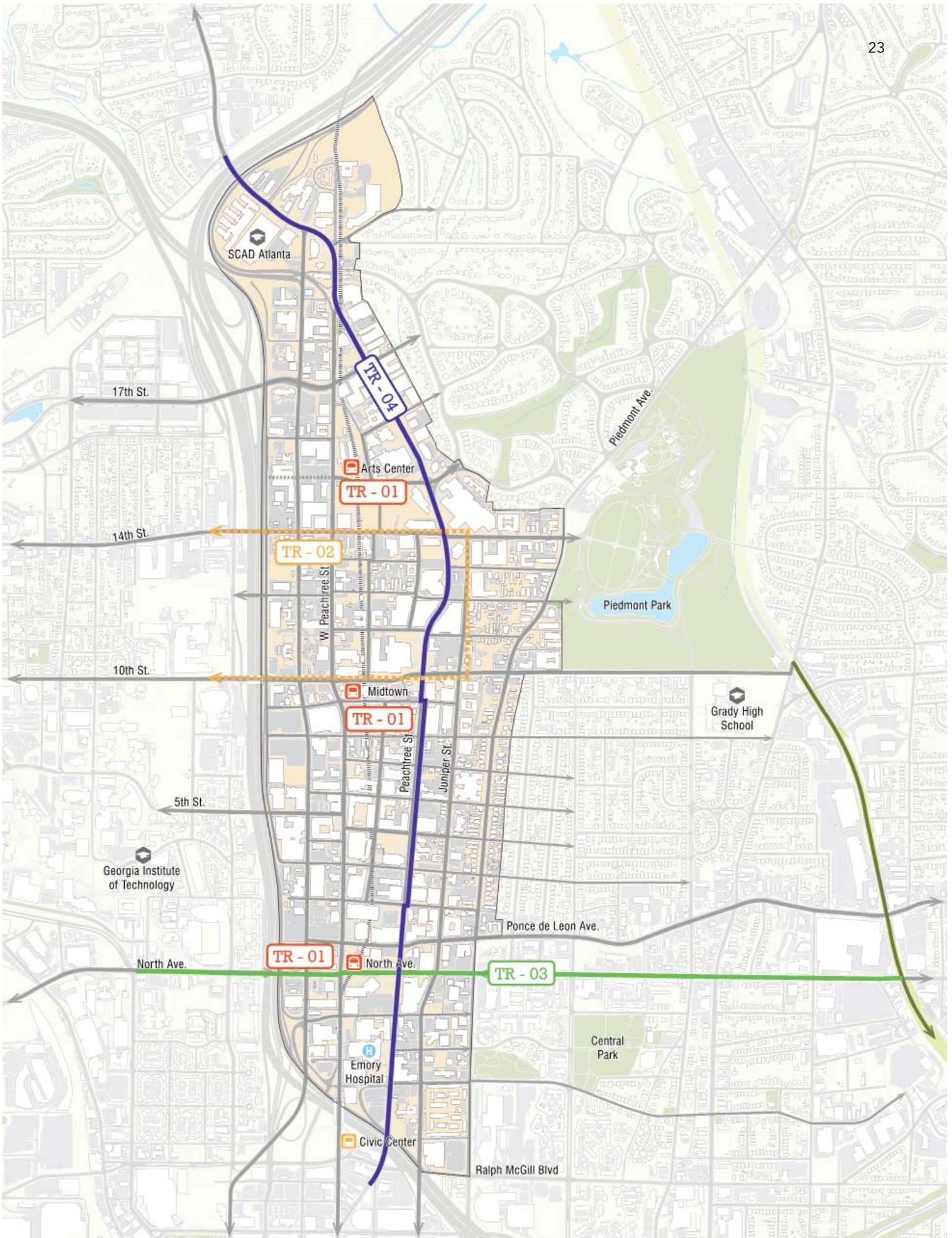
Transit Signal Priority is an operational strategy using special technology to give preferential treatment to transit vehicles at signalized intersections. This could include providing a green light for an oncoming bus or to hold the green longer. These strategies improve travel times for bus passengers and improve on-time performance.

Pursue Small, On-Demand Shuttles for Last Mile Trips:

To attract “choice” riders, transit vehicles and service need to become more user-friendly and convenient. Smaller buses are generally less intimidating to new riders and have less impact on communities. Transit agencies should adopt an on-demand service that provides a similar level of service as Uber and Lyft. Driverless shuttles like Ollie by Local Motors are starting to be tested in cities around the world and Midtown should seek partnerships to pilot similar shuttles here.



Buses with cycle racks enable last mile trips



Pedestrian Facilities

Walkability is one of Midtown’s most treasured characteristics. While there are many streets in the district that are already quite walkable, many require improvements to make walking safer, more comfortable, and more enjoyable. The following projects will result in wider sidewalks, shade trees, improved lighting, traffic calming measures, and safe crossings.

PROJECTS TO IMPLEMENT

- PF-01 Art Walk
- PF-02 17th Street Redesign
- PF-03 11th Street Space Reallocation
- PF-04 10th Street Bridge Traffic Calming

PF-01 Art Walk

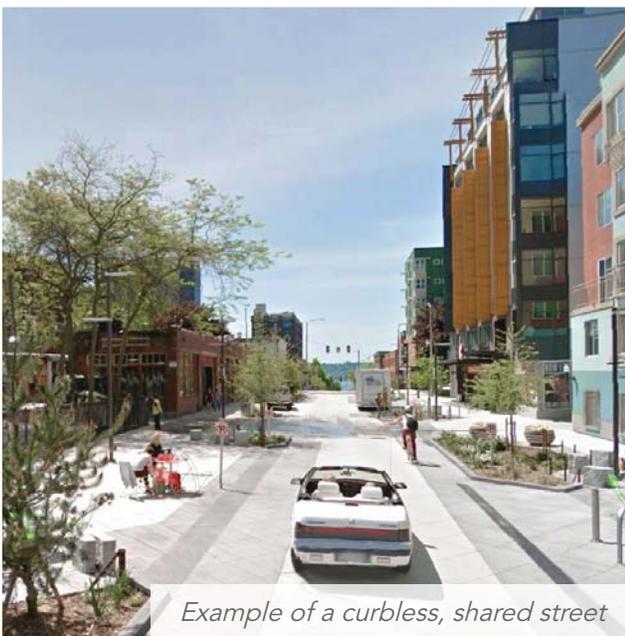
This project aims to create a unique pedestrian experience punctuated by creative design treatments, lighting, and interactive artistic elements along a one-mile walk between the North Ave and Arts Center MARTA Stations. Sections of this corridor could become “shared” streets that blur the line between sidewalk and street while maintaining access for slow moving vehicles.

PF-02 17th Street Redesign

The addition of the 17th Street Bridge crossing in 2004 created new connectivity that made the development of Atlantic Station possible. However, the current design of the corridor presents a hostile and uncomfortable place for pedestrians, creates unsafe conditions for cyclists, and encourages conflicts between cars and buses. This project reallocates the space in the street by moving the buses to the center of the street, adds a green buffer to protect and shade pedestrians, and creates a protected bike facility. These improves aim to make travel on the corridor easier, safer and more logical for users.

PF-03 11th Street Space Reallocation

Eleventh Street between Peachtree and West Peachtree Street is a relatively low-volume street that is excessively wide (50'). This extra width encourages speeding and could be used to create a better environment for retail, walking, and bicycling. This project would reallocate some of the roadway space for additional on-street parking, bike lanes and/or a green median.



Example of a curbless, shared street

Existing Conditions



Proposed Improvements

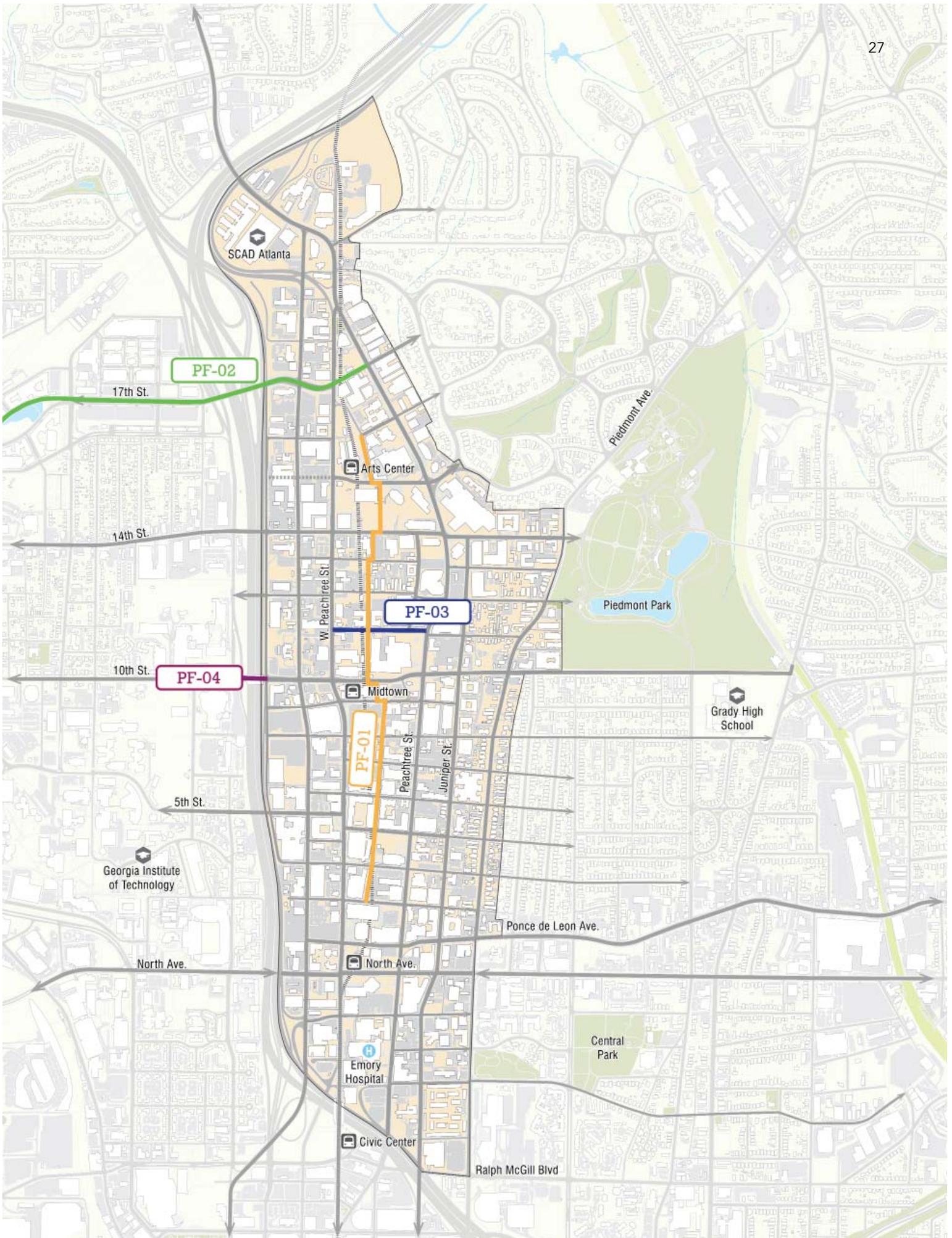
PF-04 10th Street Bridge Redesign

The 10th Street bridge presents a hostile environment for people who walk and bike. As a major gateway to Midtown, the design of this corridor is at odds with the quality of design that Midtown presents throughout the district. This project envisions upgraded bridge fencing, additional landscaping, more lighting, a pedestrian buffer, and a safer bicycling connection.

POLICIES

District wide 25mph Speeds Limit: Excessive vehicle speeds increase the likelihood of crashes as well as the severity of crashes. Reducing Midtown's default speed limit to 25 mph is a necessary first step in taming excessive vehicle speeds. Lowering the speed limits alone is not a panacea but doing so affects how streets are designed and engineered.





Street Configuration

Much of Midtown's street network is optimized for travel exclusively by car. This operational configuration no longer matches the Midtown of today and presents safety problems, particularly for pedestrians and bicyclists. The following projects serve to reconfigure Midtown's streets to make them easier and safer to navigate.

PROJECTS TO IMPLEMENT

- SC-01 One-Way to Two-Way Street Conversions
- SC-02 Peachtree Street Lane Repurpose
- SC-03 North Midtown Street Grid Reconfiguration
- SC-04 Piedmont Avenue Lane Repurpose (14th to 15th)

SC-01 One-way to Two-Way Street Conversions

This project includes converting all of the minor east-west streets in the Midtown core from one-way to two-way traffic operation. This change will make circulation easier and more intuitive for drivers, particularly visitors, and will reduce vehicle speeds. Candidate streets for conversion include:

Pine Street – Juniper St to Peachtree St

3rd Street – Spring St to West Peachtree St and Peachtree St to Juniper St

4th Street – Spring St to Myrtle St

Peachtree Place – Williams St to Spring St

13th Street – Spring St to Peachtree Walk and Juniper St to Piedmont Ave

18th Street – Spring St to West Peachtree St

West Peachtree Street – North Ave to Pine St

SC-02 Peachtree Street Lane Repurpose

Peachtree Street between Peachtree Place and Pine Street currently has two travel lanes in each direction. This stretch of Peachtree has been identified as having the greatest potential for successful retail. It also is a primary route for people traveling by bike given its relative flatness and access to jobs and residences. This project includes the repurposing of one travel lane for either on-street parking

and loading or for a striped bike lane. Adding on-street parking would likely be beneficial to existing retailers and help to attract additional retailers. Having striped bike lanes would make the corridor safer for cyclists. Additional study and community engagement is needed to determine the best use for this right-of-way.



Existing Conditions



Proposed Improvements

SC-03 North Midtown Street Grid Reconfiguration

The character of Midtown north of 17th Street is negatively impacted by a disconnected street grid and the resulting large blocks. The free flowing ramps to the Buford Spring Connector bisect the street grid, encourage excessive vehicle speeds, and hamper development opportunities. As recommended in the Connect Atlanta Plan, this project envisions a substantial reconfiguration of the street network bounded by Peachtree Street, I-75 and 17th Street. This project includes the removal of the aerial ramps, establishment of a grid of complete streets, and at-grade access to the Buford Spring Connector.

SC-04 Piedmont Avenue Lane Repurpose (14th to 15th)

This project would convert the four lanes of Piedmont Avenue between 14th Street and 15th Street to three lanes (including a center turn lane) and repurposes the remaining right-of-way for a barrier protected bike lane adjacent to the park. This lane repurpose allows people on bikes with a safer and more direct connection to and from Ansley Park and the northern part of Midtown.

POLICIES

Performance Tracking: Repurposing travel lanes is often controversial. To better understand and communicate the effects of lane repurposing, it's recommended that Midtown Alliance develop a standard operating procedure to measure transportation conditions before and after each project that repurposes lanes and communicate the results of the analysis. This would involve conducting regular multimodal traffic counts and speeds studies at intersections and mid-block locations.

Multi-modal Level of Service: In order to design streetscape projects that take into account all modes of travel, a multimodal level of service analysis should be conducted during the project concept phase. Traditionally, permitting agencies have only required that a vehicle level of service analysis be performed. A vehicle level of service analysis fails to present impacts of a proposed street design on pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users.

Intersection Improvements

Intersections are the places where the travelling public come together, and in turn where many problems originate. As this district continues to grow, Midtown must place a heavy emphasis on well-designed intersections that are safe, efficient, and legible for all users. Some intersections also provide opportunities to inject vibrancy into overbuilt or underutilized spaces.

PROJECTS TO IMPLEMENT

- IN-01 New Traffic Signals
- IN-02 Buford-Spring Connector Access Reconfiguration at Piedmont/Monroe
- IN-03 Peachtree Street at Beverly Road Intersection Improvements
- IN-04 West Peachtree Street at 12th Street Realignment
- IN-05 10th Street at Myrtle Street Signal Enhancement
- IN-06 North Avenue Alternative Freeway Access and Corridor Enhancement

IN-01 New Traffic Signals

One of the key tenets to creating better walkability for Midtown is the provision of frequent and safe street crossings. While such conditions exist in parts of the district, this plan has identified over 25 locations where protected crossings should be implemented. This project calls for adding a mix of standard and pedestrian actuated signals to provide more convenient opportunities for pedestrians to cross streets. These new signals also provide the City with the ability to better regulate vehicle speeds by timing signals to slower speeds.

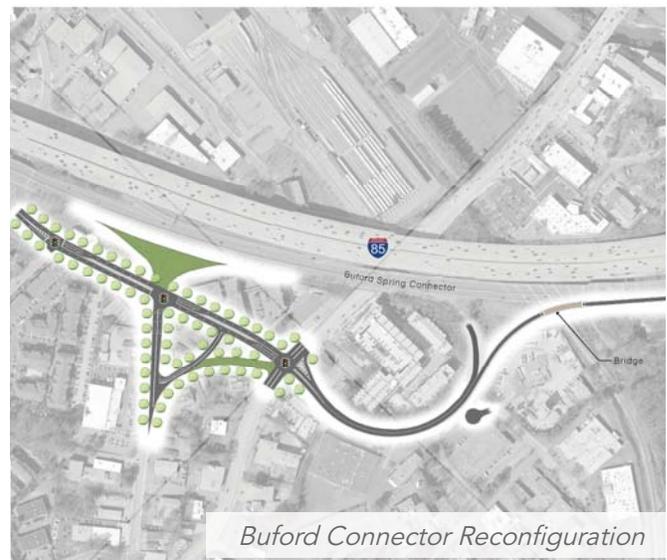
IN-02 Buford-Spring Connector Access Reconfiguration at Piedmont/Monroe

This project – first proposed in the BeltLine Subarea 7 Master Plan – would eliminate an inefficient and unsafe choke point along the Buford Highway Connector. Traffic analysis suggests the area between the Monroe Drive and Piedmont Road ramps contributes to the daily traffic buildup that eventually stretches back to Midtown. While this project alone will not “solve” the peak-hour highway congestion that frustrates Midtown residents and workers, it will eliminate an unsafe weaving condition for drivers and will help to shorten or lessen the severity of some peak traffic congestion.

IN-03 Peachtree Street at Beverly Road Intersection Improvements

The intersection of Peachtree Street and Beverly Road is currently not signalized and does not provide pedestrians with a safe opportunity to cross. This intersection also suffers from an odd geometry. Several alternatives to improve this intersection have been considered over the years, ranging from a large roundabout, to realignment of all of the surrounding streets. This plan recommends a more modest solution.

The proposed project calls for the installation of a traffic signal on Peachtree Street. The refuge island at the southeast corner would be removed and the intersection approach tightened to reduce pedestrian crossing distance. In addition, a second, coordinated traffic signal would be added at Beverly and West Peachtree to provide order to the intersection.



Existing Conditions



Proposed Improvements

IN-04 West Peachtree Street at 12th Street Realignment

This project calls for moving the eastern leg of the 12th Street intersection south to better align the intersection and reduce delay from the extra signal phase needed under the existing configuration. This requires the purchase or donation of right-of-way on the southeast corner of West Peachtree Street and 12th Street.

IN-05 10th Street at Myrtle Street Signal Enhancement

A pedestrian actuated signal (rectangular rapid flashing beacon) was recently installed at this location to provide a safer pedestrian crossing and to transition cyclists safely to and from the 10th Street cycle track. Currently, the flashing beacons are located on either side of the street. Due to the width of the street, some drivers are not seeing the beacons and therefore not stopping. This project recommends that an overhead beacon be installed to ensure visibility and improve safety.

IN-06 North Avenue Alternative Freeway Access and Corridor Enhancement

This project aims to improve access to the area of Midtown between 10th Street and North Avenue and lessen traffic volume on North Avenue. The project calls for the installation of a new ramp and bridge adjacent to the existing North Ave bridge that would allow southbound highway drivers bound for the east side of the Connector in Midtown to avoid North Avenue traffic and make a free U-turn over the Interstate and connect directly to Williams Street. Williams Street would be extended from its current terminus at 4th Street. Given the scope and scale of this

project, additional study needs to be completed to better understand the impacts that this would have on the district.

POLICIES

Don't Block the Box: a simple tactic, adding and enforcing 'Don't Block the Box' signs and striping at key intersections can remind drivers to only enter the intersection when the lanes beyond are available. The time lost from blocked intersections can propagate for multiple signal cycles - worsening peak congestion, endangering cyclists and pedestrians, and generally causing frustration.

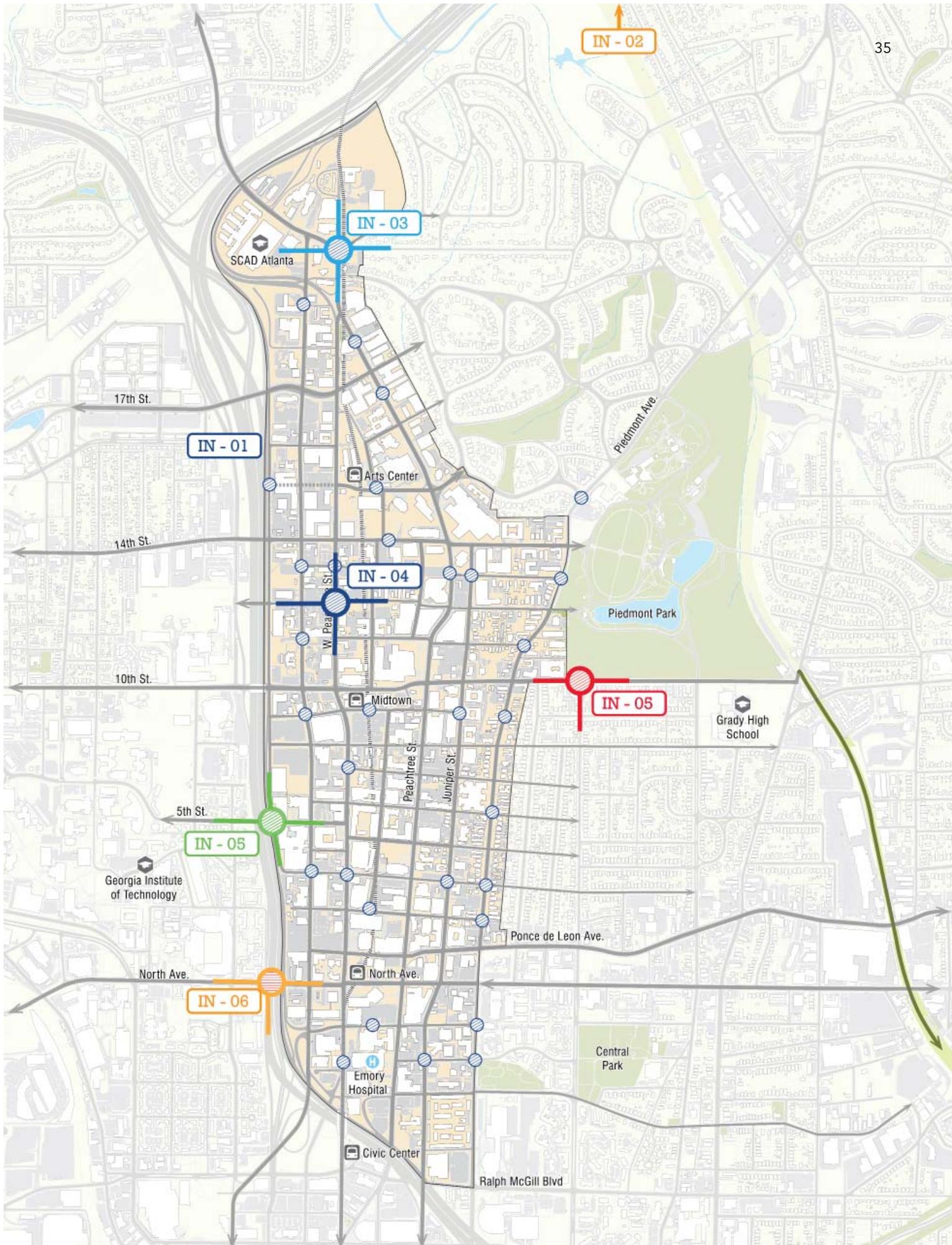
Pedestrian Focused Signal Timing: it is recommended that the Midtown district be the focus of studies to identify pedestrian focused traffic signal improvements including; shorter signal cycles, leading pedestrian interval, all walk signal phases, and high visibility crosswalks.

Right Turn on Red Policy: Prohibiting right turns on red at intersections with high pedestrian volumes will make for a safer walking environment. It is a low cost measure that improves safety without greatly inconveniencing motorists.

Regulation of Privately Hired Traffic Control Officers: Currently, several commercial office buildings hire off-duty police officers to direct traffic, in most cases over-riding traffic signals, to make it easier for Midtown workers to exit parking decks. These traffic officers can have an adverse impact on a coordinated traffic system. The City of Atlanta does not currently regulate this activity. It is recommended that a permitting system be put in place to control if, when, and where traffic control officers will be allowed, with the goal of reducing their number significantly.

Don't Block the Box: The City has begun installing 'Don't Block the Box' signs and striping at key intersections in Midtown to remind drivers to only enter the intersection when the lanes beyond are available. The time lost from blocked intersections can propagate for multiple signal cycles - worsening peak congestion, endangering cyclists and pedestrians, and generally causing frustration. It's recommended that the City stripe and sign additional intersections in Midtown and conduct regular enforcement.





Street Connections

Midtown's well-connected street grid is a major asset that can be improved upon. Street extensions and new connections across the Interstate provide people with more options on how to get from point A to point B, relieve congestion in some places, and provide improved access to parts of Midtown.

PROJECTS TO IMPLEMENT

- NC-01 15th St Bridge and HOV/HOT Ramps
- NC-02 13th Street Extension
- NC-03 11th Street Extension
- NC-04 Peachtree Place Bike/Ped Bridge and Corridor
- NC-05 Williams Street Extension to Ponce de Leon
- NC-06 Re-open 3rd Street Tunnel

NC-01 15th St Bridge and HOV/HOT Ramps

Access to I-85N and GA 400 from the northern part of Midtown could be greatly improved by a new 15th Street interchange. This new bridge would also provide improved east-west connectivity and relieve pressure on 14th Street and provide a safe opportunity for cyclists to connect to the core of Midtown. Much of the required right-of-way

for this project has already been acquired as part of the planning for the 17th Street Bridge and the replacement of the 14th Street Bridge. The ramps to and from the Interstate were originally conceived of as high occupancy vehicle (HOV) only. The opportunity may exist to allow non-HOVs to access 15th Street from the Interstate through tolled ramps. This would provide a funding mechanism and would also provide more value to more people.

NC-02 13th Street Extension

This project extends 13th Street one block at either end so that it connects to Williams Street on the west and Peachtree Street on the east. These two blocks would create a continuous local street that stretches from Williams Street to Piedmont Avenue, providing a needed alternative to congested 14th Street for pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers.



Existing Conditions



Proposed Improvements

NC-03 11th Street Extension

An extension of 11th Street from its current terminus at West Peachtree Street through to Williams Street would, like 13th Street, provide a needed alternative route for all modes of travel around Midtown. This extension would also create good block faces for future redevelopment.

NC-04 Peachtree Place Bike/Ped Bridge and Corridor

A new bike and pedestrian bridge over the Connector via Peachtree Place would provide a much safer connection as an alternative to the challenging 10th Street corridor. This bridge would connect with the multi-use path planned for the south side of 10th Street on the west side of the Connector and create a seamless east-west connection.



Bike/Ped Bridge Precedent

NC-05 Williams Street Extension to Ponce de Leon

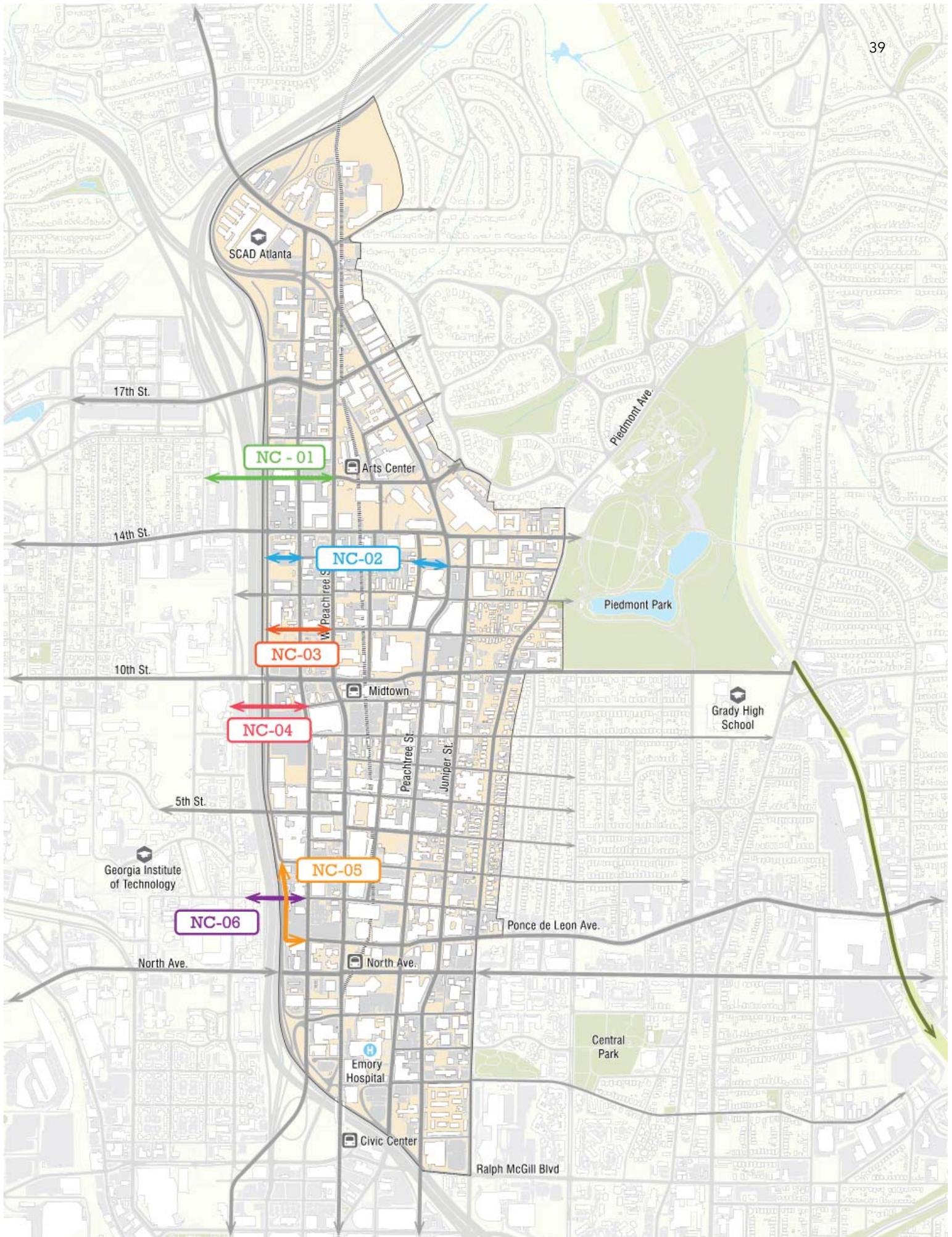
The southern terminus of Williams Street is currently 4th Street. This project calls for extending Williams Street two blocks south to Ponce de Leon Avenue. This extension provides improved connectivity to and from Tech Square and reduces some of the burden on West Peachtree and Spring Streets.

NC-06 Re-open 3rd Street Tunnel

The 3rd Street tunnel that connects the Georgia Tech campus with the southern part of Tech Square has been closed to pedestrians since 2009 due to real and perceived safety issues. Now that the parcels adjacent to the tunnel entrance on the east side of the tunnel are redeveloping, the time is right to develop a plan with Georgia Tech and GDOT to re-open the pedestrian tunnel that incorporates appropriate safety measures.

POLICIES

Update City of Atlanta's Street Master Plan: The city's street master plan should be updated to include the new street connections that bisect privately owned land. This will ensure that the land needed for new street connections will be transferred to the City as property develops.



SCAD Atlanta

NC - 01

Arts Center

NC-02

NC-03

NC-04

NC-05

NC-06

Georgia Institute of Technology

Midtown

Grady High School

Emory Hospital

Civic Center

Ralph McGill Blvd

Central Park

Piedmont Park

Piedmont Ave

17th St.

14th St.

10th St.

5th St.

North Ave.

W. Peachtree St.

Peachtree St.

Juniper St.

Ponce de Leon Ave.

Bike Facilities

Bicycling in Midtown has increased over the last decade despite the lack of new infrastructure. The growth in cycling reflects changes in travel preferences, interest in “active living,” and the trend in in-town living. Cities that have experienced a significant mode shift from driving to bicycling have invested in bicycling infrastructure that is safe, connected, and convenient. Midtown has an opportunity to create a “low stress” bike network that would appeal to the vast “interested but concerned” cohort and become a bicycling mecca.

PROJECTS TO IMPLEMENT

- BK-01 West Peachtree Street Complete Street
- BK-02 Spring Street Complete Street
- BK-03 Peachtree Place Buffered Bike Lanes
- BK-04 North Midtown Multi-Use Path Connection to BeltLine
- BK-05 15th Street Bike Lanes and Street Improvements
- BK-06 10th Street Road Diet (West of Connector)
- BK-07 10th Street Cycle Track Extension (Myrtle Street to Juniper Street)
- BK-08 Piedmont Avenue Complete Street (Ponce de Leon Ave to 15th Street)

BK-01 West Peachtree Street Complete Street (Pine Street to Peachtree Street)

West Peachtree currently has a northbound bike lane extending from North Avenue to 12th Street. The narrow width and placement of the current bike lane between on-street parking and fast moving vehicles makes for an unsafe facility. This project retains the one-way operation north of North Avenue and repurposes one travel lane to create a buffered northbound cycle track. South of North Avenue, West Peachtree would convert to two-way operation with bike lanes in each direction. This project also includes sidewalk improvements, bus shelters, and other traffic calming strategies. When demand for car travel decreases in the future, it is recommended that West Peachtree Street be fully converted to two-way operation.

BK-02 Spring Street Complete Street (17th to Linden Avenue)

Spring Street, the southbound complement to West Peachtree Street, is in need of significant improvements to the pedestrian environment. Redevelopment is finally occurring on this corridor but there are major safety and comfort issues that need to be addressed. This project includes new sidewalks with pedestrian amenities and repurposes one travel lane to create a buffered southbound cycle track. When demand for car travel decreases in the future, it is recommended that Spring Street be fully converted to two-way operation.

BK-03 Peachtree Place Buffered Bike Lanes

Adding bike lanes to Peachtree Place provides a safe alternative to 10th Street for cyclists. This new facility would ultimately connect to the 10th Street cycle track adjacent to Piedmont Park with the off-street facility envisioned for 10th Street on the west side of the Connector.

BK-04 North Midtown Multi-Use Path Connection to BeltLine

Connecting the future Midtown bike network to a second BeltLine location (in addition to the 10th Street/Monroe Drive connection) will provide much needed access to northern part of the district. This project calls for building a two-way off-street paved path from West Peachtree Street, along the wall of the Buford Spring Connector, to the BeltLine’s Eastside Trail. An alternative alignment utilizes on-street connections via Beverly Road and Polo Drive to connect to the BeltLine at Montgomery Ferry Road.

Existing Conditions



Proposed Improvements

BK-05 15th Street Bike Lanes and Street Improvements

Fifteenth Street connects the core of Midtown through Ansley Park to Piedmont Avenue. This project would add marked bike lanes to this extra-wide right of way to allow cyclists to bypass a congested section of 14th Street. As well, the stretch of 15th Street between West Peachtree Street and Peachtree Street presents an opportunity to create a safe east-west connection that provides access to the high density development on 15th Street and to the Arts Center MARTA Station. This project includes the striping of an eastbound bike lane to make it safer for cyclists navigating the long hill. This project could be implemented in tandem with SC-04 Piedmont Avenue Lane Repurpose.

BK-06 10th Street Road Diet (Howell Mill Road to Williams Street)

This project would convert the four lanes of 10th Street along the Georgia Tech campus to three lanes (two travel lanes and a center turn lane) plus bike lanes. This project would provide a more efficient street configuration, encourage safer driving speeds, easier and safer pedestrian crossings, and fewer crashes. Coupled with the benefits to cyclists from the bike lanes, this project should create great benefit with very little additional driving delay.

BK-07 10th Street Cycle Track Extension (Myrtle Street to Juniper Street)

This project would extend the current 10th Street cycle track from its current terminus at Myrtle Street to the cycle track on Juniper Street. This project could be implemented by repurposing one travel lane which would result in some additional congestion or by building the cycle track on private right-of-way.

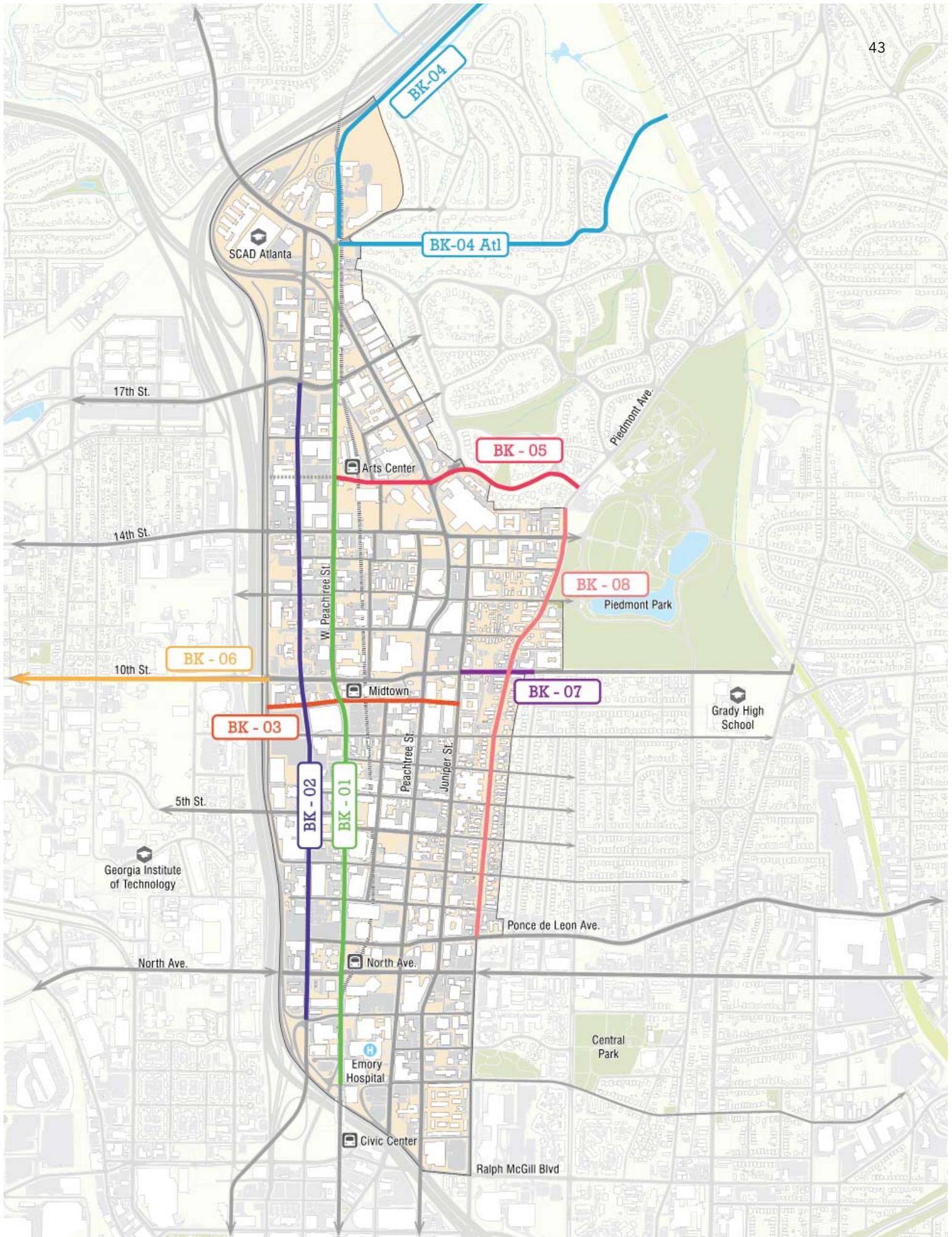
BK-08 Piedmont Avenue Complete Street (Ponce de Leon Ave to 15th Street)

Piedmont Avenue, the northbound complement to Juniper Street, currently suffers from poor pedestrian conditions, disorganized on-street parking regulations, excessive vehicle speeds, and unsafe conditions for cyclists. This project retains the existing one-way configuration and includes new sidewalks, a barrier protected northbound bicycle lane, new traffic signals, and other pedestrian amenities.

POLICIES

Bicycle route maintenance: Due to their location at the edge of the roadway, bike lanes often fill with debris. This can create maintenance issues and potentially safety concerns for cyclists. This policy recommends that the City of Atlanta invest in the equipment and manpower to keep the growing miles of bike lanes clear of debris. More specifically, it's recommended that the City acquire a street sweeper that can navigate narrow cycle tracks.

Signals and detectors: Bike signals, beacons, and detectors can be used to facilitate the safe crossing of streets by cyclists. Implemented properly, these tools can clarify when to enter an intersection and restricting conflicting vehicle turning movements. This policy recommends that the City develop standards for the use of bike signals, beacons, and detectors.



OUTLOOK



EXPECTED RESULTS

Fulfilling Midtown's Potential

The project recommendations in the preceding section address the gaps identified through analysis, fulfill the vision articulated by residents and workers, and create a transportation network that offers users many convenient options.

To achieve the goals and aspirations of this community, Midtown must deliver an exceptional urban

experience on every level – more vibrancy and street life, unparalleled walkability, abundant travel choices, ease of access, and a well-designed and attractive public realm. Achieving these goals will not be easy but they will be worth it. The projects defined in the previous chapter together will result in the repurposing of five miles of travel lanes currently allocated for drivers. This means that we are

able to make major improvements in our pedestrian, bike, and transit infrastructure by repurposing just 8% of Midtown's total lane miles.

The projects and policies outlined in this plan were developed to help satisfy these lofty goals. When implemented, these projects are expected to result in the following:

The plan recommends increased transit frequencies, improved walkability and station access and new services on the eastside of I-75/85 and along North Avenue. Paired with policy changes, the expected results will be:



**INCREASE TRANSIT MODE SHARE
2.5 TIMES**

The plan includes an extensive bike network, lowering of driving speeds and improved crosswalks. The expected results will be:



**INCREASE BIKE/WALK MODE
SHARE BY 40%**

The plan includes biking options for those who are interested but concerned about biking and visitors who might want to use the bikeshare program:



**BUILD 6.7 MILES OF LOW STRESS,
CONNECTED BIKE FACILITIES IN
MIDTOWN**

Investments in sidewalks and crosswalks, along with reduction in driving speeds will improve connectivity. The anticipated outcome will be:



**INCREASE THE HIGHLY WALKABLE
NETWORK BY 30%**

A comprehensive effort to identify the highest crash locations and prioritize resources in those areas will:



**ACHIEVE 20% REDUCTION IN
TOTAL BIKE/PED CRASHES**

Nationally in 2014, 4,884 pedestrians and 726 bicyclists were killed in crashes with motor vehicles (NHTSA). As Midtown invites more people to walk and bike, we will lead the region in creating a safe environment with projects and policies that will:



**ACHIEVE ZERO TRAFFIC DEATHS
IN MIDTOWN AND REDUCE INJURY
CRASHES BY 20%**

Planning for Growth

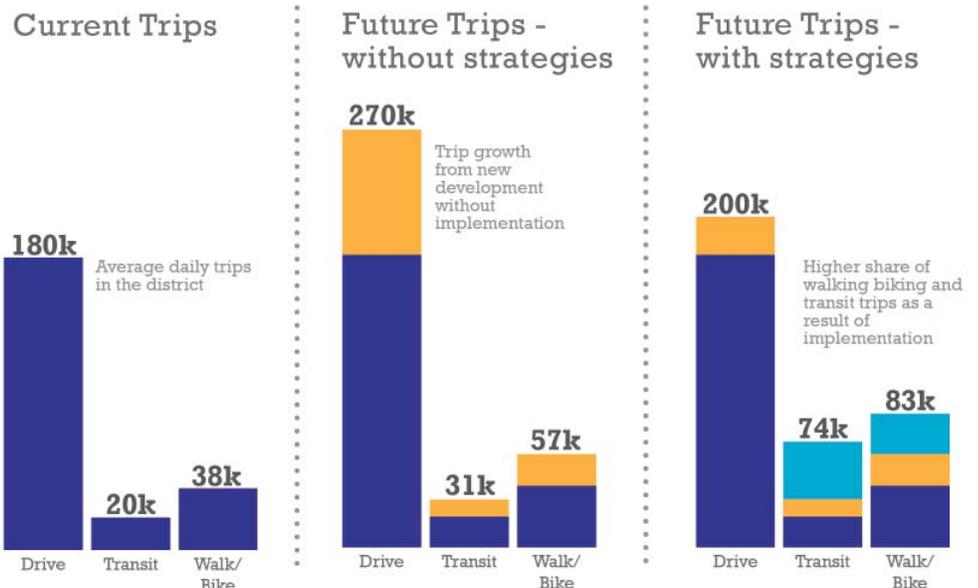
Midtown is growing at an unprecedented rate. Improving Midtown's physical transportation system is critical to accommodating new businesses, employees, and residents. To sustain this growth, however, physical improvements must be paired with policies, incentives, and actions that encourage Midtown residents and workers to embrace alternatives to driving. Significantly increasing the share of people taking transit, bicycling, and walking is necessary to prevent Midtown from succumbing to its own success. This section outlines a strategy to assure that Midtown can continue to grow and thrive without becoming gridlocked.

Midtown's traffic congestion issues are focused around the morning and evening peak periods when most people are traveling in the same direction at the same time. Given Midtown's position in a car-dependent region, the impact of the projects outlined in this plan on congestion is limited by our geography. Every successful city and district is beset with traffic congestion. For retailers, congestion can be a good thing – for commuters, it can induce rage. This plan is not trying to solve congestion but instead manage traffic and provide options.

To be successful, Midtown must make the most efficient use of its infrastructure, continue to encourage a balance of land uses, and change travel behavior through incentives. In addition to improving the physical transportation infrastructure, the following three strategies outline the best opportunity for Midtown to continue grow in a sustainable manner:

- 1. Balance traffic flows** – as espoused in Blueprint Midtown, encourage more residential development to better balance the inflow and outflow of vehicles.
- 2. Improve efficiency** – reduce the peak flows by encouraging people to travel outside of the peak periods; repurpose underutilized road capacity to support non-SOV options; time traffic signals to encourage safe, efficient use of roads.
- 3. Incentivize mode shift** – use incentives to encourage transit, biking, and walking; unbundle parking costs from leases/sales; provide affordable housing options; price parking to change travel behavior.

How Well Will These Strategies Work In Midtown?
 The new transit, bike and pedestrian infrastructure outlined in this plan was modeled and coupled with an aggressive assumption of Midtown development for the next 20 years. The model assumed that a number of the strategies listed above would be implemented. The results are as follows:





Wander
all about
MIDTOWN
WALK & BIKE IN Atlanta
MidtownATL.com

JJ
JIMMY JONES
SANDWICHES

fado
Irish pub & restaurant

The Midtown
Transportation Plan was
designed through a
collaboration between:





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