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City of Athens | **Community Mobility Plan**



Acknowledgments

City of Athens

Ben Burchfield, Public Works Director

Tennessee Department of Transportation

Andrea Noel, Planning Supervisor

Stantec Consulting, Inc.

Ralph DeNisco

Emery Hartz

Dan Hemme

Kat Maines

Catrina Meyer

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Introduction

CHAPTER 01





Nestled in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains of eastern Tennessee, Athens – or the Friendly City, as it is known – is a growing Appalachian community, proud of its agricultural roots, southern hospitality, and general good nature. The county seat of McMinn County, situated nearly equidistant from both Chattanooga to its south and Knoxville to its north, Athens offers its residents a small town feel, even as it begins to feel growth pressures. Managing this growth and accommodating its impacts on its transportation network is a balancing act -- one that requires smart planning in order to reap the full benefits of growth for all members of the community.



About the CTPG

The preparation of this plan has been financed in part by the Tennessee Department of Transportation's (TDOT) Community Transportation Planning Grant (CTPG), which is made available by State Planning and Research funds through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), a division of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT). The contents of this report do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the USDOT, FHWA, and/or TDOT. It is the policy under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that TDOT prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs and activities receiving Federal financial assistance.

In 2020, Athens applied to develop a Community Mobility Plan through the CTPG program, which is administered by the Long Range Planning Division of TDOT, to identify deficiencies and opportunities in the current transportation network and recommend improvements that could be implemented in the future. A mobility plan focuses on all modes of transportation including motor vehicles, rail, freight, bicycles, pedestrians and public transportation; however, the Town wanted to emphasize bicycle and pedestrian improvements, as well targeted recommendations in focus areas where expected future development will change. These improvements are in line with the CTPG program goals which include the following:

- Assist rural municipalities with planning efforts that define **transportation cohesiveness** between **multimodal transportation systems** and **local land use objectives** that achieve state transportation goals.
- Aid **rural municipalities** with the creation of planning documents that support improvements in **traffic flow, safety, and overall efficiency** of the transportation system.
- Provide rural city governments with **planning resources to achieve community visions** related to transportation and land use needs that promote **future economic growth**.



Goals & Objectives

Every good project has a set of specific, measurable, realistic goals that provide the framework for prioritizing projects and determining success. These goals are accompanied by objectives—key action steps to be taken to achieve each goal. While these

objectives are not exhaustive, they provide a set of stepping stones important to addressing Athens' mobility issues and realizing its communal vision. These goals, defined by Athens through public engagement, are listed below. They will guide this plan

EXTEND THE FRIENDLY CITY TO ALL USERS



Improve bicycle & pedestrian safety

Bicycling and walking should be viable modes and not put travelers at greater risk than drivers.

Design & expand the walking & biking network on current streets

More streets in Athens should be equipped to make this safe travel possible.

Create new connections & bridge divides in the existing network

The network should be complete and continuous, including in the locations where gaps or barriers currently exist.

MAKE ATHENS MORE OF A DESTINATION



Provide public spaces where people can gather

Parks, open space, and other community locations that enrich local life and appeal to visitors.

Create & expand recreational opportunities, especially for walking & biking

A complete and connected recreational system.



SUPPORT ECONOMIC GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT



Improve connections between residential areas, jobs, & commerce

Allow access to employment, shopping, and services through multiple means where possible.

Support reliable movement of people & goods

Find a balance between mobility, safety, and quality of life, which may include prioritizing certain roads and streets for certain uses.

CONNECT ATHENS TO ITS REGION & STATE



Safety first, and for all users

Reduce crash rates and improve designs and operating conditions that are a safety risk.

Manage congestion on key thoroughfares

Lessen the reliance on key thoroughfares and intersections by allowing the broader transportation system to help.

ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ATHENS' RESOURCES & AMENITIES



Transportation choices for all

Make transportation investments to allow users to match travel choice to its purpose and the modes to which they have access.

Address the needs of vulnerable users

Plan and design for a transportation system that keeps all users safe and traveling with convenience and dignity.



Process & Timeline

The Mobility Plan developed in three phases through a **two-pronged approach**, focusing simultaneously on system-wide recommendations for overall community mobility as well as targeted recommendations in specified focus areas to address areas of concern. Developing ideas and receiving feedback through focus groups allowed for rapid ideation and iteration on initial concepts, ensuring that a tight timeline was adhered to while meeting overall community needs.

Phase 1 - Investigation

Centers on data collection, preliminary study of the City, and developing the public engagement process. The Steering Committee is formed, goals developed, and analyses begins. The project website, survey, and online maps are launched to begin collecting public sentiment.

Phase 2A - System Development

Using data and analyses from Phase 1, system-level concepts for network design are developed to address previously-identified issues and community goals are identified. Concepts focus on safety, connectivity, and multimodal access for current need and future growth.

Phase 2B - Focus Area Development

Alongside System Ideation, area-specific concepts are developed for five identified focus areas, targeting issues specific to these areas. Recommendations vary depending upon need, but ultimately are tailored to the Plan's goals as they apply to these areas.

Phase 3 - Recommendations & Adoption

Draft concepts are tested through focus groups, the Steering Committee, and public workshops to vet ideas and identify opportunities for improvement. This feedback is synthesized and incorporated into the final Mobility Plan, solidifying the City's chosen path forward through its adoption.



Focus Areas

As part of the CTPG grant application, the City identified five Focus Areas of specific concern where it sought more detailed recommendations to address key issues in the area. Although the rationales for their

inclusion vary, from mitigating traffic impacts of future development to creating safe, multimodal access to key commercial destinations, to improving freight accessibility, each represents a critical location for Athens' current and future growth. Focus Areas are highlighted in Figure 1.1.

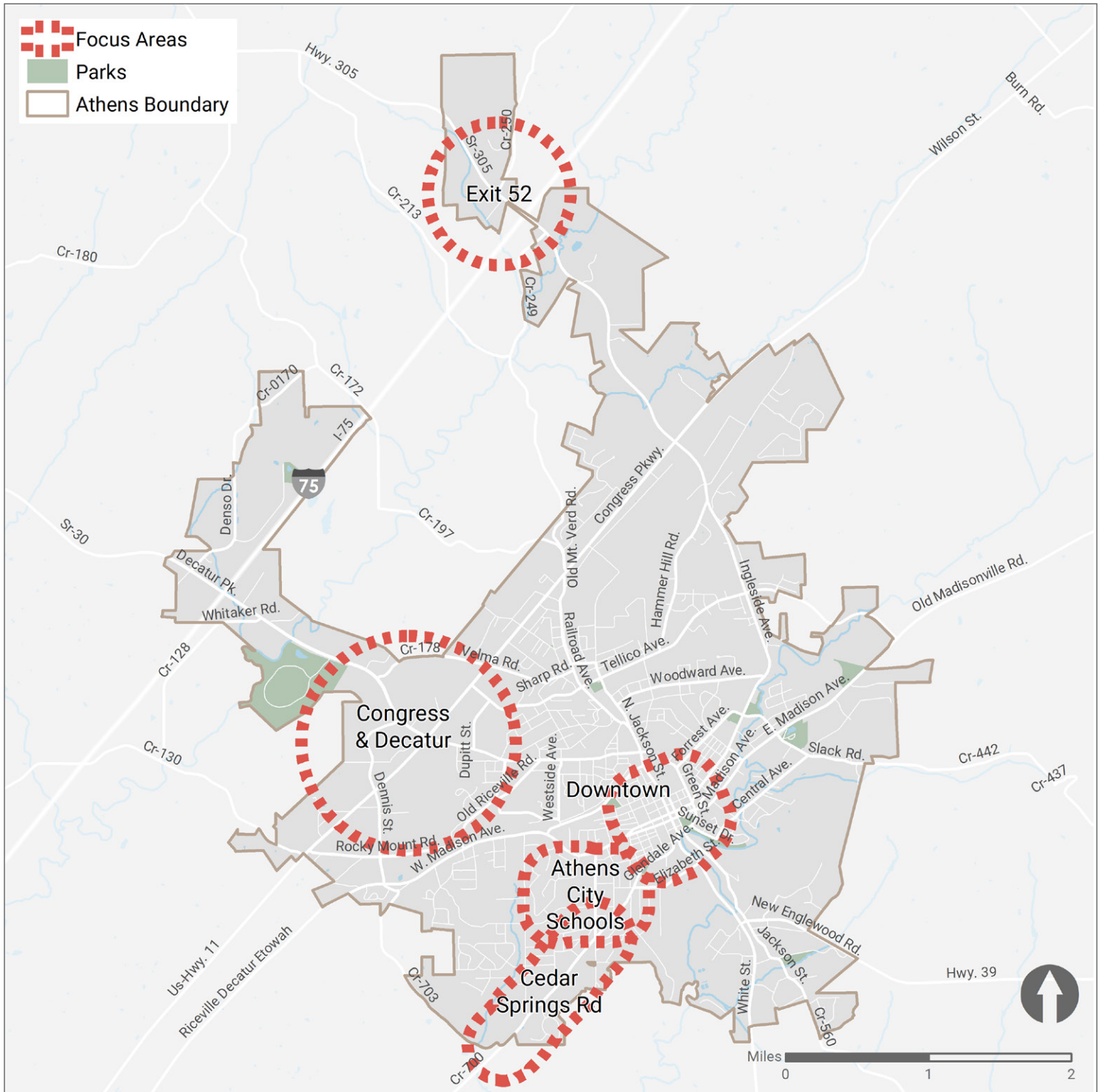


Figure 1.1: The five focus areas being studied as part of this Mobility Plan.



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Existing Conditions



Existing Conditions

Recommendations come from a robust understanding of community values and objectives, but also from an understanding of the current mobility system's problems, opportunities, strengths, and weaknesses.

This chapter examines the Athens area holistically, beginning with its demographic and community context, followed by a summary of previous planning efforts, and ending with a synthesis of the region's multimodal transportation system. The latter includes a review of existing conditions and system performance, laying out key insights that will drive this Plan's recommendations.

In this Chapter:

- Community Overview
- Previous Plans & Policies
- Multimodal Facilities
- Roadways



Downtown Athens, facing west on Washington Avenue. Downtown Athens is seeing reinvestment occurring along several of its streets; improving bicycle and pedestrian experience in this area will support that growth. Source: City of Athens.

Transportation choices are shaped by their surrounding context. Lying in East Tennessee amid the Appalachian Ridge-and-Valley province, Athens transportation network is defined both by its historical development, as well as the rolling topography that surrounds it. Choices of mode and route are affected by the cost and benefit calculations each individual makes before starting their trip. In order to plan for how present and future Athens area residents will travel, the existing transportation network must be well understood.



Community Overview

About Athens

Athens is the county seat of McMinn County, nearly equidistant from the Knoxville and Chattanooga metropolitan areas. The city has seen modest growth over the past decade, with **an estimated population over 14,000 in the present day, representing a 5% increase** from the 2010 Census. This modest growth trend is expected to continue, and the focus areas chosen by city leaders for this process were in part selected to proactively plan for population growth and developments in those areas.

Current transportation behaviors reflect a community that is heavily dependent upon the automobile. Of the working population, **94% of residents get around by automobile**, whether alone (86%) or via carpooling (8%). A mere 3% get around on foot, with **less than 1% using bikes, public transit, or other means of transportation**. Despite this, and reflecting the city's relatively small geographical footprint, over 80% of the population faces a commute of less than 20 minutes to work. However,

as growth occurs, maintaining this dependence on the automobile will create pressure within the existing transportation network, underscoring the need for multimodal improvements and encouragement of alternative modes of transportation.

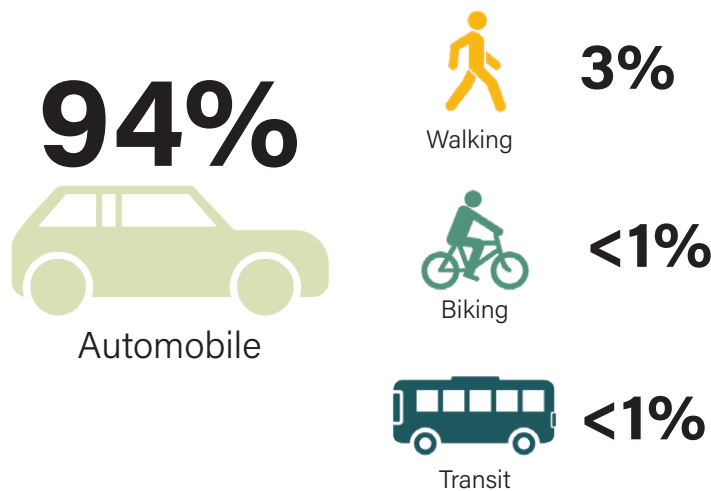
Poverty is an issue in Athens, with 28% of the population living at or below the federal poverty line. Median Household Income has grown to \$31,913, which places the city below the state median. Despite this, rates of vehicle ownership remain high: **92% of households own at least one vehicle**. Eight percent

of households do not own a vehicle, of which renters make up a large proportion of zero-car households (6%) than homeowners (2%). Transportation costs represent a significant portion of household budgets; creating convenient, affordable alternative means of transportation can aid in creating a more equitable transportation system for all Athens community members.

In Athens...

- 94%** of residents drive
- 80%** have a commute under 20 minutes
- 8%** of residents do not have access to a vehicle

How does Athens get around?



Prominent community features, such as downtowns, schools and universities, and key shopping destinations generate traffic and influence travel patterns within the community. These are called trip attractors, or trip generators, and understanding their location in Athens is important to understanding a community’s transportation network as a whole.

Within the City of Athens, these key trip generators can

be seen in Figure 2.1 below. Notably, many of these trip generators are found within the limits of this Plan’s Focus Areas:

- Athens Downtown
- Athens City Schools
- Congress Crossing Shopping Center
- Tennessee Wesleyan University

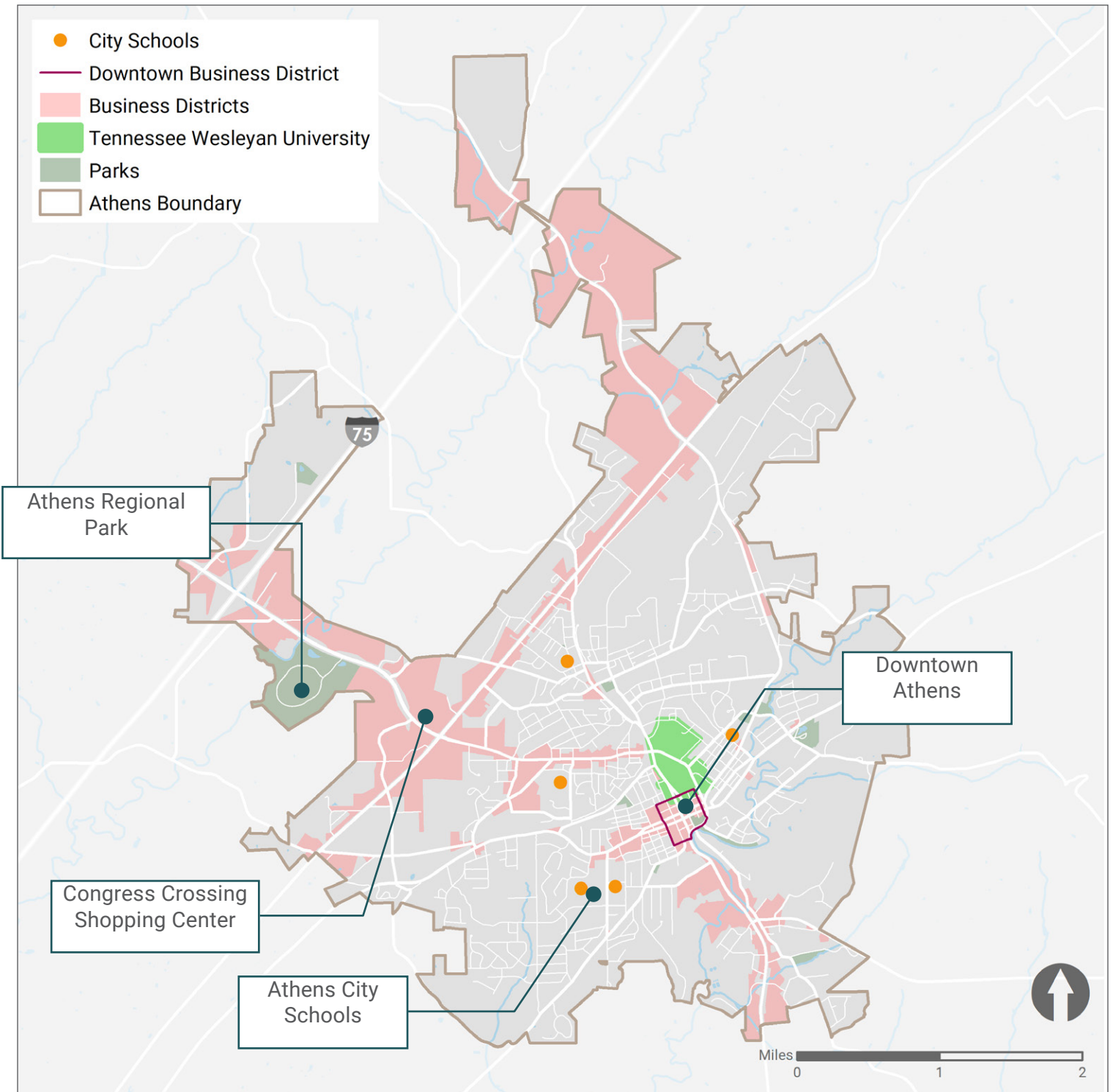


Figure 2.1: Key trip attractors and generators in Athens.



Previous Plans & Policies

This Mobility Plan occurs in the context of Athens' previous planning efforts. These plans provide a guiding framework, revealing Athens' vision for itself and strategies to achieve that vision. With each plan, common themes emerge, which help to shape the recommendations. In doing so, this Plan provides a vision that stands on the shoulders of these prior efforts, consistent with the City's vision, to increase the overall mobility, comfort, health, and quality of life of its residents.

Plans reviewed here:

- Athens Experience Masterplan (2020)
- Athens City Schools Traffic Impact Study Update (2020)
- Signal Timing & Operations Study (2019)
- Comprehensive Land Use Plan (2019)
- Athens City Schools Traffic Impact Study (2017)

Athens Experience Masterplan: the Friendly City (2020)

The Experience Master Plan creates a unified vision for how residents and visitors experience Athens, with a particular focus on branding and downtown streetscaping initiatives. The Plan makes recommendations regarding wayfinding as well as modifications to the right-of-way, focusing on road diets, traffic calming measures, and safety & accessibility amenities in three key areas:

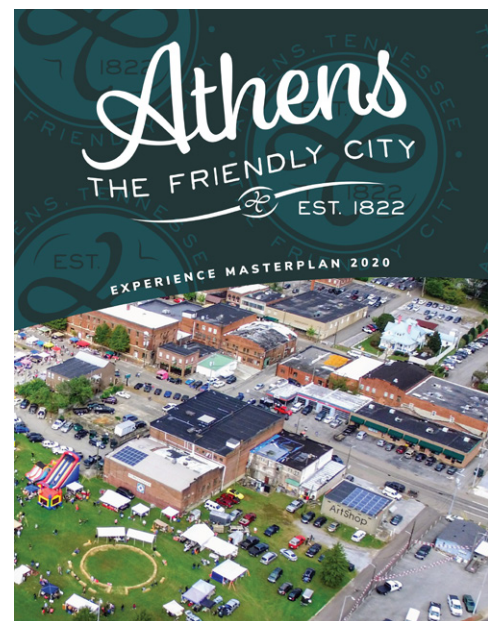
Jackson Street Corridor: the Plan presents two options:

1. Removes a travel lane to reduce Jackson to three 12' travel lanes, with pocket medians for turns. Continuous sidewalks, along with angled and parallel on-street parking nearest to downtown businesses, are protected by planted bumpouts. Crosswalks at Jackson and White Streets create a connection for pedestrians across the corridor.
2. Removes pocket medians from Option 1's design, and further narrows travel lanes, converting the removed lanes to on-street parallel parking.

College Street Corridor: the Plan presents three options:

1. Removes two travel lanes, narrowing College Street to two travel lanes. In their place, sidewalks with landscaped buffers are introduced, along with planted curb extensions and on-street angled parking. New crosswalks are provided at College and White Street.
2. Converts the parking in front of White Street Market at College and White Streets to angled, on-street parking.

3. Converts angled on-street parking to parallel on-street parking.



Downtown Square: a road diet converts one travel lane to allow angled, on-street parking on all sides of the courthouse. Planted curb extensions and crosswalks are introduced at all intersections, and side streets are redesigned to accommodate on-street parking as well. A second option converts angled on-street parking to reverse-angle, on-street parking.



Athens City Schools Traffic Impact Study Update (2020)

The impacts of the forthcoming Athens City Schools complex are a core focal point of this Mobility Plan. Following a site update, the City commissioned an update to its 2017 Traffic Impact Study, which concluded that external intersections would not be significantly impacted from the construction of a new school facility.

The 2020 update forecasts **an increase of 1,100 trips during the AM peak hour, and over 800 additional trips during the PM peak hour, with 68% of these trips occurring on Keith Lane and McMinn Avenue.** A further 14% of the additional trips are projected along Crestway Drive, leading into surrounding neighborhoods. Two alternatives were presented for analysis: the first allowed dual-lane entries to the elementary school from Keith Lane and McMinn Avenue, while the second alternative added right-turn entries from Powers Path and Crestway Drive in addition to those presented in Alternative 1. Southbound right turns were restricted on McMinn Avenue, while northbound turns were restricted on Keith Lane. In all alternatives, entering traffic were designated their own travel lanes.

Examining these alternatives, the Study recommends **Alternative 2**, which diverts traffic from congested entry points at McMinn Avenue and Keith Lane via two bypass lanes. However, the study recommends **removing the restrictions on movement** as depicted below, minimizing circuitous travel and thereby reducing delay. Universal recommendations include:

- A **two-lane, pick-up/drop-off area** for both access areas on McMinn Avenue and Keith Lane with vehicles entering and exiting in platoons directed by a control officer;
- Provide one **50-foot minimum eastbound right-turn lane at Powers Path** to the K-2nd grade access that is set back at least 150 feet from McMinn Avenue;
- Provide a **50-foot minimum right-turn lane at Crestway Drive** to the 3rd-5th grade access that provides at least 50 feet of storage for westbound through traffic on Crestway Drive;
- **Restrict on-street parking adjacent to CPES** and utilize available on-site parking.

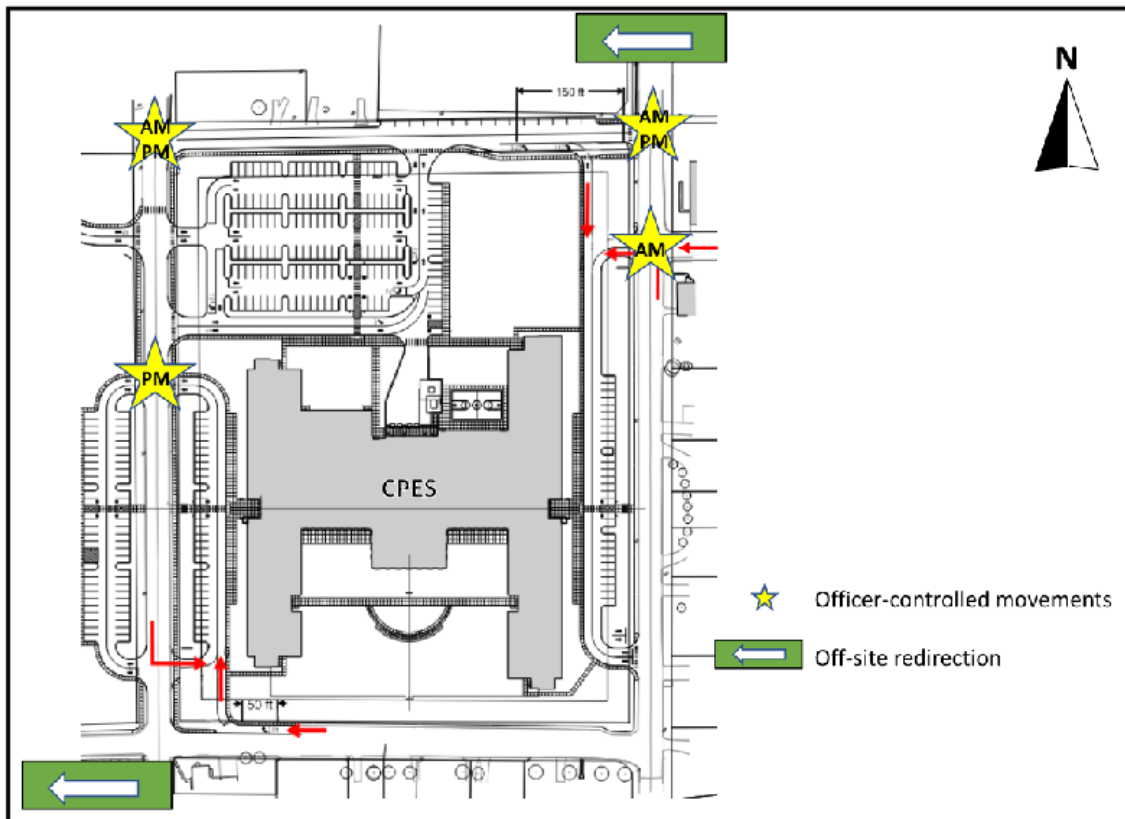


Figure 2.2: Recommendations for traffic operations and movement at the new schools complex.



Athens City Schools Traffic Impact Study (2017)

The 2017 Traffic Impact Study first examined the expected traffic impacts from the forthcoming construction of two new elementary schools and the expansion of the existing Athens City Middle School. The Study examined new trips to and from the school sites, and their distribution within the existing network, in order to make recommendations for intersections and the roadways immediately adjacent to these school sites.

The 2017 Study found that **the new complex would create an additional 1,900 trips on a daily basis** to and from the schools complex, and proposed two options for site access, evaluating:

- 1. Closure of Keith Lane between Crestway Drive and Powers Path.** Traffic entering the elementary school would arrive through the Keith Lane/ Crestway Drive intersection, and Powers Path would function as a two-way street.
- 2. Keep Keith Lane open.** The new elementary school entrance would be positioned opposite the existing middle school entrance, with Powers Path continuing to function as a one-way street.

Finding that several intersections would perform suboptimally, the Study made recommendations for intersection improvements under both alternatives.

For **Option 1**:

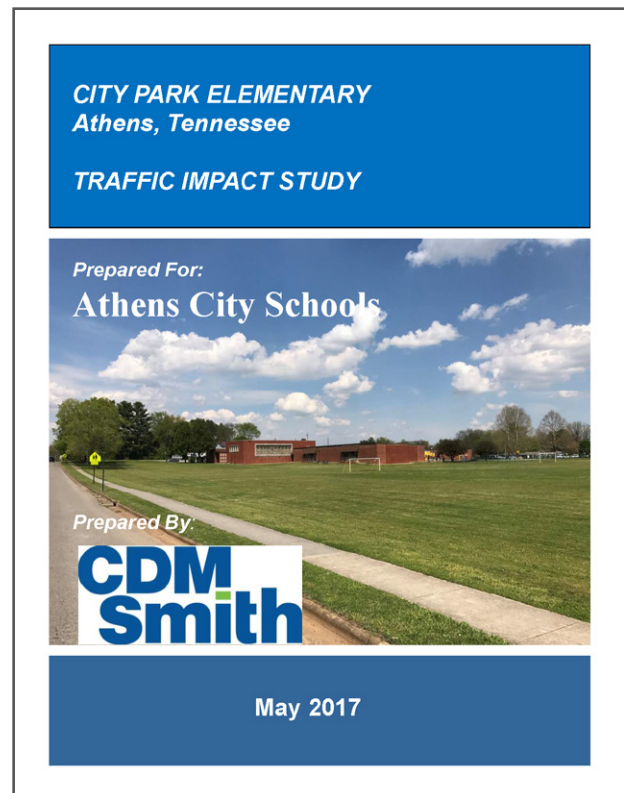
- 1. New left turn lanes** on Matlock Avenue, Madison Avenue, McMinn Avenue, and Crestway Drive
- 2. Restripe Park Street** to provide a westbound turn lane at McMinn Avenue
- Remove on-street parking and **convert Crestway Drive to a three-lane cross-section** with eastbound turn lanes at McMinn Avenue

- 4. Restripe McMinn Avenue** to provide a southbound turn lane at Crestway Drive

For **Option 2**:

- 1. New left turn lanes** at Matlock Avenue, Madison Avenue, and Crestway Drive
- Remove on-street parking and convert Crestway Drive to a three-lane cross section with **westbound turn lanes at Keith Lane**
- Remove on-street parking and convert Crestway Drive to a three-lane cross-section with **eastbound turn lanes at McMinn Avenue**
- Restripe McMinn Avenue to provide a **southbound turn lane at Crestway Drive**

This Citywide Mobility Plan builds upon the joint recommendations of these impact studies. The most current recommendations for the City Park area are reflected in Focus Area recommendations found in Chapter 4.



City of Athens Signal Timing & Operations Study (2019)

The Study focused on two major arterials:

1. SR-2/SR-30: Congress Parkway and Decatur Pike
2. SR-30 Downtown: Green Street

Within these corridors, 15 intersections were studied in greater detail; 12 located in Corridor 1, including the SR-2/SR-30 intersection, and 3 in Corridor 2, including the “five points” intersection at Madison Avenue.

Key findings on each corridor included:

1. **Uncoordinated signals** at key intersections along the SR-2/SR-30 corridor;
2. **Faulty detection loops**;
3. **Five Points cycle length not compatible with coordination** at adjacent intersections;
4. Skewed intersection geometry with Green Street & Ingleside Avenue causes **difficulty in turning movements for trucks**.

Study recommendations:

CORRIDOR 1: recommendations include a detailed final timing plan, with cycle-split-offsets optimized to favor both travel directions with continuous bands through the corridor in both directions. Eight different timing plans are recommended in total, with core foci being turning movements at the major SR-2/SR-30 intersection, **reduction of side street delay, balancing peak and off-peak demand, and school dismissal.**

CORRIDOR 2: recommendations include pedestrian improvements to the five points intersection. Potential improvements include **curb extensions, sidewalk enhancements and extensions, construction of new crosswalks** at Madison Avenue and Washington Avenue, and realignment of the Ingleside Avenue approach.



Athens Comprehensive Land Use Plan (2019)

The 2019 Land Use Plan Update updates the community vision for Athens' present and future development. Using community engagement and analyses of the community's existing resources, including economic, residential, natural, and cultural, the Update sets forth objectives and strategies with impacts on the transportation network. In fact, for many of these objectives, policies are defined with explicit transportation strategies in mind.

Land Use goals and policies include:

1. **Align regulations, services and land use development patterns** with the 2004 Land Use Plan;
2. Protect **historic assets**, including the Central Business District and current H-1 Historic District;
3. Develop **form-based code** to guide the look and feel of development activities;
4. Encourage **adaptive reuse** where appropriate; and

5. Support a **diversified economy**, and **industrial** and intensive **regional business** in Athens.

Transportation policies include.

1. **Prioritize non-motorized routes** connecting parks, schools, residential areas, and regional trails.
2. Provide higher priority for improvements at **high-collision intersections**
3. **Install benches, water fountains, and bike repair stations** along non-motorized routes
4. Prioritize improvements to bicycle routes with existing **low bicycle level of service**

Accompanying these strategies, the Plan also identifies three priority connections pursuant to the first policy, connecting parks and other community assets. These three connections can be seen in Figure 2.3.

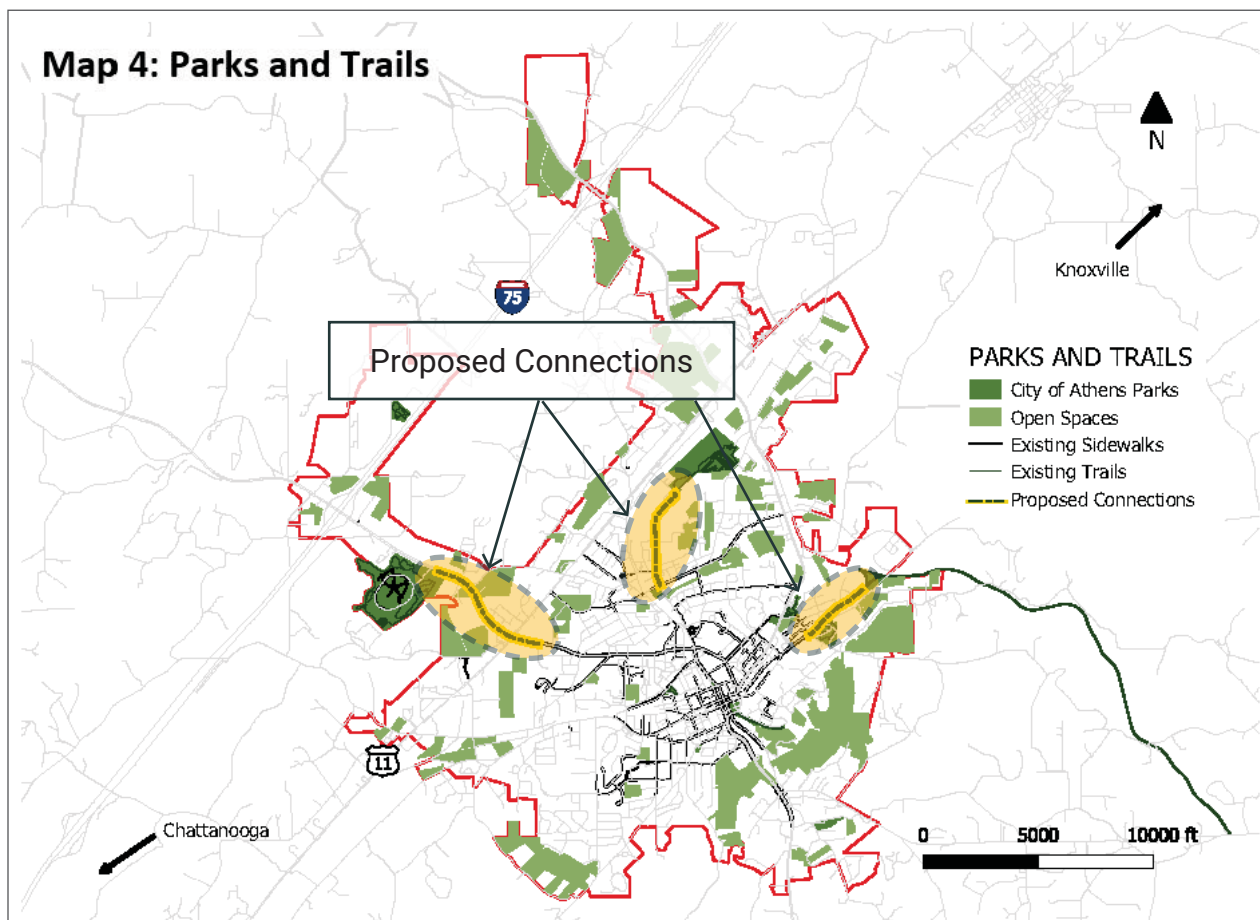


Figure 2.3: From the Comprehensive Land Use Plan, a map of priority non-motorized connections to be made through subsequent development. Source: City of Athens.



Roadways

Athens' demographics and previous planning efforts lay the foundation for understanding how this Mobility Plan can support community goals and objectives. Understanding the transportation network, however, requires a robust understanding of how it operates. Analysis of the existing street network, capacity, connectivity, and pedestrian and bicycle service tells us how the network does -- or does not -- perform for its residents, and begins to frame the recommendations of this Plan.

In this Section:

- Network Characteristics
- Traffic Volumes & Crashes
- Bicycle Facilities & Level of Traffic Stress
- Pedestrian Facilities & Sidewalk Gaps

Network Characteristics

Roadways are, for many, the foundation of the transportation system in Athens. They are the backbone for the movement of people and goods, whether by automobile, transit, bicycle, or on foot. One way to conceptualize roadways is by their functional classification -- the character of the transportation service they provide. Freeways and expressways have a different character than collector streets or arterials. **Understanding these classifications frames our understanding of how a road system operates -- or is intended to operate.**

The functional classifications of roadways in Athens are shown in Figure 2.4. US 11/SR-2/Decatur Pike and SR-30 are the two principal arterials for the city, with a network of collector streets and minor arterials distributing traffic throughout the City. In the downtown area, arterials and collectors are more densely located. Local roads near the downtown follow a grid pattern, with numerous intersections creating connections and distributing traffic along side streets.

Moving away from the downtown, however, **local streets reflect a piecemeal development pattern, lacking connectivity between adjacent developments and limited collector streets.**

Notably very few collector streets exist south and west of Downtown, where residential development is expected to occur. Lacking connections, side streets and collectors, traffic in these areas **is forced out onto arterials, increasing congestion on roads intended**

to function as higher speed thoroughfares. These problems are accentuated in the Focus Areas.

Near the Athens City Schools, few collector streets can be found, and the local residential streets that exist provide only limited connections to the schools complex. Families driving children to school have limited options: McMinn Avenue, Keith Lane, Matlock Avenue, and Crestway Drive; which are only accessible via Madison Avenue and Cedar Springs Road. These limited entries increase traffic on all of these streets during critical school pick-up and drop-off times. While the Traffic Impact Studies make recommendations for signal timing and traffic control, increasing connections to these collector streets and providing sidewalks and bike facilities to allow alternative means of travel is critical to relieving congestion and improving safety in these areas.

Some streets in Athens' network, although currently classified as a local road or otherwise, may meet the criteria for reclassification as a more significant route. These roads, such as McMinn Avenue, Crestway Drive, South Jackson Street, and others, have experienced significant growth in volumes, described in the next section.



What are Functional Classifications?

Functional classifications help to understand roads are intended to be used.

Functional Classification	Length	Access Points	Speed Limit	Usage (Volume)
Arterials	Longest	Few	Highest	Highest
Collectors	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
Local	Shortest	Many	Lowest	Lowest

Table 2.5: Functional Classification roadways characteristics. Source: Federal Highway Administration.

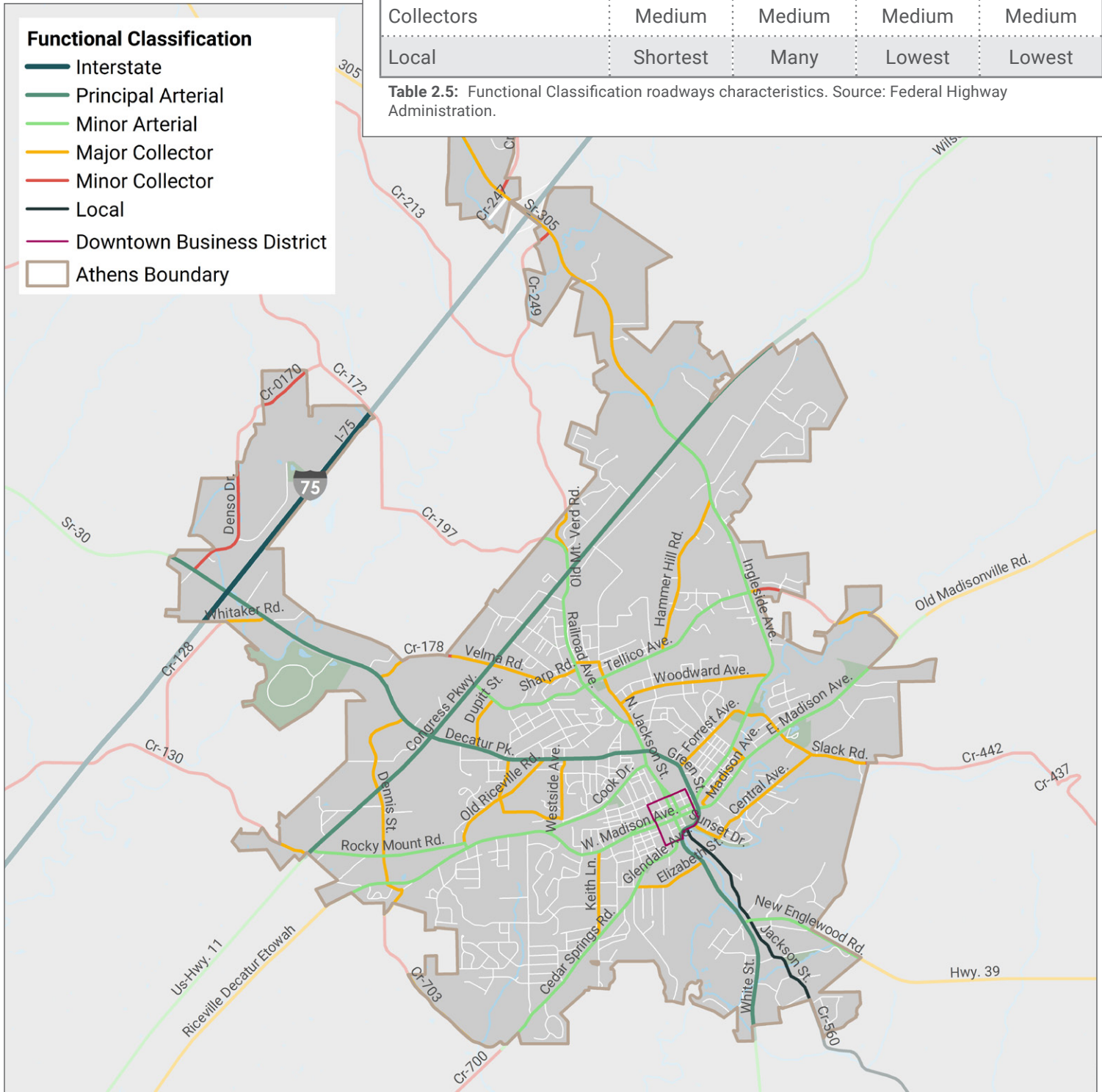


Figure 2.4: Existing functional classification network, City of Athens. Collector streets and minor arterials provide some connectivity for drivers, though this wanes further from downtown Athens.

Source: TDOT.



Traffic Volume

In contrast to functional classification, traffic volumes give us significant insight into how a transportation network is *actually* used by residents. High traffic volumes reveal workhorse corridors, shuttling residents to and through key destinations within a community on a daily basis. In the same vein, changing traffic volumes also tell us where a community is growing and evolving with time, suggesting areas where improvements may be necessary to support this new growth.

Figure 2.6 depicts both current traffic volumes and the change in volumes over the previous five years. The three highest-growth locations are called out below. The importance of SR-2/Congress Parkway and SR-30/Decatur Pike is clear, with these roads (along with I-75) **experiencing both the highest traffic volumes and highest change within Athens** over the five-year period.

However, these aren't the only roads experiencing significant growth. Change in traffic volumes has been greatest away from these corridors. **In areas both immediately north and south of downtown, traffic volumes have grown by as much as 110%** (Jackson Street). Other roads experiencing similar growth include Madison Avenue (+32%), particularly east of

downtown (+62%); Cedar Springs Road (+31%); Forest Avenue (+30%); and Woodward Avenue (+29%). Apart from Madison Avenue, **these roads are predominantly residential in nature, underscoring recent population growth and pressures on residential streets.**

While these volumes reflect changes in the previous five years, they are not predictive of future growth. With the completion of the Athens City Schools consolidation anticipated in the next three to five years, **traffic can be expected to grow on Keith Lane and McMinn Avenue.**

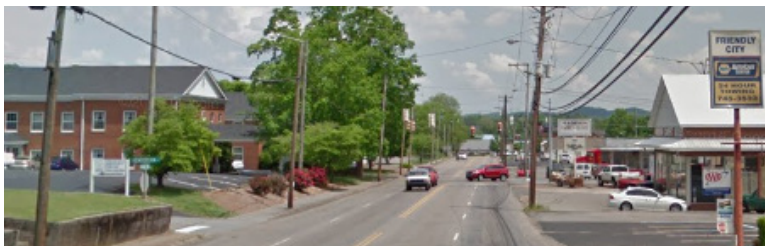
The 2020 Traffic Impact Study Update forecasts increases of nearly 2,000 vehicles per day in the area around the complex, two-thirds of which will occur on Keith Lane and McMinn Avenue. Traffic from both of these streets empties onto Madison Avenue (north) and Cedar Springs Road (south), likely increasing volumes there as well. Likewise, **new multi-family residential developments are expected along Dennis Street near the SR-2/SR-30 intersection with no additional new roadways.**



1.
Congress Parkway (SR-30)
+17% 2014-2019
(21,700 VPD)



2.
Decatur Pike (SR-2)
+20% 2014-2019
(15,900 VPD)



3.
Madison Avenue
+32% 2014-2019
(6,750 VPD)



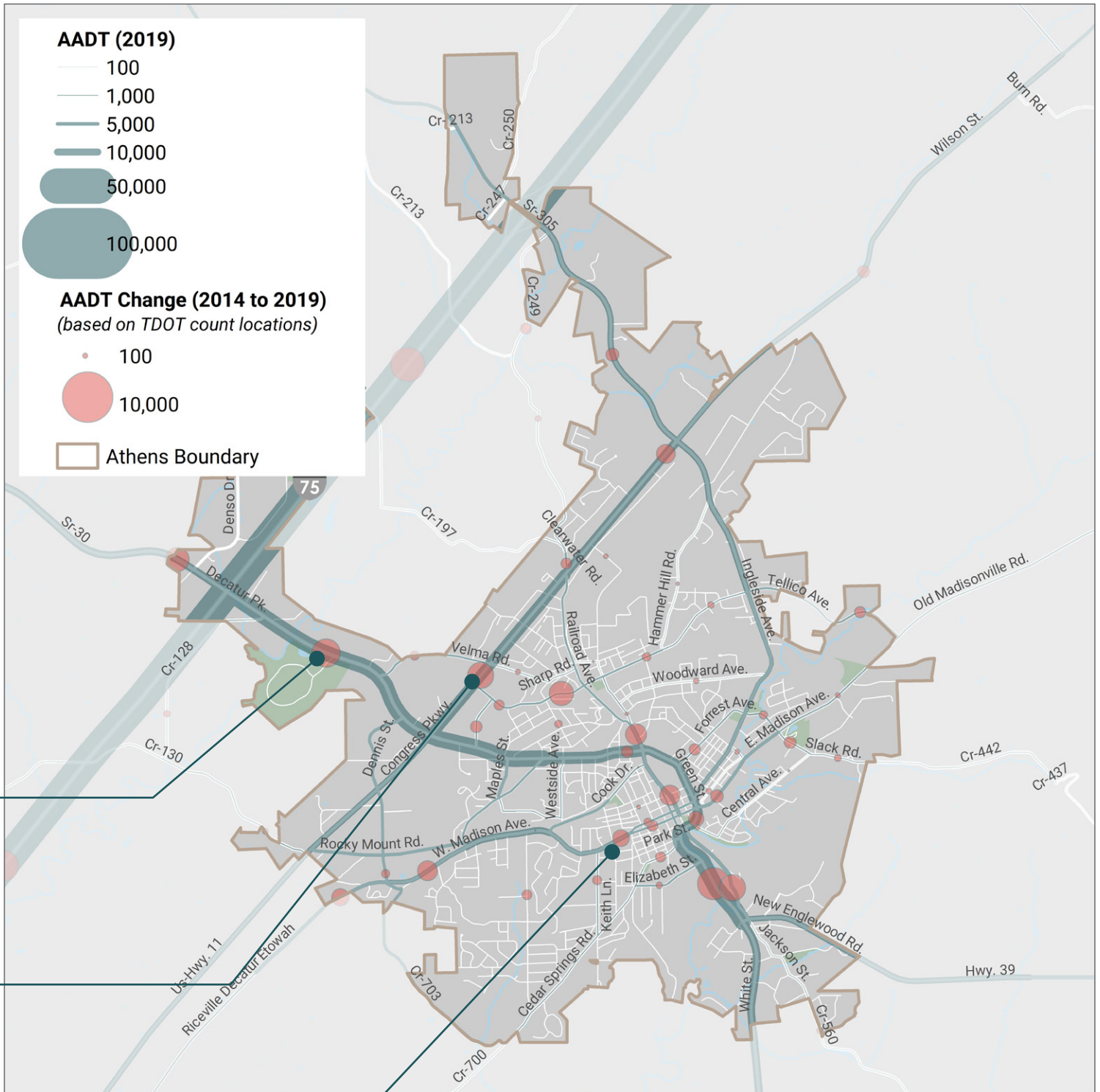


Figure 2.6: Traffic volumes, 2014-2019 and change in volumes.
Source: TDOT.



Crashes

Crash analysis serves a two-fold purpose. Rate metrics and frequencies tell us about broader trends in a transportation network. Geospatial analyses highlight locations of particular concern, revealing specific intersections or corridors where the network’s features – or lack thereof – may contribute to concentrations or patterns of crashes. Both are critical to understanding a multimodal network and how it serves, or fails to serve, its community.

Crashes have been on the increase in Athens, though severe crashes remain relatively constant. Fatal crashes have remained flat since 2017 following a high the previous year, and serious injury crashes remain relatively constant over the same time period.

Minor injury crashes, however, show an upward trend, reaching a high of 140 in 2018; this may reflect increasing congestion on Athens’ roads. Crashes are relatively even in location distribution, with just over 50% of all recorded crashes occurring at intersections, and 50% occurring along roadway segments. Angled crashes make up 30% of all crashes within Athens, followed closely by rear-end crashes (29%). **Angled crashes typically reflect turning movement conflicts, and may indicate that controlled turns and access management improvements could increase road safety.**

While all crashes may be more uniformly distributed, severe crashes are not. Figures 2.9 and 2.10 highlight areas of Athens where crashes occur with higher frequency. Several locations appear as clusters, but two stand out: Downtown Athens and the SR-2/SR-30 intersection. Crash densities here reflect higher traffic volumes and greater opportunities for conflict, but **may also reflect poor geometric design or improperly timed signals in these areas.** Other locations with higher concentrations include both I-75 exits, the SR-30/SR-39 intersection, and US-11/CR-305 intersection.

Crash Severity, 2015-2019			
Year	Fatal	Serious Injury	Minor Injury
2015	1	10	72
2016	4	6	48
2017	2	9	91
2018	2	16	140
2019	2	6	103
Total	11	47	454

Table 2.7: Crash Types by year, 2015-2019. Source: TDOT.

Crash Type, 2015-2019		
Type	Count	Percent
Rear End	750	29%
Rear to Side	18	1%
Sideswipe, same direction	209	8%
Head-on	115	4.5%
Angle	783	30%
No collision w/ Vehicle	444	17%
Sideswipe, opp. direction	54	2%
Unknown	7	0.3%
Other	21	1%
Rear to Rear	6	0.3%

Table 2.8: Crash Types by manner of crash, 2015-2019. Source: TDOT.



Figure 2.10: Crash density, indicating high-frequency crash locations. Source: TDOT.

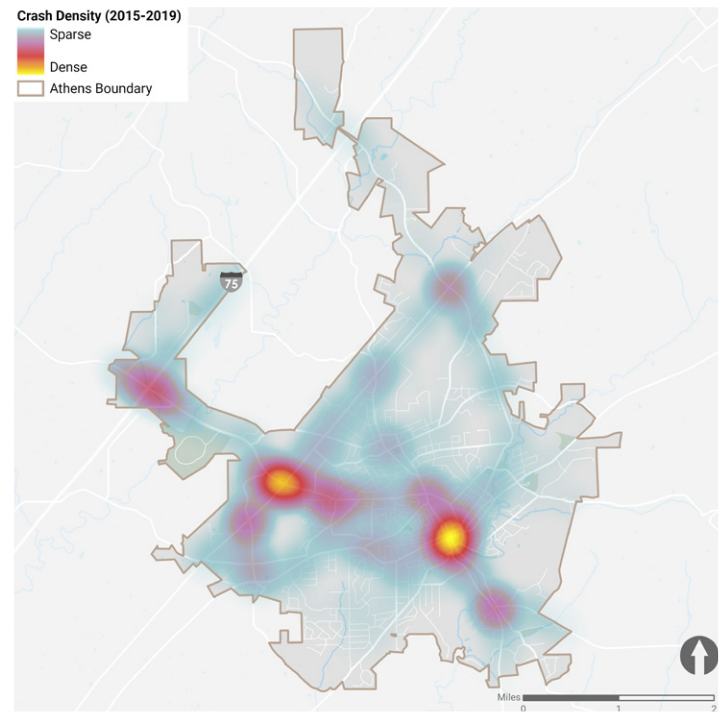
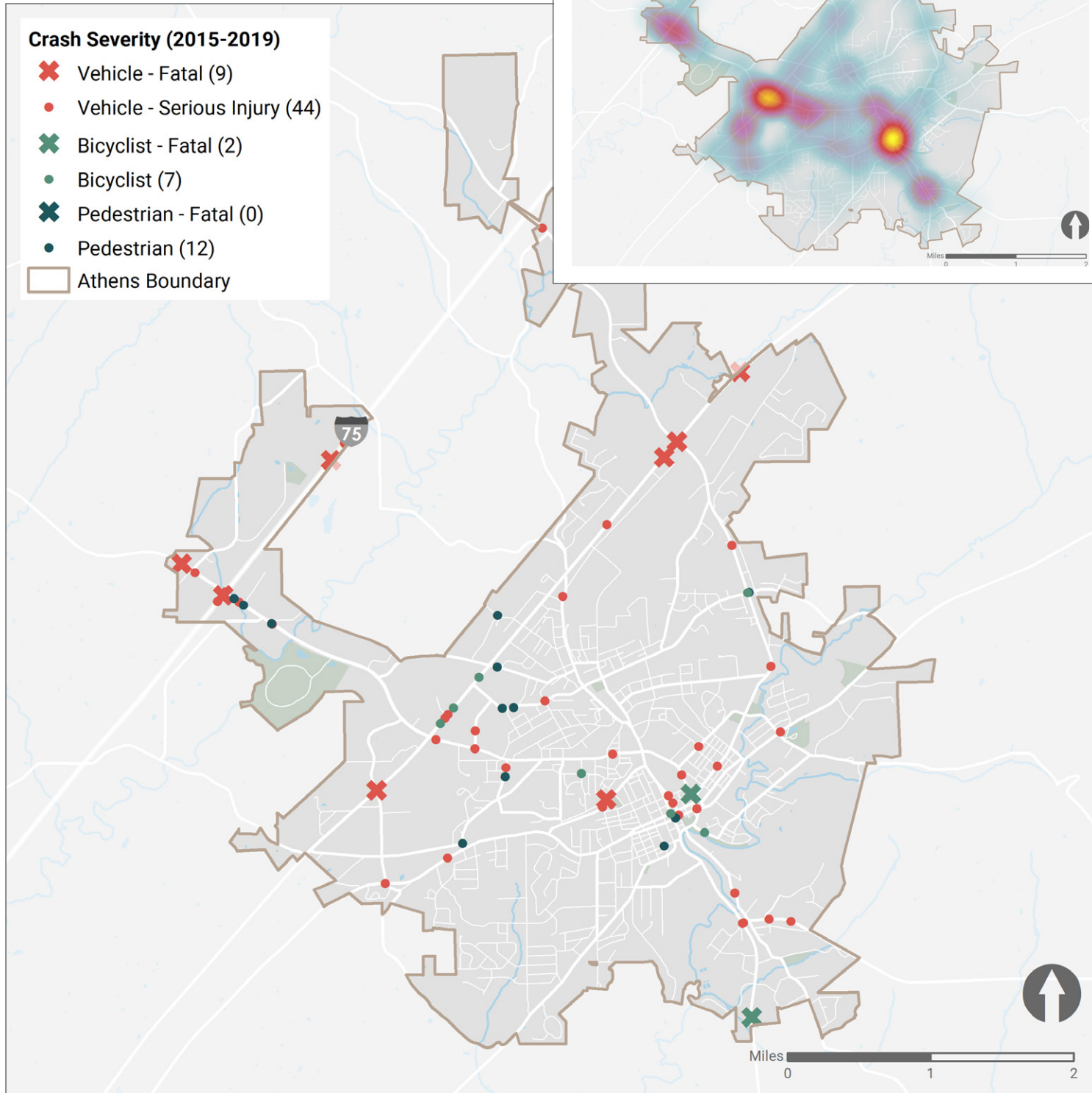


Figure 2.9: Crash Severity by travel mode. Source: TDOT.



Focus Areas - Crashes

Congress & Decatur

The Congress & Decatur focus area sees a higher proportion of crashes within Athens due to the higher daily traffic volumes. Of the 657 reported crashes within the past five years, only one has been fatal, occurring at the Dennis Street intersection. **Over 80% of crashes in the focus area, by contrast, have no associated injuries, reporting only property damage.** These crashes, depicted as black dots in Figure 2.11, are concentrated at the main Congress Parkway and Decatur Pike intersection, along Decatur Pike between the main intersection and Maple Street, at the Dennis Street intersection, and along Congress Parkway in front of McMinn County High School. The locations and relative severity of these crashes suggest that **congestion and poor corridor access are challenges in this area**, as: 40% of crashes are rear-end crashes, and a further 30% involve a turning vehicle.

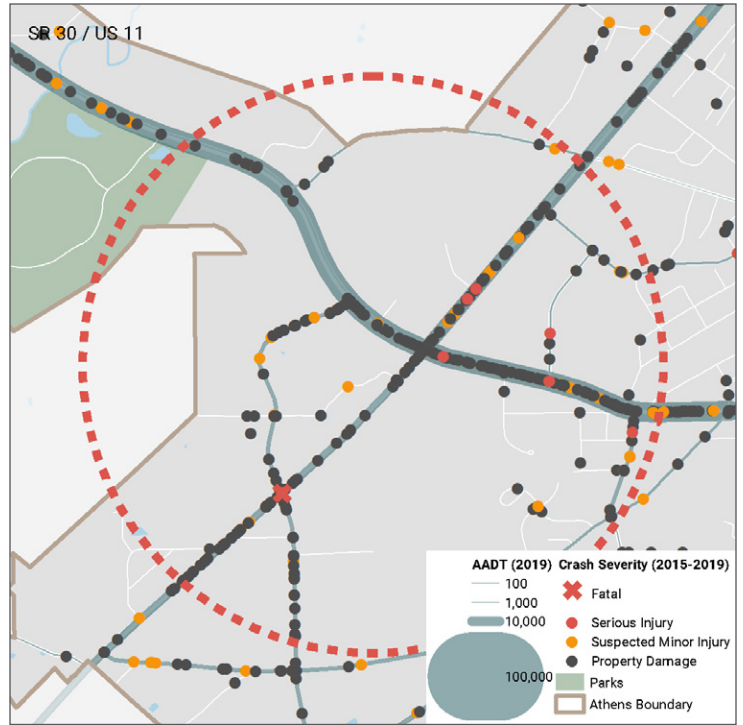


Figure 2.11: Crash locations, severity, and traffic volumes within the Congress & Decatur focus area. The high concentration of property damage-only crashes near the main intersection suggest stop-and-go traffic due to congestion. Source: TDOT.

Downtown

The Downtown Athens focus area sees a higher number of crashes relative to other focus areas, though these differ in important ways. Crash severity in Downtown remains low, with only one fatality in the past five years occurring at Green Street's intersection with Hornsby Street. More severe crashes, including all involving serious injuries, occur on streets designated as arterials, where speed limits are 30 mph or greater. **Of the over 400 crashes reported downtown, over three-quarters involve property damage only**, perhaps a reflection both of slow speeds as well as traffic operations as cars circulate for parking. This is reinforced by the manner of crash in the area. Whereas angled crashes represent 20-30% of crashes in other focus areas of Athens, they are the most common type of crash downtown, representing 40% of crashes. **These may involve parked cars turning out into roadways, backing out of on-street parking spaces, or traffic turning at intersections** to seek out preferred destinations or available parking space.

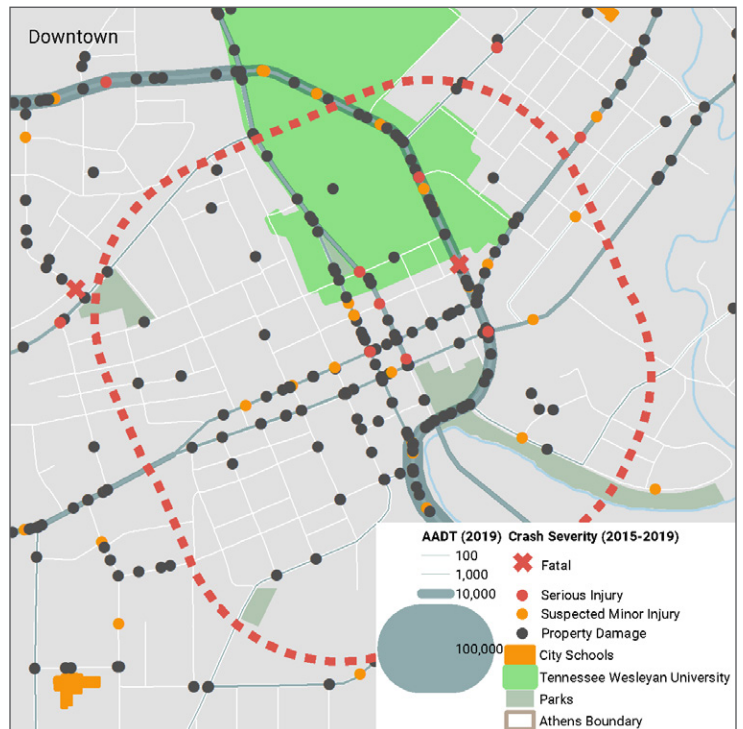


Figure 2.12: Crash locations and severity, and traffic volumes within the Downtown focus area. Angled crashes are most common in this area. Source: TDOT.



Exit 52

The Exit 52 intersection and its planned industrial development have lower traffic volumes than other focus areas and, as such, there are fewer crashes from which to draw inferences. However, those that do exist tell us about ongoing issues nearby. **Crashes are clustered near the main SR-305/CR-250 intersection and both exit ramps for I-75.** Nearly one-quarter are angle crashes, which suggests that these crashes may result from poor intersection configuration or roadway geometry.

Relatively more crashes are located south of the SR-305/CR-250 intersection, reflecting that **traffic in this area is focused on trips to and from I-75**, as well as industrial and commercial locations closer to the city of Athens. As the proposed industrial development at this site develops, more freight traffic is expected, particularly along SR-305 north of the main intersection where an industrial access connection is being proposed. Ensuring proper roadway design in this area as development progresses is critical to ensuring safe passage of all users, including truck traffic.

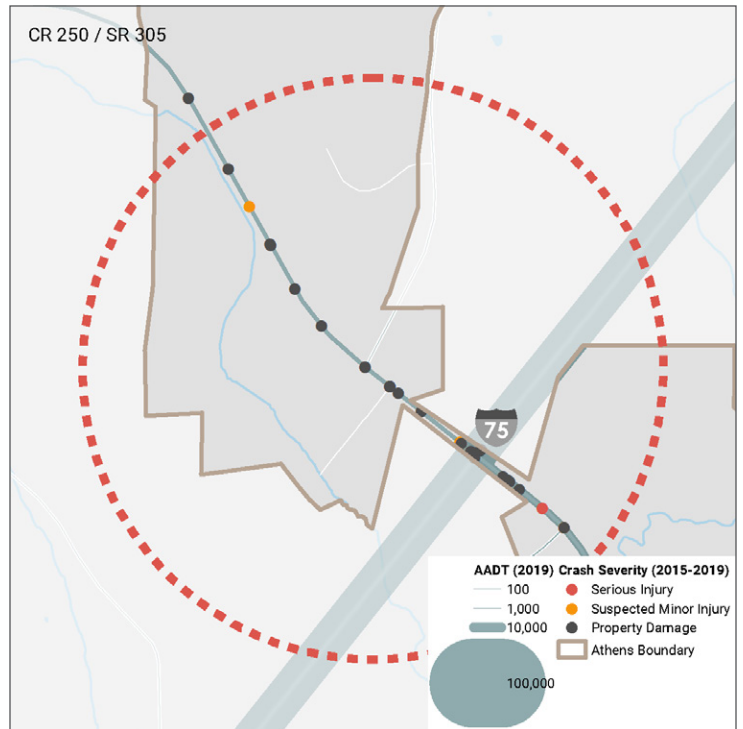


Figure 2.13: Crash locations and severity, and traffic volumes within the SR-305/CR-250 focus area. The cluster of crashes near both ramps highlights travel patterns focused on I-75 as well as poor geometric design. Source: TDOT.

Cedar Springs Road

The relatively low number of crashes in the Cedar Springs Road focus area belies the residential nature of the area. Streets within the identified zone are residential two-lane streets with low travel speeds. Over the five-year period only nineteen crashes were observed in this area, with the only one involving an injury being located off of the main corridor. The crashes along Cedar Springs Road itself occurred at intersections (Sunview Drive and Frank Street). As a whole, the data suggests that, when considering strategies to improve Cedar Springs Road’s operations for all users, motor vehicle safety should be less highly prioritized than other modes and interests.

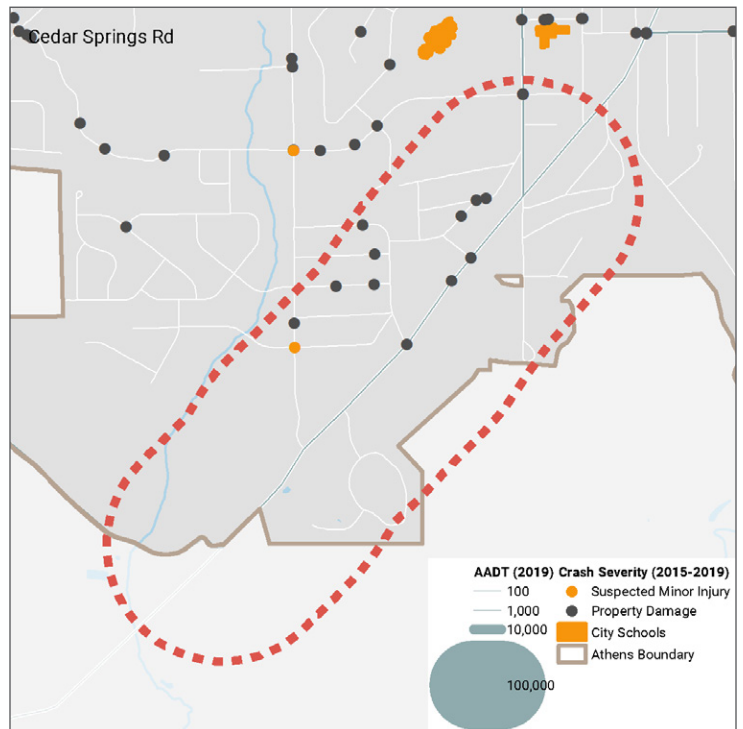


Figure 2.14: Crash locations and severity, and traffic volumes within the Cedar Springs Road focus area. Source: TDOT.



Athens City Schools

The Athens City Schools focus area lies in a transitional area between the residential zones to its south and west, and the commercial areas along Madison Avenue and the downtown core to the north and east.

Crash locations and severity seems to indicate that **crashes in this area are largely driven by school traffic**, occurring along streets where school traffic circulates. With limited streets providing access to the schools for pickup and dropoff, it is interesting to note the **crash clusters on Madison Avenue, McMinn Avenue, Keith Lane and Crestway Drive**. Crashes in this area are less severe, though some involving injuries have occurred along Madison Avenue and McMinn Avenue. Angled crashes (26%) and single-vehicle collisions (19%) are the two most common types of crashes in the area. This may suggest that **conflict points with traffic entering and exiting roadways, as well as parked vehicles, may be a cause of crashes in the area**. Four crashes along Powers Path, a one-way street with access to City Park Elementary School and on-street parking, supports this inference.

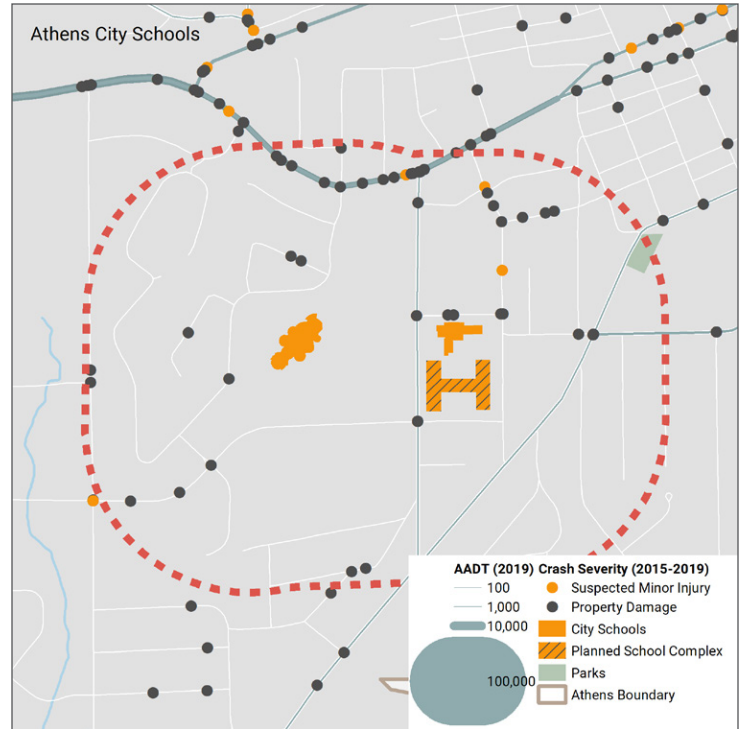


Figure 2.15: Crash locations and severity, and traffic volumes within the Athens City Schools focus area. Crash clusters on Madison Avenue, McMinn Avenue and Powers Path show the influence of school pickup and dropoff on travel patterns and road safety in the area. Source: TDOT.



Multimodal Facilities

Bicycle Facilities

Multimodal users in Athens, and in particular bicyclists, face a very different set of circumstances in their travels through the city than automobile users. Where drivers have an interconnected network of roadways designed for their travel, bicyclists face a total lack of safe, adequate identified facilities to reach their key destinations.

The Eureka Rail-Trail, with a trail head on Eastanallee Avenue, provides a connection to the town of Englewood, but is both unpaved and does not extend further into Athens city limits. **Currently, there are no bike lanes within city limits, nor are there recreational greenways providing connections throughout the city.** While some streets may have wide shoulders, these facilities are not considered adequate for bicyclists.

Bicyclists must interact with vehicular traffic in order to travel around Athens. Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) is an analytical tool that uses traffic speeds, volumes, and existing bicycle facilities to provide insight into how different types of bicycle users

experience the Athens transportation network, and their relative likelihood of using a particular facility to travel. The higher the level of perceived stress, the fewer cyclists are likely to be comfortable using that roadway. Table 2.15 shown how LTS is calculated. Figure 2.17 shows LTS for Athens' streets.

Not surprisingly, **major arterials and cross-town connectors appear as high-stress corridors.** With their higher travel speeds and vehicle volumes, Congress Parkway and Decatur Pike are both challenging to navigate for typical bicyclists, and these conditions may deter individuals from using bikes in these areas, both traveling along and attempting to cross the roadways. Conditions improve on more residential streets, where volumes and speeds are lower. Importantly, many roads depicted as low-stress are also those where traffic volumes have grown significantly in the past five years, such as Tellico Avenue and Cedar Springs Road. **As growth continues in these areas, conditions may worsen for cyclists and present even greater obstacles to navigation.**

What is Level of Traffic Stress?

LTS measures a road's suitability for different types of bicyclists, showing how connected a bike network is for different types of users.

Level	Category	Characteristics		User Comfort
		Traffic Volume	Traffic Speed	
0	Prohibited	Interstates & Freeways		N/A
1	Low Stress	Low volumes	Low speeds (<30mph)	All ages and abilities
2	Moderate Stress	Moderate volumes	Moderate speeds (30-35-mph)	Most adult bicyclists
3	High Stress	High volumes	Moderate- to high speeds (35+ mph)	Experienced, confident bicyclists
4	Highest Stress	High volumes	High speeds (45+ mph)	Advanced, highly skilled bicyclists <i>only</i>

Table 2.16: Level of Traffic Stress.



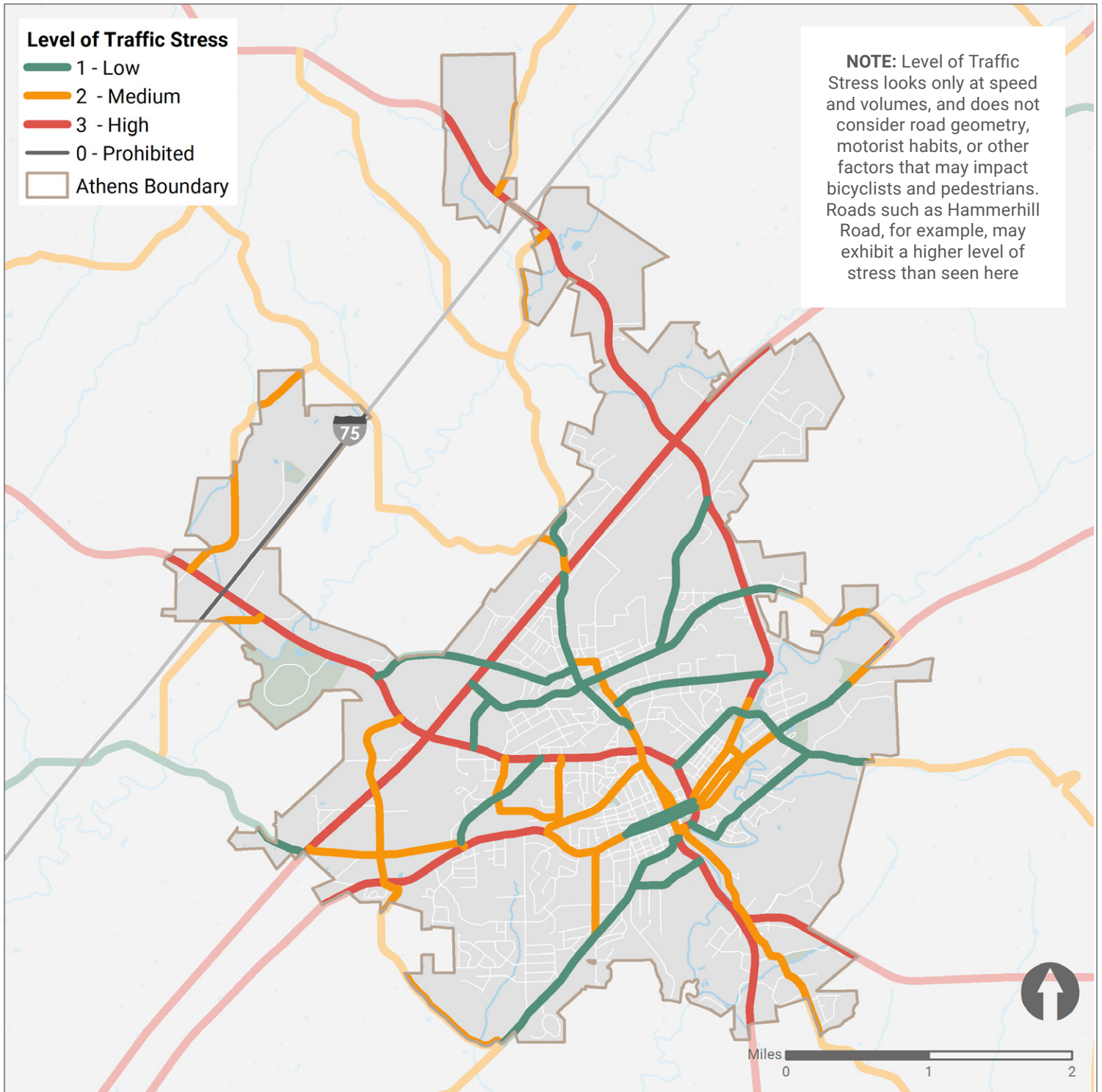


Figure 2.17: Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress, Athens. While local collectors provide relatively calm, safe streets for biking, connectivity is broken by the high-stress corridors of SR-2 and SR-30, limiting accessibility to destinations beyond these roadways for cyclists who need to cross them. Only experienced, confident bicyclists may feel comfortable bicycling along these roads – a small percentage of the population. Source: TDOT.



Sidewalks

Pedestrians face somewhat better conditions than bicyclists when navigating Athens, although the existing network still presents significant challenges to accessibility. Those attempting to walk through Athens face a disconnected network, with sidewalks along both sides of streets in key locations, but only on one side in others and non-existent elsewhere. Crosswalks are incomplete in many locations, making crossings a challenge to users who find themselves “on the wrong side of the road.”

Figure 2.19 depicts the location of existing sidewalk facilities and crosswalks in Athens. **Of the 148 miles of roads in Athens, only 12% (19 miles) have sidewalks present.** Of those 19 miles, most are found in close proximity to downtown Athens (see inset) and in the neighborhoods immediately surrounding Tennessee Wesleyan University. Here, sidewalks are largely found on both sides of the street, although crosswalks may not be provided needed connections for those seeking to cross safely. Further from downtown, sidewalks and crosswalks decrease in frequency.

Facility	Miles
Sidewalks	19.2
Roads	148.9

Table 2.18: Sidewalk facilities and total road miles. Source: City of Athens.

Where sidewalks do exist many lack crosswalks or provide only distant opportunities for crossing, such as along Congress Parkway. **Lacking pedestrian connections along or across the corridor, users may either opt to complete their trip via an automobile,** increasing congestion -- or engage in potentially unsafe behavior, increasing the likelihood of a pedestrian-involved crash. Figure 2.9 shows pedestrian and bicycle-involved crashes; notably, **many occur in areas where crosswalks are lacking or sidewalks are found on only one side of the roadway.**

In Athens...

5.5 miles of sidewalks near schools

12% of all Athens roads have sidewalks

60% of all roads near schools have sidewalks

Focus Areas - Sidewalks

Downtown

The downtown area in Figure 2.19, in contrast to other focus areas in this Plan, features a **compact, interconnected sidewalk network.** Sidewalks exist along both sides of Jackson and White Streets, as well as Madison Avenue and Washington Streets, and crosswalks facilitate crossings where these streets meet at the Mc-Minn County Courthouse. SR-30/Green Street likewise features sidewalks along both sides of the street until its intersection with Ingleside Avenue and Washington Street; **south of this intersection, sidewalks disappear.**

However, **there are limited pedestrian connections to downtown from outside areas.** Sidewalks are present along Ingleside Avenue and Jackson Street both north and south of downtown, but few other streets feature sidewalks. This forces visitors to drive to downtown rather than walk, and reinforces the need for automobiles to get around, contrasting the walkable vision of the Experience Masterplan.



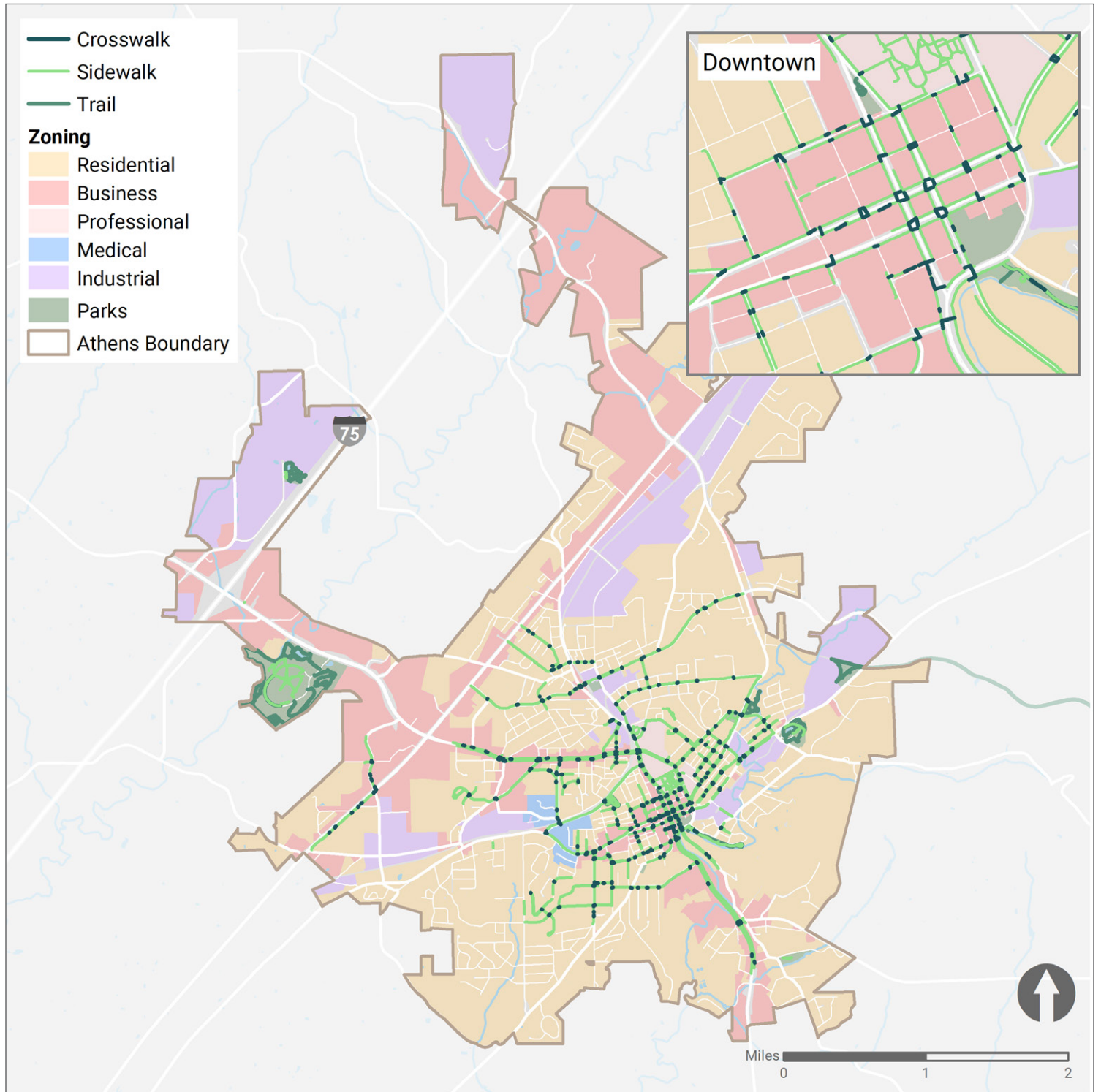


Figure 2.19: Sidewalks and current zoning. Apart from an interconnected network in downtown and older neighborhoods immediately east of downtown, the sidewalk network is fragmented and lacks consistent crossing opportunities. Source: City of Athens.



Congress & Decatur

Pedestrians near the Congress Parkway and Decatur Pike intersection are faced with a **lack of facilities and crossing opportunities, much higher traffic volumes and speeds**. Sidewalks are sparse, with all facilities ending short of the main intersection. With the right-of-way width for all legs approaching 150 feet, this intersection is a formidable geographic barrier for those attempting to cross on foot without crosswalks and pedestrian countdowns.

Along Dennis Street, near expected residential development, sidewalks are similarly lacking. **Some sidewalks exist along the southbound side of Dennis, stopping short of the Walmart entrance**. Crosswalks permitting street crossings exist at the Decatur Pike intersection, as well as Layman Road.

Elsewhere, connections are lacking for all modes that would permit pedestrian access to nearby shops. Undeveloped land east of Dennis Street and south of Decatur Pike, although planned for development, has roads neither built nor planned at this time -- representing an opportunity for building pedestrian connections and internal connectivity.



Figure 2.20: Pedestrian facilities in the SR-2/SR-30 focus area. The wide rights-of-way at the main intersection make both roads difficult to cross, barring pedestrian and bicycle access to key commercial destinations. Source: City of Athens.

Athens City Schools

The Athens City Schools complex highlights the challenges posed for pedestrians. In Figure 2.21, sidewalks can be seen along one side of Keith Lane, McMinn Avenue, and Crestway Drive, allowing some access for pedestrians. However, for those inconveniently located on the wrong side of the street, **there are few safe opportunities to cross these streets to dedicated sidewalks**. While these may be low volume, lower-speed roads, pedestrians on these residential streets are likely to be children, attempting to walk to and from school while traffic and congestion increase along these same streets. Those walking from neighborhoods north of Madison Avenue, west of Matlock Avenue, or south of Cedar Springs Road must **cross higher-volume, higher speed corridors in order to reach the school**.

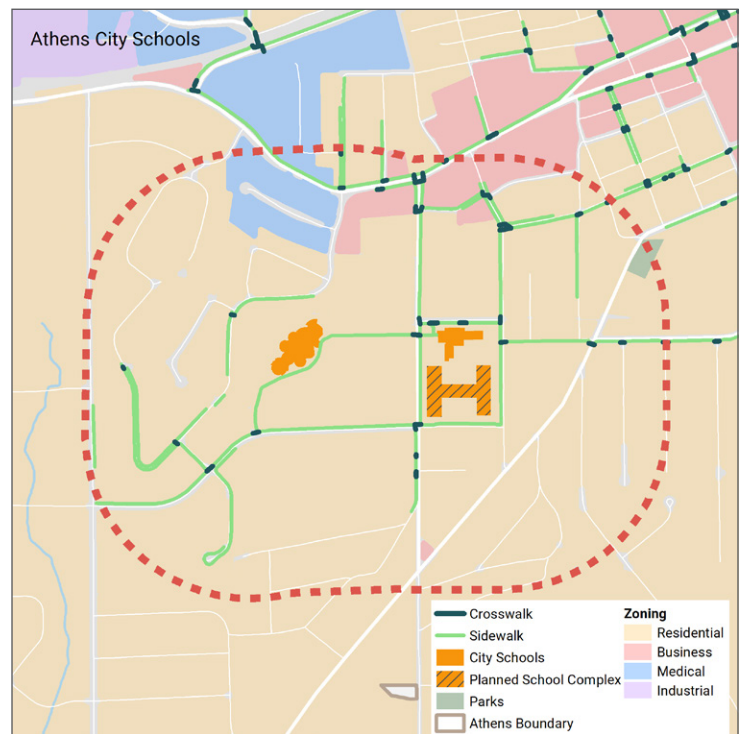


Figure 2.21: Sidewalk and crosswalk locations within the Athens City Schools focus area. Despite neighborhoods in close proximity from which children could walk or bike to school, limited sidewalks and crosswalks mean parents must pick up and drop off students, increasing congestion on nearby roads such as Crestway Drive and Madison Avenue. Source: City of Athens.



Cedar Springs Road

What stands out most about Cedar Springs Road’s pedestrian accessibility is the lack of any facilities for pedestrian movement. Despite numerous residential areas either located within the focus area or connecting to the area via Matlock Avenue and Keith Lane, **there are neither sidewalks nor crosswalks present on either side of Cedar Springs Road.** While current traffic volumes remain low, this corridor has experienced **significant growth in traffic over the past five years.** Moreover, with the schools complex nearby and new developments planned near Keith Lane, the lack of sidewalks and crosswalks is a present and future obstacle to moving along -- and across -- the road for pedestrians. **Increasing safe means of access and crossing in this focus area will be important.**

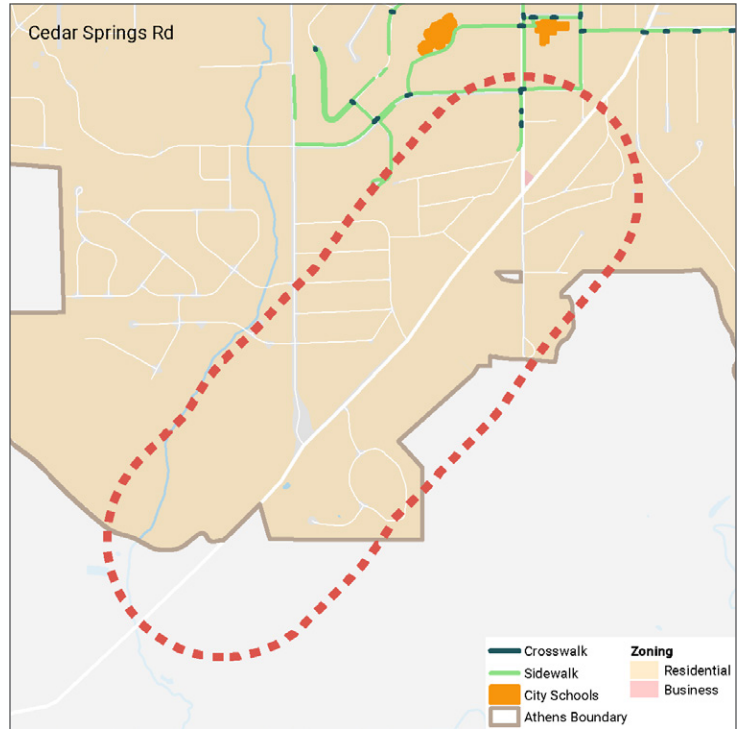


Figure 2.22: Sidewalks and zoning in the Cedar Springs Road focus area. Source: City of Athens.





**Public
Engagement**

CHAPTER 03

Public Engagement

Public engagement plays an integral role in any planning effort, as its results will impact the daily lives of community members and local businesses. Meaningful engagement means stronger results, tighter community bonds, and a greater will to implement the plan. Furthermore, engagement provides invaluable feedback to planners, engineers, and designers that might not be fully understood looking at data alone; the human element and a diversity of perspectives helps to reframe the project team's view of the issues and provide better recommendations for improvement.

This chapter describes the processes, strategies and activities used to engage with the Athens community during the Mobility Plan's development. It also summarizes information received from the public, whether through online survey methods, virtual interaction, or public meetings.

In this Chapter:

- **Online Engagement**
- **Stakeholder Discussions**
- **Public Meetings**

Impacts of COVID-19

Like many communities during this time, the COVID-19 Pandemic and its impacts on social engagement had a profound impact on this planning process and traditional means of public engagement. Daily routines, around which traditional methods of engagement were devised, were reformulated to adapt to remote working and social distancing. Social gatherings were restricted with limitations on types of events and attendance, or outright banned, in order to limit the spread of the coronavirus. Larger public meetings, such as the Needs & Ideas Workshop, and smaller gatherings, such as steering committee meetings and focus group interviews, were conducted via new formats in order to engage the public meaningfully in the planning process.

Like our community, this Plan adjusted to the new normal and shifted traditionally in-person means of outreach into the virtual realm. Coupling new online capabilities, such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams cloud meeting technology, with familiar methods of online engagement such as interactive web mapping and surveys, virtual public engagement stepped up to meet the needs of this project. And as limitations on gatherings eased towards the later stages of this project, meetings were once again able to be held in person, culminating in a locally-hosted Open House. Innovation borne out of this challenging time provided a virtual format that nonetheless fostered deep engagement and robust participation from a large segment of the community.



Online Engagement



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The Friendly City has partnered with TDOT and Stantec to develop a Community Mobility Study Plan for Athens. The study is part of the Community Transportation Planning Grant that was awarded to Athens in 2020. The goal is to target key areas around town where changes or improvements are much needed. There are two items below where you can tell us about these areas. One will take you to a [brief survey](#) about your transportation and mobility habits as well as the types of changes the City could benefit from. There is also an [interactive map](#) where you can pinpoint exact areas of interest and identify specific needs or improvements. These would be things such as safety concerns, community hubs or gathering places, areas or gaps in need of connections or renovations, and more. You can also see areas other participants have identified, too.

We would humbly request you take the time to participate and contribute to this initiative so that we can better serve the transportation needs of our citizens and visitors both now and into the future.

Early in the process, the City created a project website (https://athenstn.gov/team_athens/city_manager/public_works/community_mobility_plan.php) so residents, property owners, business owners and other stakeholders could access information and provide input on the discussions surrounding the plan's development. The website featured information on project purpose, dates and locations of upcoming meetings, and ways to get involved with the project. Event notices and opportunities to get involved were sent out by email and social media alerting the public

and inviting them to take part. As a result of Athens' efforts to publicize this Plan, hundreds of people were able to hear about the Mobility Plan during its development.

Among the ways to get involved through the website were the online survey and an interactive map tool. The survey and map were open for interaction for two months, April and May 2021, and closed as the project transitioned into the recommendations phase. Summaries of both are shown in the following pages.

"The parking lot at Market Park would be a great community gathering area if we could re-purpose that area for something other than parking."

- Needs & Ideas Workshop attendee



Online Survey

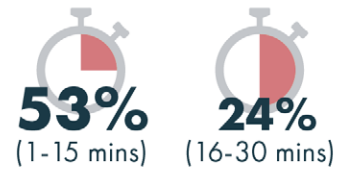
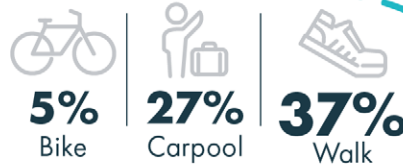
The online survey measured the pulse of community sentiment regarding the transportation network's present state, as well as their expectations of future growth. It featured a set of 11 questions related to mobility choices, feelings of safety, and community priorities. These large-scale responses complemented the first-hand discussions through the focus groups and public workshops. Major takeaways from the survey are summarized below.



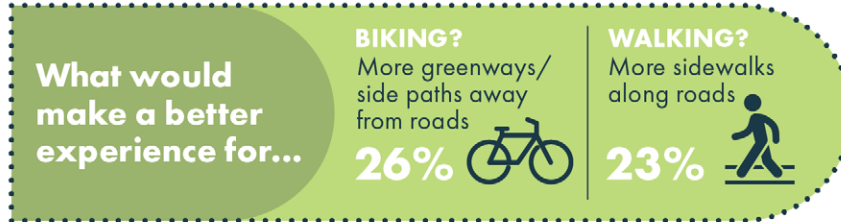
How do you GET THERE?



What's your ALTERNATIVE to get there?



How long is your COMMUTE?



Satisfied with opportunities to BIKE or WALK?



How should Athens make transportation DECISIONS?



How would YOU spend \$100?*



Satisfied with CONGESTION while driving?

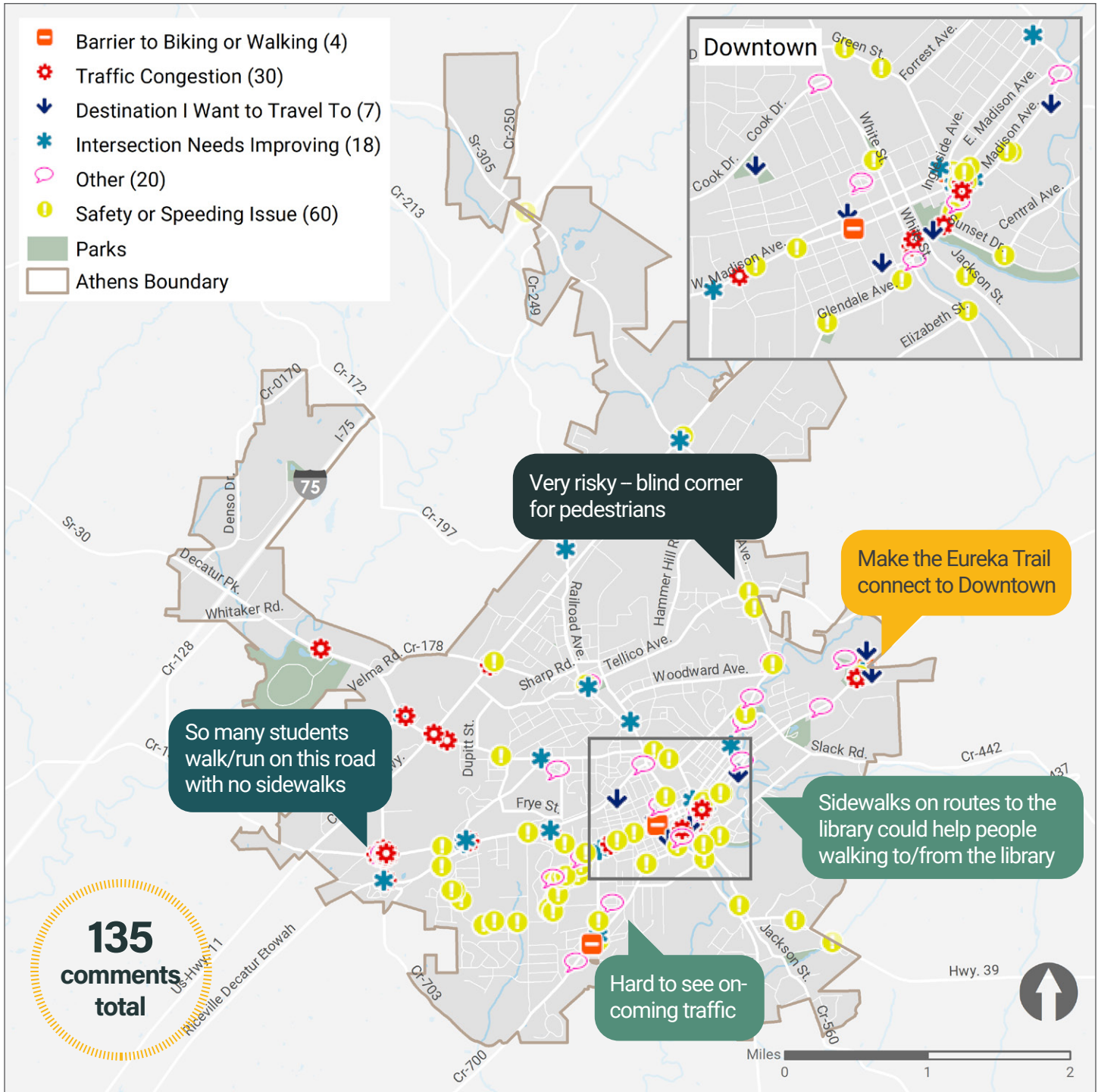


What is IMPORTANT to you?



*Dollars reflect average amount for each category as determined by survey respondents





Interactive Map

The interactive map was online for two months and allowed Athens stakeholders to identify a variety of features, including needed intersection improvements, safety hazards, barriers to biking or walking, and important destinations, among others. These were portrayed as points and icons on the interactive

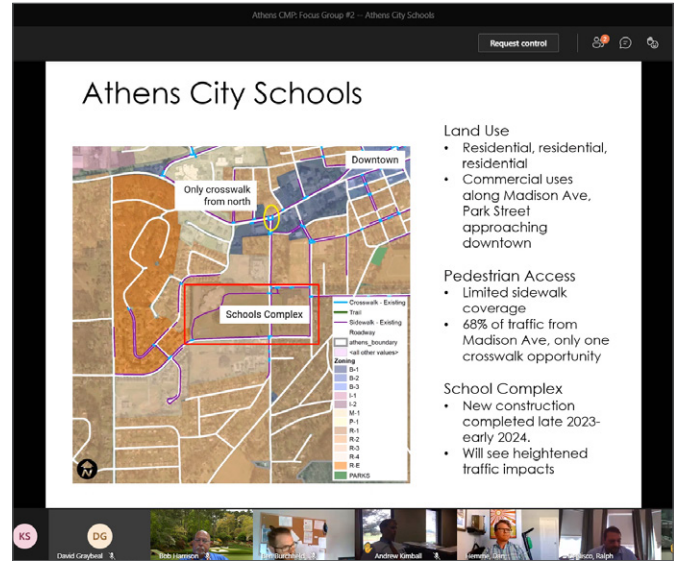
map. The web map provided a different and needed perspective on corridor-level issues than could not be fully captured through face-to-face discussions or traditional survey methods.



Stakeholder Discussions

Focus Groups

Focus group meetings, conducted towards the end of the investigation phase, offered an opportunity to obtain qualitative feedback on issues, goals, and potential strategies for improvements in each of the five focus areas. Meetings were held as a series of one-hour virtual interviews and centered on a single focus area. Focus group members were identified by members of the Steering Committee and City staff for inclusion based on their ability to provide different perspectives on the area at hand, and representing different facets of the community. These individuals included residents, agency representatives, business owners, community leaders, advocates, and elected officials. In contrast to the volumes of quantitative data produced during the initial investigation phase of the project, these ‘listening sessions’ with community members allowed the project team to verify data and set priorities with group perspectives, as well as to supplement the data with local insight and perspective not captured through data.



View of the Focus Groups in action!

Steering Committee

Early in the planning process, Athens staff formed a Steering Committee to guide this study’s progress. This core group of elected officials, agency representatives, stakeholder organizations and community members worked closely with the team to drive broader public engagement, provide guidance on goals, objectives, and priorities, and vet study recommendations. Occurring during the COVID-19 Pandemic, the team met virtually at regular intervals during the process to stay up-to-date on project progress, and on schedule to complete a comprehensive plan that moved rapidly from initiation to conclusion. At all stages of the Plan’s development, these individuals were present to provide their local, specialize knowledge, and consistent in their advocacy for a strong Mobility Plan.

MEMBERS

Frances Witt-McMahan

Lindsey Ferguson

Lisa Dotson

Austin Fesmire

Dan Evans

C. Seth Sumner

Anthony Casteel

Doug Unger

Bob Harrison

Blake McCaslin

Andrea Noel



Public Meetings

Needs & Ideas Workshop

The Needs & Ideas Workshop, was held during the same week as the focus group meetings in May 2021. This workshop provided an opportunity for stakeholders and key members of the public to review Athens' transportation network as a whole, recap key findings, and develop a cohesive set of Goals, Objectives, and Strategies. Hosted virtually over Microsoft Teams and on MURAL, an online whiteboard,

attendees could view draft goals and objectives produced by the project, provide feedback on additional goals or priorities, and indicate preferences for tangible policy and project solutions to accomplish such goals. The robust discussion held during this meeting provided invaluable feedback to the project team and fortified recommendations found herein.

Key Takeaways from the Needs & Ideas Workshop

1

Safe pedestrian crossings are an absolute must-have.

2

Fill in the existing bicycle and pedestrian network gaps, prioritizing disconnected

3

Prioritize safety improvements, especially where safe facilities are currently missing

Figure 3.22: Key Takeaways from the Needs & Ideas Workshop

Athens Community Mobility Plan
Needs & Ideas Workshop
May 21, 2021

Goals	Objectives	Solutions
<p>Extend the "Friendly City" to all users (Multimodal)</p> <p>Improve bicycle and pedestrian safety</p> <p>Design and expand sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, trails, etc.</p> <p>Create new connections OR bridge divides in existing network</p>	<p>Let's discuss!</p> <p>Improve bicycle and pedestrian safety</p> <p>Design and expand sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, trails, etc.</p> <p>Create new connections OR bridge divides in existing network</p>	<p>Improve Athens as a destination</p> <p>Provide public spaces where people can gather</p> <p>Create and expand recreational opportunities for biking & walking</p> <p>Grow local businesses and attract regional investment</p>
<p>Establish a sidewalk policy for all roadway functional classifications</p> <p>Create sufficient, safe pedestrian crossing opportunities along key corridors</p> <p>Develop a traffic calming manual</p>	<p>Adopt a Complete Streets Policy</p> <p>Focus on missing connections & divided neighborhoods</p>	<p>Incorporate more streetscaping and wayfinding signage</p> <p>Slow speeds through use of street trees, vegetation, & beautification</p> <p>Identify a regional greenway and trails network</p>

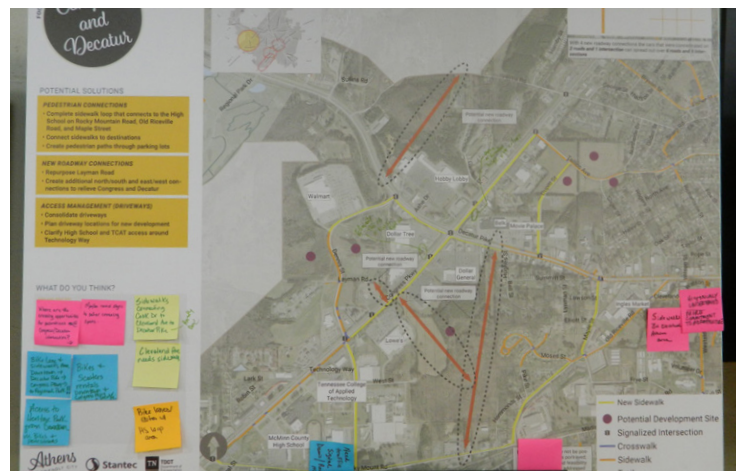
Figure 3.23: The Needs & Ideas Workshop MURAL board

41

Open House

Held June 10, 2021, the Open House was the first in-person gathering during the development of the Mobility Plan, as well as the final public meeting of the process. The Open House allowed for community members to meet the project team and other stakeholders, as well as to review the proposed strategies and recommendations and offer feedback. Draft city-wide and focus area strategies were laid out on boards, upon which attendees could draw, write, or leave sticky notes. 20 attendees, including city officials, steering committee members, and city residents provided excellent feedback, which was used to refine draft strategies into the final recommendations in this Plan.

To supplement this in-person gathering, the boards were replicated virtually using the MURAL online whiteboard platform, allowing those who could not attend the meeting in-person to view and provide feedback on the same materials. Comments from the in-person event were added to the boards, so that those attending online could also view comments from their fellow community members and expand upon the feedback already received. The presentation was recorded and made available on the project website for those unable to attend.





Recommendations

CHAPTER 04

Recommendations

Existing Conditions analysis and public engagement have identified clear issues and opportunities within Athens' transportation network. Improving Athens' community mobility requires an organized, principled set of policies and projects, grounded in to correct these issues and capitalize on opportunities.

In this Chapter, the lessons learned from public engagement and data analysis are translated into tangible recommendations for physical and policy improvements to benefit Athens' transportation network. Following the two-pronged approach, recommendations are presented for both citywide policies and strategies, as well as physical projects in the identified focus areas.

In this Chapter:

- Goals & Objectives
- Citywide Recommendations
- Focus Area Recommendations

Recommendations Overview

In response to Athens' needs and the concerns and desires expressed through the outreach process, the Community Mobility Plan makes a series of recommendations for both new or updated policies and capital project investment. The Mobility Plan creates a cohesive framework not merely for the implementation of the focus area recommendations, but also to guide future transportation decision-making, and identifying actions or ideas needing more detailed study prior to moving forward. As a multimodal plan, the Community Mobility Plan seeks to address all modes of travel and ways to shape the City's transportation system to be consistent with its desired growth. However, this planning-level guidance requires additional levels of understanding prior to projects being built or actions being taken.

In keeping with this Plan's two-pronged approach, this Chapter lays out policies and strategies that apply citywide, as well as targeted, specific projects in the Focus Areas themselves. These categories are not exclusive to each other; rather, the Citywide strategies and policies identified here support and justify the infrastructure improvements recommended in the focus areas. The following sections of this chapter provide detail on specific projects, policies, and program recommendations for addressing these areas.



Goals & Objectives

Determining transportation priorities can be challenging without a clear framework that outlines the larger goals and objectives a community seeks to achieve through its mobility network. Often, these come from larger, overarching adopted planning documents. In Athens, the Mobility Plan precedes the coming Citywide Strategic Plan. Therefore, through the public process and ongoing review, this effort has developed goals and objectives to guide decision-making and to feed into the larger strategic plan.

The recommendations show this set of specific, measurable, realistic goals that provide the framework for prioritizing projects and determining success. These goals are accompanied by objectives—key action steps to be taken to achieve each goal. While these objectives are not exhaustive, they provide a set of stepping stones important to addressing Athens’ mobility issues and realizing its communal vision. These goals, defined by Athens through public engagement, are seen below:

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES



Extend the 'Friendly City' to all users



Make Athens more of a destination



Support economic growth and development

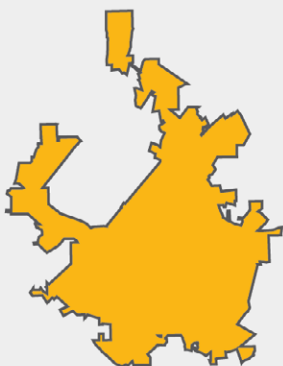


Connect Athens to its region and state



Ensure equitable access to the City's resources and amenities

Citywide policy strategies and study efforts

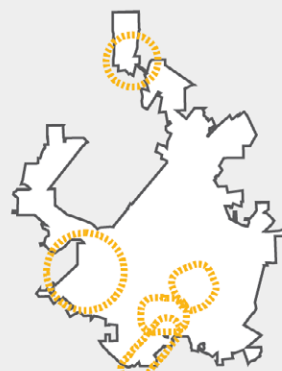


For example:

- > Create a bicycle master plan.
- > Establish a framework for constructing new sidewalk connections.

Manifests in →

Specific Focus Area projects & enhancements



For example:

- > New sidewalks
- > Crossing improvements



GOALS & OBJECTIVES



EXTEND THE FRIENDLY CITY TO ALL USERS

Whether on two feet, two wheels, or four, the notion that a transportation network should be safe for all users is essential to creating a complete multimodal mobility network. Yet in Athens, drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists experience two different cities. For drivers, a connected network of roadways provides relatively easy, safe, and convenient access to destinations. Bicyclists and pedestrians, on the other hand, experience a non-existent or incomplete network of facilities that may not connect users to their destinations, whether it be home, their place of work, shopping, or recreation. Only 12% of Athens’ roadways have sidewalks, and there are no bicycle facilities in Athens apart from the Eureka Rail Trail. Through focus groups and surveys, Athens residents stated their dissatisfaction with current biking and walking opportunities.

“Extend the Friendly City to All Users” not only embodies Athens’ goal of providing a safe, connected network of sidewalks and bike facilities, but goes further to demonstrate the importance of connecting neighborhoods and destinations. To accomplish this, the Plan defines three underlying objectives:

Objectives

IMPROVE BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

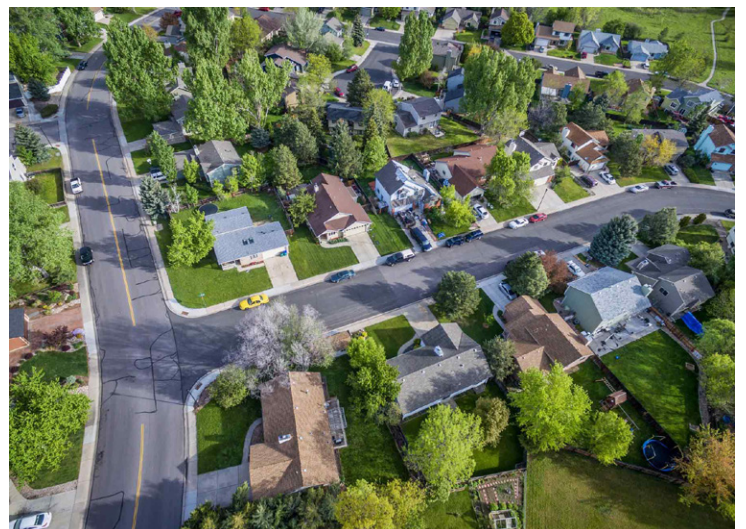
Bicycling and walking should be viable modes and not put travelers at greater risk than drivers.

DESIGN AND EXPAND THE WALKING AND BIKING NETWORK ON CURRENT STREETS

More streets in Athens should be equipped to make this safe travel possible

CREATE NEW CONNECTIONS & BRIDGE DIVIDES IN THE EXISTING NETWORK

The network should be complete and continuous, including in the locations where gaps or barriers currently exist.



GOALS & OBJECTIVES



MAKE ATHENS MORE OF A DESTINATION

As renewed interest in downtowns across the United States spurs new investment in communities like Athens, creating vibrant public spaces, whether in parks, storefronts, or streets themselves, is a vital tool in boosting the local economy through increased sales revenues, encouraging new business growth, and raising property values.

Roads and streets are more than just a means to get around, they contribute to and enhance a community's sense of place, and thus play an important role in creative placemaking within Athens and improving the experiences of residents and visitors alike as a destination.

While Athens has already taken some strides in increasing its attractiveness as a destination, through the creation of the Eureka Rail Trail as well as planned wayfinding signage based upon its Experience Master Plan, these efforts have focused in targeted areas, or may not be accessible throughout the Community.

"Make Athens more of a Destination" reflects the City's goal of creating a vibrant, attractive community and expanding opportunities for residents and visitors alike to live, work, and play throughout the City. This goal expands beyond the location and design of streets between the curbs, and promotes policies and strategies that support and promote excellent public spaces, recreational opportunities, and vibrant, attractive streets.



Objectives

PROVIDE PUBLIC SPACES WHERE PEOPLE CAN GATHER

Parks, open space, and other community locations that enrich local life and appeal to visitors

CREATE AND EXPAND RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES, ESPECIALLY FOR WALKING AND BIKING

A complete and connected recreational system



GOALS & OBJECTIVES

SUPPORT ECONOMIC GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

What economic development looks like for one community, or one industry for that matter, may differ from other communities and industries; in that way, economic development is defined by each City's values and vision for itself.

Mobility is an essential ingredient to economic development, both at the local and regional level. While a well-planned, highly-connected transportation network can boost economic development and community growth, the reverse is also true; a poorly-connected, ineffective transportation network can limit economic development and growth.

This third goal ties the Mobility Plan directly to Athens' Citywide Strategic Plan and other development efforts to promote improvements and citywide policies that support the City's goals for growth and development. Projects and strategies under this Goal help to support the movement of both people and goods in local and regional commerce, both through improving connectivity among destinations as well as creating priorities among roadways and hubs for certain uses.

Two principal objectives support this Goal:

Objectives

IMPROVE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN RESIDENTIAL AREAS, JOBS, AND COMMERCE

Allow access to employment, shopping, and services through multiple means where possible

SUPPORT RELIABLE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE AND GOODS

Find a balance between mobility, safety, and quality of life, which may include prioritizing certain roads and streets for certain uses





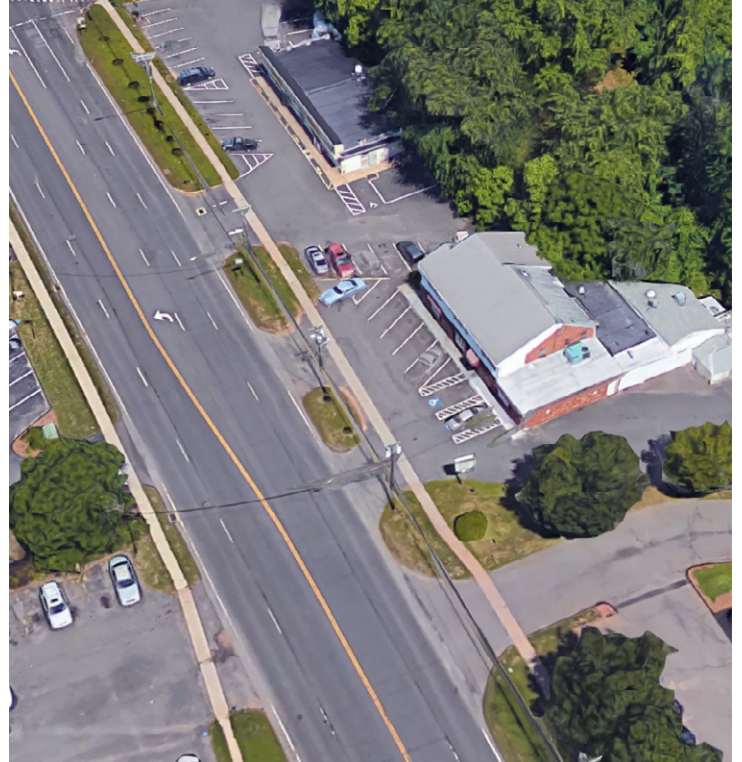
CONNECT ATHENS TO ITS REGION AND STATE

A transportation network encompasses both local facilities as well as those with regional and even national significance. These regional thoroughfares are often major arteries for communities, both for traveling to local destinations and throughout the region, connecting to neighboring towns, counties, and even states. Their broader importance means their functionality supports numerous city goals, including the growth of tourism and economic development. Ensuring the safe, reliable function of these roads ensures that Athens residents and businesses can effectively access its broader region, engage in regional commerce, and other activities.

In Athens, roads such as Congress Parkway, Decatur Pike, and Madison Avenue suffer from both poor geometric design and a lack of alternatives. Developing strategies and projects that improve safety and relieve congestion on these roadways, however, allows residents and visitors greater means of access to both local and regional destinations.

This fourth Goal looks beyond Athens' boundaries and reflects a commitment to improving the functionality of these regional connections. Projects and strategies serving this goal help to address operations and safety on major thoroughfares, whether directly (design improvements) or indirectly (creating side streets). To accomplish this, the Plan defines two underlying objectives:

Objectives



SAFETY FIRST, AND FOR ALL USERS

Reduce crash rates and improve designs and operating conditions that are a safety risk

MANAGE CONGESTION ON KEY THOROUGHFARES

Lessen the reliance on key thoroughfares and intersections by allowing the broader transportation system to help



GOALS & OBJECTIVES



ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ATHENS' RESOURCES & AMENITIES

This final Goal of ensuring equitable access to Athens' resources and amenities establishes the City's goal of creating a more balanced, evenly distributed transportation ecosystem that eliminates barriers to accessibility for vulnerable user groups and underserved communities. Throughout public engagement, the project team heard of the importance of connecting disconnected communities and overcoming barriers to mobility that have disproportionately affected underserved neighborhoods. Projects and strategies serving this goal help to create more connections to underserved neighborhoods or eliminate barriers to accessibility for vulnerable users.



An equitable transportation network is essential to providing Athens residents with improved job access, essential services, educational opportunities, grocery stores, shopping destinations, entertainment, and green spaces. While some communities in Athens enjoy the full benefits of a transportation network that connects to these destinations, whether on foot, bike, or by automobile, other communities face more barriers to traveling through Athens – and thus access to these same resources. Of the 19 miles of sidewalks in Athens, the majority are concentrated in downtown and the historic neighborhoods immediately east of downtown; **neighborhoods north and west of Downtown Athens face missing or nonexistent sidewalks, barriers to crossing major thoroughfares, and isolated connectivity** with access to only a few major roads.

In prioritizing this Plan's recommendations, this Goal functions differently from others. Rather than merely counting equally to other city goals, this goal **adds priority among equally-scoring projects and strategies**; thus, among two projects that accomplish three of this Plan's goals, the project that accomplishes the goal of creating equitable access receives higher priority than the project that does not.

TRANSPORTATION CHOICE FOR ALL
 Make transportation investments to allow users to match travel choice to its purpose and the modes to which they have access

ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF VULNERABLE USERS
 Plan and design for a transportation system that keeps all users safe and traveling with convenience and dignity

Objectives



Citywide Recommendations

Athens' recent pattern of development, with additions, subdivisions, and expansion, have led to a piecemeal network of city streets, sidewalks, and supporting transportation infrastructure. Without adequate city policies, ordinances, and regulations to shape the transportation system, much of this expansion has neglected the impacts on Athens' transportation network, and left it only able to react to the changing needs of residents and community members, rather than guide development proactively.

Throughout this planning process, in considering infrastructure improvements throughout the different focus areas, the project team captured recurring themes that applied across the entire city. These include few internal connections within new development, inconsistent driveway spacing and access to businesses, and inconsistent presence and quality of sidewalks were most prominent.

The City can begin to address these patterns with a more complete approach to transportation policy, bringing best practices into everyday decision-making. In building the guidance for future transportation actions, policies are the scaffolding that support implementation. Athens' current policies and strategies, by contrast, are largely missing, limited in application, or out of touch with the vision and goals expressed in this Plan.

With this in mind, the Project team concentrated its citywide recommendations in improving the policy environment to foster effective development of a multimodal transportation network. Recommendations in this Mobility Plan focus on the following:

- **Identifying locations and desired infrastructure for a bicycle and pedestrian network:** developing a Bicycle Master Plan, and establishing criteria for new sidewalk construction
- **Modernizing standards:** establishing access and spacing standards for driveways and roads to improve safety and efficiency of Athens streets, especially its major thoroughfares; and
- **Identifying new and needed connections:** creating the framework for new roadway connections to be planned, designed, and constructed, increasing connectivity and easing growth pressures on major thoroughfares.



CITYWIDE

POLICIES






How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

1. Create a Bicycle Master Plan

A Bicycle Master Plan is one of the most effective tools a City has to develop, promote and expand bicycling opportunities, both for exercise, recreation, and transportation. Effective planning for a bicycle network requires alignment of numerous agencies and interests. Developing a Bicycle Master Plan promotes a coordinated, strategic approach to creating and expanding bicycle facilities in a community, ensuring that new facilities are planned, designed, and constructed in accordance with community values. Crucially, Bicycle Master Plans are important in securing funding for these improvements, helping to justify need and community demand.

The following are important considerations in the creation of a Bicycle Master Plan:

- **Identify and complete a travel network:** Bike networks take on many forms based on community vision, planning horizon, preferred bikeway type, and—most importantly—geographical and physical context. Some bike networks follow an established street grid, while others are primarily comprised of shared use paths following waterways, railroads, and utility easements. The Bicycle Facility Categories shown as the dark and light green lines in Figure 4.23 may

				
ALL USERS	ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	ECONOMIC GROWTH	CONNECT TO REGION	EQUITABLE ACCESS
A low-stress bike network creates bike facilities that are usable for all ages, abilities, and types of bicyclists.	Less direct relationship	A bike network raises residential property values and increases traffic to local businesses	Connects Athens to a regional bicycle network	Safe connections throughout Athens' transportation network connect neighborhoods to other neighborhoods, other destinations.

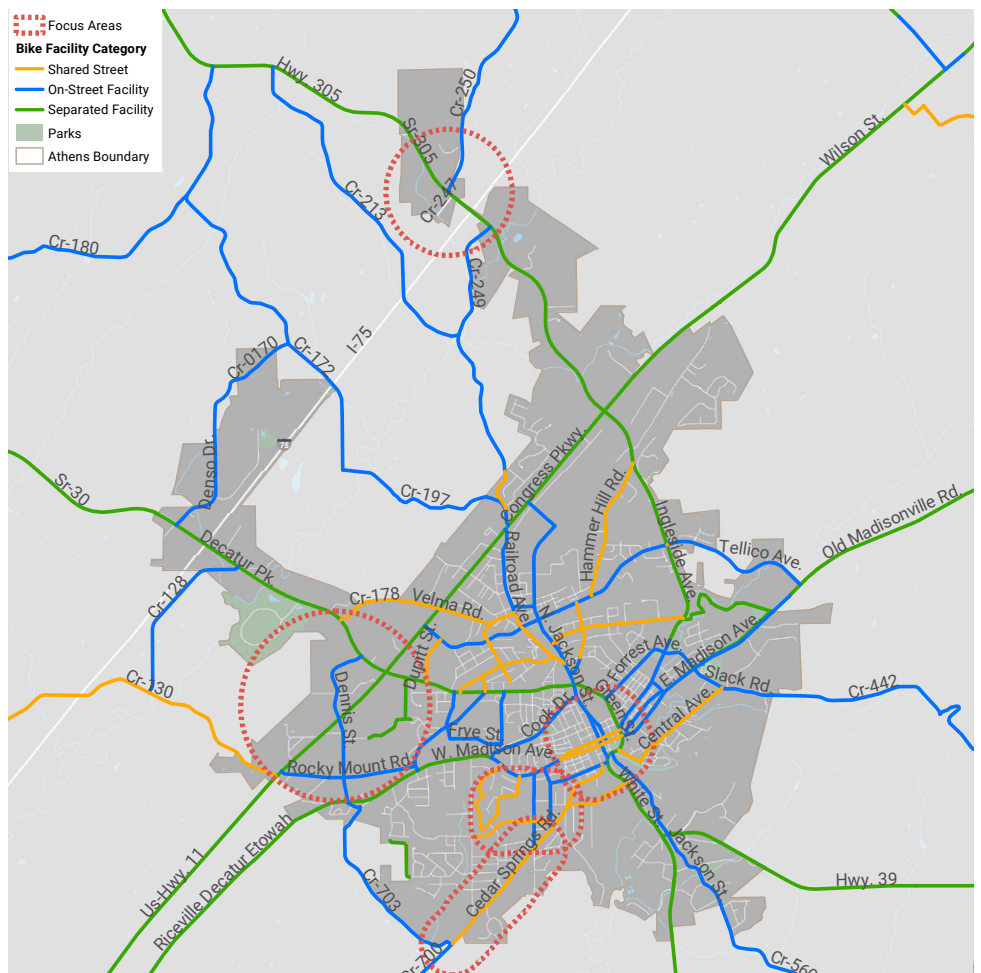


Figure 4.23: Bicycle Facility Categories based on Level of Traffic Stress analysis



POLICIES

serve as a starting point for this effort, both for light-touch enhancements as well as defining a complete bicycle facility network.

- Design for All Ages and Abilities:**
 Not all bicyclists are the same, and the type of bicyclist Athens plans for will affect the planning and design of different bicycle facilities. The largest group of bicyclists, “Interested but Concerned” bicyclists, have the lowest tolerance for traffic stress, and seek out facilities with more separation from traffic or low traffic volumes. While the “design user” for a Bicycle Master Plan should be selected based on a community’s vision, planning for a low-stress network that meets the needs of these users creates a network that meets the needs of all ages and abilities. Facilities meeting these users’s needs include shared-use paths and separated lanes. Importantly, separation from traffic should increase as traffic speeds and volumes increase.
- Build the network thoughtfully:**
 Completing a bike network takes time and investment, and constructing the facilities that support the complete vision of a low-stress network may be challenging in the short-term. As an interim measure, Athens can use signage and traffic calming measures to formalize existing low-speed streets – suitably low-stress connections – as bike priority areas. These streets can supplement a “spine network” of important connections in Athens that provide low-stress facilities to key destinations.

Figure 4.24: Typical bicycle facility examples



Shared street



On-street facility



Separated facility

POLICIES

How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?






2. Develop a Complete Streets Policy

The creation of a complete street policy should be undertaken during a detailed process, preferably embedded within a transportation plan update or as an individual effort focused on complete streets and related policies. The effort ideally requires the inputs of citizens, technical staff, elected/appointed officials, business interests, real estate developers, and other community members to ensure a policy tailored to specific interests and needs. Note that, since complete streets are part of an overall design objective that includes land use and other elements of the public realm, the study team should represent public works, planning/ zoning, law enforcement, and other departments within the town.

The following is a suggested starting point, and borrowed from established, proven resources such as the Charlotte (NC) Complete Streets Policy and National Complete Streets Coalition.

The National Complete Streets Coalition (a subsidiary of Smart Growth America) notes that the following are ten vital components of a policy framework to ensure that streets are designed for everyone, at every age, at every level of physical ability:

- **Vision:** The policy establishes a motivating vision for why the community wants Complete Streets: to improve safety,

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Policy ensures consideration of multimodal users in Athens' street designs.	Considers Athens' streets holistically to make them a place for people to live, work, and play.	Facilities for all users drives more bicycle and pedestrian traffic to businesses, eases pressure on roads	Less direct relationship	Complete Streets identify, evaluate, and design for all of a community's needs, ensuring all residents greater mobility.

promote better health, make overall travel more efficient, improve the convenience of choices, or for other reasons.

- **All users and modes:** The policy specifies that "all modes" includes walking, bicycling, riding public transportation, driving trucks, buses and automobiles and "all users" includes people of all ages and abilities.
- **All projects and phases:** All types of transportation projects are subject to the policy, including design, planning, construction, maintenance, and operations of new and existing streets and facilities.
- **Clear, accountable exceptions:** Any exceptions to the policy are specified and approved by a high-level official.
- **Network:** The policy recognizes the need to create a comprehensive, integrated and connected network for all modes and encourages street connectivity.
- **Jurisdiction:** All other agencies that govern transportation activities can clearly understand the policy's application and may be involved in the process as appropriate.
- **Design:** The policy recommends use of the latest and best design criteria and guidelines, while recognizing the need for design flexibility to balance user needs in context.
- **Context sensitivity:** The current and planned context—buildings, land use, transportation, and community needs—is considered in when planning and designing transportation solutions.
- **Performance measures:** The policy includes performance standards with measurable outcomes.
- **Implementation steps:** Specific next steps for implementing the policy are described.




POLICIES

Figure 4.25: Example complete streets guidance

The following Complete Streets Context Guide presents a high-level overview of the functional considerations of Complete Streets design elements; a strong, proactive process must also be the foundation for a consistent application of complete streets principles.


Context Zone

- Defined by the overall environment and framework of the corridor and surrounding network of streets and adjacent land uses
- Stresses context-specific treatment for three primary areas:
 - › Building form and massing
 - › Pedestrian space and design treatments
 - › Travelway modal integration (bike, walk, transit, & vehicular)




Travelway Zone

- Defined by the edge of pavement or curb line that traditionally accommodates the travel or parking lanes needed for vehicles in the transportation corridor
- Recommendations focus on modes of travel and medians
- Travelway zone focuses on two objectives:
 - › Achieve balance between travel modes sharing the corridor
 - › Promote human scale for the street and minimize pedestrian crossing distances and vehicular conflict points / speeds




Pedestrian Zone

- Extends between the outside edge of the sidewalk and the face-of-curb located along the street
- Quality of the pedestrian realm is achieved through four primary channels:
 - › Continuous pedestrian facilities (on both sides of the road if possible) to maximize safety and mobility needs
 - › High-quality buffers between pedestrians and moving traffic
 - › Safe and convenient opportunities to cross the street
 - › Consideration for shade, lighting, and amenities



Building Zone

- Define and frame the roadway and its purposes
- Streets should serve these adjacent uses, unless the roadway is primarily used for through travelers (focus on reducing or managing conflict points)
- Building scale and massing focus on two areas:
 - › Orientation (setbacks, accessibility, etc.)
 - › Design & architectural character (height, wall/void ratio, etc.)
 - › Ground floor activities, seating, shops, restaurants




CITYWIDE

POLICIES

How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?






3. Establish a Framework for constructing new sidewalk connections

Athens has considerable opportunity to expand its sidewalk network throughout the city, both in more traditional neighborhoods as well as more recently developed areas. With limited funding, a method of prioritization is needed to ensure that an expanded sidewalk network effectively accomplishes City goals and objectives and aligns with community values.








The Focus Area sections of this report identify numerous candidates for sidewalk gap-filling projects, and together these can make considerable progress completing Athens' walking networks. However, other gaps have not been specifically identified in other parts of the City.

The City should adopt this basic framework as a working policy for how to fill sidewalk gaps and complete the overall walking network. This general policy closely aligns with City Policy Solution 2, Develop a Complete Streets Policy. The framework is based on the following broad criteria.

- Identify **high potential walking demand** and **high-potential activity locations**
- Identify places where **users may be vulnerable** (e.g. schools, senior centers)
- **Define criteria** for prioritizing new sidewalk connections

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
A clear, specific sidewalk construction framework establishes guidance for completing a pedestrian network	Walkable streets are a key ingredient of attractive communities	Allows for district growth and multiples means of travel to and from destinations	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Criteria for vulnerable populations and underserved neighborhoods prioritizes equitable access

- Establish **dedicated funding** to allow regular additions to the sidewalk network
- **CRITERIA:**

-  • **Education:** Within 1/4 mi of a school?
-  • **Parks:** Within 1/4 mi of a park?
-  • **Employment:** Within 1/4 mi of an employment hub?
-  • **Services:** Within 1/4 mi of a library, healthcare, senior center, or other social services?
-  • **Equity:** Located in a neighborhood with a relatively high concentration of vulnerable populations?
-  • **Shopping:** Within 1/4 mi of a retail center?
-  • **Smart Growth:** In an area targeted for near-term development?
-  • **Safety:** Located along a high crash corridor and/or intersects a high crash cluster?



POLICIES



Figure 4.26: Conceptual sidewalk prioritization

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POLICIES






How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

4. Improve parking policies and usage

Mature cities and towns treat parking as a part of their mobility system, even as they are developing alternative forms of transportation. This plan recommends that Athens adopt this kind of an approach. This does not have to mean building more parking, making parking more restricted or heavily regulated, or making it harder to use. Indeed, a modern, forward-thinking approach to parking makes it easier to use by increasing what parking is available to the general public and using careful regulation and even pricing to manage scarce supply in high-demand locations. The underlying premise of this is that parking should always be available for the various activities that will use it, but should not come at the expense of other potential investments that enhance Athens as a place to live.

This general parking policy is based on three key strategic pillars. Implementing this policy will mean further study and detail behind these ideas.

1. **Rethink, and update as appropriate, parking requirements in the City zoning ordinance.** The parking requirements of many zoning ordinances around the United States were developed in response to a rise in personal vehicle use throughout the 20th century, and were intended to protect communities (especially

				
ALL USERS	ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	ECONOMIC GROWTH	CONNECT TO REGION	EQUITABLE ACCESS
Providing better parking access encourages efficient use both of available parking space and nearby development	Managed parking as part of the mobility system ensures availability to support increased activity	Effective use of parking optimizes balance between parking and further investment in Athens	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Maintains parking availability at a range of prices and regulations suitable to all populations

residential neighborhoods) from the spillover effect of adjacent land uses that generated amounts of visitors. However, many of these parking requirements set overly conservative ratios of required parking to building spaces. The City should perform an assessment of actual parking demand around key land uses—something as simple as counting parked cars during sampled times and comparing these to the size or amount of space a given land use features, and use this as the basis for adjusting required parking ratios. Likewise, the zoning ordinance may include such policy tools as allowing shared parking between multiple land uses, remote parking in which a given land use satisfies part of its parking requirement on another property, or reducing parking in areas with high

walking potential (such as Downtown Athens).

2. **Make parking a part of the mobility system, especially in districts of mixed uses or high activity.** Parking should not simply be provided as a function of new development. The City may wish to invest in adding to parking supply or leverage existing parking under its control to support a broader public need. Likewise, investments in sidewalk infill and other multimodal enhancement should consider parking as part of their location criteria, understanding that an underutilized parking supply near high-demand areas may be able to address that demand with adequate walking, bicycling, and other multimodal connections.
3. **Employ best practices management approaches to guide decisions on parking**



POLICIES

regulations, pricing, and new supply. It is typical for communities that have had no regulations or prices on parking to worry about the impacts of these on local business and economic activity. However, there is a time and a place for introducing parking regulations and price, and it usually follows from achieving enough economic success that there is a high degree of demand to travel to (and park in) a given location. The City should use a general approach to introducing time limits first, and then prices later, when there is a high enough level of parking demand that parking remains at routinely high levels of use (typically 85 percent utilized and higher) throughout a typical day. Time limits should be treated as a first step to ensuring availability, and pricing should be introduced when consistently high levels of occupancy continue after time limits are put in place.

Using this kind of approach helps to provide choices for users: it recognizes the parking in areas of high demand as a scarce resource, and sets limits to guard against unlimited use of that resource. However, in regulating and pricing areas of high demand only, it leaves other parking open to users who wish to stay longer or avoid paying for parking. That parking may be less convenient

to users, but if it also available, parking customers have a system for making rational decisions and deciding if price or convenience are more important.

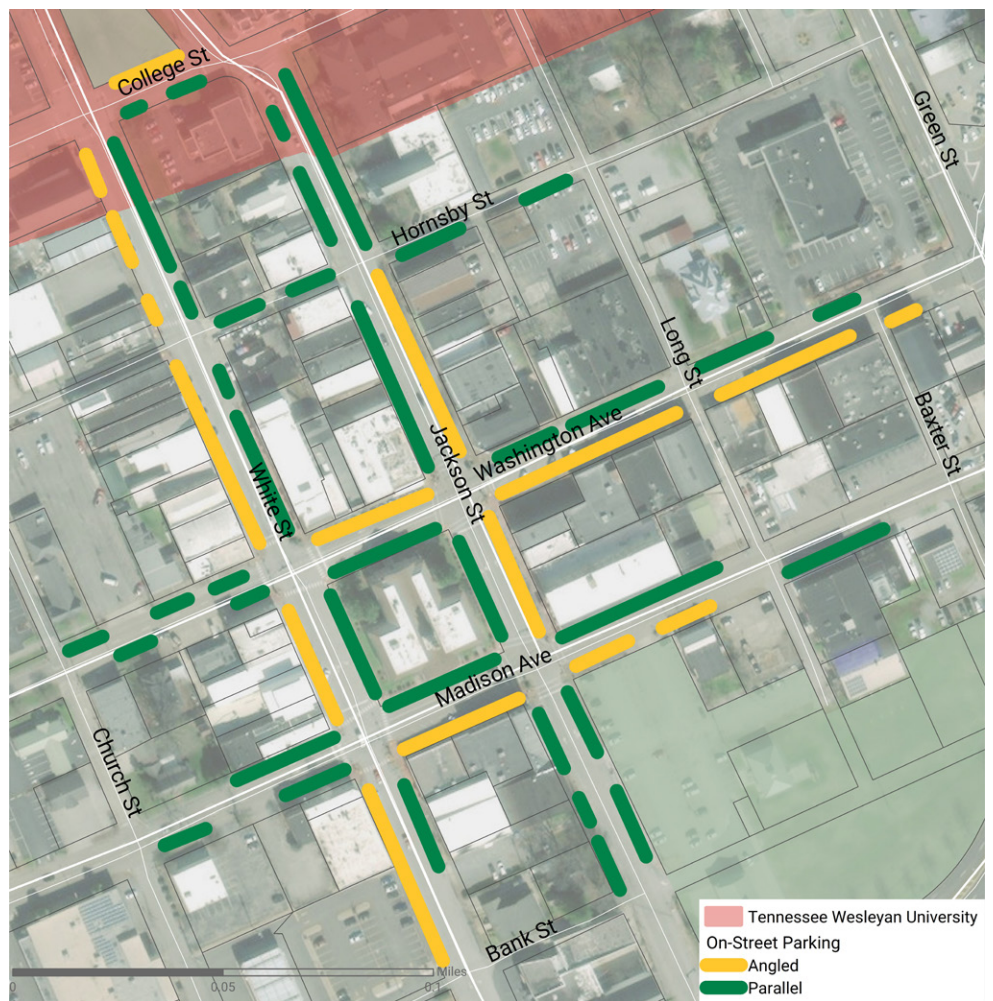


Figure 4.27: Existing parking inventory in downtown Athens

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POLICIES






5. Develop a Street Network Framework Plan

As Athens continues to grow, it will be important to establish a way that the street network can expand accordingly without compounding the kinds of challenges already observed on major thoroughfares such as Congress Pike and Decatur Street. This involves developing a general framework plan for how the Athens street network will evolve. This is intended to include both publicly-led capital projects as well as key street connections that could be achieved through private development. Key connections should be defined with enough detail to clarify key street lengths or intersections that should be linked, but should also allow enough flexibility that natural features, site constraints, and other factors that would limit the network's effectiveness could be avoided.

This framework plan should be led by the City after completion of this plan, and should include three key components as follows:

- 1. Identify locations where new development could have significant impact on current streets.** This should be coordinated as much as possible with the City's comprehensive plan to provide a rational link between this street plan and the City's adopted framework for supporting growth and development. Although the street network framework does

How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Adding new streets and appropriately characterizing existing ones allows all users to be served	Identifies streets by character	Creating more roadway connections improves movement of people and goods	More roadway connections creates easier access to and from key thoroughfares, eases pressure on existing roads	Prioritizing connections in isolated areas improves accessibility for residents

not need to be this simple, it should broadly connect to/ from, within, and between major growth areas so that the City's street network can support multiple paths of connection between destinations and not place undue burden on a single transportation facility.

- 2. Develop a simple 'purpose and need' statement for each of the street network links included in this framework plan.** This can be based on such reasons as providing alternative connections to alleviate burden on a single intersection or roadway, to provide more travel paths so that specific streets or roads can be prioritized for different modes of travel, or to limit the distances that public services (especially safety and emergency response services) must travel. This gives the City an established rationale for asking partners, whether public or private, to

help contribute to building out this street network or at least to respect its definition for key street links and not preclude them from happening.

- 3. Identify potential for new streets to help manage major thoroughfares,** especially with parallel and side streets from thoroughfares that provide alternative locations for driveway entry/exit, service trips (especially loading and deliveries), and other lower-speed trips that are not the primary intent of arterial thoroughfares.

NOTE: Prior to developing the framework plan, Athens should seek reclassification of several streets' functional class, which appear to meet threshold criteria. These streets, highlighted in Figure 4.28, include Crestway Drive, Matlock Avenue, Keith Lane, Park Street, and sections of Jackson Street.



POLICIES

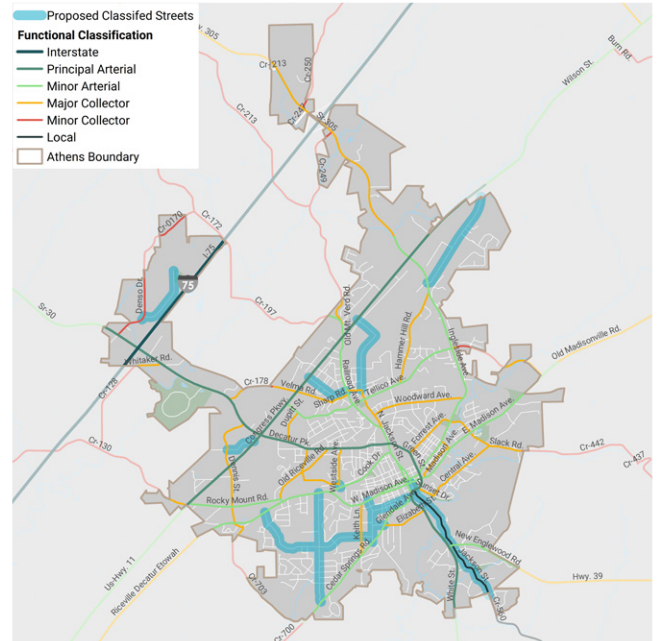
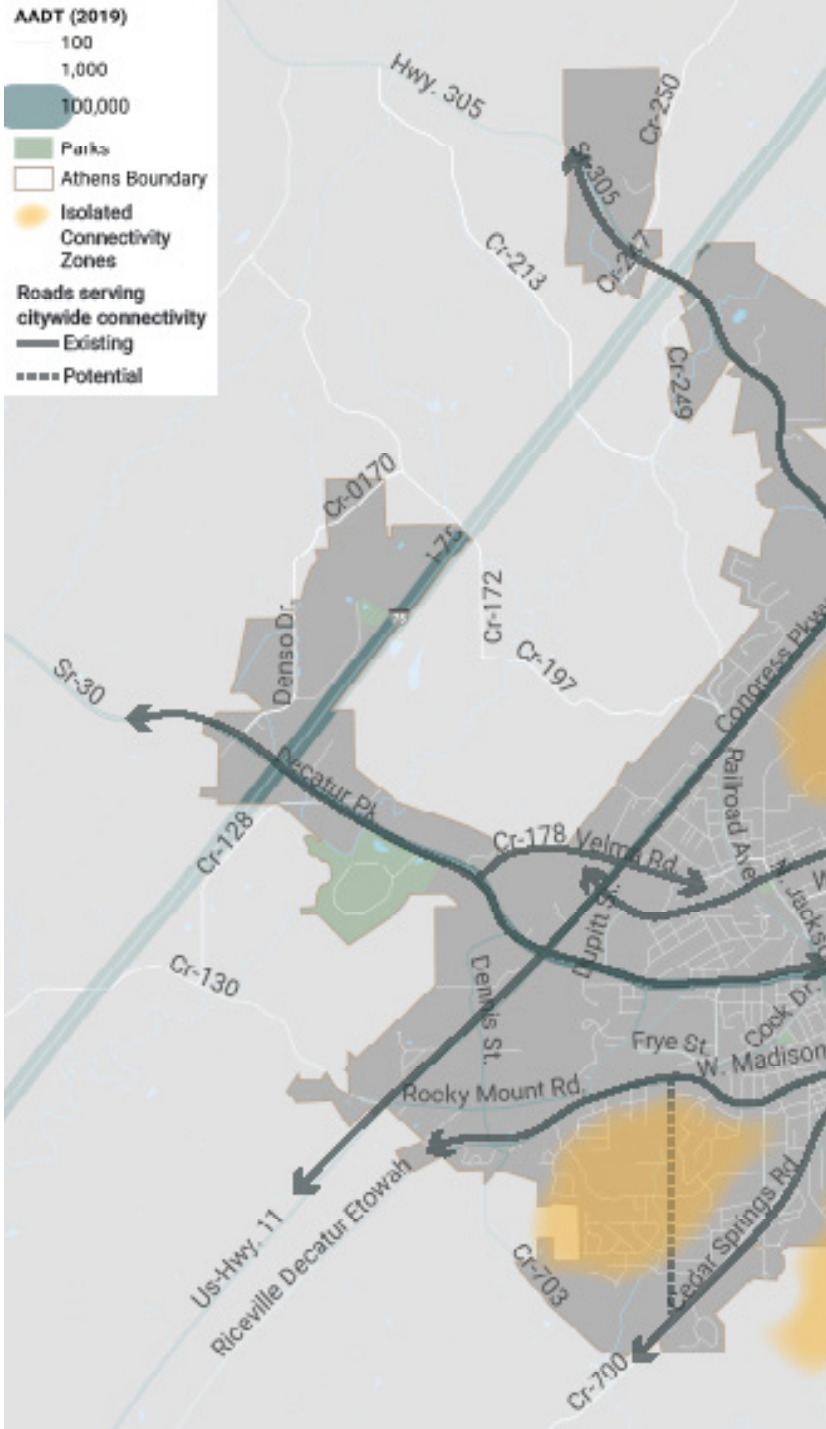


Figure 4.28: Proposed reclassification for certain streets are highlighted in blue.

Figure 4.29: Existing and potential future citywide connector roads



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POLICIES

How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

6. Establish Connectivity Standards

Working hand in hand with City Policy Solution 5 (Develop a Street Network Framework Plan), this policy solution can help to ensure a similar degree of connectivity and functioning street network as part of the development process. This is a more site-focused application of the same basic principle underlying Policy Solution 5. It is intended to make sure new development helps to contribute to a balanced, functional, and safe transportation network overall.

- **Amend city ordinances (including zoning and subdivision regulations) to provide standards for development to connect to the street network.** These may include the following:
 - A connectivity index or ratio comparing links or segments to nodes or ends. Typically these are expressed as a fraction wherein the number of segments in a subdivision or new development site plan is divided by the number of nodes, with a threshold value adopted as the policy requirement for what must be provided.
 - Standards defining the acceptable sizes of blocks, the distance between safe pedestrian crossings, etc. as ways to complete the network further.

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Standards defining appropriate block size, distance between crossings improves conditions for bicyclists and pedestrians	Identifies streets by character	Creating more roadway connections improves movement of people and goods	Greater connectivity requirements in new development creates new roads, connections for residents	Connectivity standards benefit all users, especially the most vulnerable

- Standards and administrative support to encourage more use of cross-parcel access, especially along major thoroughfares, to allow long-term reduction in the number of driveways and curb cuts along roads.
- **Work with partner agencies, especially TDOT, to incorporate the intended results of these standards into the partners' own policies and standards.** For example, introducing a new connecting street onto a state-maintained road may not initially comply with TDOT intersection spacing standards, but if it allows the elimination of existing driveways on that same road, it may provide an overall benefit to both the City and State in reduced crash risk and more efficient corridor operations.
- **Coordinate city standards and ordinance language with up-to-date guidance from partners, including TDOT.** TDOT has developed a new Access Management Manual with updated standards and draft language for use in city ordinances and regulations. Incorporating these standards into city ordinances and policies guiding road network development ensures consistency in planning and design efforts.



POLICIES

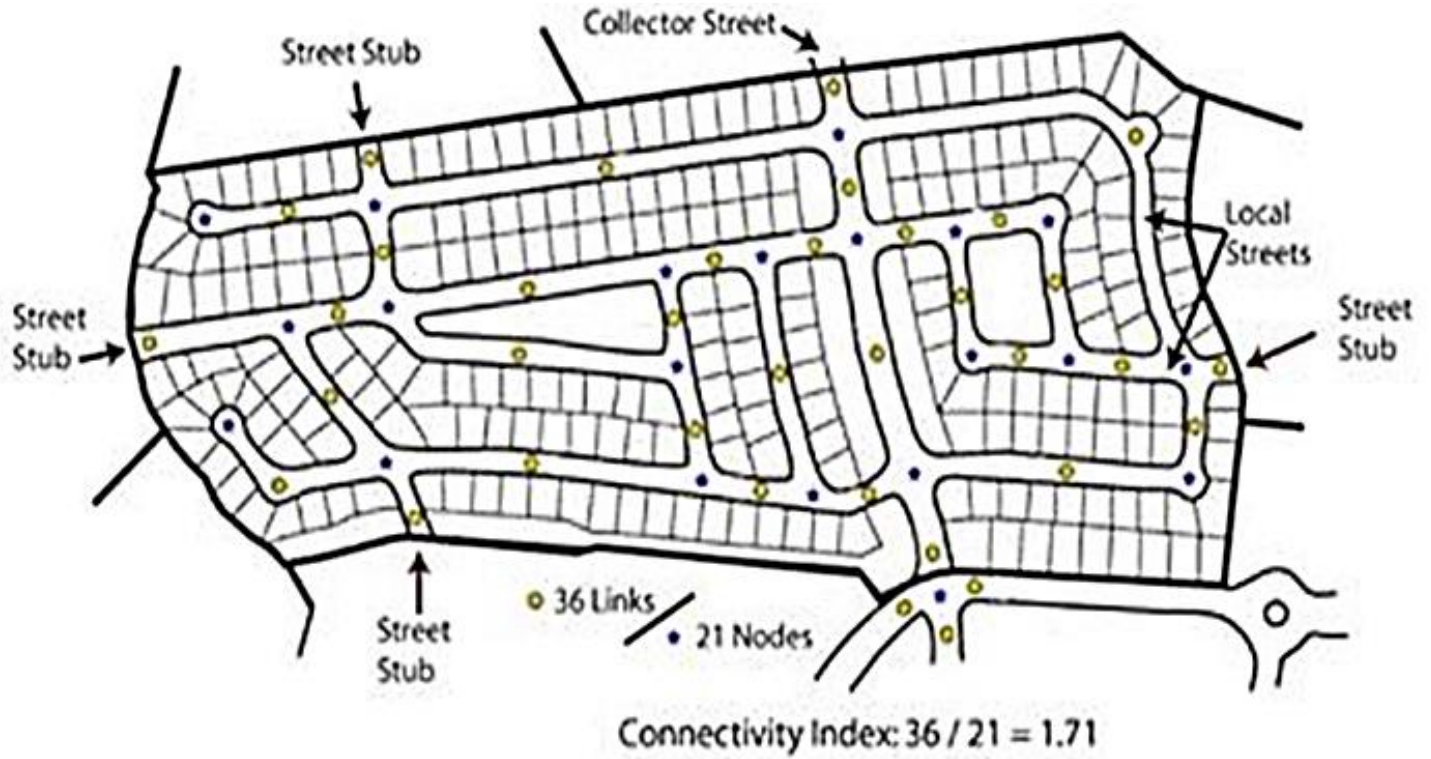


Figure 4.30: Example street connectivity standards from Round Rock, Texas

Focus Area: Downtown

A quick visit to Athens' downtown tells you much of what you need to know about the challenges and opportunities it faces. Redevelopment is already occurring, with new shops and restaurants opening as interest grows in an attractive downtown environment. Coffee shops, restaurants, and art galleries have all appeared in recent years, particularly along key corridors such as Jackson Street, White Street, and Madison and Washington Avenues. Much activity occurs in these few city blocks and more is expected, with accessibility to and from downtown being key to making it work.

Downtown Athens faces a different set of access challenges for motorists than for bicyclists or pedestrians. While Athens downtown is easy to get to in a car or truck, it lacks the same convenience of connection by other modes of travel to the rest of the city. There are no bicycle connections into or out of downtown, and there are few sidewalk connections. While crosswalks and sidewalks exist within the downtown, there are very limited safe crossing opportunities – and with a busy Green Street bounding much of downtown, this is a significant barrier to creating a bikeable, walkable environment.

While parking downtown is generally sufficient, the types of parking available may be best reconfigured. The drive-in angled parking configurations currently in use today increase the overall parking supply but can create dangerous conditions when drivers are backing out, while the lack of pedestrian infrastructure and connections may encourage visitors to drive around, rather than park once and walk.

In setting out to create a multimodal environment that built upon Athens' previous planning efforts, the planning team concentrated on four broad categories of improvements:

- **Gateways:** use identified gateways to Athens' downtown to create a distinct place, both for establishing an identity as well as to focus investment.
- **Multimodal connections:** creating bicycle and pedestrian connections, both along and across downtown streets, and incorporating wayfinding signage to aid in navigation
- **Parking:** promoting improvements to consider parking as part of an overall mobility network that complements other modes, city goals and objectives
- **Circulation:** maintain existing circulation patterns, but repurpose laneage and asphalt where appropriate to improve operations and provide space for all users.

Focus area discussions emphasized the need to improve the pedestrian experience in this area and connect downtown Athens both to surrounding neighborhoods and the broader Athens community. The project recommendations that follow vary in their scope, but focus on the following:

- **Creating safe, continuous bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure:** whether building new sidewalks and bike facilities, or filling in the gaps
- Creating safer—and more—**pedestrian crossings** with curb extensions and enhanced crosswalks.
- **Streetscape improvements**, both to create more comfortable spaces for bicyclists and pedestrians as well as to create a unique sense of place in downtown Athens.
- **Improving parking** through conversion of angled parking to parallel on-street and reverse angle in key locations.



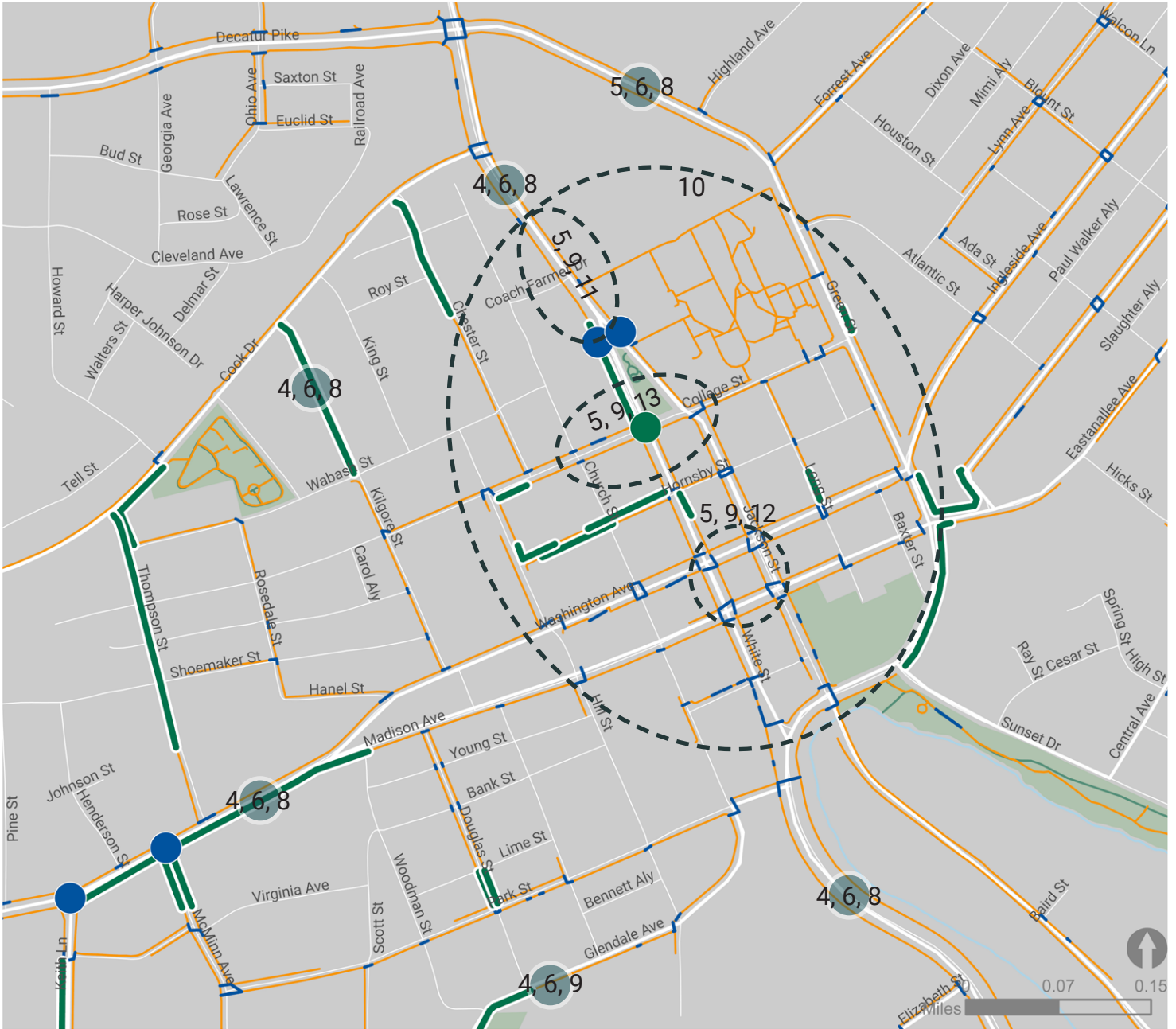


Figure 4.31:

Downtown Improvements

See the following pages for project details.

- Pedestrian Crossing Improvements
- New Pedestrian Crossing
- New Sidewalk (7)
- Existing Crosswalk
- Existing Sidewalk
- Existing Trail



DOWNTOWN






POLICIES

How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

IDENTIFY DOWNTOWN GATEWAYS

1. Use Gateways to focus investment






Athens' downtown is a critical focal point for the city's growth, but lacks a distinct sense of place. Gateway locations can both create that sense of place, as well as focus investment.

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Gateways identify Downtown as a destination, create a communal identity.	Gateways identify Downtown as a destination and focus appropriate development.	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Creates identifiable, safe access opportunities from all areas of Athens

PARKING

2. Identify potential off-street parking locations

Parking is a part of the overall mobility system, and that means having sufficient parking capacity to accommodate visitors. Identify potential off-street parking locations to improve how parking is used and managed downtown.






 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Creates space in the right-of-way for multimodal users while preserving total parking space.	Creates parking space for residents and visitors to Athens	Increasing parking capacity may influence decisions to visit and shop downtown	Creates parking space for regional visitors to access downtown Athens	Maintains parking availability at a range of prices and regulations suitable to all populations

PARKING

3. Develop a parking management strategy

Parking management is key to incorporating parking into Athens' overall mobility system. To do this, Athens should develop a parking management strategy that does the following:

- Promote a "park-once" strategy
- Manage the most popular spaces for availability, whether through metering, time limits, or otherwise
- Provide limited-time free parking
- Signage and wayfinding

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Promotes a multimodal approach to managing parking and transportation, benefitting all user groups	Optimizes Athens' available parking to increase available space for parks, shopping, entertainment	Increasing parking capacity may influence decisions to visit and shop downtown	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Maintains parking availability at a range of prices and regulations suitable to all populations



DOWNTOWN






POLICIES

How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

IDENTIFY DOWNTOWN GATEWAYS

4. Implement distinct streetscaping within and outside of Gateways






Athens can improve its downtown experience for bicyclists, pedestrians, and local/regional visitors through improved streetscaping. Provide different streetscaping within and outside of the gateways to add to the sensation of Downtown as a unique place.

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Streetscaping elements define space for all users to create comfortable uses.	Beautifying streets increases Athens' attractiveness as a destination.	Beautifying streets increases attractiveness to business and supports downtown growth	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Carless households or disconnected neighborhoods have safe connections to downtown

MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIONS

5. Pedestrian and bike connections in/out of Downtown

Athens' downtown may have walkable, low-speed streets, but it lacks connections to or from that encourage folks to walk or bike to downtown. Creating pedestrian and bike connections in and out of downtown at gateways into the Downtown Core connects the greater Athens community to downtown and increases interest in downtown as a destination.

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Creates safe, continuous infrastructure for those traveling by alternative means.	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Creates new means of access and increases walking and biking access downtown	Creates multiples means for visitors to access downtown	Carless households or disconnected neighborhoods have safe connections to downtown



DOWNTOWN






PROJECTS

MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIONS

6. Crossing improvements

Athens' downtown is defined by Green Street/SR-39, a dangerous street for bicyclists and pedestrians that creates a barrier to access for most residents. Improve crossings for pedestrians, including adding bump outs at key intersections, to bridge the divide -- literally and figuratively -- to create a safer, more welcoming environment for those seeking access to or from downtown on two feet or two wheels.

How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

				
ALL USERS	ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	ECONOMIC GROWTH	CONNECT TO REGION	EQUITABLE ACCESS
Creates safe crossings for pedestrians where none existed before.	Makes it easier and safer to access downtown Athens from nearby neighborhoods	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Safe connections across major roads connects disconnected neighborhoods.



DOWNTOWN

PROJECTS






How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIONS

7. Fill sidewalk gaps

Fill sidewalk gaps:

- Thompson St between Cook Dr and Johnson St - west side
- Thompson St between Wabash St and Cook Dr - east side
- Cook Dr between Thompson St and Howard St - south side
- Douglas St between Lime St and Park St - both sides
- Kilgore St between Cook Dr and Wabash St - west side
- Chester St between Cook Dr and south of Roy St - west side
- Hill St just north of Hornsby St - east side
- College St between Hill St and Chester St - south side
- Hornsby St between Hill St and White St - gaps on north and south
- White St between Hornsby St and Washington Ave gap east side
- White St between Jackson St and College St - west side
- Long St between Washington Ave and Hornsby St gap - west side
- Green St between College St and Atlantic St - east side
- Green St between Sunset Dr and Ingleside Ave - southeast side

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Priority connections complete the sidewalk network for pedestrians	Makes it easier and safer to access downtown Athens from nearby neighborhoods	Creates continuous means of access and increases walking and biking traffic downtown	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Neighborhood connections create a low-stress sidewalk network connecting to Greater Athens

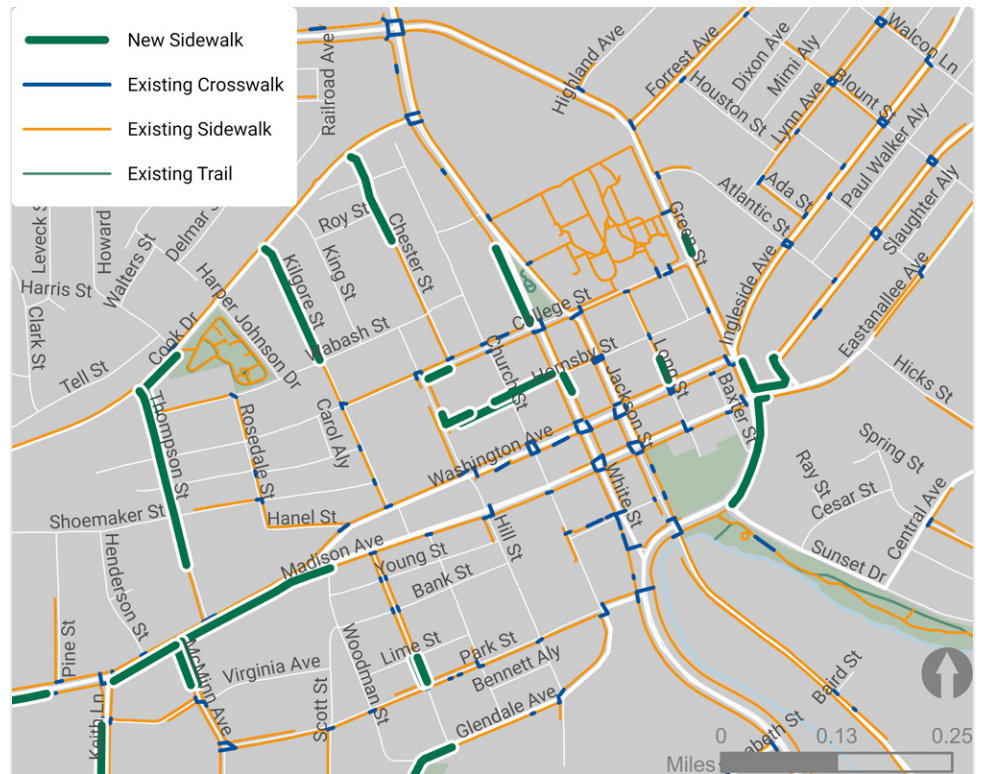


Figure 4.32: Sidewalk gaps recommended for infill in the Downtown Athens area.

- Eastanalle Ave between Green St and Madison Ave - north side
- Madison Ave between Eastanalle Ave and existing sidewalk - west side



DOWNTOWN






PROJECTS

How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIONS

8. Pedestrian and bike wayfinding






Recommended in the Downtown Experience Master Plan, wayfinding signage helps residents and visitors find their way -- literally -- and make sense of downtown. Add pedestrian and bike oriented wayfinding signage to make access to downtown Athens shops and restaurants, as well as nearby destinations.

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Wayfinding signage makes navigation easier for non-motorized users	Signage makes Athens easier to navigate for tourists and visitors	Signage directs residents and visitors to nearby businesses and destinations	Signage draws visitors to local businesses and destinations from regional thoroughfares	Makes it easier for all communities & neighborhoods to find and engage with Athens' resources

PARKING

9. Update parking type






While Athens has many angled parking spaces, parallel and reverse-angle on-street parking can be both an effective traffic calming tool as well as an improvement to parking capacity. Convert existing angled parking to a mix of parallel parking and reverse-angle parking in key locations to improve visitors' downtown experience.

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Improved parking slows traffic speeds, safer conditions for bicyclists and pedestrians	Creates parking space for residents and visitors to Athens, and increases safety for all users	Increasing parking capacity may influence decisions to visit and shop downtown	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Maintains parking availability at a range of prices and regulations suitable to all populations

PARKING

10. Implement reverse angle parking on one-way streets

Implement reverse angle parking on one-way streets to calm traffic and increase available parking downtown.

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Improved parking slows traffic speeds, safer conditions for bicyclists and pedestrians	Creates parking space for residents and visitors to Athens, and increases safety for all users	Increasing parking capacity may influence decisions to visit and shop downtown	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Maintains parking availability at a range of prices and regulations suitable to all populations








DOWNTOWN

PROJECTS

How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

EXPERIENCE MASTER PLAN
11. Jackson/White
Corridors

Recommended from the Downtown Experience Master Plan, Jackson Street needs a road diet to make it a proper gateway to downtown. Remove a travel lane, add continuous sidewalks and parallel on-street parking nearest to downtown businesses protected by Planted bump outs. Crosswalks at Jackson and White Streets across the corridors improve pedestrian

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Creates safe infrastructure for all users on a key corridor for all of Athens	Increases bikeability and walkability to and from Athens' downtown	Increases walkability and grows foot traffic on a gateway corridor	Streamlines operations and improves effectiveness of regional corridor for all users	Creates key pedestrian connections for underserved neighborhoods north of downtown

access along this key corridor. Potentially incorporate bike facilities in accordance with a Bicycle Master Plan and Low-Stress Bike Network.

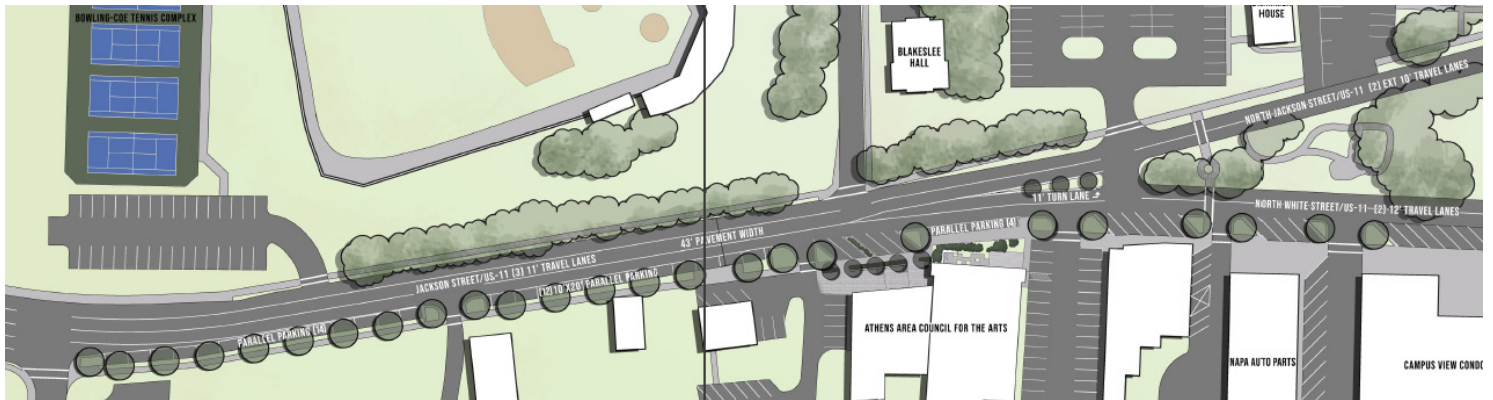


Figure 4.33: Preferred concept for Jackson/White Corridors: Reduce N Jackson Street to two travel lanes. Further narrows travel lanes. Convert the removed lanes to on-street parallel parking.

DOWNTOWN






PROJECTS

EXPERIENCE MASTER PLAN

12. Downtown Square

Recommended from the Downtown Experience Master Plan, the Courthouse Square area can be repurposed to better accommodate all users. Remove the center turn lane, narrowing to two lanes and convert existing parking spaces to a mix of reverse angle parking and parallel parking. Planted bump outs and crosswalks at all four intersections improve pedestrian crossing opportunities. Side streets should be redesigned to accommodate on-street parking.

How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Creates safe pedestrian/multimodal infrastructure around a key community landmark	Increases bikeability and walkability at a key local cultural resource.	Supports walkability and bikeability, growth in foot traffic at key downtown landmark	Creates parking space at key regional destination for visitors from outside Athens	Ensures safe vehicle and pedestrian access to Courthouse & nearby destinations for all users

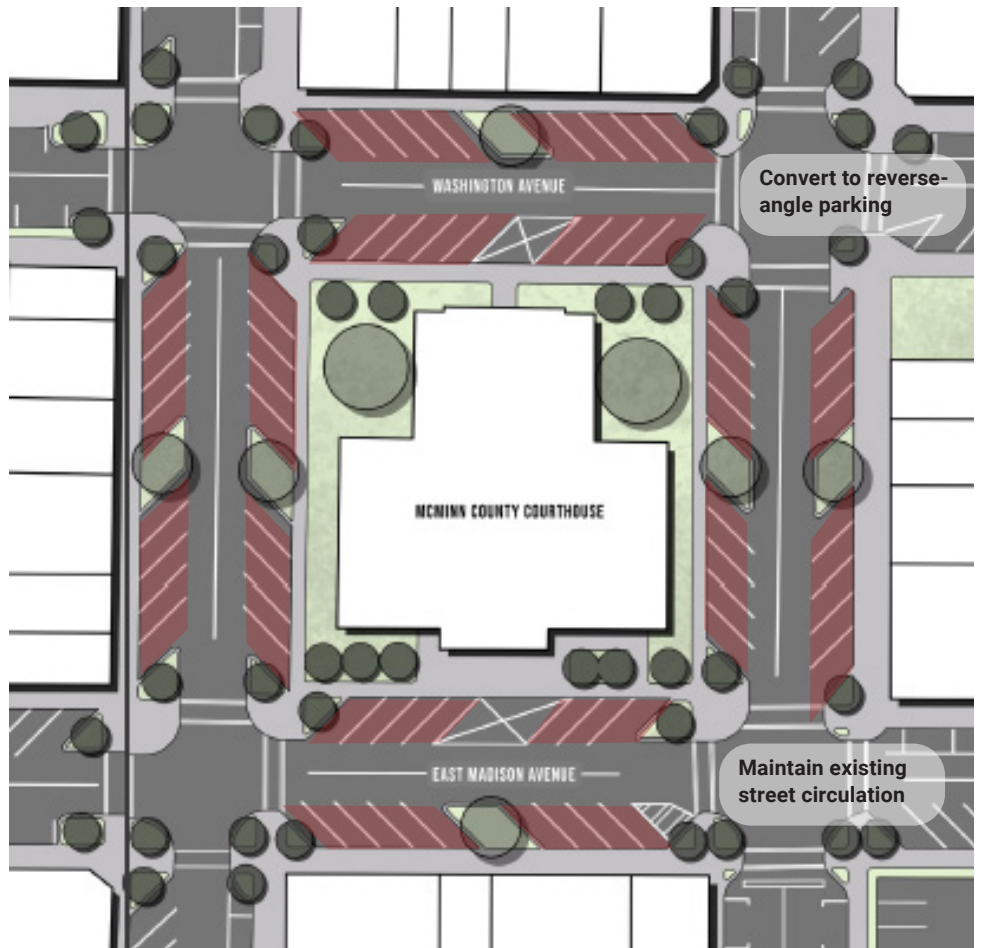


Figure 4.34: From the Experience Master Plan, Downtown Square Option One is seen above. The Focus Area recommendation builds from this Option, but recommends maintaining the existing street circulation as one-way streets, and converting the proposed angled parking to reverse-angle and parallel parking.



DOWNTOWN






PROJECTS

EXPERIENCE MASTER PLAN

13. College Street

Recommended from the Downtown Experience Master Plan, College Street is an upcoming corridor for local shops and restaurants, as well as a key street for bicycle and pedestrian movement. Remove two travel lanes from the existing cross-section and replace with sidewalks, landscaped buffers, planted bump outs, and on-street parallel parking. New Crosswalks at College and White Streets complete the pedestrian improvements and improve safety for residents and visitors downtown.

How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

				
ALL USERS	ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	ECONOMIC GROWTH	CONNECT TO REGION	EQUITABLE ACCESS
Creates safe infrastructure for all users on a key corridor for all of Athens	Increases bikeability and walkability to and from Athens' downtown	Increases walkability and grows foot traffic on an upcoming corridor for local shops & restaurants	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Creates key pedestrian connection for underserved neighborhoods into downtown

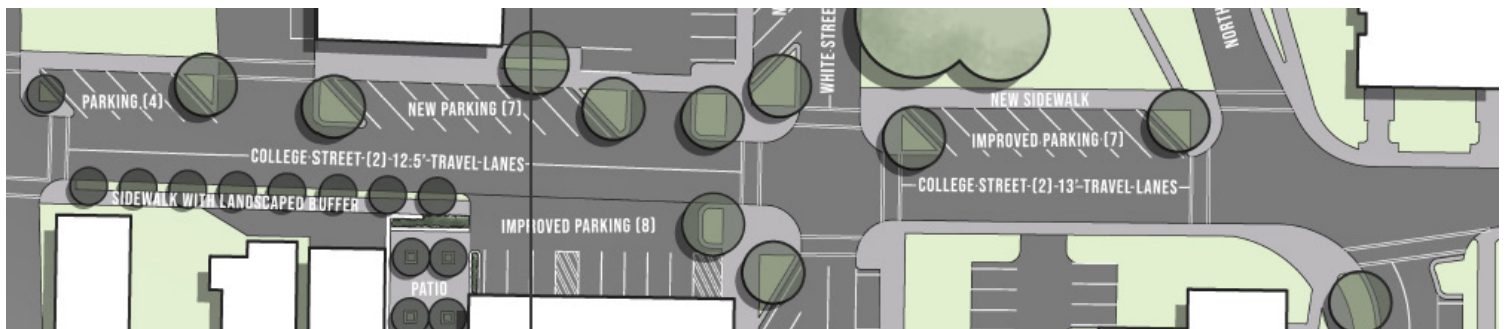


Figure 4.35: Preferred concept for College Street: Remove 2 travel lanes, narrowing College Street travel lanes. Replace with sidewalks, landscaped buffers, planted curb extensions, and on-street angled parking. New crosswalks at College and White

Focus Area: City Schools

The next three years will bring tremendous change to the area near City Park Elementary School and Athens City Middle School. The new and expanded City Park will bring more students, increasing travel demand in a small area, nestled between Athens' downtown and a growing neighborhood to the south and west. While this area is currently a calm residential area for residents and neighbors to walk and exercise, the new construction, slated to be complete in late 2023, will require changes to the transportation network.

Like much of Athens, the City Schools area is limited by a lack of bicycle and pedestrian facilities. With only three major roads in and out of the schools area, all traffic, whether in a car, on two feet or two wheels, is concentrated on roads with limited capacity. These roads feature few sidewalks; where sidewalks do exist, they are only found on one side of the street with few safe pedestrian crossings.

More students at these schools will mean more demand added to these roads, with Keith Lane and McMinn Avenue bearing over two-thirds of this added volume. This will increase congestion, unexpected and unpredictable car movement, creating potentially unsafe conditions for cars, young bicyclists and pedestrians alike. And while these conditions may not exist at all hours of the day, children trying to walk or bike to school will interact in this environment at the same time as conditions are at their worst.

The project team identified two major issues to resolve in the City Schools focus area: traffic circulation and multimodal connectivity. The two work in tandem: traffic circulation eases congestion and frees movement in the area, while better multimodal connectivity creates better alternatives to reduce dependency on the automobile for surrounding neighborhoods. Focus area discussions only reinforced that these two issues were the overarching problems to be resolved. To account for this current stress and future growth, the team focused on two major categories of improvements:

- **Multimodal facilities:** bicycle and pedestrian improvements, including new sidewalks and enhanced pedestrian crossings; and
- **Traffic management:** creating new roadway, bicycle and pedestrian connections to create alternative routes to and from the complex, as well as conversion of roads to two-way or one-way and inclusion of turn lanes.

Project recommendations are detailed in the following pages, but include the following:

- Continuous sidewalk connections along McMinn Avenue, Keith Lane, and Crestway Drive,
- Crosswalks and curb extensions at key intersections; and
- New connections between Lynnwood Drive and Keith Lane



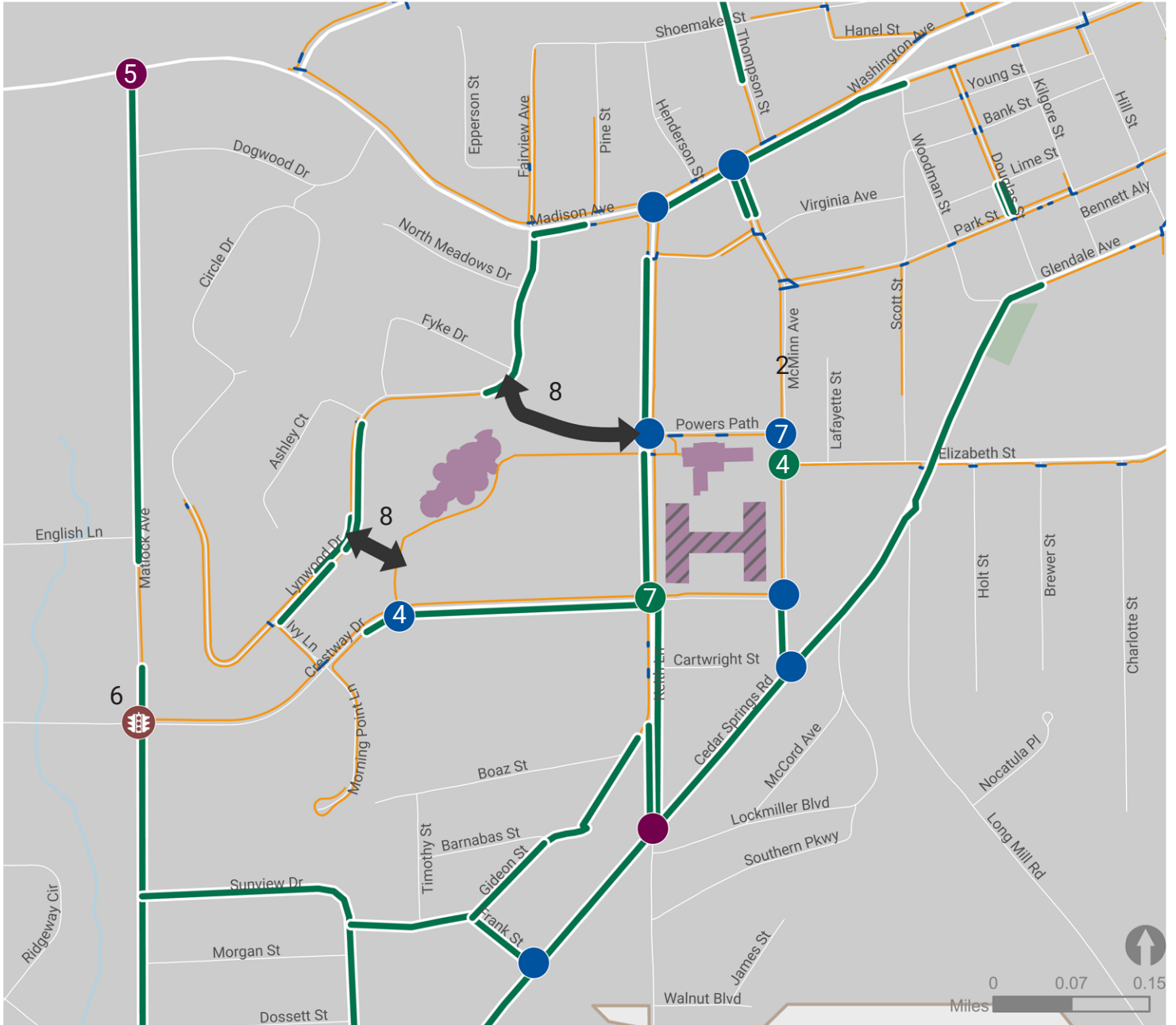










Figure 4.36:

City Schools Improvements

See the following pages for project details.

-  Pedestrian Crossing Improvements
-  New Roadway Connection
-  Intersection Improvements
-  New Sidewalk (1)
-  New Pedestrian Crossing (3)
-  Existing Crosswalk
-  New Traffic Signal
-  Existing Sidewalk



CITY SCHOOLS

PROJECTS





MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIONS

1. Sidewalk connections

With so many neighborhoods, residences and families nearby, it is remarkably difficult to access the new schools complex. New sidewalks and crosswalks create new opportunities. Continuous sidewalk connections are recommended along key roadways:

- Madison Ave between Keith Ln and Woodman St - south side
- Matlock Ave between Madison Ave and Cedar Springs Road (one segment north of Crestway Dr exists) - east side
- Lynnwood Dr south of Fyke Dr to Madison Ave - east side
- Lynnwood Dr between Ivy Lane and Ashley Ct Dr - fill gaps on both sides
- Madison Ave east of Lynnwood Dr - south side
- Crestway Dr east of Morning Pointe Dr to Keith Ln
- Keith Ln between Virginia Ave and Crestway Dr - west side
- Keith Ln between Crestway Dr and Cedar Springs Rd - east side
- Keith Ln between Gideon St and Cedar Springs Road - west side
- McMinn Ave between Madison Ave and north of Virginia Ave - both sides
- McMinn Ave between Crestway Dr and Cedar Springs Road - west side

How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	EQUITABLE ACCESS
Creates safe crossings for pedestrians where none existed before.	Creates safe, continuous connections for pedestrians to a critical local destination	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Safe crossings connect neighborhoods across unsafe roads, to community resources

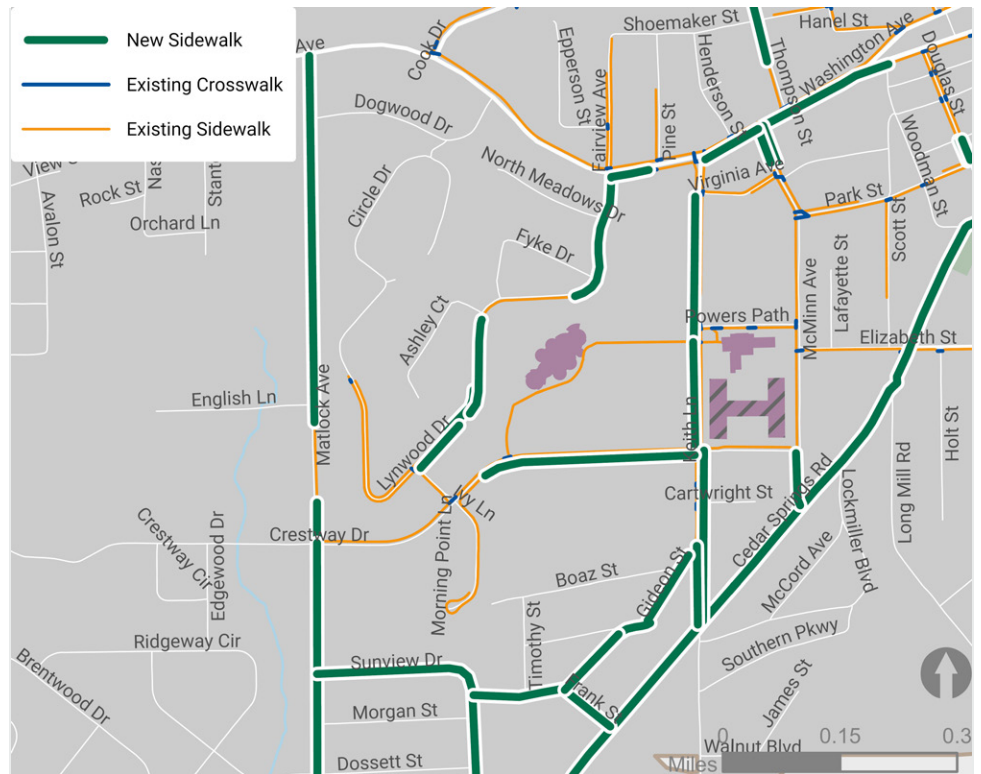


Figure 4.37: New sidewalk connections to be constructed in the City Schools focus area.



CITY SCHOOLS






PROJECTS

MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIONS

2. Sidewalk upgrades

McMinn Avenue is one of the most important streets for access to the new schools complex. Improving sidewalks along McMinn Ave between Park St and Powers Path creates greater pedestrian access to this location from downtown and neighborhoods to the east.

How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

				
ALL USERS	ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	ECONOMIC GROWTH	CONNECT TO REGION	EQUITABLE ACCESS
Creates safe, continuous infrastructure for those traveling by alternative means.	Creates safe, continuous connections for pedestrians to a critical local destination	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	These sidewalks link disconnected neighborhoods to Schools, other city resources



CITY SCHOOLS

PROJECTS

How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIONS

3. New crosswalks

Children will be crossing streets near the schools at the same time these roads face peak traffic volume and congestion. Crosswalks are critical to their safety. Install or improve crosswalks at key intersections to create safe crossing opportunities:

- Madison Ave at Keith Ln
- Madison Ave at McMinn Ave
- Middle School south Driveway at Crestway Dr
- Keith Ln at Powers Path
- Keith Ln at Crestway Dr
- McMinn Ave at Powers Path
- McMinn Ave at Elizabeth St
- McMinn Ave at Crestway Dr






				
ALL USERS	ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	ECONOMIC GROWTH	CONNECT TO REGION	EQUITABLE ACCESS
Creates safe, continuous infrastructure for those traveling by alternative means.	Creates safe crossings for pedestrians to a critical local destination	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	These connections link disconnected neighborhoods to Schools, other city resources



Figure 4.38: New sidewalks should be constructed in the locations identified above. Key pedestrian crossing recommendations are also depicted.



CITY SCHOOLS

PROJECTS






How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIONS

4. Flashing Beacons at key crosswalks

On more high-volume streets, crosswalks alone may not be sufficient enough. In these locations, where warrant analysis supports their inclusion, enhance key crosswalks with flashing beacons:

- Middle School south driveway at Crestway Dr

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Creates safe crossings for pedestrians where none existed before, accounts for unique circumstances	Eases access for pedestrians to a critical local destination at a location with challenging characteristics	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Safe crossings connect neighborhoods across unsafe roads, to community resources

MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIONS






5. Intersection Improvements at Matlock Ave at Madison Ave

Madison Avenue acts as a barrier to bicycle and pedestrian access to the schools complex. Intersection improvements at Matlock Avenue and Madison Avenue could create much-needed, safe pedestrian and bicycle crossing opportunities for those traveling from the north side of Athens. Install safe pedestrian crossings, with the potential to include high-visibility crosswalks, ADA-compliant curb ramps and pedestrian signals where warranted and compliant with MUTCD standards. As pedestrian facilities are constructed along the north side of Madison Avenue, install equal crossing facilities to provide safe passage across Madison Avenue.



Figure 4.39: Rapid Rectangular Flashing Beacon (RRFB), as recommended above.

How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Creates safe crossings for pedestrians where none existed before.	Improves bicycle and pedestrian accessibility to a local destination	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Improves safety for all users at a key intersection along Madison Avenue, a regional thoroughfare.	Safe crossings connect neighborhoods across unsafe roads, to community resources



CITY SCHOOLS






PROJECTS

How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIONS

6. Consider signalization at Matlock Ave at Crestway Dr

Increasing traffic volumes to and from the schools may impact level-of-service at this critical location, necessitating new traffic controls at this intersection. Four-way stop signage should be considered as an interim solution, and after operation a warrant analysis should be conducted to determine whether traffic impacts merit signalization.






 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Improves traffic operations and creates safer conditions for those traveling by car, bike, or on foot	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Improves operations of two increasingly important local streets, creating better connection to greater Athens	Reduces risk, obstacles to bicycle and pedestrian access from disconnected neighborhoods

CIRCULATION

7. Turn lanes along access roads to the school

Recommended by the 2020 Traffic Impact Study, turn lanes can improve traffic circulation in and around the schools complex and improve safety. Turn lanes should be considered along Keith Lane, McMinn Avenue, Crestway Drive at the following locations:

- Eastbound right turn lane from Powers Path INTO the school (dedicated turn lane is visible).
- Westbound right turn lane from Crestway Drive INTO the school (dedicated turn lane is visible).
- Southbound left turn lane from Keith Lane INTO the school
- Northbound left turn lane from McMinn Avenue INTO the school

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Improves traffic operations and safety in an area forecasted for challenging future conditions	Improves safe access and operations around the schools complex	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Improves operations on two roads critical to safe operations in Athens	Improved accessibility allows all users better access to educational resources



CITY SCHOOLS

PROJECTS






How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

CIRCULATION

8. Consider new roadway connections

The lack of options to access the schools area concentrates traffic and adds to safety and congestion concerns. Adding new roadway connections would provide options for accessing the school complex, and should be considered at:

- Between Lynwood Drive and the School entrance south of Athens Middle School
- Between Powers Path And Lynwood Drive

				
ALL USERS	ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	ECONOMIC GROWTH	CONNECT TO REGION	EQUITABLE ACCESS
Creates alternative connections and improves overall community mobility	New connections improve accessibility to a key local destination	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Eases access to broader transportation network, reduces dependence on major roads	Greater connection means greater accessibility for previously disconnected neighborhoods



Focus Area: Congress & Decatur

Perhaps no single location in Athens, apart from its downtown, has more public economic activity than the intersection of Congress Parkway and Decatur Pike. Both major arterials, these roads are workhorses, each carrying in excess of 20,000 vehicles per day. They are also the fastest-growing streets in Athens in terms of vehicle volume. At this intersection is the principal commercial center for the entire city: within ½-mile of the intersection can be found grocery stores, restaurants, educational institutions, home improvement stores, big-box retail, medical institutions, and more. Residents and visitors alike regularly interact with this area on a near-daily basis as part of their typical routine.

Because of the size and importance of this location, the conditions here have an outsized influence on Athens as a whole. Despite their importance, these two roads are hostile to bicyclists and pedestrians. Although both roadways have sidewalks for much of their length, the sidewalks stop on the approach to the intersection, and it lacks any specific pedestrian facilities, such as crosswalks, ADA ramps, or pedestrian signal indicators.

Beyond the intersection, there are few opportunities to cross these roads safely, best illustrated at the Congress and Decatur intersection. Each road features a cross-section in excess of 100 feet, with no medians or refuge islands to break up the crossing, and no pedestrian crosswalks.

Conditions have proven unsafe for vehicles as well. With unregulated driveway access leading to numerous curb cuts and entrances along the corridor, this focus area features a high number of crashes. And with limited alternative roads on which to travel, drivers have no choice but to drive on these two streets.

The project team focused on three categories of improvements:

- **Pedestrian connections:** creating continuous paths of sidewalks within and to the focus area, providing safe pedestrian facilities;
- **New roadway connections:** creating parallel side streets and alternative routes to connecting users to their intended destinations without resort to Congress and Decatur; and
- **Access management:** reining in driveways through policy changes applicable to redevelopment and new development

Project recommendations follow. Highlights include:

- New roadway connections between Rocky Mount Road and Decatur Pike
- A continuous sidewalk loop along Dennis Street, Congress Parkway, Decatur Pike, Maple Street, and Old Riceville Road; and
- Realignment of Layman Road to connect to existing signal at Lowe's entrance.



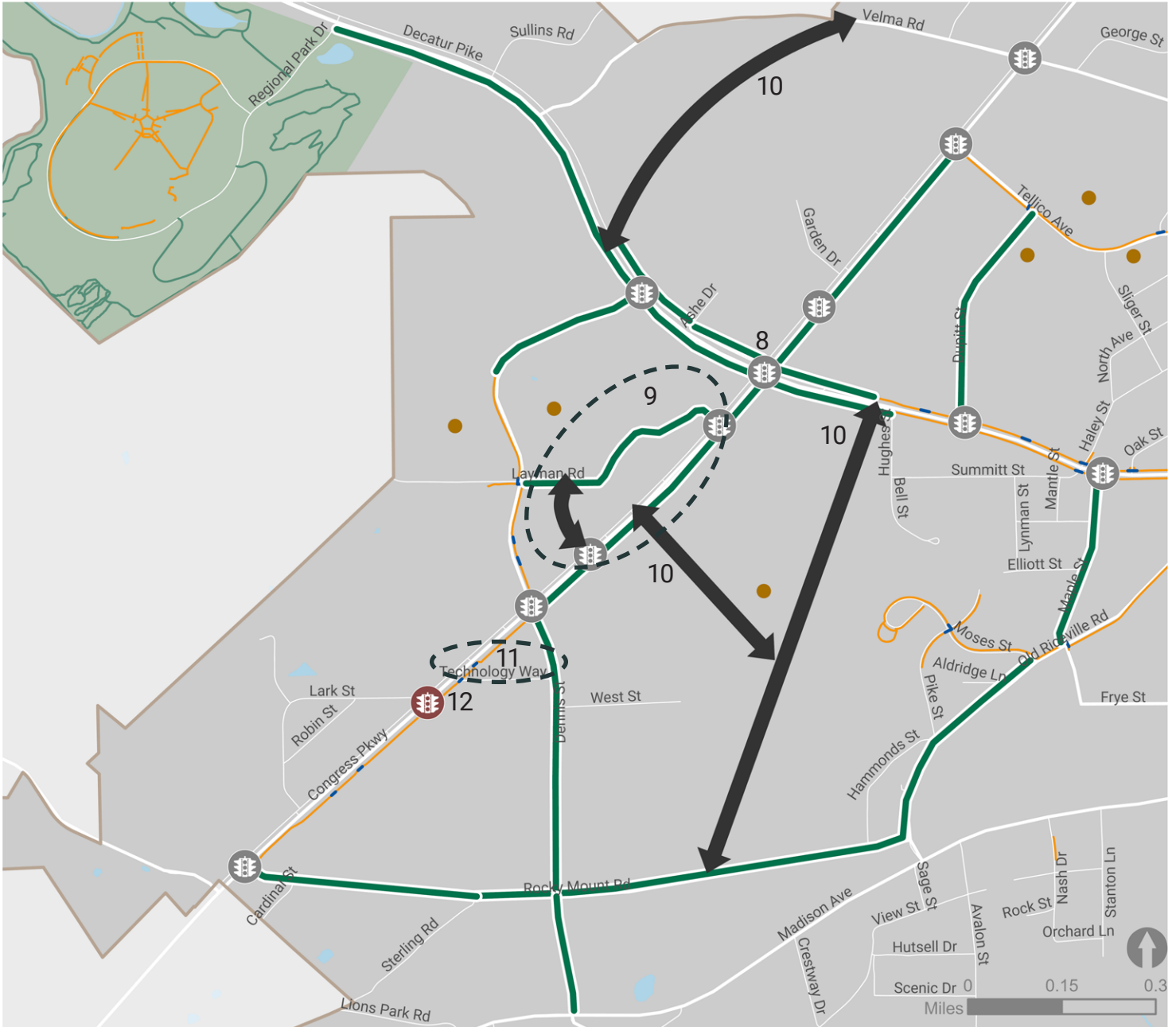


Figure 4.40:

Congress & Decatur Improvements

See the following pages for project details.

- New Pedestrian Crossing
- Ⓣ New Traffic Signal
- ↔ New Roadway Connection
- New Sidewalk (6, 7)
- Potential Development Site
- Ⓣ Existing Signalized Intersection
- Existing Crosswalk
- Existing Sidewalk
- Existing Trail



CONGRESS & DECATUR






POLICIES

MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIONS

1. Create pedestrian pathways through parking lots as redevelopment occurs

Even with sidewalks and shared-use paths, risk-averse pedestrians may feel unsafe without sufficient separation. Create sidewalks and pathways through properties and parking lots along Congress and Decatur as redevelopment occurs to increase separation from traffic and safety for all users.






How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Creates safe, continuous infrastructure for those traveling by alternative means.	Safe biking and walking infrastructure increases the walkability of this major commercial center.	Increases bicycle and pedestrian traffic, accessibility to shopping destinations for all users	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Connects disconnected areas to major commercial center

ACCESS MANAGEMENT (DRIVEWAYS)

2. Provide a template Shared Access Agreement

Provide a template Shared Access Agreement that business can use to agree to share driveways.

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Consolidated driveways make bicycle and pedestrian travel safer, improves traffic flow	Encourages more effective use of parking, freeing space for visitors	Shared access economizes driveways, parking maintenance and creates certainty for owners	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Provides more affordable access to businesses and resources



CONGRESS & DECATUR






POLICIES

ACCESS MANAGEMENT (DRIVEWAYS)

3. Plan driveway locations for new development

Redevelopment is half of the equation in this area. Planning driveway locations for new development is a proactive step to addressing access issues before they occur. Plan driveway locations for new development at signals and across from existing driveways and/or roadways where possible.

How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Consolidated driveways make bicycle and pedestrian travel safer, improves traffic flow	Fewer curb cuts make for more walkable, bikeable streets	Clear standards demonstrate city commitment to quality development, motivating investors	Coordinated, consolidated driveways improve operations of regional thoroughfares	Safer roads and crossing opportunities at intersections reduce obstacles to mobility

ACCESS MANAGEMENT (DRIVEWAYS)

4. Establish a target signal spacing

Establish a target signal spacing distance and direct most driveway traffic to signals rather than stop controlled driveways

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Spacing standards and Consolidated driveways make bicycle and pedestrian travel safer, improves traffic flow	Signal spacing and timing can be used to control traffic speeds, improving access to destinations throughout Athens	Safer roadway operations creates an environment people want to visit, brings traffic to local business	Improved operations on key corridors through better signal spacing	Streamlined operations directs traffic to controlled locations, reducing barriers to mobility



CONGRESS & DECATUR

PROJECTS






MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIONS

5. Complete the sidewalk loop to the High School

With few internal connections, the roadway loop formed by Rocky Mount Road, Old Riceville Road, Congress Parkway and Decatur Pike connects neighborhoods to education and shopping nearby. Completing the sidewalk loop that connects to Congress and Decatur to the High School from Congress on Rocky Mount Rd, Old Riceville Rd, and Maple St to Decatur would provide a continuous connection and satisfy existing demand.

Construct this sidewalk at least 8 ft wide, so that it can be used as a shared use path for bicycles and pedestrians.

How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Creates safe, continuous infrastructure for those traveling by alternative means.	Continuous infrastructure makes safe bicycle and pedestrian connections to key local destinations	Increases bicycle and pedestrian traffic and enhances attractiveness to new business	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Connects apartments and neighborhoods to community resources in geographically isolated area



CONGRESS & DECATUR

PROJECTS






MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIONS

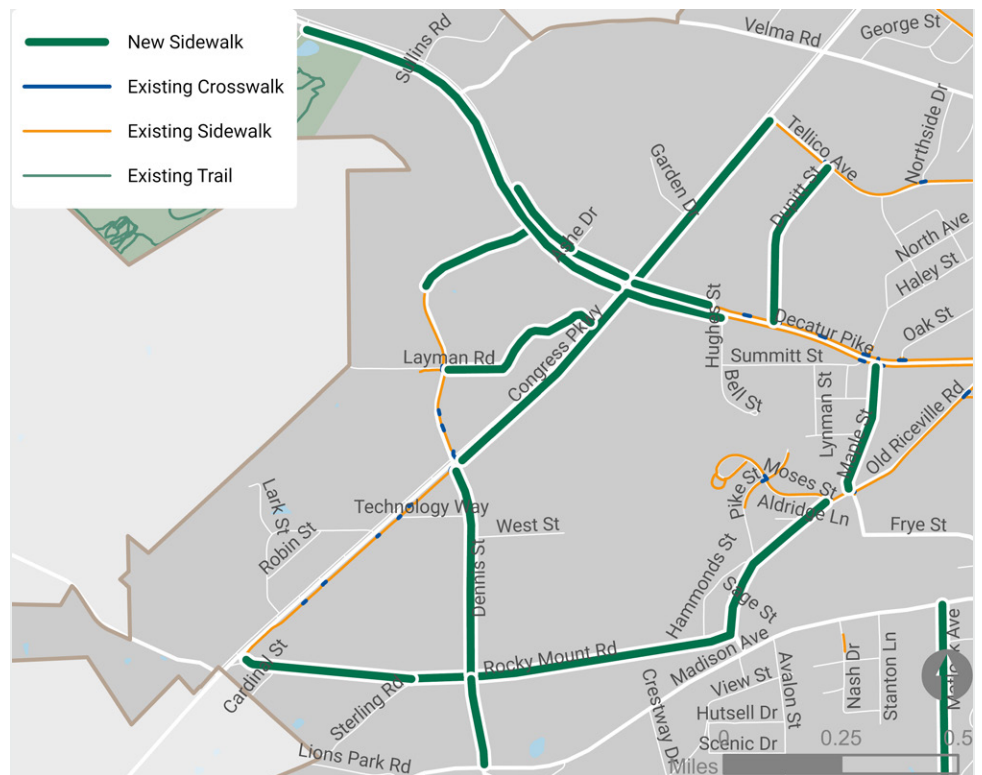
6. Sidewalk connections

Despite being a central destination for shopping and commercial activity, the Congress and Decatur focus area lacks sidewalks and connections for those traveling by bike or foot. Creating these connections is important for safe pedestrian access. Connect sidewalks on side streets to the destinations along Congress and Decatur:

- Dennis St between west Walmart Dwy and Decatur Pike - north side
- Dennis St between Congress Pkwy and Madison Ave - east side
- Decatur Pike between Regional Park Dr and Hughes St - south side
- Decatur Pike between Congress Crossing Driveway and Hughes St - north side
- Congress Pkwy between Dennis St and Tellico Ave - east side
- Dupit St between Tellico Ave and Decatur Pike - west side”

How does this recommendation advance this plan’s goals?

				
ALL USERS	ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	ECONOMIC GROWTH	CONNECT TO REGION	EQUITABLE ACCESS
Creates safe, continuous infrastructure for those traveling by alternative means.	Continuous infrastructure makes safe bicycle and pedestrian connections to key local destinations	Increases bicycle and pedestrian traffic and enhances attractiveness to new business	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Connects apartments and neighborhoods to community resources in geographically isolated area



CONGRESS & DECATUR






POLICIES

MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIONS

7. Pedestrian crossings at Congress and Decatur

Wide rights-of-way and high traffic volumes make Congress and Decatur an impassable obstacle for pedestrians. Adding crosswalks at all four legs of the Congress and Decatur intersection would create safer pedestrian crossing opportunities at this intersection.






How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

				
ALL USERS	ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	ECONOMIC GROWTH	CONNECT TO REGION	EQUITABLE ACCESS
Improves safety and access at Athens' most dangerous intersection	Creates safe crossings for pedestrians to a critical local destination	Increases safety for pedestrians and increases foot traffic in a high-intensity commercial area	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Reduces barriers to bicycle and pedestrian access in this area

NEW ROADWAY CONNECTIONS

8. Repurpose Layman Road

New developments on Dennis Street need additional connections to Athens' transportation network to alleviate congestion at major intersections. Repurposing Layman Road and connecting to the existing signals at the Congress Parkway and Lowe's entrance intersections using the existing segment that connects to Congress Parkway as a shared-use path would also further this approach.

				
ALL USERS	ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	ECONOMIC GROWTH	CONNECT TO REGION	EQUITABLE ACCESS
New road connection eases traffic flow and creates new space for multimodal users	Eases congestion and creates new connections in a key local destination; shared-use path increases walkability	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Improved connectivity relieves pressure, improves flow on key thoroughfares	<i>Less direct relationship</i>



CONGRESS & DECATUR

POLICIES






NEW ROADWAY CONNECTIONS

9. Consider new roadway connections

Congress Parkway and Decatur Pike are the workhorse corridors for Athens with limited alternatives to provide relief during peak hour traffic. Creating additional north/south and east/west connections would provide options, particularly at:

- Decatur Pike to Rocky Mount Road
- Congress Parkway to above mentioned connection
- Velma Road to Decatur Pike






How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
New road connection eases traffic flow and creates new space for multimodal users	New roadways improve traffic flow and access to local and regional destinations	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	New connections create better travel patterns for residents and visitors to regional network	<i>Less direct relationship</i>

ACCESS MANAGEMENT (DRIVEWAYS)

10. Clarify access around Technology Way






Confusing traffic patterns and driveway access defines the area surrounding McMinn County High School and TCAT. One-way access locations are not clearly signed, and often ignored. Clarify High School and TCAT access around Technology Way.

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Clear entrance and exit to high school and TCAT makes streets safer for all users	Improved access and reduced confusion/conflict increases safety for students and visitors	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	<i>Less direct relationship</i>

ACCESS MANAGEMENT (DRIVEWAYS)

11. Consider signalization at Congress Pkwy at Lark St north

McMinn County High School has an existing driveway opposite the Lark Street intersection. Consider signalization at Congress Parkway at Lark Street north as a means of consolidating driveways and improving access to the high school.

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Consolidating access to schools at existing intersection improves traffic flow	Improved access and reduced confusion/conflict increases safety for students and visitors	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Improved traffic flow on a critical corridor eases access to broader network	<i>Less direct relationship</i>



Focus Area: Cedar Springs Road

Cedar Springs Road shares many characteristics with the City Schools focus area. With housing density only beginning along the westernmost extent of Cedar Springs Road, this corridor is marked by its transitional status from rural to developed environments, and is identified in City plans as an area to support additional development in the future.

For a road that is classified as a residential collector, Cedar Springs Road has limited connections to the street network. There are few roadway connections, with only Matlock Avenue, Keith Lane, and McMinn Avenue providing through connections to the rest of Athens. Cedar Springs Road is two-lanes for its entire length and is straight along its path, which creates conditions ripe for excessive speeding. The intersecting streets feature significant angle skew and challenging, short sight distances. Residences abutting the street reduce clear sight lines even further, creating an even more dangerous condition for all users.

Conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists are potentially even more dangerous as there is a complete lack of facilities for these users. There are no sidewalks, crosswalks, or bike facilities along the entirety of Cedar Springs Road, nor along the streets connecting to Cedar Springs. Those who wish to bike or walk are faced with only one option: to travel in the roadway, or in the high grass on either side.

The project team identified three key issues to resolve along Cedar Springs Road:

- **Multimodal connections:** safe, continuous pedestrian and bicycle facilities, including crossing opportunities at key intersections
- **Safety:** reducing excessive speeding through traffic calming countermeasures and changes to streetscaping to reflect changing character of the corridor; and
- **Development:** creating connections with new development to build roadway connections and reduce dependency on Cedar Springs Road

Project recommendations include the following:

- Realignment of McMinn Avenue , Keith Lane, Matlock Avenue intersections to reduce skew, with pedestrian crossings
- Sidewalk along south side of corridor, with crosswalks at Matlock Avenue, Sunview Drive, new development entrance, Franklin Street, Keith Lane, and McMinn Avenue
- Creation of gateway intersections with streetscaping and traffic calming countermeasures at Matlock Avenue, Keith Lane, and McMinn Avenue.



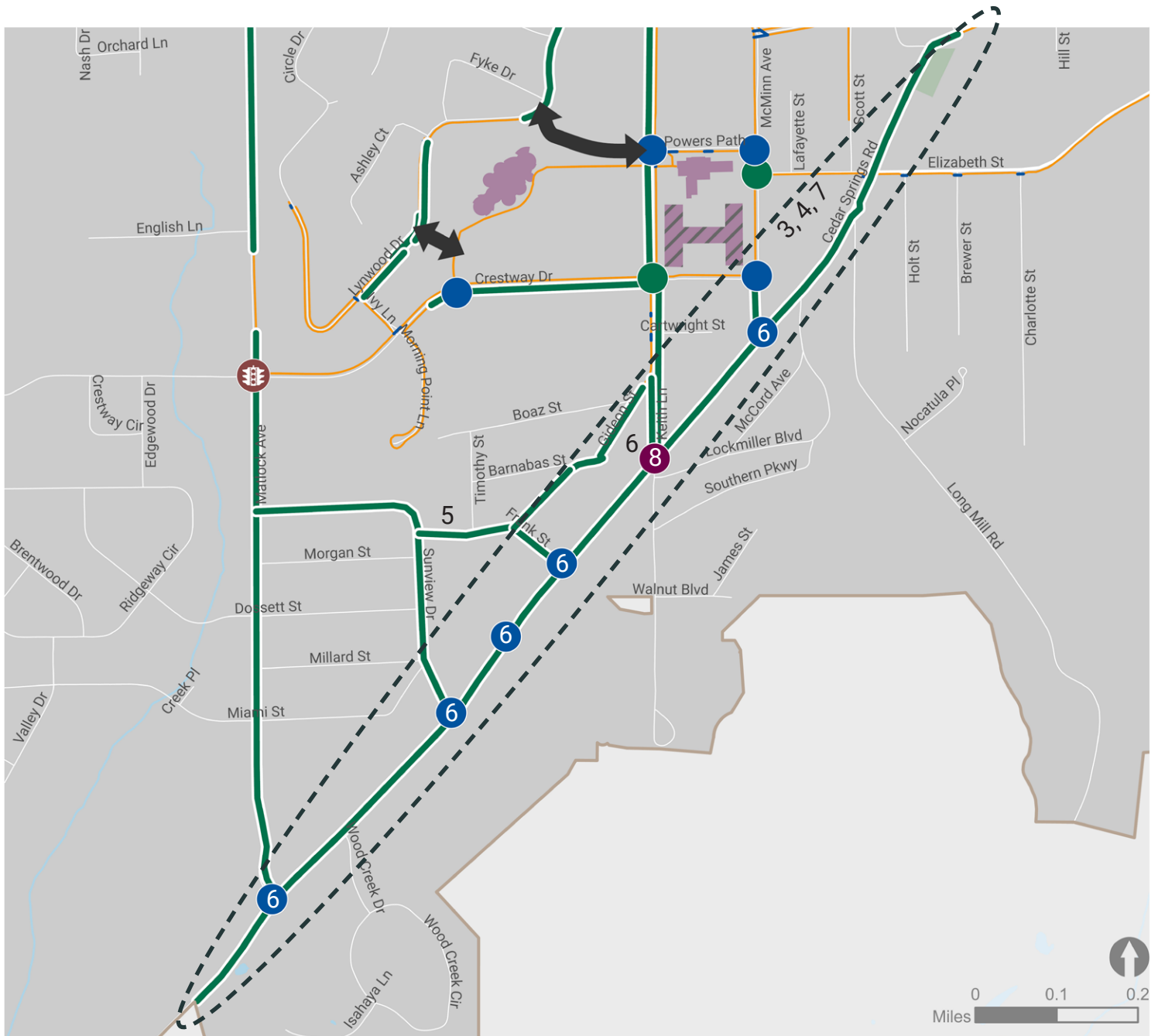


Figure 4.41:

Cedar Springs Road Improvements

See the following pages for project details.

- Pedestrian Crossing Improvements
- Intersection Improvements
- New Pedestrian Crossing
- New Traffic Signal
- New Roadway Connection
- New Sidewalk
- Existing Crosswalk
- Existing Sidewalk



CEDAR SPRINGS ROAD






POLICIES

How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

1. Pedestrian facilities in new developments






New developments along Cedar Springs Road can help to fill in the gaps in the existing pedestrian infrastructure, with correct policies in place. City subdivision regulations should be amended to ensure that new developments include safe pedestrian facilities.

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
New pedestrian infrastructure creates safe connections for all users	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	More sidewalks in neighborhoods increases property values	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Requiring new sidewalk construction ensures new developments and affordable housing support all users

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

2. Improve circulation in new developments






New development further along Cedar Springs Road is expected. Creating through-street connections within new developments, and increasing connections made with alternatives to Cedar Springs Road, can help alleviate growth in volumes on this corridor and make safer conditions for all users.

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Greater connectivity in adjacent neighborhoods relieves growth pressure, makes all streets safer	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Greater connectivity improves access to neighborhoods, destinations	Greater connectivity creates new streets to connect to transportation network	Improved street patterns ensures new developments and affordable housing connect neighborhoods

MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIONS

3. Streetscaping along Cedar Springs

Cedar Springs Road transitions from a rural road to an urban thoroughfare within a mile of road, yet maintains the same character. To reduce traffic speeds and define a sense of place, Athens should develop a distinct character and streetscaping between the gateway intersections of Cedars Springs Road at Keith Lane and Matlock Avenue.

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Streetscaping features create a friendlier environment for bicyclists and pedestrians	Gateway sensation helps define Cedar Springs Road's place	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Common streetscaping identity connects neighborhoods to other, similar places in Athens



CEDAR SPRINGS ROAD

PROJECTS

How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIONS

4. Add Sidewalk along Cedar Springs

“Pedestrians and bicyclists have no means of safe travel along Cedar Springs Road, despite the area being home to many private residences. Add a sidewalk along Cedar Springs Road from the city boundary south of Matlock Avenue to Douglas Street along the south side. Construct this sidewalk at least 8 ft wide, so that it can be used as a shared use path for bicycles and pedestrians”






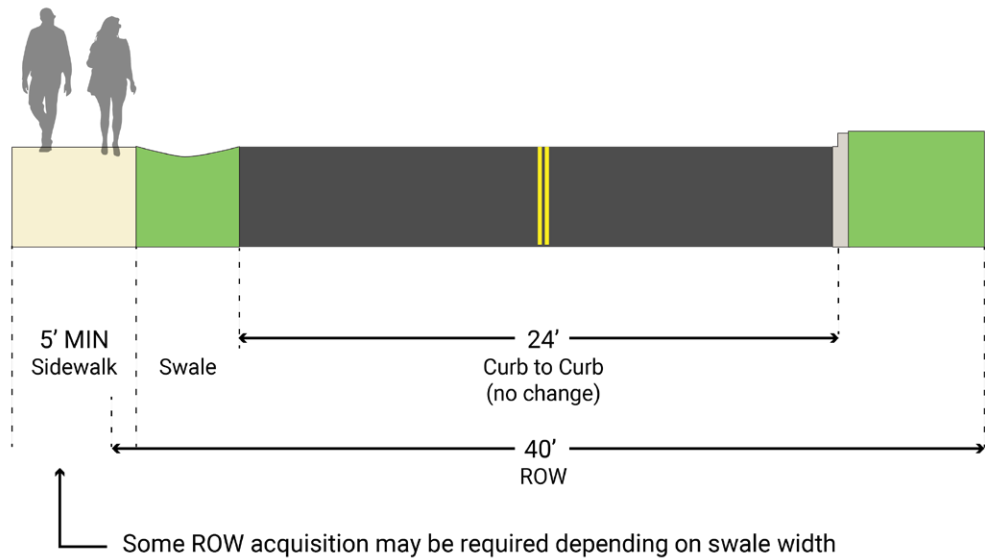
 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Creates safe, continuous infrastructure for those traveling by alternative means.	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Eases access to broader transportation network	Neighborhood connections create a low-stress sidewalk network connecting to Greater Athens

Figure 4.42: Potential cross section of Cedar Springs Road with a new sidewalk



CEDAR SPRINGS ROAD

PROJECTS

MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIONS

5. Sidewalk connections

For those walking along Cedar Springs Road, it can be difficult to find safe access to destinations along other key corridors. Improving sidewalk connections to Cedar Springs Road should include adding facilities at:

- Sunview Drive Matlock Avenue to Cedar Springs Road - south side
- Gideon Street Sunview Drive to Keith Lane - south side west of Barnabas St, north side east of Barnabas St
- Frank St Gideon St to Cedar Springs Rd - southwest side

How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?






				
ALL USERS	ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	ECONOMIC GROWTH	CONNECT TO REGION	EQUITABLE ACCESS
Creates safe, continuous infrastructure for those traveling by alternative means.	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Neighborhood connections create a low-stress sidewalk network connecting to Greater Athens



Figure 4.43: New sidewalk facilities for connections to Cedar Springs Road.



CEDAR SPRINGS ROAD

PROJECTS

MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIONS

6. New crosswalks

Crossing Cedar Springs Road is likewise unprotected, yet residents have ample reason to access destinations on either side. The City Schools complex and downtown are within walking distance, but without crosswalks they are unsafe to access on foot. Add crosswalks across Cedar Springs Road:

- Matlock Avenue
- Sunview Drive
- New development entrance (between Sunview Drive and Frank Street)
- Frank Street
- Keith Lane
- McMinn Avenue

How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?






				
ALL USERS	ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	ECONOMIC GROWTH	CONNECT TO REGION	EQUITABLE ACCESS
Creates safe, continuous infrastructure for those traveling by alternative means.	Creates safe, walkable infrastructure both near the schools complex and to downtown Athens.	Less direct relationship	Less direct relationship	Safe connections across major roads connects disconnected neighborhoods.



Figure 4.44: New crosswalks or safe crossing opportunities in the Cedar Springs Road focus areas, including broader intersection improvements that include safe crossings.

CEDAR SPRINGS ROAD






PROJECTS

SAFETY

7. Traffic Calming

Implement traffic calming measures, such as street trees, lane width reductions, curb-and-gutter installation, and consideration of roundabout construction at key intersections on the corridor to reduce speeding.

How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

				
ALL USERS	ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	ECONOMIC GROWTH	CONNECT TO REGION	EQUITABLE ACCESS
Slowed traffic speeds improve safety for all users	Less direct relationship	Less direct relationship	Less direct relationship	Less direct relationship

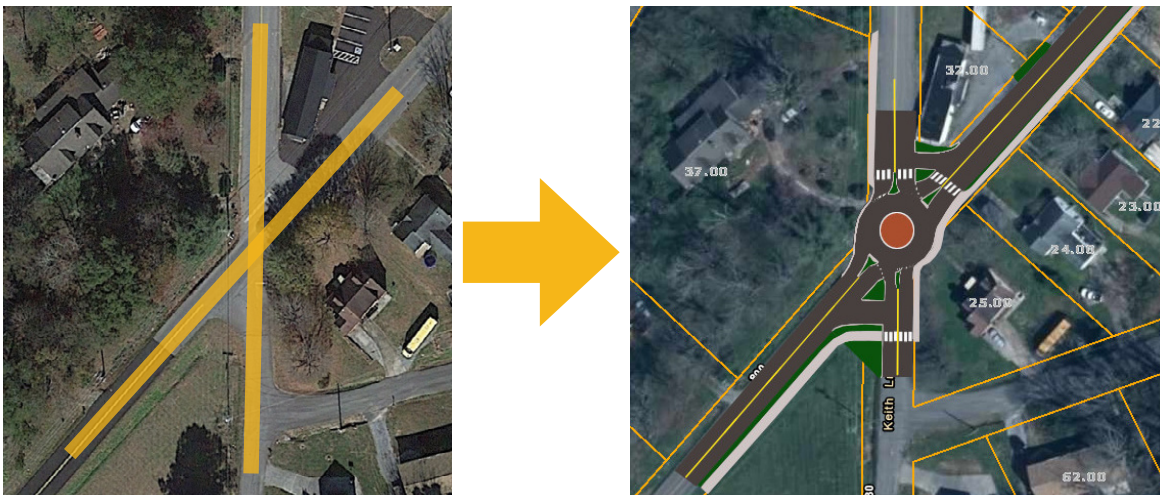
SAFETY

8. Intersection Redesign at Keith Lane

Because of Cedar Springs Road's alignment, key streets intersect Cedar Springs Road at sharp angles, creating tight turn radii that are at odds with local contours and limit sight distances. Consider realignment of this intersection to eliminate tight turn radii, potentially to include a single-lane roundabout. One potential concept seen below.

				
ALL USERS	ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	ECONOMIC GROWTH	CONNECT TO REGION	EQUITABLE ACCESS
Better intersection realignment reduces crossing distance for pedestrians, creates safer intersections for drivers	Creates a new "place" and gateway to Athens at the Keigh Lane intersection	Less direct relationship	Improves safety and operations at the intersection of two important local streets	Improves safety for drivers and pedestrians, and creates connections across a dangerous road for disconnected neighborhoods

Potential Roundabout design as a solution to challenging intersection skew angles at Keith Lane.



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Focus Area: Exit 52

Exit 52 is Athens' northernmost exit on I-75. While the area is primarily industrial, it is currently characterized by lower levels of transportation activity. Future plans for the area's development envision significant change in this regard. A warehouse at the intersection of SR 305 and CR 250 is the first property at a planned industrial site, as Athens and McMinn County hope to leverage Athens' location along I-75 near the logistics hubs of Chattanooga and Knoxville to attract new industries in manufacturing and industry.

The location, however, has opportunity for transportation enhancement to support future growth. While forthcoming improvements to the exit itself will mitigate substandard geometric design that has contributed to crashes at the exit, the potential for nearly 1.4 million square feet of industrial development shows conditions that will dramatically alter current traffic volumes. Potential for high truck traffic activity, means more vehicles, and hidden flaws in current roadway configuration could be revealed, such as needless points of conflict in the roadway, offset intersections causing congestion, or even poor sight lines.

Unlike other focus areas, the project team recognized the opportunity to be preventative in mitigating anticipated future development. The team saw two primary issues to resolve:

- **Intersection realignment:** shifting proposed intersections, such as the proposed cul-de-sac intersection at the rear of the industrial site, to locations with better sight distances and current roads; and
- **Road realignment:** shifting offset county roads to reduce driveways, optimize spacing and remove points of conflict.

Project recommendations are described on the following pages.



Figure 4.45: Exit 52 Area Conceptual Master Plan (March 2018)



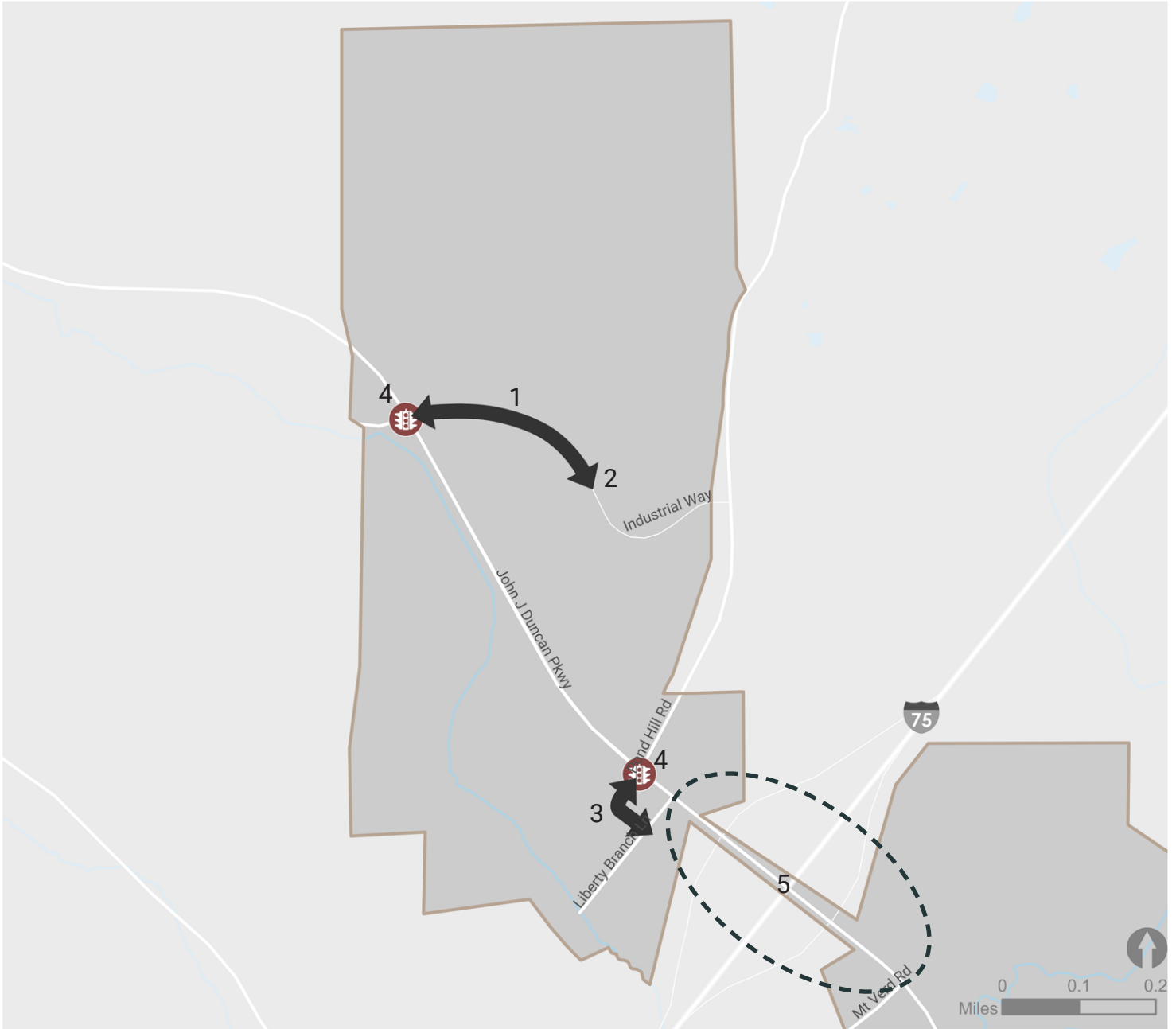




Figure 4.46:

Exit 52 Improvements

See the following pages for project details.

-  New Traffic Signal
-  New Roadway Connection



EXIT 52






POLICIES

How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

REDESIGN THE SITE PLAN

1. Relocate planned cul-de-sac intersection






The current site plan proposes a cul-de-sac intersection with SR-305 in a bend, with limited sight distances creating a potentially unsafe situation. Improved safety at and near the industrial park development and shift the intersection with SR-305 to align with the existing CR-213/SR-305 intersection.

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Improved connections consolidates freight traffic at limited intersections, improving safety for all area users	Increases Athens' attractiveness as an industrial center for businesses	Supports a more effective site plan that is attractive to development	Makes the industrial park more efficient and attractive to industrial development	<i>Less direct relationship</i>

REDESIGN THE SITE PLAN

2. Connect Industrial Way and planned cul-de-sac






As part of the redesign of the industrial park's site plan, connect the planned cul-de-sac with Industrial Way (existing cul-de-sac) in order to create a new roadway connection and promote better interior circulation at the industrial park. Two to three connections to adjacent SR-305 and CR-250 should be formed, with no direct access to SR-305 from any industry site.

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Improved connections consolidates freight traffic at limited intersections, improving safety for all area users	Increases Athens' attractiveness as an industrial center for businesses	Supports a more effective site plan that is attractive to development	Makes the industrial park more efficient and attractive to industrial development	<i>Less direct relationship</i>

REALIGN HOLIDAY INN DR / SR 250

3. Realign Holiday Inn Dr

Holiday Inn Dr is currently offset from CR 250, creating multiple intersections on SR 305 near the interstate, introducing more points of conflict and confusion for drivers, and dead-ends for industrial traffic. Create a four-way intersection between SR 305 at Holiday Inn Dr/ 250, and in the future consider this intersection for signalization.

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
<i>Less direct relationship</i>	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	Creates a more efficient transportation network for freight movement	<i>Less direct relationship</i>	<i>Less direct relationship</i>



PROJECTS






How does this recommendation advance this plan's goals?

CONSIDER SIGNALIZATION TO SUPPORT NEW DEVELOPMENT

4. Potential new signals

New development at Exit 52 will necessitate changes to intersection controls and, in some cases, require signalization. Conduct a warrant analysis and according to its findings, consider signalization at:






- SR 305 and planned cul-de-sac / CR 213
- SR 305 and CR 205 / Holiday Inn Dr

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
New signals improve traffic operations and create safe conditions for all area users	Makes the industrial park more efficient and attractive to industrial development	Supports effective movement of freight and cars through the area	Improves operations and safety for through traffic and freight movement	<i>Less direct relationship</i>

WAYFINDING

5. Wayfinding at Exit 52

Improve the ease of access to downtown Athens and other key city destinations, for visitors accessing Athens via the interstate. Like wayfinding improves navigation for bicyclists and pedestrians, install wayfinding signage at Exit 52 to improve navigation for vehicle users to and from Athens.

 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
Signage makes Athens easier to navigate for all users	Signage makes Athens easier to navigate for tourists and visitors	Supports the reliable movement of freight and people, increasing the ease of doing business	Aids travelers in connecting to and from key destinations, corridors around Athens	Aids all users in traveling to and through Athens effectively



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Implementation

CHAPTER 05

Implementation

A successful Mobility Plan is one that draws a clear line from recommendations to implementation. Aligning vision and priorities with resources is critical to effectively achieving this Plan’s ambitious Goals & Objectives.

In this final Chapter to the Mobility Plan, the recommendations of the previous Chapter are prioritized based upon their effectiveness in achieving the Plan’s Goals & Objectives. Two pilot projects are identified for temporary, quick-build implementation. Finally, potential funding sources and opportunities are identified in brief, gathering a suite of resources and strategies that together can translate this Plan from vision into reality.

In this Chapter:

- **Priorities**
- **Funding Opportunities**

In Chapter Four, this Plan’s Goals and Objectives were laid out as a framework for understanding and interpreting the development of recommendations and to provide clear guidance for how these recommendations fit into the fabric of Athens’ current and future planning efforts. These statements encapsulate Athens’ vision for its transportation network and how it will serve its community:



EXTEND THE FRIENDLY CITY TO ALL USERS



MAKE ATHENS MORE OF A DESTINATION



SUPPORT ECONOMIC GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT



CONNECT ATHENS TO ITS REGION & STATE



ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ATHENS’ RESOURCES & AMENITIES








Priorities

Beyond memorializing the collective vision, however, these Goals and Objectives also provide a framework for prioritizing this Plan’s recommendations; after all, **limited funding means that not all of these projects can be completed at once.**

Not all goals are equal, however. During the course of this Plan’s development, it became clear that **equitable access** was of paramount importance in determining where and how to make much needed improvements, connect communities and “break siloes.”

The table below represents those projects that most effectively accomplish this Plan’s goals. To arrive at these priorities, the project team evaluated each of the projects for their relation to each specific goal. The more goals a project supports, the higher the priority it receives. However, the goal of **equitable access** operates differently, acting as a **multiplier** to effectively give greater weight to projects supporting the Plan’s equity goals.

Priority Projects

	 ALL USERS	 ATHENS AS A DESTINATION	 ECONOMIC GROWTH	 CONNECT TO REGION	 EQUITABLE ACCESS
1. <i>Develop a Complete Streets Policy</i>	Light Green	Light Green	Light Red	White	Light Blue
2. <i>Develop a Street Network Framework Plan</i>	Light Green	Light Green	Light Red	Light Purple	Light Blue
3. <i>City Schools</i> Sidewalk connections & new crosswalks	Light Green	Light Green	White	White	Light Blue
4. <i>Downtown</i> Downtown Square	Light Green	Light Green	Light Red	Light Purple	Light Blue
5. <i>Congress & Decatur</i> Create pedestrian pathways through parking lots as redevelopment occurs & sidewalk connections	Light Green	Light Green	Light Red	White	Light Blue
6. <i>Cedar Springs</i> Streetscaping and sidewalks along Cedar Springs Road	Light Green	Light Green	White	Light Purple	Light Blue
7. <i>Exit 52</i> Realign cul-de-sac intersection with SR-305 and connect with Industrial Way	Light Green	Light Green	Light Red	Light Purple	White
8. <i>Cedar Springs</i> Improve circulation in new developments	Light Green	White	Light Red	Light Purple	Light Blue
9. <i>Congress & Decatur</i> Consider new roadway connections	Light Green	Light Green	White	Light Purple	White



Funding Opportunities

When considering the next steps, the City should review the following grant funding opportunities to help prioritize and construct the recommendations outlined in this CTPG plan. The information in this CTPG plan will help provide the City with the groundwork and detail to prepare the application for federal funding. The following grant programs have been identified to assist the City with funding construction of their priority improvements: Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), Recreational Trails Program, Multimodal Access Grants, and the Tennessee Highway Safety Office Grants.

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

The TDOT TAP program supports various transportation and multimodal improvements with the overarching goal to improve a city's travel choices, experience, history, and culture, creating a foundation for equitable access. TA provides funding for programs and projects defined as transportation alternatives, including:

This grant would fund the following relevant project types:

- **Bicycle and pedestrian** improvements
- New **paths, trails, or sidewalks**
- **Reconstruction** of pedestrian infrastructure
- Pedestrian and bike facilities, including **parking, repair stations, and water fountains**
- Striping, curb ramps, **ADA-compliant ramps**
- **Downtown** improvements or "Downtown Revitalization" projects
- Safe Routes to School (SRTS) projects: pedestrian infrastructure plans, design, construction, and education to **connect neighboring residential areas to local schools.**

Grant projects are funded through a competitive selection process, with a typical local share of 20% of net costs.

Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

The Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) Recreation grant includes the Recreational Trails Program (RTP). The RTP would provide funding for trail land acquisition, maintenance, restoration, construction, and facilities. These funds are distributed in the form of an 80% grant with a 20% local match. Note, this **land must be publicly owned**, and the trail may be in an urban area.



Healthy Active Built Environments

Tennessee’s Department of Health manages the Access to Health Built Environments program. These grants aim to increase access to safe and publicly-accessible places that provide opportunities for physical activity for a diverse group of users, including those who live, visit, work, play, worship, and learn in the community. The funds may be used for new construction, improvement, or planning of facilities and infrastructure. Grants are non-competitive, do not require matching funds, and can be used as a match for other grant programs. Partnerships, community engagement, and health equity are encouraged when developing each grant project. All grantees must evaluate the community impacts of their projects.

Multimodal Access Grant Program (MMAG)

The state’s Multimodal Access Grant is a state-funded program created to support the transportation needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users through infrastructure projects that address existing gaps along state routes. Multimodal facilities play an important role in providing transportation choices for people across Tennessee. Multimodal Access Grant projects are state-funded at 95% with a 5% local match. State match portion of an awarded project does not exceed \$950,000. Eligible projects include the following:

- **Intersection improvements**
- Multimodal Access
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements
- **Complete Streets/Road Diet/Traffic Calming**
- **Safety** Upgrades

Other Funding Opportunities

Municipal Funding

Finally, transportation projects can also be funded through issuance of municipal bonds. These bonds, which can be either revenue-backed (in the case of tolling projects or other revenue-generating projects) or general obligation, backed by the municipality’s full faith and credit, can be used to finance all of a transportation project, or provide the local share with matching state or federal funds. For projects with significant community interest or support, bonds can be a means of accelerating development and construction.

Public-Private Partnerships

Public/Private Partnerships are designed to accomplish a combination of goals related to economic and community development efforts, some of which have been identified in this plan. Public funds must only be made available to those projects determined otherwise unfeasible or unachievable “but for” the combined efforts of public and private participation. The projects must comply with community adopted standards and program guidelines established for that area.

