



15th Street Area LIT Lanes and Pedestrian Connections

Existing Conditions Report
Executive Summary

August 2020

MIDTOWN
Alliance

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Thank you to the Midtown neighbors, property owners, employees, and visitors who participated in the planning process and to partners at MARTA for their support and coordination.

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Existing Conditions Report Executive Summary

The rise of micromobility is rapidly changing the way people move through the city, highlighting the need to design streets that are safe and comfortable for the most vulnerable users, including pedestrians, cyclists, scooter riders. **The goal of this study is to identify the best opportunity to provide a much needed low-stress, east-west connection between the Arts Center MARTA Station and Piedmont Park**, which ties into the BeltLine Eastside Trail. The preferred route will have upgraded pedestrian facilities and protected Light Individual Transportation (LIT) lanes. This executive summary highlights key findings from the full Existing Conditions Report.

A key factor in determining a preferred route for this study is the ability to use the **“quick build”** method for implementation. The quick build process seeks to reduce the amount of pre-construction and construction time by working closely with partner agencies upfront and with the expectation that the project may undergo changes after installation, and by using materials that allow such

What are LIT Lanes?

Light Individual Transportation (LIT) lanes provide right of way for emerging personal transportation modes. E-bikes, electric scooters, and a host of other rolling devices, along with traditional bicycles, fall within the speed criteria for LIT Lanes. The LIT Lane is design for people and goods that move faster than a pedestrian, but slower than a car. They are generally designed with some level of protection between the LIT Lane and the vehicle lane.



Arts
Center
MARTA
Station



Piedmont
Park



Study Purpose

- Identify a preferred east-west LIT lane corridor with enhanced pedestrian facilities to major destinations in Midtown between Piedmont Avenue and the proposed 15th Street extension.
- Improve comfort, safety, and access for pedestrians, cyclists, and scooter riders in Midtown between Arts Center MARTA Station and Piedmont Park.
- Connect seamlessly to the new 15th Street extension and the future multi-use trail planned to terminate at the intersection of Piedmont Avenue and 15th Street.
- Propose design features to enhance safety and visibility for pedestrians, cyclists, and scooter riders and facilitate slower vehicular speeds.
- Study a potential signal at Arts Center Way and 15th Street.
- Make recommendations for wayfinding signage and potential place making opportunities.

changes. These projects are generally installed within a year of the start of planning.

The study area includes the broader area surrounding the 15th Street corridor to consider potential alternative alignments, identify nearby destinations with high volumes of users, and examine multimodal traffic patterns within the network. It extends from the Interstate 75 (I-75)/Interstate 85 (I-85) Connector to the west to Piedmont Park to the east and approximately a quarter mile north and south of 15th Street, from 17th Street to the north to 12th Street to the south.

Three alternative routes were evaluated to identify the corridor that would be the most useful and well suited to the quick build approach. The three corridors are:

15th Street

16th Street

14th Street

Each corridor uses multiple streets to connect to the end point destinations, as illustrated in Figure 1. The 15th Street corridor includes portions of 15th Street and Piedmont Avenue. The 16th Street corridor uses portions of 15th Street, Arts Center Way, 16th Street, Peachtree Circle, and Piedmont Avenue. The 14th Street corridor uses portions of 14th Street and West Peachtree Street.

The following is a summary of the existing conditions report, which includes stakeholder input, a review of major trip origins and destinations in the area, an overview of each of the alternative corridors, preliminary survey, multimodal traffic analysis, and recommendations for a preferred alternative route. **More detailed information is available in the full report.**

Figure 1. Study Area Map



Community Outreach

Members of the Midtown community, adjacent property owners, and partner entities were invited to weigh in on the route selection, opportunities, concerns, and design considerations as part of the planning process. Activities held during the existing conditions analysis phase of this project included a virtual site tour, stakeholder interviews, and an online survey. Additional engagement opportunities will occur as this project moves into the design phase.

Stakeholder Interviews

Interviews with people who directly interface with the potential routes provided insight on operations and preferences for immediate users. Participants included representatives from the Woodruff Arts Center, Ansley Park Civic Association, MARTA, Cousins Properties, Colony Square/North American Properties, Colony House Condominiums, Hanover House Condominiums, Hampton Inn and Suites, and First Church of Christ, Scientist. Overall, these stakeholders were supportive of the LIT lanes project. Concerns primarily centered on ensuring adequate access to properties for users and for loading operations; retaining on-street parking; safety; and maintaining levels of service for vehicular traffic.

Online Survey

A short survey and an interactive mapping tool were posted on the Midtown Alliance during Summer 2020 and publicized via social media, newsletters, and member organizations. Respondents were asked about their preferred LIT lane route and to share insight on issues and opportunities in the area that should be addressed through the design. 136 people responded to the survey. Most respondents (53 percent) selected the 14th Street corridor as their preferred route, followed by 16th Street corridor (25 percent), and the 15th Street corridor (22 percent). The most frequently cited reasons for selecting a preferred route were direct access to places they go often, avoiding steep hills, and having fewer cars on the street.

Table 1 summarizes the opportunities and challenges stakeholders identified for each street under consideration. Open-ended comments from respondents about streets in the study area are included in Table 1 and detailed in the full report. **More detailed information on community input is available beginning on page 5 of the full report and in the “Stakeholder Insight” boxes throughout that document.**

Table 1. Summary of Opportunities and Challenges by Street According to Stakeholders

Street	Opportunities	Challenges
<p>14th Street</p>	<p>Connect to desirable destinations</p> <p>Holistic review of state corridor capacity needs underway by GDOT</p> <p>Connect to West Midtown via bridge over I-75/85</p> <p>Narrow lanes to slow vehicle speeds and improve safety</p> <p>Less steep topography</p> <p>Steer activity away from residential areas</p> <p>Direct connection to Piedmont Park entrance</p> <p>Direct connection to other major roads</p>	<p>GDOT coordination required</p> <p>High existing traffic volumes and turning movements</p> <p>Corridor was recently repaved and restriped</p> <p>High number of driveways and conflict points</p> <p>Longer timeline for implementation</p>
<p>15th Street</p>	<p>Consolidate bus stops near Peachtree Street to Peachtree Street</p> <p>Expansive right-of-way between Peachtree Street and Piedmont Avenue for some type of buffered LIT facility</p> <p>Direct route between Piedmont Park and Arts Center MARTA Station</p> <p>Future pedestrian/bicycle bridge across I-75/85 toward West Midtown</p> <p>Connect to 15th Street extension</p> <p>Improve safety at the Peachtree Circle intersection</p>	<p>Retain on-street residential parking</p> <p>Identification of an alternative location for Woodruff Arts Center bus staging</p> <p>Steep slope between Peachtree Street and Arts Center Way, resulting in both a more challenging ride and crosswalk safety concerns related to visibility</p> <p>High volume of traffic from Promenade garage</p> <p>Safety concerns over conflict points and poor visibility at Colony Square garage and Peachtree Circle intersection</p> <p>Sidewalk improvements needed outside Midtown CID boundary</p> <p>Peak hour traffic at Peachtree Street intersection queuing in Ansley Park and concerns over increased activity after Colony Square expansion</p>

(Continued on the next page)

Table 1. Summary of Opportunities and Challenges by Street According to Stakeholders (Continued)

Street	Opportunities	Challenges
16th Street	Fewer MARTA bus stops Connection to planned transit-oriented development at MARTA site	Active on-street passenger loading Periodic lane closures for filming (Arts Center Way to Peachtree St) Narrow ROW from Peachtree Street to Peachtree Circle cannot fit a dedicated LIT lane and retain on-street parking Need to retain on-street parking for residences without off-street parking Sections with relatively steep slopes Fewer destinations with direct access
Arts Center Way	Scheduled for repaving in 2020 Direct access to MARTA station entrance and Relay bike share station	Conflicts from Woodruff Arts Center loading dock and garage
Peachtree Circle	Existing 4-foot bicycle lanes (narrow and fading) Wide available ROW Introduce traffic calming to slow vehicle speeds	Conflict point at 15th Street intersection Sidewalk improvements needed outside Midtown CID boundary
Piedmont Avenue	Connect to designed multi-use trail on the east side of the street	N/A - project underway to address

Origins and Destinations Analysis

Installing LIT lanes and high-quality pedestrian connections along corridors with high levels of activity increases the potential utility of the facilities and expands mobility choices for a greater share of the Midtown community. All three alternative alignments capture two key trip origins and destinations: Arts Center MARTA Station and Piedmont Park. As their routes diverge between these end points, each picks up a different set and intensity of potential trip origins and destinations. The full origins and destinations analysis is available beginning on page 7 of the Existing Conditions Report.

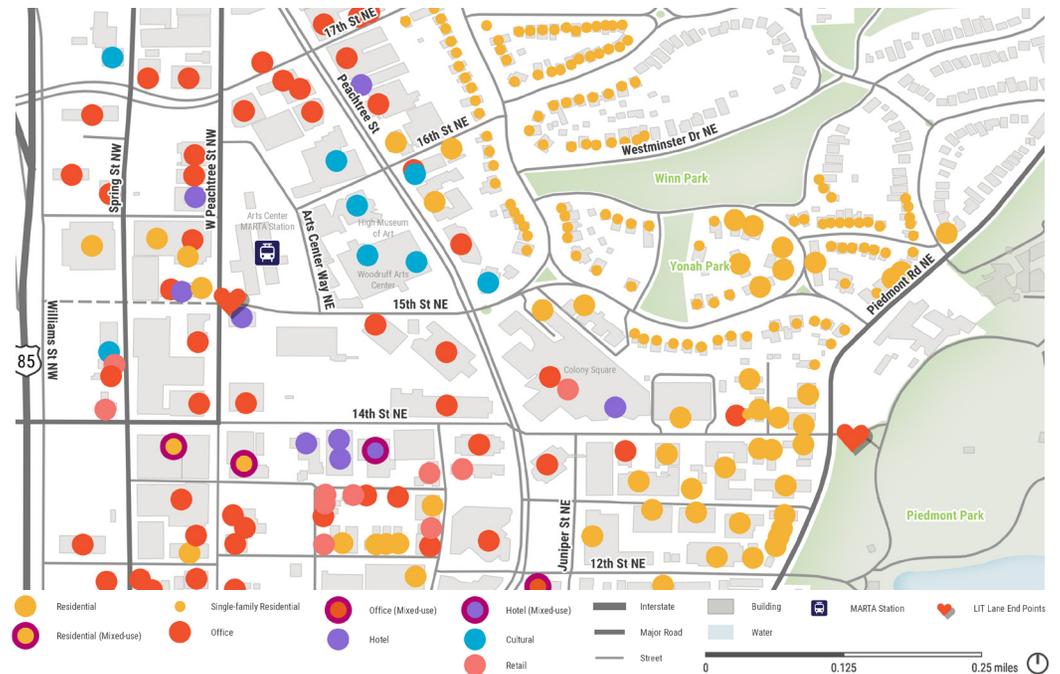
Existing Development

The highest intensity development is located in the Midtown Core area west of Peachtree Street and south of 14th Street, with lower density residences located in Ansley Park in the northeast part of the study area. The highest concentrations of residential units are along West Peachtree Street and near Piedmont Park. Offices are spread across the study area, with the greatest densities along Peachtree Street and at West Peachtree Street and 14th Street. Most hotels in the area are clustered along 14th Street. The Woodruff Arts Center and Piedmont Park are the most significant cultural destinations in the area, both attracting large volumes of visitors.

Upcoming Development

Developments currently under construction or proposed as of April 2020 will add more than 1,990 residential units, 2.5 million square feet of office, 300,000 square feet of retail, and 640 hotel rooms. Like existing development, the highest concentration of upcoming development is located closest to the 14th Street corridor.

Figure 2. Existing Development



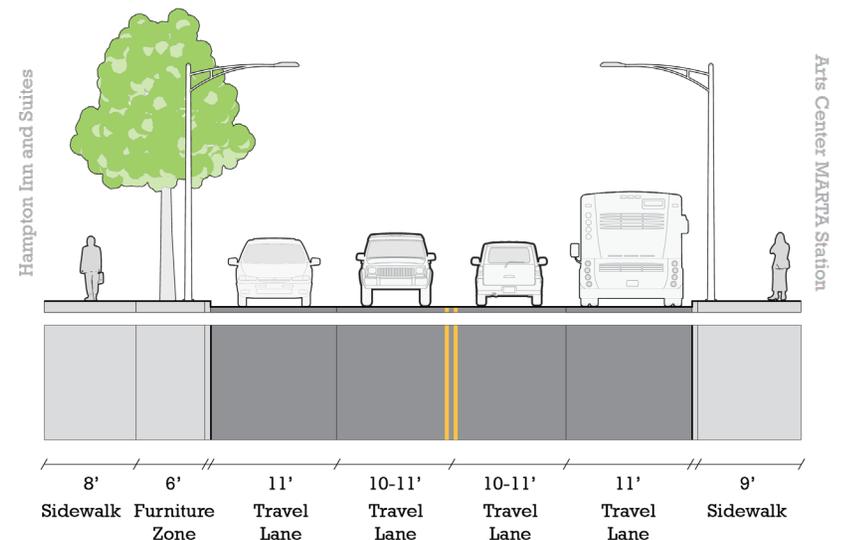


Corridor 1: 15th Street

15th Street is the primary corridor in consideration for the LIT lanes and pedestrian connections project. It connects directly to the Arts Center MARTA Station at the intersection of West Peachtree Street and terminates at Piedmont Avenue to the east, just a block north of the 14th Street gate entrance to Piedmont Park. This route provides connections to the Woodruff Arts Center, Promenade I and II office towers, Colony Square, and the Ansley Park neighborhood. There are relatively few major garage entrances along this route. Existing parallel parking on the south side of 15th Street in front of Promenade and the Castle, as well as on both sides of the street throughout the Ansley Park neighborhood, creates conflict points for cyclists along this route and must be considered in any recommendations. Frequent on-street bus staging around the Woodruff Arts Center would likely need to be relocated to accommodate LIT lanes. Most of the route has moderate topography, though a relatively steep hill between Arts Center Way and Peachtree Street may be challenging for some cyclists. Within the Midtown Core area, right-of-way

is constrained and would likely require the street to be reduced from three to two travel lanes to accommodate protected LIT lanes. Within the Ansley Park neighborhood, the unmarked street is very wide and could likely accommodate protected LIT lanes within the right-of-way without reducing vehicular throughput or on-street residential parking. The triangular intersection of 15th Street and Peachtree Circle may need to be redesigned to accommodate a LIT lane and streamline vehicular operations. West of Peachtree Street, many of the sidewalks along 15th Street are in poor condition and need to be replaced.

Figure 3. 15th Street Typical Section at West Peachtree Street Facing West



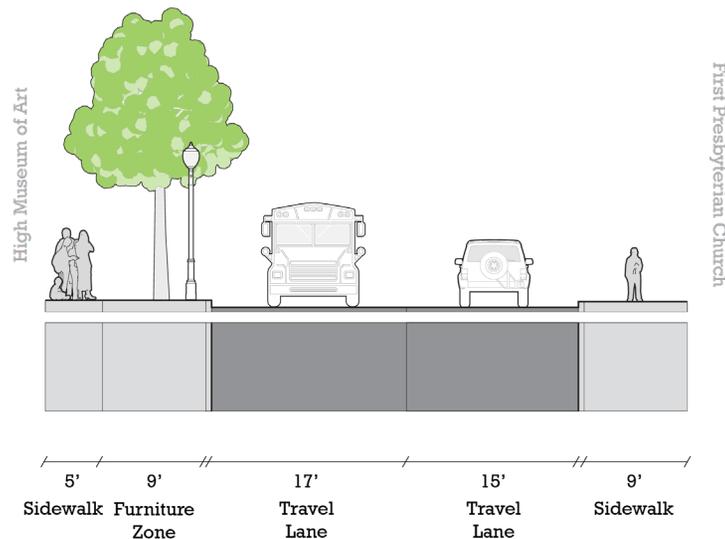
Corridor 2: 16th Street/Arts Center Way/Peachtree Circle

Arts Center Way, 16th Street, and Peachtree Circle provide an alternative to the 15th Street route that avoids steep slopes and conflict points on 15th Street between Arts Center Way and Peachtree Circle, as shown in Figure 15. Portions of this alignment are the same as the 15th Street route, using 15th Street from West Peachtree Street to Arts Center Way and from Peachtree Circle to Piedmont Avenue. There are existing on-street, unbuffered bicycle lanes adjacent to parallel parking on Peachtree Circle. Of the three alignments, this one is the least direct route between the Arts Center MARTA Station and Piedmont Park and would make the trip slightly longer for riders. The topography is relatively moderate and would be comfortable for many riders. This route is surrounded by lower intensities of development than the other two alignments, meaning it has fewer conflict points but also provides less utility for riders. Other than the end point destinations, the only major destination along this route is the Woodruff Arts Center.

Parallel parking and on-street drop-off zones are prevalent along this route, including portions of one side of Arts Center Way and 16th Street, as well as both sides of Peachtree Circle and 15th Street from Peachtree Circle to

Piedmont Avenue. Buses for field trips at the Woodruff Arts Center currently use 16th Street and Arts Center Way to drop off and wait for students. Some of these functions may have to be relocated if this route is selected. The Woodruff Arts Center has its main loading dock on Arts Center Way and a secondary loading dock on 16th Street, which would create additional conflict points. A lane on 16th Street is closed for film crew staging for film shoots at Woodruff Arts Center up to two times per month; Arts Center Way is closed for filming less frequently.

Figure 4. 16th Street Typical Section at Arts Center Way Facing West





Corridor 3: 14th Street

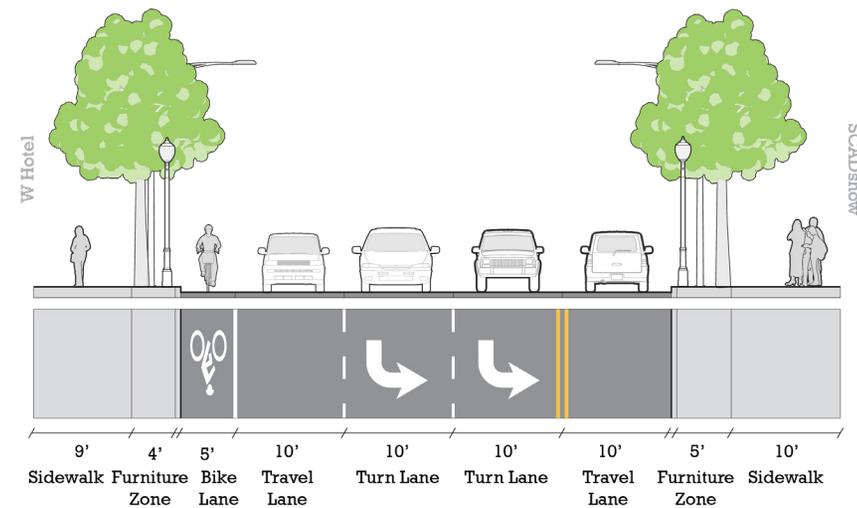
14th Street was initially considered as an alternative east-west connection between the Arts Center MARTA Station and Piedmont Park. It has a high concentration of existing development, including major office towers, major residential towers, and hotels. Although this high level of existing activity makes the route a useful one for potential riders, it will also create conflict points. This route has frequent driveways and a higher volume of vehicular traffic than the alternative routes, which can both increase the level of stress for riders and make it more difficult to reduce vehicular travel lanes to accommodate LIT lanes. There is an existing one-way, unprotected bike lane on the north side of 14th Street between Piedmont Avenue and Juniper Street. The topography along this route is moderate and would be comfortable for many riders. Of the three routes, this is the only alignment that falls completely within the Midtown Community Improvement District boundary, which could aid in implementation. An access ramp to I-75/I-85 is located on 14th Street on the west end of the study area and 14th Street is a state route west of West Peachtree Street, meaning any alterations would require coordination with GDOT. Long term, adding LIT lanes along this corridor could help build out a direct connection from Piedmont Park to West Midtown.

Based on the preliminary analysis and conversations with the project team, it was determined that 14th Street is not a viable route for this quick build project, largely due to:

- GDOT route west of West Peachtree Street
- High vehicular traffic volumes
- Constrained right-of-way
- High concentration of conflict points

While a LIT lane facility on 14th Street is still desired, these factors make it unlikely for the one-year target timeframe.

Figure 5. 14th Street Typical Section at Juniper Street Facing East



Transit Operations

Arts Center MARTA Station

The Arts Center MARTA Station is the hub of transit operations for the northern part of Midtown. It offers MARTA bus and rail service, commuter bus service, ZipCar, Relay bike share, scooter drop zones, and a small on-site parking lot. MARTA is considering proposals to redevelop portions of the site as dense transit-oriented development.

Local Bus Service

There are four MARTA bus routes serving the area: Routes 27, 37, 40, and 110. Route 110 has the highest ridership of all routes in the area, with more than three times as many average weekday passenger trips as any other route. There are bus stops along all of the corridors, with the busiest stops at 15th Street and Arts Center Way, 14th Street and Juniper Street, and Peachtree Street and 16th Street.

Commuter Bus Service

Many commuters arrive in Midtown by bus using CobbLinc, Gwinnett County Transit, or SRTA Xpress. Commuter buses either pick up in the MARTA station bus loop or on West Peachtree Street in front of the station, which is an active loading area especially on weekday mornings and evenings.

Existing and Planned Bicycle Facilities

Existing Bicycle Facilities

Two existing bicycle facilities connect to the corridors. There are existing, narrow, unprotected bike lanes on Peachtree Circle from 15th Street north. On 14th Street, there is a one-way, unprotected bike lane on the north side of the street from Piedmont Avenue to Juniper Street.

Planned Bicycle Facilities

Several projects are planned to bring new bicycle facilities to the area, including the 15th Street extension (sidewalk level bike lanes from Williams Street to West Peachtree Street), Piedmont Avenue Complete Street Project (shared-use path on the east side of the street from 14th Street to 15th Street and one-way protected bike lane south of 14th Street), Juniper Complete Street Project (one-way protected bike lane from 14th Street south), and the West Peachtree and Spring Street Quick Build Bike Lanes (pair of one-way protected bike lanes from 13th Street south).

Bike Share Stations

Relay bike share stations are located at Arts Center MARTA Station, SCADshow, the 14th Street gate to Piedmont Park, and Piedmont Avenue and 12th Street.

Multimodal Traffic Analysis

Crash Analysis

Crash data from 2016 through 2018 showed the highest concentrations of crashes in the study area located at the intersections of Peachtree Street and 14th Street, West Peachtree Street and 14th Street, and West Peachtree Street and 17th Street.

Traffic Analysis

14th Street has the highest traffic volumes of the corridors, with typical weekday daily volumes between 9,500 and 16,600 vehicles for most segments according to StreetLight data. The 15th Street and 16th Street corridors have fewer vehicles, with fewer than 4,000 weekday daily trips in most places. In Ansley Park, volumes generally drop below 1,000 weekday daily trips. West Peachtree Street and Piedmont Avenue handle more through traffic and have the highest volumes of any route segments, with West Peachtree Street reaching up to nearly 29,000 weekday daily trips. Speeds throughout the study area tend to range from 25 to 35 miles per hour. During off-peak hours (12 to 6 am), when there are fewer vehicles on the roads, speeds increase. The highest off-peak speeds are on 15th Street from West Peachtree Street to Peachtree Circle, where average off-peak speeds are generally between 35 and 45 miles per hour.

Travel Time Estimations

The 15th Street route has shortest estimated travel time for LIT riders (3.9 minutes eastbound, 3.3 minutes westbound) compared to the 16th Street corridor (5.9 minutes EB, 5.2 minutes WB) or 14th Street corridor (7.0 minutes EB, 6.4 minutes WB).

Bicycle Level of Service (BLOS)

BLOS is a summary metric to describe a bicyclist's perception of the quality of service on a route. All three corridors currently have similar BLOS scores overall. 14th Street from West Peachtree Street to Crescent Avenue has the lowest score, primarily because of the number of conflict points and higher speeds. 15th Street from West Peachtree Street to Peachtree Street also has a low score, largely due to a high number of conflict points and higher traffic volumes.

Arts Center Way Signal Warrant Analysis

Signalization of the intersection of 15th Street and Arts Center Way may help control conflict points in this area. Preliminary analyses were conducted for different types of signals. While it did meet peak hour warrants for a full signal, the intersection is not likely to meet critical warrants for a full signal or pedestrian hybrid beacon based on existing volumes and upcoming development in the immediate area. A rectangular rapid flashing beacon may be appropriate as an interim measure to provide additional pedestrian visibility and protection, if a full signal is not permitted.

Recommendations

A preferred alternative has not yet been selected and will be determined following additional community input. The following should be considered for all potential corridors to develop a design that is context-sensitive, enhances the sense of place, and balances the needs of adjacent properties with the need to expand mobility and improve safety for users of all modes. More detailed recommendations are available beginning on page 83 of the full existing conditions report.

- Consolidate bus stops where possible to reduce conflict points.
- Maintain ADA-compliant access to bus stops.
- Enhance LIT lane visibility at driveways with sight line limitations, including Callaway Plaza, the downhill slope on 15th Street, and the Woodruff Arts Center garage exit on Arts Center Way.
- Install an interim RRFB at 15th Street and Arts Center Way and consider a full signal, depending on the LIT facility design.
- Work with Woodruff Arts Center to identify alternative bus staging areas, as needed.
- Simplify the intersection of 15th Street and Peachtree Circle, such as to a stop-controlled T-intersection, to reduce crashes and improve compatibility with a LIT facility.
- Explore designs that allow the retention of left turn lanes where possible, while recognizing the elimination of a turn lane or travel lane to accommodate a LIT facility may be necessary in some locations.
- Add a westbound left turn phase at 15th Street and Peachtree Street, if the left turn lane is retained.
- Retain on-street residential parking in Ansley Park.
- Incorporate traffic calming features in the Ansley Park neighborhood.
- Partner with property owners to install bicycle and scooter parking along the route.
- Contribute to the Midtown Art Walk where it intersects with the route.
- Install wayfinding signage and coordinate with wayfinding application developers to maximize awareness of the route.



For more detailed information about the existing conditions analysis and initial community input, please see the full Existing Conditions Report.

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