



Decatur's Transportation Network, 2007

Nothing speaks louder of a city's transportation system than how its residents use it. A public survey conducted as part of the CTP revealed that sixty-seven percent of commuters drive alone to get to work or school. Over 20 percent of commuters in Decatur either walk, bike or take transit. Even more interesting, 79 percent of residents reported having walked or ridden a bike to downtown Decatur. Additionally, the majority of residents feel that it is easy to get around the City. These results indicate a system that already provides a lot of choice for travelers.

The following sections detail the extent of these choices, i.e. the facilities that make up the existing Decatur transportation network. The CTP uses this snapshot of how Decatur gets around in 2007 to recommend how the City can build upon its existing strengths to realize its vision of a healthy and well-connected community.

Existing Street Network

Streets are where it all comes together for travel in and through Decatur. The streets and their edges provide places for people to walk, bicycle and travel in buses and other vehicles. Compared with the MARTA rail system and off-road paths and greenways, the street system in Decatur accommodates the majority of travel and is detailed below.

Roadway Classification in Decatur

In 1974, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) published the manual *Highway Functional Classification - Concepts, Criteria and Procedures*. The manual was revised in 1989 and forms the basis of this roadway classification inventory. Functional classification is the process by which streets and highways are grouped into classes, or systems, according to the character of vehicular traffic service that they are intended to provide. In general, there are three functional classifications: arterial, collector, and local roads. All streets and highways are grouped into one of these classes, depending on the character of the traffic (i.e., local or long distance) and the degree of land access that they allow.

Information on this function-based system is provided for funding and maintenance purposes. The CTP utilizes a street typology overlay that fundamentally alters the existing roadway classification system to include land use as a defining factor, taking into account other roadways users besides the auto. Please see Chapter 5 for more information on the street typology classification system.

The functional classification system is further described in the following table.

Table 3-1 Functional Classification System

Functional System	Definition
Arterial	Provides the highest level of service at the greatest speed for the longest uninterrupted distance, with some degree of access control. Arterials can be further classified as principal or minor. Principal arterials generally move higher volumes of traffic at higher speeds over longer distances than minor arterials.
Collector	Provides a less highly developed level of service at a lower speed for shorter distances by collecting traffic from local roads and connecting them with arterials.
Local	Consists of all roads not defined as arterials or collectors; primarily provides access to land with little or no through movement.

Information on functional classification for the Decatur street network was collected from the Georgia Department of Transportation DeKalb County database. Since Decatur is included within the Atlanta Urbanized Area, roads have been classified under the urban classification system. The following provides highlights of the findings and the functional classification.

Urban Principal Arterials

The City of Decatur has one principal arterial, **Scott Boulevard** (SR 8 & US29). It traverses the northwest corner of the City connecting downtown Atlanta to Stone Mountain and points further east.

Urban Minor Arterials

Decatur has good east-west and north-south connectivity provided for by a number of minor arterials. The City's minor arterials that generally run in an east-west direction include:

- East/West College Avenue (SR 10 & US 278)
- East/West Howard Avenue
- East/West Ponce de Leon Avenue
- North Decatur Road

Those arterials that run in a general north-south direction include:

- South Candler Street (Kirk Road south to City limits)
- South Columbia Drive
- Commerce Drive
- Clairemont Avenue
- East Lake Road

Urban Collectors

There are several collectors with the City limits. These roads generally run in north-south direction and include:

- Second Avenue
- East Lake Drive
- South Candler Street (E. College south to Kirk Road)
- East Trinity Place
- Church Street
- North Arcadia Avenue

Local Roads

The remaining streets in Decatur are considered local roads. The vast majority is located within the City's numerous single-family residential neighborhoods.

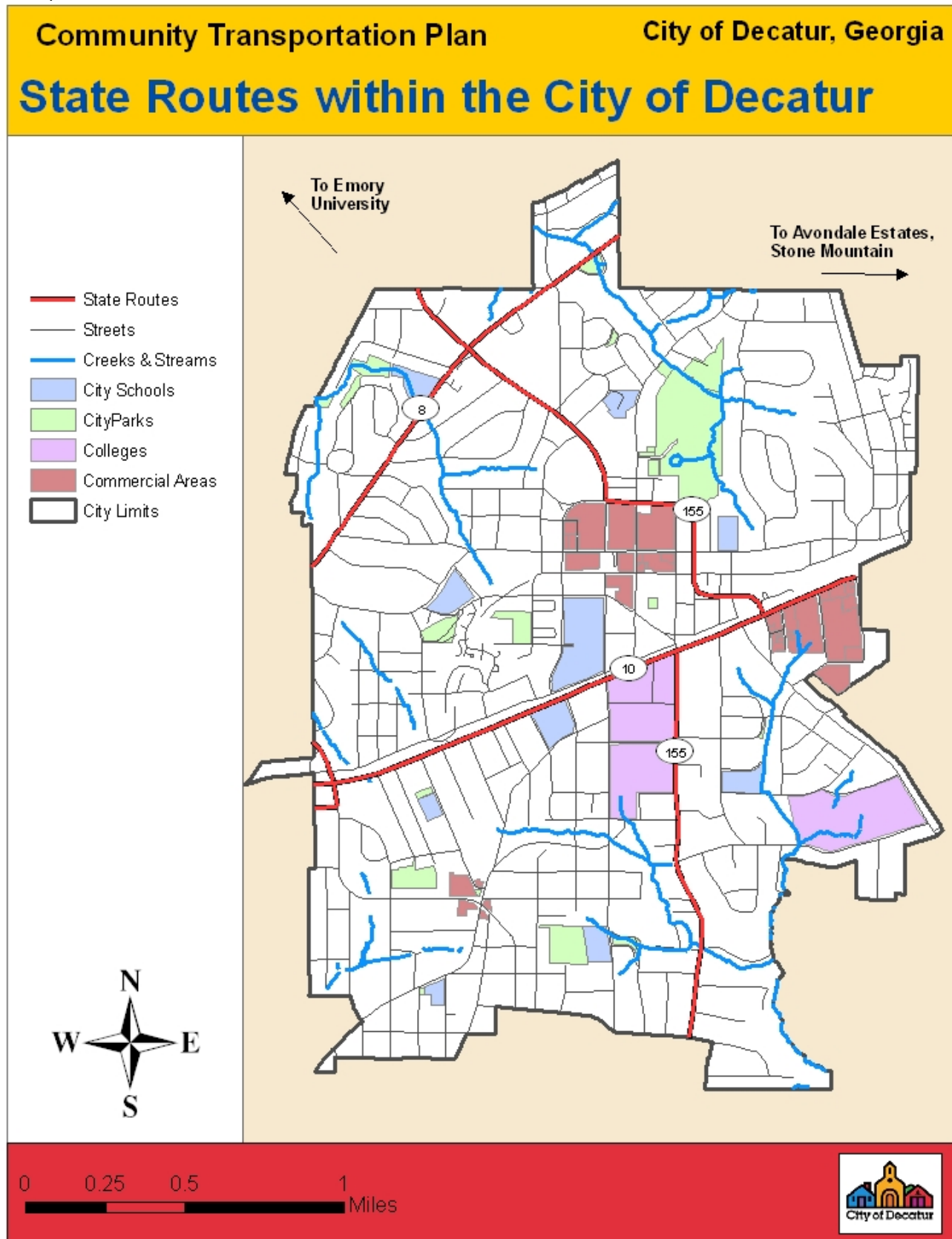
State Routes within Decatur

The City of Decatur has a number of designated State routes administered and maintained by the Georgia Department of Transportation. The City currently has 6.8 miles of State routes within the City limits, including the sections of the following roads which fall within the City's limits:

- **State Route 8: Scott Boulevard**
- **State Route 155 :Commerce Drive (from Clairemont Ave east to College Ave), Clairemont Avenue, S. Candler Street**
- **State Route 10: College Avenue, Park Place (from East Lake Dr west to city limits), East Lake Drive (from city limits south to Park Place)**

The administration of State routes is an important factor of the street network and the Community Transportation Plan. The State has established criteria and procedures for construction and maintenance on State roads and coordination will be important in the implementation of any CTP recommended improvements. See Map 3-1 for State Routes within the city.

Map 3-1 State Routes in Decatur



Existing Pedestrian Conditions

Sidewalks currently exist on almost 61 miles of city streets, nearly 82 percent of the total street miles. The remaining gaps in the sidewalk network – streets without sidewalks on at least one side – total 13 miles or 17 percent of the city streets. Map 3-2 is a graphical depiction of the following table.

Table 3-2 Decatur Sidewalk Network

Facility Type	Length
Streets with sidewalk on at least one side	60.9 miles
Gaps in current sidewalk (street with no sidewalk on either side)	13.1 miles
Current Total Street Network	74 miles
Projects currently in design (as of 2007 – Phase I bond projects, see Pedestrian chapter)	1.87 miles

Source: City of Decatur

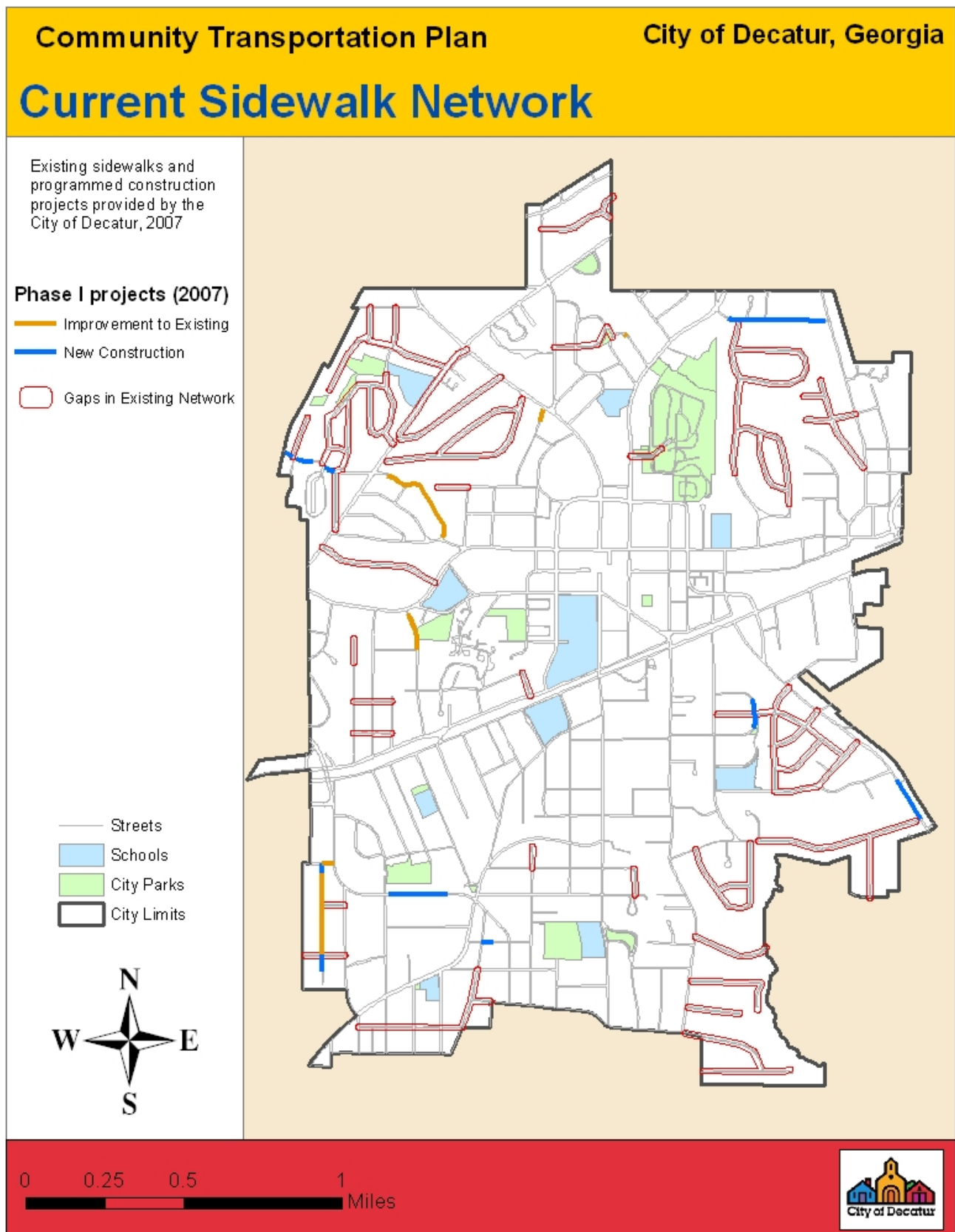
The City has a long history of pedestrian planning. The historic downtown area has always been a center for shopping at the general store, attending public functions at the court house, and strolling on the lawns. The downtown Square remains a central location for pedestrians with a wide variety of small retail shops, restaurants, office buildings, and a growing number of apartments and condos.

However, while Decatur is becoming an ever more pedestrian friendly area, the balance is still tilted towards automobile driving and parking. Figure 3-1 shows the amount of space allotted to pedestrians as compared to areas for automobiles.

Figure 3-1 Decatur Pedestrian and Auto Areas



Map 3-2 Decatur Sidewalk Network



Existing Bicycle Conditions

Existing designated bicycle facilities within the City of Decatur are currently very limited. The city has only 113 feet of striped bicycle lanes and 3 miles of off-street paths. The PATH Foundation has designated 3 miles of street in Oakhurst and downtown as bicycling routes along the regional Atlanta to Stone Mountain recreational route. Map 3-3 is a graphical depiction of the following table.

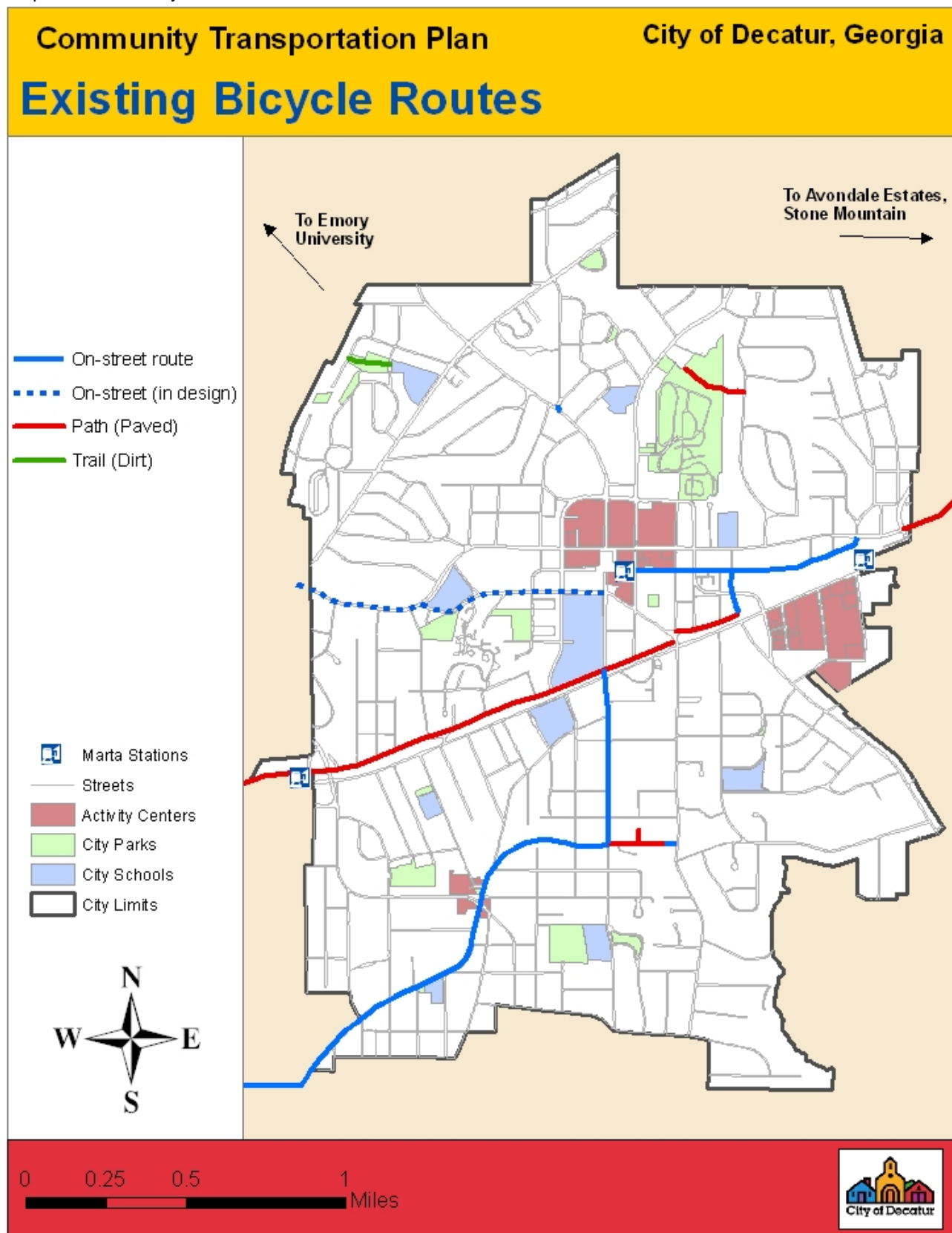
Table 3-3 Decatur Bicycle Facilities

Facility Type	Length	Route
On-street marked lane	113 feet (0.02 mi)	Michigan Ave. access off Clairemont Ave.
On-street designated route	3.03 miles	PATH Stone Mountain & Trolley Line routes
Off-street multi-use trail	3.08 miles	PATH Stone Mountain & Green Street trails; Glenn Lake Park trail
Current Total Bike Facilities	6.13 miles	
Current Total Street Network	74 miles	
Projects currently in design	1.2 miles	W. Ponce de Leon Ave. & W. Trinity Pl. marked bicycle lane

Source: City of Decatur

Beyond designated facilities, however, the city has over 70 miles of potential bicycle facilities, as all of the City's streets, with the reasonable exception of Scott Boulevard, where automobile traffic volume and speed make bicycling unsafe, provide opportunities for cyclists to travel as legal vehicles on the roadway.

Map 3-3 Decatur Bicycle Facilities



Existing Transit Conditions

MARTA Rail Service

The backbone of the MARTA transit system serving Fulton and DeKalb Counties is comprised of one North-South rail line and one East-West rail line, intersecting in downtown Atlanta at Five Points Station. MARTA bus service complements the rail service, collecting riders from areas throughout the service area.

The City of Decatur sits on the East-West line. MARTA operates three rail stations within Decatur's limits: East Lake Station, Decatur Station, and Avondale Station. East Lake Station is located at the western edge of the City of Decatur, Decatur Station is located in the downtown square, and Avondale Station is located at the eastern edge of Decatur. Rail service is offered from 5:00AM to 1:00AM, approximately every 10 minutes during peak times and every 20 minutes during off-peak times. Additionally, a total of 13 bus routes serve the Decatur area and connect to Decatur's rail stations. See Map 3-4 for bus routes and rail stations in Decatur.

All of MARTA's bus routes and rail stations are accessible for those with disabilities, and include such facilities as wheelchair lifts and wide faregates. In addition, MARTA provides ADA Complementary Paratransit Service to eligible disabled persons who are unable to board, ride or disembark from an accessible vehicle in MARTA's regular bus or rail services. Service is provided with special lift-equipped vans on a curb-to-curb, shared ride basis. Individuals utilizing this service must have a MARTA ADA Photo Identification Card and call the MARTA's Paratransit Reservation Office for an advance service reservation. Generally, service hours are from 5:00 AM to 12:30 AM, seven days a week including holidays.

There are various parking options for cars and bicycles at the MARTA transit stations in Decatur. Free short-term auto parking (up to 24 hours) and bicycle parking is available at East Lake Station and Avondale Station. Transit users may bring their bicycle on MARTA trains as well as secure them on racks attached to the front of MARTA buses. The Decatur Station has no dedicated parking for either autos or bicycles.

Map 3-4 MARTA Transit Routes



As seen in Table 3-4 below, Avondale Station has significantly higher average total weekday boardings than both Decatur and East Lake Stations. Avondale boards 1.5 times the number of riders as Decatur, and more than 5.5 times the number of riders at East Lake. Due to its eastern location farther from downtown Decatur and Atlanta than the other two stations, Avondale Station likely attracts a large number of riders who park and ride. Additionally, Avondale Station is served by more bus routes than Decatur and East Lake Stations and is easily accessed from surrounding areas due to several major arterials in the vicinity. These arterials include East Ponce de Leon Avenue, North Clarendon, and Covington Road.

Table 3-4 Decatur MARTA Rail Stations: Average Weekday Boardings (October 2006)

Rail Station	Total Weekday Boardings (Avg.)
Avondale	6,693
Decatur	4,480
East Lake	1,205

Source: Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority

MARTA Bus Service

In addition to rail, MARTA offers bus service connecting to these stations -- three bus routes serve East Lake Station, five serve Decatur Station, and nine serve Avondale. Bus service is generally offered between 5:30AM and 1:30AM, with service offered approximately every 20 minutes during peak times and every 30-45 minutes during off-peak times. Descriptions of the MARTA bus routes serving Decatur are shown below, including bus number, route name, main streets used, and key destinations served.

East Lake Station Bus Service (three routes)

#22 – Second Avenue

Serves west side of Oakhurst neighborhood, south of the East Lake MARTA Station, including East Lake Ave., Second Ave., in addition to Memorial Drive, Glenwood Ave., Wal-Mart on Gresham Rd., Steele and Toney Elementary Schools, and McNair Middle School

#24 – Belvedere

Serves Kirkwood neighborhood (within Atlanta city limits), southwest of the East Lake MARTA Station, in addition to W. College Ave., Hosea Williams Dr., Memorial Drive, and Oakhurst and Knollwood Elementary Schools

#123 – Decatur/Candler Park

Links Edgewood/Candler Park, East Lake, and Decatur MARTA Stations

Serves area east and northeast of East Lake Station including W. Ponce de Leon Ave., N. Decatur Rd., North Druid Hills Rd., Dekalb Medical Center, and North Dekalb Mall

Decatur Station Bus Service (five routes)

#2 – Ponce de Leon

Serves the Ponce de Leon Ave. corridor between North Avenue Station in Midtown Atlanta and Avondale Station in east Decatur, including City Hall East, Fernbank Science Center, and Downtown Decatur

#15 – South Dekalb

Serves the Winnona Park neighborhood, southeast of Decatur Station; in addition to the Dekalb County Library, Agnes Scott College, South Dekalb Mall, Clifton Springs Health Center, and Georgia Perimeter College (South Campus)

#18 – South Decatur

Serves the Oakhurst neighborhood; links downtown Decatur with downtown Atlanta via Edgewood/Candler Park, King Memorial and Georgia State Stations

#19 – Clairmont

Links Decatur Station with Brookhaven Station, serving the area north of Decatur, including Atlanta VA Medical Center, Briarcliff Shopping Center, Buford Highway, and Plaza Fiesta

#123 – Decatur/Candler Park

Links Edgewood/Candler Park, East Lake, and Decatur MARTA Stations

Serves area northeast of East Lake Station including W. Ponce de Leon Ave., N. Decatur Rd., and North Druid Hills Rd., Dekalb Medical Center, and North Dekalb Mall



Avondale Station Bus Service (nine routes)

#2 – Ponce de Leon

Serves the Ponce de Leon Ave. corridor between North Avenue Station in Midtown Atlanta and Avondale Station in east Decatur, including City Hall East, Fernbank Science Center, and Downtown Decatur

#8 – North Druid Hills

Serves the Decatur Heights neighborhood north and west of Avondale Station, linking Avondale with Brookhaven Station using North Druid Hills Dr. Crosses Stone Mountain Freeway and I-85.

#36 – North Decatur

Serves the area north and west of Avondale Station, linking Avondale with Arts Center Station using N. Decatur Rd., Morningside Dr., and Piedmont Ave. Serves T.D. Vinson Health Center, Dekalb Medical Center, Druid Hills High School, Emory University and Hospital, Piedmont Park, Ansley Mall, and Colony Square.

#75 – Tucker

Serves the area northwest of Avondale Station to Tucker, including Devry University, North Dekalb Mall, and Tucker High School

#96 – Snapfinger/Wesley Chapel

Serves the area southwest of Avondale Station to Snapfinger Road south of Interstate 20. Destinations include Columbia Seminary, Avondale Mall, Columbia High School, and Snapfinger Elementary School.

#119 – Avondale/Indian Creek

Serves the area east of Avondale Station to Indian Creek Station, including a stop at Kensington Station.

#120 – Stone Mountain

Serves the area north and east of Avondale Station to the Stone Mountain Park and Ride, including the Department of Human Resources.

#122 – Georgia Perimeter College

Serves a loop to the northeast of Avondale Station, including Avondale Estate, Scottdale, Tobie Grant Park, Clarkston High School, Dekalb Tech, and Georgia Perimeter College.

#125 – Northlake/Avondale

Serves the area north and east of Avondale Station along the I-285 corridor. Destinations include Dekalb Medical Center, Dekalb Technical College, Georgia Perimeter College, Emory Northlake Regional Medical Center, Lawrenceville Highway, Briarcliff Road, and Northlake Mall.

The bus routes serving Decatur and Avondale Stations have the highest ridership numbers, while those serving East Lake Station have among the lowest. The routes with the highest average total weekday boardings serve different geographic locations, but tend to be longer routes that extend the farthest distances. For example, the route with the highest average total daily ridership, “#15 – South Dekalb,” originates at Decatur Station and extends south of Interstate 285.

Other routes with high average total daily ridership are the “#120 – Stone Mountain” and “#19 – Clairemont,” serving Stone Mountain and Brookhaven/Oglethorpe Station, respectively. The high ridership on some routes is also due to the commercial and employment destinations they serve. For example, the “#2 – Ponce de Leon,” while not a particularly long route, provides access to the heavy commercial and employment corridor of Ponce de Leon Avenue into Midtown Atlanta. See Table 3-5 for complete ridership data for all bus routes that serve the City of Decatur.

Table 3-5. Decatur MARTA Bus Routes: Average Weekday Boardings (Data collected December 2006 unless otherwise noted)

Bus Route (Route# - Name)	Decatur Transit Station(s) Served	Total Weekday Boardings (Avg.)
15 – South Dekalb	Decatur	4,879
120 – Stone Mountain	Avondale	3,494
125 – Northlake/Avondale	Avondale	2,605
2 – Ponce de Leon	Decatur, Avondale	2,088
19 – Clairemont	Decatur	1,921
75 – Tucker	Avondale	1,675
8 – North Druid Hills	Avondale	1,610
96 – Snapfinger/Wesley Chapel	Avondale	1,530 ^a
18 – South Decatur	Decatur	1,265
36 – North Decatur	Avondale	1,042
119 – Avondale/Indian Creek	Avondale	642 ^b
123 – Decatur/Candler Park	East Lake, Decatur	503
24 – Belvedere	East Lake	457
122 – Georgia Perimeter College	Avondale	447 ^b
22 – Second Avenue	East Lake	415

Source: Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority

^aJuly 2006 ^bOctober 2006

While MARTA transit coverage in the City of Decatur is extensive given its size, the routes are generally linear. The result is a high degree of access into and out of Decatur, but a low degree of access within and between some of Decatur's neighborhoods. For example, while buses connect neighborhoods such as Winnona Park and Oakhurst with Downtown Decatur, there are no routes that connect the two with each other.

Clifton Corridor Transportation Management Association (CCTMA) Shuttle Service

Decatur is served by the Clifton Corridor Transportation Management Association (CCTMA), one of eight Atlanta-area TMAs designed to manage transportation demand through creative alternatives to single occupancy driving. The CCTMA provides services to employer members located within a three-mile radius from the intersection of Clifton Road and Haygood Drive in DeKalb County. Emory University, the largest employer in DeKalb County, leads the CCTMA in developing and providing member services to the various hospitals, non-profit organizations, and government agencies in the surrounding area.

The CCTMA operates the “CCTMA-Decatur Shuttle,” also known as “Cliff” free to anyone, as a link between the Clifton Corridor area and Decatur MARTA Station. CCTMA-Decatur Shuttle service is offered approximately every 30 minutes between 5:30AM and 8:00PM on weekdays. There is no weekend service. Additional information is available at www.cctma.com.

Recent Investments in the Transportation System

As demonstrated in Chapter 2, the City has a long history of planning initiatives. The City officials and staff continue to be very proactive on both planning and implementing projects, particularly during the past five years. The most significant programs, including Transportation Enhancement grants, the Avondale LCI plan, and the bond program, are outlined in the following sections.

Transportation Enhancement (TE) Projects

Transportation Enhancement (TE) grants are awarded by the Federal government for creative projects that incorporate the transportation system with the surrounding community and environment. TE grants were established by Congress with the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991. The Georgia Department of Transportation awards TE grants annually and requires matching funding from the local jurisdiction.

TE grants can be used for a variety of projects, including historic preservation, scenic highways, rehabilitation of historic buildings, and other transportation-related programs. In addition, the TE grants can be used for building and maintaining bicycle and pedestrian facilities. TE grants help local jurisdictions employ federal funding for expanding the range of facilities for human-powered transportation and help create a safe and comfortable transportation system for all users.

The City of Decatur has been very active on applying for and receiving TE grants. During the 2006-2007 funding rounds, the City won grants for implementing bicycle lanes along West Ponce de Leon Avenue and West Trinity Place, improving downtown streetscaping along East Trinity Place and Church Street, and improving streetscaping within the Oakhurst Business District.

The TE awards totaled over three million dollars and help address a number of projects referenced in the Streetscape Master Plan, the Preservation Corridor Plan, the 2000

Strategic Plan, and the 2005 Comprehensive Plan Update. All three projects are currently in design phases and have been considered in the recommendations presented by the Community Transportation Plan. The successful implementation of the TE grant projects help continue the city's dedication to innovative planning initiatives and complete important pieces of the overall transportation system.

Avondale LCI

The Avondale Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) district is located on the east side of Decatur adjacent to the Avondale MARTA station. The area is currently industrial and contains vacant lots. It is a prime opportunity for redevelopment under the Atlanta Regional Commission's LCI program to encourage transit-oriented development.

The area will be redeveloped over 20 years to accommodate a mix of medium-density residential, small retail and restaurants, and direct access to MARTA transit facilities. These changes will help increase MARTA ridership while making alternative transportation a viable choice for more residents throughout the area. The area has already been the focus of several very successful private development initiatives, including the Tally Street Lofts and East Decatur Station district.

2006-2010 Bond Program

In 2006, the City passed an ambitious bond program to raise money for a series of public capital improvement projects. The program, which included a dedicated transportation element, provided money for a sidewalk capital improvement program. The City has established a goal of providing a sidewalk on at least one side of every street in the city and has allocated a significant portion of the bond money towards meeting that goal.

Beginning in 2007, the City embarked on the first phase of sidewalk improvements. New facilities will be built on Coventry Rd and Madison Ave. Improvements to existing facilities will include S. Columbia Dr, Forkner Dr, East Lake Dr, and Winnona Dr.

The City's bond money, paired with state and federal grants, will also provide for several major transportation improvements. Potential improvements may include sidewalk construction and repair, streetscaping improvements within downtown and Oakhurst, improvements to intersections and the study and potential implementation of a railroad right of way zone.

The bond projects will be flexible in the future as grant money and matching money becomes available for new projects. The bond money will be used immediately to fund a bicycle lane on W. Ponce de Leon Ave and W. Trinity Place. Further projects will be based on current need as well as priorities set through the city's various planning documents, including the Community Transportation Plan.

Conclusion

As this chapter illustrates, the City of Decatur transportation system has most of the elements necessary to realize its goals in the areas of health, choice, community, and connectivity. The City enjoys a variety of transportation options, including extensive sidewalks and transit facilities, and benefits from significant investment made in previous years to improve the overall system. The recent approval of bond money for

transportation shows that such projects are a priority for citizens. Most important of all, Decatur has a significant portion of its population that already takes advantage of walking, bicycling, and transit options.

Overall, the City is well positioned to embark on a targeted program of improvements and programs to increase and improve its facilities to create a healthy, well-connected, and accessible community. By being proactive and innovative regarding transportation needs, the City is responding to the most prominent issues of the time, including concerns about air quality and climate change, energy resources and trends in chronic disease. An effective transportation system can provide real alternatives to travel by automobiles, thereby reducing auto emissions that negatively impact the environment, reducing reliance on fossil fuels, and increasing levels of physical activity to reduce chronic disease. Recommendations included in the Streets, Bicycle, and Pedestrian elements describe strategies for the City to build on its existing assets and address deficiencies in safety, access and mobility, and active living.