CHAPTER • 7

Pedestrian

The City of Decatur is a prime location for walking. Historic houses, tree lined streets, a range of fine shopping and restaurants, and a conveniently small size all help create an inherently pedestrian friendly city. Furthermore, the City has worked hard over decades to create an extensive and generally well-maintained sidewalk

network. Residential neighborhoods are low-traffic with neighborhood schools and numerous recreational parks. Thanks to booming redevelopment and a proactive policy to require the creation of appropriate public facilities with new development, the downtown core has expansive sidewalks with a growing amount of retail built for strolling and window shopping.

As the City has committed itself to putting a sidewalk on at least one side of every street in the city, the mission of this chapter in the Community Transportation Plan is to capture the range of pedestrian needs in the city and help highlight important areas for future improvement.



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Facilitating pedestrian travel is an important opportunity in the transportation network. All other modes of travel start and end with some amount of walking. Pedestrians are a broad category that includes every type of system user: commuters, shoppers, recreational walkers, children, older adults, temporarily or permanently disabled persons, car owners and non-car owners, and anyone else who chooses or is forced to travel under their own power. Pedestrian planning and design needs to address safety, convenience, equity, and accessibility.

If Decatur is to become an Active Living community pedestrian facilities must be attractive and, at least in some cases, provide a more convenient mode of travel over the automobile. By encouraging active travel, Decatur transportation system can increase residents' levels of physical activity, thereby lowering the risk of obesity, heart disease, diabetes and other chronic diseases.

Identifying Important Pedestrian Routes

Routes throughout the city serve important functions for neighborhood residents, local developments, and citywide connectivity. The following sections explore the various

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initiatives and programs oriented towards pedestrian planning in the city and the technical analysis conducted for the CTP. These elements provide various opportunities for either expanding or improving the existing pedestrian network.

Existing Gaps in the Sidewalk Network

The clearest places to start with improving the existing sidewalk network are the gaps in the system. The city has roughly seventy-four miles of streets and sixty-one miles of sidewalks. The remaining thirteen-miles are primarily neighborhood streets located in the corners of the city. Map 7-1 displays the current gaps in the sidewalk network. The map also highlights the upcoming improvements in the sidewalk network planned under Phase I of the City's public bond program.

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Safe Routes to School

The Decatur city school system, in conjunction with the Atlanta Bicycling Campaign, recently completed a one year demonstration program of implementing a Safe Routes to School project. The project focused on promoting bicycling and walking amongst school aged children and parents, as well as identifying existing barriers for children traveling to school.

The project surveyed parents of children traveling to the pilot school locations, Glennwood Academy and Clairemont Elementary. The most commonly used routes for walking and bicycling were identified, as well as routes which would be beneficial for children to use if specific improvements were made to existing infrastructure or enforcement. The routes identified are shown on Map 7-2.

The Metropolitan Safe Routes to School Demonstration Project was presented to the Georgia Department of Transportation for review in December 2006. The project presents specific goals and recommendations which can be adopted separately by the City of Decatur.



Map 7-1 Decatur Sidewalk Network









Transit Routes and Accessibility

Providing safe and comfortable walking routes are critical for building a transportation system that supports a variety of modes. The City of Decatur has a number of transit



options, either rail or bus routes that provide service for commuters and residents throughout the Atlanta area.

The primary transit provider in Decatur is the Metropolitan Atlanta Regional Transit Authority (MARTA). MARTA has three rail stations within the city limits and a network of bus routes connecting to a variety of destinations outside the city. In addition to the regional MARTA system, the Clifton Corridor Transportation Management

Association provides a free shuttle between the Decatur rail station, Emory Commons shopping center, and Emory University.

A majority of the City of Decatur falls within a one-quarter mile radius of the three MARTA stations. Bus routes encompass every quadrant of the city and provide regular service along major streets. The pedestrian network provides direct access to the transit system and allows residents to walk directly to rail stations or bus stops.

Greenspaces, Natural Areas, and Historic Resources

Though small in size, the City of Decatur has numerous parks and recreational greenspaces, historic resources, and natural areas. The City's recreational opportunities offer valuable opportunities to improve the physical and mental health of residents while historic locations draw visitors to explore the city.

The City adopted a Preservation Corridor plan in 2004 to help guide route planning for a trail, the Decatur Greenway, which would increase connectivity between neighborhoods, greenspaces, and historic sites. The plan originally focused on connecting the Woodlands park, the Decatur Cemetery, the Old Courthouse, Oakhurst Community Garden, and Dearborn Park. Upon requests by the community, however, the plan was expanded to form a network through the rest of the city. Map 7-4 highlights the recommended routes for the Decatur Greenway from the Preservation Corridor plan.

The Preservation Corridor routes include both pedestrian and bicycling facilities. The greenway and multi-use path segments are facilities designed to accommodate walking travel. The Preservation Corridor plan provides network linkages for improving pedestrian, and bicycle, network connections throughout the city.

Latent Demand Score

While the supply of good pedestrian facilities is critical to enticing residents and visitors, a measurement of the demand for new facilities helps prioritize and identify key areas for new or improved sidewalks. This plan has used a model of demand called the Latent

Demand Score (see Chapter 4 for a more complete explanation.) The LDS predicts the demand within the city if ideal facilities were installed to existing destinations.

The pedestrian LDS for Decatur highlights the downtown core as a primary area for pedestrian trips. The high number of restaurants, retail shops, offices, and schools makes the downtown Square the primary destination for both residents and visitors. Map 7-5 displays the LDS scores throughout the City.

The Latent Demand Score helps highlight areas where new facilities will meet the highest demand. Many of the downtown core streets have existing facilities so the secondary LDS scores can be used to help feed into the higher demand areas and improve neighborhood connectivity. Combined with the Level of Service scores (discussed below), the LDS scores highlight segments with the highest potential for improvement.

Level of Service

The most basic function of pedestrian facilities is to provide safe and comfortable walking spaces. The technical work performed by the project team assessed and ranked corridors by their level of quality for pedestrians. Map 7-6 displays city corridors on a scale from A to F depending on a range of factors: sidewalk widths, buffers from the roadway, sidewalk condition, and others. The rankings for each corridor provide a foundation for prioritizing future improvements and measuring the effectiveness of future efforts.

The city's street corridors scored well overall for quality pedestrian environments. On a scale from A to F, all major city streets fell between C and B for pedestrian condition. The corridors identified by LOS score to need the most improvement are: Scott Blvd, Clairemont Ave, Commerce Dr, W. Ponce de Leon Ave, W. Trinity PI, S. Candler Rd, S. Columbia Dr., and E. College Ave.











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Miles

0.25

0.5

Health Impact Assessment

The HIA conducted as part of the CTP focused on pedestrian issues, among other topics. Participants of the HIA workshop identified pedestrian network connectivity, shade trees along sidewalks and paths, and buffers between cars and pedestrians as important elements to encouraging people to walk, thereby increasing levels of physical activity. Participants also recognized that the provision of pedestrian facilities should reflect the demand (e.g. wider sidewalks where demand is high, narrower sidewalks where demand is lower). They also expressed concern regarding locating sidewalks on only one side of the street, especially where street crossing is difficult. They saw this as a potential safety issue and a serious disincentive to walking for travel and recreation. The HIA workshop also targeted specific groups as being particularly vulnerable to the existing pedestrian environment. These groups include high school and middle school students who have to cross the railroad tracks to travel from home to school, older adults who walk to access local goods and services and people with disabilities.

Research has linked the provision of pedestrian facilities to increases in physical activity. In an analysis of 50 different studies, researchers have found that, if adjusted for age, education and gender, residents in neighborhoods with physical activity features were 20 percent more likely to be active. Furthermore, the presence of pavements (sidewalks) increased the likelihood of physical activity by 29 percent and stores and services within a walkable distance increased the likelihood of being active by 30 percent. And finally, the absences of high traffic volumes increased the likelihood of physical activity by 22 percent (Duncan, Spence and Mummery 2005).

Quality Growth Audit

The Quality Growth Audit that was conducted as part of the CPT explicitly links transportation goals to existing land development regulations. Recommendations regarding the pedestrian environment suggested the development of Decatur-specific public works standards to ensure the creation of properly designed curb ramps, median islands that are accessible for pedestrians, as well as people in wheelchairs or on bicycles; the appropriate placement of street furniture; and educational and signage options to encourage people to use active travel modes, like walking.

Prioritizing Pedestrian Corridors

As outlined above, Decatur contains a variety of potential pedestrian routes. The City current has a generally well connected sidewalk and trail network and is actively continuing to expand and improve the system. Rather than developing a recommended pedestrian network map, such as the one created for bicycles, the project team decided to help prioritize specific street corridors based on how they meet pedestrian needs.

The following map highlights corridors that are important for pedestrian trips. It was compiled by overlaying route information presented in the previous sections – Safe Routes to School, transit and destination connections, and information gleaned from the latent demand scores and level of service analysis. The corridors were then rated on a scale of high to low priority based the incidence of overlap among the categories. For example, if one corridor served a school, transit facility or other important destination, the

rating was higher than if it served only one of those purposes. The rating was advanced even higher if the corridor showed a high level of demand or poor level of service.

Not surprising, the area surrounding the downtown contains the highest number of high priority corridors given its proximity to the central business core. Medium and low priority corridors are located throughout the City. The majority of existing gaps are located among the low and medium priority areas.

This priority map is meant to supplement the City's already existing goals and provide guidance if additional funds or need for prioritization arises.



Strategies for Improving Pedestrian Conditions

A range of new strategies have been developed by planners and engineers to improve pedestrian conditions. From basic to innovative, these strategies seek to make pedestrian areas safer and more convenient to help encourage more walking trips. This section outlines the elements which must be considered for a range of pedestrian improvements.

Corridor Strategies

The following tools help improve pedestrian conditions along roadway corridors and within intersections. The primary factors affecting pedestrians along corridors are sidewalk widths, surrounding land uses, streetscaping, vegetation, and accessibility.

Street Typology

Building on the Level of Service scores and incorporating surrounding land uses and neighborhood characteristics, the project team developed a series of street typologies



that suggest design characteristics for individual roadway segments. The street typologies categorize city corridors by their function and seek to match the roadway characteristics to the uses of the street. See Chapter 4 for the Street Typology map for City corridors.

The street typologies identified by the project team include Downtown Core, Urban Mixed Use, Neighborhood

Conservation, and Regional Boulevard. Each of these street types caters to different pedestrian needs. The existing downtown area features prominent ground-floor retail, restaurants, and high-density residential buildings. The high pedestrian traffic in these areas necessitates wider, well maintained sidewalks with bright street lighting and frequent pedestrian amenities.

Likewise, the Urban Mixed Use areas have been selected to support growing business areas and new residential development. These areas require a higher quality of pedestrian facilities with an emphasis on access to retail and residential buildings.

Moving away from the higher activity areas, the Neighborhood Conservation typology supports lower-density, primarily single-family household areas and low traffic streets. The pedestrian facilities in these areas can be designed for fewer walkers. While sidewalk widths can be narrower than downtown, the neighborhood areas should receive extra attention for shade trees, buffers from the roadway, and maintenance for cracks and debris.

Finally, the Regional Boulevard typology applies primarily to Scott Boulevard on the northwest side of Decatur. The road serves high volumes of regional traffic with few pedestrian-oriented land uses. Sidewalks remain an important feature along the road to allow residents egress from their houses or neighborhoods and access to other streets. Further, with the reorientation of the city's school system all children along Scott Boulevard will cross the road to reach their elementary and middle schools. The road is a major impediment to safe routes in that part of the city. The high traffic volumes and speeds along the road necessitate significant buffers from the roadway and extra attention to pedestrian safety, especially at crossings.

The following table provides a summary of the street typologies mentioned above and the pedestrian facilities appropriate for each.

Roadway	Examples	Pedestrian Way
Regional Boulevard	Scott Boulevard	Sidewalk on both sides
Downtown Core	Clairemont Ave., Commerce Drive, Ponce de Leon (east of Scott Boulevard)	10-16 ft sidewalk 6 ft. furniture zone or tree pits
Urban Mixed Use	Sections of Commerce, College Ave and N. McDonough St.	10-12 ft sidewalk 6 ft furniture zone or tree pits
Neighborhood Conservation	South Candler and East Lake Dr.	5-6 ft sidewalk

Table 7-1 Street Typology Summary

Shade Trees & Streetscaping

Beyond corridor design recommendations, the City should continue to implement a range of streetscaping improvements that bolster the walking environment as well as encourage future developers to expand and beautify the pedestrian environment.

Street shade trees, regularly spaced benches, water fountains, convenient curb cuts, and access to a range of restaurants, businesses, and greenspaces should remain primes goal for future City projects.

Maintenance

Regular maintenance is also critical to building safe and comfortable pedestrian environments. Neighborhood streets should be well monitored and regulated to ensure that sidewalks are not cracked or loose, vegetation is cut back, and no obstructions block the existing facilities. The City should remain responsive to concerns about sidewalk improvement or condition and encourage local property owners to maintain high quality walking environments.

Intersection Strategies

The following tools help improve pedestrian conditions at intersections. The primary factors affecting pedestrians at intersections and crossings are distance, timing, the complexity of automobile movement, guidance for navigating traffic, and meeting the ability of all users.

Signal Re-Timing

Intersection crossing signals are timed to meet certain engineering objectives. In the past, timings have been programmed to allow most reasonably fit people to cross in the allotted time. However this means many people moving at a slower speed will be stranded in the intersection as cross-traffic changes.

Re-timing intersections should meet a lower standard and accommodate as many walking speeds as possible. The generally accepted standard has been 4 feet per second. Recent research and experimentation has lowered crossing speeds to 3.5 feet per second and that is the recommended goal for all Decatur intersections.

Signal Phasing

In addition to signal timings, complex signal phasing can create a network that is biased significantly towards automobile travel and intimidates pedestrian travelers. Signal phasings should be as simple as possible, discouraging left turn signals as much as possible.

Positive Guidance for Pedestrians

Crossing intersections can be intimidating for walkers, especially older or slower walkers. All pedestrians are better served by knowing the amount of time they have to cross an intersection and clearly seeing a pedestrian crossing signal.

Pedestrian countdown signals are becoming

common place in many cities. These signals provide a clear time counting down the number of seconds before traffic changes. Further, most signs flash a caution signal to discourage walkers from entering an intersection without enough time left to cross. In conjunction with DeKalb County, the City should begin a program of installing pedestrian countdown signals.

Shorten the Walking Distance at Intersections

One of the best measures of a pedestrian friendly intersection is the walking distance required to cross any leg. Walking should be made convenient and easy by decreasing the distance that pedestrians have to cross an intersection. The conceptual drawings of intersection improvements located in Chapter 6 Streets demonstrate the benefits of shortened crossings.

Provide High Visibility Crosswalks

In addition to decreasing walking distance, intersections should have highly visible crosswalks that help alert drivers to pedestrian crossings. Crosswalks should be freshly painted with longitudinal stripes and contain high-visibility yellow paddles reminding vehicles to stop for pedestrians in the crosswalk.

Meet ADA Requirements & Universal Design Elements at All Corners

All intersections should meet basic ADA requirements, including 2 curb ramps at each corner and at least 4 feet of flat grade behind the top of curb ramps. Engineering

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standards laid out as national criteria must be applied to all projects to ensure access by the full range of abilities within the city. Through the Quality Growth Audit process a recommendation has emerged to develop Decatur-specific public works standards that would reflect national criteria, but would respond to the unique context and challenges of the City. Such standards would ensure that all City staff and contracted companies would be responsible to adheres to City-adopted policies regarding such items as curb ramp design.



On a broader scope, pedestrian improvements must be subjected to Universal Design criteria, which is a philosophy that stresses that the built environment, including transportation facilities, should be usable by all people without need for adaptation or specialized design. Universal design, which is a step further than ADA requirements in all it stresses inclusiveness in the design of things and spaces.

Universal design principles include accommodating all users, flexibility in access, and simple and intuitive use. Access to intersections should be perceptible, with audible, tactile, and visual stimuli for all users. Example images of universally designed public facilities are available in the Gallery of the Quality Growth Audit located in the Appendix of this document.

Recommendations

The primary goals of the Community Transportation Plan are safety, accessibility, mobility, and active living. Promoting increased walking requires achieving all of these goals and a wider range of objectives. To support the broad goals, a number of safety, accessibility, and educational or encouragement objectives have been outlined in this section.

It is important to note that the goals and objectives significantly overlap, for example improving safety helps achieve accessibility and so forth. The following recommendations have been loosely grouped into their most appropriate section, though the common goals of the pedestrian element should be achieved by a range of projects and initiatives.

Objective: Safety

- Post maximum speeds on all city streets
- Crossing safety
- Intersection improvements for pedestrian safety
- Update crossing policies to reflect goals & new intersection improvements

- Ensure that street lighting is good for all crossings
- Traffic signals
- Ensure that pedestrians are given prioritization or due consideration at all signals
- Ensure that pedestrian signals are installed correctly and well maintained at all crossings
- Review pedestrian signal timings and ensure that crossing times meet the need of all users
- Consider the installation of audible or countdown signals at higher use intersections
- Sidewalk safety
- Identify gaps in the current sidewalk network
- Continue installation of sidewalks on at least one side of every city street
- Educate and enforce sidewalk maintenance by private owners and developers
- Ensure that pedestrian lighting is installed and maintained at regular intervals along all city sidewalks
- Identify, correct, and maintain all deficient corners with appropriate curb cuts and sidewalk ramps

Objective: Accessibility

- Adopt and maintain a pedestrian priority network
- Develop a system of wayfinding signage marking pedestrian facilities, activity centers, and destinations
- Avoid the use of pedestrian overpasses or underpasses for crossing surface streets or railroad corridors
- Implement traffic calming program to slow traffic speeds along residential streets
- Make walkways accessible and safe for all users, including those with physical disabilities
- Adopt and implement Safe Routes to School designated routes and recommended improvements
- Use pedestrian priority network as a basis for designating safe routes to all city schools
- Coordinate traffic guard with designated routes and crossings
- Prioritize sidewalks and crossings along safe routes for future improvements
- Implement pedestrian improvements along transit routes and improve accessibility to transit stations





- Develop and implement improvements to bus stops, including covered stops, improved waiting areas, and signage designating transit connections
- Prioritize pedestrian improvements and crossings near bus stops and transit stations

Objective: Pedestrian-Friendly Streetscaping, Development, and Land Uses



- Encourage and build improved sidewalk furniture, landscaping, and public art
- Identify locations along pedestrian routes to improve sidewalk furniture and public art
- Coordinate with parks and recreation department to improve park facilities along pedestrian routes.
- Coordinate with community groups and local businesses to install signage and landscaping that highlights local history and cultural attractions
- Incorporate lighting elements into public art displays
- Promote land uses that encourage and accommodate pedestrian facilities
- Use zoning and land use codes to encourage mixed uses and improve pedestrian access
- Promote parking facility and management regulations that encourage pedestrian travel and central parking for multiple destinations within the city
- Require contractors to install pedestrian accessible rights-of-way along construction sites
- Encourage continued street-level retail development that attracts and supports pedestrian travel along major corridors
- Encourage or mandate public walkways or trails through large private development or redevelopment areas
- Install more pocket parks along priority pedestrian network

Objective: Education, Advocacy, & Enforcement

 Establish a citizens' Health & Wellness committee within the city government to monitor, evaluate, and promote Active Living transportation projects and programs

- Increase coordination with citizen groups, associations, and public or education institutions to promote and implement alternative transportation programs
- Sponsor an annual Walk or Bike to Work Day and promote bi-annual Walk or Roll to School Days
- Sponsor Pedestrian Safety Week to educate both pedestrians and drivers
- Sponsor and coordinate pedestrian and bicycle safety classes in city schools, especially at the elementary school level
- Publicize the new pedestrian facilities, streetscaping, and other planning initiatives through publications and web resources.
- Publish suggested walking and biking routes in city publications and brochures
- Continue to use radar trailers in pedestrian areas to control speeding



- Use targeted enforcement at pedestrian crossings to discourage unsafe driving
- Sponsor and coordinate pedestrian safety courses amongst city law enforcement officers
- Encourage increased bicycle patrols in high pedestrian areas