



Community Involvement

The community involvement component of the CTP was designed to reflect the consistently high standard of public participation set by the City. The intent was to educate the citizenry about the goals of the project, solicit input on areas needed for improvement in the transportation system, gauge public opinion on potential strategies and projects, and foster continued involvement during the funding, implementation, operations and design phases. The results of the public comment process are summarized below and have been fully incorporated into the recommendations of this Plan.

Overview

To ensure comments were solicited from the widest variety of both the general public and stakeholder group representatives with specific interests, the project team utilized a three-tiered approach comprised of general public meetings, small group meetings, and workshops on specific topics.

A CTP kick off meeting was held at Decatur's City Hall, and was publicized to the general public. Small group meetings focused on the needs of specific targeted audiences such as the elderly and disabled, resident boards and commissions, local institutional entities such as universities, and low-income populations. Workshops were held to discuss topics such as bicycle and pedestrian needs and traffic calming. A list of the meetings held to solicit input from the public for the CTP is shown on the following page.

Participants of each of these public input opportunities were asked to share their opinions either by making verbal comments during the documented formal meetings or by submitting written comments. Participants were free to give general comments about Decatur's transportation system, but comment forms were developed for each meeting or workshop to target specific issues. Some comment forms featured an "active living" theme, asking residents to share their vision of what an active living community looks like and how changes to Decatur's transportation system could help residents pursue an active lifestyle. Other comment forms displayed a map of Decatur and gave participants the option of circling specific intersections and writing notes directly on the map. Others still allowed for general comments about the plan, process, and Decatur's transportation network. The variety of comment forms allowed participants to communicate clearly and creatively.



Table 4-1 Decatur CTP Meeting Schedule

Type of Meeting	Invitees	Location	Date	Number of Attendees
Kickoff Meeting	General Public	Decatur City Hall	August 7, 2006	75 - 100
Active Living Event	General Public	Downtown Decatur	September 20, 2006	150
Small Group Mtg. #1	Institutional Stakeholders	Decatur City Hall	October 16, 2006	7
Small Group Mtg. #2	Resident Boards, Commissions, VIPs	Decatur Presbyterian Church	October 16, 2006	15
Small Group Mtg. #3	Senior and Disabled Citizens	Philips Towers	October 17, 2006	36
Small Group Mtg. #4	Decatur Housing Authority Residents	Decatur Housing Authority Community Center	February 27, 2007	25
Workshop #1: Pedestrian	General Public	Decatur City Hall	September 30, 2006	15
Workshop #2: Bicycle	General Public	Oakhurst Solarium	October 21, 2006	25
Workshop #3: Traffic Calming	Select neighborhood groups	Old DeKalb County Courthouse	November 18, 2006	25
Workshop #4: Health Impacts	Representatives of local groups, churches, institutions and businesses; state, regional and county organizations and departments; public health experts; and city leadership and staff	Decatur City Hall	April 30, 2007	60

Public Meetings and Workshops

General Public Meeting: Kickoff Meeting

The Decatur CTP Kickoff Meeting, held on August 7, 2006 at Decatur City Hall, was the Decatur community's first opportunity to learn about the plan and provide input. The event was publicized in the Decatur Focus, with fliers posted around the community and widely distributed via e-mail lists, and through a variety of church and neighborhood organizations. The kickoff was conducted in an open house format with three comment stations displaying maps and presentations.

Input was extensive, with attendees leaving both written comments and geographic maps of needed transportation improvements. Members of the project team were available to answer questions and explain the planning process. Approximately 75 – 100 people participated in the meeting to learn about and provide input to the Decatur CTP. The following figure highlights some of the submitted comments and maps.

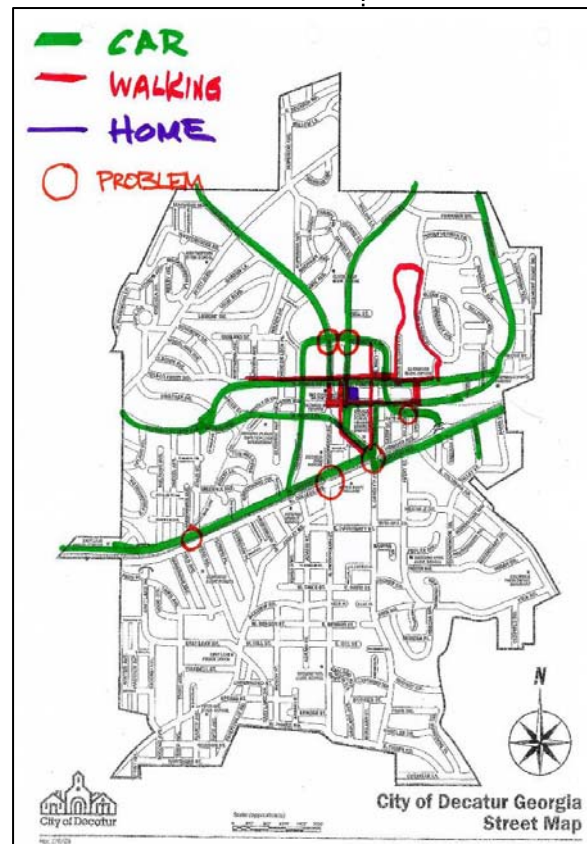
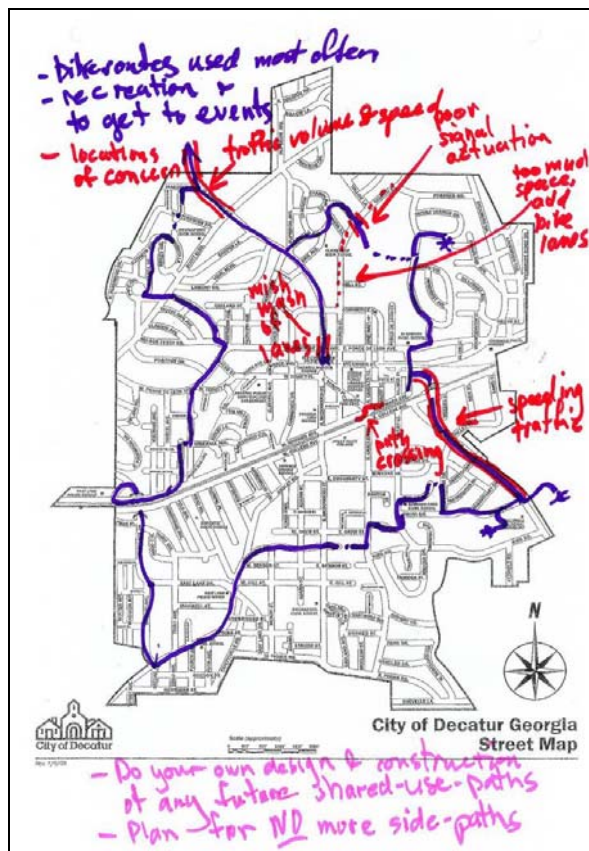


Figure 4-1 Decatur CTP Comment Maps

Active Living Event

One goal of the Decatur Community Transportation Plan is to create a transportation



system that can be utilized by pedestrians and bicyclists in pursuit of an active lifestyle. To educate residents of Decatur about the characteristics and benefits of active living, the project team held an Active Living Awareness Event for Decatur's 5th graders to coincide with Car Free Day in Decatur on September 20, 2006. Children were the audience for this event

because of the power of early learning and the potential for kids to teach their families about active living.

This two-part event brought together approximately 150 children at the old DeKalb County Courthouse for a presentation on the importance of exercise and healthy food choices by renowned endocrinologist Dr. Darin Olson and Phil Southerland of Team Type 1 Diabetes, the bike team that won the race across America. Pedometers, Frisbees, water bottles, and t-shirts were distributed to encourage active living. Attendees and all students in the Decatur elementary schools were also invited to participate in a "Decatur Active Living Scavenger Hunt," which required active behavior of its participants. The scavenger hunt forms were returned to the Saturday night Concert on the Square to be entered into a raffle for several active living prizes. Additionally, everyone who participated in the scavenger hunt received a CTP sports water bottle and some exercise.



Small Group Meeting #1: Institutional Stakeholders Meeting

The Institutional Stakeholders Meeting, held on October 16, 2006 at Decatur City Hall, was the first small group meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to solicit input from local institutions, such as MARTA, DeKalb County Board of Health, Atlanta Bicycle Campaign, and educational institutions such as City Schools of Decatur, Agnes Scott College, and Emory University. The seven representatives in attendance agreed that there is a need to encourage bicycle riding as a viable mode of transportation and to reduce the use of cars in Decatur. Additionally, the group recommended the promotion of transit ridership and the creation of a network of bicycle paths to link different areas of Decatur in new ways, and to link it more effectively with transit stations and Emory University.

Small Group Meeting #2: Resident Boards, Commissions, and VIPs Meeting

The second small group meeting was the Resident Boards, Commissions, and VIPs Meeting, which also took place on October 16, 2006 at Decatur Presbyterian Church. Decatur residents who serve on volunteer boards and commissions (such as the Planning Commission and the Zoning Board of Appeals) and local elected officials were invited. The input of the fifteen meeting attendees focused on the improvement of transportation corridors (particularly through the use of traffic calming) and intersections (through the use of improved pedestrian crossings). The need for additional bicycle parking downtown was a recurring theme. Meeting attendees also commented on the need for traffic calming and other pedestrian safety enhancements at specific locations such as South Columbia Drive and Clairemont Avenue.

Small Group Meeting #3: Senior and Disabled Citizens

On October 17, 2006, the third small group meeting was held at Philips Towers to specifically address the transportation needs of senior citizens and the disabled. Thirty-six people were in attendance, which was the largest attendance of any of the small group meetings. This event was publicized through outreach to Philips Towers, Clairemont Oaks, and Christian Towers, as well as Disability Link and Side by Side Clubhouse. The comments received at the meeting largely focused on ways to improve the pedestrian experience in Decatur, particularly at crosswalks and intersections. Participants requested improvements to curb cuts to accommodate wheelchairs and walkers, increased time for crossing at crosswalks, crosswalk signs that display a countdown timer, and an education program for drivers to encourage responsible driving. Additional concerns included the widening of sidewalks to accommodate wheelchairs and increasing local transit service within the City of Decatur.

Small Group Meeting #4: Decatur Housing Authority Residents

On February 27, 2007, the project team attended a Housing Authority residents meeting as a line item on the agenda. The purpose of the presentation to the group of 25 was to educate them about the project and also get their input on the issues of the current transportation system in Decatur and any suggestions for improvements. Residents noted the need for additional signage for crosswalks. Residents also liked the “Bike Train” event sponsored in part by the Safe Routes to School pilot program. The need for improved bus shelters was also noted.

Pedestrian Workshop

The experience of pedestrians often bears directly on the quality of life of residents and their ability to live an active lifestyle in Decatur or any other city. As such, a public workshop was held. The focus was expressly on the needs and concerns of Decatur's pedestrians. The workshop was held on September 30, 2006 at Decatur City Hall and attracted 15 participants whose concerns were very similar to the comments received from other stakeholders but were more location specific due to the active walking portion of the workshop. Corridor-related comments focused on the need for more sidewalks across Decatur, traffic calming to slow vehicles near sidewalks, and improvements to the quality of existing sidewalks – either repaving or clearing brush and low-hanging branches. Regarding intersections, participants at the pedestrian workshop commented on the need for improved safety at crossings and improvements to the functionality of crossing signals (e.g., clearly identifying which button goes with which crossing direction). The potential for providing better pedestrian connectivity to link southeast Decatur with downtown was mentioned with frequency.



Bicycle Workshop

A special bicycle workshop was held to solicit input specific to the experience of bicyclists in Decatur. Twenty-five people attended the bicycle workshop on October 21, 2006, which began at the Oakhurst Solarium and offered a hands on bicycle riding experience.



Attendees provided comments on corridors, intersections, and new facilities. Along corridors, participants at the bicycle workshop supported better maintenance and cleaning of roadways, reduction of vehicles speeds through the use of traffic calming methods and/or stiffer law enforcement, and an increase in the number of bicycle lanes across the city. Participants commented that

Decatur's intersections need to be made safer for those who are trying to cross on foot or via bicycle. Finally, participants supported new "Share the Road" signage to remind

drivers of bicyclists, and the installation of additional bicycle parking facilities across the city.

Traffic Calming Workshop

On Saturday, November 18, 2006, traffic calming workshops were held with representatives from four Decatur neighborhoods: Sycamore Drive, South Columbia Drive, Garden Lane / Lamont Drive, and East Lake Drive / Second Avenue. General traffic calming procedures and policies were presented, and then participants were split into groups by neighborhood to look at maps and, with the project team, identify issues and potential solutions for their neighborhoods. The issues and concerns raised for each neighborhood, along with potential ideas to address the issues, are described in a summary located in the Appendix of this document.

Pathways to a Healthy Decatur Workshop



On April 30, 2007, the project team held a rapid, one-day HIA workshop at Decatur's City Hall. Approximately 60 participants attended. They included residents of the city of Decatur; representatives of government bodies such as DeKalb

County, the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT); and representatives of local businesses, churches, and nonprofit organizations.

Several broad areas of concern emerged from the different groups. Four topics that generated the most discussion and attention were intersection improvements, bicycle facilities, sidewalk improvements, and traffic safety. Key recommendations from the group include make traffic safety a priority, intersections should be ADA compliant and easily crossable, bicyclists need amenities other than safe routes like parking and showers, connectivity is crucial, and Active Living must remain a priority as Decatur continues to grow. The HIA report is included in its entirety in Appendices of the CTP.

Summary of Public Comments

Public comments received throughout the planning process were catalogued in a database and categorized by transportation mode, issue of concern, and location of concern. Comments were categorized by their greatest relevance to a particular mode or issue to avoid double-counting. Individual comments were taken out of written response forms or recorded from verbal comments.

Summary of Comments by Travel Mode

Over the course of seven meetings with 135 participants, the project team received 723 specific comments. Of those comments, the most (37%) related to pedestrian issues. The second most (33%) related to bicycle issues and the third most common issues (24%) related to car travel. Other modes – wheelchair, transit, and cargo rail – received the remaining comments (6%).

A majority of pedestrian concerns related to safety issues, including slowing traffic speeds, improving visibility of crosswalks, adding audible signals, and a range of comments regarding specific locations.

The second most common pedestrian concerns dealt with functionality of the pedestrian network, including connectivity of routes, better maintenance of existing facilities, expansion of existing network, and improving crosswalk buttons. The third group of comments regarded aesthetics, including better streetscaping, water fountains, and more shade trees.

Bicycling concerns were the second most frequent comments recorded by the project team. A majority of bicycling concerns related to functionality of the system, including better maintenance, better connectivity, and increased bicycle parking. The second most common bicycling concerns dealt with safety concerns, including conflicts at specific intersections, concerns regarding facility design, and lowering traffic speeds.

Most pedestrian and bicycle concerns were generic and applied city-wide. However many intersections and corridors were called out specifically for improvement. Intersections along the downtown “moat” along Commerce Drive were the most frequently cited intersections, especially Candler Drive & Howard Avenue. The three railroad intersections were also frequently cited for safety and functionality concerns. Major corridors were cited for high traffic speeds and the need for traffic calming measures or bicycle lanes. Bicycle facilities, mainly the PATH route along W. Howard Ave, was cited for dangerous crossings, being too narrow, and a lack of buffer strip between the roadway and path. The need for bicycle facilities was mixed, though most cyclists regarded bike lanes as beneficial for riding and safety.

Of the auto-related comments, a majority (65%) were concerned with limitations to auto driving such as increased traffic calming. The remaining comments (35%) related to enhancements of vehicular travel, including improved signal timing, decreased congestion, and improved access.

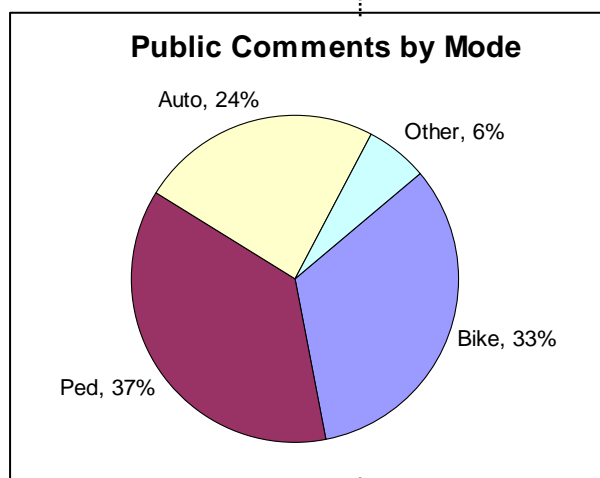


Figure 4-2 Public Comments by Mode

Approximately twenty transit-related comments were received, accounting for approximately 3% of all comments. The comments identified the challenges and opportunities including creating convenient connections to transit from other modes, displaying route numbers on MARTA bus stop signs, diversifying transit alternatives (e.g., creation of local streetcar), developing a local transit circulator system within City of Decatur, and repairing MARTA bus shelters and stops.

Summary of Comments by Issues of Concern

In addition to travel mode, all comments were categorized by their issue of concern. Issues included specific corridors, specific intersections, facilities or services, programming, connectivity, or adjacent land uses.

The most frequently comments (49%) were related to corridor concerns. These included adding or improving sidewalks, installing traffic calming, adding bicycle lanes, and other concerns about specific roadway segments.

The second most frequent comments (34%) related to intersections, including improving pedestrian safety, improving signal timing, adding or removing turn lanes, and repairing or maintaining curb cuts and other access points.

Facilities and services, such as installing more bicycle racks or car parking spaces, received 9 percent of the comments. Programming issues, such as increased educational initiatives and improving coordination with regional agencies, received 4 percent of the total comments.

Connectivity concerns, such as improving pedestrian access to downtown and adding linkages to multi-use PATH facilities, received three-percent (3%) of the comments. Land use issues, such as orienting travel facilities to small business locations and adding greenspace areas, received one-percent (1%) of all comments.

Summary of Comments by Location

Many comments were non-specific or applied citywide. For comments that referenced a specific location, the corridor segment or intersection was recorded. This summary does not break comments out by specific percentages but lists the ten most frequently referenced locations.

The most commonly referenced location, by a significant margin, was the intersection of N. Candler Rd, E. Howard Ave, and E. Trinity Pl. This intersection, which is adjacent to the Dairy Queen, also has a PATH trail crossing and is adjacent to a railroad crossing at E. College Ave. This intersection received special design attention by the project team, which is detailed later in the plan.

S. Candler Rd was the most frequently referenced corridor with speed limits and bicycle facilities often cited as issues of concerns. The three railroad crossings were grouped

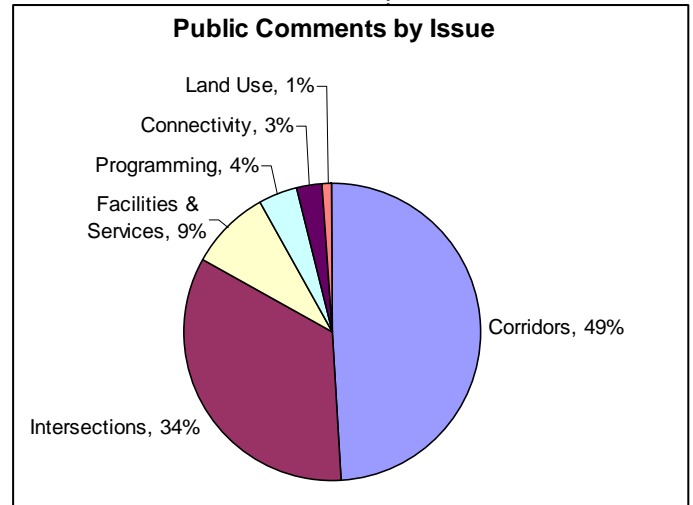


Figure 4-3 Public Comments by Issue

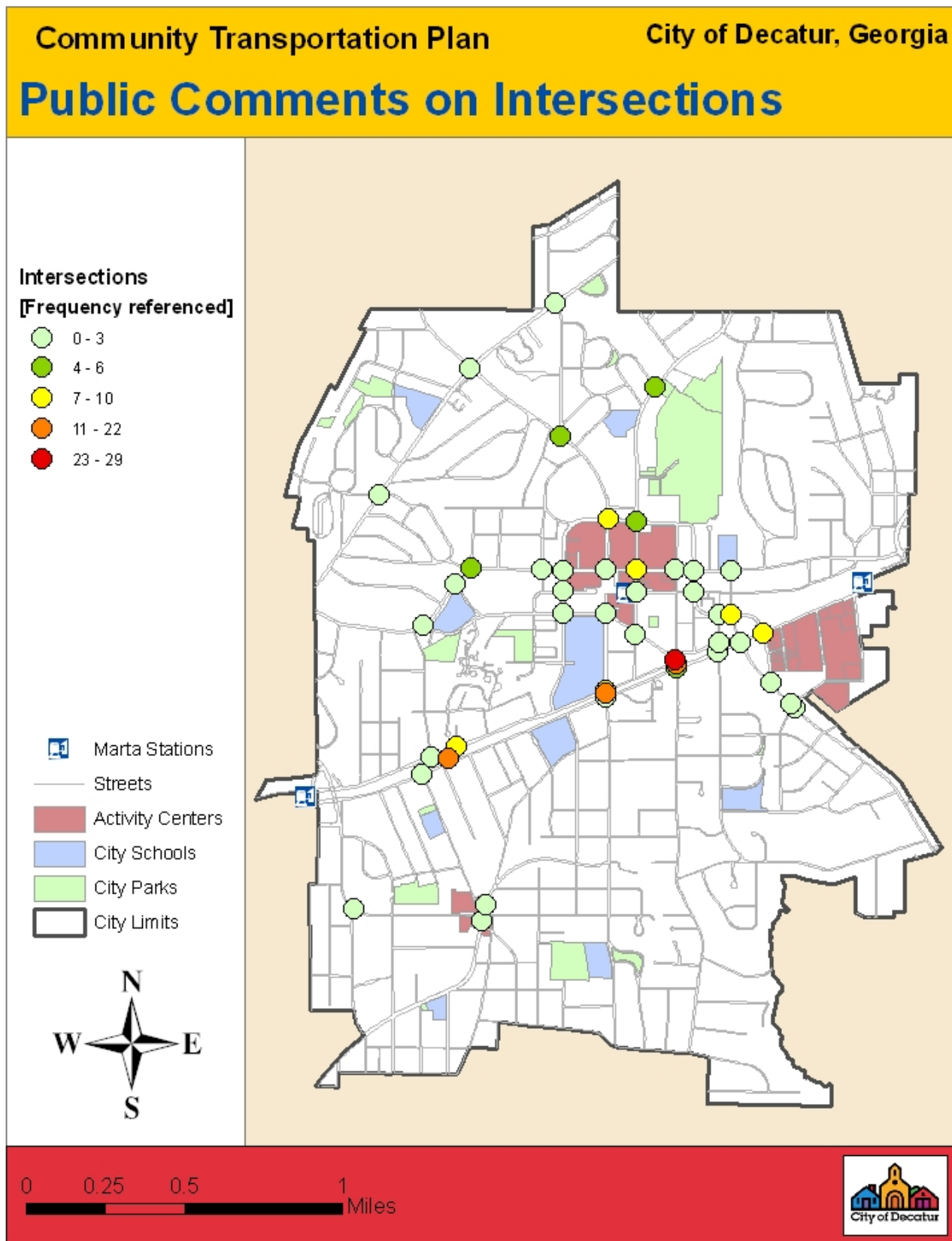
together since comments regarding railroads were often either non-specific about the location or applicable to all three locations.

The primary arterial routes through the City – Ponce de Leon Ave, Scott Blvd, Commerce Dr, Church St, and Clairemont Ave – received similar numbers of comments, again addressing a wide range of concerns from traffic speeds to bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

The downtown square was also continually highlighted for a range of transportation concerns, including bicycle and car parking facilities, pedestrian safety at crossings, and enhancing pedestrian access from the surrounding neighborhoods.

The following maps highlight corridors and intersections that received comments throughout the open public comment process. Table 4-2 highlights some of the many responses the project team heard from comment forms.

Map 4-1 Intersection Comments



Map 4-2 Corridor Comments

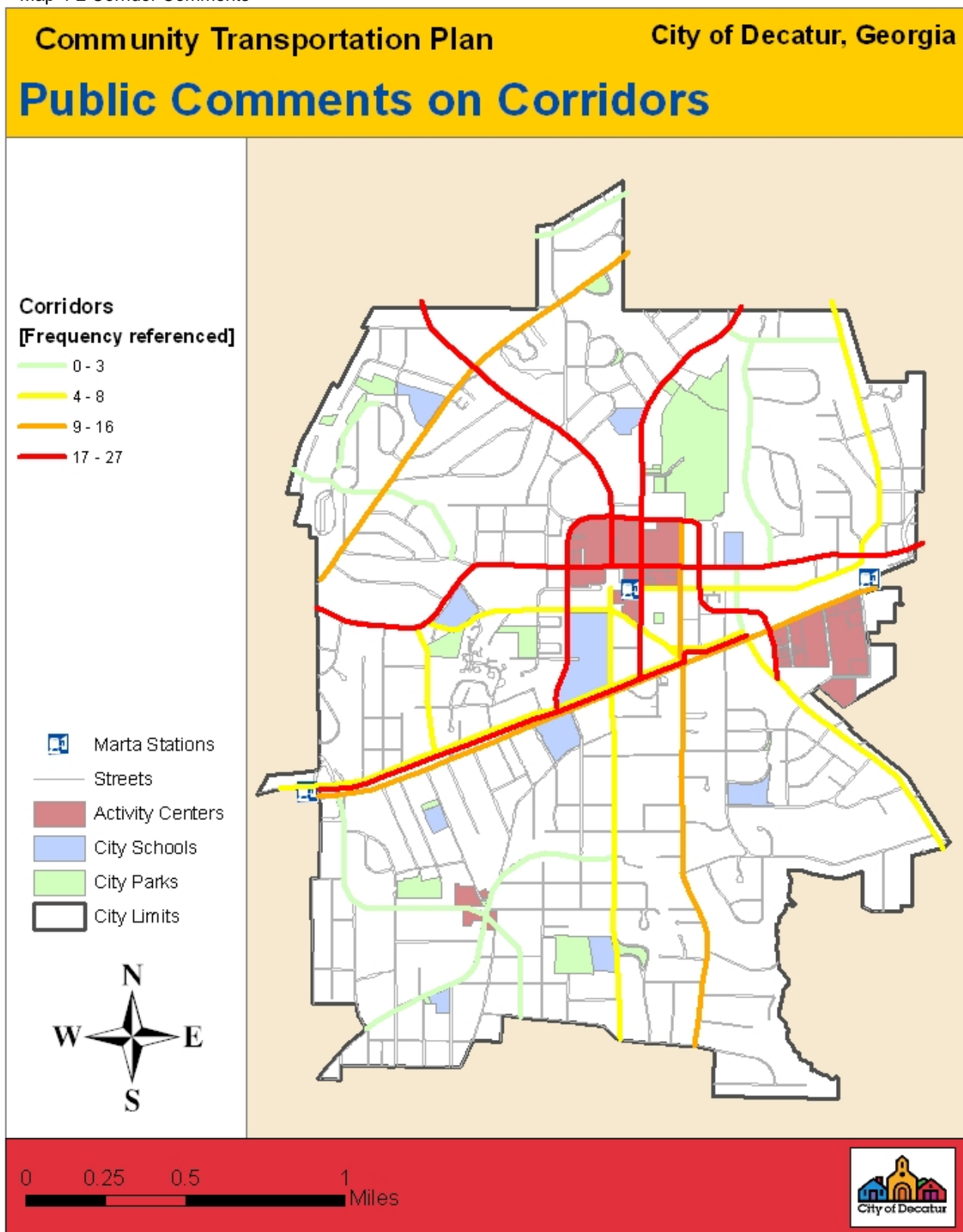


Figure 4-4 Comments Heard from the Public

Highlighted Responses from Project Comment Forms

What does an Active Living community look like?

“A community that emphasizes more walking, biking, or easy access for seniors and persons with limited mobility to be able to be more mobile and to be safe while out.”

“It has lots of wide tree lined sidewalks, bike lanes, and greenway trails. It has sidewalks and greenway trails linked to parks and schools and major destinations like downtown Decatur. It has safe crossings of railroad tracks and major arterial streets.”

“In order to make a community more active, it needs to be easier to walk than to get in a car. Core streets must be friendly to bikes and pedestrians, not designed with easing car traffic as the main objective.”

What can Decatur do to make Active Living easier?

“Enforce speed limits, create bike lanes, maintain sidewalks.”

“Add on-road bicycle facilities, avoid use of ‘bulb-out’ style traffic calming, as well as other options that narrow roads.”

“Make sure sidewalks are in good repair, curb cuts are not so steep to hinder wheelchairs, scooters, etc. Provide time for seniors and persons with mobility issues to have enough time to cross the street at crosswalks.”

“Have bike racks available all over town; continue to increase the number of pedestrian crosswalks with signs in the middle of the road.”

“Improve pedestrian crossings at the railroad, College Avenue, and Candler St.”

How might changes to the Decatur transportation system allow you to pursue a more active lifestyle?

“Pursuing a transportation strategy that places equal focus on multiple modes of transportation, not just cars, is key to livability.”

“Continue to educate the public to consider riding or walking once a week – I think the “Walk & Roll to School” program has really made people more aware that they can walk or ride. Somehow rollout a similar plan for the City – “Walking Wednesdays” to encourage all of City of Decatur activities to be done walking or cycling. “

“Improved access to downtown would encourage me to walk to downtown restaurants, events, businesses more frequently than I do. Improved paths and linkages to greenspace would make my exercise/bike/walk less perilous.”

Phone Survey and Results

In addition to soliciting input from Decatur residents through the extensive public involvement opportunities identified above, the public participation efforts for the CTP also included a statistically significant telephone survey to gather data from Decatur's public outside of those who traditionally attend public meetings.

The survey was designed to gather input on a variety of different transportation issues, including existing commuting patterns, the potential effect of new and/or improved bike and pedestrian facilities on modes for commuting and recreational activities, prioritization improvements intersections and corridors, and the most critical transportation issues in Decatur. These issues were covered in a nine-minute telephone questionnaire administered to 300 residences within the city of Decatur. Specific effort was made to ensure that the survey participants were representative of the City's population in terms of geography, age, and race, among other demographic factors.

Key findings resulting from the data include:

- Two-thirds (66%) of residents drive by themselves to get to work or school, as compared to approximately 90% of single occupancy vehicle commuting found in some Atlanta regional surveys.
- Forty-four percent (44%) of employees and students say improved sidewalks and crosswalks would positively affect their decision to walk or ride a bicycle to work or school, and 61% indicated that these improvements would positively affect their decision to walk or bike for recreational travels.
- Wait times at traffic lights and roadway congestion were listed as the biggest transportation problems in Decatur by 31% and 28% of respondents respectively.
- Redesigning intersections was favored as the single biggest way to improve Decatur's transportation system by thirty-seven percent (37%) of residents.
- Seventy-three percent (73%) support the use of City funds for a city-wide trolley or circulator bus system.
- Residents support a Complete Streets policy by a 61 to 31 percent margin.

The full citizen survey report is included in the Appendix of the plan.

// Residents support a Complete Streets policy by a 61 to 31 percent margin. //

Public Comments and the CTP

Public participation has provided guidance for the Decatur CTP in three notable ways. First, public input highlighted specific locations in Decatur where many users of the transportation system see opportunity for improvement. The identification of those locations helps the City of Decatur to prioritize possible improvements.

Second, public input has emphasized the importance of specific modes such as walking and bicycling, allowing for the City of Decatur to account for all users during the project design and prioritization phases. Finally, the identification and inclusion of sensitive groups such as the elderly and disabled also ensures that their interests are accounted for during the project design and prioritization phases.