

Benefits from Transportation Improvements

PRIORITY OUTCOMES

State of Good Repair

Maintain and rehabilitate existing infrastructure.

The condition of downtown street infrastructure is below average. Many streets need significant repair and some need complete reconstruction. The proposed improvements focus on providing for a multimodal downtown transportation system by building significant street improvement to support transit, dedicated on-street bicycle lanes, and high-quality sidewalk and streetscape amenities. At the same time these mode changes are implemented, downtown’s subpart infrastructure can be repaired and replaced.

Upgrade transit facilities and service for better downtown mobility.

Transportation downtown is currently automobile-centric, a condition that has negative impacts on pavement conditions, particularly in comparison to areas where transit, biking, and walking are more prevalent. Transit service has very limited hours and service intervals and is primarily used as a park-and-ride service for events. These limitations contribute to low ridership and encourage greater use of automobiles in downtown. Realizing downtown’s redevelopment potential requires creation of a much more walkable environment. Given downtown’s size and the separation of major nodes of activity—Old Town, the central business district, Government

Center, Delano, the arena, the convention center, and the museum district—fostering a walkable environment will require expanded transit service.

Add bicycle facilities to reduce the burden on the roadway network.

Because there are now no bicycle facilities in downtown, bicycle users often ride on the sidewalk, creating safety hazards for pedestrians (and for the bicyclists themselves). Downtown traffic volumes are low enough and the streets are wide enough to provide dedicated on-street



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bicycle lanes on low-volume streets, which should help increase the mode-share of bicycles in downtown and lessen the number of automobile trips.



Strengthening Economic Competitiveness

Build a strong downtown Wichita.

Downtown is the core of the Wichita region and home to many of the region's major cultural, business, and entertainment facilities. Millions of people from throughout the region use these facilities annually, and most of these users have no choice but to use their automobiles to get to them. The Transportation Framework offers a framework for providing multimodal access to and around downtown by introducing significant transit, bicycle, and pedestrian improvements that will improve access to downtown's major destinations for all visitors.

Capture the 'Creative Class.'

Young "creative class" workers prefer to live in urban, walkable environments, and creating that environment downtown can unlock significant economic development potential for new housing, office, and commercial markets. The multimodal transportation improvements proposed in this master plan will play a key role in creating this urban, walkable environment.

Create jobs in an economically distressed area.

With an average income that is 77% of the national per-capita average, downtown Wichita is an economically distressed area. The Transportation Framework provides a redevelopment framework that, if unlocked by the proposed transportation improvements, would result in significant development of new housing, office, and commercial uses drawing higher-income residents and new jobs.

Expanding access to downtown Wichita through better transportation and additional employment and residential development opportunities would broaden the jobs base for the entire region, due to downtown's mix of businesses and cultural amenities that cannot be found anywhere else in the state.

Promoting Livability

Implementing the Transportation Framework would improve livability by revitalizing, modernizing, and reallocating deteriorating right-of-way features to effectively support job attraction and creation, to fuel economic growth, and to broaden access to places and activities that add to the community's quality of life. Rehabilitating downtown rights-of-way,



strategically converting key one-way streets to two-way operation, and diversifying modes of transportation services would enhance everyday life by improving access and connectivity for all citizens.

Improved transportation services would enhance commerce by strengthening links between jobs and the workforce, reinforcing links and synergies among businesses, and supporting movement of goods and services. Everyday life would be enhanced by greater access to education, human and medical services, and civic and cultural destinations and events. Investment in downtown Wichita would also foster a concentration toward the historical center of the region rather than an expansion into new and more dispersed areas. Concentrating on the center would bring activities and interconnections closer together, utilize existing utilities and infrastructure more efficiently, and prevent the basic components of a thriving community from being diluted by expansion and sprawl.



Implementing the Transportation Framework would help bring the components of everyday living within reach for more and more of the community and do it in a way that is both affordable and sustainable.

Enhance user mobility by creating more options.

With the expansion and enhancement of transit, bicycle, pedestrian, and

auto infrastructure within downtown, residents would not only have new travel options but they would be able to make connections to transit service not otherwise accessible or safe to reach. Transit amenities would immediately improve user mobility and, as service expands in the future, transit would become a more viable and dependable travel option for additional choice riders who require the convenience of frequent, higher-capacity service.

Improve existing transportation choices by enhancing connectivity.

Downtown Wichita has a series of vibrant and attractive activity centers within downtown. The distance between the activity centers within these “Strings of Pearls” works against their success, and the challenge of separation is exacerbated by poor walking conditions almost everywhere. This Plan would provide four circulator transit routes to connect the String of Pearls to housing, employment, and the regional transit center. In addition, improved bikeways and walkways would provide non-motorized options for connecting the activity centers within downtown.

Improve accessibility for low-income residents, non-drivers, senior citizens, and people with disabilities.

Knitting downtown together through enhanced pedestrian, bicycle and circulator transit service would especially benefit the most economically disadvantaged individuals, families and businesses. Implementing the transportation component of the *Master Plan for Wichita* would strongly benefit populations often left behind due to poor access to opportunities. The Transportation Plan would also improve access and connections among struggling businesses and services that may currently be close but inconvenient to drive to, yet too far or inconvenient to walk to. A focus on

affordable alternative transportation improvements would serve all residents.

Advancing Environmental Sustainability

Implementing the Transportation Framework would promote environmental sustainability in the region by reducing annual vehicle miles traveled. This decrease would in turn greatly reduce oil dependency and greenhouse gas emissions.

As an integrated transportation and land use plan, the master plan fosters growth in the historical center of the region. The plan is contingent on providing sustainable transportation choices, such as walking, cycling and riding transit, that people of all ages want to see in their city. Implementing the Transportation Plan would help reduce vehicle emissions and foster denser redevelopment that capitalizes on a choices downtown's robust range of viable transportation options.

The Transportation Framework would increase the region's sustainability by converting streets to two-way operation to facilitate transit and bicycle circulation; modernizing

sidewalks and pedestrian amenities; and providing high-quality transit amenities. Implementing the framework:

- Preserves and increases the use of existing infrastructure, rather than building new infrastructure that must be maintained, even though it may be underused.



- Encourages compact land development by connecting uses that may be beyond walking distance but still lie within convenient reach of buses and bicycles.
- Opens up more efficient parking options, thereby freeing land currently devoted to parking for higher-level uses.

Improve energy efficiency, reduce dependence on oil, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Downtown Wichita's long blocks and one-way circulation makes transit circulation and auto trips to specific destinations circuitous and time-consuming. Converting streets to two-way operation would make transit easier to use, since a return-trip bus stop would be on the same street; would make auto trips more accessible and direct; would reduce vehicle miles traveled (and associated fuel consumption); and would actually reduce the number of vehicles entering the downtown intersections.

Introducing new and improved transit circulator service would provide a convenient alternative to short auto trips and encourage workers to take transit downtown knowing they have a viable option for lunchtime and business-related

travel. Bus service would reduce vehicle miles traveled by eliminating short automobile trips within downtown, and it would reduce congestion and delay caused by drivers searching for parking. Bus service would also encourage those who drive to downtown to park once and then move throughout downtown on buses instead of driving to new parking locations.

Incorporating new and integrated bicycle features into the downtown street network, parking inventory, and transit capabilities would provide the conveniences of walking with the range of bus service. The safety of bike lanes connected with the existing bikeways would raise the bicycle mode split for work trips, cutting the number of cars entering downtown and reducing overall vehicle miles traveled.



Implementing the Transportation Framework would dramatically improve the downtown pedestrian environment by rehabilitating deteriorating sidewalks, creating a complete and coherent pedestrian circulation network, and installing new strategically located amenities to help pedestrians cross streets. The anticipated

redevelopment and increased use of downtown properties would create more destinations that are within walking distance.

Maintain, protect or enhance the environment.

The transit, bicycle, and pedestrian improvements

recommended here would make use of existing infrastructure and rights-of-way, which means that making them would have minimal environmental impact. Once in operation, these components would also reduce harmful emissions: a significant number of auto trips would be replaced by walking, cycling and transit trips, and the remaining auto trips would be less circuitous and therefore less polluting.

Enhancing Safety

Implementing the Transportation Framework would enhance public safety in several ways. It would reduce the probability and severity of transportation crashes; increase the safety of public infrastructure; and help prevent crime. The latest urban design practices that pertain to ADA compliance, right-of-way infrastructure, transportation operations, and crime prevention should be applied.

Converting parts of the street network to two-way operation would shorten trips for transit riders, cyclists and drivers, thereby reducing their exposure to potential threats. Managing auto-pedestrian conflicts through signalization would enhance



safety at the intersections of two-way streets, where—unlike the intersections of one-way streets—signals can control left-turning autos so they don’t cross active crosswalks. Right-turn lanes can provide space for drivers as they wait for pedestrians to finish crossing their path. Complete sidewalks and strategically located and designed midblock crosswalks would encourage pedestrians to circulate and cross streets where drivers and cyclists can be warned and prepared to expect them. On-street parking should be used not only to support local business, but to provide a buffer between traffic and pedestrians, producing



a more inviting street environment. Bike lanes would provide wide, dedicated space on streets where current configuration requires bicyclists to travel in auto lanes, leading to conflicts with motorists.

Implementing the Transportation Framework should also incorporate principles of crime prevention through enhanced

pedestrian-level street lighting, increased transit presence and infrastructure design. High-quality, lighted bus shelters on downtown’s major streets would greatly enhance the safety of transit riders and pedestrians. As a catalyst to redevelopment, reinvestment, and increased livability, greater activity in public rights-of-way (including more bicyclists and transit vehicles) would multiply the number of “eyes on the street” and the overall sense that downtown is safe, vibrant, and inviting.

Accelerating Innovation

Multimodal “complete streets” approach

The planning team applied the emerging “complete streets” approach to the plan’s street design, employing a broader systems view that leads to recommendations for complete mode-specific networks that would effectively connect destinations, areas, and land uses careful rethinking of Wichita’s unique public right-of-way layout.

Innovative application of common tools and best practices

One-way streets and two-way streets are nothing unusual, but choosing particular existing rights-of-way as spurs to transportation, economic growth, livability and sustainability objectives is innovative—and the resulting recommendations will require creativity in execution.

Transit-signal priority, real-time passenger information

Wichita Transit has secured funding for installation of intelligent transportation system (ITS) equipment with the ability to give buses priority at traffic signals and generate real-time bus arrival information for passengers. Extending the technology to the Q-Line trolley buses would significantly improve their reliability, and the real-time information would provide convenience and security to existing riders and can help attract a new generation of choice transit riders.

PARTNERS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE TRANSPORTATION FRAMEWORK

All partners who have played a role in developing the Transportation Framework are committed to working together to make it a reality. They include:

- **Wichita Public Works**
<http://www.wichita.gov/CityOffices/PublicWorks/>
Wichita Public Works should be responsible for designing, constructing, operating, and maintaining right-of-way infrastructure improvements.
- **Wichita-Sedgwick County Metropolitan Area Planning Department (MAPD)**
<http://www.wichita.gov/CityOffices/Planning/>
MAPD should help perpetuate the goals of the *Master Plan for Wichita* by providing ongoing planning expertise and advocacy in the areas of land use, community facilities and transportation.
- **Wichita Transit**
<http://www.wichita.gov/CityOffices/Transit/>
Wichita Transit Should operate the recommended Q-Line routes that will link locations within downtown and along its perimeter that could otherwise only be linked by automobile. Wichita Transit should collaborate with MAPD and Public Works to establish the most strategic links between locations and to assure that right-of-way features and operations complement transit service and access to transit service.

- **Wichita Downtown Development Corporation (WDDC)**

<http://www.downtownwichita.org/>,

WDDC's expertise and programs should complement the project by providing additional incentives to support business relocations to downtown, tenant improvements, housing investments, and parking lot landscaping.

- **Wichita Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (WAMPO)**

<http://www.wampoks.org/>

WAMPO will provide the regional perspective and funding support required to assure that the *Master Plan for Wichita* benefits greater Wichita. In particular, WAMPO policies and transportation project should discourage suburban sprawl by encouraging urban redevelopment and renewal.

Save for the WDDC and WAMPO, all project partners fall under the leadership of Wichita's city manager. This unity of leadership and accountability should help assure productive collaboration among the City partners.

The City and WDDC should use these transportation improvements as an opportunity to further the partnership they have established to address comprehensively all aspects of livability in downtown.

BENEFIT/COST ANALYSIS SUMMARY

Wichita, Sedgwick County, the State of Kansas and beyond will feel the benefit of this plan's proposed investment. It will leave infrastructure in good repair. It will strengthen Wichita's economic competitiveness. It will enhance the livability, sustainability and safety of the community. Some of these benefits have been quantified below in monetary terms.

Completing the right-of-way improvements and expanding the transit-circulator components of the Transportation Framework will create a new and robust multimodal

TO READ THE COMPLETE BENEFIT/COST ANALYSIS, VISIT:

www.wichita.gov/NR/rdonlyres/4A6A4540-1285-446D-9018-9A2F1086489B/64007/ECONWBenefitsCalculationsWichita3Adjusted.xls

environment in downtown. Enhancing the pedestrian experience, adding transit stop amenities, increasing transit service frequency and introducing a new bicycle network will have many benefits. These benefits will take the form of higher-quality, more varied, and integral infrastructure as well as improved transportation service. Improved service can be quantified in terms of time saved. In particular, improved traffic circulation and more frequent circulator transit service will save time for users. Assuming current demand, drivers will save more than an estimated 80,000 hours of driving time yearly. Over their 40-year useful life the infrastructure improvements will save an estimated \$23,000,000 in driving time.

Reducing the headway time between Q-Line buses from 30 minutes to 10 minutes will reduce waiting time accordingly. Accounting for the value of time and a growing reliance on the Q-Line, transit users will save approximately \$27,000,000 worth of time during the 40 years after service begins in 2012. The data and methodology supporting these estimates are documented in Exhibit 5-1, Web Links to Additional Information.

Immediate Benefits

The Transportation Framework will make immediate tangible improvements to downtown Wichita. It will not just fix existing broken infrastructure, it will make the City better.

Investment in excellent public rights-of-way that effectively connect places and complement adjacent property will be an immediate benefit to those who already live, work and own property and businesses.

It will immediately attract more people to consider downtown as a potential place of business, residence, and financial investment. Downtown's refreshed and updated transportation framework will immediately turn the broader region's attention from its expanding suburban frontier towards its urban core:

- A core where existing and plentiful utilities and infrastructure can absorb growth without further public or private investment.
- A core that provides a desirable central location that provides great access to the region.

Benefits That Extend Into Other Parts of the City And Region

A refreshed and complete right-of-way network and enhanced transit service will be a catalyst that makes downtown a “shovel-ready” location for the next generation of business and residential development. It will be a place where property can be developed without the cost of building or expanding infrastructure.

The sustainability aspects of the framework, discussed above, will provide ongoing benefit to the community. Reduced air pollution, increased safety, reduced stormwater runoff, and less space devoted to the operation and storage of autos will continue into the future.

Implementation of the Transportation Framework, coupled with other stimulus initiatives in Downtown, is estimated to foster office, retail and hotel development that will support a total of 2,080 new employees earning wages totaling \$103,690,000 (2009 dollars) at full buildout.

A significant investment in the downtown core will allow public works maintenance dollars to be applied to other areas of the city. It will allow other projects to move up on the City’s priority list. New infrastructure will need a minimum of maintenance. Modern, innovative improvements in traffic signal operation and stormwater management will minimize operating costs.