

October 19, 2020



AGENDA ITEM 6 B

MIDTOWN AREA TRANSPORTATION PLAN PHASE II

TYPE OF ITEM: Action

STATEMENT OF ISSUE

This item seeks approval of the Phase II of the Midtown Area Transportation Plan which was initiated in 2017. The plan identifies recommended options consistent with the plan's goal of improving Midtown's multimodal options and vibrancy.

CRTPA COMMITTEE ACTIONS

The CRTPA's two (2) committees (Citizen's Multimodal Advisory Committee and Technical Advisory Committee) unanimously recommended the CRTPA approve the Midtown Area Transportation Plan Phase II at their June 2, 2020 meetings.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Option 1: Adopt the Midtown Area Transportation Plan Phase II

BACKGROUND

Transportation improvements to the Midtown area of Tallahassee have been discussed and documented for a number of years. Recent efforts include:

- The CRTPA's "Connections 2040 Regional Mobility Plan" (adopted on November 16, 2015) which identifies the Thomasville Road/Meridian Road/Seventh Avenue intersection for improvement.
- Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency Community Enhancement project ("Midtown Placemaking (Thomasville and Monroe Roads)") that identifies improvements at the five-points intersection of Meridian Road/Thomasville Road/Seventh Avenue as well as streetscaping improvements to Monroe Street (Thomasville Road to Tharpe Street) and Thomasville Road (Monroe Street to Post Road). This project was included in the November 2014 passage of the Leon County Penny Sales Tax Extension.

- FDOT safety study (“Thomasville Road (Midtown) Safety Study”) was conducted by the FDOT on Thomasville Road (Monroe Street to Betton Road) based upon a request by the CRTPA to evaluate bicycle and pedestrian safety along the corridor. The study, presented to the CRTPA on September 19, 2016, identified potential pedestrian safety improvements along the corridor some of which are currently being scheduled for construction).

Building upon and coordinating the above efforts, the Midtown Area Transportation Plan was initiated at the June 19, 2017 CRTPA meeting and developed in two parts (Phase I and Phase II). The development of the plan sought to identify potential changes to Midtown’s transportation network that will enhance the area’s mobility and vibrancy. The plan’s result is a blueprint towards moving forward with short-term, mid-term, and long-term improvements that will increase the area’s multimodal options and safety.

Currently, sidewalks exist on most corridors in Midtown; however, there is both significant gaps and existing sidewalks of insufficient width that ultimately limit the overall connectivity of the sidewalk network. Additionally, limited opportunities for safe pedestrian crossings on main corridors, as well as insufficient buffers between sidewalks and travel lanes hinder the perception of safety of users. The area also lacks connectivity with the existing bicycle network and does not provide bicycle facilities. This is a major disadvantage for the area, and Phase I reflected this by evaluating recommendations that addressed key sidewalk gaps and encouraged traffic-calming in areas on corridors that bicyclists and pedestrians frequently use.

PHASE I of the Midtown Area Transportation Plan was a technical study that was approved by the CRTPA on February 20, 2018. The phase provided an evaluation of the following nine (9) options, of which the **highlighted options** were removed by the Board from further study. The approved options provided a foundation from which the next phase (“Phase II”) of project would begin.

The following provides a summary of the options:

- **Beard St and North Gadsden St Realignment** - Realignment of Beard Street within existing right-of-way to improve connectivity at this location has been identified.
- **Sidewalk Connectivity** - Missing gaps in the Midtown area are identified (including key missing gaps at N. Gadsden, discussed below).
- **North Gadsden St corridor improvements from 6th Ave to Thomasville Rd** - Identifies construction of missing key sidewalk gaps and Road Diet in this key location of Midtown.
- **Midtown Boulevard/Complete Street** - by definition, Complete Streets are streets designed for all users (pedestrian, bicyclists, transit users as well as motorized transportation). Many of the proposed alternatives evaluated can be implemented in a manner that to improve the Midtown area for all users.
- **One-way southbound option of Thomasville Rd from N Gadsden St to N Monroe St** - This alternative improves roadway level of service and could be constructed to use existing right-of-way for complete street improvements. Potential negatives with proposal include reduced access to businesses.
- **One-way southbound option of Thomasville Rd from N Gadsden St to 6th Ave** - This alternative improves roadway level of service and could be constructed to use existing right-of-

way for complete street improvements. Potential negatives with proposal include reduced access to businesses.

- **Thomasville, Meridian and N Gadsden Roundabout (includes all existing movements)** - Analysis identifies that this option does not operationally work and will have constructability issues. Additionally, a roundabout at this location creates pedestrian challenges.
- **Thomasville, Meridian and N Gadsden Roundabout (No Gadsden to Meridian movement)** - Analysis identifies constructability issues. Additionally, a roundabout at this location creates pedestrian challenges.
- **6th and 7th Ave Bi-Directional Roadways** - Convert the existing one-way pairs into two-way roadways. Analysis identifies that this change would reduce level-of-service and create additional conflict points at intersections.

Due to the technical nature of Phase I of the Plan, coordination efforts focused on meeting with the Florida Department of Transportation District 3 and local planning agencies.

PHASE II - Phase II of the Plan involved extensive public and stakeholder input as identified options were built upon and refined. Specifically, the alternatives identified in Phase I were further developed and evaluated through a series of public engagement opportunities that included focused meetings, public workshops, pop-up tent events, and an online survey (**Attachment 3** providing a link to the project's page details these efforts). Phase II included a focus on alternative transportation opportunities for bicyclists and pedestrians given the area's concentration of restaurants, shops, and other businesses as well as surrounding neighborhoods.

Ultimately, Phase II developed a series of recommendations (see **Attachment 2** providing a link to the report) that are broken out into short-term, mid-term, and long-term timeframes for the Midtown area. A large portion of the plan, however, focused on identifying long-term recommendations on the area's two (2) main arterial roadways: Thomasville Road and Monroe Street. Opportunities were identified for Thomasville Road South (Monroe Street to 7th Avenue), Thomasville Road North (7th Avenue to Betton/Bradford roads) and North Monroe Street (Thomasville Road to Tharpe Street). Ultimately, these opportunities were refined through extensive public involvement that resulted in identifying recommended options for each of these three (3) distinct corridors of Midtown.

Specifically, Phase II of the Midtown Area Transportation Plan recommends the following for the three (3) corridors focused within the plan:

- Thomasville Road South: The community-preferred alternative for Thomasville Road South includes the elimination of the center turn lane to reallocate right-of-way for wider sidewalks and increased landscaping on both sides of the corridor. Note: more details on this opportunity and all project recommendations is included in the draft project report (**Attachment 2**).
- Thomasville Road North: The community-preferred alternative includes the reduction in number of travel lanes on Thomasville Road North from six lanes to four lanes. The additional right-of-way obtained from removing two travel lanes, as well as having consistent lane widths, will allow for a shared-use path and landscaped buffer on both sides of the corridor.

Like Thomasville Road South, this will allow bidirectional movement for pedestrians and bicyclists. A landscaped median is also included in this alternative and would provide left turns where warranted.

- Monroe Street: For this alternative, North Monroe Street will remain within the existing footprint of the road with a modified center turn lane. This two-way center turn lane will be replaced where feasible with a landscaped median to improve access management along the corridor, with left turns provided at appropriate locations. Monroe Street currently has limited right-of-way and any significant changes to the roadway's footprint are unlikely due to the cost.

NEXT STEPS

The long-term recommended opportunities for the corridors provide a basis from which further project development activities may begin. To that end, the CRTPA's Adopted Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 – FY 2026 Roadway Priority Project List (PPL), adopted at the September 21 CRTPA meeting, contains the next phases for Thomasville Road South and Thomasville Road North on the PPL.

With regards to short-term and mid-terms recommendations, the Midtown Area Transportation Plan identifies both the next steps and responsible agencies for moving towards implementation of the plan's recommendations.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Option 1: Adopt the Midtown Area Transportation Plan Phase II
(Recommended)

Option 2: CRTPA Board Discretion.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Project Map

Attachment 2: [DRAFT Midtown Area Transportation Plan Report LINK](#)

Attachment 3: [Midtown Project page LINK](#)

MIDTOWN AREA TRANSPORTATION PLAN

STUDY AREA

