

Downtown Circulation Assessment and Improvement Project Summary

Purpose

The purpose of the Downtown Circulation Assessment and Improvement Project was to develop a set of immediate, short-term, and long-term solutions that can be implemented to improve traffic flow, transit service, and the pedestrian environment.

Goals and Objectives

The following three goals guided the problem assessment and solution development process:

- Identify the specific circulation and congestion problems in the Golden Triangle, based on current realities and projected visions;
- Develop practical solutions that can be implemented; and
- Implement the agreed upon solutions according to an immediate, short-term, and long-term timetable.

The overall project objective was to develop a comprehensive operations plan and implementation strategy that would be the complete reference for implementing improvement strategies and providing guidance on follow-up procedures.

Identification of Participants

The following agencies participated in the process:

- Allegheny County Department of Economic Development
- City of Pittsburgh
- Pittsburgh Cultural Trust
- Pittsburgh Foundation
- Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission
- Port Authority of Allegheny County
- Port of Pittsburgh Commission
- Pittsburgh Parking Authority

Milestones Achieved

The Task Force generated a list of prioritized problems of the focus areas consisting of automobiles, transit, pedestrians, parking, loading zones, and bicycles. The list of problems was divided into the following three categories:

- Congestion –Recurring (Peak Hours)
- Congestion – Non-Recurring (Anytime)
- Circulation

Strategies were identified within the Task Force and grouped into eight main categories. Traffic Operations, Transit Routing, Parking, Roadway Management, Master Planning, Sidewalks, Enforcement, and Special Events Planning. The following strategies were pursued in greater detail:

- Actions to alleviate heavy bus traffic
- Signal retimings
- Bus lane modification
- Lane marking deficiencies
- Left turn restrictions
- Use of the transit free zone
- Loading zone issues and strategies
- Wayfinding
- On-street parking
- Bus shelter design and placement
- School bus parking

The following recommendations gained concurrence from the Task Force

- Traffic Operations
 - Retime signals along Grant Street and Liberty Avenue.
 - Restrict left turns at Sixth Avenue @ Smithfield, Ft Duquesne @ 6th Street and 7th Street.
 - Install bus priority traffic signal systems at 4 locations.

- Transit Routing
 - Develop marketing program for Free Fare Transit Zone.
- Parking
 - Review causes of illegal parking and remove meters that restrict bus movements.
 - Undertake evaluation of current loading zones to determine need of zone.
 - Install very short-term meters in loading zones.
- Roadway Management
 - Relocate stop bars to remove bus/auto conflicts.
 - Extend Smithfield Street bus lane from Boulevard of the Allies to Fort Pitt Blvd.
 - Upgrade traffic signals at 22 locations to permit inclusion into signal system.
- Master Planning
 - Expand current wayfinding system throughout Downtown Pittsburgh.
- Sidewalks
 - Replace transit shelters that cause sidewalk congestion or are in impractical locations.
- Special Events Planning
 - Re-designate school bus parking locations.

Several recommendations met with objections from one or more of the implementing agencies on the Task Force and have not been agreed to. They are listed below:

- Transit Routing
 - Institute short looping of some regular bus routes at “T” stops and express routes.
 - Institute several additional through routes to reduce turning movements and provide links to important destinations.
 - Increase transit frequency along Liberty Avenue to service important destinations.
 - Create six color transit corridors utilizing existing and modified routes.
 - Reroute numerous bus routes from the Fifth/Forbes corridor to spur development.
- Roadway Management
 - Extend Wood Street bus lane from Fourth Avenue to Sixth Avenue.
 - Allow bicycles to use bus only lanes.

Next Steps

The Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership convened a committee to prioritize the recommended improvement strategies, determine costs for implementation, identify funding sources, and develop a realistic implementation schedule.