

CHAPTER 6 RECOMMENDATIONS



The South Lamar Boulevard corridor is changing. More and more people are looking to the area for its central location and access to many area amenities. The growing number of mixed-use developments on South Lamar offer a central location with retail, dining and services options just a few steps away for residents, and within walking or biking distance for many people living nearby in adjacent neighborhoods. These developments contribute to the growing 'completeness' of the corridor through promoting density, connectivity and a higher-quality built environment for people who walk, bike, work and enjoy the available services and recreational activities.

Even as the nature of South Lamar shifts towards a higher level of walkability, population growth in Austin will persist, and vehicular operations on the corridor will continue to feel the impact. Significant improvements in vehicular operations will not be an option for this corridor without considerable mode shift and diligent adherence to travel demand management strategies. Many opportunities already exist for people to choose other modes for shorter trips in their daily activities. Mode shift and travel demand management will be critical to keeping up with growth and sustaining the corridor. It is up to the City to be proactive in planning for a corridor's changing environment and ensuring that it continues to serve the community. The Imagine Austin vision statement recognizes that Austinites are committed to preserving the best of Austin and changing those things that need to be changed.

Recommendations developed for South Lamar Boulevard were based on input from the public meetings and stakeholder focus groups, the results of land use and traffic analyses, and several related Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies. These recommendations will guide the City of Austin in shaping South Lamar Boulevard into a multimodal corridor that supports people who choose to walk, bike, ride transit, and drive.

South Lamar Boulevard is a major north-south corridor. It is the intent of this project that the recommended improvements will improve mobility for nearby residents and commuter through-traffic. Building enhanced facilities for other modes such as bikes, pedestrians and transit will provide increased options for people to conduct daily activities such as trips to school, work, or to access corridor amenities. Use of advanced technology will also improve travel for commuters who frequently use the corridor during peak hours.

METHODOLOGY

The City of Austin is committed to accountability and transparency. Public involvement in the planning process is a vital component in helping agencies and planners to understand the values of the surrounding community, how the infrastructure and surrounding land is used, and to design new built environments and roads that best serve the community.

The South Lamar Corridor recommendations incorporated input from the community and from stakeholders. Two public meetings were held to gather feedback from the public regarding their values and vision for the corridor. The City of Austin also solicited input by hosting an online survey and making project information available throughout the planning process.



A thorough analysis of existing conditions along the corridor, as well as recent and planned developments built adjacent to or near the corridor were also taken into consideration while developing proposed improvements. The auto-centric improvements were compiled and incorporated into the future year (2035) VISSIM models to obtain future year intersection LOS. The proposed pedestrian, bicycle, transit improvements were incorporated into the multimodal HCS Streets analysis to obtain future year multimodal LOS along South Lamar Boulevard.

SOUTH LAMAR BOULEVARD CORRIDOR CONCEPTS

Corridor concepts developed for South Lamar Boulevard envision a smartly planned facility that serves all modes of transportation, encourages active transportation and enhances safety overall. According to a 2009 National Household Travel survey, 28% of all trips in the U.S. are less than a mile. During the public involvement process, many people indicated they would walk or bike more given a safer facility to use to reach their destinations. It is the goal of the City of Austin and project planners that the proposed concepts for South Lamar Boulevard serve both the vehicle demands of the facility, while accommodating and encouraging alternative modes.

In support of the Complete Streets policy, the ultimate cross section proposed for South Lamar Boulevard would include protected bike facilities and wider, completely connected sidewalks for both northbound and southbound travelers. These bike lanes and sidewalks should be fully ADA compliant and run the full length of the corridor.

The facility will continue to serve four lanes of traffic, as it always has, and will also allow for transit improvements in locations that meet system needs and where space allows. In place of the existing continuous, but unmanaged center turn lane, a raised median will help to reduce conflict and streamline access to businesses. This median can also serve as a pedestrian refuge for people wanting to cross the busy corridor, thereby improving safety for foot traffic and motorists alike.



Conceptual rendering of the ultimate cross section for South Lamar Boulevard.



Figure 6-1: Future Corridor Concept for South Lamar



Figure 6-2: Future Corridor Concept for South Lamar and Riverside Drive



PROPOSED CROSS SECTIONS

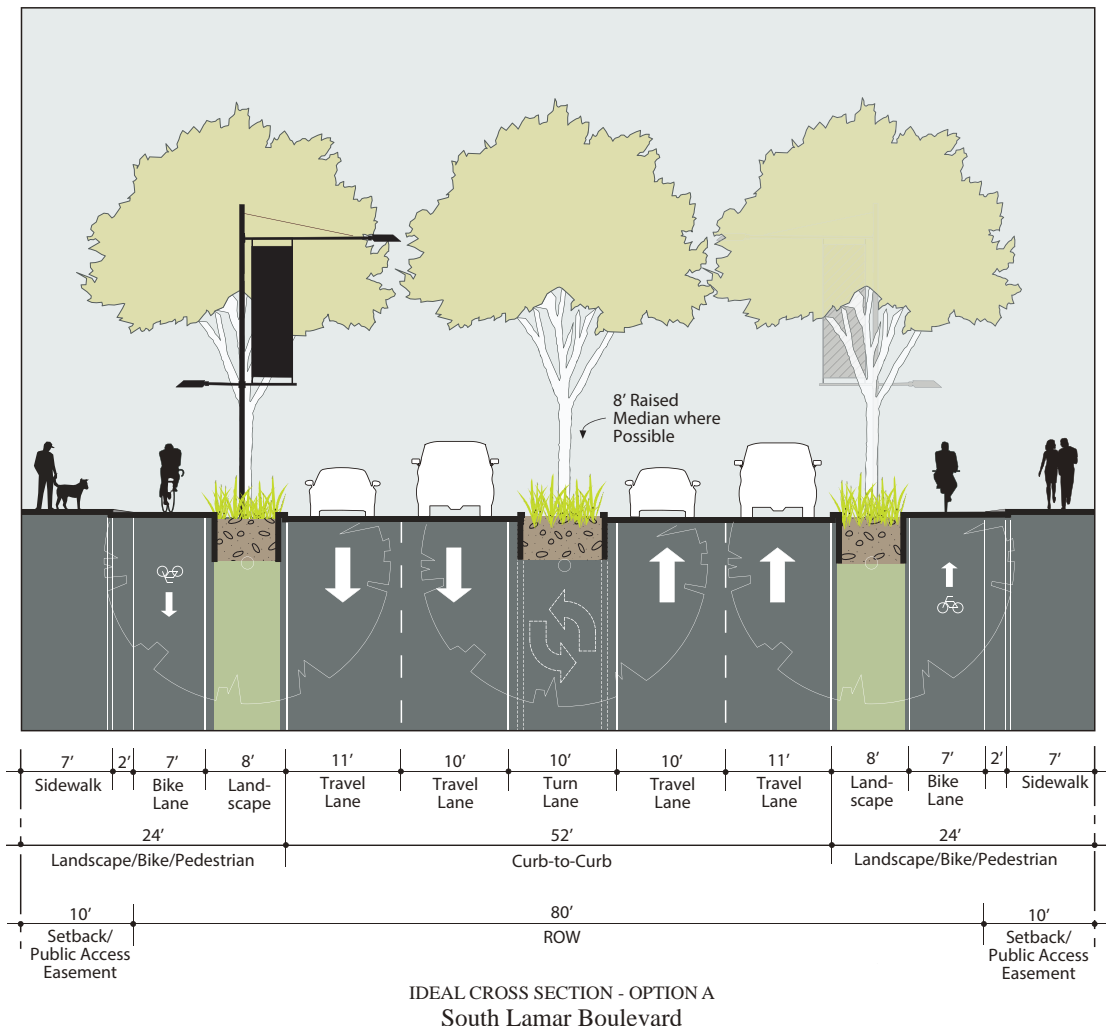
The recommended ultimate cross section for South Lamar follows the complete streets guideline established in Imagine Austin. The ideal facility would serve all modes of transportation, and provide a safe, connected travel way for people who walk and bike, while continuing to carry two lanes of traffic northbound and two lanes southbound.

The ultimate cross section is wider than the existing facility, and would require additional right-of-way. Until new development occurs, there are many locations along the corridor where the new setback area cannot be used to implement a wider cross section. In order to minimize/eliminate the need for additional right-of-way to implement the long-term improvements, three concepts were developed and can be applied to the appropriate sections of the corridor.

Ultimate Cross Section: Option A

In order to maintain vehicular capacity and provide high-quality pedestrian and bicycle facilities, 100 feet of right-of-way is needed. Much of the property along the corridor is zoned “CS” which requires a 10-foot front yard building setback. This Option A shows a possible solution within an 80-foot right-of-way, requiring public access easements in the 10-foot setback zone. The protected bike lane is located behind the curb, adjacent to the sidewalk.

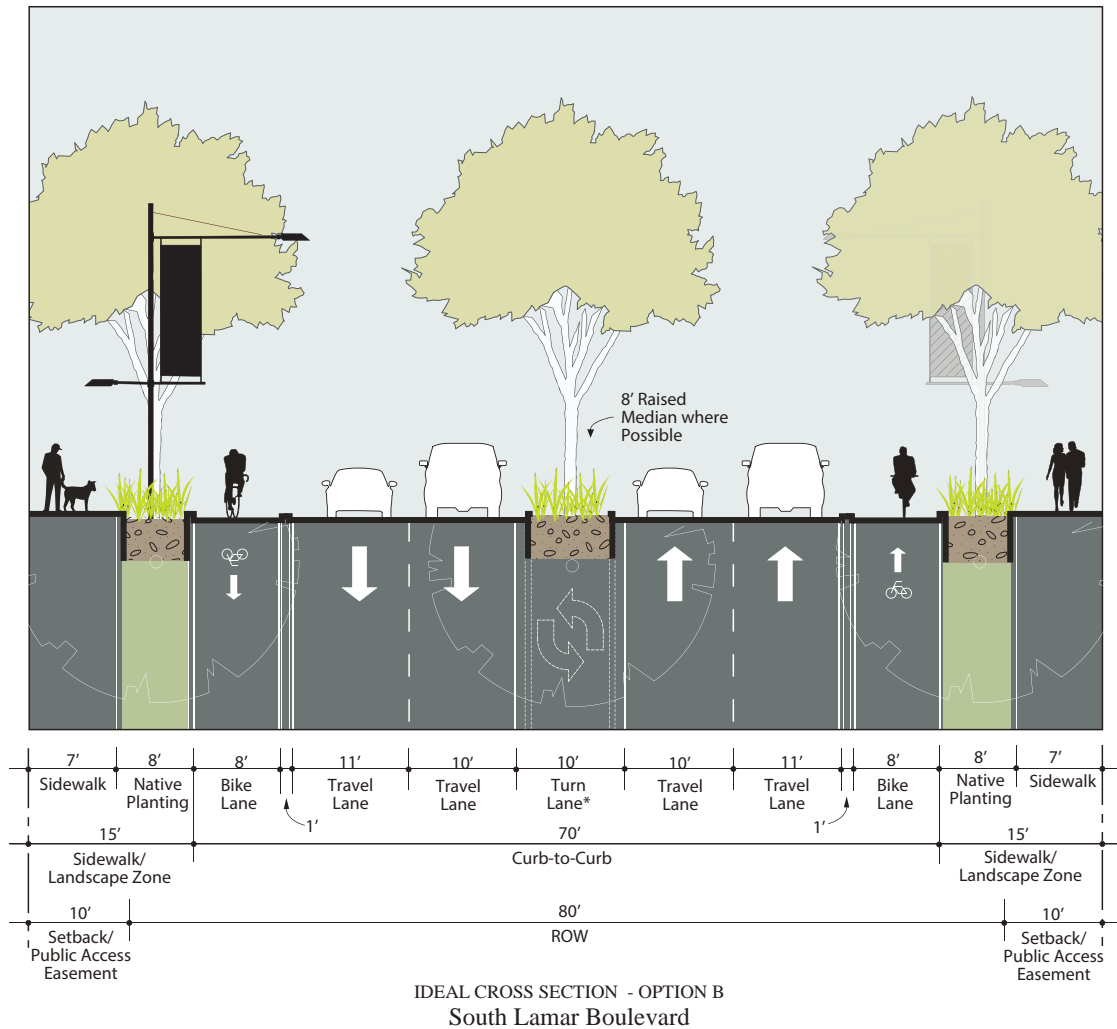
Figure 6-3: Ultimate Cross Section: Option A



Ultimate Cross Section: Option B

This is a variation where the protected bike lane is located within the roadway with a 12-inch barrier separating it from the auto lanes. Like Option A, it would require a building setback and public access easement on the many portions of the corridor with less than 100 feet of right-of-way.

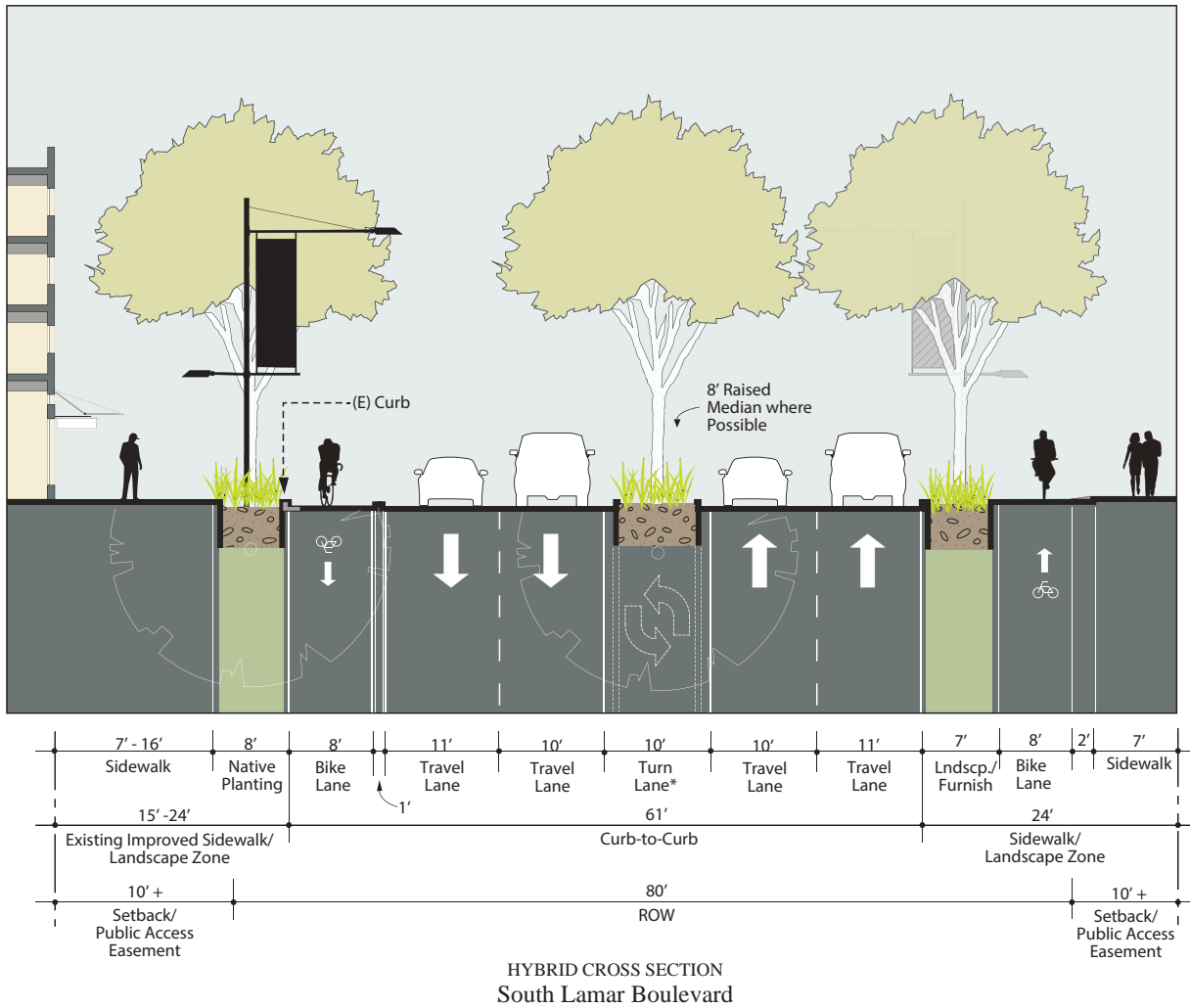
Figure 6-4: Ultimate Cross Section: Option B



Hybrid of Option A & B

This is a hybrid of the ultimate sections A and B that could be employed along recently completed streetscapes like the Post or Gibson. A protected bike lane could be introduced along the completed streetscape with a “behind the curb” protected bike lane on the opposite side.

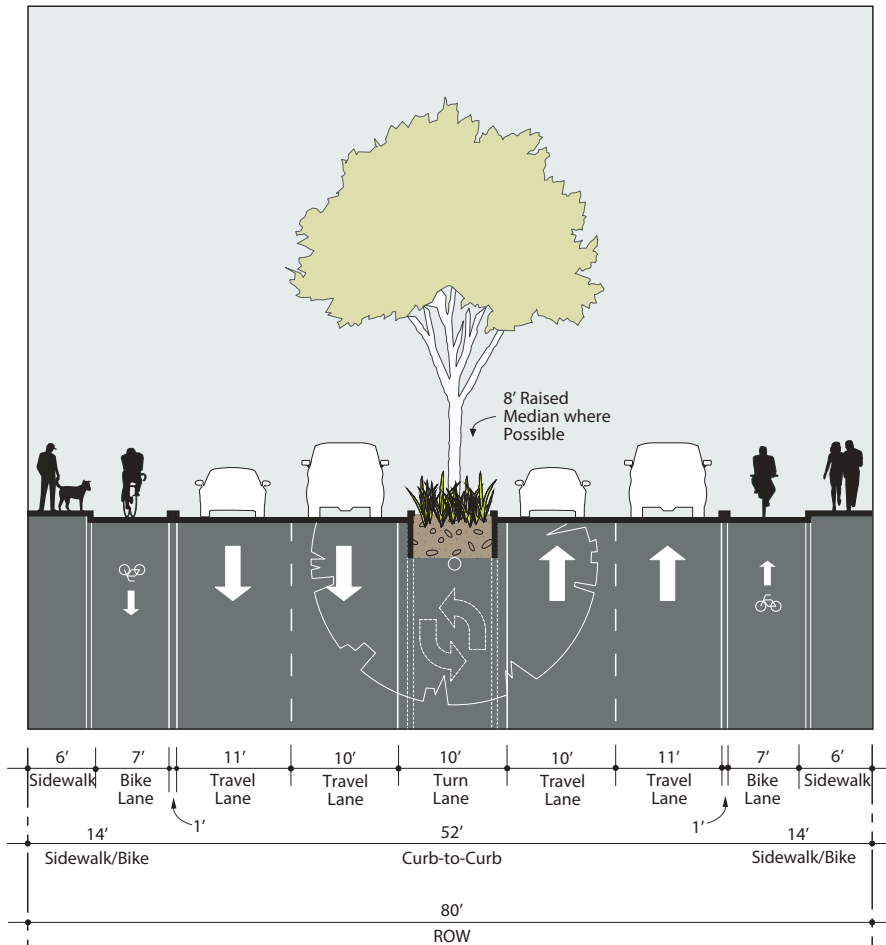
Figure 6-5: Hybrid of Option A & B



Interim Option 1

In many locations, we may not be able to use the setback area until new development occurs. Interim Option 1 establishes the future 52-foot curb-to-curb of the Ultimate Option A section and introduces protected bike lanes and median landscaping in places where the center turn lane could be removed.

Figure 6-6: Interim Option 1



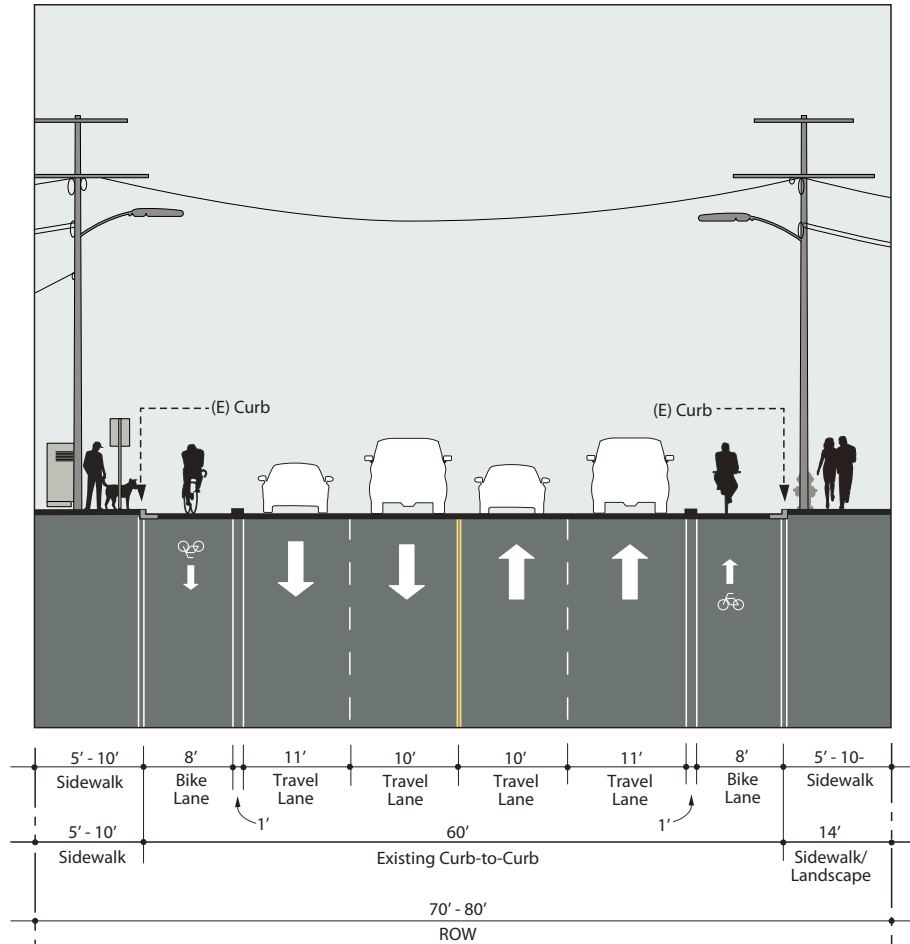
INTERIM CONDITION WITH CENTER TURN LANE
South Lamar Boulevard



Interim Option 2

This is a less intensive intervention, with protected bike lanes within the existing 60-foot roadway. This could occur where the center lane is eliminated.

Figure 6-7: Interim Option 2



INTERIM CONDITION WITHOUT CENTER TURN LANE
South Lamar Boulevard

These interim conditions cross sections establish the future 52-foot curb-to-curb of the ultimate section and improve the sidewalk and streetscape, while maintaining the on-street bike lane. The removal of the center turn lane will be required to implement this plan and where it is not possible to remove the turn lane, Interim Option 1 with the center turn lane could introduce protected bike lanes and median landscaping. Sidewalk and adjacent streetscape improvements in many cases would need to await property redevelopment.



RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS

Recommended improvements for South Lamar Boulevard are based on the complete streets and corridor concepts discussed previously. The improvements are detailed in this section and have been identified as either short- (0 – 5 years) or long-term (5 – 20 years) to help the City of Austin prioritize based on need and feasibility and also to allow the City time to raise the needed funds.

ACCESS AND MEDIAN IMPROVEMENTS

Access management is an important strategy to improve safety and mobility along a major arterial roadway with the volume of traffic and variety of land uses such as those present along the South Lamar Boulevard Corridor. Fewer driveways and opportunities for turns to/from South Lamar Boulevard equate to fewer conflict points and, thus, lower potential for crashes. In addition, fewer conflict points improve mobility by reducing the friction that heavy turning traffic can cause along a major arterial corridor. Reduced conflicts will also minimize road blockage caused by accidents.

As part of the proposed improvements along the South Lamar Boulevard Corridor, a raised median is proposed to replace the existing two-way left-turn lane. Median breaks are proposed at signalized intersections, most unsignalized intersections, and select locations to allow driveway access. Private businesses along the corridor should be incentivized to consolidate driveways and create joint-access among multiple businesses to a single driveway, where possible.



Raised median near Riverside Drive.



Raised median with paved center turn lane at Kinney Avenue.



A raised median on South Lamar Boulevard, like the one between Riverside Drive and Barton Springs Road, will improve safety and reduce conflict along the corridor.



AUTOMOBILE

As discussed in the previous subsection, a raised median and driveway access control along the entire South Lamar Corridor reduces conflict points and lowers friction along South Lamar Boulevard. These improvements will have significant positive impacts to safety and mobility along the corridor.

Several key intersections on South Lamar Boulevard are also recommended for future improvements. Southbound traffic on Lamar Boulevard at Barton Springs can be particularly heavy during peak hours, and often throughout the day and on weekends. An additional left-turn bay is proposed at Barton Springs Road to relieve congestion and shorten queue lengths at that heavy movement, allowing more motorists access to destinations east of the corridor.

Three new traffic signals are recommended to help improve safety on South Lamar. Toomey Road and Butler Road have experienced a large number of crashes over the past few years, and a signal at the intersection of South Lamar Boulevard and Toomey Road will help to improve safety and provide a viable entrance/exit to/from the adjacent neighborhood. New traffic signals are also recommended at Collier Street/ Evergreen Avenue and at Del Curto Road. These new signals will be coordinated with the existing signals along the corridor such that impacts to South Lamar Boulevard traffic flow will be minimal.

People driving on South Lamar will also benefit from the proposed multimodal recommendations for the corridor. These recommendations are considered to be multimodal because of their main purpose: to improve conditions for people who walk, bike, and use transit services. These improvements, however, also have positive effects on mobility and safety for drivers. At a high level, the multimodal improvements create a better experience for users of non-automobile modes. The result is a shift from automobile trips to trips via other modes, helping to reduce automobile demand and, thus, congestion along the corridor.



A second left turn lane will ease queuing at Barton Springs Road.



Improvements at Hether and Mary Streets.



Improvements at Bluebonnet Lane.

MULTIMODAL IMPROVEMENTS CAN BENEFIT PEOPLE WHO DRIVE TOO. SAFE AND ATTRACTIVE FACILITIES FOR CYCLISTS AND PEDESTRIANS ENCOURAGES NON-MOTORIZED TRAVEL. AS TRIPS VIA OTHER MODES INCREASE, AUTO DEMAND ON ROADWAYS CAN DECREASE.



TRANSIT

As density on South Lamar Boulevard continues to increase, good urban design is needed to maintain access to high-quality transit. Shorter distances between people's homes and their daily destinations increase opportunities for travel that doesn't require driving. When more people live near transit stops, transit service can run more often and to more places.

South Lamar Boulevard is already well-served by Capital Metro's MetroBus and MetroRapid. This existing service can be improved along the South Lamar Corridor in two ways: (1) mobility and (2) quality of service and experience.

To improve mobility, bus queue jumps are recommended for implementation at all right-turn-only lanes along the corridor. This will provide faster and more reliable service to transit users. Northbound travel at Oltorf Street and at Barton Springs Road are two such locations.

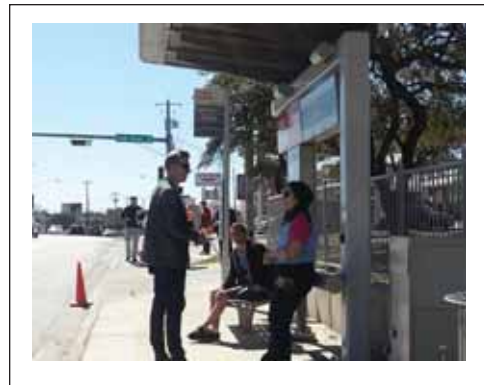
At a queue jump, a Capital Metro bus headed straight through the intersection can use the right-turn-only lane to bypass a standing queue at a red light. The bus, equipped with a transponder, communicates its approach in the queue jump lane and receives its own green light after service of conflicting movements. The green light allows the bus to "jump" ahead of the standing queue of vehicles, and these vehicles receive a green light immediately following the bus queue jump green light.

Other mobility improvements include farside (instead of nearside) bus stops and bus pullouts to reduce delay. City of Austin should consider adopting an ordinance that provides buses the right-of-way when exiting a bus pullout.

In addition to improving transit vehicle mobility, quality of service can be improved to enhance the user experience and to encourage ridership. People are more likely to use public transportation when facilities are attractive, safe, and functional. Covered and/or enclosed bus stops provide shade and protect transit users during inclement weather. Benches, bicycle parking, and route information are other elements that can be added to improve quality of service. The transit network on South Lamar will also benefit from the recommended improvements to pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Improvements to these facilities improve ease-of-use by helping users connect to transit.



Bus queue jump at Oltorf Street.



Amenities at transit stops encourages ridership.

IN RESPONSE TO A SURVEY REGARDING IMPROVEMENTS ON SOUTH LAMAR, 22% OF RESPONDENTS SELECTED TRANSIT AS BEING MOST IMPORTANT.



PEDESTRIANS

There are many amenities on South Lamar within walking distance of neighboring amenities and within walking distances of neighborhoods and residences adjacent to the corridor. People who live or work within short distances of these services and who prefer to walk to reach them should have a well connected, continuous and accessible facility to do so. Visitors to the area may also choose to leave their car at home if other options were available to access amenities along the corridor.



Amenities are plentiful on South Lamar while safe crossing opportunities are not.

To improve connectivity and enhance the pedestrian mode of travel, continuous sidewalks are recommended to be built along both sides of South Lamar Boulevard for its entire length. Cross sections developed for the corridor propose sidewalks to be a minimum width of 7-feet, ADA-compliant, and separated from faster moving traffic by a planted buffer or median. Sidewalks on adjacent neighborhood streets should also be continuous.



Pedestrian infrastructure should serve the needs of all users.

ADA-compliant curb ramps will improve accessibility for all users and are recommended at all intersections. Additional traffic signals and pedestrian hybrid beacons will increase crossing opportunities and help to cut down on unsafe mid-block crossings. Ladder-style crosswalks and pedestrian signals at traffic lights will improve pedestrian safety when crossing both the main corridor and neighborhood connector streets, while also improving connectivity to neighborhoods.



Wider, connected sidewalks, ladder-style crosswalks, and pedestrian hybrid beacons build a better infrastructure for people who chose walking as a transportation mode.



BICYCLES

The bicycle improvements recommended as part of this study are intended to improve safety, and to provide connectivity to neighborhoods, adjacent and connecting roadways and other bicycle facilities in the area. In the Bicycle Master Plan Update, South Lamar Boulevard is shown to be a corridor plan with “all ages and all abilities” bicycle facilities. Protected lanes, or “cycle tracks,” meet the criteria for this type of facility that encourages riders of all abilities.

A protected, continuous 7-foot cycle track is recommended for the entire length of the South Lamar Boulevard Corridor. In the recommended Ultimate Cross Section A, this facility will be provided on both sides of the corridor and would be protected from vehicles by an 8-foot landscaped median. Similar to facilities in the Mueller neighborhood and on 3rd Street in downtown Austin, a separated bike route for cyclists on both sides of South Lamar Boulevard will reduce conflict between bicycles and vehicles, and improve connectivity to neighborhoods and other destinations along and beyond the corridor.

In addition to the safety and riding comfort advantages that the proposed one-way cycle tracks provide, two-way cycle tracks are proposed on each side of South Lamar Boulevard between Riverside Drive and Barton Springs Road. These two-way cycle tracks more efficiently connect the future South Lamar Boulevard Corridor bicycle network with the existing surrounding network and, especially, the pedestrian/bicycle-only Pfluger Bridge over Lady Bird Lake. These two-way cycle tracks will greatly improve connections to Zilker Park during and special events, as well as improve access to downtown, nearby trail systems, and other amenities in the area.

The bicycle facilities along streets intersecting South Lamar Boulevard should also be improved to facilitate network and neighborhood connectivity. For example, a connection for bicycles between Treadwell Street and West Bouldin Creek Greenbelt, underneath the Union Pacific railroad tracks, is recommended to provide access to the greenbelt and improve bicycle mobility in the area.

Recommendations for bicycle improvements along South Lamar Boulevard support the City of Austin’s Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan and the 2014 Bicycle Master Plan Update. The Bicycle Master Plan incorporates elements of the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan by proposing the creation of a connected and protected active transportation network that will provide additional transportation options for Austin residents and visitors.







Safety on South Lamar could be greatly improved by providing a protected bicycle facility like those in downtown Austin and in the Mueller neighborhood.



SHORT-TERM IMPROVEMENTS

All of the improvements discussed previously in the chapter have been prioritized for short-term and long-term implementation. Short-term projects are recommended for implementation within a five year term, and address problematic areas along the corridor where safety is more of an issue. Projects have also been categorized as short-term based on feasibility to implement and cost. **Table 6-1** details short-term projects recommended for South Lamar Boulevard.


Table 6-1. Short-Term Improvements

Limits (Lamar @)	Project	Mode				Description
						
5th/6th Streets*	Operational				X	Prohibit left-turn movements along Lamar Blvd. during peak periods.
Riverside Dr.	Operational		X			Construct protected bike facility at intersection.
Riverside Dr. & Toomey Rd.	Operational	X			X	Install new traffic signal.
Between Riverside Dr. & Treadwell St.	Raised Median				X	Construct raised landscaped median with select openings at driveways.
Between Riverside Dr. and Barton Springs Rd.	Bicycle Lanes		X			Construct 2-way cycle tracks on both sides of S. Lamar Blvd.
Barton Springs Rd.	Operational		X			Construct protected bike facility at intersection.
	Bus Queue Jump			X		Install NB and SB bus queue jumps (using right-turn lanes).
	Operational				X	Construct dual SB left-turn bays.
	Operational			X	X	Convert NB approach to two through lanes with third receiving lane for bus stop pullout.
Treadwell St.	Network		X			Construct bicycle connection under UPRR tracks to West Bouldin Creek Greenbelt.
Between Riverside Dr. & Treadwell St.	Operational	X	X	X	X	Construct recommended ultimate cross section.
South Lamar and Collier St./ Evergreen Ave.	Operational/Safety	X			X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install new traffic signal. Prohibit left-turn movement at Mary St. approach. Build roundabout at Mary St. and Evergreen Ave. Close NB "ramp" from South Lamar Blvd. to Mary St.
Oltorf St.	Bus Queue Jump			X		Install NB bus queue jump (using right-turn lane).
	Operational	X			X	Move pedestrian crossing across S. Lamar Blvd. from south side to north side of intersection.
	Safety	X			X	Remove channelization from NB right-turn lane.

*5th and 6th Streets are beyond the scope of this study; however, due to their impact on corridor operations, recommendations have been provided.



Table 6-1. Short-Term Improvements, continued



Limits (Lamar @)	Project	Mode				Description
						
South Lamar & Del Curto Rd.	Operational	X			X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install new traffic signal. Prohibit left-turn movement at WB Bluebonnet Ln. approach. Construct roundabout at Del Curto Rd. and Bluebonnet Ln.
Bluebonnet Ln.	Bus Queue Jump			X		Install NB bus queue jump (using right-turn lane).
	Bicycle Lanes		X			Install continuous 2-way cycle track across South Lamar Blvd.
Manchaca Rd.	Bus Queue Jump			X		Install NB bus queue jump (using proposed bus lane).
Between Manchaca Rd. and Barton Skwy.	Bus Lane			X		Construct NB bus lane.
Barton Skwy.	Operational/ Bus Queue Jump			X	X	Construct NB right-turn bay and install bus queue jump (using right-turn lane).
South Lamar Blvd. and West Oak Dr.	Safety	X		X		Install pedestrian hybrid beacon.
South Lamar Blvd. and Brodie Oaks	Operational				X	Prohibit NB left-turn movement from US 290/SH 71 underpass.
Corridor-wide	Policy	X	X		X	Reduce speed limit to 35 mph
	Policy			X		Pass ordinance to assign right-of-way to buses at pullouts.
	Informational/Recreational	X	X	X	X	Install wayfinding signs, especially to/from area green spaces.
	Safety	X				Time leading pedestrian intervals at signalized crosswalks where significant conflict between turning vehicles and pedestrians exists.
	Bicycle Supply		X			Install B-cycle stations where supported by local demand.
	Operational				X	Install adaptive signal system.
	Informational				X	Install dynamic message signs with travel times, alternative, routes, parking info, etc.
	Operational/ Safety			X	X	Institute an incident management program.
	Bus Stops			X		Provide covered, enclosed bus stops.
	Bus Stops			X		Install far side bus stops instead of nearside stops.



LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENTS

Long-term projects are recommended for implementation within five to twenty years, and may require more funding to implement than short-term projects. To obtain the necessary right-of-way needed to build the full recommended cross section for Lamar Boulevard, properties along the corridor will have to wait until redevelopment occurs. Long-term recommendations will need time to enact. **Table 6-2** details long-term projects.

Table 6-2: Long-Term Improvements

Limits (Lamar @)	Project	Mode				Description
						
Between Treadwell St. and Brodie Oaks	Operational	X	X	X	X	Construct recommended ultimate cross section.
North Lamar Blvd. and 5th/6th Sts.*	Operational				X	Consider constructing a grade separation to reduce delay.
Between Riverside Dr. and Panther Tr.	Operational/ Safety				X	Consider implementation of variable speed limit.
Between Barton Springs Rd. and Treadwell St.	Safety	X				Install pedestrian crossing (pedestrian hybrid beacon or elevated) near Bluff St., when warranted.
South Lamar Blvd. and Hether St./ Mary St.	Operational/ Safety				X	Acquire right-of-way to realign Mary St. approach to remove skew with Hether St.
South Lamar Blvd. and Bluebonnet Ln.	Operational/ Safety				X	Acquire right-of-way to realign Bluebonnet Ln. approach(es) to remove skew at South Lamar Blvd.
Barton Skwy.	Network		X			Construct bicycle connection to (1) Barton Creek Greenbelt and (2) Barton Skwy. and Spyglass Dr.
Corridor-wide	Network	X	X			Install bicycle and pedestrian connections to side streets and adjacent communities.
Corridor-wide	Parking				X	Implement parking district with centralized parking facilities.
Corridor-wide	Bus Lane			X		Implement transit-only lane(s) during peak periods, when supported by ridership.

**5th and 6th Streets are beyond the scope of this study; however, due to their impact on corridor operations, recommendations have been provided.*

A LONG-RANGE PLAN PROVIDES A STRONG FRAMEWORK TO GUIDE CITY ACTION AT ALL LEVELS. THE VISION AND PRINCIPALS OF THE PLAN NEED TO BE RESPECTED, BUT OVER TIME, THE COMMUNITY SHOULD EXPECT TO REVISIT AND REFINE INDIVIDUAL POLICIES. -IMAGINE AUSTIN



Figure 6-8: Ultimate Cross Section for South Lamar Boulevard 1 of 10



Figure 6-9: Ultimate Cross Section for South Lamar Boulevard 2 of 10



Figure 6-10: Ultimate Cross Section for South Lamar Boulevard 3 of 10



Figure 6-11: Ultimate Cross Section for South Lamar Boulevard 4 of 10

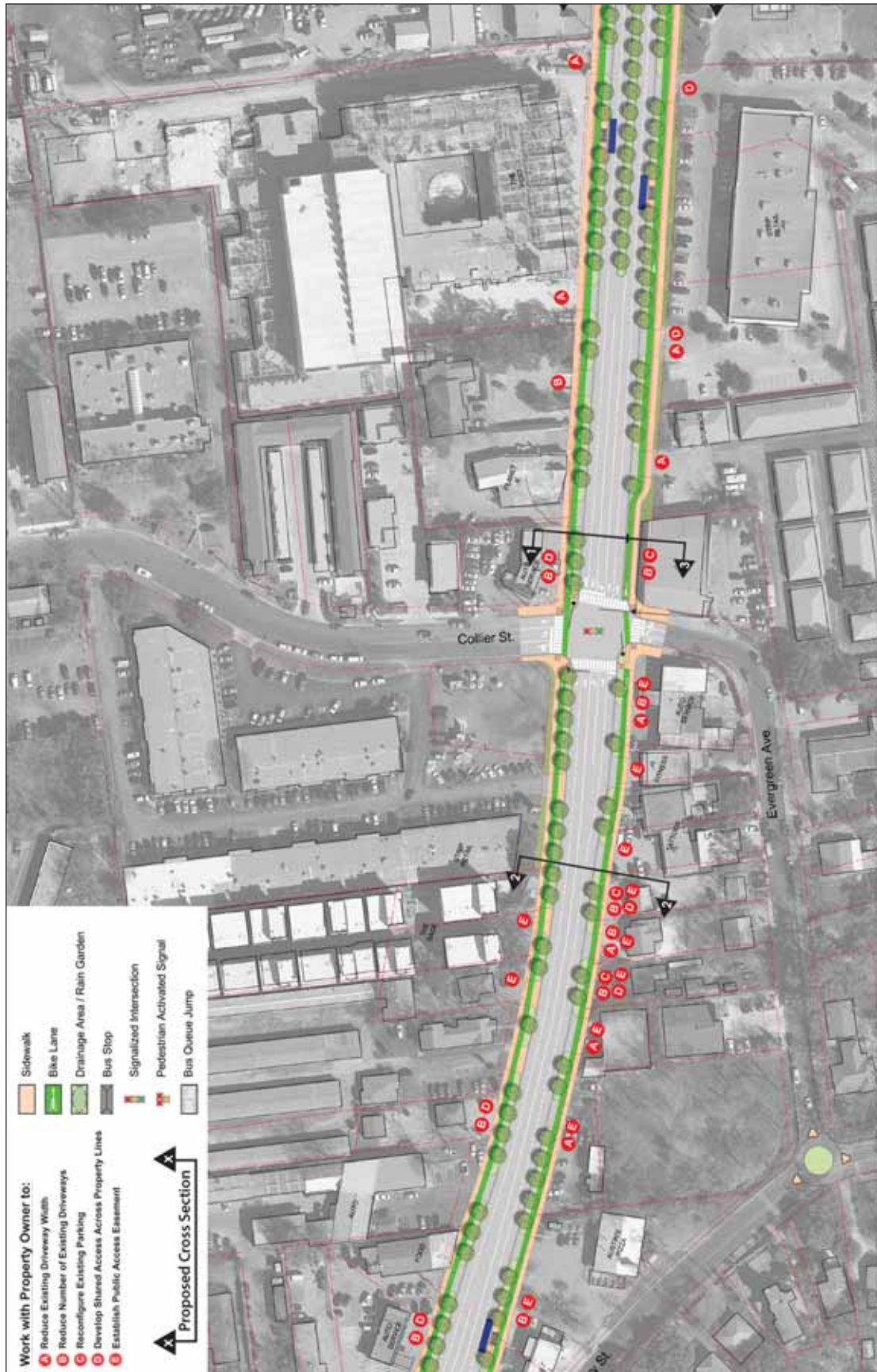


Figure 6-12: Ultimate Cross Section for South Lamar Boulevard 5 of 10



Figure 6-13: Ultimate Cross Section for South Lamar Boulevard 6 of 10



Figure 6-14: Ultimate Cross Section for South Lamar Boulevard 7 of 10

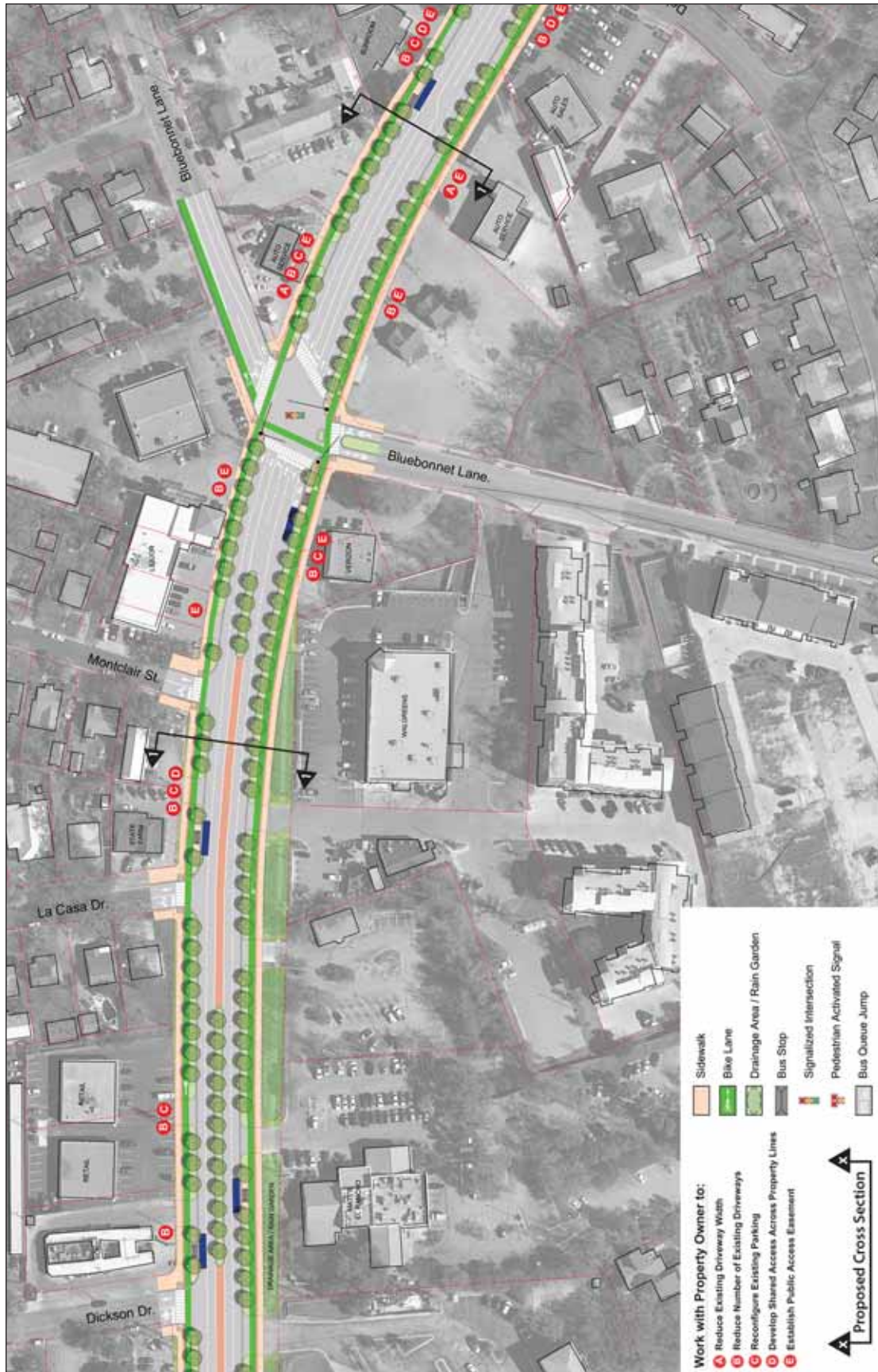


Figure 6-15: Ultimate Cross Section for South Lamar Boulevard 8 of 10



Figure 6-16: Ultimate Cross Section for South Lamar Boulevard 9 of 10



Figure 6-17: Ultimate Cross Section for South Lamar Boulevard 10 of 10



COMMUTER SOLUTIONS

South Lamar Boulevard is a major north-south arterial in Austin, carrying significant commuter traffic between South Austin and downtown/Central Austin as well as local traffic to/from area businesses and neighborhoods. The improvements cited in this chapter provide benefits to commuter traffic in addition to the more localized traffic. The existing two-way center-turn lane configuration along South Lamar Boulevard currently impacts travel time reliability and delay along the corridor due to multiple conflict points along its length. A raised median proposed for South Lamar Boulevard in place of the center turn lane will help to reduce these conflict points and increase traffic flow rates by reducing friction caused by accelerating and decelerating turning vehicles.

Advanced technology provides benefits for commuters along the corridor. Adaptive signal control and continued signal timing optimization and coordination are recommended to maximize the use and efficiency of the existing roadway infrastructure. An increased number of signal timing plans along the corridor, tailored to the travel demands of a specific time of the day or week (e.g., Friday p.m. peak), helps to reduce delay caused by traffic signals and increase progression and throughput along the corridor. Dynamic message signs projecting travel time and other traffic-related information keep drivers aware of traffic conditions and provide them the opportunity to make informed decisions about their travel options, such as routes and travel times. Dynamic message signs placed south of Ben White Boulevard and north of 6th Street could be most effective in terms of providing effective information to travelers for informed decision-making and selecting alternate routes during incidents along the corridor. In addition, the City of Austin should consider efficient incident management to relieve corridor congestion when a crash occurs.

Improvements to transit operations along South Lamar Boulevard also provide benefits to commuters. Capital Metro has proposed a Park and Ride facility along Ben White Boulevard, between Manchaca Road and Clawson Road, with the goal to incentivize commuters traveling between Central and South Austin to use Capital Metro bus service. Bus queue jumps, in combination with transit signal priority technology, proposed along South Lamar Boulevard provide more reliable bus travel times and help buses to adhere to schedules during congested times of the day. Far side bus stops and bus pullouts, in addition to a proposed new ordinance allowing buses with the right-of-way at the pullouts, will increase transit reliability and mobility along the corridor.

Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority is currently planning to construct managed lanes along Mopac South as an extension of the Mopac Improvement project currently under construction north of the river. The Mopac South managed lanes will provide a reliable alternate route for commuters and transit vehicles coming from South Austin to Downtown. Once in place, commuters may find the managed lanes as a potential viable alternate north-south route to South Lamar Boulevard.



HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The Health Impact Assessment study was undertaken simultaneously with the development of transportation study recommendations, and had the benefit of providing preliminary information on health considerations at an early stage of project development, and ensuring that health was considered in the proposed transportation study recommendations.

The Health Impact Assessment summarizes that South Lamar Boulevard has a high density of people and destinations, with a reliance on auto transport for within-corridor trips. An interest in active travel indicates substantial unmet opportunity for physical activity.

A significant barrier to public health exists due to inadequate pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure, public green space, and connectivity. Bluebonnet and South Lamar are of particular importance to public health, due to confluence of multiple factors. Over one-quarter of community survey respondents commute less than three miles; only 2% said they ever walk to work, and 4% said they ever bike. Twenty-two percent said they would walk more often, and 49% said they would bike more often under ideal conditions for all travel modes (including motor vehicles).

Although rigorous research on health-related effects of urban green space is limited, a systematic review found generally consistent evidence that urban green spaces are positively associated with physical activity, mental health, and social interactions. The designs proposed by the corridor study team include the addition of trees both within the roadway median and in greenspaces that buffer sidewalks from roadways. In sections with wider ROW, rain gardens are included in the roadway buffers. Proposed improvements for South Lamar Boulevard would have a positive effect on safety, physical activity, and opportunities for social interaction. A review of studies that examined how the attributes of the physical environment affect physical activity behaviors found sidewalk availability to be positively associated with walking for transportation for both adults and children.

The Health Impact Assessment makes the following recommendations for the Built Environment:

- Consider implementing a speed limit of 25-30 mph in specific segments or during specific times where heavy pedestrian/bicyclists activities are expected along South Lamar. Research indicates that for both safety and encouragement of physical activity, a speed limit below the recommended 35 mph would be preferable.



Bluebonnet Lane serves a high volume of pedestrians.



Lower speed limits create safer roadway conditions.

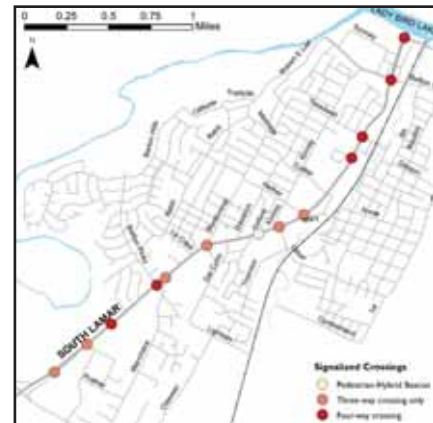


Access to green space is a key factor in improved public health.



- Complete crosswalks/crossing lights for all four sides of existing intersections. Many have crosswalks on only three of four sides. (See Figure 6-16)
- Increase the availability of bicycle parking throughout the corridor through policies targeting private businesses as well as the provision of public bicycle parking (e.g. bike corrals).
- Construct a pedestrian/bicyclist crossing of the railroad tracks at Treadwell. Such a crossing would substantially increase access (via active transportation) to Lamar destinations, including the MetroRapid Lamar Square Station, and increase access to the Bouldin Creek greenbelt/park. For cyclists travelling to or from the neighborhood west of South Lamar, this crossing would provide an off-Lamar route to the protected bicycle facility on Barton Springs east of the South Lamar intersection, and would connect bicyclists to the bicycle facility on Treadwell, west of South Lamar.
- Create pocket parks along South Lamar in areas where existing ROW allows, such as the 2500 block, just south of Bluebonnet Street. Building spaces at transit stops leverages and support existing activity and resources.
- Take steps to preserve and care for existing heritage trees on South Lamar Boulevard, particularly during any infrastructure installations that may affect the tree root zones.
- Develop improvements for southernmost section of the corridor in coordination with TxDOT. The South Lamar/Ben White intersection is a designated Activity Center per Imagine Austin, includes a BRT stop, is a regular destination of many people in the study area (as reported by the HIA survey), provides access to a host of community resources including two full-service grocery stores. Given this significance, greater multimodal access in this area is needed. At minimum, the inclusion of a pedestrian island or other enhancement to facilitate crossing at Brodie Oaks should be included in the overall recommendations.
- Design improvements to facilitate and accommodate high volumes of within-corridor walking and biking
- Create public greenspaces along South Lamar
- Conduct a robust walk audit of the ½ mile South Lamar walkshed
- Prioritize improvements at Bluebonnet/Lamar intersection

Figure 6-18: Protected Crossings on South Lamar



For the full Health Impact Assessment Report, see **Appendix E**.

SUMMARY

The recommended improvements described in this chapter are the results of a comprehensive process that incorporated the input and feedback of neighborhood residents, local business owners, and City of Austin officials representing a wide variety of interests. The recommendations envision the South Lamar Corridor as a safer, more connected multimodal facility, creating a street that is both an anchor for the surrounding neighborhoods and a welcoming place for local residents and businesses.

