

1.1 OVERVIEW OF PROJECT STAGES

The Toledo Regional Core Circulator Study (RCCS) followed a course of action that started with a solid foundation of need, analyzed a comprehensive list of alternatives, and responded when current events offered new possibilities to be considered. What was initially considered to be a 16-month study spanned almost three years, in three distinct stages.

- Stage 1: Downtown Area Analysis
- Stage 2: Economic Benefit Assessment of Downtown Streetcar
- Stage 3: Investigation of Transit Options Between the University of Toledo and Downtown

1.1.1 Stage 1: Downtown Area Analysis

The Toledo area recognizes the importance of a vibrant downtown to the well-being of the region. The *Regional Transportation Plan* calls for transportation improvements supporting revitalization of the regional core.

RCCS began as an effort to address transportation-related questions raised in the *Downtown Toledo Master Plan*, unveiled in 2002. Developed by Downtown Toledo, Inc. (DTI) and the City of Toledo, in cooperation with the Toledo-Lucas County Planning Commission, much of the Master Plan is organized around two key principles – direct infill development to Madison Avenue and Huron Street to create strong

spines connecting the various districts of downtown and create an attractive public space to provide public access along the riverfront. The plan outlines proposed improvement programs for the Riverfront, Core and Warehouse District areas of downtown.

Several specific transportation proposals were recommended in the Master Plan that required further study. These included changes in street operation from one-way to two-way, a central transit center, parking expansion and changes to existing Toledo Area Regional Transit Authority (TARTA) bus stations. These proposals spawned additional questions as to what is the best downtown transportation system. The need to answer these questions resulted in the first stage of RCCS, initiated in July 2002.

1.1.2 Stage 2: Economic Benefit Assessment of Downtown Streetcar

In November 2003, as the project was nearing a decision on the preferred course of action, it became apparent that an economic analysis of the benefits of the proposed streetcar would facilitate the decision-making process. The scope of work was expanded to provide this information and the schedule was extended to complete the analysis by mid-2004.

The Toledo Regional Core Circulator Study has three distinct stages:

- *Stage 1: Downtown Area Analysis*
- *Stage 2: Economic Benefit Assessment of Downtown Streetcar*
- *Stage 3: Investigation of Transit Options Between the University of Toledo and Downtown*

1.1.3 Stage 3: Investigation of Transit Options Between the University Of Toledo and Downtown

During the time the economic analysis was being conducted, two major events occurred. News of the proposed Glass Pavilion project across from the Toledo Museum of Art reached the study team. This new attraction across from a well-established visitor destination needed to be considered.

More significantly, the University of Toledo unveiled a plan for a Toledo Science, Research and Technology Corridor (herein after called Technology Corridor). The Technology Corridor would be formed by connecting the University of Toledo's Bancroft and Scott Park campuses, the Toledo Hospital, the Medical University of Ohio (formerly known as Medical College of Ohio) and other nearby partners. Discussions with these partners indicated a strong linkage between the Technology Corridor and the downtown, suggesting the need for an investigation of ways to connect the two. This became the Connecting to the Core: Transit Options Between the University of Toledo and Downtown assessment conducted in 2004, and referred to as the university corridor analysis.

1.2 STUDY PURPOSE

The ultimate objective of RCCS is to achieve broad consensus on what types of transportation improvements best meet Toledo's needs and goals for its regional core – the downtown and surrounding areas. The study process was initiated in

July 2002 and involved an extensive public involvement process to react to technical planning analyses. This study is an alternatives analysis, with the alternatives crafted to respond to specific questions that downtown constituencies posed, including the basic question of how to connect major activity centers. This custom tailoring of alternatives has permitted the public to identify what should be incorporated in the best transportation solution for Toledo.

The goal of the Toledo Regional Core Circulator Study is to identify the best transportation system for downtown

The planning process involved initial stakeholder interviews, followed in October 2002 by a stakeholder conference. This conference included workshops where stakeholder groups identified issues and potential treatments. This information was input into the *Needs and Opportunity Assessment Report* published in December 2002 and was used to identify basic improvement concepts.

As the concepts were refined, specific alternatives were developed that addressed five key study questions relating to:

- What is the best overall mode of downtown transportation?
- What is the best transportation connection to the Toledo Museum of Art and Zoo?
- What is the best transportation connection across the Maumee River?
- Should the existing bus loop operations and stations be changed, and if so how?
- What is the impact of changing streets from one-way to two-way? Are there new roadway connections that should be provided?

Orienting alternatives to specific questions is non-traditional, but still consistent with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements for studying major investment alternatives eligible for federal funding. Federal regulations require a No Build (in this case the Baseline), transportation system management (TSM) and Build alternatives. The TSM alternative represents relatively low-cost improvements that address study issues. Build alternatives are typically more costly improvements.

The modal strategies evaluated for each study question can be packaged to be consistent with federal regulations, as reflected in Table 1-1. They were developed and evaluated as answers to specific questions since packaging them together in one alternative would make it difficult to assess the performance and answer the particular question.

Analysis focused on future 2030 conditions, although information on the impacts of some alternatives if implemented today was also provided. No Build conditions were assessed for each study question. The overall mode options reflect both TSM and build alternatives. Questions related to connections to other areas, bus loop operations and downtown street operations represent elements of the TSM alternative. The Baseline Alternative is the 2030 No-Build.

A package of “Fundamental” improvements related to streetscape, pedestrian/bicycle improvements, wayfinding and other moderately low-cost improvements was developed. These

improvements are considered “fundamental” to the success of downtown Toledo and must be a part of the preferred alternative.

1.3 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

Public involvement was encouraged and managed using a stepped approach in which gradually widening circles of concerned citizens, officials, business persons and civic leaders were encouraged to participate in the study’s decision-making process.

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Details are provided in the *Public Involvement Report* published under separate cover. Highlights of the public involvement program are noted in the following sub-sections.

1.3.1 Steering Committee

A Steering Committee of 19, comprised mainly of representatives of local government groups, met a total of 16 times (4 times as part of the Task Force) during the Stage 1 study process. Membership was expanded for Stage 3 and the Committee met twice in 2004. Members of the Committee are identified in Appendix A.

1.3.2 Task Force

The 43-member Task Force (including the 19 original Steering Committee members) met 4 times during the course of the project. Task Force members represent

Table 1-1 STUDY QUESTIONS AND ALTERNATIVES

Study Question	Modal Strategies/Alternatives	NEPA Alternatives		
		No Build (Baseline)	TSM	Build
What is the best overall mode of downtown transportation?	Status Quo	X		
	Rubber-tired Circulators		X	
	Streetcar			X
	Personal Rapid Transit (PRT)			X
What is the best transportation connection to the Toledo Museum of Art and Zoo?	Status Quo	X		
	Improved TARTA Connections		X	
	Dedicated Service			X
What is the best transportation connection across the Maumee River?	Status Quo	X		
	Rubber-tired Circulator			
	Water Taxi			
	Aerial Gondola			
Should the existing bus loop operations and stations be changed, and if so how?	Status Quo	X	X	
	Central Transfer Station		X	
	Modify Loop		X	
	Modify Stations		X	
What is the impact of changing streets from one-way to two-way? Are there new roadway connections that should be provided?	Status Quo	X		
	All Streets Two-way		X	
	Modified Two-Way Operation		X	
	New Street Connections			X

many of the downtown activity centers. Members are noted in Appendix A.

Convention Centre and Toledo-Lucas County Public Library.

1.3.3 Stakeholder Interviews

Study team members conducted 35 interviews with stakeholders, either as individuals or groups, in Stage 1. Examples of stakeholder groups interviewed include Toledo Museum of Art, the Toledo Zoo, Fifth Third Bank, Fifth Third Field, Citifest, Sandpiper Water Transit, Owens Corning, Riverfront Apartments, SeaGate

During Stage 3 another round of interviews was conducted with stakeholders, including various Departments of the University of Toledo, The Toledo Hospital, the Toledo Museum of Art and adjacent neighborhood groups.

1.3.4 Stakeholder Conference

On October 7, 2002 approximately 50 of 175 invitees attended a half-day stakeholder conference that included workshop sessions focused on Toledo issues and opportunities. US Representative Marcy Kaptur provided opening remarks.

1.3.5 Public Meetings

Two rounds of public meetings were held during Stage 1. One was from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. on October 9, 2002 at the Toledo-Lucas County Public Library to review materials on identified problems, issues and potential alternatives. Over 2,500 postcard invitations were mailed and 17 persons attended.

A second round of public meetings was held to present and discuss the evaluation of alternatives. A total of approximately 300 invitations were mailed, a public meeting notice was placed in three local newspapers and a major news article was printed in the Toledo Blade before the meeting. A court reporter prepared a transcript of comments and a 45-day comment period was provided. A total of approximately 37 persons signed in for the two sessions provided – one from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and another from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. The meetings were held in the lobby of a downtown office building and included half-hour of open house time, a one-hour presentation and question-and-answer period, and a final half-hour of open house time. Members of the Steering Committee presented the evaluation findings.

A public meeting was held on December 9, 2004 at the Monroe Street United Methodist Church from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. and from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. to discuss the Stage 3 analysis addressing transit options between the University of Toledo and downtown. The meeting was advertised in the newspaper and local newsletters. A total of approximately 25 people attended.

1.3.6 Group Briefings

A total of eight briefings were held during the four-month period June through September, 2003. The briefings were status reports on the results of evaluation of the alternatives. Groups or individuals briefed include:

- Downtown Toledo Inc. Board;
- Selected City Council members;
- Lucas County Commissioners;
- TARTA Capital Projects Committee;
- *The Blade* Editorial Board; and
- City Council Economic Development Committee.

1.4 REPORT PRESENTATION

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 pertain to the purpose and need, alternatives and evaluation of alternatives, respectively, for the Stage 1 analysis of the downtown core, including the Stage 2 economic assessment. Results of the Stage 3 university corridor analysis are presented in Chapter 5.

The Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) is described in Chapter 6.

Chapter 7 includes information on the financial plan and conclusions.

The following Appendices are printed in a separate volume. They include:

- Appendix A: Steering Committee and Task Force Members
- Appendix B: Initial Modes Considered
- Appendix C: Streetcar Memo
- Appendix D: Notes on PRT Costs
- Appendix E: Toledo Museum of Art to Zoo Shuttles Analysis Memo
- Appendix F: Water-based Transportation Assessment Memo
- Appendix G: Aerial Gondola Memo
- Appendix H: Central Transfer Analysis Memo
- Appendix I: Traffic Analyses Memo
- Appendix J: Sample Taxi Regulations
- Appendix K: Ridership Estimation Approach Memo
- Appendix L: Environmental Scan Memo
- Appendix M: Cost Assumptions Memo
- Appendix N: Economic Impact Analysis of Downtown Toledo Streetcar
- Appendix O: University Corridor Analysis Memo
- Appendix P: Funding Options Memo