



Victory Drive – Skidaway Sector Plan

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VICTORY DRIVE/SKIDAWAY SECTOR PLAN

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Introduction

The area surrounding Victory Drive/US 80 at Truman Parkway was identified for focused study as part of the CORE Total Mobility Plan because of key transportation facilities that connect in the area, its role as a gateway between the islands and downtown Savannah, transportation system impacts of recent commercial development, and active development proposals in various stages. This report is intended to identify issues and opportunities related to an effective transportation system in the area, building upon previous work completed by CORE MPO during its regular update of the Congestion Management Process.

The figure below shows the study area, which includes land in the City of Savannah and in Thunderbolt.

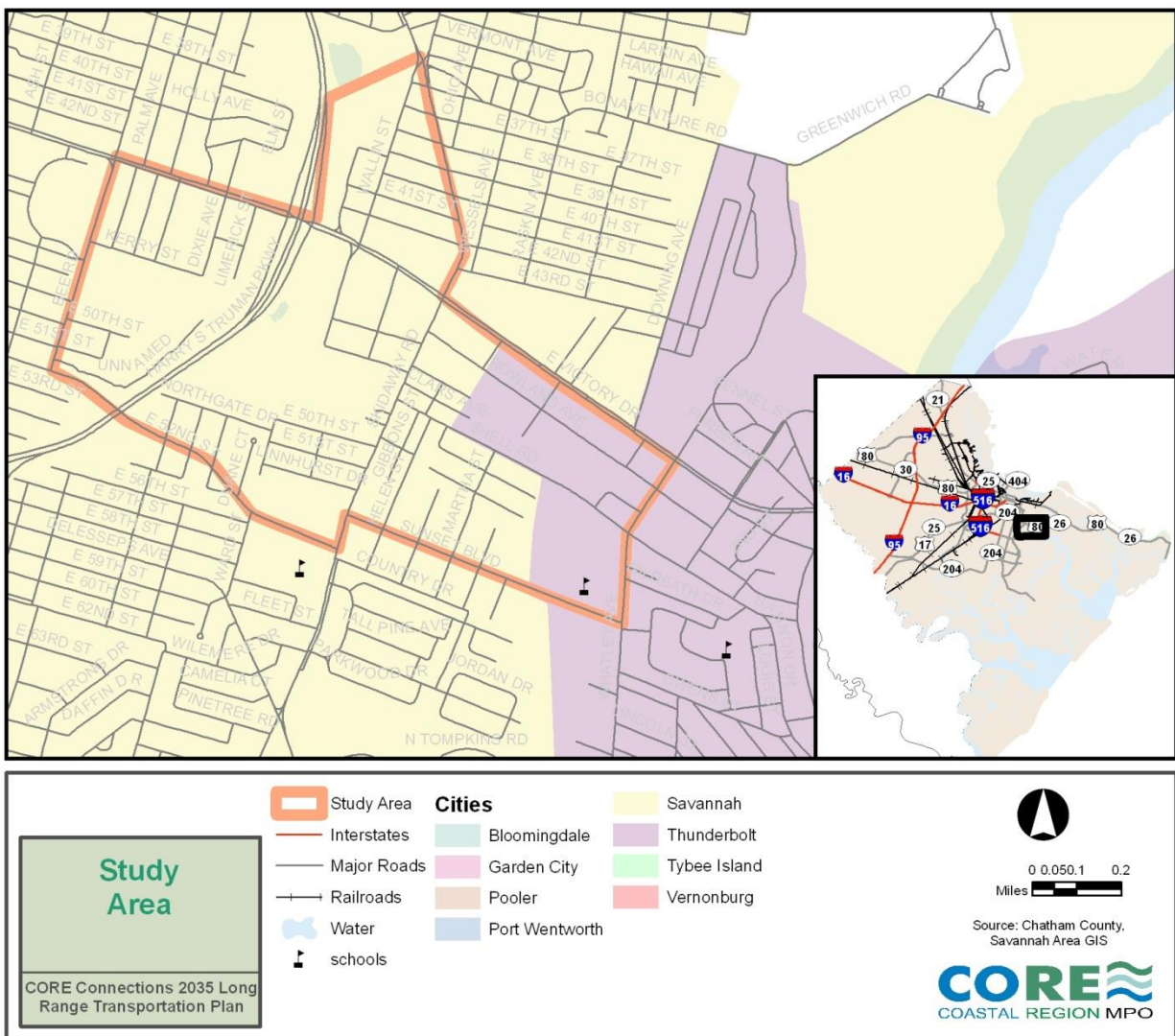


Figure 1 Study Area and Jurisdictions

Area Overview

There are three arterials in the area, Victory Drive/US 80, Truman Parkway, and Skidaway Road. Principal arterials are intended to carry trips through the region, emphasizing mobility over access to adjacent land. US 80 is a designated hurricane evacuation route.

Road Name	GDOT Functional Class	Width
Victory Drive/US 80	Urban Principal Arterial	Four-lane divided
Rowland Avenue	Urban Local Road	Two-lane
Shell Road	Urban Local Road	Two-lane
52 nd Street	Urban Collector	Two-lane
Sunset Blvd	Urban Local Road	Two-lane
Bee Road	Urban Collector	Two-lane
Wallin Street	Urban Collector	Two-lane
Truman Pkwy	Urban Principal Arterial	Four-lane limited access
Skidaway Road	Urban Principal Arterial	Two-lane; four-lane approaching Victory Drive intersection
Whatley Avenue	Urban Collector	Two-lane

Previous Study and Recent Improvements

Because of the congestion and intense development in the area, several recommendations to improve operations have been explored by local jurisdictions and GDOT. The 2009 Congestion Management Process (CMP) analyzed the area immediately surrounding the Home Depot/Target/Staples shopping center, including the Truman Parkway interchange. The CMP update recommended four improvements:

1. Implement a dual left turn lane configuration for the westbound traffic exiting the shopping center at the Victory Drive intersection with Wallin Street.
2. Reconfigure Rowland Avenue at Skidaway Road to align with the entrance into the shopping center.
3. Install a signal at the new Rowland Avenue/Shopping Center entrance intersection identified in Recommendation #2 above.
4. Work with the shopping center property owners to close off the northernmost entrance bay in the parking lot by the Wallin Street entrance. This is required to allow enough vehicle storage in the dual left turn-lane bays.

Subsequent to the CMP, the long range transportation plan adopted in 2009 includes an operational improvement project for the Victory Drive/Truman Parkway interchange area. The general project location is shown in Figure 8.

The City of Savannah is currently working with GDOT to lengthen the left-turn lane from US 80 eastbound onto Wallin Street northbound. Any improvement project will need to address the drainage inlet located near the current end of the turn lane. GDOT recently completed a project to add a second right-turn lane from northbound Truman Parkway onto Victory Drive. The City of Savannah also improved signal timing in 2010 with the goal of reducing congestion related to the Truman Parkway.

Chatham County has a long-standing SPLOST project to improve Skidaway Road, which includes realigning Rowland Avenue at the Target shopping center entrance, relocating a traffic signal there, and extending 52nd Street east to connect to Sunset Boulevard. The Skidaway Road project is at the concept level now and will need future public involvement efforts as part of the final design.

Development Character

Figure 9 shows the existing land use in the study area. Victory Drive is characterized by big box and strip commercial development, with a few multifamily residential developments. Victory Drive has been designated by the Coastal Region (CORE) MPO as a Historic Amenity Corridor, a Canopy Amenity Corridor, and a Gateway Corridor. No other highway in the sector is a designated amenity corridor.

Skidaway Road is also a commercial corridor, with characteristic strip development. Although Skidaway Road has a smaller scale than Victory Drive, both are generally lined with parking lots.

Rowland Avenue, one block south of Victory Drive acts as a service road for most parcels that front on Victory Drive and has industrial and commercial uses on the south side of the street. The parcels on the south side of the street typically contain one or two aisle parking lots that front on Rowland Avenue.

The remainder of the study area is primarily single family residential or vacant land. According to 2009 land use data, of the 968 parcels in the study area, 217 (or 22%) are vacant or undeveloped. This represents 109 (26%) of 415 acres, a significant share of the land.

There is currently a large commercial site west of Truman Parkway which formerly housed the Bacchus car dealership. Whole Foods has expressed interest in the site. Currently, the site is only accessed from Victory Drive/US 80. However, the City owns a large parcel with access to Limerick Street, which runs on the west side of the Bacchus site, and Kerry Street, which currently dead-ends at Dixie Street. Increased traffic from a major retailer such as Whole Foods could degrade the performance of Victory Drive and the Truman Parkway ramps further.

Multimodal Users

Figure 10 shows the multimodal transportation network in the study area. The majority of roads do not have sidewalks or bicycle facilities. The area has local bus service operated by Chatham Area Transit (CAT). There are bus routes on Victory Drive and Skidaway Road. Skidaway Road does not have sidewalks. In addition to the sidewalk on the north side, there are walking paths worn along the south side of Victory Drive/US 80. There are intermittent sidewalks on 52nd Street. There is a sidewalk and bike lanes on Bee Road adjacent to Daffin Park.

Figure 13 and Figure 14 show a pedestrian walking on the south side of Victory Drive, between a drainage swale and the roadway.

Traffic Conditions

The road network is regularly congested, especially during peak times in the afternoon on weekdays and on weekends when shopping trips peak. Figure 11 shows estimated road network congestion based on the regional travel demand model. Figure 14 shows the signal at Victory Drive and Wallin Street, with left-turning traffic blocking the through lane as the signal changes to yellow.

Specific congested areas include:

- Victory Drive in the Truman Parkway interchange area and Wallin Street intersection
 - Victory Drive left-turning vehicles onto northbound Wallin Street block the left through lane on Victory Drive
 - Signal at Victory Drive and Truman Parkway northbound off ramp; queues from Wallin Street signal extend to Truman Parkway at peak hours.
- Skidaway Road at 52nd Street
- Skidaway Road at Wallin Street

According to the City of Savannah Traffic Engineer, traffic signals on the Victory Drive/US 80 corridor from Bee Road to east of Skidaway Road are coordinated based on time of day. Signals on Skidaway Road north of Victory Drive are also coordinated by time of day. Figure 12 shows the location of signalized intersections.

Access Management

Of the three arterials in the study area, Skidaway Road and Victory Drive/US 80 provide access to development along the roadside. As a limited access road, Truman Parkway only provides access to the road network at the Victory Drive/US 80 interchange. Because it is a major east-west arterial both regionally and nationally, US 80 is intended to primarily serve through traffic. However, the high degree of access provided along US 80 limits the efficiency of through movements. The figures below show that both driveway spacing and median opening spacing are below standards recommended by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT).

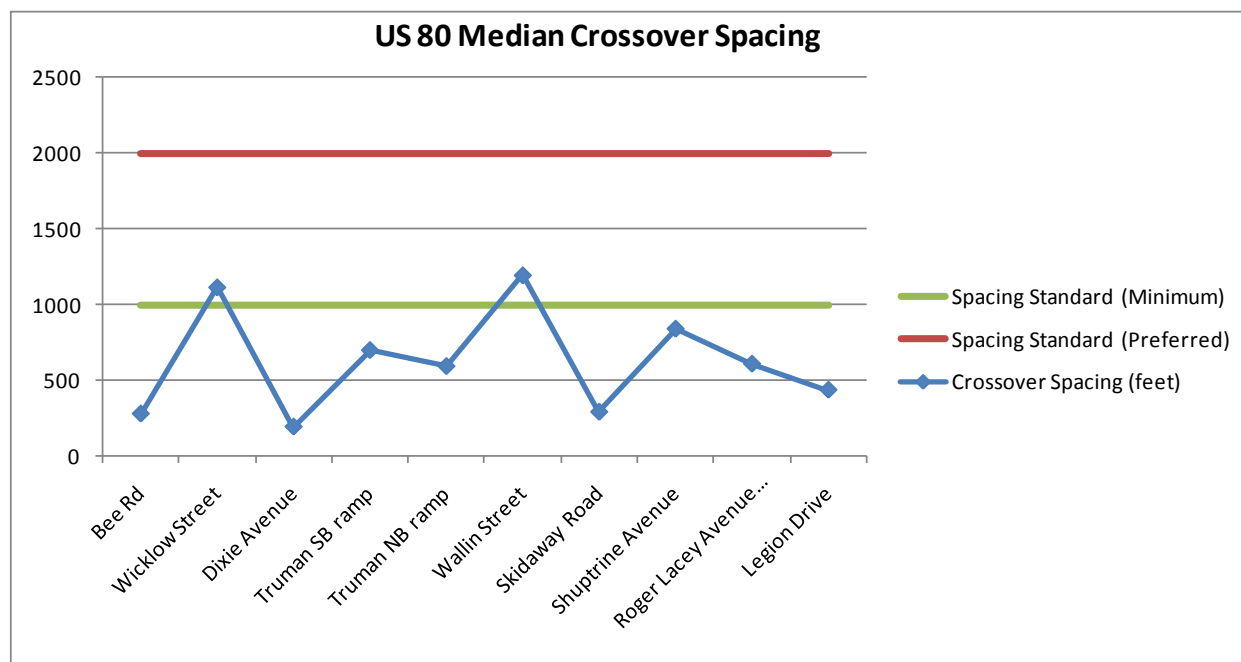


Figure 2 Median Opening Spacing

The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) recommends a minimum driveway spacing of 294 feet on roadways with right-turn lanes and a speed limit of 40mph¹. The figures below show that segments on both eastbound and westbound US 80 do not meet the recommended spacing, but that eastbound has many more driveways than are recommended.

¹ Georgia Department of Transportation. October 2009. *Regulations for Driveway and Encroachment Control*.

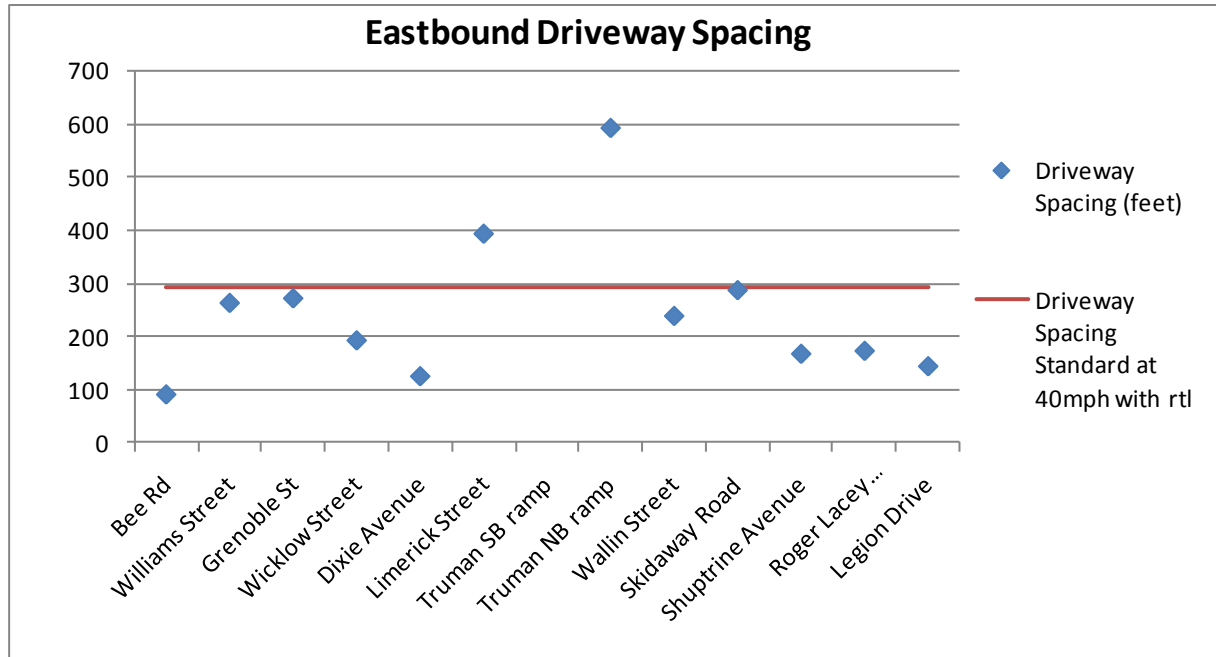


Figure 3 Eastbound Driveway Spacing between Intersections

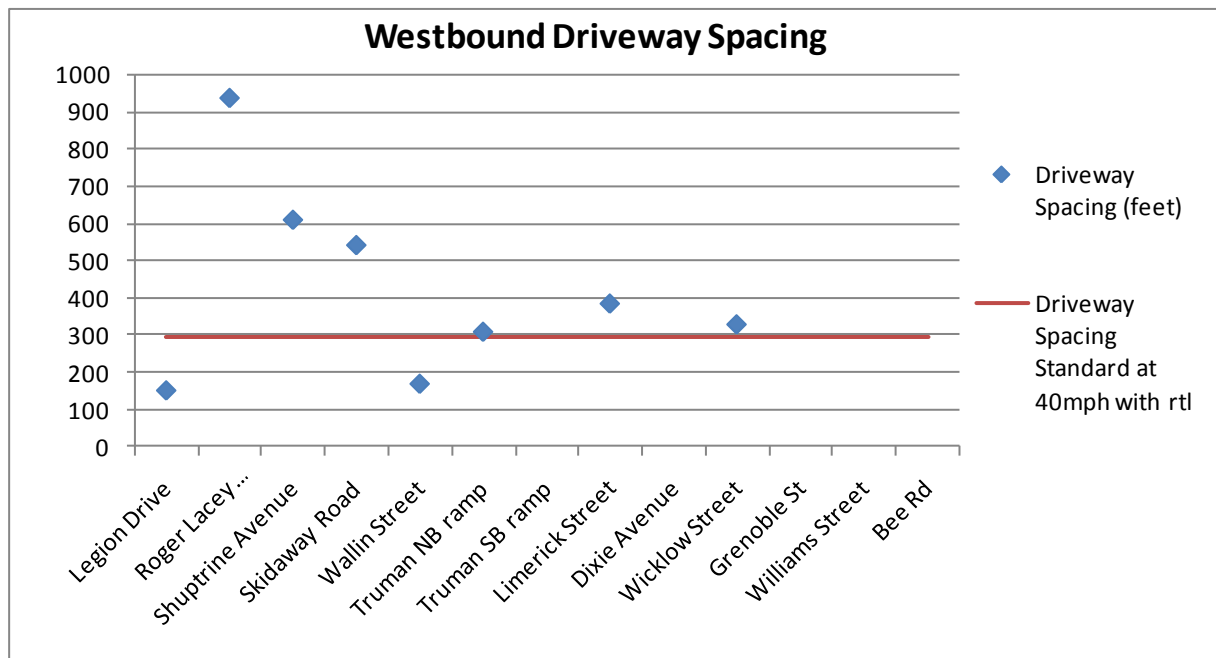


Figure 4 Westbound Driveway Spacing between Intersections

The driveway spacing on Skidaway Road is also below standard for the majority of the study area. Figure 5 and Figure 6 show the applicable driveway spacing, which includes driveways on both sides of the road where the road is undivided; points below the red line indicate areas with substandard driveway spacing. Figure 16 shows several closely spaced driveways on Skidaway Road, with the queue

at the traffic signal blocking adjacent driveways. Driveways in the signal's influence area limit the capacity of the roadway and the effectiveness of the signal.

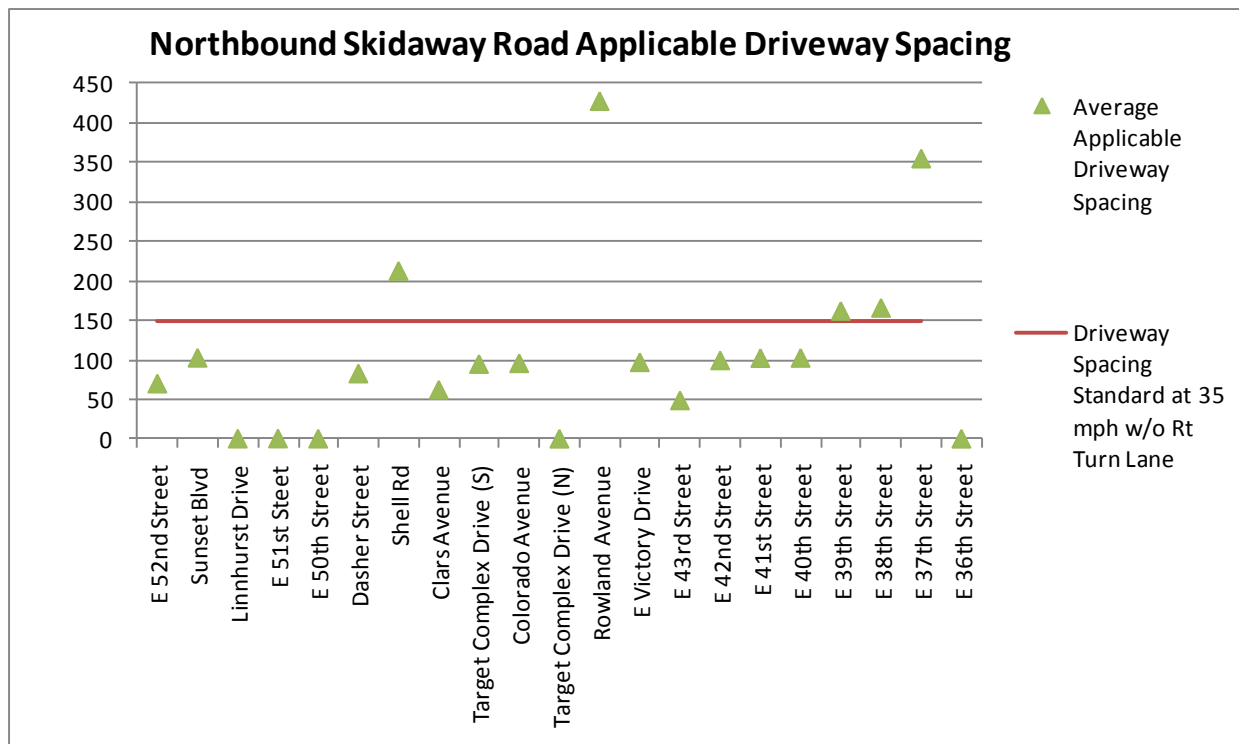


Figure 5 Northbound Skidaway Road Driveway Spacing between Intersections

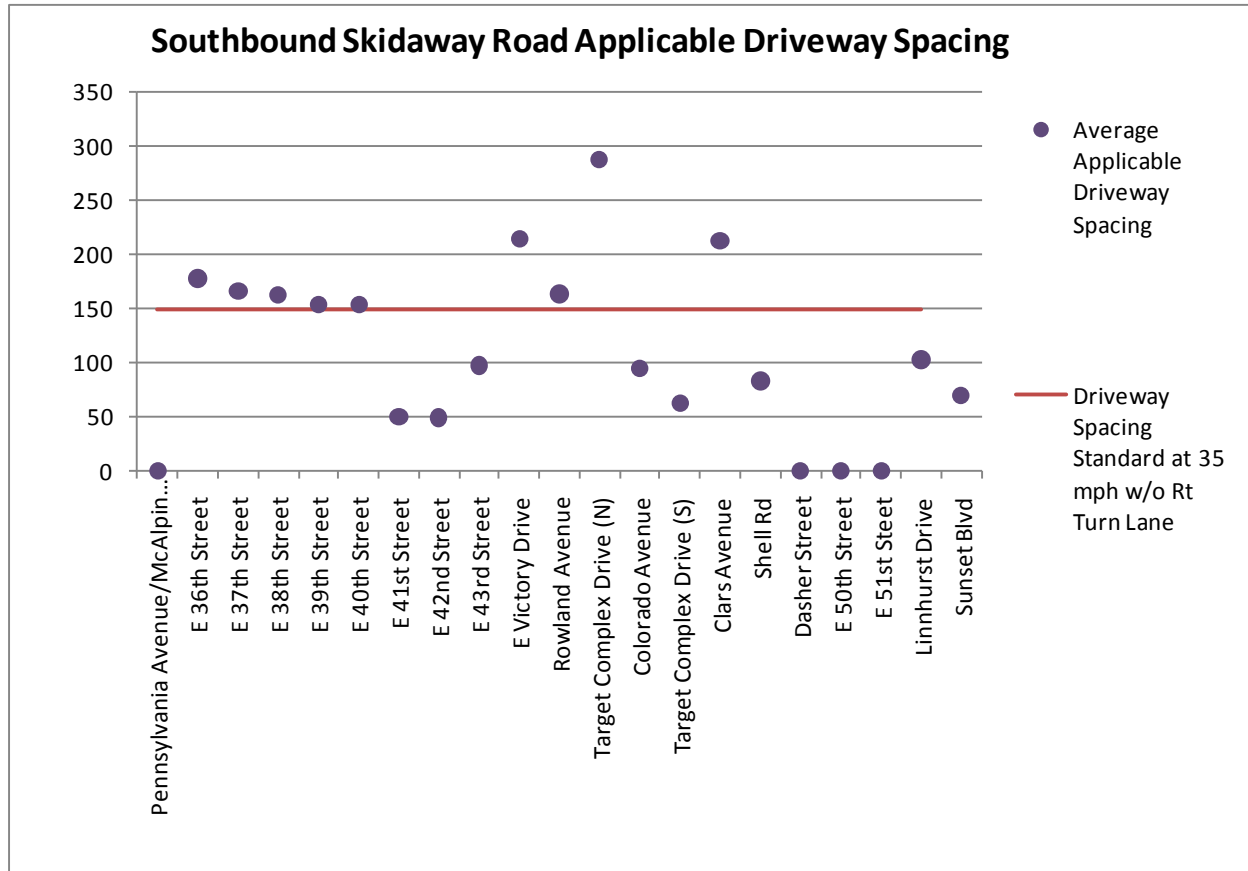


Figure 6 Southbound Skidaway Road Driveway Spacing between Intersections

Crash History

The study team reviewed the most recently available crash history from the CARE database managed by GDOT. Crashes from 2007-2009 are included in the analysis. The figure below shows overall crash count by location. The thickness of the roadway centerline represents the number of crashes summed by half-mile segments. The circles represent the total number of crashes in the database for the precise location shown.

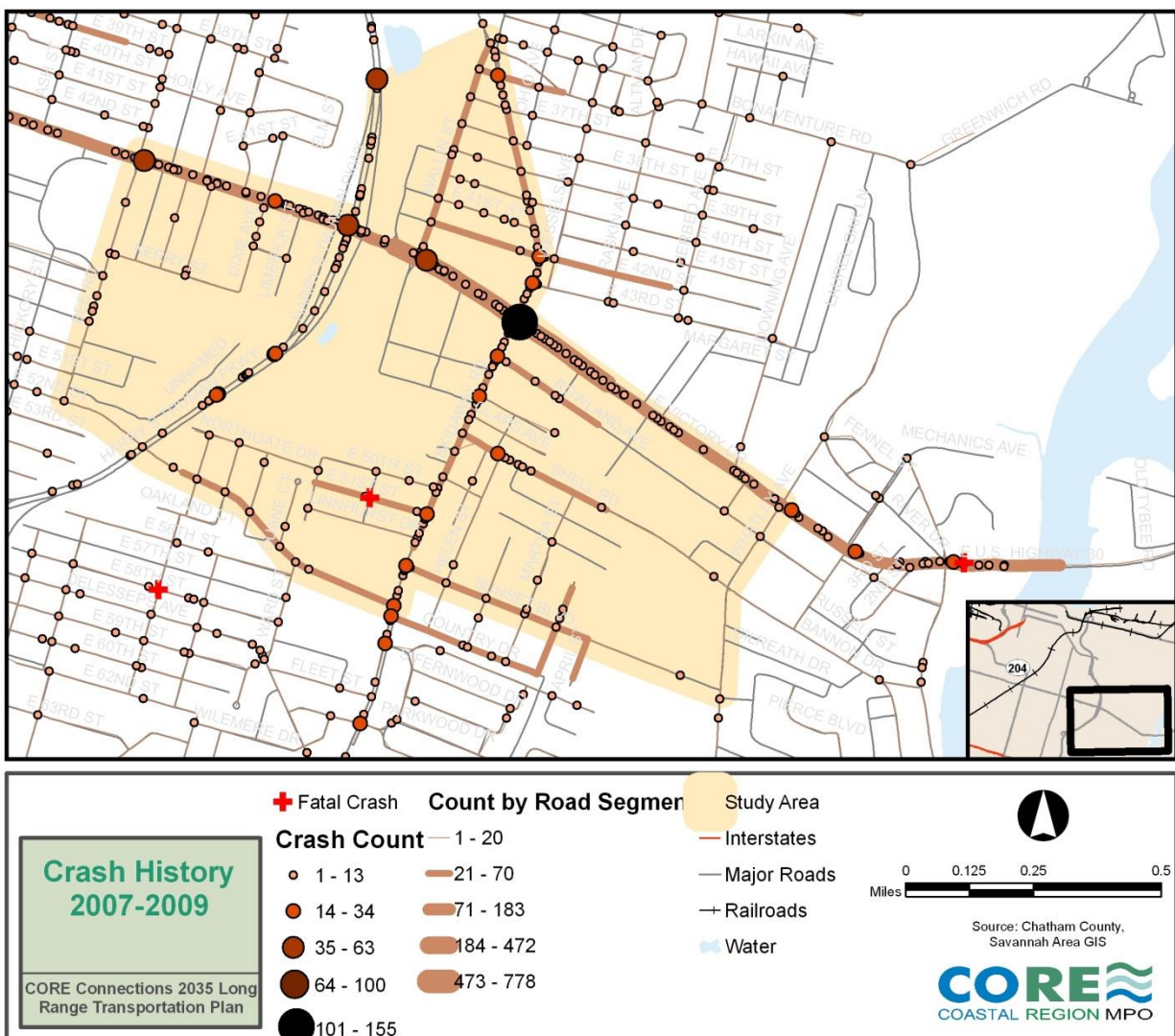


Figure 7 Crash Count 2007-2009

The table below shows a summary of crashes by type at each major signalized intersection in the study area. The predominance of rear end collisions suggests that general congestion and queue lengths may be an issue, while other potential causal factors include poor visibility of signals, inadequate signal timing, or large turn volumes.

Table 1 Intersection Crashes in the Study Area

Victory Drive and Bee Road Intersection and Influence Area		
Manner of Collision	2007-2009 Count	Percent of Intersection Crashes
Angle	13	25%
Head On	1	2%
Rear End	23	44%
Sideswipe – Same Direction	5	10%
Sideswipe – Opposite Direction	1	2%
Not a Collision with a motor vehicle	9	17%

Table 1 Intersection Crashes in the Study Area

Victory Drive and Truman Parkway Ramps intersections and influence area		
Manner of Collision	2007-2009 Count	Percent of Intersection Crashes
Angle	13	16%
Head On	1	1%
Rear End	52	65%
Sideswipe – Same Direction	12	15%
Sideswipe – Opposite Direction	0	0%
Not a Collision with a motor vehicle	2	3%
Wallin Street and Victory Drive intersection and influence area		
Manner of Collision	2007-2009 Count	Percent of Intersection Crashes
Angle	14	15%
Head On	5	5%
Rear End	60	65%
Sideswipe – Same Direction	10	11%
Sideswipe – Opposite Direction	1	1%
Not a Collision with a motor vehicle	3	3%
Victory Drive and Skidaway Road intersection and influence area		
Manner of Collision	2007-2009 Count	Percent of Intersection Crashes
Angle	55	23%
Head On	6	3%
Rear End	136	57%
Sideswipe – Same Direction	28	12%
Sideswipe – Opposite Direction	2	1%
Not a Collision with a motor vehicle	10	4%
Whatley Avenue and Victory Drive intersection and influence area		
Manner of Collision	2007-2009 Count	Percent of Intersection Crashes
Angle	15	36%
Head On	0	0%
Rear End	18	43%
Sideswipe – Same Direction	3	7%
Sideswipe – Opposite Direction	4	10%
Not a Collision with a motor vehicle	2	5%
52nd Street and Skidaway Road intersection		
Manner of Collision	2007-2009 Count	Percent of Intersection Crashes
Angle	8	31%
Head On	3	12%
Rear End	10	38%
Sideswipe – Same Direction	3	12%
Sideswipe – Opposite Direction	0	0%
Not a Collision with a motor vehicle	2	8%

The study team also reviewed crash data for the northbound Truman Parkway exit ramp and influence area. From milepost 3.8 north/east to 5.1, there were 52 crashes in the three year period. Of those, only seven (7) were rear end collisions, and twelve (12) were same direction sideswipe collisions that may be related to queuing at the exit ramp.

Table 2 Crashes on Truman Parkway Northbound at Victory Drive

Manner of Collision	2007-2009 Count	Percent of Crashes
Angle	9	17%
Head On	0	0%
Rear End	7	13%
Sideswipe – Same Direction	12	23%
Sideswipe – Opposite Direction	0	0%
Not a Collision with a motor vehicle	24	46%

Summary of Issues

- Truman Parkway serves as a barrier to traffic, limiting east-west movements to 52nd Street or Victory Drive/US 80.
- High level of access to Victory Drive/US 80 and Skidaway Road limits the capacity for through traffic.
- There is a bottleneck at the Truman Parkway and Victory Drive interchange due to traffic volumes, including both local traffic to shopping centers and through traffic between islands and Savannah.
- Constrained land area limits improvements that can be made without significant impacts to natural resources or private property.
- Previous development was approved without a process to estimate or mitigate traffic impacts. Layout of parking and commercial driveways results in queues and increased delay on Victory Drive.

Summary of Opportunities

- Proposed redevelopment and redevelopment opportunities
- Proposed and planned bicycle/pedestrian facilities
- Historic character and oak trees make Victory Drive a signature route in Savannah
- City of Savannah Economic Development Department activities to provide detailed plans on strategic corridors
- The County has a planned project to improve Skidaway Road through the study area
- GDOT has plans to improve the left turn lane from eastbound Victory Drive to northbound Wallin Street; Funding is pending.
- Improved local road connectivity through road projects or redevelopment

Recommendations

There are a number of issues that have been identified through the assessment of the area. In order to address the identified issues, as well as take advantage of the opportunities for Victory Drive to maintain its status as a signature route, as well as its historic character, several major recommendations have been developed. These recommendations are designed to ease the traffic congestion, particularly in the

area of the shopping centers and provide a long term solution in enhancing east-west parallel capacity, as well as improve the multimodal access and network along Victory Drive, Skidaway Road, and Wallin Street. Other studies and/or recommendations by the City of Savannah, Chatham County and the Georgia Department of Transportation have also been included in the development of these recommendations. The recommendations include the following:

- Continue with plans to improve the turn lanes and signal timing from the Truman Parkway northbound exit ramp onto Victory Drive and the improvements to the left turn lane from eastbound Victory Drive to northbound Wallin Street.
- Coordinate with the redevelopment opportunities, particularly west of Truman Parkway along Victory Drive to ensure the incorporation of pedestrian facilities, landscaping, and access management.
- Extend Kerry Street from Dixie Avenue across Truman Parkway into the shopping center parking lot between the Home Depot and Target stores. The roadway facility would continue through the parking lot and tie into Rowland Avenue, coordinated with the local plan to realign Rowland Avenue with the Skidaway Road access to the shopping area. The character and cross section of Rowland Avenue is currently suited to providing parallel access for Victory Drive to Whatley Avenue. This extension provides the opportunity to provide additional or improved ingress/egress to the shopping area, as well as upgrade the parking area from a “sea of asphalt” to a more urban pattern which enhances the character of the area.
- Coordinate with County plans to upgrade the connection of 52nd Street and Skidaway Road. Currently, 52nd Street provides some lower volume, lower level parallel east-west capacity south of Victory Drive. Sunset Boulevard, which runs from Skidaway Road to Whatley Avenue, is more residential in character and in keeping with the character and traffic volumes of 52nd Street. This improved intersection and access to Sunset Boulevard could provide some additional lower level parallel east west capacity.
- Bicycle and pedestrian facilities should be incorporated whenever feasible to ensure the safety, and provide accessibility for multimodal users.
- Coordinate with the transit routes to provide safe and connected access to the stops along the routes within the study area.

Plan Update

Since the completion of the sector plan, several important efforts have occurred in the study area. The GDOT projects to improve the northbound Truman exit ramp at Victory Drive and the left turn lane eastbound from Victory Drive to Wallin Street have been completed. These projects have improved the operation of the intersections, although congestion is still an issue.

The southwest quadrant of the interchange at Truman Parkway and Victory Drive has undergone a significant redevelopment. The property on the south side of Victory Drive was redeveloped into a shopping area with a Whole Foods as the main anchor store. The properties on the north side of Victory Drive are subsequently being upgraded, with additional outparcels developed or developing. The

intersection of Victory Drive and Dixie Avenue has been upgraded, as well as access into these redeveloped properties. Pedestrian facilities have also been upgraded, as well as the replanting of palm trees in the median to ensure the continuation of the historic avenue of palms.

The additional recommendations described above continue to be viable long-range improvements.

Map Series

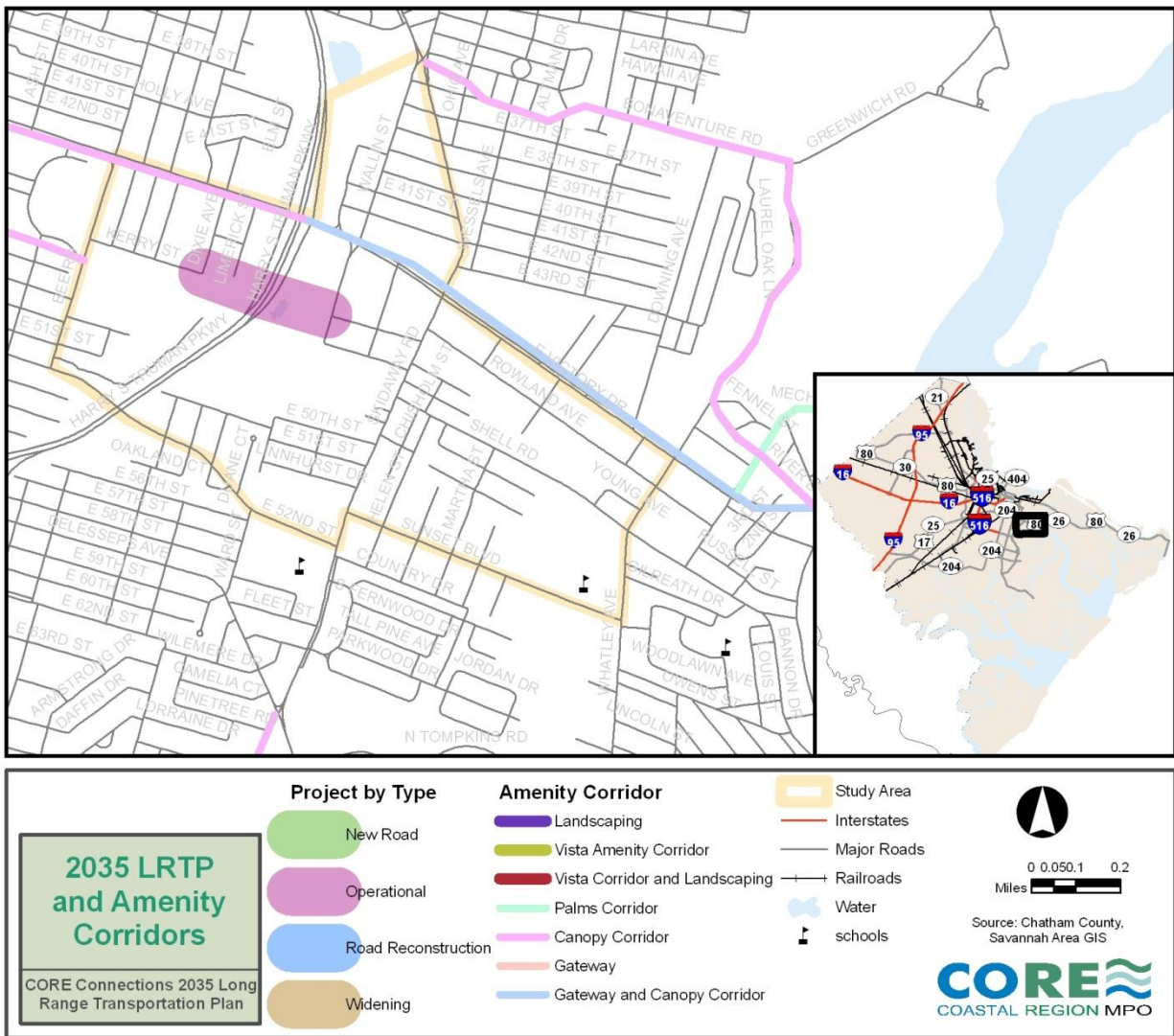


Figure 8 CORE MPO Long Range Transportation Plan

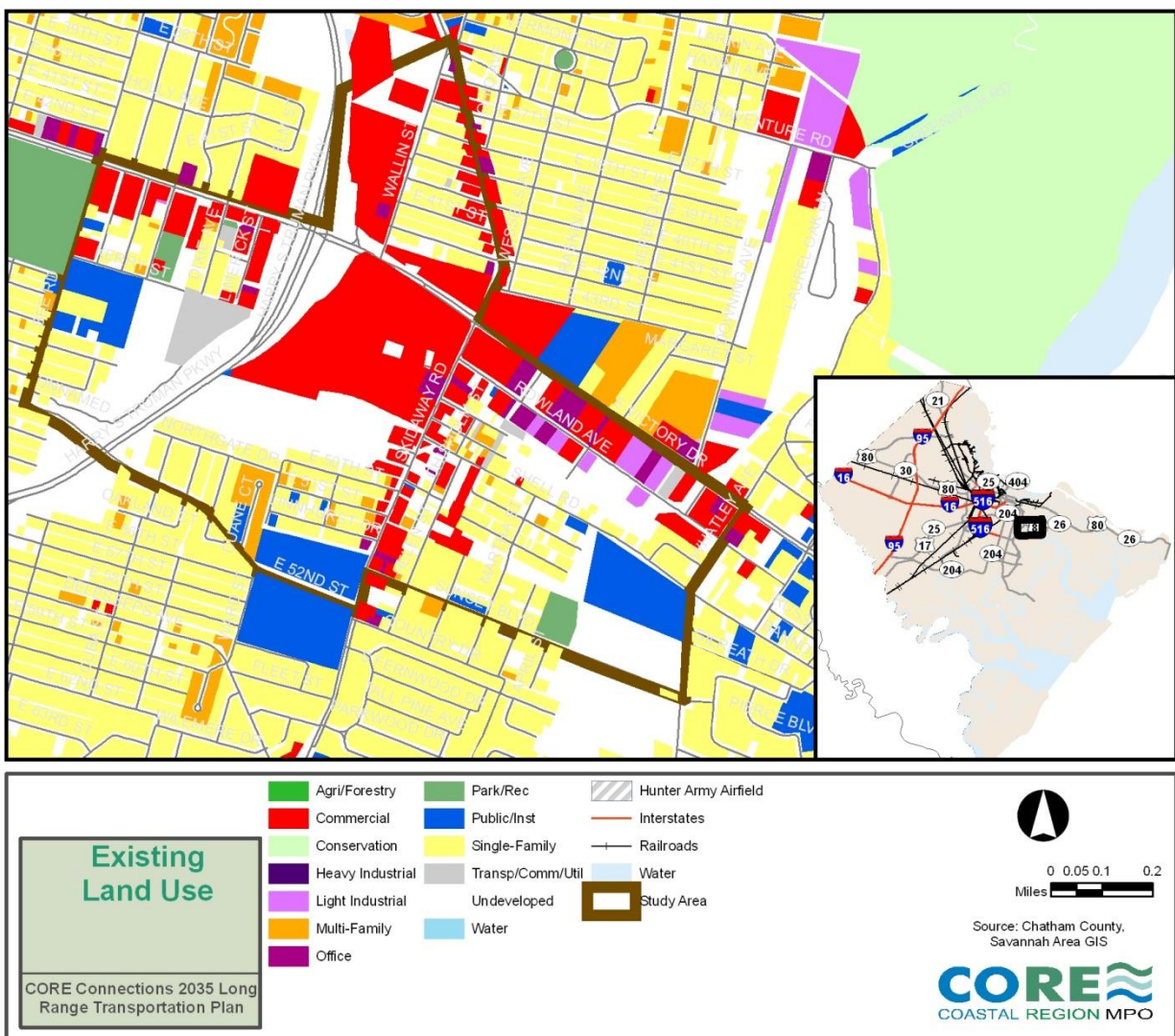


Figure 9 Existing Land Use

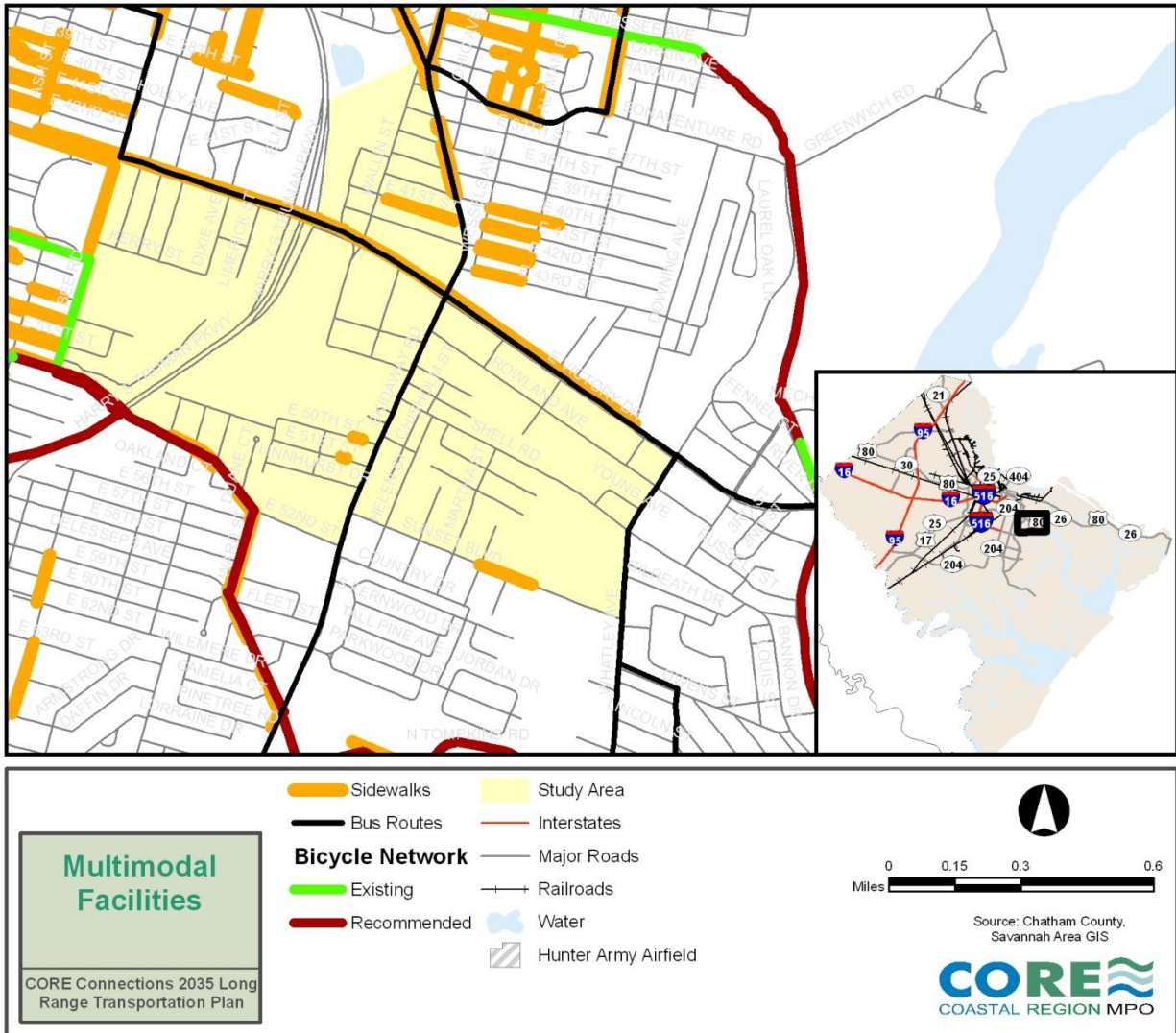


Figure 10 Multimodal Network

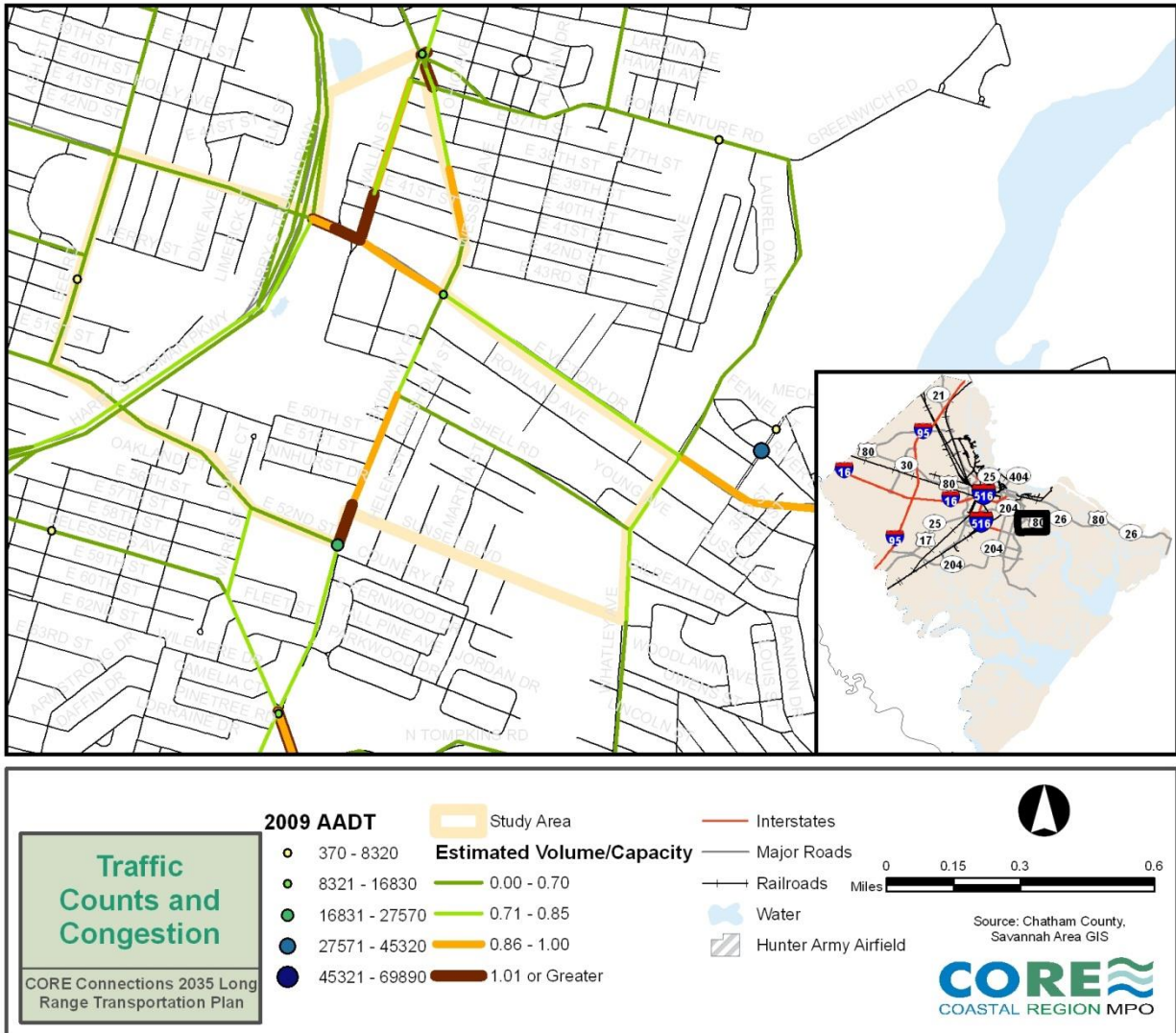


Figure 11 Existing Traffic

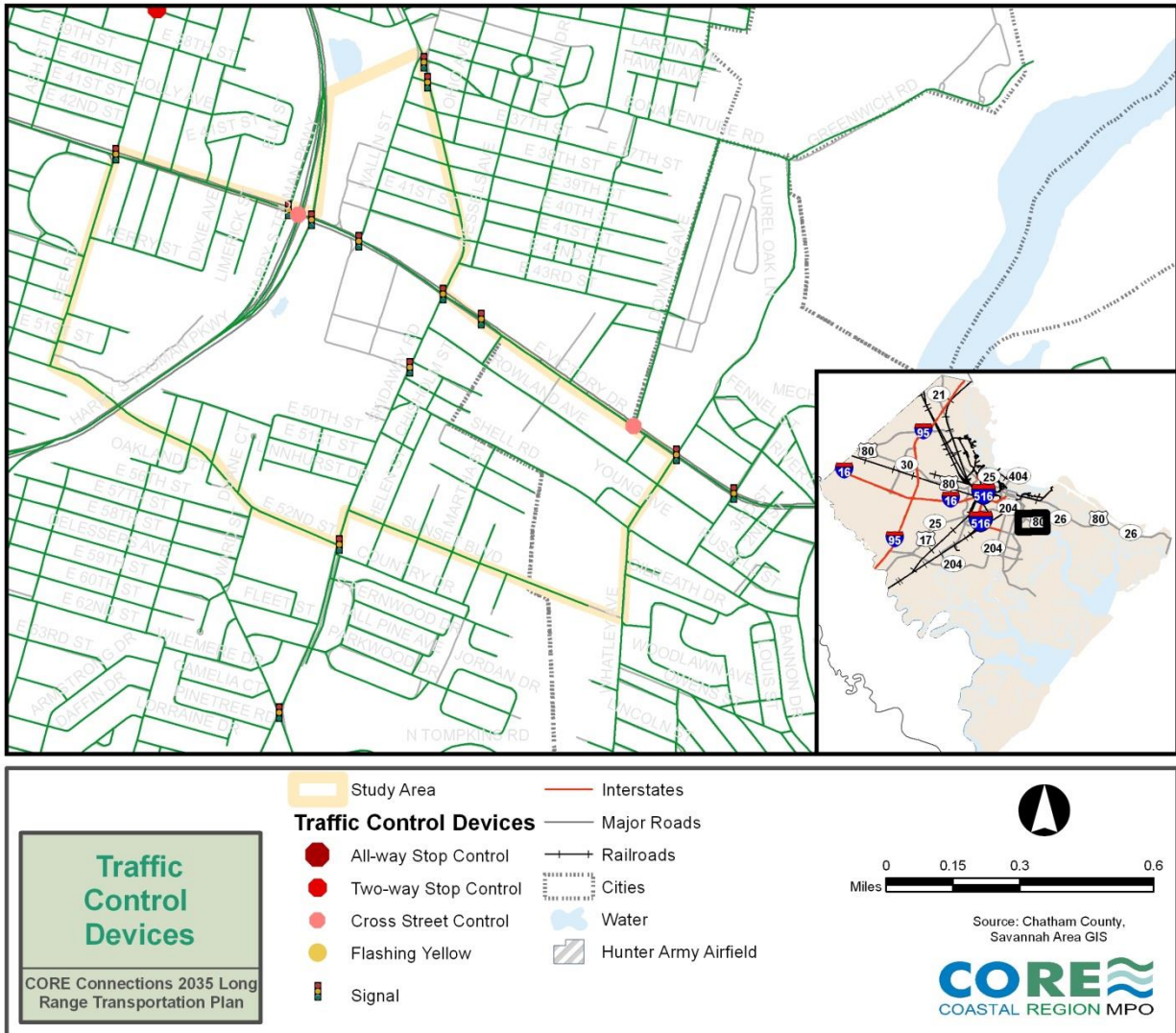


Figure 12 Traffic Control Devices



Figure 13 Pedestrian in Victory Drive walking path (just east of Wallin Street)



Figure 14 Victory Drive Worn Roadside Path



Figure 15 Left-turn Queue Blocking Eastbound Through Traffic on Eastbound Victory Drive



Figure 16 Signal at Target/Home Depot Driveway and Skidaway Road