

# FINAL REPORT

## McKownville Corridor Study

Town of Guilderland, Albany County, New York

CME Project #02-009d

Submitted to:

Town of Guilderland  
Town Hall, P.O. Box 339  
Guilderland, New York 12084

and

Capital District Transportation Committee  
5 Computer Drive West  
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Prepared by:



*with*

**THE HUDSON GROUP, LLC**

*and*



May 29, 2003

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background and Purpose

Where high traffic volumes pass through residential areas, promoting neighborhood quality of life requires a broad mix of both on-the-road and policy actions. Such is the concern in the Town of Guilderland's McKownville neighborhood, through which Western Avenue carries 25,000 to 38,000 vehicles per day. Reconnecting the McKownville neighborhood to itself, in addition to promoting opportunities to travel to points outside the neighborhood through means other than personal motor vehicles, is a challenging task, with much at stake.

That said, reinforcing the primacy of neighborhood-scale activities in busy travel corridors has become easier in recent years with the development and successful use of both analytic tools and highway design techniques which emphasize walking, cycling, transit use, access management and other elements of the transportation system which go beyond the historical emphasis on "moving cars." In addition, considerable empirical evidence now exists to demonstrate that taking steps to make busy corridors more walkable and bikeable has an *economic* payoff – both retail and service sector businesses benefit from making these corridors more approachable to neighborhood residents and to people who work in the area. The McKownville neighborhood offers tremendous opportunity in this regard, given the large residential areas, offices and retail activities all located in a relatively compact area.

This report sets forth a feasible vision both for reinforcement of internal neighborhood travel routes and for the expansion of opportunities to travel beyond the neighborhood, particularly on foot or by bicycle. The underlying premise of the Study held that the potential exists to satisfy all involved parties with "people first" rather than "cars first" designs.

The Implementation Strategy contained within this draft report offers the Town and the residents of the McKownville neighborhood a unified strategy for promoting human scale activity in the area. This approach emphasizes *comprehensive* treatment of the range of circulation types in the study area and *complementary* treatment of the various transportation modes so as to harmonize interactions between modes and between the transportation system and the neighborhood's built environment. At the same time, it should be noted that McKownville interacts with other Town neighborhoods and other communities. Thus, improvements in McKownville will not resolve problems related to the "total trips" many people are taking. In addition, they will not change the overall climate of the area with regard to motorist behavior, for such behavior is a function of the motorist himself/herself as well as everything s/he encounters in the course of a journey. Thus, the improvements proposed in this report should be taken as important first steps in a continuous process of improvement needed to enhance the safety, comfort and convenience of travel in the region.

## Scope and Context: The McKownville Neighborhood

The well-established McKownville neighborhood at once presents numerous opportunities and challenges when working toward heightened degrees of walkability and bikeability and minimizing the adverse effects of motor vehicle travel through the area. In the area of opportunities, the neighborhood includes the following:

- fairly compact residential development
- a number of trip destinations (e.g., Stuyvesant Plaza, the University at Albany main campus, larger office buildings, restaurants) to which travel routes for the various modes can be rather easily traced
- several transit routes
- some degree of existing pedestrian infrastructure along Western Avenue, Fuller Road and a number of side streets from which a more complete system can emerge
- the designation of Western Avenue as part of State Bike Route 5, which gives this street some degree of stature related to NYSDOT's efforts to develop a statewide network of bicycle routes, particularly with regard to pavement cross section and accommodation of bicycles
- knowledgeable and involved residents who can share their experiences and ideas so as to better flesh out the range of known problems and possible actions for the area
- an essential vibrancy and vitality which gives the neighborhood a "good start" in promoting this type of human-scale transportation (that is, there are significant existing levels of walking and cycling to preserve and build upon, as opposed to cases in which the basic ideas of walking and cycling still need to be brought into existence)

The challenges in the neighborhood are by no means "fatal flaws;" in fact, they do present some silver linings. Some of the major examples are the following:

- recent land developments and redevelopments on either side of the Guilderland/Albany line have resulted in additional traffic pressures on the corridor (*silver linings: more local destinations for the neighborhood, and perhaps more walk-to-work opportunities*)
- the study area is near a regional transportation crossroads (the Thruway-Northway-"Freebie 90" area), a regional mall, a major university and a major State employment site, all of which either generate or otherwise handle substantial amounts of traffic (*silver linings: for some, the "local destinations" and "walk to work" opportunities noted previously; for others, the opportunity to zero in on a relatively small number of "gateway" locations at which the message needs to be conveyed to motorists that they are "entering a neighborhood"*)

- congestion in the area (particularly along Western Avenue) has prompted NYSDOT and CDTC to explore means of enhancing the ability of the area to process traffic (*silver lining: NYSDOT and Albany County DPW are well aware of the neighborhood's concerns regarding the character of the area, and the neighborhoods in turn appear to be prepared to continue to participate in the process of working toward solutions*)

## Outreach Activities

While there had been considerable public dialogue in the course of several efforts leading up to this Study, the range of technical issues and the specificity of some of the concerns to be addressed in the Corridor Study required that it also include a substantial public participation component. Thus, in addition to regular Steering Committee meetings, Public Meetings were held in March and July of 2002, with each of these events drawing 40 to 50 people. In addition, the Guilderland Chamber of Commerce sponsored a briefing on the Study for members of the local business community, providing additional opportunity for interested parties to provide their input to the effort.

## Study Team

The Implementation Strategy was prepared through a combination of Steering Committee discussions, public outreach efforts and technical examinations. The Consultant Team was led by Creighton Manning Engineering, LLP (CME), with support from the LA Group, PC and the Hudson Group, LLC. The effort proceeded under the guidance of a Steering Committee consisting of the following residents and other interested parties:

Lindsay Childs, Guilderland Pathways Committee  
 Stephen Feeney, Town of Guilderland Planning Board  
 David Jukins, Capital District Transportation Committee  
 Bill Meehan, McKownville Improvement Association  
 Christopher O'Neill, Town Resident/Capital District Transportation Committee  
 David Reid, McKownville Improvement Association  
 Don Robertson, New York State Department of Transportation - Region 1  
 Bert Schou, Guilderland Pathways Committee/Capital District Transportation Authority  
 Kathy Tabora, Holiday Inn Express/Guilderland Chamber of Commerce  
 Jan Weston, Town of Guilderland Planning Department (Town Project Manager)

The effort also benefited from a considerable amount of fieldwork, survey research and community outreach conducted by the McKownville Improvement Association. Officers and Directors of this organization were as follow:

### *Officers*

Don Reeb, President  
Bill Meehan, Vice President  
Kathy LeRoux, Secretary  
Steve Berg, Treasurer

### *Board of Directors*

Sue Brown  
Marty Gnacik  
Paul Haldeman

Martha Haraus  
David Knight  
Doug Smith

Alice Torda  
Joe Trapasso  
Jim White

## **Key Issues and Recommended Strategies**

### *Pedestrian and Bicycle*

#### *Need*

- Enhancement of walking/cycling-based travel routes about the area.

#### *Key Recommendations*

- long-term plan for sidewalk improvements (replacements and new construction)
- development of a system of off-road trails/paths
- bike route designations
- intersection improvements
- ordinance provisions for bike parking, pedestrian/bike-friendly street and site design

### *Trails and Recreational Areas*

#### *Needs*

- Enhanced pedestrian/bicycle access
- Additional recreational opportunities

#### *Key Recommendations*

- Improvements to pedestrian and bicycle routes accessing recreational opportunities
- Trailblazer signage and on-the-way cautionary signage raising awareness of destinations, potential pedestrians and cyclists
- Redevelopment of McKownville Reservoir as recreational destination

## *Transit Service and Facilities*

### *Needs*

- Enhanced traveler comfort
- Improved traveler information
- Expanded local transit travel opportunities

### *Key Recommendations*

- Shelter installations
- Installation of electronic signboards providing transit route/vehicle information
- Pilot effort targeting UAlbany students promoting use of transit as an alternative to driving

## *Intermodal Facilitation*

### *Needs*

- Enhanced pedestrian, bicycle access to transit stops
- Assurance of year-round accessibility of transit stops and comfort/security while waiting

### *Key Recommendations*

- Prioritization of sidewalk, shoulder, bike lane improvements based on transit route access
- Improvement of sidewalk maintenance practices, snow removal law to ensure availability of facilities in wintertime
- Integration of stormwater management treatments into transportation projects where possible to advance the pace at which flooding issues are addressed

## *Traffic Operations*

### *Traffic Operations, Part 1: Managing Interactions Between Modes*

### *Needs*

- Enhance motorist awareness of pedestrians and bicyclists in the area
- Complement awareness with physical treatments and traffic control
- Establish a more reasonable balance between motor vehicle, pedestrian and cyclist mobility in the neighborhood

### *Key Recommendations*

- Install pedestrian button–initiated “NO RIGHTS ON RED” signs at Western/Fuller and Western/McKown/Norwood
- Prohibit right turns on red from Church Road at Western/Church
- To alert motorists to the potential for encountering pedestrians and cyclists, install cautionary signage along main streets and routes to recreational, shopping, other destinations

### *Traffic Operations, Part 2: Access Management*

#### *Needs*

- Enhance the predictability of traffic to pedestrians and cyclists
- Preserve the carrying capacity of the road
- Enhance overall traffic safety

#### *Key Recommendations*

- Driveway turn restrictions and internal circulation changes at Best Western/Capitalodge/Dunkin’ Donuts
- Reduce Western Avenue driveway accesses for corner parcels
- Promote shared driveway use/rear accesses from side streets
- Tie parking lots together where one lot has signalized driveway access

### *Traffic Operations, Part 3: Traffic Calming*

#### *Needs*

- Reduce traffic speeds
- Reclaim right-of-way for pedestrians and cyclists
- Enhance transit vehicle safety
- Increase motorists’ abilities to see pedestrians and cyclists
- Reduce illegal motor vehicle travel along shoulders, bike lanes

#### *Key Recommendations*

- Install bulbouts at intersections near CDTA bus stops
- Reduce pavement width by reclaiming some wide shoulder space
- Use pavement markings and signage to provide visual “sanctions” for pedestrians and cyclists in roadways

## *Traffic Operations, Part 4: Streetscaping and Motorist Behavior*

### *Needs*

- Establish a “sense of neighborhood” readily evident to motorists
- Enhance the comfort of pedestrians and people in their homes
- Harmonize Western Avenue’s traffic-carrying function with its setting in a residential neighborhood

### *Key Recommendations*

- Introduce street trees closer to the right-of-way
- Replace taller “cobra head”-style street lights with shorter, more ornamental neighborhood-style lighting
- Promote uniform cross-section to rights-of-way providing for a greater mix of activities, more greenspace
- Use medians and roadway narrowings to reduce expanses of pavement and “wide open” perception of streets

### *Gateways*

#### *Need*

- Clarify the distinctions between higher-speed/design roads accessing the area (e.g., Northway, I-90, State Campus ring roads) and area streets

#### *Key Recommendations*

- Install planted median islands at intersections where area character changes
- Where median islands are not possible, use plantings and other treatments outside the curb lines to establish a visual point of distinction for approaching motorists
- Install “Welcome to McKownville” signage to establish definition for the neighborhood

### *Regulatory and Procedural Steps*

#### *Issue*

Not everything that needs to happen will happen on the road. In many cases, what is needed are modifications to processes and requirements that yield both softer treatments such as bike racks at commercial sites and design of internal and new subdivision roadways and off-road internal circulation systems with an eye toward providing a supplemental buffer for pedestrians and cyclists, or enhanced ease of internal mobility for transit.



### *Key Recommendations*

- Bike parking ordinance
- Transit-friendly design standards for internal roads (paying special attention to corner radii, potential stop locations and other elements)
- Enforcement of laws concerning keeping public rights-of-way/alleys clear for through travel
- Site design guidelines promoting development closer to roads, with parking areas behind buildings (to reduce walking distances and enhance the safety of pedestrian approaches)

### **The Implementation Strategy**

In addition to a listing of desirable products with cost estimates, this document provides two critical mechanisms for ensuring that it becomes a tool for action rather than a shelved reference document:

- Individual projects are presented with indications of *priority*, both relative to other projects and in a time frame context (the latter e.g., short/medium/long term). This should provide the agencies responsible for implementation of these concepts with a framework and logic for getting the process of improvement underway.
- The Implementation Strategy outlines a plan for getting the projects implemented based on available funding opportunities, existing programs and agency budgets, and other considerations. The aim in developing this part of the document was to ensure that this package of proposals, which likely provides the Town with at least fifty (50) years' worth of action items for McKownville (given both needs in other neighborhoods and other programmatic priorities), is both ambitious and grounded in an understanding of the fiscal context in which it needs to be considered.

Reflecting an emphasis on developing or enhancing *systems* for the various transportation modes present in the area, the remainder of this report is organized by transportation mode or topic, rather than by sub-neighborhoods or some other geographic basis. The last chapter of the report presents an *implementation strategy* consisting of both a strategic plan for pursuit of the various projects discussed and an overview of the funding landscape within which the Town, Albany County, NYSDOT, CDTA and other parties will be operating as they work to progress these projects.

## PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE FACILITIES AND ENVIRONMENTS

### Key Issues

#### *General Pedestrian Environment*

Some highlights of the pedestrian environment in McKownville are as follows:

- While the sidewalk system is not continuous for the length of Western Avenue in the Study corridor (the Albany City line to Johnston Road), most of the street has sidewalks in both directions. That said, a significant amount of the existing sidewalks do not meet the Town's standard for width (5') and/or construction type (concrete), with the majority of nonstandard sidewalks failing to meet the width standard. In addition, due to settling and/or initial construction method, a significant number of sidewalk sections in the corridor, particularly along the westbound side of Western Avenue between the City line and Fuller Road, are significantly below the level of the grass and/or street adjacent to them and thus prone to silting and ponding. In addition, both along Western Avenue and along the side streets having sidewalks, many sections are heaved, misaligned or cracked.
- Fuller Road has an asphalt sidewalk along its southbound side, generally in good condition and 5' in width. An unusual feature of the pedestrian environment on this road is the installation of a WALK/DON'T WALK pedestrian signal head and a curb ramp leading to a concrete pad on the east side of Fuller Road at Executive Park Drive, but with no sidewalk leading away from this pad.
- The existing sidewalks along area side streets (see Figure 1-1) are generally of substandard width. In addition, a number of the older sidewalks are overgrown with grass – some to the point of being virtually covered by grass – and/or heaved by tree roots.
- Street crossings, particularly across Western Avenue, are among the most challenging pedestrian issues in the Study area. In the corridor, there is considerable variation in street crossing width, time to cross, level of accommodation provided (e.g., crosswalks and WALK/DON'T WALK heads) and motorist behavior and awareness of pedestrians.
- The internal routes north of Western Avenue provide emergency and homeowner access, and remain important for internal bicycle and pedestrian circulation. While people from outside the area use them, the routes are short, not well connected, and duplicative of the sidewalks proposed for Western Avenue. Thus, maintenance of these routes is perhaps best oriented toward preserving localized use rather than encouraging broader use.
- The Thruway/Northway corridor forms a barrier to pedestrian (and bicycle) travel which tends to impose a requirement of car use for travel. In fact, there is a tendency on the part of some to consider McKownville to be east of the Northway and Westmere west of the Northway, notwithstanding the fact that the original McKown patent extended to Johnston Road. The location of the McKownville United Methodist Church on Western Avenue west of the Thruway bridge is one of many reminders of the continuation of McKownville to the west.

## *General Bicycle Environment*

- Bicycle travel along the major roads in the Study area – Western Avenue and Fuller Road – is fairly well-accommodated from the perspective of provision of space, although traffic volumes, speeds and turning maneuvers present challenges to cyclists. Generally, it is the more skilled cyclist that will use Western Avenue or Fuller Road for regular commuting or other transportation functions, as these streets are simply not comfortable for the average cyclist. The environments on these streets (1)serve as something of a cap on the potential for getting people out of their cars in favor of cycling and (2)reduce the range of mobility options available to McKownville residents.
- Along Western Avenue and Fuller Road, intersections with right turn lanes tend to present challenges to cyclists, as they must determine where to position themselves so as to continue on their trips as they approach these intersections (particularly where they will be continuing to travel along Western Avenue through such intersections).
- On the secondary roads in the area, such as McKown, Schoolhouse, Church and Johnston Roads, there are no accommodations for cyclists. In addition, as these roads have generally evolved over time from farm-to-market-type roads to collectors and minor arterials, they can presently be characterized as narrower than desirable, somewhat winding in spots, with higher speeds and volumes than are desirable for a cycling route. At the same time, for people who would travel longer distances into Guilderland and Albany by bike, these are the most direct routes to Western Avenue from outside the Study area. As such, they present obstacles to the potential commuter or errand-running cyclist, in addition to recreational riders.
- On the local/neighborhood streets in the Study area, motor vehicle traffic volumes tend to be such that cyclists can use these streets without any accommodation such as a bike lane. However, there does appear to be a problem of motorist awareness of cyclists on some of these streets, such that BIKE ROUTE or other such signage might be helpful in raising motorist awareness of the potential to encounter cyclists as they travel along these streets.

## *Challenge in Establishing Facility Hierarchies*

Throughout the Study effort, recurring themes in the discussions were on the need for new and/or improved facilities to build toward something of a *hierarchy*, starting from Western Avenue and Fuller Road, then to the next busiest group of streets in the area (e.g., Church, Johnston, McKown and Schoolhouse) and then on to something of a set of either local collectors or strategic connections (e.g., a connection between Patricia Lane and the Westmere School, or between Stuyvesant Plaza and Crossgates Mall). This concern will affect both the identification of travel networks and the prioritization of individual projects needed to get these networks developed.

That said, a key challenge facing the community is that Western Avenue – potentially the major route for longer-distance, purpose-oriented travel both within McKownville and for connections between it and surrounding areas – is regarded by many people as more of an impediment that one must surmount to travel than as an actual transportation route for pedestrians and cyclists. In the course of public meeting, telephone conversation and ad hoc contact discussions, the Study

Team consistently heard from residents, students, store employees and bicycle club members that, simply put, “no one uses Western Avenue in McKownville if they can avoid it.” Most of these people did however note that if one’s destination was along Western Avenue, the thought process was one of finding a route that entailed traveling along or across Western Avenue for as short of a distance as possible.

### *Sidewalks: New Construction versus Reconstruction*

It is also worth noting with particular regard to sidewalks that during the Study’s public outreach efforts, there were a considerable number of comments regarding locations where sidewalks exist, but are seen as being of poor quality, substandard width, prone to flooding/puddling or otherwise inadequate for their purposes. These observations appear to be borne out by inventories conducted by the McKownville Improvement Association and field-checked by the Consultant Team.

Given an apparent need for both new sidewalk connections and rehabilitation of existing sidewalks, a key consideration became that of whether the “first order of business” was to bring *existing* facilities up to standard or on accepting these facilities for the moment and concentrating early improvement efforts on creating *new* facilities to bridge gaps in the pedestrian transportation system and extending coverage to new areas. Overarching this question is the broad aim of the Study effort to identify key steps for promoting *basic mobility*. That is, while much of the Study effort was about enabling area residents to have *choices* with regard to mode of travel, there is a more essential need to provide suitable accommodations for those people who are unable to drive because of age, infirmity or lack of vehicle availability (e.g., UAlbany students).

The general consensus of the Study Steering Committee was that the construction of the sidewalks holding the greatest promise for use should be a higher priority than the reconstruction of existing substandard sidewalks should. The qualification to this rule would be that where there are existing sidewalks which present hazards or other defects which effectively preclude their use (severely heaved or broken sections, for example), improving such sidewalks should also be a high priority. In practice, the distinction may come with regard to *funding*: new sidewalk construction will tend to be a larger effort requiring pursuit of funding through the CDTC Spot Improvement Program, the NYSDOT Transportation Enhancement Program, legislative member items or other such sources, while many spot repairs of problems such as those just mentioned could be done out of the Town’s current highway maintenance or parks and recreation budgets.

### *Latent Demand for Sidewalks*

The most common direct measures of demand for sidewalks are (1)pedestrian counts and (2)worn paths where sidewalks do not exist. While these measures provide definitive proof of pedestrian activity, it oversimplifies the matter to rely exclusively on them to provide guidance to decisions regarding sidewalk construction. In addition, no matter when a pedestrian count is

taken, it becomes a “hit or miss” issue as to whether the peak times of demand were captured during the count period.

At the Study’s public workshops, several people related specific examples of places where they *would* walk if proper facilities were provided. In addition, the Team frequently heard area residents and workers state very specific areas such as Western Avenue between Church and Schoolhouse Roads presented such a *package* of obstacles that they effectively precluded consideration of what could amount to fairly lengthy walk trips.

Accordingly, as the Study Team examined the existing sidewalk system with an eye toward identifying promising locations for new sidewalk construction, it used several bases in addition to observed pedestrian activity and worn paths, including the following:

- Relative proximities of residential, office and retail developments
- System gaps (e.g., areas where two sidewalks come close but do not meet)
- Isolated “barrier” locations where a single obstacle appears to dissuade people from making walk trips
- Public comments on desirable locations at which to develop sidewalks
- Potential shortcuts that would significantly reduce walking distances (particularly staying on public property)

## **Recommendations**

Note: Recommendations SW-1 through SW-14, along with the current conditions of Study area sidewalks, are summarized in Figure 1-1 on the following page.

### *SW-1: Johnston Road Sidewalk Improvements*

- *Description:* Construction of new sidewalks along the northbound (east) side of Johnston Road. Two sections are indicated: Western Avenue to the Town Center driveway (~200’), and the Town Center driveway to Westmere Elementary School (~250’).

For maximum benefit, the two sections should be progressed as a set.

- *Estimated Cost:* \$15,000
- *Additional Notes:* This improvement would not only enhance pedestrian and transit access to the Town Center shopping opportunities, but also provide part of an important pedestrian link between the Alton Road/Hungerford Road area and the Westmere Elementary School. As was noted during the Study effort, this would be the only neighborhood in the Study area from which children could potentially walk to and from the Westmere School without crossing a busy highway.

It was also noted that pedestrians have difficulty crossing the Western Avenue/Johnston Road intersection because of conflicts with both left- and right-turning vehicles. Two tools for addressing these conflicts which will be discussed in greater detail in the Traffic Operations chapter are (1) pedestrian button-actuated “NO RIGHT TURN ON RED” signs and (2) the development of signal phasing plans which will provide red arrow indications to left turn movements conflicting with crossing pedestrians when the appropriate pedestrian button is pushed. These treatments should also be progressed for this intersection.

*SW-2: Western Avenue Eastbound Side Sidewalk Improvements*

- Description: Construction of new sidewalks and some reconstruction of existing sidewalks along the eastbound (south) side of Western Avenue. Eight sections are indicated:
  - 1690 Western Avenue to Alton Road (~935’ of new construction)
  - Church Road to the Thruway Bridge (~400’ of new construction)
  - the Thruway Bridge to Schoolhouse Road (~475’ of new construction)
  - around Fuller Road Alternate (~1200’ of new construction)
  - Fuller Road to the Holiday Inn Express (~125’ of reconstruction and ~750’ of new construction)
  - west of McKown Road to Westlyn Court (~600’ of new construction)
  - Westlyn Court to Arcadia Avenue (~725’ of reconstruction)
  - Hillcrest Avenue to the City line (~725’ of new construction).

It may be desirable to progress the coterminous projects as sets, e.g., Church Road to Schoolhouse Road, and west of McKown Road to Arcadia Avenue.

- Estimated Cost: \$185,000
- Additional Notes: Where it is not possible to fit a full five foot-wide sidewalk within the available right of way on this side of Western Avenue, “jogs” of the centerline toward the other side of Western Avenue might be considered when reconstruction of Western Avenue takes place in the future; alternatively, 3’ wide or 4’ wide sidewalks may be permissible for short lengths in order to complete connections. Negotiation of easements with property owners to secure sufficient space for a 5’ wide sidewalk is also an option which has worked elsewhere. Needs indicated in Project SW-3 may also be relevant to these considerations.

*Please click on FIGURE 1-1 on the Web page  
for the Sidewalk Map*

### *SW-3: Western Avenue Westbound Side Sidewalk Improvements*

- Description: Construction of new sidewalks and some reconstruction of existing sidewalks along the westbound (north) side of Western Avenue. Five sections are indicated:
  - UAlbany to Waverly Place (~100' of reconstruction and ~1000' of new construction)
  - Waverly Place to Fuller Road (~2400' of new construction)
  - In the vicinity of the McKownville Reservoir to Fuller Road Alternate (~625' of new construction)
  - Mobil (1667 Western Avenue) to Gabriel Terrace (~190' of new construction)
  - 1677 Western Avenue to Johnston Road (~535' of new construction)

It may be desirable to progress the SUNY to Fuller Road section as a set.

- Estimated Cost: \$150,000
- Additional Notes: Where it is not possible to fit a full five foot-wide sidewalk within the available right of way on this side of Western Avenue, “jogs” of the centerline toward the other side of Western Avenue might be considered when reconstruction of Western Avenue takes place in the future; alternatively, 3' wide or 4' wide sidewalks may be permissible for short lengths in order to complete connections. Negotiation of easements with property owners to secure sufficient space for a 5' wide sidewalk is also an option which has worked elsewhere. Needs indicated in Project SW-2 may also be relevant to these considerations.

### *SW-4: Crossgates Mall Sidewalk Improvements*

- Description: Construction of new sidewalk accessing the mall via a connection to Rapp Road (approximately 125').
- Estimated Cost: \$4,000
- Additional Notes: The indicated new sidewalk would bridge a gap. Other improvements which would potentially improve pedestrian access to the Mall include the modification of parking rows, perhaps by removing one half row of parking spaces in favor of a marked and protected walkway or by installing a sidewalk between two head-to-head parking space rows. It should be noted that this would likely be a very difficult “sell” to the Mall owners and would not be likely to see significant use, given that the existing Mall sidewalks (including the transit center area) provide an approach for the majority of current or potential walkers.

### *SW-5: Church Road Sidewalk Improvements*

- Description: Construction of new sidewalks along the northbound (east) side of Church Road. Two sections are indicated: Western Avenue to Tice Road (~2500'), and Tice Road to Farnsworth Drive (~4600').



- Estimated Cost: \$220,000
- Additional Notes: Creative use of available space, negotiation of an easement (possibly focusing on the large vacant parcel on the northbound side of Church Road) and/or employment of substandard widths along certain sections may be in order.

*SW-6: Strawberry Lane Sidewalk Improvements*

- Description: Construction of a new sidewalk along the southbound (west) side of Strawberry Lane from Schoolhouse Road to Abele Park (approximately 250').
- Estimated Cost: \$8,000
- Additional Note: This improvement is seen as a short-term priority given both the general critical need for safe pedestrian access to recreational areas and for the potential for high pedestrian travel to the Park from nearby residences.

*SW-7: McKown Road Sidewalk Improvements*

- Description: Construction of a new sidewalk along the southbound (west) side of McKown Road. A possible segment breakout would be as follows:
  - Western Avenue to Williams Court (~725')
  - Williams Court to Short Street (~780')
  - Short Street to Woodscape Drive/Abele Park path access path (~625')

It may be desirable to progress these three segments as a set; if this is not done, there are varying arguments as to which segment would provide the most immediate benefit. That is, while working in the sequence indicated would provide a progression and tie into the existing sidewalk on Williams, the Short-to-Woodscape section arguably merits the earliest effort to provide pedestrians with greater physical separation from traffic.

- Estimated Cost: \$65,000
- Additional Notes: McKown Road includes several sections along which it may be very difficult to fit a 5' wide sidewalk within the existing right of way. Narrower sections may be in order for short lengths; alternatively, the Town may wish to investigate the potential costs of acquiring easements or additional right-of-way which would enable it to construct a consistent 5'-wide walk for the entire length of the project. Also, it was noted that this sidewalk connection would be quite beneficial to CDTA patrons.



*Figure 1-2  
Walkers with Groceries, McKown Road*

*SW-8: Williams Court Sidewalk Improvements*

- *Description:* Construction of new sidewalks and some reconstruction of existing sidewalks along the eastbound (south) side of Williams Court. Three sections are indicated:
  - McKown Road east 150' (first new construction section)
  - Westlyn Court west 150' (second new construction section)
  - Middle section (250' of reconstruction)
- *Estimated Cost:* \$17,000
- *Additional Notes:* Identified as a low priority by members of the Steering Committee.

*SW-9: Westlyn Court Sidewalk Improvements*

- *Description:* Reconstruction of existing sidewalks along the northbound (east) and southbound (west) sides of Westlyn Court. Two sections are indicated: Western Avenue south to Williams Street, including the short one-way southbound section of Westlyn (~450'), and Williams Street north to Western Avenue along the northbound side of the street (~510')
- *Estimated Cost:* \$30,000

- Additional Notes: It was noted by members of the Steering Committee that this project would help establish a connection between this neighborhood and Abele Park, should the McKown Road and/or Pinnacle Place-Abele Park connections also be made. A connection via Short Street was also suggested to aid this connection, although it should be noted that Short Street would present challenges from the perspectives of streamside trail continuity or and/or fitting in a standard-width sidewalk, possibly requiring negotiation of easements or the purchase of right-of-way.

*SW-10: Brookwood Avenue Sidewalk Improvements*

- Description: Reconstruction of existing sidewalks along the full lengths of one or both sides of Brookwood Avenue. Approximate total sidewalk length is 1500’.
- Estimated Cost: \$45,000 (see note below)
- Additional Note: The sense of the Steering Committee was that it would be logical to first progress this reconstruction on only one side of Brookwood. This would likely reduce the cost of providing some improvement to Brookwood by roughly 50 percent.

*SW-11: Northeast Quadrant Sidewalk Improvements*

- Description: Construction of new sidewalks and some reconstruction of existing sidewalks along either or both sides of Fuller Road, Elmwood, Parkwood, Glenwood and Norwood Streets, Knowles Terrace and Waverly Place, as follows:
  - Fuller: ~1650’ new construction
  - Elmwood: ~500’ new construction, ~1750’ reconstruction
  - Parkwood: ~1625’ reconstruction
  - Glenwood: ~1500’ reconstruction
  - Norwood: ~95’ new construction, ~2900’ reconstruction
  - Knowles Terrace: 875’ reconstruction
  - Waverly Place: 750’ reconstruction
- Estimated Cost: \$350,000
- Additional Notes: Possible priority order:
  - Fuller
  - Norwood (community crossroads/tie to UAlbany)
  - Elmwood (pedestrian shortcut between Western Avenue and Fuller Road)
  - Parkwood and Glenwood
  - Knowles and Waverly

#### *SW-12: Mercer Street Sidewalk Improvements*

- Description: Construction of new sidewalk along one side of Mercer Street between Fuller Road and the utility right-of-way, to tie into the proposed Freedom Quad – Stuyvesant Plaza Trail (see Project TRL-1). Approximate total sidewalk length is 1075’.
- Estimated Cost: \$35,000
- Additional Note: Mercer is a relatively low-volume street; thus, this project could be broken up into stages if desired. Should this be done, starting work at the Fuller Road end of this section may be preferable from the perspective of mitigating conflicts between pedestrians and motor vehicles based on considerations of traffic volume and speed. The Steering Committee also noted that this is a relatively isolated improvement standing to benefit a small number of people, which could affect its timing unless local residents were receptive to the idea of a sidewalk district.

#### *SW-13: Schoolhouse Road Area Pedestrian Crossing Improvements*

- Description:
  - Install crosswalk from sidewalk along eastbound (south) side of Western Avenue to refuge island.
  - Install pedestrian buttons outside curb line and at refuge island tied to alternating lights attached to “PEDESTRIAN CROSSING AHEAD” sign along Fuller Road Alternate slip ramp.
- Estimated Cost: \$30,000
- Additional Notes: Also see Project IS-5 for additional elements related to the design and operation of this intersection.

#### *SW-14: Schoolhouse Road Sidewalk Improvements*

- Description: Construct a sidewalk from McKown Road to Vaughn Drive
- Additional Notes: Listed for reference here, this project is likely to be progressed by Albany County.

#### *SW-15: Zoning Ordinance Provisions to Facilitate Multimodal Travel*

- Description: Draft new zoning ordinance provisions to enhance multimodal mobility including building setback minimization (to encourage placement of buildings closer to roads, with parking behind buildings), parking lot interconnections (to reduce short-distance motor vehicle travel between driveways and provide for pedestrian and bicycle connections

between businesses) and the inclusion of transit centers/park-and-ride lots with pedestrian and bicycle accommodations in larger developments such as office parks and shopping centers.

- Estimated Cost: \$2,000 to \$5,000 for ordinance language development and legal notices.
- Additional Notes: Also see related ordinance recommendation BK-3.

#### *BK-1: Designation of Town Bike Routes in McKownville*

- Description: The following facilities are potential candidates for inclusion in a Town Bike Route system. Further study is needed to determine which facilities are appropriate or could be made appropriate for designation as Town bike routes. The Town will first need to establish criteria for selecting Town bike routes.
  - Western Avenue across Town
  - Fuller Road from Western Avenue to City Line
  - Schoolhouse Road from Western Avenue to Town Line
  - Church Road from Western Avenue to Johnston Road
  - Johnston Road from Church Road to Town Line
  - McKown Road from Western Avenue to Abele Park access
  - Strawberry Lane from Schoolhouse Road to Abele Park
  - Norwood Street from Western Avenue to SUNY
  - Elmwood Street from Western Avenue to Fuller Road
  - Woodscape Drive from McKown Road to Town Line
  - Alton Road from Western Avenue to Patricia Lane/Hungerford Road
  - Ruth Terrace from Patricia Lane/Hungerford Road to Tice Road
  - Tice Road from Ruth Terrace to Church Road
  - Western Avenue - Schoolhouse Road connection around Fuller Road Alternate Ramp
  - New McKown Road-Abele Park connection
- Estimated Cost: Designation would be an action of the Town Board, with costs largely limited to those associated with preparation of resolutions/other Town forms and legal notices.
- Additional Notes: See Recommendation BK-2 for the details of what this designation would be intended to achieve.

#### *BK-2: Multi-Stage Bike Route Improvement Program*

- Description: Progress a long-term program of staged improvements to the bike routes designated under project BK-1 above. The improvement stages are as follow:

- Stage 1: install “BIKE ROUTE” signs (with trailblazer arrows at major crossroads and where route turns corners) at major crossings and at half-mile intervals
  - Stage 2: install “WATCH FOR BIKES” or SHARED ROADWAY signs at narrow/higher speed locations and those where there are sight distance concerns
    - *Examples:* Western Avenue, Fuller Road, Schoolhouse Road northbound and southbound approaching Thruway bridge, Church Road southbound south of Western Avenue (existing sign), Church Road eastbound (northbound) east of Farnsworth Drive
  - Stage 3: spot improvements (widening if possible without unduly compromising buffers between private properties and the roadway edge, or traffic calming) at locations of concern discussed in Stage 2 concept. Improvements listed would be in addition to those presented in other projects in this listing.
- Estimated Cost: Stage 1 \$35,000, Stage 2 \$11,200, Stage 3 \$120,000

### *BK-3: Bicycle Parking Ordinance*

- Description: Adopt bicycle parking provisions in the Zoning Ordinance as a means of promoting bicycle travel to local destinations. In providing for a needed *destination treatment* – parking at the end of a bicycle trip – this action would complement Project SW-14, which provided for bike-friendly internal site design. There are numerous examples of adopted bicycle parking ordinances across the country from which the Town can draw in developing its own ordinance; the caution would be that in considering any such ordinances as models for a Town ordinance, their schedules of parking requirements should be compared to existing local developments to determine whether they are practical or would require refinement. That is, for example, based on a survey of existing ordinances, a current “average” requirement for high schools would require that Guilderland High School provide approximately 500 bicycle parking spaces.
- Estimated Cost: \$2,000 to \$5,000 for ordinance language development and legal notices.

## **Notes on Other Topics**

### *Destination Treatments*

The Study Team noted several locations where the key obstacles to cycling or walking are at one endpoint of a trip rather than “along the way.” The parking lots at Crossgates Mall, for example, are difficult to cross by bicycle or on foot from Western Avenue, due to concerns of both distance and conflict with motor vehicles. Destination treatments such as shortcut paths, textured pavement and the installation of bollards or other physical installations would be desirable to facilitate pedestrian and cyclist access to the Mall. Similarly, it would be advisable to “look outward” from major destinations such as Price Chopper, 1450 Western Avenue, Stuyvesant Plaza, UAlbany and other larger commercial or institutional uses to identify opportunities for access enhancement. Such opportunities could be exploited either when

applications come before the Town for expansions or other modifications to these properties, or in some cases incorporated into future roadway improvement projects for Western Avenue or Fuller Road. In addition, some of the other tools discussed in this report, such as access management and intersection-based improvements, will have applicability to the access points for these sites.

### *Toolbox of Intersection Treatments Benefiting Cyclists*

Several of the improvements recommended earlier in this chapter or to be discussed in the Traffic Operations chapter are geared toward enhancing the comfort and safety of bicycle travel. Because a number of these treatments are potentially applicable to numerous other locations in the neighborhood (and indeed, elsewhere in the Town as well), following is a brief review of some of the major steps which could be taken to improve the cycling environment at intersections.

- *Separate Stop Lines for Cyclists*: Providing stop lines in line with bikeable shoulders or bike lanes (typically slightly narrower than standard stop lines) can give cyclists a head start in proceeding through signalized intersections once they get a green light. In addition, where there are bus stops right at intersections, separate lines can provide an official sanction of sorts to cyclists' being further "into the box" to avoid buses.
- *"Trace" Lines for Turns through Intersections*: Particularly at broad, busy intersections, providing dotted lines showing the Providing stop lines in line with bikeable shoulders or bike lanes (typically slightly narrower than standard stop lines) can give cyclists a head start in proceeding through signalized intersections once they get a green light.
- *Right Turn on Red Prohibitions*: Where feasible, prohibiting right turns on red can have the practical benefit of reducing "rolling rights on red" as well as reducing the frequency of situations in which a driver looking to his/her left for an opportunity to make a right on red does not see a cyclist waiting at the intersection on the same corner. This reduces the potential for the cyclist to be struck by the motor vehicle.
- *All-Red Signal Phases*: In addition to providing pedestrians with safer crossing opportunities, these phases can benefit cyclists. That said, a bicycle's status as a vehicle may require that, legally, a cyclist would have to walk his/her bicycle through the intersection during the all-red phase.
- *Positioning Pedestrian Buttons to be Cyclist-Accessible*: Related to the previous point, if a cyclist waiting at an intersection can easily reach a pedestrian button which would request a green phase or an all-red phase with WALK indications, the ease and efficiency of cycling would be enhanced. A key design consideration is that of how to achieve this ease of access to the button – if the button already exists and is attached to a standard vertical traffic signal strain pole or a separate pole installed in the ground specifically to position and support the button, it may be necessary to provide a short "flare out" of the curb or the pavement area to allow the cyclist to comfortably reach the button. More creativity in positioning the button

so as to provide comfortable access to both cyclists and pedestrians would be allowed for in retrofits at locations which do not already have buttons.

- Drain Grate Retrofits: As a general practice, it is desirable to install drains which do not have their main grate strips running parallel to the direction of travel (or which do not have the “parallel line” design at all), for this eliminates the possibility of a cyclist’s catching a tire in a grate. This concept is specifically mentioned *here* because depending on the configuration of an intersection, the drain may be placed at an undesirable location relative to the path that a cyclist may be taking in traveling through an intersection. If these grates do have their main strips running parallel to the direction of travel, one “quick fix” would be to weld strips of steel *across* the main strips. This should not have a significant adverse impact on drainage.
- Incorporate Bicycle Considerations into Maintenance and Protection of Traffic Strategies: While this is also a generally desirable action, it is important to bear in mind that when road work takes place, intersections frequently become *transition points* into work zones. Signage and the placement of any physical barriers (e.g., cones, barrels or Jersey barriers) should be planned with an eye toward ensuring that a travel space is established at the intersection and maintained through the work zone. If it is not practical to accommodate cyclists through the work zone, detour signage should be clear, worded specifically to cyclists and positioned well in advance of the intersection at which the detour would take effect.
- Maintain the Orientation of Bike Lanes through Intersections: The graphic presenting recommended improvements to the intersection of Western Avenue and Church Road includes the relocation of the eastbound Western Avenue bike lane to the *inside* of the right turn lane which serves drivers intending to turn both to Church Road and to Fuller Road Alternate. At other locations where a roadway flares out as it approaches an intersection to provide a right turn lane, it would be prudent to avoid cyclist (and motorist) uncertainty to maintain the position of the bike lane in the same line as it was before the road flared out. “WATCH FOR BIKES” or other suitable signage should also be provided, to ensure motorist awareness of cyclists as the beginning of the road flare approaches.

#### *Accessory Treatments/Finishing Steps*

As discussed earlier, motor vehicle traffic presents numerous types of challenges to pedestrian and cyclist mobility in the Study area; it thus follows that no single tool can be realistically expected to completely remedy the challenges pedestrians and cyclists face at any single location, for at every location in the corridor, the problems are multifaceted. For example, pedestrians walking along Elmwood Street near Fuller Road face the combination of not having a sidewalk (no *physical separation* from motor vehicles) high traffic speeds (a *behavioral* problem) and through traffic (meaning drivers may not be aware of the potential for encountering pedestrians or cyclists traveling along or across the street – an *awareness* problem). Even with a set of *design treatments* implemented with the aim of improving the conditions at hand, experience indicates that problems could continue to exist (or new problems arise) even after significant improvements have been made with the aim of enhancing walkability or bikeability.



In many cases, it can be argued that the lack of an *education* element in a project is to blame. One example that might apply to the Elmwood Street example would be the installation of “WATCH FOR PEDESTRIANS” or “SHARED ROADWAY” signs to raise motorist awareness at the scene.

Another more specific point on signage would be that while the additional connection between McKown Road and Abele Park to be presented as Project TRL-4 in the “Trails and Recreational Areas” chapter is certainly desirable, in the short run there are other steps which should be taken such as installing signage to direct people to the existing connection.

A general comment would be that without creating a proliferation of signs on streets to the point that they become “part of the background” because they have lost their uniqueness, it is important to include this education function in the implementation of Study recommendations to ensure that motorists, pedestrians and cyclists all know their rights and responsibilities as they travel about the neighborhood.

### *Crossings*

The public meetings held during the Study effort saw numerous comments raised regarding the difficulty of crossing busy streets in the area, particularly Western Avenue. The experiences related by public meeting participants generally pointed to the following three aspects of Western Avenue:

- The *width* of this street requires that pedestrians have a substantial amount of time to complete a crossing. Pedestrians need to wait for motor vehicles to complete their maneuvers before they can cross; also, they may experience confusion regarding when they are permitted to cross the street.
- The *absence of pedestrian facilities* such as crosswalks and countdown timers results in pedestrian uncertainty regarding where to cross and whether the opportunity exists to safely complete a crossing. The uniform provision of these facilities at all signalized intersections in the corridor would (1)sanction the presence of the pedestrian in the intersection and (2)make clear when the crossing opportunities existed.
- The *conduciveness of current street design to aggressive and/or high-speed driving* tends to impose a hesitance on the parts of pedestrians to cross the street. At some locations, this hesitance is particularly well-founded, as there does not appear to be much evidence in motorists’ behaviors that they are aware of the potential to encounter pedestrians as they proceed through the corridor.

The recommendations for intersection improvements to be presented in the “Traffic Operations” chapter offer tools for addressing these elements of the corridor, combining enhanced pedestrian infrastructure with traffic calming and other treatments emphasizing improved control of motor vehicle flows.

Three principles which can be incorporated into all projects progressed in the area stand to substantially enhance pedestrian comfort and safety.

- Proper Frame of Reference: While Western Avenue is clearly critical to the larger transportation system of the larger area and indeed the region, it is as important to recognize that the approach to managing Western Avenue cannot solely be based on the need to move traffic through the corridor as quickly as possible. That is, if anything, improvements to this road should be developed with an understanding that the levels of congestion and delay experienced by motorists *cannot* be remedied with a construction solution. It is thus important to consider *other* objectives such as enhancing pedestrian comfort and safety when developing project concepts for this street. In fact, it can be argued that the urgency of “leveling the playing field” between motorists, pedestrians and cyclists calls for an *emphasis* on mitigating conflicts between transportation activities and the communities – even if this mitigation comes at a cost to motor vehicle level of service – so as to truly restore the levels of personal mobility, comfort and safety that had been experienced in the past. Several of the intersection improvement recommendations presented in the “Traffic Operations” section illustrate how this frame of reference can be reflected in project design.
- Aggressiveness: It is important for the Town and the residents of McKownville to maintain their efforts to keep the message discussed in the previous item prominent when improvements to intersections along the corridor are being scoped out. As an example of why this vigilance will be necessary, the NYSDOT Highway Design Manual chapter on traffic calming includes a number of reference tables and narrative discussions on where on the State highway system different traffic calming tools may or may not be appropriate. For a busy facility such as Western Avenue upon which the desire to maintain traffic flow may dissuade project designers from incorporating traffic calming features, vigilance in providing the local perspective particularly on those challenges facing pedestrians looking to cross Western Avenue will be critical to ensuring that these concepts have a real chance at being included in project designs.
- Consistency: The CDTA Multi-Modal Program project will improve a number of intersections near CDTA bus stops. The Study Steering Committee noted the importance of seeing treatments such as pedestrian crosswalk enhancements, countdown timers, sidewalks, lighting and streetscaping improvements at the ends of the Western Avenue corridor within the study area and then *consistently replicated* along the way. This would help to send motorists a clear and consistent message regarding the neighborhood setting and the potential for encountering pedestrians (and cyclists) while traveling through the neighborhood. This consistency is particularly critical along the section of Western Avenue between the Albany line and Fuller Road, given both the uniformity of the road’s cross-section and the presence of a large residential neighborhood immediately adjacent to Western Avenue. Treatments at both signalized and unsignalized intersections in the corridor need to be as consistently applied as possible, *both* to reinforce the message to motorists *and* to provide pedestrians and cyclists with a consistent, predictable level of accommodation as they travel along this road.

## *Maintenance*

The year-round maintenance of sidewalks, shoulders, bike lanes and other pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure is critical to assuring the availability of safe, comfortable travel systems. Bicycle and pedestrian facilities are not “build it and forget it” installations. Maintenance can be as important to travelers using these modes as it is for motor vehicles, with sweeping and snow plowing being the main examples.

The small rock which a car tire rolls over without a driver’s noticing any perceptible change in control could quite easily cause a cyclist to crash. Similarly, sidewalks must be kept clear of debris, for while most pedestrians are able to avoid such impediments, this may not be true for those pedestrians – particularly the elderly and/or handicapped – who may not see the debris or who may be less secure in their footing. In the worst case, the process of walking out into traffic or bicycling around a hazard may cause an accident.

Clearing snow from sidewalks, shoulders and bike lanes is critical to further the goal of four-season availability of walking and cycling as viable travel modes. Keeping these facilities clear enhances opportunities both (1)for those people who regularly walk or cycle for transportation purposes to continue doing so in the colder months and (2)for other people to be able to do so on an occasional basis (e.g., warmer times during the winter, there is a snow cover but it might otherwise be a pleasant day).

The Town (particularly the Parks Department, having the labor availability during snow season) handles sidewalk plowing along Western Avenue, and is on the one hand theoretically equipped to do this along other roadways, but on the other there presently are not many sidewalks apart from those along the major roads (Western Avenue and Fuller Road, in particular).

An important note on plowing is that when snow is plowed from parking lots or roadways, it often ends up on sidewalks. This problem is magnified when snow or slush continue to be cleared from roads after snowfall has ended, for what is plowed while not having much of an effect on motor vehicle operations while still on the road becomes much denser and prone to icing when it is plowed onto sidewalks. While snowplowing is a challenging task, especially during major storms, sensitivity to this dynamic is in order. Toward this end, the Town does have a commercial snowplow law which specifies fines for covering sidewalks with such “second hand snow.”

In addition to general maintenance, it is critical that the *physical conditions* of bicycle and pedestrian facilities be checked regularly, with timely repair/rehabilitation efforts when deficiencies are found. In addition to the direct injury-avoidance benefit of such condition monitoring, there is a preventative effect rooted in pedestrians’ and cyclists’ *expectations* regarding the availability of a facility. That is, if a facility is known by “regular users” to be in poor condition, they may assume that it is not an available option and take another route.

### *Sidewalk Law*

At its October 15, 2002 meeting, the Town Board passed a law which in essence requires developers to construct sidewalks along all State and County roads in the Town in the course of pursuing their projects, unless the land in question is zoned agricultural. The law includes a provision that the Town Board can by resolution add Town roads to the list of facilities to which the law applies.

Based on the range of comments received during this Study regarding the need for sidewalks around the neighborhood, it would be prudent for the Town to make explicitly clear that the specific facilities included either in the initial law or in the set of facilities assembled and expanded upon by resolution over the course of time be seen as a *minimum* rather than a *maximum* level of additional sidewalk coverage for the Town. Given the relatively low cost to the Town of sidewalk maintenance, particularly when related to the useful life of these facilities, the Town should encourage construction of these facilities by private parties wherever practical, in addition to making efforts of its own to progress sidewalk development through such means as pursuit of Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC) Spot Improvement Program and Transportation Improvement Program funds.

### *Ordinance/Law Enforcement*

At the public meetings, there was frequent mention of enforcement of traffic laws which serve to protect pedestrians and cyclists as a key to enhancing the environments for this mode of travel. “Rolling” right turns on red (that is, without full stops), speeding, disregarding of traffic signals and driving on shoulders/bike lanes (the latter is a particular problem on the eastbound approach to Western Avenue/McKown/Norwood) are among the more common Vehicle and Traffic Law violations in the corridor.

The Town Police Department makes substantial efforts to enforce traffic laws. It is the sheer frequency with which these violations take place combined with police resource limitations which results in the perception that the Police Department is failing to enforce these laws. From a practical standpoint, it is also important to note that the aim of enforcement is not to create a “gotcha” environment or to assure a revenue stream, but to reinforce the notion that the traffic laws need to be obeyed – that is, to enhance the safety of the travel environment by promoting compliance with the law. That said, the Town Police Chief has expressed a willingness to enforce laws that would enhance traffic safety, specifically including a lower speed limit. This point will be revised in the Traffic chapter.

While resource limitations may preclude establishment of dedicated patrols or other mechanisms for ongoing, focused efforts aimed at promoting pedestrian and cyclist safety, it may be possible to conduct periodic campaigns to promote safe behavior on the parts of motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. Such campaigns could be coordinated either by the Town or groups such as the Pathways Committee or the McKownville Improvement Association, and be complemented by short-term enforcement efforts such as a morning rush hour “rolling right on red” detail at one or more known trouble spots such as Western Avenue/Church or Western Avenue/McKown.

Municipal ordinances covering issues beyond traffic were also discussed in some detail at the public meeting. The most common examples of such ordinances concerned trash removal and the requirement that public rights-of-way and alleys be kept clear, so as to allow for through travel. The matter of public alleys will be discussed shortly; the comment here is that code enforcement and police officials generally point to a lack of formal complaints as the reasons why certain situations are not addressed through the enforcement process – people make note of a problem, but they do not formally bring it to the attention of the appropriate authorities, and thus nothing gets done. There is ample evidence that the residents of McKownville are willing to take ownership of their neighborhood; a degree of vigilance in this regard is also necessary to ensure that pedestrian and cycling routes are not only in place but kept usable.

### *Intermunicipal Coordination of Improvements*

It was noted in the Executive Summary that for many people, improvements within the neighborhood affect only parts of their “total trips.” While this point may on its surface apply particularly to motor vehicle travel, the location of UAlbany, the State Office Campus and other local educational, employment and commercial opportunities nearby means that even pedestrians and cyclists would benefit from more of an effort on the part of the Town to work with the City of Albany to improve the complete paths people are taking in the area.

### *Notes on Other “Official and Unofficial” Facilities*

As noted earlier, people living and working in the area have made a point of seeking out safe walking and cycling routes to complete their trips. The results of this process are readily apparent, in the forms of worn paths along utility rights of way (as will be discussed in the chapter on trails), between the dead ends off Western Avenue and the UAlbany campus, along the Krum Kill, and in other areas. In addition to these routes, there are some little-known (perhaps except to immediate area residents) public facilities being used for pedestrian and bicycle connections, such as the alley system north of Western Avenue and east of Fuller Road, as located in Figure 1-3 on the following page.

The chapter on trails will note a number of opportunities for purchasing land, securing rights-of-way or simply cleaning up already-public land to enhance the quality of these routes and to more completely integrate them into the area’s pedestrian and bicycle transportation system. In cases such as the alley system illustrated above, there is also a need to protect these facilities both as thoroughfares and for their original purposes of allowing for underground access to water, stormwater and sanitary sewer lines for repairs and improvements. As such, it is important to ensure that adjacent owners have not over time located vehicles, sheds, lawn furniture or other fixtures so as to make *de facto* claims on these public spaces as extensions of their own properties. In addition, these public alleys are being used by some motorists as thoroughfares and/or to access their garages when the garages are behind their houses, without direct street access; it is important to preserve the passability of these alleys.



Map courtesy of Town of Guiderland Planning Department

Figure 1-3  
McKownville Alleys Map

A number of these alleys have trees, bushes or other natural growth encroaching on them and thus are only a car-width across. It does not seem appropriate to widen these facilities so as to accommodate cars, pedestrians and cyclists, for widening them would be likely to increase motor vehicle speeds, which would increase the degree of potential conflict with pedestrians and cyclists. Similarly, it does not seem appropriate to encourage pedestrian and cyclist use of these facilities through their inclusion in some sort of official travel network; rather, they should continue to have the “neighborhood amenity” status they do at present. That said, should opportunities present themselves, certain strategic extensions to the alley system should be considered, such as an extension of the alley between Fuller Road and Elmwood Street to provide access to the signalized Fuller Road crossing at Executive Park.

## TRAILS AND RECREATIONAL AREAS

### Overview on Trails and Open Space

This component of the McKownville Study will discuss the opportunities for internal bike/pedestrian networks, assuming that over time, the poor and fragmented designs of the arterial routes will be surmounted, through the suggestions developed with the other elements of this, or other studies. Opportunities to connect some of these short neighborhood-based trails and shortcuts to regional trail systems will also be discussed.

Four areas, all divided by the arterials and expressways from one another, will be discussed. The best opportunities for interconnection of the areas will be mentioned where they occur. These study sections will include:

1. the area to the **north of Western Avenue and east of Fuller Road**
2. the area to the **south of Western Avenue**
3. the area **west of Fuller Road and East of Fuller Road Alternate**
4. the areas **west of the Thruway and Fuller Road Alternate**

While many of the opportunities and challenges presented by the neighborhood – based routes can be secured through traditional road, bike route and sidewalk improvement projects, there are probably many more opportunities that should be secured through good community planning, wise use of existing easements and utility corridors, stream floodway and wetland protection, and the cooperation of the major commercial and public institutions in the area.

The discussion of the walking and bicycling opportunities internal to the four neighborhoods mentioned above will primarily serve these separate areas. The links between these neighborhoods and other destination points however has to be based on the assumption that transportation plans will resolve the safe bicycle and pedestrian routes along the major arterial roads serving McKownville and adjoining communities. Aside from the Western Avenue corridor (the central element of this plan), bicycle and pedestrian travel along Fuller Road, Washington Ave. and Washington Ave. Extension needs to be addressed.

In addition to the major collector roads clear, safe, consistent corridors for pedestrians and bicyclists is greatly needed through the State University properties, both east and west of Fuller Road. Further east, the crossings of the ring roads cutting off access to the State Office Building Campus (soon to be redeveloped as part of a high-tech complex) require improvement. It is a sad commentary on public policy that “high-tech” centers and major academic institutions are being developed adjoining each other without the provision of safe and inviting access between these institutions.

### *North of Western Avenue and East of Fuller Road*

Probably the oldest section of McKownville, with some houses that date back to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the formal and informal paths through this community present both issues and opportunities. Many of the houses and street layout date to the 1920s, with the layout for support services based on an internal system of alleys and storm drainage and utility pipeline system located within an intermittent stream's route. Though this design provides for excellent pedestrian mobility and well-organized services linked to back yard garages, some property owners have however extended their storage into these internal routes cutting off use. The surface easements associated with underground storm drainage pipeline route (if any) is also open for pedestrians at some locations, but it is closed at other points. The north end of dead-end streets are used for access to the State University grounds.

The following findings and recommendations pertain to the neighborhood to the north of Western Avenue and to the east of Fuller Road:

1. The dead-end streets should be connected to the State University sidewalk and bike-friendly road system. These “unofficial” paths benefit the neighborhood and should be maintained, through joint efforts with UAlbany, which owns the land between the dead-end streets and the Perimeter Road.
2. Where the alleys remain intact, they should be protected as essential elements of a successful neighborhood design. Some attention from municipal officials may be needed to protect the viability of the local resource.
3. Access to the State University open space and east-west pedestrian and bike corridors should be maintained, and perhaps reinforced with treatments such as coverage with wood chips, which are often used to keep parts intended for walking dry and free of mud. In addition, this simpler treatment sends a message that low-intensity use is anticipated. Bicyclists approaching wood chip-defined trail segments tend to choose to walk their bikes over them rather than riding over them.
4. The rights associated with the “pipeline” route require research. As it now stands this storm drainage system may not be completely successful for flood protection or as a consistent through-trail in this neighborhood. If this walking route becomes better established, an improved crossing of Fuller Road at its terminus is required.
5. With improved routes along Western Avenue and the State University, it may not be essential to secure a comprehensive “mid-block” east-west pedestrian system, however the neighborhood benefits where local pedestrian traffic is permitted and secured for the future.
6. Where alley systems are only used for adjoining land owner “storage,” this appears to constitute a trespass into a public easement. If obstructions to these alleys cannot be readily removed, then there may be little benefit to maintaining these easements. If abandoned, the



value of these easements should be determined for fair market value sale and property tax benefits to the municipalities.

### *South of Western Avenue*

Perhaps the most interesting opportunity for the development of a central neighborhood trail system in McKownville is comprised of the narrow stream valleys and occasional wetlands located to the south of Western Avenue. The Krum Kill has eroded the postglacial sandy soils throughout this area, to form steep ravines and narrow flood plains at the bottom of these linear depressions. Utilities, use these corridors, often including a dirt maintenance road used by the public for walking and access to surprisingly pristine stream-side green spaces. Unfortunately these green corridors do not form any comprehensive system of trails, so only the most adventurous teen-agers appear to use this network for true transportation. This limited spectrum of users generates some trespass, trash dumping and other nuisances.

In the vicinity of the offices and restaurants near Western Avenue, the one-time stream has been replaced by storm drainage pipelines and fill. Occasional fences disrupt pedestrian routes in this area. Though paved, the back of these parking lots shows little use, but as with some of the streams, trash and debris is common at these “unused” inhospitable spaces. Former access to residential areas, adjoining the commercial properties to the south is visible, but is now severed at many locations. People who at one time walked from their neighborhood to stores and offices now drive the few blocks to Western Avenue.

Schoolhouse Road, from the Thruway Bridge to Western Avenue, has a serviceable sidewalk. At Strawberry Lane, trails extend from Abele Park into the woods, and then using water line alignments, connect to McKown Road via a crushed stone path and a small bridge that leads east along dirt trails. Some faint trails also go north from this Park, connecting to the Krum Kill open spaces. As with other trails in this area, it is not clear when these trails are on public or private property.

The most appropriate material for the paths next to the Krum Kill need to be explored further as part of the final design effort (outside the scope of this study). The material will need to stay in place under flooding conditions, with geo-textile and other support likely required in spots. The approach should be to choose as fine a material as practical to allow a good surface for walking and wide tire bikes, but which at the same time is coarse and heavy enough to remain in place in case of flooding. The gravel used near Abele Park appears to be standing up well and provides a comfortable surface. Different stream sections may however require different solutions based on drainage and soils issues.

The previous point raises a note regarding a possible approach to the ultimate development of trail concepts: the Town Pathways Committee can assist Town technical staff in determining what trail surface treatments best fits projected use, construction budgets and the need to access underground utilities. Trail groups such as the Adirondack Mountain Club may also be able to provide skilled advisors to assist such efforts.

The Krum Kill trail heading toward Albany along Wood Avenue becomes a gravel road leading to a wastewater utility plant. Bricked-in windows and broken fences indicate minimal concern with maintenance. No other development exists along this road. This streamside route can be an excellent trail corridor, even with carefully planned adjoining development.

Perhaps broader opportunities for regional trail systems can be developed to continue a trail route along the Krum Kill, over the Thruway via the Route 85 Bridge and into Albany. From this point this regional trail concept would extend into park properties to an existing trail system along the Normans Kill along the Albany Municipal Golf Course and the Stevens Farm. The neighborhood trail along the Krum Kill can be designed to serve local needs, or as a part of a broader regional trail. Though bicycles are permitted along the shoulder of Route 85, this route needs considerable improvement before use for a desirable trail connection. Other routes traversing the Thruway will also need to be explored.

The following suggestions can bring about an ideal trail system and open space preservation project located to the south of Western Avenue:

1. The major utility lines, easements and service roads need to be reviewed for a potential trail system, either on a neighborhood basis or as the connection to regional trails systems.
2. The Krum Kill storm drainage system, floodways and wetlands needs to be protected and managed as high quality, linear open space, for their value as a natural area enhancing adjoining properties and the neighborhood.
3. The connection of the Krum Kill trail system should be reopened along the unused sections of blacktop behind commercial properties that front on Western Avenue in order to access Fuller Road, Stuyvesant Plaza, and an existing trail connection behind Burger King to Country Drive loop area (however a trespass situation may exist at this location).
4. A few strategically located sidewalks along McKown Road and in the vicinity of the east end of Western Avenue will be required to connect the Krum Kill greenway trail to Western Avenue destinations. In some cases, private property would need to be crossed, necessitating either easement negotiation or right-of-way acquisition. Where these sidewalks end, safe crossing of Western Avenue will have to be provided.

#### *West of Fuller Road and East of the Northway*

The area between the Northway and the residential, academic and commercial development linking to Fuller Road and Western Avenue is somewhat neglected, but offers great opportunity. Demand for a connection in this area is evidenced by a number of worn paths as well as the Team's noticing some unauthorized use of a culvert under the Thruway as a walking route.

In this area of McKownville an extensive strip of open space, with overgrown "pine-bush" vegetation characteristics is located to the north of Stuyvesant Plaza and south of Washington

Ave Extension, and a small, but neglected area exists next to the reservoir located south of Stuyvesant Plaza.

### *The McKownville Reservoir*

The reservoir, dating to early development along the Great Western Turnpike, is silting in and neglected. This reduces its ecological, silt-retention, aesthetic and recreational attributes. The Stuyvesant Plaza stores turn their back to this amenity, even where it offers attractive and grassed lakeside greenspace. This reservoir offers potential community opportunity for considerable improvement along the following concepts:

1. The area between Stuyvesant Plaza and the reservoir starts off and ends as attractive lakeside open spaces but a middle section is a paved area used for the storage of garbage and truck parking. A design should be considered that screens the garbage storage from the reservoir and provides for a lakeside walk and perhaps outdoor spaces to be used in conjunction with some of the adjoining coffee shops in the Plaza.
2. A sewer right of way has recently been worked on to the west of the reservoir. It can be used as a trail to connect to Western Avenue, and hopefully a safe crossing to Schoolhouse Road. A crushed stone surface on this alignment can keep sand from entering the reservoir and offer part of a loop walk around the lake.
3. Stuyvesant Plaza plows snow to the head of the reservoir, adding silt and debris. A silt retention basin at the head of the reservoir, with a shallow year-round pool can offer an aesthetic amenity, and safe winter ice-skating opportunities.<sup>1</sup>

### *East of the Northway*

A large area of sandy soil with some remnant scrub pine forest and wetlands next to the Northway exists north of Stuyvesant Plaza and east of the Northway. The area has many characteristics of former Pine Barrens, with occasional pitch-pine found among the more recent vegetative growth. Access trails exist from behind Ann Street, SUNY Freedom Quad and the misused areas behind the new CESTM development. High tension electrical transmission and gas lines operated by National Grid (formerly NiMo) run north – south, offering well used trails between the SUNY properties, Mercer and Providence Streets and Stuyvesant Plaza. This area and existing trail alignments offers opportunities for preservation and trail connections.

Bicycle and pedestrian connections from this area to the commercial areas to the west will probably have to be via Western Avenue and the Washington Ave. Extension, though both of these routes are encumbered by significant constraints and challenges. A northbound elevated ramp crosses the Northway and the Thruway from Crossgates Mall Road in the vicinity of the office park at Stuyvesant Plaza. The potential of this bridge to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians has been mentioned at workshops; this link is unlikely to be feasible. At nearly one-

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<sup>1</sup> The USDA Soil Conservation Service may be willing to design this small improvement to the Krum Kill basin and reservoir.

third of a mile in length, the slender one-lane bridge accommodates high-speed traffic that negotiates a tight turn, with poor site distances. Problems also exist at both the western and eastern landing points of this ramp precluding desirable or safe connections to walkways in the two shopping plazas.

The following recommendations may help develop an important open space and trail connection in this area:

1. The State University, CESTM and Stuyvesant Plaza should cooperate on securing trail easements for routes along the north-south utility corridor. Students use this corridor<sup>2</sup> to avoid the dangers posed by walking and bicycling along Fuller Road. In addition, this corridor provides an alternative to Fuller Road for walking trips to UAlbany.
2. Given the complaints regarding the recent destruction of vegetation during the construction of a new residential quad along Fuller Road, the University should probably review the impact of current CESTM construction<sup>3</sup>, and consider the protection of some of the remaining open space in this area.
3. The potential to extend trails along Washington Ave. Extension is greatly enhanced if the route could traverse Albany sewer line right of way near the north end of this open space, beginning an important link to SUNY, Pine Bush Preserve and Albany trail systems. At least a desirable right of way should be secured for this bike/ped link at this time.
4. An improved bicycle and pedestrian connection between the University campus on the east side and CESTM and housing on the west side is essential if these units are to function well in a cooperative manner. Though a sidewalk connects Freedom Quad to the campus next to a utility building, the walk is long and uninviting with an unsafe crossing of Fuller. Students report that those who own cars will mostly drive between these two adjacent areas.

#### *West of the Thruway and Fuller Road Alternate*

There is little that can be done that will do more than provide basic safety in the sections of McKownville to the west of the Thruway. The minimum current standards indicate at least the provision of good sidewalks and bike friendly road shoulders along the collector roads such as Church Street, safer routes along Western Avenue, road crossing safety and better access for bicyclists and pedestrians into Crossgates. The dilemma of providing these improvements lies more with good road design than with imaginative trail solutions.

The potential of trail routes along the landscaping located on the south side of Crossgates Mall Road and / or along the Thruway was considered, but rejected because of unsafe crossing points posed by any of these routes.

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<sup>2</sup> Though the University has put up fences to keep the movement of pedestrians between Freedom Quad and the power / gas line corridor trails, it is clear from the many breaks in this fencing that this is a futile attempt to keep students from using their best route for travel to their destinations.

<sup>3</sup> Construction debris has been piled up around mature pitch-pine vegetation, ultimately killing these trees.

Though not examined for this study, it is likely that the tributaries linking the street ends at Hanley Road and Gertrude Street to the Normans Kill may present similar opportunities as do the Krum Kill tributaries. If considered, these trails must connect to serviceable sidewalks linking to destinations in the neighborhood and ultimately to Western Avenue. The attributes of the stream corridors should be considered with any planning, subdivision and zoning regulations for this area to maximize and rationalize the benefits that can be provided by such enlightened policies.

Aside from the sidewalk along Schoolhouse Road, and the segments of often disconnected bike/pedestrian facilities along Fuller and Western Avenue, there are few streets with sidewalks. Sidewalks along the secondary streets are generally of dated vintage, not ADA-compliant, heaved by trees, and seldom where there is great need for pedestrian connections.

## **Recommendations**

Note: Recommendations TRL-1 through TRL-9 are summarized in Figure 2-1 on the following page.

### *TRL-1: Freedom Quad – Stuyvesant Plaza Trail Development*

- *Description:* Develop ~2000' stone dust trail along Niagara Mohawk right of way between UAlbany Freedom Quadrangle and Stuyvesant Plaza. Additional potential for extension to CESTM and SUNY Intergenerational Village, as concepts progress.
- *Estimated Cost:* \$20,000
- *Additional Notes:* Approximately 1125' of this trail would be in the Town, and the remainder in the City of Albany. As the municipal boundary line is not a logical terminus for the trail (that is, it would need to continue northward to Freedom Quad to fully accommodate the targeted travel route), coordination between the Town and the City will be necessary to complete development of the entire trail.

### *TRL-2: Western Avenue – Schoolhouse Road Trail Development*

- *Description:* Develop ~475' asphalt trail from eastbound side of Western Avenue at the east end of the Thruway bridge to Schoolhouse Road. Consider installation of a pedestrian/cyclist-activated signal at the Schoolhouse Road intersection.
- *Estimated Cost:* \$10,000; add \$75,000 for signaling the Schoolhouse Road intersection.

*Please click on FIGURE 2-1 on the Web page for the Trail Concepts map. If you wish to print this figure, please note that the figure is approximately 26 inches by 11 inches. It is best printed to a color plotter, and will be very difficult to read if printed to fit an 8 ½ x 11 or 11 x 17 sheet.*

- *Additional Notes:* This improvement is an alternative to the sidewalk concept for this alignment presented in Project SW-2. In addition, the bicycle-related improvements presented in Project IS-6 may obviate the need for installation of a signal here as they would be expected to significantly reduce cyclist use of this trail to travel to the east via Western Avenue (that is, there would be little or no bicycle crossing traffic).

*TRL-3: Patricia Lane –Westmere Elementary School Trail Development*

- *Description:* Develop ~1350’ asphalt trail from the dead-end section of Patricia Lane around the rear parking lot of the Westmere Elementary School to a point at which pedestrians and cyclists can safely access the School. Also, a ~500’ stone dust spur connecting the main trail to the Town Center would promote pedestrian access to shopping opportunities, and provide residents of the 1700 Designer Residences with access to walking opportunities in the Alton/Hungerford area.



*Figure 2-2  
Westerly View from the Dead-End Section of Patricia Lane*

- *Estimated Cost:* \$30,000 (including the cost of the spur trail)
- *Additional Notes:* In past years, this was a well-used pedestrian route, but the current owner of the land upon which these trails would sit has blocked this path and does not appear at present to be disposed toward making the land available for their development. Acquisition of this land or provision of a trail easement as a condition of future development approval for this property may be the necessary means of implementing this concept. As the Alton-Hungerford neighborhood is the only neighborhood in the study area holding the potential for

children to walk to school without crossing a major street, either this trail connection or the sidewalk improvements outlined in Recommendations SW-1 and SW-2 should be high priorities for implementation.

*TRL-4: McKown Road – Abele Park Trail Improvements*

- Description: Develop ~1300' stone dust trail from McKown Road in the vicinity of Pinnacle Place to Abele Park. Also, improve the existing trail's McKown Road access point (near Woodscape Drive) to enhance clarity and approachability.
- Estimated Cost: \$13,000
- Additional Notes: The new trail would provide a more direct exclusive facility connecting McKownville north of Western Avenue and east of McKown Road with Abele Park. This trail could partially follow the McKownville Reservoir watercourse (see Project TRL-5).

*TRL-5: Krum Kill West Branch Trail Development*

- Description: Develop ~2375' gravel or cleared/mowed (no new surface, just grass) trail along the West Branch of the Krum Kill from Western Avenue (opposite the McKownville Reservoir) to McKown Road.
- Estimated Cost: \$10,000
- Additional Notes: This project has good potential to be coordinated with stormwater management work the Town is looking to pursue in the near term. Also, it would promote potential access to the Normans Kill near Route 85. Potential concerns regarding the use of stone dust near a watercourse was the basis for indicating either gravel or grass for the travel surface.

*TRL-6: Norwood Street – UAlbany Trail Development*

- Description: Develop ~95' asphalt trail from the north end of Norwood Street to the UAlbany Perimeter Road, and install a crosswalk connecting the end of the trail to the paved multi-use path on the opposite side of Perimeter Road.
- Estimated Cost: \$2,000
- Additional Notes: This would be less a "trail" than a strategic connection. Most of the dead-end streets in this area have these unofficial paths connecting to UAlbany; the Norwood path is indicated here for improvement based on the aim of using the Western/McKown/Norwood intersection as something of a neighborhood crossroads, such that pedestrians and cyclists in particular could be signed to the Abele Park and UAlbany connections at the intersection.



UAlbany cooperation for construction and/or maintenance would be required for this project. If desired by residents and acceptable to UAlbany, this connection could serve as a model for connections of other “Northeast Quadrant” streets to the Perimeter Road path, enhancing both pedestrian/bicycle transportation and recreational opportunities.

*TRL-7: Recreational Trail System West of Fuller Road*

- *Description:* Formalize public access to the network of sewer rights of way in the area bordered by Fuller Road, Fuller Road Alternate, I-90 and the Guilderland/Albany line. Sign recreational loops and connections to the Freedom Quad-Stuyvesant Plaza trail (see Project TRL-1).



*Figure 2-3  
Existing Use of “Unofficial” Trails West of Fuller Road*

- *Estimated Cost:* Administrative costs to the City, plus minor staff time investments related to coordination of efforts with Albany.
- *Additional Notes:* This is not a Guilderland action – the sewer rights of way referenced are in the City of Albany. However, it stands to benefit Guilderland residents in providing another nearby recreational opportunity which would not require them to cross Western Avenue (or, for many people, Fuller Road). The action would be to advise Albany of the recreational potential of these rights of way (use of which is already evident from path wear). In addition, there is the potential for “winter sports” use of this trail, both because of its appealing setting and terrain and because in December 2002, Eastern Mountain Sports entered a lease agreement for space in Stuyvesant Plaza. This sporting goods retailer sells a considerable amount of gear such as snowshoes and cross-country skis, and a location with a trail nearby could encourage greater wintertime use. This however could affect the decision

on what type of surface treatment to provide on this trail, as stone dust, grass or wood chips maintain snow surfaces better than solid pavements do.

*TRL-8: Town Trails Map Development*

- Description: Develop a trail map to ensure local/visitor knowledge of these local recreational and transportation-oriented opportunities.
- Estimated Cost: \$3,000
- Additional Notes: Trail development would need to take place before map development would be a practical action.

*TRL-9: Redevelop McKownville Reservoir as a Recreational Destination*

- Description: Treatments including path development, the provision of picnic or park benches and clearing additional level greenspace to provide nearby residents and workers with a local site for strolling, picnicking, and other activities.
- Estimated Cost: \$50,000 - \$75,000
- Additional Notes: Over the years, the Reservoir pond has become smaller in area and shallower due to siltation. The Town is exploring ways to expand and deepen the reservoir as a partial means of addressing Western/Fuller area flooding issues. These actions could be incorporated into the landscaping and other surrounding area treatments being considered for inclusion in such a project.



*(Photos courtesy of the Town of Guilderland)*

*Figure 2-4  
Aerial Views of McKownville Reservoir in 1967 and 1995*

## TRANSIT SERVICE AND FACILITIES

### Overview

Transit service in the study area, particularly along Western Avenue, is plentiful, with CDTA Routes 10, 21 and 63 and the UAlbany transportation system in operation along Western Avenue. The CDTA routes also provide direct access to UAlbany, Stuyvesant Plaza and Crossgates Mall.

Existing CDTA service provides area transit users with a range of options both for trip start times and (via transfers) potential destinations outside the neighborhood. Indications are that transit patronage in the area has increased as a result of the #10 (Western Avenue) service's being extended to Crossgates Mall via the Western/Johnston intersection. In addition to enhancing travel opportunities to Crossgates and the other destinations between the Mall's Western Avenue entrance and Johnston Road, this modification also increased Guilderland's attractiveness as a residential location for people who do not have cars, given the number of apartment complexes in and near the study area.

UAlbany students who have paid the mandatory comprehensive fee or have purchased an "all you can ride" semester bus pass may in addition to using the UAlbany bus system ride the following CDTA Routes:

- Route 10 (Western Avenue) – This route does not enter the campus, but it does stop near UAlbany's Western Avenue entrance. Students may ride this route days, evenings and weekends.
- Route 11 (UAlbany Shuttle) – Students may ride this route evenings and weekends
- Route 12 (Washington Avenue) – This route serves UAlbany, but does not enter the Study area. Students may ride this route days, evenings and weekends.
- Route 90 (Troy/Latham/Crossgates) – Students may ride this route after 6:30 PM Friday and all day Saturday.

The issues discussed in the next section and the recommendations subsequently presented concentrate on improving the accommodation of existing transit patrons ("maintaining the base"), enhancing the comfort and convenience of transit use both through the provision of customer amenities and by getting transit closer to specific destinations, potential improvements to transit service, and promotion of transit travel opportunities.

## Issues

### *Service/Schedules*

Public meeting participants seemed to have a real understanding of the importance of transit service to the area, and were generally satisfied with the frequency of fixed-route service in the corridor. They tended to express desires for changes only in those areas that might be considered tailoring services to local needs, such as a McKownville circulator service (perhaps akin to CDTA's Shuttle family of services) or express service from the neighborhood to downtown Albany.

### *Stop Placements/Accommodations*

Numerous concerns were expressed during the Study regarding transit stop placements and accommodations (e.g., benches and shelters) at these stops. Concerns raised about stop placements frequently appeared to reflect problems people had in accessing stops which tended to have less to do with distance than about pedestrian accommodations along the way (e.g., continuous sidewalks leading to a stop) or the quality of the stop location itself (e.g., a need to walk through grass, mud or snow to get from a sidewalk to a bus and vice versa).

Generally speaking, the frequency of transit stops in the Study area is related to the amount of residential development on the same side of Western Avenue as a bus. That is, between the City line and Fuller Road, there is a stop along the westbound side at nearly every block (adjacent to the most densely residentially-developed part of the neighborhood), while stops in either direction are more spread out between Crossgates Mall and Johnston Road (with larger land uses, less residential development nearby and fewer commuting destinations).

### *Need for Transit-Oriented Design*

Crossgates Mall and Stuyvesant Plaza offer fairly easy access and internal circulation for transit vehicles. Other existing developments are less compatible with transit vehicles, with this situation being even more problematic in cases such as the Town Center shopping center area where access from the development to the transit stops on Western Avenue is also not completely accommodated.

Attributes of the Crossgates and Stuyvesant Plaza site designs can be used as models for future internal site designs of both larger and mid-sized commercial developments.

### *Transfer Opportunities*

Using combinations of the CDTA #10, #21 and #63 routes, transit users in McKownville and elsewhere in the region have access to a considerable range of travel destinations beyond those along any one of these routes by itself. All of the transit stops on Western Avenue accommodate at least two CDTA routes including the #10. The #10 is a full-day route, while the #21 and #63 are peak period routes destined for particular sites or areas not served by the #10 such as the

Village of Altamont, the Northeastern Industrial Park, and downtown Schenectady. Having information on these travel opportunities readily available to transit users would enhance the potential role of transit for both local and wider-area tripmaking.

### *Bike Racks on Buses*

The #10 and #63 are two of CDTA's "Bikeable Bus" routes, with all buses on these routes equipped with bike racks capable of holding two bicycles. Continuing the theme just discussed, this opens up opportunities for longer-distance travel with bicycles both for commuting purposes and for others such as recreation (e.g., putting a bicycle on a bus and going up to Schenectady to access the Mohawk River section of the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail).

### *Miscellany*

- Crossings near Transit Stops: Safe pedestrian crossings near transit stops are among the keys to transit's realizing its potential in any area. Most regular transit users in the area will need to cross Western Avenue either at the beginning or end of their travels (e.g., to get on a bus in the morning, or to go home in the evening). In addition to the provision of a clearly delineated pedestrian area, pedestrian signals and other amenities, it is critical particularly in the wintertime that lighting at intersections be sufficient for motorists to see pedestrians crossing.
- Maintenance: Across the region, many of CDTA's current shelters were installed as elements of the traffic mitigation packages required by localities as conditions of approval for proposed developments. CDTA advises that if additional shelters are provided through such means or through municipal purchase, they will maintain them if the shelters meet CDTA standards. CDTA does not plow the areas near bus stops, instead relying on local regulations and cooperation; for example, should a new shelter be installed at a stop along Western Avenue, CDTA would request that the Town sidewalk snow removal machine make a pass in front of the shelters. The Town recently purchased a new machine which has been seen as a substantial improvement to its capabilities in this regard.

Another interesting note regarding maintenance of facilities near stops was that when the Town recently began clearing the areas near existing Western Avenue sidewalks of overhanging bushes and overgrown lawn/soil areas, the realization was that some of these sidewalks were significantly wider than had been thought.

- Right-of-Way: An additional issue regarding potential shelters in the corridor is that at some locations, the NYSDOT right-of-way ends at or close to the inside edge of the sidewalk. Should shelter installation be pursued at such locations (such as the Town Center area), it would be necessary to secure permission from the owner of the property where the shelter would actually be located.

- Details: There are also some potential conflicts between shelters and adjacent parcel improvements which would need to be resolved prior to shelter location. As one example, the Town Center property has an automatic sprinkler systems installed which covers right up to the Western Avenue sidewalk area; some people approaching or standing outside a shelter near this location could get wet while waiting for a bus, particularly on a windy day.

## Recommendations

### *TRN-1: Install Shelters at Western Avenue Bus Stops*

- Description: Install shelters at the following bus stops (in priority order):
  - McKown Road (eastbound side)
  - SUNY (westbound side)
  - 1450 Western (eastbound side; currently has bench)
  - 1700 Western/Town Center (eastbound side – near Price Chopper)
  - Fuller Road (eastbound side, near Dentist’s Office/Burger King)
  - Church Road (westbound side, past intersection)
  - Stuyvesant Plaza main driveway (westbound side, past driveway)
  - SUNY (westbound side)
  - Arcadia Avenue (eastbound side)

Transit stops and these proposed shelter locations are presented in Figure 3-1 on the following page.

- Estimated Cost: \$36,000 - \$108,000 depending on the type of shelter desired at each location (\$4,000 per shelter for basic shelters, up to \$12,000 per shelter for more elaborate facilities with peaked roofs and other features which could make the shelters more visually consistent with the surrounding area).
- Additional Notes: CDTA is currently pursuing funding for a program that would enable it to install shelters at a number of locations on its system. If they are successful, the potential exists to have one or more of the shelters listed above included in this program. Also, CDTA recently secured a \$285,000 State Multi-Modal Program grant for improvements to intersections near transit stops, with these improvements potentially including the installation of transit shelters. Three packages of intersection improvements recommended in the “Traffic Operations” chapter – for Western/UAlbany (IS-1), Western/McKown/Norwood (IS-2) and Western/Fuller (IS-4) have been discussed with CDTA and flagged as the highest priorities for pursuit under the Multi-Modal Program project.

*Please click on FIGURE 3-1 on the Web page  
for the Transit Map*

*TRN-2: Promote CDTA Travel Opportunities for College Student Travel*

- Description: CDTA and UAlbany to work to better promote transit travel opportunities for the student community.
- Estimated Cost: Minor staff time costs, perhaps some modest cost associated with the development of promotional aids.
- Additional Notes: Could be a model for efforts at other area colleges and major employment sites.

*TRN-3: Enhance Traveler Information*

- Description: Increase the availability of information on transit services, statuses, transfer opportunities and tripmaking assistance through the use of electronic signboards at major transit stops, enhanced CDTA Web site tools, kiosks at UAlbany, Stuyvesant Plaza and Crossgates Mall.
- Estimated Cost: \$170,000 for four signboards at an average installed cost of \$7,500 apiece, \$5,000 for Web site improvements, and three touch-screen kiosks at \$15,000 apiece.
- Additional Notes: Could be progressed as part of a systemwide effort.

*TRN-4: Explore Transit Priority Opportunities for the Western Avenue Corridor*

- Description: Assess the potential for the use of transit signal priority (extended green phases or early changes to green to enable approaching buses to continue on their ways without stopping) along Western Avenue. The initial effort required would take the form of a feasibility study which would include modeling of traffic along the Western Avenue corridor, with likely endpoints for the corridor to be from Route 155 in Guilderland to Washington Avenue in Albany.
- Estimated Cost: \$75,000 to \$100,000 for the feasibility study.
- Additional Notes: CDTA is currently progressing transit priority on Route 5 between downtown Albany and downtown Schenectady as part of a project to upgrade traffic signals along this corridor. A positive outcome for this project could create a momentum for transit priority in other corridors such as Western Avenue. There is a project on the draft 2003-2008 CDTC TIP (Project A435) which would see deployment of transit priority along Washington and Western Avenues in 2007 or 2008.



*TRN-5: Explore Opportunities for Express CDTA Service from McKownville*

- Description: Examine the potential for converting the #63 route to express service east of Fuller/Western (by way of Fuller Road and I-90 or the State Office Campus).
- Estimated Cost: Examination could be progressed as an internal effort in the course of other general service planning activities.
- Additional Notes: While the conversion of the #63 service would require transfers by patrons traveling between the bypassed area and points to the west, the #10 route provides frequent service in the bypassed area; the frequency of service along the #10 would minimize the waits associated with these transfers.

**Note on Intermodal Facilitation**

Transit's success in realizing its ridership potential is dependent on a number of factors including accessibility of individual stops. It is thus important to ensure that pedestrians, cyclists and motorists (the latter particularly for park-and-ride) have comfortable, safe routes to transit stops and appropriate facilities at these stops wherever possible. To do this, several planning and programmatic steps can be taken, including the following:

- Elevating the Construction/Rehabilitation Priority of Sidewalks Approaching Transit Stops: "Looking outward" from individual stops (particularly high current or potential patronage stops), needed sidewalk improvement or construction projects can be assigned higher priorities in capital programs.
- Exploring Additional Pedestrian and Cyclist Treatments: Crosswalks, wide paved shoulders, and traffic signals with pedestrian phases and/or pedestrian button-actuated "NO TURN ON RED" indications can improve the ease of walking to bus stops.
- Destination Treatments: Park-and-ride lot and general transit stops can be improved to provide the basic amenities needed to enhance transit's attractiveness, through such measures as providing bike storage racks or lockers at bus stops, paving and sanctioning "unofficial" park-and-ride lots, and improving the safety and ease with which turn and crossing movements to and from stops can be made.
- Policy Measures: The Town takes responsibility for sidewalk maintenance at present, with the additional measure of an ordinance prohibiting the plowing of snow onto sidewalks providing additional assurance of the accessibility of these facilities. While the Town's efforts include clearing snow from sidewalks near transit stops, paying special attention to the accessibility of buses from transit stops (e.g., in clearing "cut-through" paths across utility strips) would enhance the comfort of wintertime transit users.

## TRAFFIC OPERATIONS

One of the premises of this Study was the basic understanding that while motor vehicle traffic is one of the main defining attributes of the corridor, the aim of the Study was not to identify remedies to traffic issues *per se*, but rather to identify actions which could be taken to reconcile traffic with the character and needs of the adjacent neighborhood. This aim was consistent with the findings from the first public meeting, at which it was interesting to note that not much was said about getting traffic *out of* McKownville. This acceptance of or resignation to the presence of significant volumes of traffic could be explained by pointing to two items:

- Tenure: According to the Fact Finders survey conducted for the Town Comprehensive Plan effort, the average homeowner respondent had lived in Guilderland for 21-22 years, while the average renter respondent had lived in the Town for 10-12 years. Thus, for many people, Western Avenue traffic has been a fact of life since they moved to the Town. For example, in 1979 the section of Western Avenue between the Northway and SUNY entrance carried 25,000 – 30,000 vehicles per day – levels generally comparable to current volumes.
- Major Local Trip Generators: While it is conceivable that there is some *slight* opportunity to redirect traffic away from the area, making greater use of Washington Avenue, the Northway and I-90, the fact is that with generators such as Crossgates, SUNY and the State Office Campus located in the area, with multiple points of ingress and egress, traffic has largely sorted itself out to its optimal paths in the area. “Wild cards” such as the potential redevelopment of the State Campus could change things somewhat by modestly affecting either travel patterns or peak work hours (the latter if any future changes to the use of the Campus result in its occupation by more “three shift” work such as high tech or “back office” private sector operations), but the basic influence of these sites on the surrounding transportation system would likely remain as it is now.

That said, the Study effort included a special meeting to discuss the corridor’s key traffic issues, so as to ensure that the Study Team proceeded in its investigations with a complete understanding of and sensitivity to the traffic realities of the area. Participants in this March 4, 2002 meeting were as follow:

Todd Gifford (Town Highway Superintendent)	Don Robertson (NYSDOT Region 1 Planning)
Mike Franchini (Albany County DPW)	Steve Terplak (NYSDOT Region 1 Traffic and Safety)
Dave Jukins (Capital District Transportation Committee)	Jan Weston (Town Planner)
James Murley (Chief, Town Police Department)	Steve Allocco (Creighton Manning Engineering)
Chris O’Neill (CDTC)	John Tozzi (Creighton Manning Engineering)

At this meeting, a number of issues and potential actions were identified; several of these issues and actions will be presented later in this Chapter.

## Issues

### *Managing Interactions Between Modes*

In the previous chapter, a note was presented regarding the importance of facilitating intermodal connections. Even more important to the enhancement of travel opportunities in the corridor for all modes of transportation is the *minimization of conflict between modes*. Speeding, right turns on red (“rolling” or otherwise), “boomerang U-turns” (which will be discussed below) and other behavior tend to occur at a cost to the comfort and safety of other modes, particularly human-powered travel and transit.

When one mode is accommodated by a given action, it is usually necessary to complement the action with actions affecting other modes in order to ensure safety and efficiency. As one example, the provision of a bike lane provides cyclists with an exclusive facility upon which to ride; installing SHARE THE ROAD signage would *compound* this benefit by reminding motorists to watch for cyclists and give them some room. Another example might be the combination of promoting transit use through improving pedestrian connections to transit stops with reducing speed limits or physical traffic calming steps to reduce motor vehicle speeds in the area.

### *Enhancing the Predictability of Traffic through Access Management*

While on the one hand it is important to basic mobility and the local economic base to ensure the accessibility of land uses, it is indeed possible to have “too much” access resulting in unpredictable traffic. For example, a business with no curbing in front of its parking lot has a de facto full-width driveway. In addition to fostering uncertainty regarding where a vehicle accessing or leaving the property will drive, such full-width driveways allow motorists to turn off the street at higher rates of speed than do more explicitly delineated driveways. Also, single land uses with multiple full-access driveways (that is, to or from which left or right turns can be made) raise the potential for conflicting movements.

Access management – the reduction of driveway-related conflict points – can increase predictability and safety, with the added benefit of enhancing the efficiency of roadways in carrying traffic. While increasing the efficiency of the Study area roadways was not a stated goal of this project, nor is it on its face consistent with the idea of reconciling traffic with neighborhood setting, it does bring with it the benefit of reducing the amount of low-speed driving or idling. This in turn would also reduce emissions and noise in the area.

### *Traffic Calming*

In its *Highway Design Manual*, NYSDOT uses the Institute of Transportation Engineers’ definition of traffic calming, which describes this tool as

“the combination of mainly physical measures that reduce the negative effects of motor vehicle use, alter driver behavior, and improve conditions for nonmotorized street users” (Institute of Transportation Engineers, as presented in NYSDOT *Highway Design Manual*, Page 25-2)

In the course of the Study, the Advisory Committee requested that Western Avenue, Fuller Road, and a number of the neighborhood streets off Western Avenue be examined for traffic calming opportunities. The recommendations set forth in this chapter will present the Study Team’s determinations on where from among these locations this tool is most feasible.

### *Down-Design*

“Down-designing” is arguably a variant on traffic calming under which a facility is reconstructed to a lower *design speed* (the speed which the horizontal and vertical elements of a highway are designed to accommodate) after which the facility is not otherwise modified to further affect motor vehicle traffic speeds. This idea came up during the Study particularly with thoughts of application to Western Avenue and Fuller Road Alternate. A down-design concept for Fuller Road Alternate will be presented in the recommendations; what follows is some discussion of the idea for Western Avenue, for which the idea is *not* incorporated into any recommendations but for which future exploration is arguably warranted.

At the traffic issues meetings as well as throughout the study, the potential for reducing the speed limit along Western Avenue to 30 or 35 miles per hour (MPH) was discussed. The character of Western east of Fuller Road is generally comparable to that on the Albany side of the Albany/Guilderland line, where the City speed limit of 30 MPH applies.

The NYSDOT approach to setting speed limits is based on the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed of traffic traveling on a street. This is consistent with common traffic engineering across the country, and means that NYSDOT would not reduce the speed limit to 30 on a facility such as Western which sees 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speeds well over that figure. Discussions with NYSDOT *did* yield the point that NYSDOT *would* be willing to consider a speed limit change if speed along Western came down to a more conducive figure through other means, such as road design modifications. As noted earlier, the Town Police Chief has expressed a willingness to enforce a lower speed limit if it was posted. Traffic calming is certainly one tool for achieving this reduction; another tool which was discussed during the project would entail reducing Western Avenue’s cross section between the City line and Fuller Road from four lanes to two lanes plus a two-way left-turn lane. This concept was the subject of considerable discussion, a summary of which bears presentation here so as to provide some context for future readers of this document seeking insight on additional concepts for consideration beyond those explicitly recommended herein.

The Study team considered the potential of going from four lanes to a *two lanes plus two-way left-turn lane* (TWLTL) cross-section of the sort discussed by Dan Burden and Peter Lagerwey in their “Road Diets” paper (Walkable Communities, Incorporated, 1999). Burden and Lagerwey see promise in this concept because it would provide a benefit to *human-scale transportation* and, by extension, to

local quality of life -- crossing distances can be reduced and space freed up within the existing right of way for bike lanes, sidewalks and utility strips.

While a proper microsimulation analysis of the two-lane plus median/turn lanes (or roundabouts) or 2+TWLTL concepts for Western Avenue in McKownville was beyond the scope of this Study, the Study team used traffic and roadway capacity information, information on adjacent land use and overall transportation system configuration information to conduct something of a “fatal flaw” analysis of the potential of 2+TWLTL application in this corridor. The basic finding was that this section of Western Avenue appears to have too many local destinations, too much “entirely local” traffic, too much traffic *in total*, and insufficient spacing between signalized intersections to hold promise for successful 2+TWLTL application. The expectation would be that the intersections would dictate traffic flow through the corridor, with increased congestion resulting. While one of the cornerstones of this study was that it was *not* predicated on maintaining the quality of traffic operations above all else as an inflexible requirement, the quality of traffic operations is in fact part of what the *neighborhood* requires as a condition for quality of life – that is, for it can minimize the amount of exhaust in the air and noise related to pull-away acceleration. This concept is also currently being explored for Columbia Turnpike (U.S. Routes 9 and 20) in East Greenbush as part of another CDTC Linkage Program project. While ongoing explorations have yet to yield a clear insight on whether 2+TWLTL can be applied in that corridor, the reality is that as a starting point, Columbia Turnpike has fewer major destinations, for the most part lower traffic intensity commercial development, and a substantial amount of through traffic.

The team also took up the concept of 2+TWLTL for Western Avenue with Dan Burden; in fact, team Project Manager Steve Allocco had the benefit of Burden’s having been out in the field on this corridor some time ago when Steve and Don Robertson of NYSDOT Region 1 participated in the USDOT “Pedestrian Safety Road Show “train the trainer” sessions. Burden not only specifically observed that the volumes on Western Avenue exceeded what he had seen as most workable for 2+TWLTL – stating that numbers in the range of about 17,000 to 22,000 were “workable in most applications” – he also specifically suggested that the region not make Western Avenue the first location in the region at which 2+TWLTL be tried. Instead, Burden proposed concentrating on a mix of other streetscape, traffic calming and traffic regulation tools to achieve meaningful changes in operating conditions and livability. This response could be taken as “backing off too easily,” for the philosophy behind system management could arguably be more one of approaching the design of the road from the perspective that some degree of the quality of traffic operations can be sacrificed if a meaningful change in livability is the result and the sacrifice does not include defined undesirable side effects. In practice, this might for example mean that lower operating speeds through the corridor related to reduced capacity would be acceptable as long they enhanced local mobility (particularly human-scale transportation) and did not come with increased local vehicle emissions or vehicle stop/start cycles.

That said, the possibility that future conditions and circumstances will be substantially different from those of the present time is intriguing, for they could open up possibilities for actions that are presently beyond the realm of realistic consideration. While such conditions or

circumstances could be either more or less conducive to something like 2+TWLTL or two lanes plus medians and left turn lanes or roundabouts, the comment remains that NYSDOT and the Town should not limit their considerations of the possibilities for this street to what is possible right now. Accordingly, it is proposed that these concepts be considered to hold potential for implementation *if a number of preconditions were in place with regard to volumes, mix of traffic, adjacent land use, driveway access behavior, access management, intersection/traffic signal spacings, complementary treatments away from the corridor, NYSDOT policy and practice on management of capacity on its facilities* (i.e., “willingness to try something different”) and other factors. In other words, 2+TWLTL could become a more realistic possibility if for example a number of the other actions recommended in this report became a reality.

### *Streetscaping and Motorist Behavior*

At first glance, this may seem like an odd pairing of subjects, but as for traffic calming, the commonality lies in trying to modify the physical environment to enhance the feel of the corridor and affect motorist behavior in a positive way. What was striking to the Study team about discussions with area residents on this topic was that a substantial number of the actions the residents desired for the corridor for primarily aesthetic reasons could in fact be included in an effective approach to making motorists drive slower, less abruptly and (by extension) more predictably through the area. Among the tools and design preferences identified in exchanges with residents were the following:

- A *center median* with grass and plantings, but with turning points at intersections – in essence, interspersing a center turn lane but interspersed with green space.
- Attractive *street lighting*, perhaps using an old-fashioned or otherwise non-generic style.
- Improving the *appearance* of the rear of Stuyvesant Plaza near Fuller Road, or adding some kind of *visual screening*.
- Enhancing the look of the Fuller Road Alternate bridge over Western Avenue, perhaps through installation of a *false stone facing* for the sides of the bridge.
- Eliminating the *third westbound travel lane* (which extends to the Crossgates Mall entrance) between Fuller Road Alternate and Crossgates Mall.
- Installing *median refuges* for pedestrians on Western Avenue and Fuller Road, particularly at the intersection of Church Road and Western Avenue.
- More consistent *separation of sidewalks from roads* (with utility or maintenance strips).
- Planting more *street trees*, with the locations most often mentioned being the south (eastbound) side of Western from Fuller Road to McKown Road.

In addition to all of these considerations, neighborhood residents brought to the Study team’s attention a phenomenon termed *boomerang U-turns* which while not unique to this area appears to be a particular problem given the character of the streets just off the westbound side of Western Avenue, east of Fuller Road. As described by the residents (and subsequently observed by the team), under this maneuver people turn left into these dead-end streets, make U-turns (frequently using driveways), and then proceed west on Western Avenue. Two possible causes for these maneuvers are the following:

- Difficulties in turning left from unsignalized driveways (e.g., at hotels) onto Western Avenue, possibly rooted in the lack of a flush median which would enable motorists to get part of the way through their movements by first turning across the eastbound travel lanes.
- People (perhaps visiting UAlbany, the State Campus or area businesses from out of town) who are unfamiliar with the area and thus do not realize that they are turning into dead-end streets, because they are looking for a place to turn left and do not notice the DEAD END signs because they are concentrating on traffic.

Driveway consolidation favoring exiting through existing signalized driveways (e.g., at 1450 Western Avenue) would reduce this problem, as would the provision of clearer navigational signage for the benefit of visitors to the area. That said, the boomerang U-turn problem is likely to remain, as many people who *are* familiar with the area have apparently figured out that at times, they represent the easiest way to head west from properties on the south (eastbound) side of Western Avenue.

### *Flooding and Stormwater Management*

Flooding is a critical issue for this study for two reasons: when it occurs, it creates major operational problems for all modes of travel in the area, and because the timings of a number of pedestrian, bicycle and transit-related actions will be functions of when needed improvements to the area's water, stormwater and sanitary sewer systems take place.

Steering Committee discussions of flooding in the Stuyvesant Plaza area raised an important note regarding the need for a "total solution" for the area: in the context of this Study, there is the need to enhance the pedestrian environment in particular; in addition, the flooding issue needs to be addressed such that people are assured of the availability of these facilities when wet weather occurs. (That is, people do still walk in the rain.) Toward this end, the Study Team worked closely with the Town Engineering Department to ensure that the prioritization of improvements identified as desirable in this study was consistent with the Town's plans with regard to both roadway and utility infrastructure.

Stormwater management is regulated to some extent by all levels of government, and is a logical concern for well-designed private and public projects and maintenance programs. To advance the practice of stormwater management, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) recently extended its Phase II Stormwater Management Compliance Regulations, as administered in New York by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). The new regulations are intended to ensure that storm sewer improvements and other large construction projects in urbanized areas include appropriate controls on storm water discharge. These regulations apply to the Town, and will thus affect projects taking place in the study area.

The new regulations require that operators of smaller municipal separate storm sewer systems (generally, those serving populations of less than 100,000 people) and smaller construction sites (one to five acres in size) develop stormwater management plans and apply "best management practices" (examples of which are provided by USEPA on its stormwater program Web site,

<http://www.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater>) to minimize the adverse effects of stormwater discharges. Information on flooding, sediment and erosion control, which under the Phase II regulations may in some cases require NYSDEC permits, is available from NYSDEC's Division of Water at <http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dow>.



*Figure 4-1  
Flooding at the Western Avenue/Fuller Road Intersection*

In addition to influencing the prioritization of projects within this effort and the Town's utility infrastructure planning, discussions of flooding issues raised ideas passed along to other agencies for consideration in their own efforts. For example, in the traffic issues meeting discussed earlier, Town Police Chief Murley suggested that in light of problems such as periodic flooding in the Stuyvesant Plaza area, it would be helpful to have variable message signs (VMSs) installed on the Fuller Road Alternate bridge over Western Avenue in both directions, so as to keep people from entering congested and potentially dangerous areas during flood conditions and major incidents. This is logical from the perspective of getting a message to travelers as they approach "decision points" where they can process the information provided and then decide whether to take alternate routes. The Study team passed this insight along to NYSDOT Region 1 Transportation Management Center (TMC) staff for consideration as TMC planners explore concepts for future additions to VMS coverage of the region.



## Recommendations

### *General Note on Bulbouts*

The Steering Committee saw significant potential benefit to reducing shoulder widths and otherwise “right-sizing” pavements at a number of Study area intersections, particularly with regard to reduced pedestrian crossing distances and a modest calming effect on traffic. While bulbouts are common tools for achieving this end, the Committee recognized that the standard bulbout design, which includes curbs extending to travel lane edges, could raise issues at certain locations, with these issues including difficulties in maintaining bike lane courses, snow removal difficulties and potential access problems where the bulbouts would be near driveways. It should thus be understood that while the project discussions which follow may convey images of *bulbouts*, the recommendations are in essence identifying locations at which the *types of benefits* common to bulbouts would be desirable. The Committee encourages the responsible agencies to consider other actions which would achieve comparable benefits, such as reduced shoulder widths, the use of concrete planter boxes (which could be removed from the right of way during the wintertime), flexible/removable bollards, and longer-than-standard tapers which would make the introduction of the narrowed areas less “abrupt.” In some cases, these would be interim measures; in others, they could be incorporated into roadway redesigns.

### *Intersections*

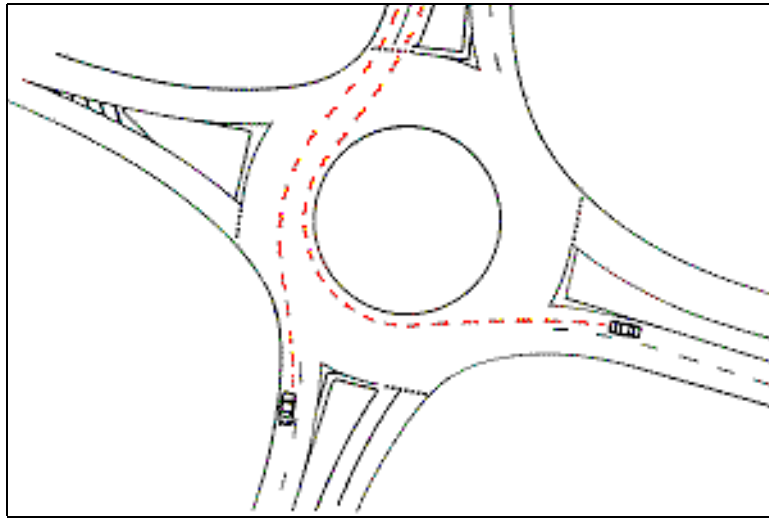
#### *IS-1: Western Avenue/UAlbany Intersection Improvements*

- Description:
  - Reconstruct the west leg of the intersection to take out the westbound acceleration lane/bus bay and use this reclaimed area for greenspace and lighting.
  - Relocate the eastbound and westbound stop bars to accommodate crosswalks.
  - Reduce the radius of the northwest corner to lower speeds of right turns exiting UAlbany.
  - Install new high-visibility crosswalks.
  - Install new “countdown timer” pedestrian signal heads with ped buttons.
  - Install “Welcome to McKownville” monument sign on northwest corner.
- Estimated Cost: \$125,000
- Additional Notes: The recommended improvements are presented in Figure 4-2 on the following page. Aside from the signage and lighting improvements, this package could be implemented through CDTA’s Multi-Modal Program project.

Early Steering Committee discussions of this intersection raised the idea of reconstructing this intersection as a *roundabout* intersection, both for operational reasons and to create a gateway to McKownville. A roundabout is a form of intersection design accommodating one-directional traffic flow around a central island. Where roundabouts are retrofitted to existing conventional intersections, the one-way loop roadway is accessed by the current legs

*Please click on FIGURE 4-2 on the Web page  
for the Western Avenue/UAlbany Intersection  
Improvements visual*

of intersections via stop-controlled or yield-controlled approaches. An illustration of a roundabout is presented in Figure 4-3.



*Figure 4-3*

*Sample Roundabout with Through Movement and Left-Turn Trajectories Illustrated*

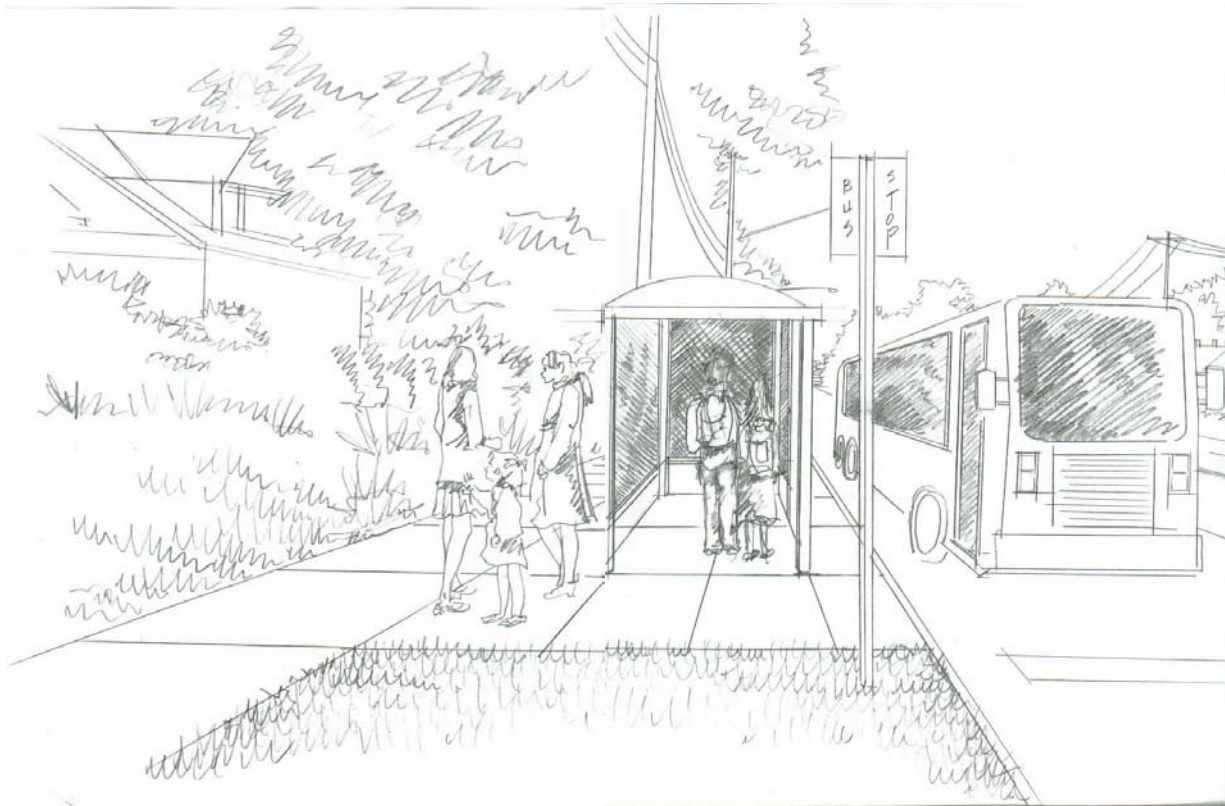
Roundabouts can open up overall traffic flow by eliminating the need to wait at traffic signals. The McKownville neighborhood’s dominant traffic flows (particularly along Western Avenue) might be accommodated efficiently by this type of design. At the same time, there are considerations to be weighed regarding the effects of roundabouts on traffic flow and on pedestrian safety, including their being problematic for visually-impaired persons unless some type of traffic detector or protected crossing location is provided to take the place of the audible indication of stopped traffic which signalized intersections provide.

This noted, there are local examples of roundabout construction in progress, such as at the intersection of Routes 85A and 155 in Voorheesville; it would be prudent to look to that location in the future for insight on the effects of roundabouts on traffic flow and safety, so as to get a sense of the potential for roundabout development at this intersection.

*IS-2: Western Avenue/McKown Road/Norwood Street Intersection Improvements*

- *Description:*
  - Reduce shoulder widths and crossing distances on the eastbound and westbound Western Avenue approaches to the intersection.
  - Install pedestrian button-initiated “NO RIGHTS ON RED” signs and “countdown timer” pedestrian signal heads with ped buttons.
  - Curb off the southeast corner and consolidate driveway accesses.

- Prohibit left turns in and out of the driveway on the southeast corner of the intersection.
  - Install new high-visibility crosswalks.
  - Install a new sidewalk extending south from the intersection along the west side of McKown Road.
- Estimated Cost: \$125,000
  - Additional Notes: The recommended improvements are presented in Figure 4-5 on the following page. Like IS-1, aside from the signage improvements, this package could be implemented through CDTA’s Multi-Modal Program project.



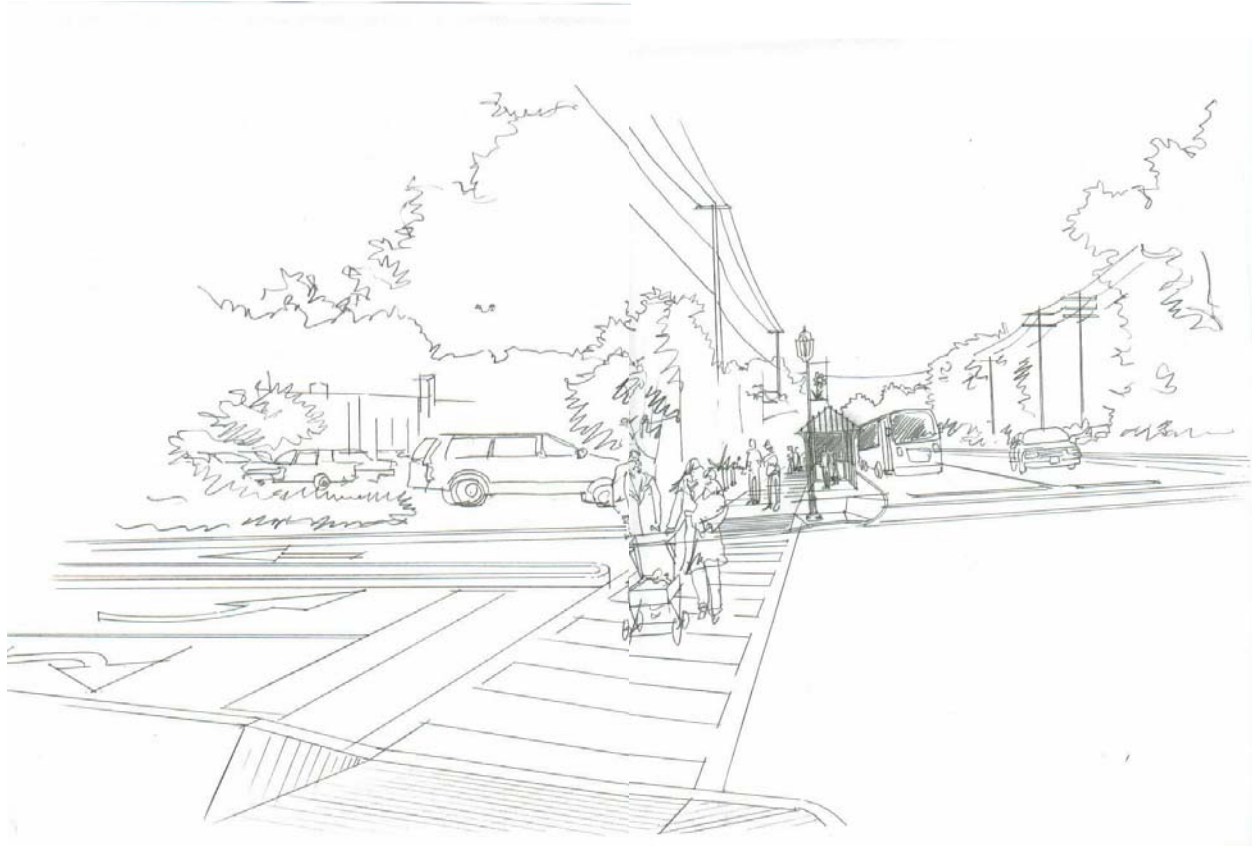
*Figure 4-4  
Rendering of Western/McKown/Norwood Intersection  
with Recommended Improvements*

*IS-3: Western Avenue/Parkwood Street/1450 Western Intersection Improvements*

- Description:
  - Install curb ramps and sidewalks along the eastbound (south) side of Western Avenue approaching the intersection. Reclaim some excess bike lane space to provide walks and utility strip.

*Please click on FIGURE 4-5 on the Web page  
for the Western Avenue/McKown  
Road/Norwood Street Intersection  
Improvements visual*

- Install pedestrian button-initiated “NO RIGHTS ON RED” signs and “countdown timer” pedestrian signal heads with ped buttons.
- Install new high-visibility crosswalks.
- Along the westbound approach, provide an improved transit waiting area between the sidewalk and the shoulder/bike lane.



*Figure 4-6  
Rendering of Western/Parkwood/1450 Western Intersection  
with Recommended Improvements*

- *Estimated Cost:* \$150,000

*IS-4: Western Avenue/Fuller Road Intersection Improvements*

- *Description:*
  - Relocate westbound bike lane to align with lane on the other side of Fuller.
  - Modify signal controller settings to stop all conflicting movements when a pedestrian crossing is actuated. This could be either a “scramble” phase for all pedestrian movements (with all vehicle movements stopped) or a series of individual crossing-

specific phases which would stop all vehicle movements conflicting with the requested crossing but still allow other vehicle movements (right turn movements on the opposite side of the intersection, for example). In addition, install “countdown timer” pedestrian signal heads to inform pedestrians of the time remaining for them to complete their crossings.

- Develop signal phasing plans which will provide red arrow indications to left turn movements conflicting with crossing pedestrians when the appropriate pedestrian button is pushed.
  - Install new high-visibility crosswalk across Burger King driveway.
  - Reduce radius of northwest corner to reduce speeds of Fuller-to-Western right turns.
  - Prohibit left turns into/out of dentist office parking lot.
  - Negotiate shared access agreement to allow dentist office patient access to that lot via Burger King lot.
- Estimated Cost: \$85,000
  - Additional Notes: The recommended improvements are presented in Figure 4-7 on the following page. Like IS-1 and IS-2, this package could be implemented through CDTA’s Multi-Modal Program project. In addition, it should be noted that a dedicated left turn lane on Western Avenue into the Burger King *could* be used as an encouragement to Burger King to allow access to the dentist’s office and, ultimately, to allow a connection to a rear service road which would connect Highland Drive next to the Lutheran Church to the rear of the Holiday Inn Express parking lot. This would allow access by all users to the two signalized intersections at Fuller and Parkwood, if this is found to be manageable from the perspective of safe vehicle movement in the Burger King parking lot; if it would appear that the volumes in the lot would be too high to ensure safety, the rear access to Burger King from the other properties and Highland Drive would still serve to reduce short-length tripmaking on Western Avenue.

#### *IS-5: Western Avenue/Schoolhouse Road Intersection Improvements*

- Provide high-visibility crosswalk markings across slip ramp from inner edge of ramp to corner refuge island.
  - Provide pedestrian button-activated alternating flashing lights with PEDESTRIANS CROSSING AHEAD sign alongside slip ramp upstream of crossing point.
  - Improve refuge island separating slip ramp from Western Avenue traffic to serve as pedestrian waiting area.
  - Install pedestrian button-initiated “NO RIGHTS ON RED” signs and “countdown timer” pedestrian signal heads with ped buttons for other crossings.
- Estimated Cost: \$75,000
  - Additional Notes: The recommended improvements are included in Figure 4-8 on Page 4-16. Also see Project SW-13 for additional elements related to the design and operation of this intersection.

*Please click on FIGURE 4-7 on the Web page  
for the Western Avenue/Fuller Road  
Intersection Improvements visual*



*Please click on FIGURE 4-8 on the Web page  
for the visual showing improvements along  
Western Avenue from Church Road to  
Schoolhouse Road*

### *IS-6: Western Avenue/Church Road Intersection Improvements*

- Description:
  - Modify signal controller settings to stop all conflicting movements when a pedestrian crossing is actuated. This could be either a “scramble” phase for all pedestrian movements (with all vehicle movements stopped) or a series of individual crossing-specific phases which would stop all vehicle movements conflicting with the requested crossing but still allow other vehicle movements (right turn movements on the opposite side of the intersection, for example). In addition, install “countdown timer” pedestrian signal heads to inform pedestrians of the time remaining for them to complete their crossings.
  - Install “countdown timer” pedestrian signal heads with pedestrian buttons on northwest corner of intersection (in front of United Methodist Church).
  - Reposition pedestrian buttons on southeast and southwest corners of Western/Church or add bicyclist-accessible buttons streetside.
  - Reposition eastbound bike lane to the left of the right turn lane from the beginning of the outermost lane west of Church Road.
  - Reduce radius of southeast corner to reduce speeds of right turns from Church to Western.
  - Install sidewalk along the northbound (east) side of Church Road.
  - Install new high-visibility crosswalk across the east leg of the intersection.
  - Install sidewalk along the eastbound (south) side of Western from the intersection to the bridge over the Thruway.
- Estimated Cost: \$100,000
- Additional Notes: The recommended improvements are presented in Figure 4-9 on the following page. Also see Project NCD-1 for additional elements affecting the potential design of this intersection.

### *IS-7: Western Avenue/Crossgates Mall Intersection Improvements*

- Description:
  - After the westbound side of the street tapers inward (i.e., away from Crossgates), install a right turn lane on westbound Western Avenue to provide access to Crossgates.
  - Extend the islands at the Crossgates access further into the intersection to present a physical barrier to through traffic’s continuing westward from the right turn lane.
  - Install a new high-visibility crosswalk and pedestrian countdown timer heads in the middle of the English Couplet.
  - Install a sign to clarify pedestrians (particularly those walking along the westbound side of Western) that there is a sidewalk to Crossgates adjacent to the Crossgates exit direction road.

*Please click on FIGURE 4-9 on the Web page  
for the Western Avenue/Church Road  
Intersection Improvements visual*

- Estimated Cost: \$75,000
- Additional Notes: The recommended improvements are presented in Figure 4-10 on the following page. Also see Project NCD-1 for additional elements affecting the potential design of this intersection.

*IS-8: Fuller Road/UAlbany South Driveway Intersection Improvements*

- Description: Install high-visibility crosswalks across both streets.
- Estimated Cost: \$1,000

*Neighborhood and Community Design*

*NCD-1: Reclamation of Western Avenue Pavement between Fuller Road Alternate and Crossgates Mall*

- Description: Construct a boulevard on Western Avenue from Fuller Road Alternate to Crossgates Mall by shifting the westbound travel lanes outward at Fuller Road Alternate so as to go from Left/Through/Through/Through pavement use to a Boulevard/Left/Through/Through assignment. The boulevard would continue through the Church Road intersection between the eastbound left turn lane (to the Church) and the through lanes on west side of intersection, providing an opening for the turn lane and then continuing on to the Crossgates intersection, where it would taper inward as the two through lanes taper in and a right turn pocket to Crossgates is provided.
- Estimated Cost: \$1 million to \$1.5 million
- Additional Notes: See Figure 4-8 for the recommended improvements in this package.

*NCD-2: Median on East Leg of Western Avenue/Fuller Road Intersection*

- Description: Construct a median on the east leg of the intersection with a turn pocket provided for access to the Burger King parking lot (and, potentially, for access to the Dentist's office, if a shared use arrangement for the parking lot can be developed. (See Figure 4-7 for a visual representation of this concept.)

*NCD-3: Trailblazer Signage for Local Recreational Opportunities*

- Description: Install trailblazer signage at Western Avenue intersections and along local streets directing people to Abele Park. Appropriate signs are of designs comparable to those of highway signs, but of smaller size so as to avoid conflicts such as motor vehicles traveling down McKown Road to get to Abele Park (accessible from McKown only by a trail).
- Estimated Cost: \$10,000

*Please click on FIGURE 4-10 on the Web page  
for the Western Avenue/Crossgates Mall  
Intersection Improvements visual*

- Estimated Cost: \$20,000

#### *NCD-4: Streetscape Standards*

- Description: Work toward implementing streetscape enhancements including pedestrian-scale/height lighting, preservation of existing trees and tree canopies, and planting of new trees, planter strips and other landscaping where appropriate. Increased lighting at pedestrian crosswalk areas, and colored, textured pavement for crosswalks increase pedestrian visibility and create a more attractive sense of place. Other features which can enhance the streetscape are benches, hanging flower baskets, attractive bus shelters and information kiosks.. The visualizations presented elsewhere in this report can provide illustrations of the value of streetscaping and the desired relationship between modes of transportation, lighting and trees in the Western Avenue corridor.
- Estimated Cost: Town staff time only.
- Additional Notes: With regard to plantings within the right-of-way, it is important to choose hardy species which will tolerate some amount of leaching of de-icing compounds into the ground. In addition, to minimize the potential for root spread to heave sidewalks, the use of open grates around the bases of trees rather than solid earth or pavement is encouraged, for this will provide trees with more immediate areas from which to draw water.

#### *Operational Enhancements*

##### *OP-1: 30 MPH Goal for Western Avenue*

- Description: Pursue a 30 MPH speed on Western Avenue between the City line and Fuller Road. To achieve this goal, act to reduce prevailing speeds through traffic calming, streetscaping, pedestrian-oriented design and other treatments.
- Estimated Cost: \$0
- Additional Notes: Pursuit of this goal can be reflected both in on-the-road projects and through administrative, regulatory and judicial decisions such as development reviews. That is, Town review and comment on future improvement proposals could include consideration of the question of whether the proposed improvement(s) would get the corridor closer to this goal.

##### *OP-2: Strategic Width Reductions and Shoulder Right-Sizings*

- Description: Reduce shoulder widths at a total of eight locations on Western Avenue between the City line and Fuller Road, in both directions. The reductions would be designed to “visually disrupt” the shoulder areas without intruding on the areas where bicycles would be traveling. This could most practically be achieved by constructing curb extensions which

do not extend all the way to the edges of travel lanes or by incorporating “cut-throughs” in the extensions which would continue 4’ – 5’ wide bike lanes through the extension areas.

- ***Estimated Cost:*** \$80,000 for eight locations (\$10,000 per location)
- ***Additional Notes:*** The aim is to provide repeated visual (and physical) cues to motorists that the bike lane/shoulder is not a travel lane. Particularly along longer blocks and when busy traffic blocks motorists’ downstream views, this will reduce the temptation to move over to the bike lane to reach an upcoming corner at which the motorist plans to turn right. In addition, a modest traffic calming benefit could be realized.

The “General Note on Bulbouts” presented earlier should be factored into consideration of this proposed strategy. Alternative treatments such as reducing shoulder widths and the strategic placement of planter boxes could achieve the same functional benefit as would be realized from bulbouts. The estimated cost figure presented above could thus be seen as a “placeholder” for the level of investment needed along the indicated section of Western Avenue.

*OP-3: Access Management Treatments*

- ***Description:*** Pursue access management treatments (driveway reductions, turn restrictions, driveway width restrictions and/or internal circulation changes) at the following sites:

<b>Top Priority Locations</b>	<b>Secondary Priority Locations</b>
Best Western/Capitalodge/Dunkin’ Donuts (driveway turn restrictions and internal circulation changes)	1450 Western (tie parking lots of office buildings next door to this one, to provide access to signal)
Vacant parcel across from Mangia’s (driveway access through or next to church lot)	Liberteks.com/Jade Fountain, 1648-1652 Western Avenue (reduce Liberteks driveway width, reorganize internal circulation)
Germano’s Auto Repair/Capital WinAir, corner Western/McKown (curb off to provide one standard width driveway access on either street)	Mobil station, Western opposite Alton (possibility of reducing two driveways to one or two full-access driveways to one in/one out)
Eastbound side Western at Alton Road (two full access driveways – reduce to one) – 2 full access eastbound side	Former gas station, Western at Chapman (three driveways – two on Western, one on Chapman – reduce to one per street)
Eastbound side Western at Church – gas station lots, Western at Fuller (reduce two Western Avenue driveways to one)	Burger King/Dentist’s office parking (close off Dentist’s Western Avenue access/provide access through BK?)

- Estimated Cost: \$2,000 per driveway for curb-offs; \$1,000 per location for turn prohibition signage; \$10,000 per location for right in/right out curbing.
- Additional Notes: Implementation is seen as a function of where opportunities arise in the course of other activities. For example, the above list of prioritized locations could be used as a reference as development, redevelopment or business expansion proposals come before the Town; that is, in such cases, access management treatments could be parts of the traffic mitigation or site design requirements for the proposals. Also, should larger improvement plans for Western Avenue arise (e.g., a NYSDOT reconstruction project for some part of the corridor), the opportunity could exist to incorporate driveway reduction, driveway narrowing or turn movement restrictions into the design of the roadway fronting individual parcels. Additionally, the Town might wish to pursue access management-related improvements using its own funds or funds available through CDTC and other sources.

*OP-4: Fuller Road Alternate Traffic Calming/Gateway Treatments*

- Description: Enhancements to Fuller Road Alternate (commonly considered to be the southern end of the Northway) and the Fuller Road Alternate/Western Avenue intersection to reduce vehicle speeds south of the Crossgates flyover and establish a transition to the McKownville neighborhood. Elements would include:
  - Installation of a grass refuge island with a sidewalk through it at end of Fuller Road Alternate, with rollover curbs used to avoid introducing what might be regarded as a fixed barrier.
  - The installation of pedestrian buttons activating “PEDESTRIAN CROSSING AHEAD” signs along the southbound side of Fuller Road Alternate, including buttons in the refuge island.
  - The installation of a pedestrian button-activated “NO RIGHTS ON RED” sign along the southbound side of Fuller Road Alternate.
  - The installation of medium-height plantings (bushes and flowers) outside the roadway edges.
- Estimated Cost: \$200,000 to \$300,000

*OP-5: Fuller Road Alternate Down-Design*

- Description: Down-design Fuller Road Alternate (commonly considered to be the southern end of the Northway) to reduce vehicle speeds south of the Crossgates flyover, in anticipation of entering the McKownville neighborhood. Elements would include redesign of the southbound facility to a 50 MPH design speed, with plantings closer in (have row of trees taper in on either side, getting closer to the shoulder).
- Estimated Cost: \$2.75 to \$5 million.



- *Additional Note:* This improvement would most appropriately be considered in the context of a larger-scale project such as a complete reconstruction of Fuller Road Alternate or the development of a direct Northway-Thruway connection (to be discussed in the “Miscellany” section of this chapter).

*OP-6: Elmwood Street Traffic Calming Measures*

***NOTE: This project is presented strictly as a discussion concept. It is important that the Town enter discussions with the residents of Elmwood Street to get a sense of their sentiments regarding these ideas prior to their pursuit, as the treatment at Western Avenue would result in a reduction in ease of access by precluding turns from Western to Elmwood. Still, given the relatively modest additional distance to be traveled by car from Western/Elmwood to Fuller/Elmwood, it is possible that many residents would be willing to accept this tradeoff in exchange for reduced through traffic.***

- *Description:* Modify the intersection of Western Avenue and Elmwood Street to keep Elmwood one way at the intersection but not permit traffic to access it from Western at the intersection. To do this, install a raised island across what had been the side of Elmwood which vehicles currently can travel from Western to Elmwood. Install appropriate signage to make clear the prohibitions on turns onto Elmwood. The Buckingham Drive/Bender Street intersection in Albany (shown in Figure 4-11 below) illustrates the concept.



*Figure 4-11  
“One Way at the Intersection” Treatment at Buckingham and Bender, Albany*

In addition, to reduce the speeds at which vehicles turn between Fuller and Elmwood, extend the sidewalk/utility strip area at the northeastern corner of the intersection to force these turns to make squared-off rather than “slant off” turns between the two streets.

- *Estimated Cost:* \$50,000
- *Additional Note:* The initial step in exploring this concept would be outreach to Elmwood Street residents to get their views of this concept.

## *Miscellany*

In addition to the specific recommendations raised in this report, a number of additional concepts, points to bear in mind or future considerations were articulated during the Study effort. A few of the key such concepts follow.

- *Stormwater Management Efforts:* Improvements to stormwater management in the neighborhood go hand in hand with improvements to pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, for reducing the risks of flooding in certain parts of the neighborhood will both (1)enhance the predictability of availability of facilities for all modes of travel (that is, they will be usable whether it is rainy or dry) *and* (2)provide opportunities to advance some trail and recreational projects (the Krum Kill West Branch and McKownville Reservoir projects, as examples).
- *Centerline Stripes on Side Streets:* It was suggested in one meeting during the Study that installing short lengths of standard yellow centerline striping (perhaps 100’ or less) on side streets starting at their intersections with either Western Avenue or Fuller Road would provide something of a budget traffic calming benefit in keeping motorists (particularly through traffic) from making left turns onto residential streets and starting to proceed on the wrong side of the road; in addition, these stripes would visually “box in” the pavement, which could also reduce speeds somewhat.
- *Aesthetic Treatments:* It was suggested for a number of the existing or proposed structures in the study area (such as the Fuller Road Alternate flyover over Western Avenue) that it would be beneficial to install some sort of stone facing or other visual improvement to make the structure look more in keeping with a residential neighborhood. Again, this has some potential to provide a traffic calming benefit, in this case by conveying the sense that an area is not completely “about” moving traffic.
- *Pedestrian Separation from Traffic on Bridge over Thruway:* In a similar vein to the previous point, but also for the purpose of enhancing safety, it was suggested that consideration be given to installing some sort of more visually interesting way to separate people from traffic on the westbound side of this bridge, with examples including either some sort of ornamental ironwork.
- *Potential Thruway-Northway E-ZPass Connection:* A current New York State Thruway Authority study is examining a number of possible means of enhancing traffic operations in the area, concentrating on the Northway-Thruway connection. One of the ideas being considered which has gained a bit of currency would involve a dedicated connection between the two facilities for E-ZPass-equipped vehicles. In turn, one variant on this concept would have the connection only serve trucks. The significance of this study to the McKownville area is twofold:

- should such a connection ever become reality, it is possible that it might involve some sort of elevated structure which would have more of an impact on the appearance of the area than the current Fuller Road Alternate flyover does, and
- it would present the Thruway Authority (and, perhaps, NYSDOT) with the opportunity to enhance the pedestrian connections under the current Fuller Road Alternate flyover. As a project of this magnitude would invite a revisiting of the issue of traffic flow patterns and the layout of the roadway system in this entire area, some neighborhood residents on the Study Steering Committee and/or who are members of the McKownville Improvement Association have contacted the involved agencies to request that this study be conducted not only with the requisite sensitivity not only to local traffic impacts but also with an eye toward enhancing local travel opportunities, particularly for walking trips.

## GATEWAYS



*Figure 5-1  
Visual Simulation and Post-Construction Picture  
of South Broadway Gateway, Saratoga Springs*

A number of the intersections for which improvement recommendations have already been set forth serve as *de facto* gateways to the neighborhood. This section briefly discusses some additional considerations for managing the neighborhood’s gateways both for the purposes of traffic calming and to enhance the sense of place of the neighborhood.

At the Public Meetings, strong support was voiced for the general idea of pursuing “Gateway” treatments at selected locations around the area. These treatments would convey to motorists the sense that they are entering a residential and commercial area where the possibility exists of encountering pedestrians, cyclists, driveway maneuvers and other neighborhood-scale activity. In addition, as a number of the potential gateway locations are also points at which there is a transition from more “wide open” roads such as the Northway to closer-in settings with frequent intersections and driveway accesses, the opportunity exists to use the gateways as initial traffic calming points.

Neighborhood residents raised several ideas for approaches to gateway improvement at the Public meetings, with most of these ideas centered on cleaning up areas, introducing landscaping, installing less institutional-looking signage highlighting either the Town or the neighborhood, and physical modifications to roadways so as to reduce traffic speed. A number of these concepts have been incorporated into recommendations previously discussed in this report; the following section discusses additional concepts for consideration.

## Gateway Overlay District

As a general concept, an *overlay district* is a special zone covering an area within which some special type of resource or attribute exists. As its name implies, the district overlays the existing land use regulations covering the subject area, and supplements these existing regulations. The appeal of the overlay concept lies in the community's being able to achieve the goal of protecting certain attributes of an area through a relatively simple legislative process. That is, the overlay district can be appended to the existing land use, site plan and other applicable regulations rather than requiring an extensive rewrite of these existing regulations.

The McKownville neighborhood is proximate to three municipal borders and has numerous high-speed roads approaching or running through it. It would seem prudent for the Town to explore the potential for creation of a *gateway overlay district* to selected corridors and major crossroads. The primary areas to which it would apply would arguably Western Avenue near the bottom of Fuller Road Alternate, at the City line and near Johnston Road.

While the Town's desires specific to the identified gateways should ultimately determine the contents of the gateway district article, an examination of the potential McKownville gateway areas suggests that the following design elements and restrictions could be among the main features of such a district's regulations:

- For nonresidential developments *site design with parking behind buildings*, to facilitate walking to and from establishments and to establish a "close in," neighborhood-oriented feel to the streetscape (potentially serving a traffic calming function).
- Also for nonresidential developments, *screening of loading areas or their placement behind buildings*.
- Encouragement of *shared accesses* to Western Avenue.
- *Underground connections* to all utility lines and infrastructure.
- *Landscaping* of areas between buildings and roadways, with this landscaping set back from the roadway to facilitate sidewalk installation and protect lines of sight between through streets, driveways and side streets.
- *Greater than normal setback requirements for gas pumps* at service stations (to enhance internal site circulation, in turn improving the safety of the roadway in front of the station by reducing impedances related to driveway movements).
- Along a similar line to the previous point, *increased minimum lot depth requirements* to ensure adequate space for internal circulation, landscaping and other aspects of the site.
- *Design or architectural styles* more in keeping with the character of the neighborhood being entered at the gateway point.

While some of these elements are clearly subject to local discretion regarding acceptability (what constitutes an architectural style in keeping with the neighborhood, for example), the comment is that the gateway overlay district can provide the Town with a tool for ensuring that visual transitions are logical and positive and that site-level activity on the parcels in these areas takes place in a manner compatible with the adjacent setting.

## IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

### Strategic and Logistical Aspects of Implementation

This chapter presents a road map for implementing the 50 specific recommendations presented in the previous five chapters. The aim of this discussion is to establish a plan for pursuing implementation of the complete package as a sustained effort which is both internally logical (that is, actions are sequenced based on not only urgency but *compatibility*) and feasible (with regard to both fiscal resources and competing priorities in McKownville, elsewhere in the Town and elsewhere in the Capital District).

What is presented is a general framework for implementing these recommendations through a combination of exploiting existing or known upcoming opportunities and a number of new efforts to be progressed according to a strategic, long-term plan. This conceptual approach offers a sense of how the logistical, budgetary and political matters inherent in pursuing such an extensive list of actions can be addressed.

The goal in developing an overall approach to implementation is to establish a vision and a set of working relationships very similar to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) which metropolitan planning organizations such as CDTC use to guide short- to medium-term capital project implementation and planning work.

### Steps to Progressing Actions

The process by which strategies are “bundled” can further goals of logistics, political and public acceptance, administrative efficiency, and cost-effectiveness. Similar benefits can be realized from the establishment of a long-term plan for management and improvement of the local multimodal transportation system. This plan needs to articulate both a fiscally-constrained budget for short, medium and long term projects *and* information on opportunities to progress strategies outside the plan’s set of projects. The process needs to be *strategic* in relating equity, situational urgency, resource availability and other opportunities for implementation to the sequence in which strategies are implemented. This provides a consistent direction for planning and investment decisions.

Some of the keys to this strategic approach are discussed below, both in general senses and as applicable to the *Study’s* strategy set.

#### *Integration into Existing Efforts*

##### *Projects*

Opportunities may exist in already-planned (and programmed) projects to add in elements which would enhance the bicycle and/or pedestrian travel environments or to better harmonize

transportation activities with the neighborhood. One example referenced earlier was the CDTA Multi-Modal Program project, which will provide the opportunity for implementation of some of the pavement marking and bulbout recommendations discussed in the Pedestrian/Bicycle and Traffic chapters.

As projects involving federal transportation funds in particular are programmed well in advance of implementation, it is vital to initiate these sorts of explorations far in advance of the start of construction.

This principle has applications well beyond the pedestrian and bicycle realm. For example, in laying the groundwork for future ITS deployments, NYSDOT has taken opportunities in the courses of pavement reconstruction projects to include the burying of fiber optic cables so as to ensure the availability of fiber optic lines for future improvements to signal control, communications and traffic monitoring systems.

While the current NYSDOT State Transportation Improvement Program and the Albany County Department of Public Works' capital program do not point to specific projects to be progressed on roads in the Study area, such that recommendations from this Study could be integrated, one project on the draft 2003-2008 TIP – Project A435, “Transit Signal Priority for Washington and Western Avenues,” will if on the final approved TIP stand to implement and in fact go beyond this report’s recommendation TRN-4, which simply proposed a *study* of transit priority’s potential in the Western Avenue corridor. In addition, and as will be detailed in the “Federal Transportation Funds/Programs” discussion later in this chapter, the Town has a proposal on the draft TIP for a number of improvements recommended under this Study.

### *Programs*

Several prospects exist for taking advantage of ongoing programmatic opportunities to enhance either travel environments or the knowledge bases that are applied to transportation system management. In the former light, opportunities include NYSDOT’s annual programs for replacement of pavement markings, traffic count collection and pavement condition inventories and NYSDOT’s capabilities to conduct examinations of locations for safety issues, traffic signal retiming needs and condition deficiencies. In the latter light, training opportunities such as workshops and conferences presented by the New York Planning Federation have recently included transportation-related topics such as smart growth planning tools, the relationship between transportation and land use, and access management. In addition, recent workshops presented by the Federal Highway Administration, NYSDOT and other parties have covered topics ranging from pedestrian and bicycle planning to intelligent transportation systems.

### *Special Opportunities*

Periodically, opportunities arise with relatively short notice to participate in either special programs or other efforts which could bring resources to the area. For example, in the course of development of each federal highway reauthorization bill, there is ordinarily a call for potential “earmark” items, usually drawing from a particular funding source (such as ITS or demonstration

project funds). These types of funds could potentially be available for projects in the Study area to enhance traffic control, alternate routing and some of the other incident-related capabilities which provide a secondary benefit to pedestrians, cyclists and transit, as discussed previously. The likely scenario for any pursuit of these funds including the Study area would be for NYSDOT to include this area in either an areawide ITS or traffic signal improvement proposal. In such a case, the primary action needed on the Town's part would be to contact NYSDOT to in essence remind them of their concerns regarding traffic in this area and to express a desire that NYSDOT facilities in the Town be included in any larger area proposals.

### *Add-Ons*

Opportunities to capitalize on existing projects through the addition of some relatively modest elements related to this study to other transportation or non-transportation projects should be capitalized upon. For example, a sidewalk improvement could be integrated into a roadway or sewer line reconstruction project, or special pavement markings or signage could be incorporated into NYSDOT's annual pavement markings and signage replacement programs. In certain areas, such as Western Avenue near Fuller Road Alternate, this approach will be critical, as truly "leveling the playing field" likely require a major reallocation of right-of-way to the various modes using this important corridor.

### *Early Wins*

Some of the recommendations presented earlier in this report lend themselves to very short term implementation, particularly those involving crosswalk markings, regulatory actions (e.g., zoning ordinance changes) and improved information dissemination (e.g., the UAlbany-focused promotion of local transit service options). These catalytic steps or *early wins* could take place within six months to one year of acceptance of the final study report, with low-cost construction or other physical improvement actions holding potential for submission as candidates for CDTC's Bicycle and Pedestrian Spot Improvement Program and other such recurring opportunities ideally continuing the momentum established by the early wins.

### *Free-Standing Projects*

From a review of the recommendations set forth in this report, it becomes clear that it will not be possible to achieve everything identified as needed in this Study area either through integration into other efforts or through simple, short term actions. Many of the indicated projects will need to be progressed by the Town, the County or NYSDOT either completely using its own funds or leveraging these funds with funds available from outside sources. Along this line, and as will be discussed in the "Federal Transportation Funds/Programs" discussion later in this chapter, the Town also intends to demonstrate its commitment to the goals of this project through medium-term investments in significant capital projects. The Town intends to take advantage not only of available federal transportation funds but of the synergies between a number of recommended local actions to progress a *bundle* of projects which would have the cumulative effect of yielding meaningful enhancement to the pedestrian travel environment along the Western Avenue corridor between Fuller Road and the City line. It is somewhat unusual to progress a number of



medium-sized projects so quickly following their development; the effect in addition to the obvious benefits of these projects could be to provide further illustration of the value of these types of investments, again in turn sustaining a momentum for improvements to the local pedestrian and bicycle travel environments.

### **Recommended Sequence for Strategies**

One of the challenges in developing a staging plan for the actions recommended in this report was that these actions represent a *subset* of all the desirable actions for the McKownville neighborhood, which is of course only one part of the *Town*. The following plan should thus be considered more as offering a *sequence* of steps to be taken in the McKownville neighborhood in the topical areas covered by this Study rather than suggesting a specific timetable for implementation. That said, notes are offered regarding the timing of pursuit of certain opportunities as appropriate..

Unless a note is made regarding the sequencing of projects in two different topical areas, the listings which follow should only be interpreted to offer possible sequences of actions within each topical area. That is, for example, under the discussion of shorter-term prospects, the Schoolhouse Road area pedestrian crossing improvements are recommended to be of greater priority than the Johnston Road project. It is left to the Town to establish priorities across topical areas, as the study team saw the presentation of recommendations on relative priorities between topics as inappropriate given the context in which these recommendations need to be considered (as noted in the previous paragraph)

#### *Shorter-Term Prospects*

The following projects appear to warrant earliest pursuit because of the benefit they would provide, their low cost or ease of implementation, and/or their being necessary prerequisites for other actions. Some of these projects could be initiated by the appropriate jurisdictions within six months to a year; these projects are shown in *italicized boldface*.

<b><i>SW-15: Zoning Ordinance Provisions to Facilitate Multimodal Travel</i></b>	<b><i>Lead: Town</i></b>
SW-13: Schoolhouse Road Area Pedestrian Crossing Improvements	<i>Lead: Town</i>
SW-1: Johnston Road Sidewalk Improvements	<i>Leads: Town/Albany County</i>
SW-14 Schoolhouse Road Sidewalk Improvements	<i>Lead: Albany County</i>
<b><i>BK-1: Designation of Town Bike Routes</i></b>	<b><i>Lead: Town</i></b>
<b><i>BK-3: Bicycle Parking Ordinance</i></b>	<b><i>Lead: Town</i></b>
BK-2: Multi-Stage Bike Route Improvement Program, Stages 1 and 2	<i>Lead: Town</i>
TRL-1: Freedom Quad-Stuyvesant Plaza Trail Development	<i>Lead: Town</i>
TRL-5: Krum Kill West Branch Trail Development	<i>Lead: Town</i>
TRL-6: Norwood Street-UAlbany Trail Development	<i>Lead: Town</i>
<b><i>NCD-4: Town Streetscape Standards</i></b>	<b><i>Lead: Town</i></b>

**OP-1: Establish 30 MPH Policy Goal for Western Avenue East of Fuller Road**    **Lead: Town**  
**OP-3: Adoption of List of Access Management Treatment**  
**Candidates as Reference Set**    **Lead: Town**

IS-8: Fuller Road/UAlbany South Driveway Intersection Improvements    *Lead: Albany County*  
 IS-4: Western Avenue/Fuller Road Intersection Improvements –  
 All Elements but Negotiated Access and Median Treatments    *Leads: CDTA/Town*

**TRN-2: Promote Travel Opportunities for UAlbany Students**    **Lead: CDTA**  
 TRN-1: Install Shelters at Western Avenue Bus Stops    *Lead: CDTA*  
 TRN-3: Enhance Traveler Information    *Lead: CDTA*  
 TRN-5: Explore Opportunities for Express CDTA Service from McKownville    *Lead: CDTA*  
 TRL-5: Krum Kill West Branch Trail Development    *Lead: Town*  
 TRL-7: Recreational Trail System West of Fuller Road    *Lead: Town*

**OP-6: Elmwood Street Traffic Calming Measures**    **Lead: Town**  
*Note: as discussed the in the presentation of this recommendation, efforts to explore the potential for these measures should begin with outreach to Elmwood Street residents in the short term.*

It is recommended that pursuit of policy-related actions- SW-15, BK-1, BK-3, NCD-4, OP-1 and OP-3 commence upon final acceptance of this document by the town. As just discussed, OP-6 should also be a short term pursuit.

*Medium-Term Prospects*

The following projects appear to be of high priority, but are not seen as likely to be pursued in the short term for reasons of resource requirements or other Town and NYSDOT priorities. Barring unanticipated opportunities to advance these projects in the courses of other activities, it would be expected that most of them would not be progressed until at least the year 2009. That said, the earliest projects in each topical purpose should certainly be seen as priorities for earlier implementation if opportunities arise.

SW-2 Western Avenue Eastbound Side Sidewalk Improvements    *Lead: Town*  
 SW-3 Western Avenue Westbound Side Sidewalk Improvements    *Lead: Town*  
 SW-6: Strawberry Lane Sidewalk Improvements    *Lead: Town*  
 SW-7: McKown Road Sidewalk Improvements    *Lead: Town*  
 SW-11: Northeast Quadrant Sidewalk Improvements    *Lead: Town*  
 SW-5: Church Road Sidewalk Improvements    *Lead: Town*

IS-1: Western Avenue/UAlbany Intersection Improvements    *Lead: CDTA*  
*Note: This position in the sequencing is predicated on the indicated improvements' not being progressed by CDTA through its Multi- Modal Program project.*  
 IS-2: Western Avenue/McKown Road/Norwood Street Intersection Improvements    *Lead: CDTA*

*Note: This position in the sequencing is predicated on the indicated improvements' not being progressed by CDTA through its Multi-Modal Program project.*

- IS-4: Western Avenue/Fuller Road Intersection Improvements – Negotiated Access and Median Treatments *Lead: NYSDOT*
- IS-5: Western Avenue/Schoolhouse Road Intersection Improvements *Lead: NYSDOT*
- IS-6: Western Avenue/Church Road Intersection Improvements *Lead: NYSDOT*
  
- NCD-2: Median on East Leg of Western Avenue/Fuller Road Intersection *Lead: NYSDOT*
- NCD-3: Trailblazer Signage for Local Recreational Opportunities *Lead: Town*
- NCD-1: Reclamation of Western Avenue Pavement Between Fuller Road Alternate and Crossgates Mall *Lead: NYSDOT*
  
- TRN-4: Explore Transit Priority Opportunities for Western Avenue Corridor *Lead: CDTA*  
*Note: Would be pursued through CDTC 2003-2008 Draft TIP Project A435*
  
- TRL-9: Redevelop McKownville Reservoir as a Recreational Destination *Lead: Town*
  
- OP-4: Fuller Road Alternate Traffic Calming/Gateway Treatments *Lead: NYSDOT*

*Longer-Term Prospects*

The following projects appear likely to require deferral to the longer term. Barring unanticipated opportunities to advance them in the courses of other activities, it would be expected that they would not be progressed until at least the year 2015.

- SW-4: Crossgates Mall Sidewalk Improvements *Lead: Private*
- SW-8: Williams Court Sidewalk Improvements *Lead: Town*
- SW-9: Westlyn Court Sidewalk Improvements *Lead: Town*
- SW-10: Brookwood Avenue Sidewalk Improvements *Lead: Town*
- SW-12: Mercer Street Sidewalk Improvements *Lead: Town*
  
- BK-2: Multi-Stage Bike Route Improvement Program, Stage 3 *Lead: Town*
  
- TRL-2: Western Avenue-Schoolhouse Road Trail Development *Lead: Town*
- TRL-3: Patricia Lane-Westmere Elementary School Trail Development *Lead: Town*
- TRL-4: McKown Road-Abele Park Trail Development *Lead: Town*
- TRL-8: Town Trails Map Development *Lead: Town*
  
- IS-3: Western Avenue/Parkwood Street/1450 Western Intersection Improvements *Lead: CDTA*  
*Note: This position in the sequencing is predicated on the indicated improvements' not being progressed by CDTA through its Multi-Modal Program project.*
- IS-7: Western Avenue/Crossgates Mall Intersection Improvements *Lead: NYSDOT*
  
- OP-2: Strategic Midblock Bulbouts on Western Avenue and Fuller Road *Leads: NYSDOT, Albany County*

## Funding Opportunities

### *Local Resources*

Use of local funds has the advantage of generally being the fastest way to progress projects. At the same time, this requires the local implementer to fund projects entirely with its own resources. This may not be a desirable approach for larger-scale projects.

Typically, highway, public works or parks department budgets are used to support transportation projects such as pavement repairs or reconstruction, sidewalk construction and trail or bike path development. Human service agency funds may be used to secure transportation service for agency program clients. Under more aggressive arrangements around the State, highway funds have been used to support transit service, with the logic being that the investment in transit service in essence benefits the highway system by relieving some of the burden on the road system.

From the set of strategies developed in this *Study*, among the primary candidates for pursuit solely with local funding are some of the shorter-length sidewalk replacement or construction projects, signage improvements, and support of specialized transit services (e.g., dial-a-ride services for seniors). In addition, a number of the ordinance-related strategies set forth in this report would likely be progressed through local resources as the necessary development work would be undertaken by Town staff in the courses of their normal duties.

In light of the point raised in the Executive Summary regarding the way in which improvements such as sidewalk construction can yield benefits to both quality of life and economic development, they can be seen as investments in the future of the community which benefit both residents and business owners. As such, one concept raised by the Steering Committee in its discussions was the establishment of a Town fund for sidewalk development accumulated from modest taxes and fees imposed on new developments. Recognizing the Town's past history with impact fees, it is noted that the key to making such a fee basis work would be to establish a clear connection between the fee levies and the in-the-field improvement projects funded through these fees. As it may be difficult for a developer to (for example) reconcile a levy on a development in Fort Hunter with a sidewalk project in McKownville, it may be most appropriate to structure the fund groups such that funds are collected and used within the same neighborhood, based on the Town's most common neighborhood definitions.

Another dimension to the discussion of local resources concerns taxpayer-financed improvements through *special assessment districts*, such as a sidewalk district. While the establishment of such districts could partially defray the Town's expenses related to the replacement or new construction of sidewalks, there are a number of political and policy-related issues which would need to be considered should the establishment of a special assessment district be considered by the Town. Some of the main such issues include the need to identify a

logic for prioritizing these improvements and the time frame to achieve benefit (if improvements in the district are funded solely by the assessments).

#### *Note on Local Resources and Maintenance*

It should be recognized that a number of the improvements recommended in this report will introduce new responsibilities for maintenance of public spaces and facilities. As the Town considers whether and when to pursue those improvements falling within its areas of responsibility, potential maintenance-related demands need to be understood, and a commitment to performing this maintenance needs to be made. Failure to do so will lessen both the magnitude of and the length of time during which these benefits will realized.

#### *State Resources*

State support for transportation investments comes in four main forms: direct State pursuit of these investments, State assistance to local governments in covering their shares of the costs of transportation-related investments, State non-NYSDOT grant programs in other areas which can provide communities with support for their efforts, and legislative “member items.”

In regard to *direct state pursuit* of transportation projects, it is frequently the case that many or most of the most critical road-based transportation linkages in a community (in McKownville’s, case, including Western Avenue and Fuller Road Alternate) are on State routes. As such, NYSDOT would ordinarily be financially responsible for improvements to these facilities, save for some cases in which the host community looked to do something (such as streetscaping) which was neither within the scope of an existing NYSDOT project nor within the NYSDOT right-of-way for the road in question. That said, the general comment is that opportunities may lie in existing NYSDOT projects and plans to achieve community transportation objectives.

On the matter of *State assistance to local governments*, the two main programs serving this purpose in the transportation arena are the Consolidated Highway Improvement Program System (CHIPS), which provides support for capital improvements to road and bridges with expected life spans of seven to ten years or more, and Marchiselli funding, which covers 75 percent of the local share on federally-funded projects (that is, 75 percent of the required 20 percent local share, meaning that the locality ultimately needs to cover only five (5) percent of the cost of such shared-fund projects). CHIPS tends to be used to support improvements such as pavement rehabilitations (“repaving”) and bridge repairs, while Marchiselli funding tends to be applied to larger pavement and bridge reconstruction projects (that is, projects that are large enough to be federally funded and for which this type of support would be beneficial).

There are also *non-NYSDOT programs* which support transportation improvements or related activities. For example, in the area of safety education, the Governor’s Traffic Safety Committee (GTSC) and the New York State Department of Health’s Bureau of Injury Prevention both operate funding programs supporting safety education. Several communities in Albany County have taken advantage of past GTSC programmatic opportunities. These agencies are also sources of accident data for planning and project development efforts. (GTSC: 518-474-3135;

*Bureau of Injury Prevention: 518-474-8985*) In addition, the New York State Environmental Protection Act, administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), covers projects for such facilities as walking and bicycling trails.

Recognizing the significance of stormwater management issues in the neighborhood, it is worth noting that the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the New York State Emergency Management Office and other related agencies may be sources of information regarding state (and federal) funding opportunities for stormwater management enhancements which may be able to include pursuit of some of the trail concepts presented in this report.

Finally *legislative member items* can be secured through the area's State Senate or Assembly representatives. The pursuit of member items has positive and negative aspects. On the positive side, they can be secured for relatively short term project implementation (i.e., within the next State Fiscal Year), tend not to require the sorts of detailed applications or project justifications that are typical of transportation funding processes (particularly competitive program opportunities), tend not to require local matches, and can be "pitched" through very localized efforts such as meetings or field visits with a Senator's or Assemblyperson's district office staff. On the negative side, the competition for this sort of support can be quite fierce, the dollar amounts that can be provided tend to be toward the low end of the range for transportation improvements (perhaps \$10,000 or less), the degree to which the opportunity really exists is a function of the political process (e.g., the area representative's majority/minority status in his/her legislative body), and the availability of funds is ultimately a function of the passage of the State budget.

#### *Federal Transportation Funds and Programs*

Several transportation funding programs operate under the provisions of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, or TEA-21. TEA-21 is the Federal transportation law which authorizes Federal highway, highway safety, transit and other surface transportation programs. These programs cover general transportation, transit, pedestrian and bicycle transportation, pavement and bridges. TEA-21 took effect in October of 1997, and will be in force through September 30, 2003, by which time a new highway law will need to have been passed.

Through the Capital District Transportation Committee (CDTC), the Town can submit projects for consideration for federal transportation funding under CDTC's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP process is both quite competitive from the perspective of quality of project proposals and constrained by available funds and the need to first complete existing projects before funding new ones.

For the 2003-2008 TIP update, the Town submitted a proposal to CDTC for a package of projects developed under this study. At the time of this writing, the proposal was on the draft TIP out for comment (to be voted on by the CDTC Policy Committee in May), with construction projected for the 2007-2008 fiscal year. The package consisted of the following projects.

- SW-2: Western Avenue Eastbound Side Sidewalk Improvements (segments between UAlbany and Fuller Road only)
- SW-3: Western Avenue Westbound Side Sidewalk Improvements (segments between UAlbany and Fuller Road only)
- IS-1: Western Avenue/UAlbany Intersection Improvements
- IS-2: Western Avenue/McKown Road/Norwood Street Intersection Improvements
- IS-4: Western Avenue/Fuller Road Intersection Improvements
- NCD-2: Median on East Leg of Western Avenue/Fuller Road Intersection

### *Other Federal Funds and Programs*

Other Federal agencies administer programs with potential application to study area projects, particularly in the area of trail development. As examples, the Federal Land and Water Conservation Funds and the National Trails Act are managed by OPRHP and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) staff, while stormwater, wastewater and floodplain management efforts supported through the Army Corps of Engineers and the United States Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service may include trail and walkway development. The NYSDEC Region 4 offices in Rotterdam would be the first point of contact for information on these opportunities.

### *Private Support*

Private support for transportation-related improvements tends to be limited to trail, open space or tourism-oriented opportunities. In many cases, this support takes the form of in-kind or permissive support, such as the way in which a number of utility companies around the State have allowed trail development along their rights of way; however, with policy changes implemented by many utilities in the wake of the World Trade Center attack, there may not be the degrees of access to these rights of way in the future.

Another form of private support is financial support for trail development or land acquisition. Charitable foundations such as the J. M. Kaplan Fund ([www.jmkfund.org](http://www.jmkfund.org)) have provided grants to efforts of these sorts in past years, although the recipients of these grants have tended to be private organizations rather than governments, and the Kaplan Fund has particularly (although not exclusively) targeted more rural areas. That said, a number of the trail development concepts discussed earlier could conceivably be pursued by the Guilderland Pathways Committee (if its official or legal status qualifies it to do so) with foundation funding support.

For both private and public grant support, it would be prudent to periodically contact the New York State Library, as the State Library is a clearinghouse for those libraries in each county which serve as *designated repositories for foundation grant information*, and maintains updated listings of grant opportunities.

**APPENDIX  
RESIDENT VIEWS ON NEIGHBORHOOD NEEDS**

A planning effort such as this one relies greatly on local input on issues and needs, for only so much about the mobility and quality of life challenges faced by the community can be gleaned from examinations of the transportation system itself. Toward this end, the Study benefited from the recent work of the McKownville Improvement Association (McKIA) on community outreach.

Two of the McKIA’s recent efforts provided important insights to the Study. One, the development of the Proposal for Western Avenue, was discussed in the treatments of sidewalks both in this section and in the “Proposed Strategy Elements” section. The other was a survey of neighborhood residents concentrating on needs in a variety of areas including sidewalks, streetscaping, lighting, transit service and local destinations. The preface to the summary of survey findings includes the following indications of the degrees of interest and concern residents have for the future of the neighborhood:

“More than ten percent of McKownville households, 96 of about 800 residences, took the time to complete the survey. Many provided additional comments....The report on Western Avenue was produced by the 34 members of the Planning Group. Later more than a dozen neighbors circulated a petition asking McKownville residents to indicate general support for the Western Avenue proposal and 316 signatures were obtained.”

Some of the key findings of this survey related to the areas of concern covered in this Corridor Study are presented below. While the results may not meet the requirements of statistical significance, if the responses are indeed representative of the views of the community as a whole, they do arguably paint a clear picture of the vision residents have for the area.

<b>Question: “Do you want...”</b>	<b>Yes (percent of all Yes/No responses)</b>	<b>No (percent of all Yes/No responses)</b>	<b>No Opinion/ Left Blank</b>
<b><i>Pedestrian and Bicycle Accommodations</i></b>			
...sidewalks and curbs along the (following) important cross streets?			
Church Road	53 (90%)	6 (10%)	37
Fuller Road	73 (95%)	4 (5%)	19
McKown Road	65 (94%)	4 (6%)	27
Schoolhouse Road	62 (93%)	5 (7%)	29
...walk lights at these locations? <i>(Intersections named: Schoolhouse; Fuller/Executive Park Drive; Norwood; Fuller/Mercer; Fuller/ Providence; Fuller/University at southernmost entrance; Fuller/Western)</i>	30 (94%)	2 (6%)	64
...existing walking paths in McKownville (between Abele Park and McKown Road, between Parkwood and Elmwood, etc) to be clearly marked?	70 (86%)	11 (14%)	15



<b>Question: “Do you want...”</b>	<b>Yes (percent of all Yes/No responses)</b>	<b>No (percent of all Yes/No responses)</b>	<b>No Opinion/ Left Blank</b>
...the McKownville pond at Stuyvesant to be made into an attractive park for strolling, picnicking and winter ice skating and necessary changes made to reduce the flooding of western Avenue?	85 (94%)	5 (6%)	6
...a Town park/playground for the residents of Providence/Warren/Mercer streets (because it is the one area that is cut off from both Abele Park and the university, the latter often used as a park)	45 (73%)	16 (27%)	35
...a walking path created along our stream in McKownville (the stream, a branch of the Krumkill, runs from the pond near Stuyvesant southeast behind Burger King and becomes an open stream behind the Holiday Inn and then passes under McKown Road near Short Street and is at the end of Brookwood, Arcadia and Hillcrest and near Ayre Drive and Dillenbeck)?	57 (80%)	14 (20%)	25
...walking paths to be created from Highland/Country/Oak/Shady to Able Park (without having to use Schoolhouse Road), from Mercer/Providence/Warren to Stuyvesant (without having to use Fuller Road) and from McKown Road to Highland/Country/Oak/Shady (without having to use Western)?	62 (84%)	12 (16%)	22
<b><i>Transit Service and Facilities</i></b>			
...CDTA to provide express nonstop buses from Stuyvesant Plaza to and from downtown during rush hour?	37 (72%)	14 (28%)	45
...the reinstatement by CDTA of the Four Malls bus?	36 (69%)	16 (31%)	44
<b><i>Traffic Operations and Safety</i></b>			
...stop signs at these intersections? <i>(Locations named: Fuller/Mercer/University; Western/Arcadia; generally along Western (the latter named 2 times))</i>	29 (85%)	5 (15%)	62
<b><i>Streetscaping and Motorist Behavior</i></b>			
...more trees and shrubbery to be planted along the Northway, Thruway and University drives to eliminate the sight of traffic and reduce traffic noise?	73 (92%)	6 (8%)	17
...trees to be planted by the Town along these streets? <i>(Streets named: Western Avenue (named 4 times), at I-87 and Western area, Burger King/China Buffet/Fuller Road areas (named 2 times each))</i>	42 (89%)	5 (11%)	49
...more streetlights installed along these streets? <i>(Streets named: Fuller Road (named 3 times); Providence Street (named 2 times); McKown Road; Arcadia Avenue (named 2 times); Elmwood (named 2 times); Ayre Drive; Dillenbeck Drive; Parkwood Street)</i>	44 (83%)	9 (17%)	43

Question: “Do you want...”	Yes (percent of all Yes/No responses)	No (percent of all Yes/No responses)	No Opinion/ Left Blank
<b>Gateways</b>			
...the open space (the fields and hills) between the Northway entrance and exit, and between Schoolhouse Road and the Thruway, to be made more attractive with flowering bushes, trees, and other plantings?	50 (85%)	9 (15%)	8

While there are some misconceptions underlying some of these questions – as one example, trees and shrubbery are not effective noise barriers – the survey responses point to a clear sense of the accommodations of different modes and aesthetic character which residents desire for the neighborhood.

The survey responses are also consistent with the insights gleaned from Public Meetings held in March and July. At both of these meetings, concerns, issues or ideas fell into the following categories, approximately in the same rank order by number of comments:

- Barriers/Connections/Destinations (for walking and cycling)
- Bike and Ped Infrastructure/Where Needed
- Streetscaping/Refuges/Lighting/Trees
- Safety/Speed/Traffic (10 comments)
- Neighborhood Character and Commercial Development
- Technology/Traffic Signals
- Gateways
- Personal Mobility
- Transit
- Regulations
- Signage
- Local Services