

## Transportation Working Group Memo: Public Transit and Placemaking

Transit-oriented community life and neighborhoods have numerous benefits to residents. This memo provides recommendations to enhance public transit service and amenities, as well as focus on opportunities to use transportation infrastructure for placemaking in the Junction Neighborhood.

According to a 2018 article, "Creating Public Spaces for Transit-Oriented Communities" by New Jersey Transit Friendly Newsletter, *"A strong sense of place is fundamental to the creation of community. There may be no better way to convey collective identity or a communal bond than through a shared place and an understanding of its history. Placemaking—the local and collaborative process used to shape or reinvent public spaces while preserving physical, cultural, and social identities that define those places—can help to bolster the community-supportive properties of parks and public space and can be employed throughout a downtown, in a transit area, or in other public spaces."*

The Junction Neighborhood's transportation characteristics include:

- Several TARTA bus routes including #28, 27H, 27N and 5, as well as paratransit service through TARPS.
- Major roadways including Dorr Street and Nebraska Avenue running east and west. Collingwood Avenue and Detroit Street running north and south.
- Dorr and Detroit are designated State Routes and so any changes on these roadways must be coordinated with the Ohio Department of Transportation.

The following are recommendations to enhance the public transit access in the Junction Neighborhood:

- **Coordination to Improve TARTA Service**  
As development of the Junction-McClinton Nunn Choice Neighborhoods Plan is underway, close coordination and ongoing input should occur with the TARTA Next project. TARTA Next is a comprehensive operational analysis of TARTA's bus system and other services such the Toledo Area Regional Paratransit Service (TARPS). The TARTA Next project will result in recommendations for new, effective bus routes and services that will increase access to jobs, shopping, healthcare needs and more. This is a critical opportunity to ensure the transit needs of the Junction Neighborhood are included in the final recommendations of the TARTA Next project, which should be completed in spring 2022.
- **Preserve and Enhance Public Transit**  
Public transit should be preserved and enhanced in the neighborhood to make sure residents have access to services, jobs, and amenities. To achieve this, current and new development should include transit-oriented design principles. There is also a need for more direct bus routes from the neighborhood to key destinations. Direct bus routes will reduce the need to go Downtown to transfer to another which lengthens trips for residents.
- **Study Dorr Street for High-Capacity Transit Corridor**  
Dorr Street from University of Toledo through the Junction Neighborhood and to Monroe Street should be studied for its potential success as a High-Capacity Transit

Corridor with Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service. High-capacity transit is an optimized version of traditional public transit and is characterized by the ability to carry a large volume of passengers with frequent service (typically 10-15-minute headways), fewer stops, faster travel speeds, specially branded buses and stops. BRT often has a dedicated lane. Examples include the CMAX service in Columbus (<https://www.cota.com/services/cmax/>); the Laker Line in Grand Rapids, Michigan (<https://www.ridetherapid.org/howtoride/laker-line>); and the HealthLine in Cleveland (<http://www.riderta.com/healthline/about>). This type of service - BRT - can deliver many of the positive attributes of light rail, but at a more affordable cost and be more quickly implemented since it uses buses and the existing roadway infrastructure.

The next set of recommendations focus on enhancing the current transportation amenities with an emphasis of using placemaking as a primary goal to increase awareness and pride in the Junction Neighborhood.

#### **Develop Junction Neighborhood Branding and Signage**

Replicate similar efforts in other Toledo neighborhoods such as Collingwood/Old West End and the Lagrange/Polish Village - to create a recognized brand for the Junction Neighborhood. This branding should be used on signage welcoming visitors to the area as well as create branded TARTA bus shelters.

As part of the branding of the neighborhood, the unique history and culture of the area should be highlighted. This includes the work of the African American Legacy Project and Museum in the area as well as the influence and home of jazz legend Art Tatum.

#### **Create a Gateway into the Junction Neighborhood**

I-75 has become a physical barrier between the Junction neighborhood and nearby areas and amenities such as The Toledo Museum of Art and Downtown Toledo. Enhancing the Dorr Street and Collingwood Avenue bridges/overpasses with artwork and pedestrian and bike amenities would show that one is entering the Junction Neighborhood. In Columbus, the Long and Spring Street Bridges used a variety of enhancements to create gateways from Downtown Columbus to the historic King Lincoln District - <https://bit.ly/3Dk9Y6U>. Using a variety of techniques from panels documenting the history of the King Lincoln District to making the bridge more friendly to pedestrians and bicyclists, the overpass bridge was transformed to a gateway to connect two areas and celebrate a historic neighborhood.

#### **Adopt a Bus Shelter**

In partnership with TARTA, create an adopt a bus shelter program with local businesses and organizations to help maintain clean and safe bus shelters in the neighborhood.

#### **Create a Special Improvement District**

Special improvement districts (SID) are a tool to help neighborhoods revitalize and create a funding source to provide supportive services to local businesses such as hiring ambassadors to help with safety, cleaning and maintenance in public areas and

around businesses. Downtown Toledo currently has a SID and could be consulted to learn more about the services that it provides and how it was established. It is recommended that this should be investigated further as an option for the Junction Neighborhood.

- **Partnership with the Toledo Museum of Art**

It is recommended to explore the potential of the Toledo Museum of Art having presence in the Junction Neighborhood. The Art Museum and Junction are neighbors, and a partnership would help connect the community to this international resource next door. One potential site for development of a physical presence of partnership would be on the site of the former Washington Elementary School, which was one of Toledo's oldest schools and its current use is available public green space.

**Promoting Walkability**

One of the simplest things that can be done throughout the Junction to increase the quality of life is to promote walkability. By working on the outer limits of the neighborhood we can create higher permeability for multi-modal traffic while disincentivizing heavy traffic flow within the core of the neighborhood.

Defining the primary special boundaries of the neighborhood as Detroit/Dorr/and Collingwood we can immediately see that the Junction neighborhood has been cut-off from amenities due to historically poor planning (highways that isolate the neighborhood, difficult to cross major roads adjacent to senior housing, et cetera). We can also identify that the primary through-street of Junction is Nebraska, which operates as a higher volume cut-through to downtown. Junction has good automobile access to downtown, the University of Toledo, the Toledo Museum of Art, but it is much more difficult for Junction residents to move by other means.

**Desired Outcomes:**

Improve pedestrian and bike friendliness within Junction and nearby neighborhoods.

**Potential Partners:**

City of Toledo, ODOT, TMACOG, Junction Coalition, and bike advocacy groups.

**Walkability Action Steps:**

To achieve the highest utility from resources and efforts, focus on upgrades to Nebraska and Collingwood. These upgrades will include creating curbs, adding street trees, upgrading sidewalks, and undertaking other streetscaping corrections to Nebraska. These upgrades will greatly enhance the sense of place while discouraging high-speed traffic.

Collingwood stands as the neighborhood's biggest barrier to the downtown amenities. A road diet on Collingwood, with greatly enhanced pedestrian/bike infrastructure additions, would greatly diminish the spatial disconnect. North and Southbound traffic along Collingwood can be re-routed along that portion of Interstate 75. A good example of a successful project with similar aims is the award

winning “Big Jump” project in Baltimore Maryland (<https://transportation.baltimorecity.gov/engineering-construction-projects/big-jump-project>). The creation of a dedicated and protected multi-modal connector can provide improvements for everything from economic development to social determinants of health.

Form a group of the partners to discuss needed improvements in more detail and start to identify possible locations needed for improvements.

**Potential Funding Sources:**

TMACOG has some available funding that the City of Toledo actively utilizes, ODOT PSIP, Safe Routes to School