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One-way streets may go away

Atlanta Business Chronicle - by [Dave Williams](#) Staff Writer Byron E. Small

Two-way: Some major one-way downtown Atlanta, such as Spring, West Peachtree and Courtland, could be changed to two-way streets.

The city of Atlanta is considering converting some major one-way streets, including West Peachtree and Spring, back to two-way traffic.

The city's first comprehensive transportation plan, about to go out for a final round of public hearings, also envisions expanding public transit to high-density corridors not already served by MARTA.

City planners concede that one-way streets can move cars faster. But one-way traffic whizzing by in multiple lanes isn't a good fit in commercial areas full of pedestrians and bicyclists, said Steven Cover, Atlanta's planning and community development commissioner.

Paul Moore, a senior associate with Glatting Jackson Kercher Anglin Inc., a consulting firm that helped develop the Connect Atlanta plan, said one-way streets also affect retail businesses and restaurants.

"When you think about Atlanta, the places where there's an active urban environment are almost exclusively on two-way streets," he said, citing Peachtree Street as a prime example.

Heather Alhadeff, the city's transportation planning chief, said "We need to spread that retail growth, that sense of being comfortable in the city, out beyond Peachtree Street."

Besides West Peachtree and Spring streets, city planners also have talked about one-way Courtland Street as a potential candidate for two-way traffic.

The idea of converting some of Atlanta's one-way streets to two-way flow isn't new.

Angie Laurie, vice president of transportation for Central Atlanta Progress, said the downtown booster group put out a plan several years ago recommending converting some one-way streets.

She said more two-way streets would make downtown driving easier for the business travelers and tourists staying at the area's many hotels.

"This would help them get around in ways that are logical ... providing more options to get to and from major connecting points, like the Downtown Connector," Laurie said.

But Ed Walls, general manager of The Westin Peachtree Plaza, said losing one-way streets could curtail traffic flow when downtown is especially busy.

“The last thing we want is to have two-way streets being an impediment to these huge traffic flows for the major events,” he said.

Another aspect of Connect Atlanta focuses on getting people out of their cars altogether.

It endorses current proposals to: extend existing MARTA rail lines, develop transit-oriented communities along Atlanta’s Beltline and run a streetcar along the Peachtree corridor.

But the plan goes further by recommending new transit routes along busy corridors including Ponce de Leon Avenue, Marietta Boulevard and Capitol and Moreland avenues.

The ultimate goal would be to bring more than 500,000 Atlantans within a 10-minute walk of a transit line.

“For 50 to 60 years, the city and region have spent a lot more money on streets than on transit,” Moore said. “We want to get that balance back.”

The plan doesn’t get into specifics on what type of public transit should go into each corridor.

Alhadeff said the city will have a lot of choices, from the heavy rail of a MARTA-type system to light rail to train-like vehicles that run on rubber tires, like the trams at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport.

It’s uncertain how the city would pay for all of the planned improvements.

The plan puts forth a typical mix of funding sources, including taxes, tolls and transit fares.

But it also envisions getting part of the money by charging commuters more to park their vehicles.

According to the draft plan, there’s room to increase parking fees and still keep Atlanta competitive with other major cities.

Also, studies show that higher parking rates boost transit ridership by discouraging commuters from driving to work.

Following September’s hearings, a final version of the plan will be submitted to Atlanta City Council in October. A final vote is expected in December.

Traffic pattern

Downtown Atlanta streets that could be converted to two-way streets, an idea that is being recommended by the city’s first comprehensive transportation plan:

- West Peachtree Street
- Spring Street
- Courtland Street

Source: Staff research

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