

**PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES STAFF REPORT**

**For Planning Commission Meeting of December 16, 2014**

**SUBJECT: Resolution in Support of the Reimagine Washtenaw Corridor Improvement Study**

**PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION**

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the “Resolution in Support of the Reimagine Washtenaw Corridor Improvement Study.”

**PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION**

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby adds the 2014 Reimagine Washtenaw Corridor Improvement Study to the list of planning documents to be used as resource information in support of the City Master Plan.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission forward the resolution in support of the Reimagine Washtenaw Corridor Improvement Study to City Council for approval, and further, that the Commission add this study to the planning documents to be used as resource information in support of the master plan.

**STAFF REPORT**

Background – The Reimagine Washtenaw planning initiative was established to improve the economic health of the Washtenaw Avenue corridor through land use and transportation enhancements. The steering committee for the effort, which is coordinated by Washtenaw County, includes the four Washtenaw County communities with frontage along Washtenaw Avenue: the City of Ann Arbor, City of Ypsilanti, Pittsfield Township and Ypsilanti Township. Additional partners include the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), which has jurisdiction over the road, the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority (The Ride) and the Washtenaw Area Transportation Study (WATS).

The Corridor Improvement Study (formerly called the “Right-of-Way” study) was funded by a HUD Sustainable Communities Challenge Grant and was completed in April 2014 (see attached link). The Study provides a dimensional plan for future cross sections of each segment of the corridor. The recommendations accommodate vehicular, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian modes of travel. Additionally, the location of bus stops with enhanced amenities called “Super Stops”, were identified. TheRide has already budgeted for the construction of at least one Super Stop in the near future.

Public Engagement – An extensive public engagement process was included in this planning effort. Four public meetings were held along the corridor in the Spring of 2013. The purpose of these meetings was to gather public input regarding various alternative cross sections and pedestrian and transit improvements. Additionally, Washtenaw County worked directly with the City of Ann Arbor to include the City’s Open City Hall online comment tool. A concluding public meeting was held on December 11, 2013, where the consultant presented final recommendations.

Study Format – The Study included the following Chapters:

- 1) Introduction: study area, corridor governance, community engagement.
- 2) Existing Corridor Conditions: land use, traffic, transit, non-motorized traffic, specific segments.
- 3) Corridor Cross Sections: complete streets, alternatives, vision for each community.
- 4) Transit: improvements, super stop guidelines, super stop locations.
- 5) Pedestrian Improvements: pedestrian crossings, mid-block crossings
- 6) Implementation: public access approach, traffic volume reduction strategy, phased projects.

Recommendations – The study makes recommendations for future Washtenaw Avenue right-of-way needs between E. Stadium Boulevard and US-23 (see attached excerpts). For the segment between E. Stadium Boulevard and Platt Road, the study proposes a 132 foot right-of-way to accommodate a median, buffered bike lanes and two lanes of traffic in each direction. For the segment between Platt and US-23, the study proposed a 144 foot right-of-way to accommodate a median, buffered bike lanes, two lanes of traffic in each direction, a mid-block pedestrian crossing and two transit Super Stops.

Resolutions of Support – MDOT staff has indicated a desire for all four communities to endorse the recommendations of the study through resolutions of support. This cooperative effort will encourage MDOT to support future planning and street enhancement initiatives in the corridor. The individual resolutions collectively acknowledge that each community supports and endorses the recommendations of the study, with the understanding that future, more detailed analysis will be required, as well as coordination with MDOT, in order to implement all of its provisions.

Planning Commission Review and Action - The Planning Commission’s Master Plan Review Committee discussed the proposed resolution on November 25, 2014. The Committee supported the resolution and recommended bringing the resolution to the full Planning Commission.

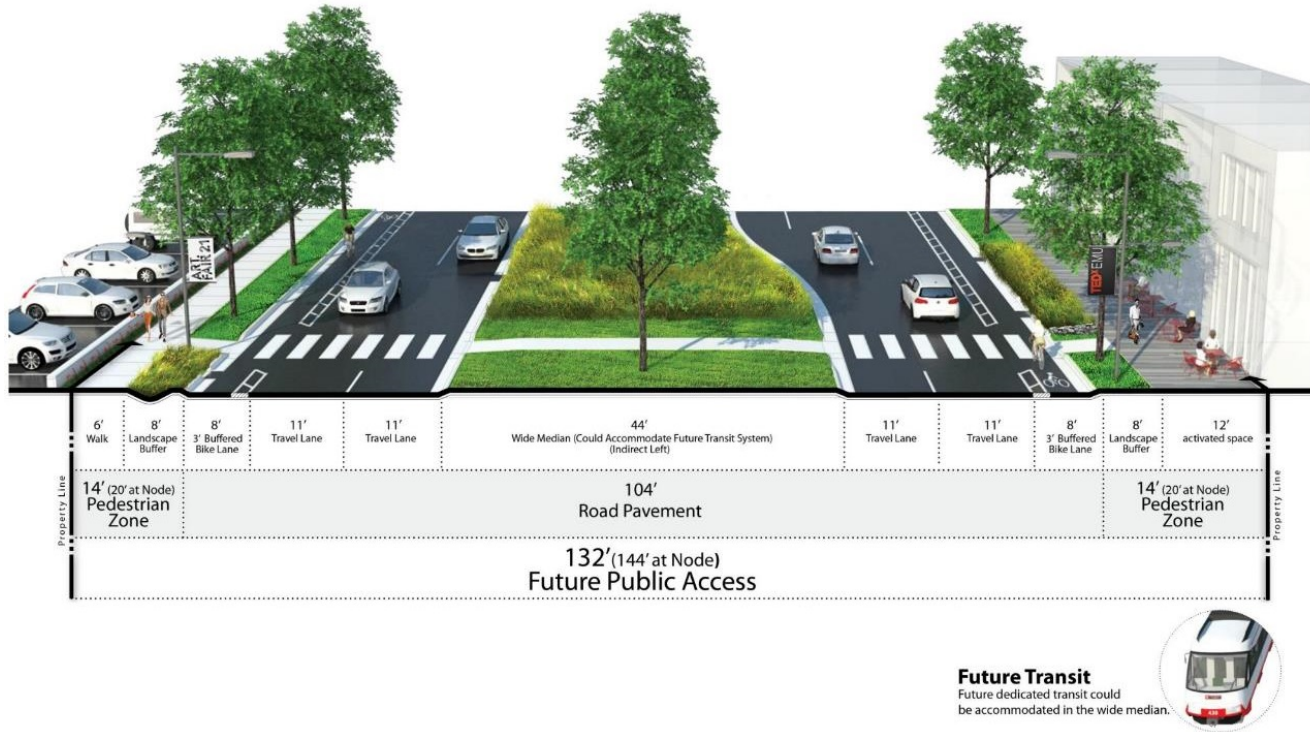
Prepared by Jeff Kahan  
Reviewed by Wendy Rampson

c: Systems Planning Unit  
Project Management Unit

Attachments: Link to Corridor Improvement Study: [www.reimaginewashtenaw.org](http://www.reimaginewashtenaw.org)  
Resolution in Support  
Excerpts from the Corridor Improvement Study



# [Corridor Cross Sections] Corridor Vision Plan – Ann Arbor



## Four Travel Lanes with Wide Median and Bike Lanes

This cross section includes two 11-foot travel lanes in each direction and a 44-foot wide center median. The wide median is an excellent method to improve traffic flow through use of indirect left-turns (“Michigan lefts”) and it accommodates the turning movements of larger vehicles while also increasing safety for pedestrian crossings. The wide median also provides an opportunity for stormwater management. As with all of the cross sections, this recommendation includes a buffered bike lane, a continuous pedestrian zone with a landscape buffer and screen walls where buildings are not adjacent to the public access limits.

A future alternative of this cross section would implement center-operated dedicated transit lanes within the wide median.

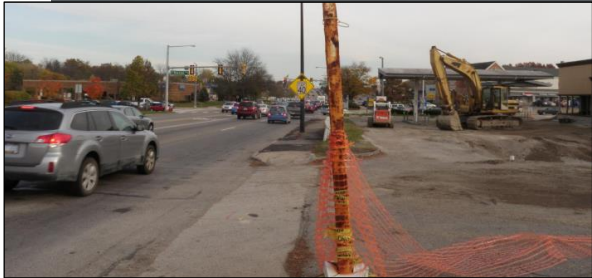
All of these strategies would require more detailed design analysis, justification through traffic studies and coordination with MDOT.

# [Corridor Cross Sections] Corridor Vision Plan – Ann Arbor



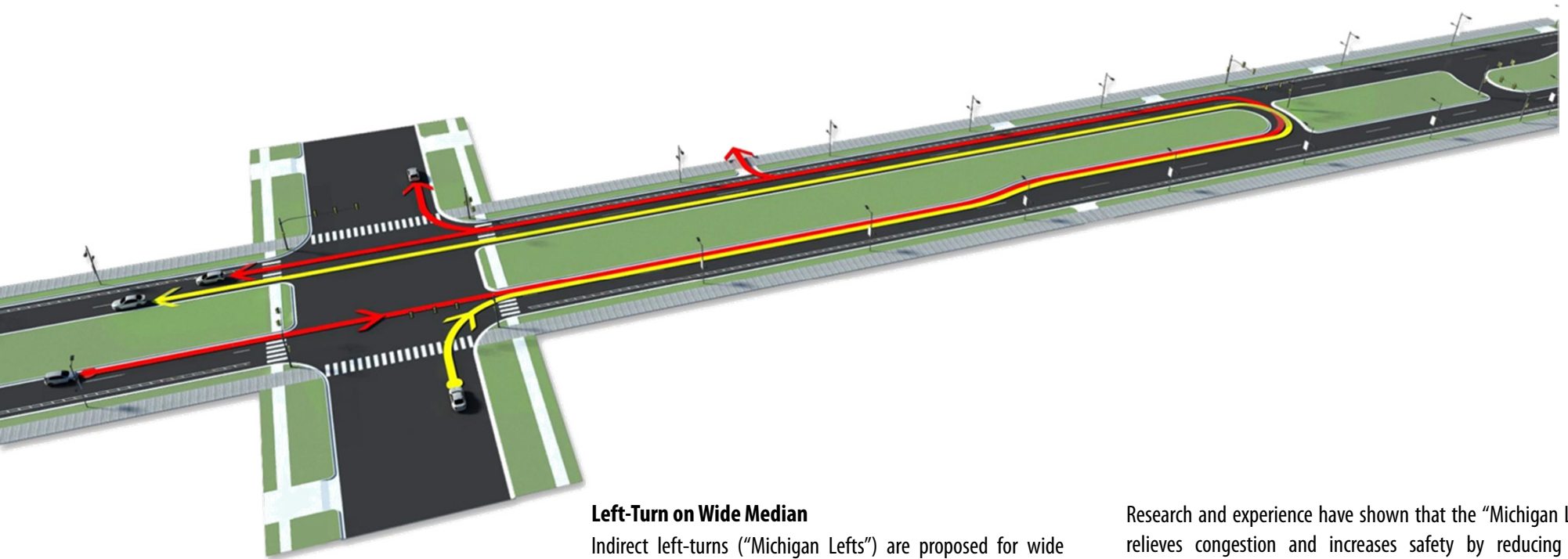
Source: SmithGroupJJR

**PROPOSED**



**BEFORE**  
View Looking East at the Washtenaw Avenue/Huron Parkway Intersection

## [Corridor Cross Sections] Corridor Vision Plan – Ann Arbor



### **Left-Turn on Wide Median**

Indirect left-turns (“Michigan Lefts”) are proposed for wide median segments to improve traffic flow and safety, to facilitate left-turns and to access property on the opposite side of the road. Where a “Michigan Left” is in place, left-turns at the intersection are not allowed. Instead, to turn left, you must drive straight or turn right, then make a U-turn at a median crossover.

Research and experience have shown that the “Michigan Left” relieves congestion and increases safety by reducing the number and severity of crashes. In commercial corridors like Washtenaw Avenue, crossovers typically need to accommodate a 74-foot overall length truck with a 45-foot turning radius.

“Michigan Lefts” have been part of Michigan roadways since at least the late 1960s.

Specific bike circulation design, including left hand turn methods, will be developed as part of the overall roadway engineering at the time of implementation.