Purpose and Need

Problem Statement

The City of Birmingham is challenged to meet its mobility, housing, and economic development needs by its continued loss of population, uneven and low-density land use patterns, a lack of affordable housing, poor transportation connectivity across all modes, underutilization of existing transportation resources, and limited transit, bicycle, and pedestrian options.

Individually, each of these issues contributes to reduced quality of life, mobility, and economic competitiveness. Together, they are a severe impediment to creating sustainable growth and a vibrant livable community in the years to come. If the City is to address these problems proactively, a comprehensive and progressive solution is required to integrate land use, economic development, social, and transportation needs holistically.

Mobility and access in the study area are challenged by a fragmented and discontinuous transportation network and a lack of transit, bicycle, and pedestrian options. These transit and non-motorized conditions are particularly evident when travel between communities and neighborhoods within the City is attempted. These local trips are the dominant type of travel in the City, and are most often accomplished by personal automobile. Transportation-related problems caused by these deficiencies include limited access and mobility and increased travel times. These problems also contribute to a lack of economic opportunity at the individual, communitywide, and citywide levels.

Project Purpose

The purpose of the transportation elements of the US 11 / US 78 East Corridor Study is to improve access and mobility for existing and future residents and workers by increasing transit and bicycle/pedestrian options, and providing links in and between those networks. In addition to its transportation purpose, the US 11 / US 78 East Corridor Study has a land use and economic development component that is intended to stimulate economic activity and structure growth.

Project Needs

Population Decline

Population in the City of Birmingham has decreased by 37.7 percent from 340,887 in 1960 to 212,237 in 2010. In the US 11 / US 78 corridor, population loss has been acute in the close-in residential areas just east of Downtown. Based upon regional forecasts population the Center City and Five Points South areas are expected to grow by 30% from 2005 to 2035 while population in the Southside/Avondale/Crestwood, East Lake / Woodlawn, and Tarrant / Airport areas are expected to decline by 18% during the same period. While population growth is welcome in the Center City and Five Points South sections of the City, a broader revitalization throughout the eastern portion of the study area is needed. These data point to a need to provide public transit improvements to accommodate growing population in the Center City and Five Points South while encouraging redevelopment in the study area.

Environmental Justice and Transit-Dependent Populations

Compared to combined population of Jefferson and Shelby Counties, the study area contains relatively high percentages of minority and low-income populations that qualify as environmental justice populations, as well as populations without access to automobiles. Public transportation options are often critical to the mobility of these population groups. This indicates a need to provide public transit and bicycle/pedestrian options in those areas where environmental justice populations have been identified in the study area.
**Land Use and Economic Development**

Over the past 30 years, Birmingham’s real estate development pattern has been skewed to the southern portion of the Region. Much of this activity has been dominated by low-density, auto-centric development, such as single-family residential development. Meanwhile, in the northern, eastern and western portions of the City, little to no development occurred during the same period. Market and demographic analyses show that without intervention these trends are set to continue into the future. If the existing low-density land use patterns and skewed development trends continue, this may lead to increased roadway congestion, decreased mobility, and a reduced quality of life, while doing nothing to address the lack of economic opportunities and quality of life issues, or make use of infrastructure capacity and redevelopment opportunities in the City of Birmingham. Thus, there is a need to increase transportation options in parallel with making changes in land use and development patterns in the study area to improve economic opportunities and quality of life.