District of Columbia Office of Planning

District Department of Transportation

CONGRESS HEIGHTS

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS STUDY

June 2022

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Executive Summary

Study Purpose and Goals

In the development of the Congress Heights Small Area Plan (CHSAP), the District of Columbia Office of Planning (OP) identified key community destinations with access challenges that merited further study. These four destinations, listed below, provide vital community services, retail opportunities, and community gathering spaces. As a companion to the CHSAP, this follow-up study seeks to identify challenges to pedestrian access and develop recommendations for improvements – both for the key destinations as well as neighborhood-wide – with a goal of improving the connectivity of the pedestrian network throughout the neighborhood. Public input provided during outreach events was critical in helping the study team understand the community's challenges and needs when walking around Congress Heights.

The study team, comprised of representatives from OP, the District Department of Transportation (DDOT), and consultants, organized recommendations into three categories:

- **New Spot Improvements:** Location-specific projects that address conflict points or targeted improvements, such as pavement markings.
- **Network Gaps/Enhancements:** Larger projects to close gaps in the network where pedestrian facilities end abruptly or to enhance facilities with access or capacity limitations.
- **Existing Pedestrian Facilities Improvements:** Improvment projects to repair or modernize existing pedestrian facilities.

Recommendations in this study include repairs, design enhancements to existing facilities, new pedestrian connections, and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility improvements. The following guidance documents informed the development of recommendations:

- American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities.
- DDOT Design & Engineering Manual (DEM).
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) pedestrian safety countermeasures.

The Shops at Park Village (Giant)

Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue SE Commercial Corridor

Future Library Site

Congress Heights Recreation Center

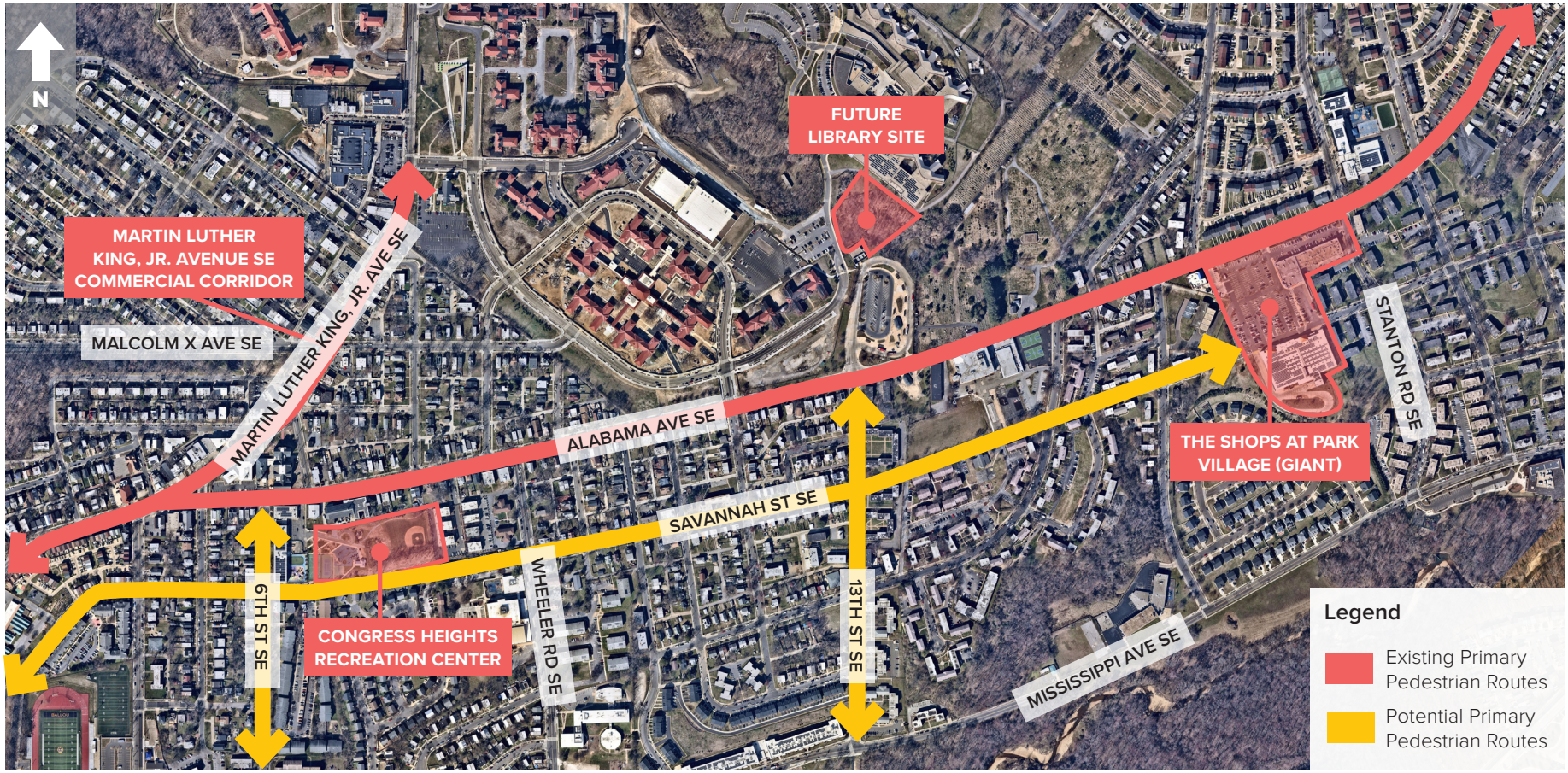
TLC Program Overview

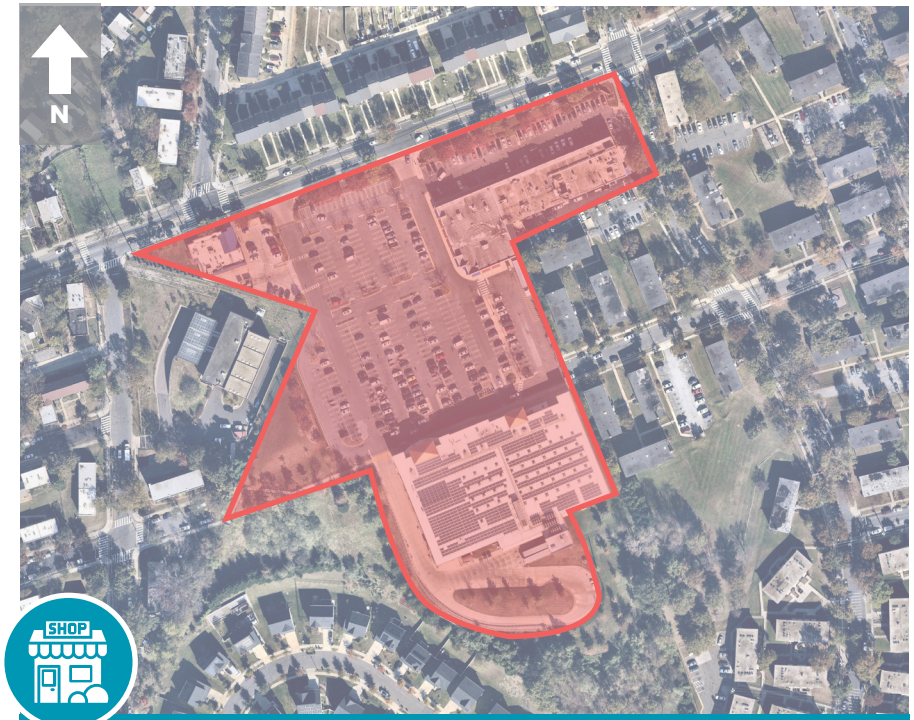
The Congress Heights Pedestrian Access Study was funded through the Transportation and Land-Use Connections (TLC) Program. Since 2007, the Transportation Planning Board has funded small planning, design, and preliminary engineering projects at the community level through the TLC Program. The program provides assistance for projects that promote mixed-use, walkable communities and support a variety of transportation options.

Neighborhood-Scale Opportunities

The four study locations are primarily accessed via two core pedestrian routes in Congress Heights. Alabama Avenue SE is the primary east-west vehicular and pedestrian route in the neighborhood. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue SE is the primary north-south mobility corridor on the west end of the neighborhood, as well as being an activity center with several blocks of retail extending north from Alabama Avenue SE. Both corridors have been identified by DDOT as Vision Zero Corridors. indicating they are in need of critical safety interventions based on crash history.

In reviewing alternative points of access to the study locations from other streets, the study team identified opportunities to optimize another east-west connection and two north-south routes on slower, safer neighborhood streets. Recommendations at The Shops at Park Village and the Congress Heights Recreation Center will help enable a continuous east-west pedestrian route along Savannah Street SE, which is currently restricted at each site. Additional pedestrian enhancements along the street could make it an attractive alternative pedestrian route to Alabama Avenue SE. Steep topography makes north-south travel challenging between Alabama and Mississippi Avenues SE. The study recommends optimizing pedestrian facilities along 6th and 13th Streets SE to enhance safety and connectivity to the four key destinations and other community resources, including schools.





The Shops at Park Village (Giant)

Giant is the only full-service grocery store in the Congress Heights neighborhood. A major challenge in accessing this destination is the limited number of access points from the west side of the shopping center, which is entirely fenced off with the exception of a gated entrance that is not ADA accessible. Many residents live west of the site, and pedestrian traffic from the northeast is funneled to the Alabama Avenue and Stanton Road SE intersection, where community members cited pedestrian-vehicle conflicts. The study team's review identified more than 10 recommendations to improve connectivity to the site and pedestrian safety on and around the site, which is primarily designed for vehicular access and fronted by a large parking lot that creates a hostile environment for pedestrians.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue SE Commercial Corridor

This commercial corridor is major hub for retail and socialization in Congress Heights. DDOT recently implemented traffic calming measures throughout the roadway, but the study team's review indicated that some of these improvements are not optimized for pedestrian safety, including a number of lane drops that may distract drivers from looking out for crossing pedestrians while trying to read pavement markings. Community members identified a variety of concerns with discomfort walking along the corridor as well as crossing safety, insufficient pedestrian-scale lighting, obstructions on the sidewalks, and pinch points where sidewalk widths change and structures limit walking space. The study team identified seven recommendations to improve pedestrian comfort and safety while enjoying this vibrant commercial area.

Future Library Site

A new Congress Heights public library is slated to be built on Parcel 16 of the St. Elizabeths campus, directly north of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) bus loop at Congress Heights Metrorail Station. This study location is unique because it is currently undeveloped, and therefore no existing pedestrian facilities were designed to access this location. The bus loop will remain a neighbor to the library, so the study team assessed pedestrian connectivity to and safety within the bus loop. The team identified two major opportunities to address pedestrian network gaps: the realignment of 13th Street SE to connect into St. Elizabeths and WMATA's joint development project that will reconfigure the parcel at the southern Metrorail entrance.

Congress Heights Recreation Center

The DC Department of General Services (DGS) is currently redesigning the Congress Heights Recreation Center to better meet the needs of the community, with improved indoor and outdoor recreational and gathering spaces. Despite its minimal parking space, pedestrian access to the site is not optimal. The proposed DGS redesign, presented in Chapter 4, addresses a number of access issues, including the addition of a southeastern access point and formalizing the northeastern entrance path that is currently a pedestrian desire line worn through the grass. OP will remain engaged in design development to leverage the ongoing project to implement recommendations identified in this study.

CHAPTER 1

Project Overview

Study Background & Purpose

OP initiated the Congress Heights Pedestrian Access Study as a follow-up effort to the CHSAP completed in 2022. The CHSAP identified Transportation and Access as one of six focus areas and called for a pedestrian access study to enhance pedestrian safety and connectivity in the neighborhood. This study represents the first step toward implementing that recommendation.

The Congress Heights neighborhood has a population of approximately 25,000 residents, more than 93 percent of whom are Black or African American.[1] Approximately 45 percent of Congress Heights households do not have cars, and residents spend over 65 more hours commuting to work each year than the average District worker. Located in Ward 8 in Southeast DC, Congress Heights has suffered from historic underinvestment but is poised to undergo rapid change and growth through redevelopment at the St. Elizabeths campus as well as other residential, civic, and infrastructure projects in the area.

The CHSAP embraced a planning approach centered on equity and racial justice to develop a community vision for equitable and inclusive growth. As an outgrowth of the CHSAP, this study seeks to align its recommendations with that equity and racial justice framework, including engaging Congress Heights community members and seeking to promote recommendations that will enhance quality of life for existing residents of the neighborhood.

1 2018 American Community Survey

This Congress Heights Pedestrian Access Study assesses pedestrian comfort and safety and identifies barriers to pedestrian connectivity at locations throughout the neighborhood, with a particular focus on improving access to four key destinations. These destinations serve a variety of functions that provide vital community services, retail opportunities, and gathering spaces for Congress Heights residents and visitors. The destinations represent four of the most active and highly visible locations for pedestrian activity in the neighborhood, which is why they were selected for inclusion in this study. **Figure 1-1** shows a map of the Congress Heights neighborhood with the four key destinations highlighted.

For the purposes of this study, **pedestrian safety** refers to attempts to reduce or eliminate risks to people walking in Congress Heights. **Pedestrian comfort** assumes a safe walking environment but also considers how comfortable pedestrians feel in walking in a particular location. **Pedestrian connectivity** considers how direct and convenient it is to walk between different destinations in an area or neighborhood. Barriers to connectivity could include hilly topography, large parcels and lots, fencing or gates, or other elements that make it difficult for pedestrians to take a direct route to their destination.

Figure 1-1. Congress Heights Context Map with Key Pedestrian Destinations

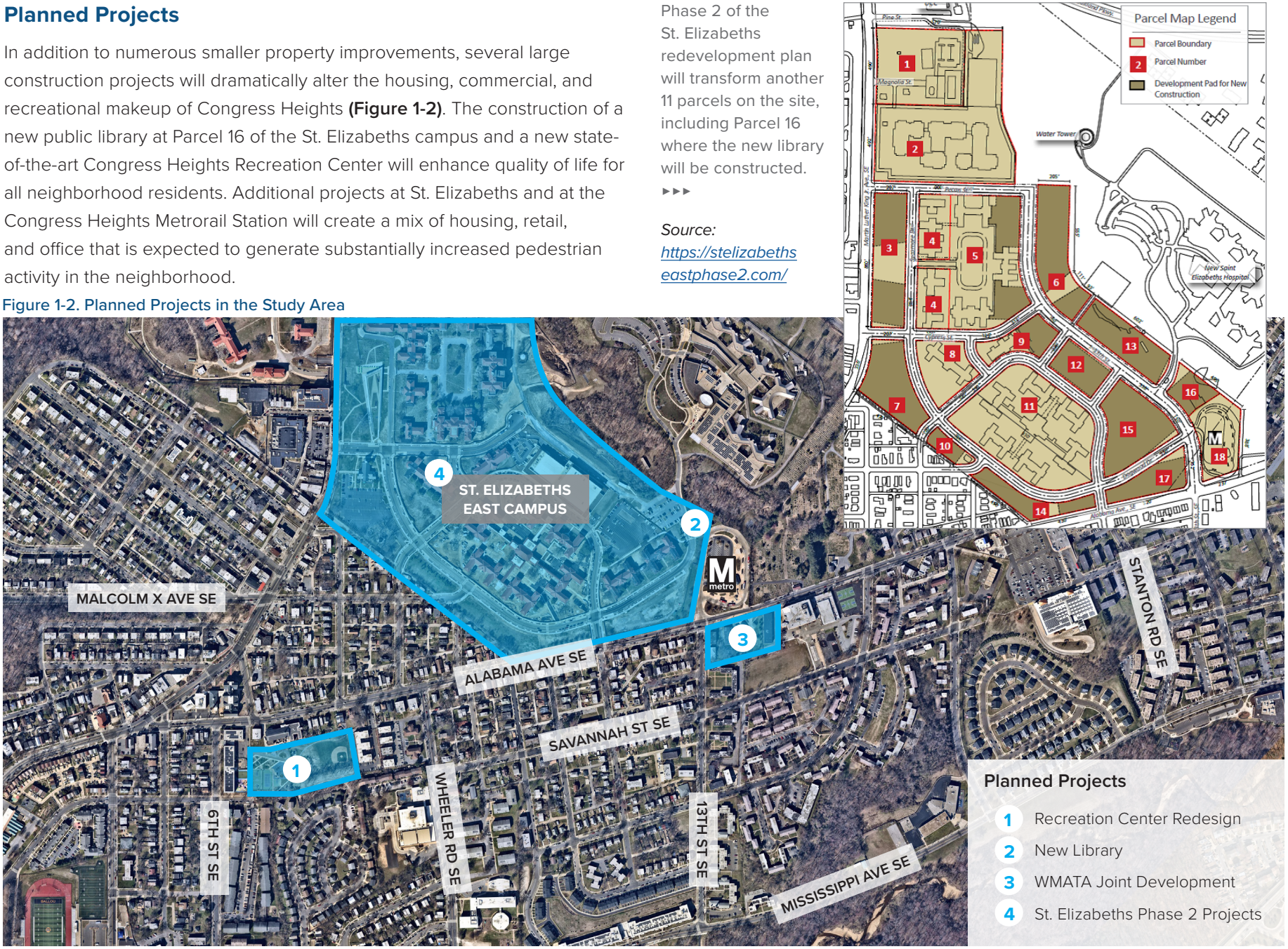
Planned Projects

In addition to numerous smaller property improvements, several large construction projects will dramatically alter the housing, commercial, and recreational makeup of Congress Heights **(Figure 1-2)**. The construction of a new public library at Parcel 16 of the St. Elizabeths campus and a new state-of-the-art Congress Heights Recreation Center will enhance quality of life for all neighborhood residents. Additional projects at St. Elizabeths and at the Congress Heights Metrorail Station will create a mix of housing, retail, and office that is expected to generate substantially increased pedestrian activity in the neighborhood.

Phase 2 of the St. Elizabeths redevelopment plan will transform another 11 parcels on the site, including Parcel 16 where the new library will be constructed. ▸▸▸

Source: https://stelizabetheastphase2.com/

Figure 1-2. Planned Projects in the Study Area



Recent Mobility Improvements

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) has undertaken multiple projects in recent years aimed at improving pedestrian safety in Congress Heights, particularly on the two main corridors–Martin Luther King, Jr. and Alabama Avenues SE–that feature the heaviest traffic volumes and relatively high vehicle speeds. These projects were performed in support of the Mayor's Vision Zero Initiative, which seeks to eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries.

A corridor improvement project on Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue SE in 2021 substantially enhanced pedestrian safety and comfort by installing new medians, realigning intersections, upgrading crosswalks and pedestrian signals, and reconstructing sidewalks, curbs, and curb ramps.

Recent improvements on Alabama Avenue SE have helped calm traffic by reducing the number of travel lanes, installing flexposts along the roadway centerline, and reconstructing and extending curbs to reduce crossing distances for pedestrians.

Work on Alabama Avenue SE continues as part of a Vision Zero assessment that is identifying additional measures to improve pedestrian safety, including some recommendations identified as part of this study.

DDOT installed new medians, crosswalks, and landscaping along Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue SE in 2021.

DDOT recently upgraded a rectangular rapid flashing beacon (RRFB) to a HAWK signal on Alabama Avenue SE to better control traffic.

As part of the Alabama Avenue SE safety improvements, DDOT added median flexposts to calm traffic and restrict turning movements in certain locations.

CHAPTER 2

Community Engagement Summary

To align with the CHSAP's equity-centered approach and its focus on enhancing quality of life for existing Congress Heights residents, it was important that the study team hear from community members to understand their concerns when it comes to mobility and access. To that end, the study process included multiple engagement opportunities with community members, including:

- A **walking tour** with members of the CHSAP Community Advisory Committee on November 15, 2021.
- **Pop-up events** to engage community members at four locations in the neighborhood.
  - Parklands-Turner Public Library on November 17, 2021
  - Rita's Water Ice on Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue SE on November 18, 2021
  - Congress Heights Recreation Center on November 18, 2021
  - Congress Heights Metrorail Station on November 30, 2021
- A **brief survey**–in both digital and paper format–to gauge mobility concerns and needs.

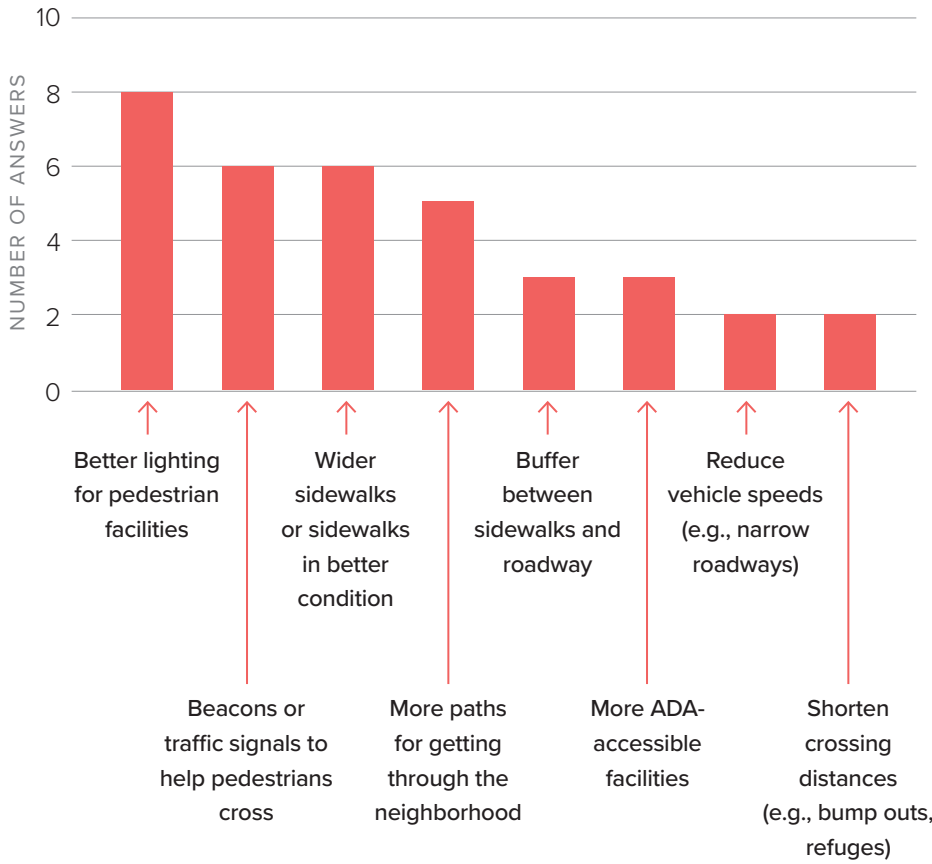
> **Equity exists where all people share equal rights, access, choice, opportunities and outcomes, regardless of characteristics such as race, class, or gender.**
>
> *–DC Comprehensive Plan*

Based on the input received in conversations with community members and through survey responses, the most pressing issues that need to be addressed involve inadequate lighting for pedestrians, challenges crossing busy corridors such as Alabama Avenue SE and Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue SE, and degraded sidewalk conditions and sidewalk gaps that make walking uncomfortable. Beyond specific mobility issues, there were also widespread concerns about personal safety among community members.

Input gathered through the engagement process was used to develop an assessment of existing safety issues and connectivity barriers and also helped inform the types of recommendations that the study team proposes as part of this study.

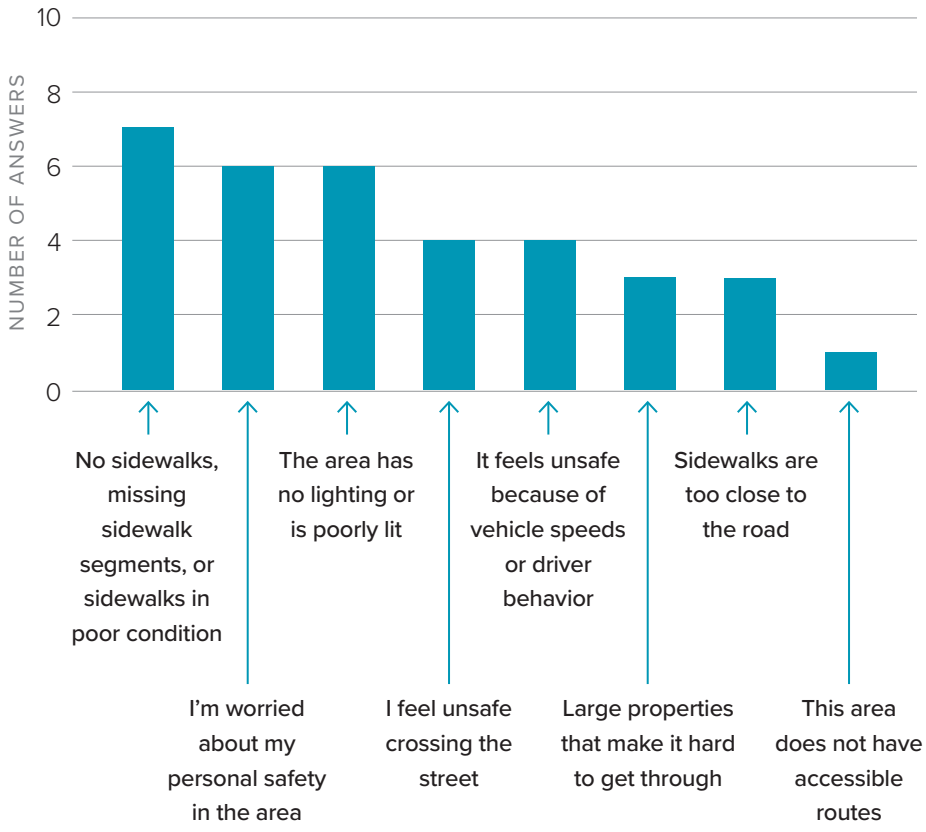
QUESTION 1

What improvements would you like to see to make it safer and easier to walk around Congress Heights? (Select up to 5 responses)



QUESTION 2

If there are places that you avoid when walking, why do you avoid these locations? (Select all that apply)



CHAPTER 3

Mobility Improvements Toolbox

Pedestrians in Congress Heights face a variety of challenges caused by suboptimal infrastructure, incomplete connections, and a transportation network that prioritizes the movement of cars over people.

Pedestrian infrastructure investments by DDOT in recent years, particularly along the Alabama and Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenues SE corridors, have sought to reduce vehicular speeds and improve pedestrian safety in Congress Heights. However, substantial issues remain that degrade pedestrian safety and comfort throughout the neighborhood.

This section of the report features a "toolbox" of potential improvements that the District and other community partners can implement to address pedestrian challenges in Congress Heights. The issues and countermeasures included in this section provide a sampling of the types of recommendations–and the types of issues they're intended to address–that are highlighted in Chapter 4 of this report.

Photo Credit: VHB

DDOT-Standard Crosswalks and Curb Ramps

EXISTING ISSUE

Missing crosswalks and curb ramps create safety and accessibility challenges for pedestrians, as seen in the photo above at the Giant shopping center parking lot. The lack of a DDOT-standard crosswalk and curb ramps means that pedestrians don't have the visual cues they need to find a safe and comfortable route to the shopping center sidewalk network and drivers and other road users don't have visual cues alerting them to expect pedestrians.

POTENTIAL TREATMENT

Marked crosswalks make it easier to cross the street by showing pedestrians the appropriate locations to cross. They also help alert drivers that they should expect pedestrian crossings at that location. Curb ramps are essential to safely and comfortably accommodating people in wheelchairs.

Reduced Crossing Distances

EXISTING ISSUE

Photo Credit: VHB

Long crossing distances across driveways create uncomfortable conditions for pedestrians and expose them to greater risk of conflict with vehicles. The crosswalk across the western Giant shopping center driveway (pictured above) is 80 feet long. Crossing the driveway on foot is an uncomfortable experience due to its length and the speeds of vehicles entering and exiting the driveway.

POTENTIAL TREATMENT

Photo Credit: www.pedbikeimages.org/Dan Burden

Redesigning driveways to reduce crossing distances can substantially improve pedestrian comfort while still providing vehicles–especially larger vehicles like delivery trucks–the space they need to turn into and out of the property. Reducing curb radii would also require vehicles to make the turns into and out of the parking lot at slower speeds, and the design can include mountable curbs to accommodate delivery trucks.

Road Diet

EXISTING ISSUE


Photo Credit: VHB

Narrow or missing sidewalks serve as barriers to connectivity and degrade the pedestrian experience by forcing pedestrians to either walk in the roadway or take alternate, often longer, routes. Pictured above is 15th Street SE, which features a relatively wide roadway but no sidewalk on the east side.

POTENTIAL TREATMENT


Photo Credit: VHB

In some cases, roadways are wide enough that some space can be reclaimed for a new and/or wider sidewalk. This is called a “road diet” and can greatly enhance the pedestrian experience while also calming traffic speeds.

MOBILITY IMPROVEMENTS TOOLBOX

Sidewalk Improvements

EXISTING ISSUE

Narrow or missing sidewalks serve as barriers to connectivity and degrade the pedestrian experience by forcing pedestrians to walk in locations not designed or intended for pedestrian activity. Various sidewalk improvements can improve the pedestrian experience and access where the right-of-way is not wide enough to reallocate space from the roadway for pedestrian facilities.

POTENTIAL TREATMENT

Sidewalk widening projects can use space outside the roadway where buildings are set back far enough to provide space. Other potential improvements include maintenance projects to fix cracks or uneven surfaces, closing gaps in the sidewalk network along individual parcels, or leveraging development projects to require inclusion of high-quality pedestrian facilities, like the privately owned brick plaza enhancing the pedestrian space shown above.

Parking Lot Pedestrian Routes

EXISTING ISSUE

Photo Credit: VHB

Parking lots often feature conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles, particularly if there are inadequate sidewalk connections. Pedestrians forced to walk long distances through parking lots with no dedicated pedestrian facility—as seen here in the Giant shopping center parking lot—face extended exposure to vehicle conflicts and an uncomfortable environment in which to walk.

POTENTIAL TREATMENT

Photo Credit: www.pedbikeimages.org/DanBurden

Photo Credit: www.pedbikeimages.org/TransportationResearchandEducationCenter

Dedicated pedestrian routes through parking lots greatly increase pedestrian comfort, indicate preferred walking routes through the lot, and signal to drivers that they should expect pedestrian activity at those locations.

MOBILITY IMPROVEMENTS TOOLBOX

ADA Ramps

EXISTING ISSUE

Multiple pedestrian connections in the neighborhood feature only stairs and no ramping, such as at the access to the Congress Heights Recreation Center (pictured above) or at the connection to the Giant shopping center from Savannah Street SE. Stairs-only connections create significant barriers to connectivity and limit accessibility.

POTENTIAL TREATMENT

Stair connections should be accompanied by ADA-accessible ramping to reduce barriers to connectivity for individuals using mobility aids, including improving access for people in wheelchairs.

Dockless Bicycle and Scooter Corral

EXISTING ISSUE

Photo Credit: VHB

Unorganized and haphazard scooter and bicycle parking on sidewalks creates clutter and can block the path of pedestrians. Here, a parked scooter blocks the sidewalk on Alabama Avenue SE near the Congress Heights Metrorail Station.

POTENTIAL TREATMENT


Photo Credit: VHB

Parking “corrals,” like the one shown above on Raleigh Place SE, create designated parking locations for scooters and bicycles and can help reduce sidewalk clutter and blockages.

Curb Extensions

EXISTING ISSUE

Wide intersections can create adverse conditions for pedestrians in multiple ways. They create long crossing distances that make it more likely that pedestrians will come in conflict with turning vehicles. Certain intersection designs also provide too much room for turning vehicles and can encourage vehicles to take turns at high speeds.

POTENTIAL TREATMENT

Curb extensions, like the one pictured above on Alabama Avenue SE, can reduce the size of an intersection to calm traffic and reduce the distance that pedestrians need to cross.

Median Pedestrian Refuge

EXISTING ISSUE

Photo Credit: VHB

Medians can help calm traffic while also making a roadway corridor more attractive through landscaping and amenities. However, in some locations medians stop short of the crosswalk and therefore don't provide a refuge for pedestrians.

POTENTIAL TREATMENT


Photo Credit: VHB

Extending a median beyond the crosswalk improves pedestrian comfort by providing a refuge for pedestrians crossing the roadway.

Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPIs)

EXISTING ISSUE

Photo Credit: VHB

Pedestrians crossing corridors with relatively high traffic volumes – such as Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue SE or Alabama Avenue SE – often face conflicts with turning vehicles at signalized intersections.

POTENTIAL TREATMENT


Photo Credit: VHB

LPIs give pedestrians a "head start" over vehicles by giving the walk signal a few seconds before the traffic signal turns green. This reduces the amount of time pedestrians are exposed to potential conflicts from turning vehicles. Pictured above is an LPI at the intersection of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X Avenues SE.

Rectangular Rapid-Flashing Beacons (RRFBs)

EXISTING ISSUE

Photo Credit: VHB

Pedestrians crossing at unsignalized locations—like the one pictured above at Alabama Avenue and Webster Place SE—can face uncomfortable conditions even when there is a crosswalk and warning signage present, particularly on high-speed corridors.

POTENTIAL TREATMENT

Photo Credit: VHB

A Rectangular Rapid-Flashing Beacon, or RRFB, features LED lights that are activated by a push-button and alert drivers to pedestrians crossing the roadway. RRFBs can help increase the visibility of marked crosswalks at locations where there is not a traffic signal.

Pedestrian-Scale Lighting

EXISTING ISSUE

Photo Credit: VHB

There is a lack of lighting along several sections of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue SE corridor and the Alabama Avenue SE corridor. In areas where there is lighting, that lighting is generally intended as roadway lighting and is inadequate for pedestrian needs – as seen in the photo above along Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue SE.

POTENTIAL TREATMENT

Photo Credit: wordonstreet.wordpress.com

Photo Credit: www.pedbikeimages.org/

Pedestrian-scale lighting, as pictured above, is designed to serve pedestrian needs and provide adequate lighting for sidewalks and walkways. This type of lighting is essential to improving nighttime conditions for pedestrians from both a safety and personal security standpoint.

CHAPTER 4

Study Findings & Recommendations

Study Locations

The study focuses on four key destinations where the study team reviewed existing conditions and developed recommendations to improve pedestrian access to each location. Shown in **Figure 4-1**, the four destinations are:

- **The Shops at Park Village (Giant)**
- **Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue SE Commercial Corridor**
- **Future Library Site**
- **Congress Heights Recreation Center**

These locations all provide important services and opportunities in Congress Heights. Giant is the neighborhood's only full-service grocery store, the library and recreation center provide vital public services, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue SE is a vibrant commercial hub.

Because all four locations are located within 1 mile of one another, the study also identified recurring pedestrian network deficiencies and yielded opportunities for neighborhood-scale network recommendations.

Recommendation Categories

Recommendations were classified under three different categories:

- New Spot Improvements
- Network Gaps/Enhancements
- Existing Pedestrian Facility Improvements

Each category was developed based on the recurring types of pedestrian access challenges the study team identified by reviewing existing conditions in person and using desktop data sources. New spot improvements include discrete project recommendations that create new pedestrian facilities at specific locations, such as new crosswalks, pedestrian refuges, or curb extensions. Network gaps/enhancements focus on segments where the pedestrian network lapses or is inadequately sized, including road diets or new pedestrian easements through parcels. Existing pedestrian facility improvements address ADA accessibility challenges and enhancing or repairing existing facilities, including crossings and sidewalks.

All recommendations align with moveDC 2021 goals, including Safety, Equity, Mobility, Management and Operations (State of Good Repair), and Sustainability. Following the description of neighborhood-scale challenges and recommendations, the findings from each study location are addressed in detail.

Existing Pedestrian Network

The primary pedestrian routes in Congress Heights—Alabama Avenue SE to travel east-west and Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue SE to travel north-south—are also major vehicular routes, and like any historic neighborhood, the space available to widen sidewalks is constrained by existing buildings with small setbacks. Additionally, many of the residential and commercial areas along these busy roads, particularly Alabama Avenue SE, further constrain pedestrian space with fencing along the sidewalk edges. Pedestrian comfort is also low when crossing these streets. Both streets have several unsignalized crossings, and residents report pedestrian-vehicle conflicts at signalized intersections, specifically at Alabama Avenue and Stanton Road SE in front of The Shops at Park Village. East of this intersection, the next signalized crossing is at the 22nd Street SE intersection nearly half a mile away.

Figure 4-1. Congress Heights Pedestrian Access Study Area and Key Destinations

DDOT has undertaken several projects to improve safety on both corridors, but unsafe driver behavior was observed during site visits for this study, including illegal left-turns through newly installed median flexposts on Alabama Avenue SE.

Traveling north-south between Alabama and Mississippi Avenues SE is challenging throughout the neighborhood due to topography changes and sometimes-steep upward slopes when traveling north. DDOT has studied and is implementing several safety improvements on Wheeler Road SE where downhill travel results in high vehicular speeds in the vicinity of multiple schools. The north-south streets were also where the study team identified most sidewalk gaps and consistently narrow and poorly maintained sidewalks.

Neighborhood-Scale Recommendations

Figure 4-2 shows the location of neighorhood-scale recommendations for improving pedestrian access and connectivity. **Recommendation numbers (CH-#) correspond to the implementation costs and time frame table on page 27.**

To further the goals of this study and the Small Area Plan, OP, DGS, and DDOT should continually consider pedestrian access goals in ongoing design reviews for development projects in Congress Heights **(CH-1).**

New Spot Improvements

To minimize pedestrian-vehicle conflicts, the team recommends that DDOT implement LPIs at signalized intersections along both Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue SE in the commercial corridor between Alabama Avenue SE and Cypress Drive SE and along Alabama Avenue SE. LPIs give pedestrians a head start into the crosswalks to increase their visibility and improve compliance with turning vehicles yielding to pedestrians **(CH-2 and CH-3)**.

Network Gaps/Enhancements

The continuity of Savannah Street SE, which runs parallel to Alabama Avenue SE one block south, is interrupted by the existing Congress Heights Recreation Center and The Shops at Park Village, where a stairs-only connection on the west side is not ADA accessible and is gated off at 9:00 PM. As discussed in the Congress Heights Recreation Center findings section of this report, the redesign of the recreation center intends to create an east-west pedestrian connection through the south side of the site connecting the gap on Savannah Street SE. To capitalize on this connection, OP, DDOT, and DGS should coordinate to enhance pedestrian facilities along Savannah Street SE, including through the redesign recreation center site, to increase capacity and improve comfort to create a viable east-west alternative pedestrian route to Alabama Avenue SE **(CH-4)**.

The study team identified 6th and 13th Streets SE as north-south corridors where pedestrian facility improvements could provide the greatest benefits to the neighborhood. In coordination with the St. Elizabeths East redevelopment, 13th Street SE will be realigned to continue northward through the existing WMATA bus loop to the future library site and beyond, making this corridor increasingly important for neighborhood connectivity. West of 13th Street SE and Wheeler Road SE, 6th Street SE is a lower speed residential corridor that provides the opportunity for a safe pedestrian route connecting schools and the recreation center to residential areas and the commercial corridor on Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue SE **(CH-5)**.

By improving alternative pedestrian corridors to the existing thoroughfares, DDOT, in coordination with DGS and OP, could relieve sidewalk crowding and reduce pedestrian-vehicle conflicts by spreading pedestrian traffic across a greater number of routes and crossings. Implementation of the neighborhood-scale recommendations along with the site-specific recommendations will benefit everyone traveling in Congress Heights with a focus on improving access to vital community activity centers for local residents.

Recommendations Summary

Figure 4-2. Neighborhood-Scale Pedestrian Access Recommendations

Implement LPIs at signalized intersections on Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue SE and on Alabama Avenue SE.

Invest in continuous pedestrian facilities and enhance pedestrian comfort on Savannah Street SE to establish a viable east-west alternative to Alabama Avenue SE.

Invest in continuous pedestrian facilities and enhance pedestrian comfort on 6th Street SE and 13th Street SE to improve north-south connections in the neighborhood.

Implementation Costs & Time Frame

The study team, in consultation with DDOT, developed planning-level cost range and time frame estimates for implementing recommendations.

Location	Recommendation	Lead Stakeholder(s)	Coordination Complexity	Cost	Time Frame
CH-1	Continually consider pedestrian access goals in ongoing design reviews for development projects in Congress Heights	OP, DGS, DDOT	N/A	N/A	N/A
CH-2	Implement LPIs at signalized intersections on Martin Luther King, Jr. Ave SE	DDOT	Low	$	Short term
CH-3	Implement LPIs at signalized intersections on Alabama Ave SE*	DDOT	Low	$	Short term
CH-4	Enhance pedestrian comfort on Savannah St SE to establish a viable east-west alternative to Alabama Ave SE	DDOT, Property Owners	Medium	$$ - $$$	Long term
CH-5	Enhance pedestrian comfort on 6th and 13th Streets SE to improve north-south connectivity	DDOT, Property Owners	Medium	$$ - $$$	Long term

Cost

Low ($): <$10,000
Medium ($$): $10,000-$50,000
High ($$$): > $50,000

Time Frame

Short term: 1-2 years
Intermediate term: 3-5 years
Long term: >5 years

*DDOT to consider as part of ongoing Alabama Avenue SE Safety Improvement Study.

LOCATION 1

The Shops at Park Village (Giant)

Existing Conditions

The Shops at Park Village is unique within the Congress Heights neighborhood with its large parking lot designed for vehicles as the primary mode of access. It is home to the current Parklands-Turner Neighborhood Library and Giant, the only full-service grocery store in the neighborhood, making it one of the most important destinations in Congress Heights. As shown in **Figure 4-4**, most of the neighborhood can access the store within a 15-minute walk, but topography and limited ADA accessibility severely restrict access from the south and west. There are four main points of access—two large driveways from Alabama Avenue SE, only one with sidewalks into the site; Savannah Avenue SE entering directly into the parking lot from the east; and a large stair case where Savannah Avenue SE dead ends into the west side of Giant.

Access Challenges

The locations of the challenges described are shown in **Figure 4-3**.

A. One of the most significant network gaps in accessing the neighborhood's only grocery store is on the west side of the parking lot. There is no designated, or separated, pedestrian route from Alabama Avenue SE for anyone approaching the shopping center from the west, and because the southwest entrance is not ADA accessible, this leaves pedestrians who may be using mobility aids to travel more than 450 feet in mixed traffic with vehicles to the Giant storefront.

B. Both driveway entrances create very long crossings at more than 80 feet between curb ramps, and the crosswalk marks are severely worn and faded. The crossings are also dangerous for pedestrians, as large curb radii allow vehicles to turn in and out of the parking lot at high rates of speed.

C. DDOT recently installed flexposts in the median of Alabama Avenue SE to prevent left turns in and out of the west shopping center driveway, but the flexposts are bent from vehicles driving over them, and vehicles were observed making illegal left turns into and out of the parking lot during a site visit.

D. At the eastern driveway from Savannah Street SE, a sidewalk with a curb ramp on the north side of the street dead ends into the parking lot with no crosswalks connecting it to the sidewalks to the west or south of the corner, including the Giant store front.

E. Several challenges affect western access to the site, which is widely fenced off and separated by a PEPCO building on 15th Street SE.

F. The only point of access at the southwest corner is a large stair case with no accompanying ADA ramp or other accommodation. Also affecting ADA accessibility from the only other western point of access is a grade change in the sidewalk on Alabama Avenue SE where stairs and a narrow ramp do not meet ADA standards.

G. For pedestrians traveling north to Alabama Avenue SE to avoid the large stair case, their route is also impeded by a gap in the sidewalk network along the east side of 15th Street SE beside the PEPCO building.

H. The entire south side of the site is inaccessible due to a major grade change, reinforced by retaining walls behind the Giant and by the lack of connection between the shopping center and the residential subdivision to the south.

Summary of Access Challenges

Figure 4-3. The Shops at Park Village Access Challenges

A

No pedestrian route through parking lot from the west

B

Long crossing distances and faded crosswalk markings

C

Vehicles make prohibited left turns in/out of west Alabama Ave SE driveway, running over flex posts

D

Missing crosswalk connections

E

Limited points of access from the west

F

Lack of ADA accessibility from the west

G

Gaps in the pedestrian network (missing sidewalk)

Figure 4-4. Walking Distances in 5, 10, and 15 Minutes

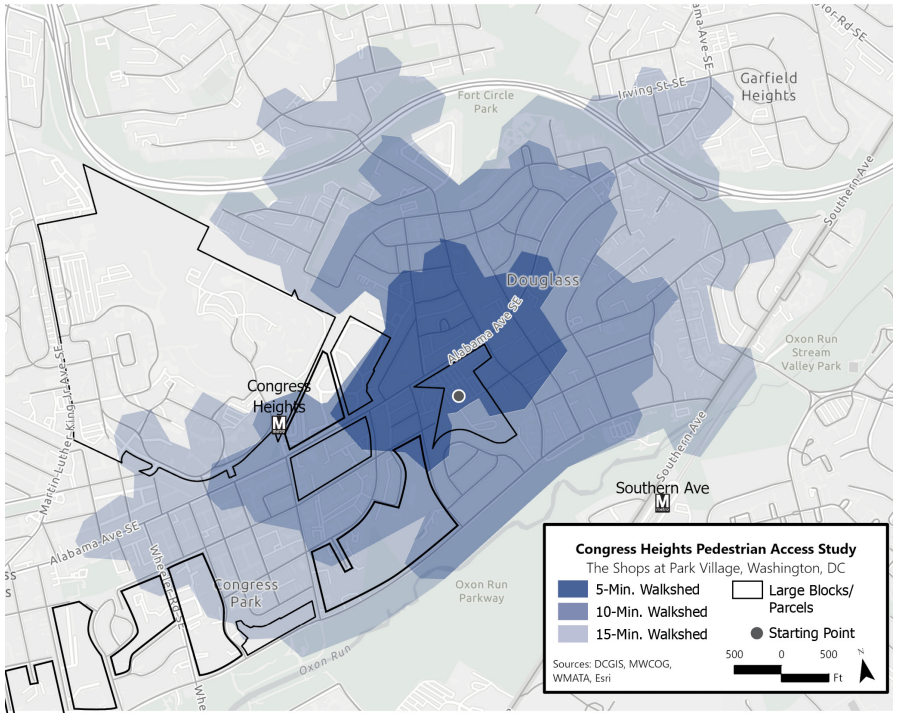
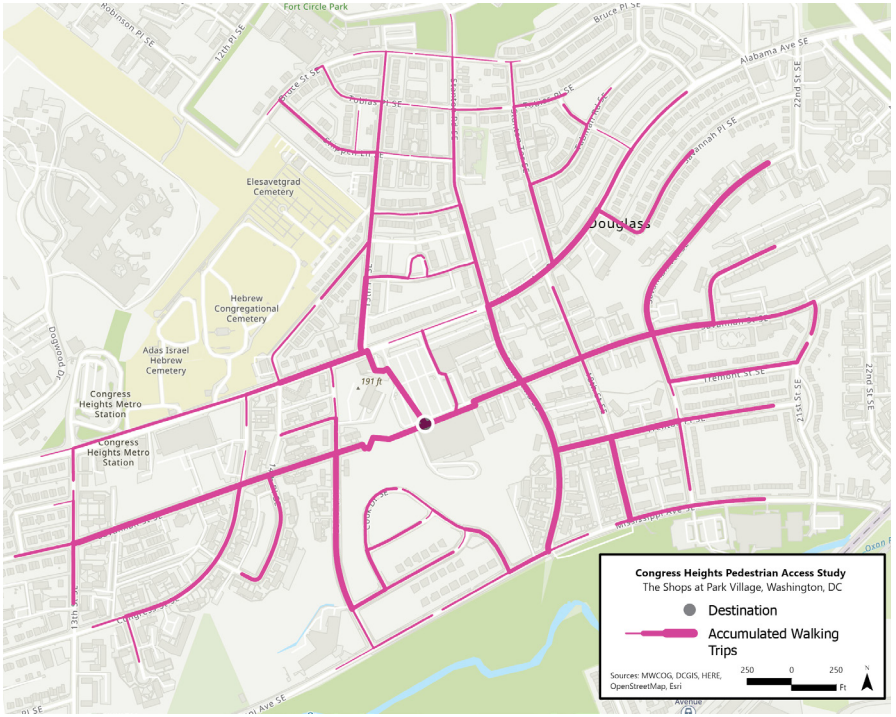


Figure 4-5. Walking Routes to The Shops at Park Village (Giant)



Walkshed Analysis

A walkshed analysis estimates how far someone can walk in a certain amount of time based on average walking speed using the streets and trails/paths available. Using the The Shops at Park Village as the starting point, **Figure 4-4** shows how far an average person can walk in 5, 10, and 15 minutes. Several large developments, including some housing subdivisions closed off from the main street grid, create barriers to pedestrian access throughout the Congress Heights neighborhood, particularly St. Elizabeths and the residential developments southwest of The Shops at Park Village. Through the ongoing redevelopment of the St. Elizabeths campus, connectivity through the parcel will be improved, but OP should monitor development opportunities on the other large blocks, including the WMATA joint development project, to advocate for pedestrian connectivity through and adjacent to the blocks.

Preferred Walking Routes

Using zoning and housing unit data to estimate the number of people traveling to the study locations, **Figure 4-5** shows how pedestrian travel accumulates along the limited number of routes available to access The Shops at Park Village. In addition to directly addressing the access challenges identified in this study, improvements to pedestrian facilities should take into account the volume of pedestrian traffic to provide adequate space where heavy traffic is expected. This model does not account for the accessibility limitations at the stair case on Savannah Street SE but indicates a large number of trips could use that route and divert walking trips through the parking lot from Alabama Avenue SE if accessibility was improved. The recommendations for this location address both the safety of pedestrians walking through the parking lot, gaps or barriers in the pedestrian network to the site, and ADA accessibility challenges.

Recommendations

The recommendations for The Shops at Park Village are categorized as on-site **(Figure 4-6)** or off-site recommendations **(Figure 4-7)**. On-site recommendations will require coordination with the private property owner, and off-site recommendations will require coordination with DDOT. This study location is unique in that it is the only site where there is significant pedestrian movement within a facility designed primarily for vehicular use, due to the lack of designated pedestrian routes through the large parking lot.

Recommendation numbers (GSC-#) correspond to the implementation costs and time frame table on page 35.

On-Site Recommendations

New Spot Improvements

A neighborhood-wide issue identified during public engagement was sidewalk clutter, particularly scooters and dockless bicycles. At this location, several parking spaces along Alabama Avenue SE were reallocated for a Capital Bikeshare station, and there is sufficient space for a dockless scooter and bicycle corral in the space around the station protected by flexposts. Because the property owner already approved this space for Capital Bikeshare use, the only modifications needed would be pavement markings designating where to park the dockless scooters and bicycles **(GSC-5)**.

Shortening the western driveway crosswalk on Alabama Avenue SE would improve pedestrian safety and comfort and could be achieved through several redesign options. A concrete median that only allows right turns in and out of the driveway could provide a pedestrian refuge and reinforce the ban on left turns, which drivers violate by driving over the existing median flexposts on Alabama Avenue SE. Alternatively, the curb radii of the driveway corners could be tightened significantly, though they would still need to allow turning movements for delivery trucks, as this driveway is the access point for the loading docks. In the short term, either of these options could be implemented using flexposts until a permanent modification could be installed **(GSC-6)**.

Network Gaps/Enhancements

In coordination with the property owner, a designated, ADA-accessible pedestrian route should be added from the west driveway to the Giant storefront. Ideally, this route would be a sidewalk or physically separated path, but a short-term option would be striping a route with pavement markings and safe crossings at aisle intersections **(GSC-8)**.

Another major opportunity to improve western access to the site would be to open the gated PEPCO driveway at the corner of Alabama Avenue and 15th Street SE as a pedestrian-only route to the shopping center. When coordinating with PEPCO, DDOT and/or OP could propose a limited use of the driveway with a sidewalk along the north side, only requiring the fence to be relocated by several feet, as opposed to re-purposing the full width of the driveway **(GSC-10)**.

Existing Pedestrian Facility Improvements

DDOT and/or OP should coordinate with the private property owner to install ADA-accessible ramping at the existing staircase connection from Savannah Street SE at the southwest corner of The Shops at Park Village. This improvement would create a new point of access for anyone who may not be able to or want to use the existing large staircase **(GSC-7)**.

Summary of On-Site Recommendations

GSC-5 Install scooter/bike parking corral near the existing Capital Bikeshare station

GSC-6 Shorten the crossing distance across the west shopping center driveway

GSC-10 Explore opportunities to convert the PEPCO driveway to a dedicated pedestrian connection into the shopping center

GSC-8 Install a dedicated pedestrian facility through the west side of the parking lot

GSC-7 Install ADA ramping to improve the existing sidewalk and stair connection from Savannah Street SE

Figure 4-6. The Shops at Park Village Pedestrian Access Recommendations (On Site)

Off-Site Recommendations

New Spot Improvements

At the eastern entry point to the shopping center on Savannah Street SE, the intersection already has stop signs controlling westbound and southbound traffic, so the addition of crosswalk pavement markings would be a sufficient improvement at this location **(GSC-2)**.

During the public engagement process, the study team identified pedestrian-vehicle conflicts at the intersection of Alabama Avenue and Stanton Road SE as a commonly cited issue. While DDOT recently made improvements to Alabama Avenue SE, the Stanton Road SE right-of-way can accommodate curb extensions at the four corners to shorten crossing distances when crossing east-west on the north and south sides of Alabama Avenue SE. This improvement would require DDOT taking the lead to study and implement **(GSC-3)**.

Network Gaps/Enhancements

The study team recommends that DDOT study the possibility of a road diet on 15th Street SE to create a pedestrian path on the east side of the road. This solution avoids impacts to the PEPCO property and avoids the construction challenges posed by installing a sidewalk where there is currently a steep slope beside the roadway **(GSC-9)**.

Existing Pedestrian Facility Improvements

Where the shopping center fronts Alabama Avenue SE, DDOT should restripe the crosswalks at both driveways, which are severely worn and faded **(GSC-1)**.

Several enhancements to existing pedestrian facilities along Alabama Avenue SE would help improve pedestrian comfort and safety. While there are existing north-south pedestrian crossings on Alabama Avenue SE east of The Shops at Park Village, none have traffic signals or signs or warning signals, such as RRFBs, until the traffic signal at 22nd Street SE. The study team recommends DDOT study the implementation of an RRFB or comparable pedestrian safety device at one of the unprotected crossings. This improvement may reduce the number of pedestrian-vehicle conflicts at the Alabama Avenue and Stanton Road SE intersection if pedestrians traveling west are more comfortable crossing Alabama Avenue SE before reaching the intersection **(GSC-4)**.

Additionally, DDOT recently installed a HAWK signal on Alabama Avenue SE at the previously uncontrolled crossing at 15th Street SE, but foliage is already beginning to obstruct visibility of the signal. DDOT should conduct regular maintenance of pedestrian facilities in the neighborhood.

Summary of Off-Site Recommendations

GSC-4
Consider an RRFB, or similar, at marked crosswalk on Alabama Avenue SE east of Stanton Road SE

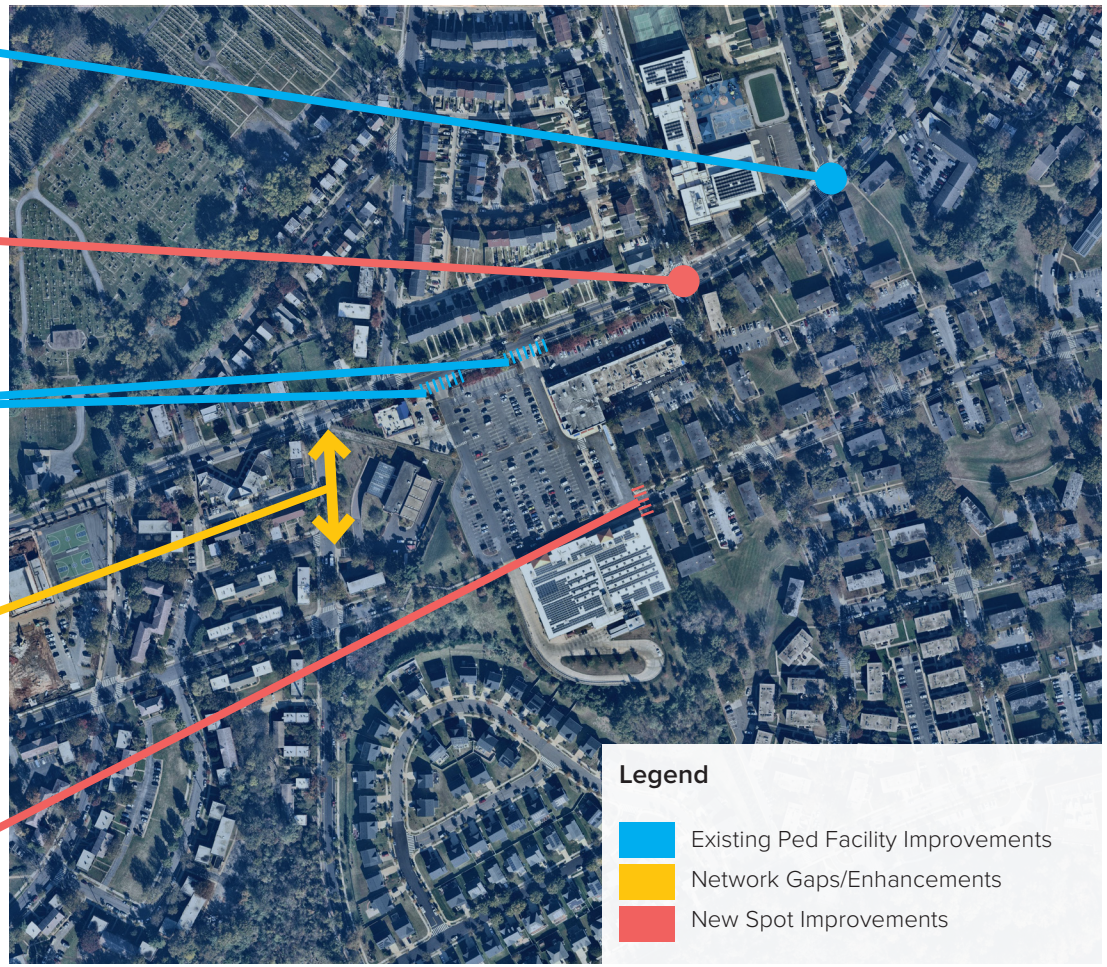
GSC-3
Install curb extensions on Stanton Rd SE at Alabama Avenue SE

GSC-1
Restripe faded crosswalk markings across the shopping center driveways

GSC-9
Consider installing a road diet on 15th Street SE to complete the sidewalk connection on the east side of the street

GSC-2
Install a crosswalk and curb ramps across Savannah Street SE at the shopping center driveway

Figure 4-7. The Shops at Park Village Pedestrian Access Recommendations (Off Site)



Implementation Costs & Time Frame

OP, in consultation with DDOT, developed planning-level cost range and time frame estimates for implementing recommendations.

Recommendation Number	Recommendation	Lead Stakeholder(s)	Coordination Complexity	Cost	Time Frame
GSC-1	Restripe faded crosswalks at driveways*	DDOT	Low	$	Short term
GSC-2	Install curb ramps, crosswalk at Savannah St SE driveway	DDOT	Low	$$	Short term
GSC-3	Install curb extensions on Stanton Rd SE at Alabama Ave SE*	DDOT	Low	$$	Short term
GSC-4	Install RRFB (or similar) on Alabama Ave SE east of Stanton Rd SE*	DDOT	Low	$$	Short term
GSC-5	Add parking corral for dockless scooters/bikes	Property Owner (WC Smith)	Medium	$	Short term
GSC-6	Shorten the crossing distance across the shopping center west driveway	DDOT, Property Owner (WC Smith)	Medium	$$	Intermediate term
GSC-7	Implement Savannah St SE staircase and ramp improvements	DDOT, Property Owner (WC Smith)	Medium	$$ - $$$	Intermediate term
GSC-8	Add dedicated pedestrian facility through west side of parking lot	Property Owner (WC Smith)	Medium	$$$	Intermediate term
GSC-9	Consider implementing 15th Street SE road diet	DDOT	Medium	$$ - $$$	Intermediate term
GSC-10	Explore opportunities to repurpose a portion of PEPCO driveway for pedestrian connection into shopping center	DDOT, Property Owner (PEPCO)	High	$$$	Long term

Cost

Low ($): <$10,000
Medium ($$): $10,000-$50,000
High ($$$): > $50,000

Time Frame

Short term: 1-2 years
Intermediate term: 3-5 years
Long term: >5 years

*DDOT to consider as part of ongoing Alabama Avenue SE Safety Improvement Study.

LOCATION 2

Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue SE Commercial Corridor

Existing Conditions

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue SE corridor is a vital commercial center in Congress Heights for restaurants, shopping, and socializing, but it is also a major vehicular route with little space to buffer pedestrians from the roadway. The busiest section of the corridor extends from Alabama Avenue SE north to Malcolm X Avenue SE and thins out around the Cypress Street SE entrance to the St. Elizabeths campus. Along this section of the corridor, the lane configuration and sidewalk width vary every few blocks, and vehicles traveling at high rates of speed create uncomfortable conditions for pedestrians walking along the corridor or trying to cross Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue SE. The study team reviewed conditions along the corridor for specific challenges that reduce pedestrian safety or comfort to support the vibrancy of this active commercial center.

Access Challenges

The locations of the challenges described are shown in **Figure 4-8**.

A. Recent DDOT improvements on Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue SE changed the configuration of lanes along the corridor. While these improvements did not change the total number of lanes, in certain locations the new configuration requires drivers to switch lanes to maintain their direction of travel. This can result in distracted drivers focused on navigating confusing lane assignments and not vigilantly looking out for pedestrians in crosswalks.

B. Sidewalk widths vary due to differences in building setbacks.

C. Sidewalks are frequently obstructed by utility poles, dockless mobility devices (e.g., scooters), and other clutter such as public trash bins.

D. The sidewalks are not buffered from traffic at any point along the corridor regardless of sidewalk width, creating uncomfortable conditions for pedestrians walking in close proximity to relatively high-speed vehicles.

E. The sidewalk network is interrupted by numerous active business driveways along the corridor.

F. The Popeyes driveway and parking lot has a large number of pedestrian-vehicle conflicts where the vehicular and pedestrian spaces are not clearly delineated.

G. During public engagement for this study, community members expressed concern about sufficient lighting for pedestrians, particularly at the Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X Avenues SE intersection, creating both personal safety concerns and crossing safety issues.

H. Community members expressed concern about feeling unsafe at unsignalized crossings along the corridor.

I. While DDOT has made recent safety improvements on the corridor, the medians installed for traffic calming end before crosswalks, providing no refuge for pedestrians or protection from vehicles making tight turns near the center lines.

Summary of Access Challenges

Figure 4-8. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue Access Challenges

A		Lane drops at southern end of MLK corridor distract drivers
B		Inconsistent sidewalk widths
C		Obstructions in sidewalk
D		Narrow sidewalk widths and/or lack of buffering
E		Numerous active driveways
F		Popeyes parking lot conflicts
G		Insufficient pedestrian lighting
H		Crossing MLK is perceived as unsafe in multiple locations
I		Medians calm traffic but do not extend to crosswalks to provide pedestrian refuge

Figure 4-9. Walking Distances in 5, 10, and 15 Minutes

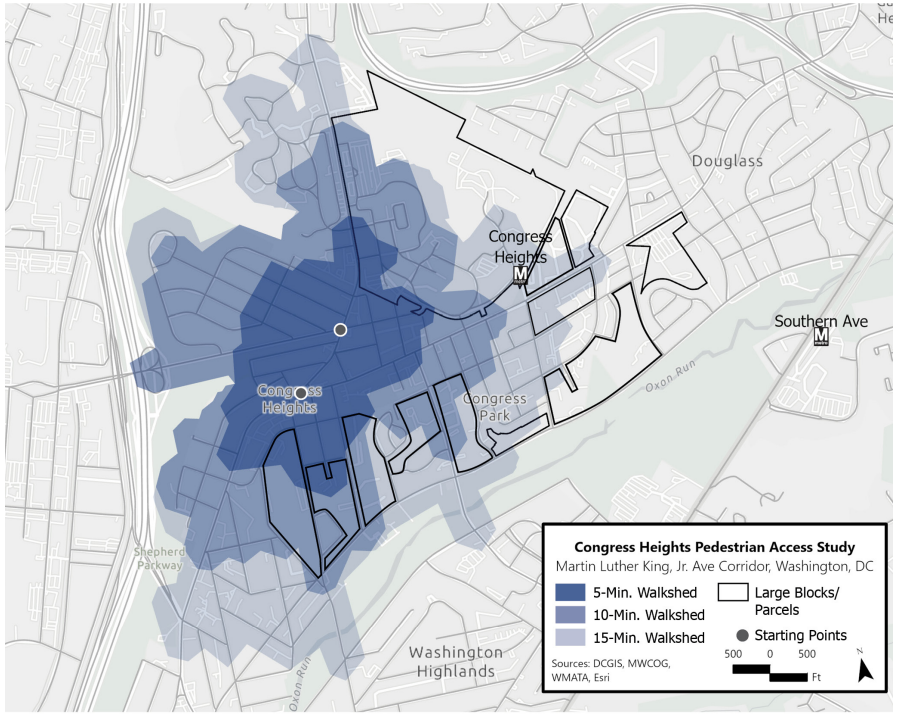
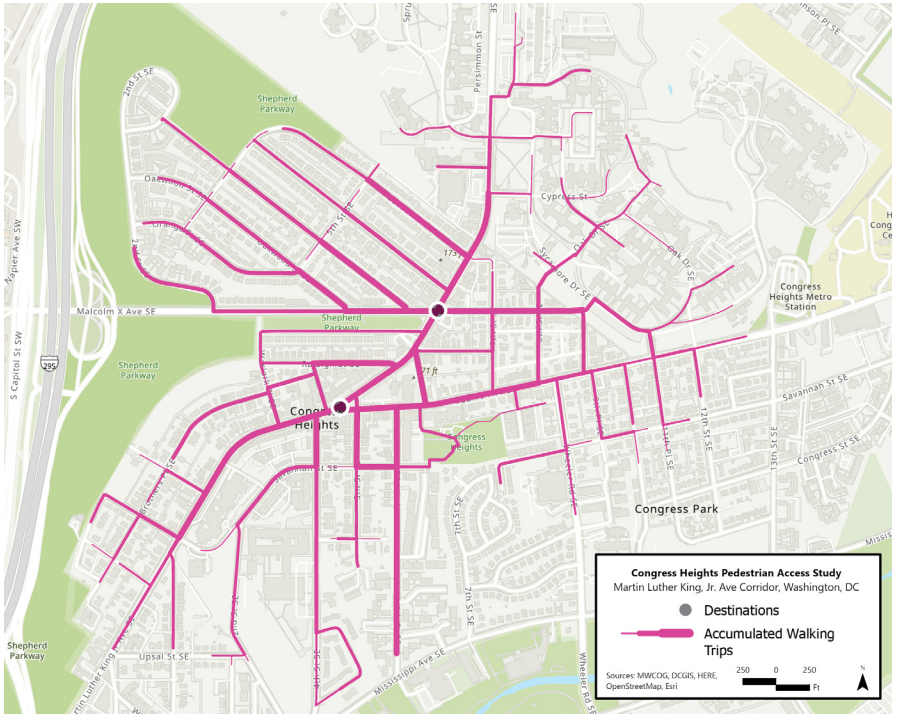


Figure 4-10. Walking Routes to the Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue SE Commercial Corridor



Walkshed Analysis

A walkshed analysis estimates how far someone can walk in a certain amount of time based on average walking speed using the streets and trails/paths available. Using the intersections of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Alabama Avenues SE and Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X Avenues SE as the starting points, **Figure 4-9** shows how far an average person can walk in 5, 10, and 15 minutes. Several large developments, including some housing subdivisions closed off from the main street grid, create barriers to pedestrian access throughout the Congress Heights neighborhood, demonstrated here by St. Elizabeths along the northeast edge of the corridor; however, transportation improvements will improve access to and through the St. Elizabeths campus as part of the ongoing redevelopment. Additionally, the corridor runs roughly parallel to I-295, limiting all pedestrian access only a few blocks west of the corridor.

Preferred Walking Routes

Using zoning and housing unit data to estimate the number of people traveling to the study locations, **Figure 4-10** shows how pedestrian travel accumulates along the routes available to access the corridor. In addition to directly addressing the access challenges identified in this study, improvements to pedestrian facilities should take into account the volume of pedestrian traffic to provide adequate space where heavy traffic is expected. The recommendations for this location address sidewalk issues identified on the sidewalks fronting the businesses and challenges to crossing Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue SE. This analysis also shows demand on OP's recommended north-south pedestrian corridor enhancements on 6th Street SE and the high volume of pedestrians at the Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X Avenues SE intersection and Martin Luther King, Jr. and Alabama Avenues SE intersection.

Recommendations

The majority of recommendations along this corridor address the public right-of-way and will require coordination with DDOT. Given that DDOT recently completed roadway improvements in this section of Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue SE, many recommendations included here likely would implemented in the intermediate or long term.

Because of the total number and wide range of types of recommendations, this study categorizes them as related to the sidewalk area **(Figure 4-11)** or roadway crossings **(Figure 4-12)**. **Recommendation numbers (MLK-#) correspond to the implementation costs and timeframe table on page 42.**

Sidewalk Recommendations

New Spot Improvements

In response to public comments, DDOT should investigate lighting conditions at the Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X Avenues SE intersection, particularly in relation to pedestrian visibility. Additionally, improvements to pedestrian-scale lighting should be reviewed and considered throughout the corridor **(MLK-5)**.

While sidewalk widths vary throughout the commercial area, the WMATA bus stop on the east side of Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue SE just south of the intersection with Malcolm X Avenue SE creates a pinch point that is particularly difficult to navigate. DDOT should work with adjacent private property owners and WMATA to reduce pinch points and consider consolidating driveways **(MLK-7)**.

One specific driveway and parking lot where conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians can be reduced is the Popeyes parking lot where vehicular and pedestrian spaces are not clearly delineated by grade, pavement type, or markings. DDOT should coordinate with the private property owner to clarify vehicular and pedestrian space **(MLK-4)**.

Network Gaps/Enhancements

At the north end of the commercial corridor, the St. Elizabeths redevelopment presents an opportunity to advocate for the installation of wider sidewalks along the abutting section of Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue SE **(MLK-3)**.

To improve the comfort and safety of the entire commercial corridor, the study team recommends DDOT perform a comprehensive pedestrian road safety audit on this section of Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue SE **(MLK-6)**.

Crossing Recommendations

New Spot Improvements

The study team recommends that DDOT explore opportunities to install curb extensions at crossings throughout the corridor. Short-term improvements could be installed with flexposts and later replaced with concrete curb extensions in coordination with other transportation projects and/or as budget allows **(MLK-1)**.

Existing Pedestrian Facility Improvements

Where DDOT recently installed concrete medians as traffic calming measures, the medians could be extended at intersections to provide pedestrian refuges where they currently end short of the intersection. Alternatively, DDOT could consider other other turn-hardening treatments **(MLK-2)**.

Summary of Sidewalk Recommendations

MLK-3 Leverage St. Elizabeths redevelopment to install wider sidewalks on site edges along MLK, Jr. and Alabama Avenues SE

MLK-5 Investigate existing lighting along corridor and identify needs for improved pedestrian-scale lighting, with focus on MLK, Jr. and Malcolm X Avenues SE intersection

MLK-7 Work with adjacent property owners and WMATA to reduce pinch points and potentially close driveways to improve the pedestrian environment on east side of MLK, Jr. Avenue SE

MLK-4 Work with property owner of Popeyes to clearly delineate vehicular and pedestrian space

MLK-6 Consider conducting a pedestrian road safety audit on the corridor

Figure 4-11. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue Sidewalk Recommendations

Summary of Crossing Recommendations

MLK-2

Consider extending median noses and installing median refuges (or assess turn hardening treatment alternatives) to further improve pedestrian crossings on the corridor

MLK-1

Explore opportunities to install curb extensions at one or more intersections on corridor

Figure 4-12. Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue Pedestrian Crossing Recommendations

Implementation Costs & Time Frame

The study team, in consultation with DDOT, developed planning-level cost range and time frame estimates for implementing recommendations.

Location	Recommendation	Lead Stakeholder(s)	Coordination Complexity	Cost	Time Frame
MLK-1	Explore opportunities to install curb extensions at one or more intersections on corridor	DDOT	Low	$$	Short term
MLK-2	Consider extending median noses and installing median refuges to further improve pedestrian crossings on the corridor	DDOT	Low	$$	Intermediate term
MLK-3	Leverage St. Elizabeths redevelopment to install wide sidewalks on site edges along Martin Luther King, Jr. or Alabama Ave SE	DDOT, Property Owner	Medium	$$	Intermediate term
MLK-4	Work with Popeyes property owner to implement treatments to more clearly define/delineate pedestrian and vehicular spaces	DDOT, Property Owner	Medium	$ - $$	Intermediate term
MLK-5	Investigate existing lighting along corridor and identify needs for improved pedestrian-scale lighting, with focus on Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X Ave SE intersection	DDOT	Low	$$	Long term
MLK-6	Consider conducting a pedestrian road safety audit on the corridor	DDOT	Low	$	Long term
MLK-7	Work with WMATA and Popeyes property owner to eliminate sidewalk pinch points and cross-modal conflicts around driveway and bus stop	DDOT, WMATA, Property Owner	Medium	$$	Long term

Cost

Low ($): <$10,000
Medium ($$): $10,000-$50,000
High ($$$): > $50,000

Time Frame

Short term: 1-2 years
Intermediate term: 3-5 years
Long term: >5 years

LOCATION 3

Future Library Site

Existing Conditions

The future library site is a currently undeveloped parcel (Parcel 16) located on the St. Elizabeths East campus, directly north of the WMATA bus loop at Congress Heights Metrorail Station. Access to Sycamore Drive SE along the edge of the parcel is currently restricted due to its proximity to St. Elizabeths Hospital. Because the parcel is currently undeveloped, access to the site is limited and indirect; however, new connections are being designed as part of the larger St. Elizabeths campus redevelopment.

Access Challenges

The locations of the challenges described are shown in **Figure 4-13**.

A. The most direct route from the south and east is through the WMATA bus loop, which lacks pedestrian facilities long the west side of the loop. Pedestrian facilities create a route from the southeast corner of the bus loop to the northwest corner, exiting onto Sycamore Drive SE in the vicinity of the Future Library entrance. Pedestrians entering at the main bus loop driveway would seek a direct route along the western edge of the bus loop where there are currently no pedestrian facilities.

B. There are currently no direct pedestrian connections to the site from Alabama Avenue SE, although the realignment of 13th Street SE to connect into St. Elizabeths will feature dedicated pedestrian facilities.

C. The most direct route for anyone approaching the site from south of Alabama Avenue SE will be via 13th Street SE. The street has narrow sidewalks that are not suited for increased pedestrian volumes.

The future library will be constructed on Parcel 16, which is currently undeveloped, behind the WMATA building at the center of the photo. The site is currently restricted from public access due to its proximity to St. Elizabeths Hospital, but connections are being designed in coordination with campus redevelopment and the realignment of 13th Street SE.

Summary of Access Challenges

Figure 4-13. Future Library Site Access Challenges

A

Existing connection through bus loop to Future Library site is indirect and uncomfortable for pedestrians

B

No existing direct sidewalk connection between Alabama Avenue SE and the future library site

C

Narrow sidewalks on 13th St SE south of Alabama Avenue SE

Figure 4-14. Walking Distances in 5, 10, and 15 Minutes

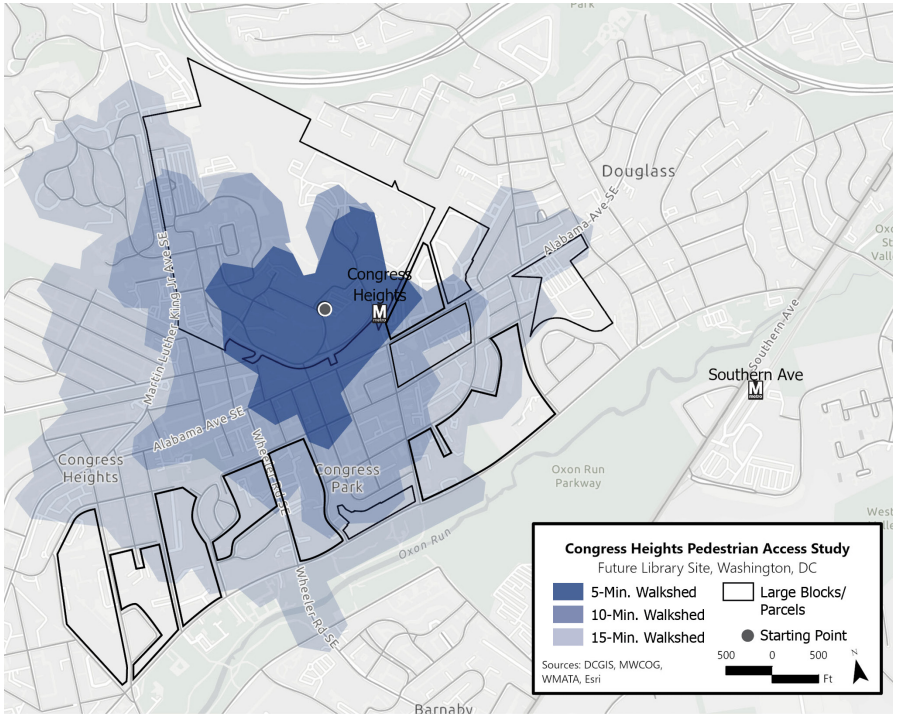
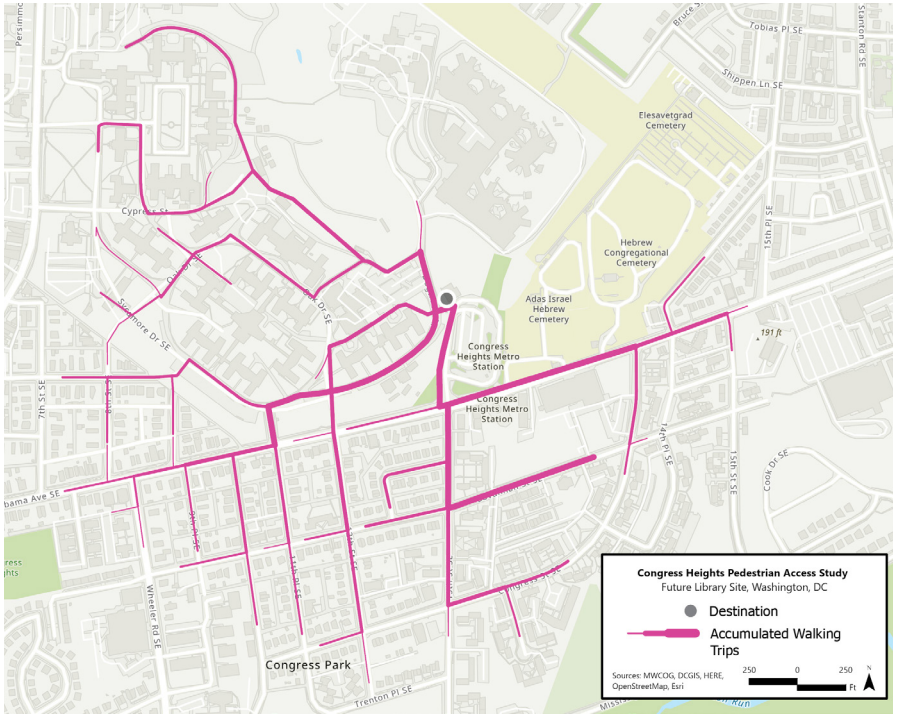


Figure 4-15. Walking Routes to the Future Library Site



Walkshed Analysis

A walkshed analysis estimates how far someone can walk in a certain amount of time based on average walking speed using the streets and trails/paths available. Using the future library site as the starting point, **Figure 4-14** shows how far an average person can walk in 5, 10, and 15 minutes. Several large developments create barriers to pedestrian access throughout the Congress Heights neighborhood, as seen by St. Elizabeths severely limiting northeastern access, extending the time and distance residents of eastern Congress Heights will have to walk to the library, but new and improved connections are included in the overall St. Elizabeths campus redevelopment effort.

Preferred Walking Routes

Using zoning and housing unit data to estimate the number of people traveling to the study locations, **Figure 4-15** shows how pedestrian travel accumulates along the limited number of routes available to access the future library. In addition to directly addressing the access challenges identified in this study, improvements to pedestrian facilities should take into account the volume of pedestrian traffic to provide adequate space where heavy traffic is expected. The recommendations for this location address network gaps and capacity needs to provide access to a new destination and enhance pedestrian facilities through the bus loop.

Recommendations

Because the library site has not yet been designed or constructed, OP and DDOT will have the opportunity to consider pedestrian access throughout the design review process. Additionally, through the ongoing redevelopment of St. Elizabeths, 13th Street SE will be realigned, providing direct pedestrian access to the site from Alabama Avenue SE. **Figure 4-16** shows the locations of recommendations for the new library site.

Recommendation numbers (FLS-#) correspond to the implementation costs and time frame table on page 48.

New Spot Improvements

With the realignment of 13th Street SE, buses will access the bus loop from 13th Street SE rather than from Alabama Avenue SE. DDOT should coordinate with WMATA to ensure any new or modified access points to the bus loop are reasonably sized to limit crossing distances across driveways and minimize the number of vehicle-pedestrian conflict points **(FLS-4)**.

Network Gaps/Enhancements

On the south side of Alabama Avenue SE, WMATA is advancing a joint development project around the southern entrance to the Metrorail station. To improve pedestrian connections to and from the south, OP and DDOT should encourage public pedestrian access through the new joint development site design to provide alternate pedestrian routes from Savannah Street SE to Alabama Avenue SE and northward **(FLS-1)**.

OP should also engage with DDOT and DGS in the design process for the 13th Street SE realignment to make sure pedestrian facilities are adequately sized for access to the new library site and other developments **(FLS-2)**.

Existing Pedestrian Facility Improvements

The existing bus loop conditions include crossings and pedestrian facilities, but the routes through the bus loop are indirect and, in spots, incomplete. Through the lens of improving access for anticipated adjacent development, the team recommends DDOT coordinate with WMATA to improve pedestrian facilities on and adjacent to WMATA property north of Alabama Avenue SE where the bus loop, Kiss & Ride, and northern station entrance are located **(FLS-3)**.

Summary of Recommendations

FLS-2

Work closely with DDOT/DGS to confirm 13th Street SE extension into St. Elizabeths East features adequate pedestrian accommodations

FLS-3

Improve pedestrian connections on and adjacent to its property north of Alabama Ave SE (bus loop, Kiss & Ride, north station entrance)

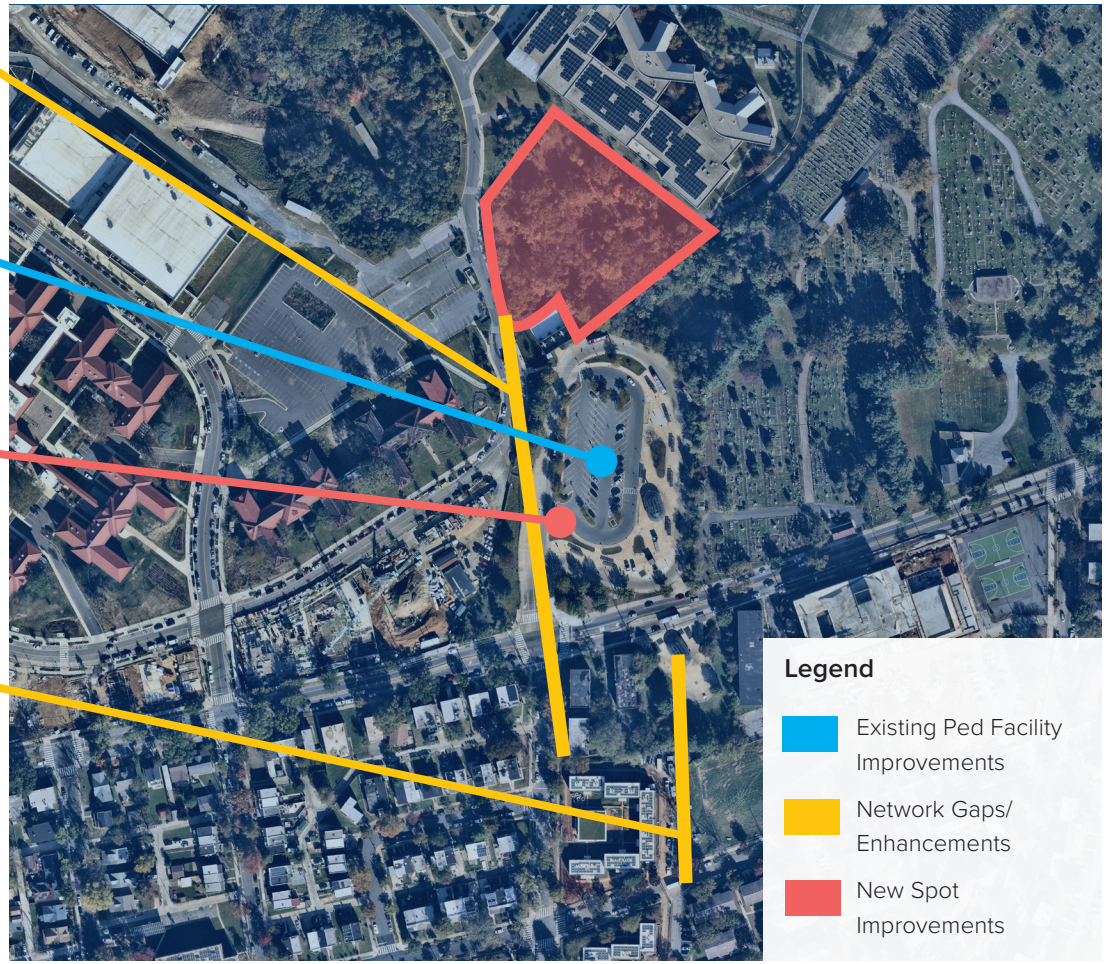
FLS-4

Ensure new access point(s) to bus loop are reasonably sized to limit crossing distances across driveways

FLS-1

Encourage publicly accessible pedestrian connection through future WMATA joint development site adjacent to the Metrorail station south entrance to enhance connectivity between Alabama Avenue and Savannah Street SE

Figure 4-16. Future Library Site Pedestrian Access Recommendations



Implementation Costs & Time Frame

OP, in consultation with DDOT, developed planning-level cost range and time frame estimates for implementing recommendations.

Location	Recommendation	Lead Stakeholder(s)	Coordination Complexity	Cost	Time Frame
FLS-1	Encourage publicly accessible pedestrian connection through future WMATA joint development site adjacent to the Metrorail station south entrance	DDOT, WMATA, Property Owner	Medium	$$	Short term
FLS-2	Ensure the 13th Street SE extension into St. Elizabeths features adequate pedestrian accommodations	DDOT, DGS	Medium	$$	Intermediate term
FLS-3	Improve pedestrian connections on and adjacent to bus loop, Kiss & Ride, north station entrance	DDOT, WMATA	Medium	$$ - $$$	Intermediate term
FLS-4	Ensure new access point(s) to bus loop are reasonably sized to limit crossing distances across driveways	DDOT, WMATA	Medium	$$	Intermediate term

Cost

Low ($): <$10,000
Medium ($$): $10,000-$50,000
High ($$$): > $50,000

Time Frame

Short term: 1-2 years
Intermediate term: 3-5 years
Long term: >5 years

LOCATION 4

Congress Heights Recreation Center

Existing Conditions

The Congress Heights Recreation Center is an important activity center for the neighborhood, centrally located on the south side of Alabama Avenue SE and co-located with Martin Luther King, Jr., Elementary School. The existing recreation center has a softball field, pavilion, shaded playground, basketball and tennis courts, and other park space, providing valuable outdoor recreational space in the neighborhood. The DC Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) describes it as one of its most popular playgrounds and is planning to redevelop the recreation center to increase the variety of recreation facilities and provide more indoor space.[1]

While the site redesign is still in development, a draft of a proposed configuration in **Figure 4-20** shows plans to formalize existing and add new pedestrian paths into and through the site. Currently, the primary points of access are a shared driveway from Alabama Avenue SE to the north and a staircase connection to Savannah Street SE on the south side of the site.

Access Challenges

Despite its central location, the Congress Heights Recreation Center has limited points of access, especially from the south side of the neighborhood.

A. The recreation center is separated from Alabama Avenue SE by Rehoboth Baptist Church and private residences, making the driveway with its narrow sidewalks the only access point directly from this main thoroughfare.

B. In addition to the main driveway near the northwest corner of the site, the only other formal point of access is a stair case from Savannah Street SE at the southwest corner of the site with no ADA accommodations.

C. A "goat path" indicating a pedestrian desire line provides informal access from the northeast corner of the site from an unnamed paved alley at 8th Street SE, which is the only way to access the recreation center from the east.

D. The southeast corner of the site is completely inaccessible by any mode of travel.

Figure 4-17 provides a graphic summary of these challenges.

1 DC Department of Parks and Recreation. https://dpr.dc.gov/page/congress-heights-recreation-center.

Summary of Access Challenges

Figure 4-17. Congress Heights Recreation Center Access Challenges

A

Existing sidewalks between Alabama Avenue SE and the recreation center are too narrow to accommodate future pedestrian volumes to the redesigned site

B

Southwest corner is not ADA accessible (staircase only)

C

Informal “goat path” from northeast corner of sports field, but no dedicated pedestrian facility

D

No pedestrian connection to/from the southeast

Figure 4-18. Walking Distances in 5, 10, and 15 Minutes

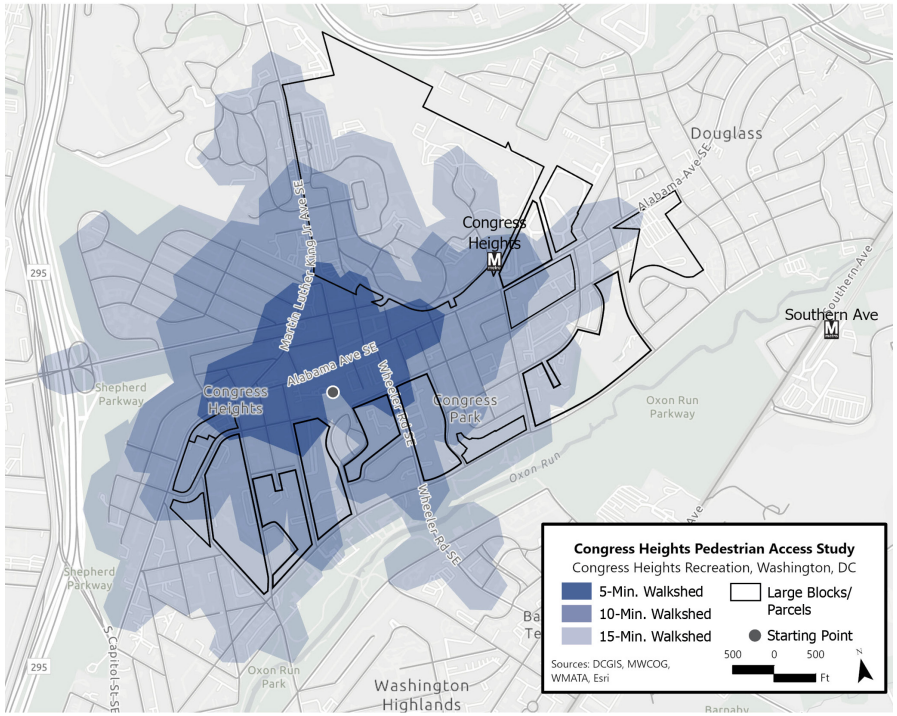
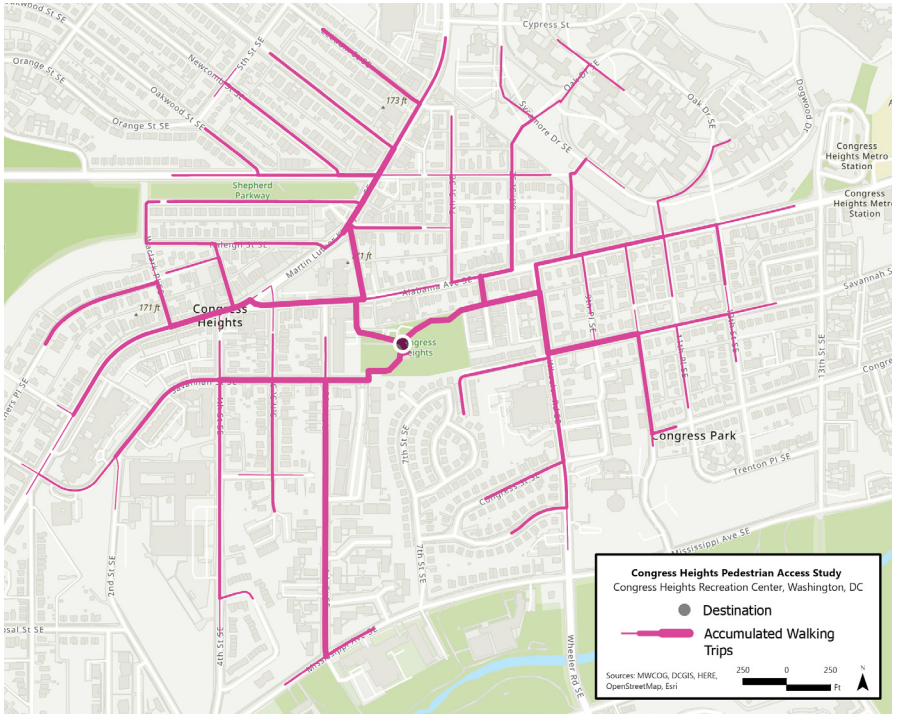


Figure 4-19. Walking Routes to Congress Heights Recreation Center



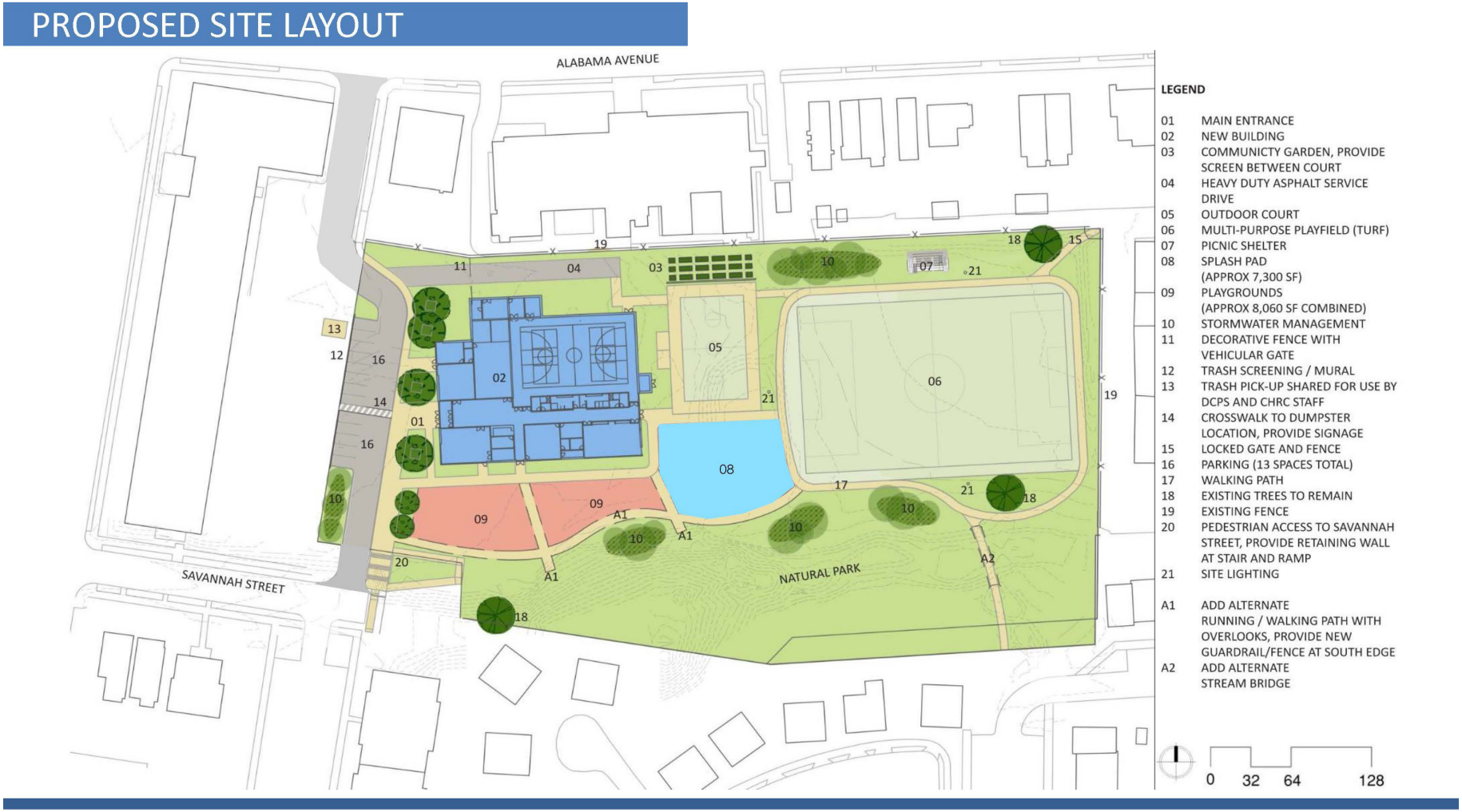
Walkshed Analysis

A walkshed analysis estimates how far someone can walk in a certain amount of time based on average walking speed using the streets and trails/paths available. Using the Congress Heights Recreation Center as the starting point, **Figure 4-18** shows how far an average person can walk in 5, 10, and 15 minutes. Several large developments, including some housing subdivisions closed off from the main street grid, create barriers to pedestrian access throughout the Congress Heights neighborhood, demonstrated here by the imbalance of walksheds, which show how one can travel north, east, and west more quickly than south because of limited access on the south side of the recreation center site.

Preferred Walking Routes

Using housing density to estimate the number of people traveling to the study locations, **Figure 4-19** shows how pedestrian travel accumulates along the limited number of routes available to access the Congress Heights Recreation Center. In addition to directly addressing the access challenges identified in this study, improvements to pedestrian facilities should take into account the volume of pedestrian traffic to provide adequate space where heavy traffic is expected. The recommendations for this location address both the limited number of access points, accommodating forecasted pedestrian volumes, safety, and ADA accessibility.

Figure 4-20. Draft Site Redesign of Congress Heights Recreation Center



Source: DC Department of Parks and Recreations & DC Department of General Services

Recommendations

The Congress Heights Recreation Center site presents a unique opportunity for the implementation of new spot improvements because it is publicly owned, minimizing dependence on private property owners, and it is already slated for redevelopment. Improved access to and through the site also has the potential to dramatically improve east-west connectivity in the neighborhood. The location of recommendations are shown in **Figure 4-21**. Recommendations slated for inclusion in the site redesign will require coordination with DGS and DDOT, and any improvements made off-site will require coordination with DDOT.

Recommendation numbers (CHRC-#) correspond to the implementation costs and time frame table on page 55.

New Spot Improvements

The main driveway from Alabama Avenue SE will be altered as part of the recreation center redesign, which presents the opportunity to design larger pedestrian facilities (i.e., wider sidewalks) to accommodate the forecasted increase in pedestrian traffic volume **(CHRC-2)**.

The redesigned driveway should also be designed for low vehicular travel speeds to enhance pedestrian safety and comfort and discourage cut-through traffic **(CHRC-3)**.

On the south side of the site, new and enhanced pedestrian connections at the southwest and southeast corners of the site will enable the neighborhood-scale recommendation to improve the east-west connectivity of Savannah Street SE. At the southeast corner, a new pedestrian connection to Wheeler Hill Drive SE is needed where none currently exists. This new connection should be adequately sized for pedestrian and bicycle access, which the DDOT DEM designates as 12 feet for a shared-use path, and ADA accessible. At the southwest corner, the existing connection includes only a staircase and should be widened and redesigned for ADA accessibility **(CHRC-6)**.

Network Gaps/Enhancements

The redesigned site should include a continuous pedestrian connection along the south side of the site, which will help create a through-path to improve connectivity between the east and west sides of the neighborhood. The new spot improvements at the southern corners discussed in the previous section will be necessary to facilitate connectivity through the site **(CHRC-5)**.

At the northeast corner of the site, DDOT should coordinate with DGS to include a dedicated pedestrian facility connecting the alley at 8th Street SE to the formalized pedestrian path to replace the “goat path” along the north side of the recreation center **(CHRC-4)**.

Once network gaps are addressed, DDOT and DGS should install adequate wayfinding signage to and through the site, particularly where pedestrians might not intuitively understand the routes available through the recreation center to destinations on either side of the site **(CHRC-7)**.

Existing Pedestrian Facility Improvements

DDOT has carried out several recent transportation safety studies along Wheeler Road SE to help mitigate ongoing vehicle-pedestrian conflicts. Where Savannah Street SE dead ends into Wheeler Road SE, Wheeler Hill Drive SE continues on the west side where a new pedestrian connection to the Congress Heights Recreation Center is proposed.

To complete a safe pedestrian connection from the east, OP should coordinate with DDOT to improve the pedestrian crossing on Wheeler Road SE by implementing curb extensions and/or a road diet **(CHRC-1)**.

Summary of Recommendations

CHRC-2 Design Alabama Avenue SE entrance for increased pedestrian volumes

CHRC-3 Design vehicular site access for low travel speeds and to discourage cut-through traffic

CHRC-4 Install a dedicated pedestrian facility in the alley to tie into the pedestrian connection from the northeast corner of the site

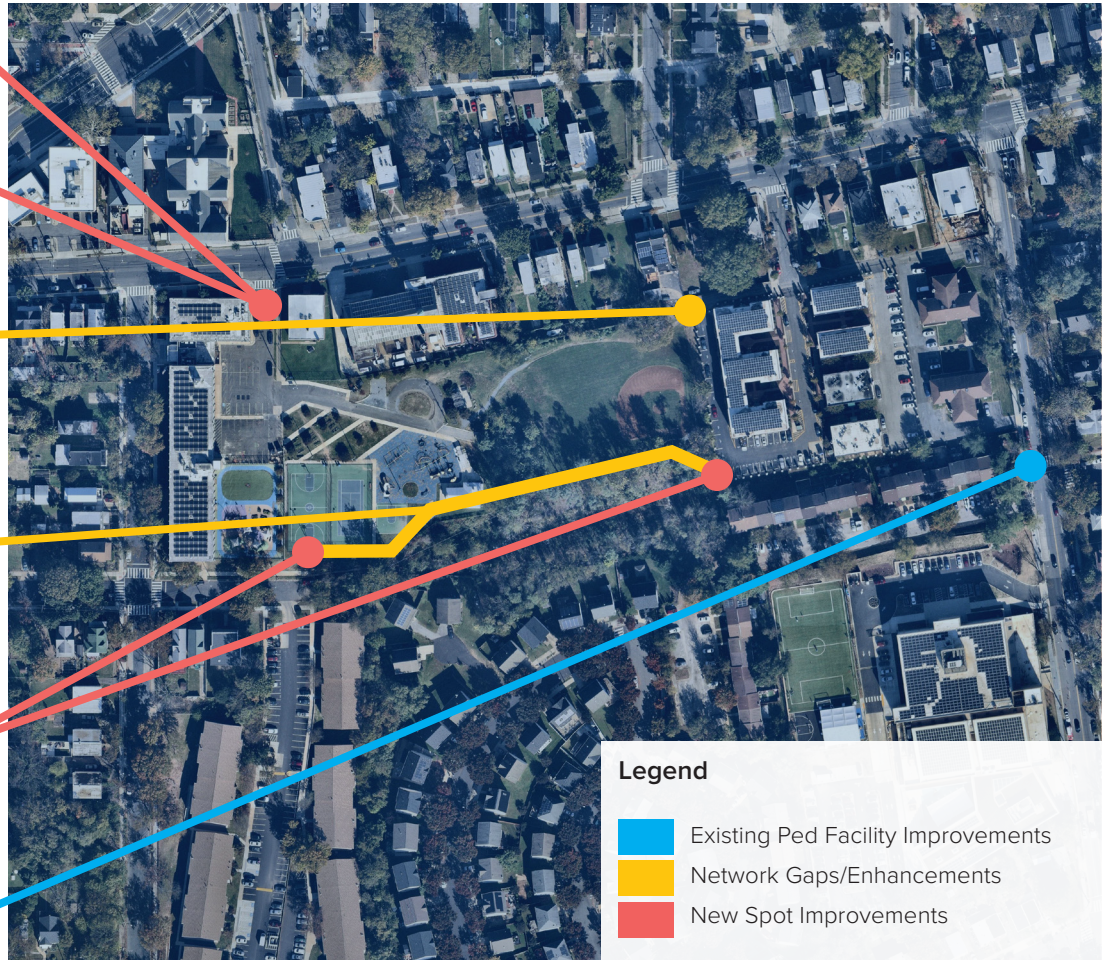
CHRC-5 Ensure the redesigned Recreation Center site features a continuous pedestrian connection through south side of site (supporting Savannah Street SE pedestrian corridor recommendation)

CHRC-6 Ensure pedestrian connections at the southeast and south edges of the site are adequately designed and sized

CHRC-1 Improve crossing on Wheeler Road SE at Savannah Street SE, potentially including curb extensions and/or road diet on Wheeler Road SE

CHRC-7 Add wayfinding signage to indicate access points to and *through* the site

Figure 4-21. Congress Heights Recreation Center Pedestrian Access Recommendations



Implementation Costs & Time Frame

OP, in consultation with DDOT, developed planning-level cost range and time frame estimates for implementing recommendations.

Location	Recommendation	Lead Stakeholder(s)	Coordination Complexity	Cost	Time Frame
CHRC-1	Improve crossing on Wheeler Rd SE at Savannah St SE, potentially including curb extensions and/or road diet on Wheeler Rd SE	DDOT	Low	$$ - $$$	Short term
CHRC-2	Design Alabama Ave SE entrance for increased pedestrian volumes*	DDOT, DGS	Low	$ - $$	Intermediate term
CHRC-3	Design vehicular site access for low travel speeds and to discourage cut-through traffic	DDOT, DGS	Low	$ - $$	Intermediate term
CHRC-4	Install a dedicated pedestrian facility in the alley to tie into the new pedestrian connection at the northeast corner of site	DDOT	Medium	$$	Intermediate term
CHRC-5	Implement continuous pedestrian connection through the south side of the site	DDOT, DGS	Low	$$ - $$$	Intermediate term
CHRC-6	Ensure adequate design and sizing of pedestrian connections at the southeast and south edges of site	DDOT, DGS	Low	$$	Intermediate term
CHRC-7	Include wayfinding signage to indicate access points to and through the site	DDOT, DGS	Low	$	Intermediate term

Cost

Low ($): <$10,000
Medium ($$): $10,000-$50,000
High ($$$): > $50,000

Time Frame

Short term: 1-2 years
Intermediate term: 3-5 years
Long term: >5 years

*DDOT to consider as part of ongoing Alabama Avenue SE Safety Improvement Study.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions

The Congress Heights Pedestrian Access Study is a key step to further the goals outlined in the Transportation and Access section of the latest CHSAP. Multimodal access is critical in dense, urban neighborhoods like Congress Heights, including equitable accessibility for people without cars and with all levels of physical abilities. The recommendations in this study range from repairing sidewalks and crosswalks to installing new pedestrian facilities, and will require extensive coordination with private property owners, OP, DDOT, DGS, and other government agencies to implement improvements on public and private property that are vital to enhancing neighborhood connectivity and access to the four key destinations studied in this report.

Congress Heights is experiencing a period of rapid change as the large St. Elizabeths campus is being redeveloped through a series of standalone commercial and residential projects. Community input informed several of the study recommendations, and continuing to listen to people who live and work in the neighborhood will be vital to the success of implementing these improvements. As the neighborhood changes, community members need to know the new projects are being designed with their needs in mind, and their support will help prioritize these recommendations for implementation.

By extending the lens of this study beyond the four original study locations, these recommendations will enable the opportunity to improve neighborhood-wide connectivity where people feel safe and comfortable walking to school, work, recreation, shopping, and visiting family and friends.

Table 5-1 includes all recommendations in order of implementation time frame to assist in tracking coordination opportunities to leverage planned projects and more efficiently incorporate these recommendations where possible.

Table 5-1. All Recommendations (sorted by implementation time frame)

Location	Recommendation	Lead Stakeholder(s)	Coordination Complexity	Cost	Time Frame
CH-1	Continually consider pedestrian access goals in ongoing design reviews for development projects in Congress Heights	OP	N/A	N/A	N/A
CH-2	Implement LPIs at signalized intersections on Martin Luther King, Jr. Ave SE	DDOT	Low	$	Short term
CH-3	Implement LPIs at signalized intersections on Alabama Ave SE*	DDOT	Low	$	Short term
GSC-1	Restripe faded crosswalks at driveways*	DDOT	Low	$	Short term
GSC-2	Install curb ramps, crosswalk at Savannah St SE driveway	DDOT	Low	$$	Short term
GSC-3	Install curb extensions on Stanton Rd SE at Alabama Ave SE*	DDOT	Low	$$	Short term
GSC-4	Install RRFB (or similar) on Alabama Ave east of Stanton Rd SE*	DDOT	Low	$$	Short term
GSC-5	Add parking corral for dockless scooters/bikes	Property Owner (WC Smith)	Medium	$	Short term
MLK-1	Explore opportunities to install curb extensions at one or more intersections on corridor	DDOT	Low	$$	Short term
FLS-1	Advocate for publicly accessible pedestrian connection through future WMATA joint development site adjacent to the Metrorail station south entrance	DDOT, WMATA, Property Owner	Medium	$$	Short term
CHRC-1	Improve crossing on Wheeler Rd SE at Savannah St SE, potentially including curb extensions and/or road diet on Wheeler Rd SE	DDOT	Low	$$ - $$$	Short term
GSC-6	Shorten the crossing distance across the shopping center west driveway	DDOT, Property Owner (WC Smith)	Medium	$$	Intermediate term

*DDOT to consider as part of ongoing Alabama Avenue SE Safety Improvement Study.

Cost

Low ($): <$10,000
Medium ($$): $10,000-$50,000
High ($$$): > $50,000

Time Frame

Short term: 1-2 years
Intermediate term: 3-5 years
Long term: >5 years

Location	Recommendation	Lead Stakeholder(s)	Coordination Complexity	Cost	Time Frame
GSC-7	Implement Savannah St SE stair case and ramp improvements	DDOT, Property Owner (WC Smith)	Medium	$$ - $$$	Intermediate term
GSC-8	Install dedicated pedestrian facility through west side of parking lot	Property Owner (WC Smith)	Medium	$$$	Intermediate term
GSC-9	Consider implementing 15th Street SE road diet	DDOT	Medium	$$ - $$$	Intermediate term
MLK-2	Consider extending median noses and installing median refuges to further improve pedestrian crossings on the corridor	DDOT	Low	$$	Intermediate term
MLK-3	Leverage St. Elizabeths redevelopment to install wide sidewalks on site edges along Martin Luther King, Jr. or Alabama Ave SE*	DDOT, Property Owner	Medium	$$	Intermediate term
MLK-4	Work with Popeyes property owner to implement treatments to more clearly define/delineate pedestrian and vehicular spaces	DDOT, Property Owner	Medium	$ - $$	Intermediate term
FLS-2	Work closely with DDOT/DGS to confirm 13th Street SE extension into St. Elizabeths features adequate pedestrian accommodations	DDOT, DGS	Medium	$$	Intermediate term
FLS-3	Work with WMATA to improve ped connections on and adjacent to bus loop, Kiss & Ride, north station entrance	DDOT, WMATA	Medium	$$ - $$$	Intermediate term
FLS-4	Work with WMATA to ensure new access point(s) to bus loop are reasonably sized to limit crossing distances across driveways	DDOT, WMATA	Medium	$$	Intermediate term
CHRC-2	Design Alabama Ave SE entrance for increased pedestrian volumes*	DDOT, DGS	Low	$ - $$	Intermediate term
CHRC-3	Design vehicular site access for low travel speeds and to discourage cut-through traffic	DDOT, DGS	Low	$ - $$	Intermediate term

*DDOT to consider as part of ongoing Alabama Avenue SE Safety Improvement Study.

Cost

Low ($): <$10,000
Medium ($$): $10,000-$50,000
High ($$$): > $50,000

Time Frame

Short term: 1-2 years
Intermediate term: 3-5 years
Long term: >5 years

Location	Recommendation	Lead Stakeholder(s)	Coordination Complexity	Cost	Time Frame
CHRC-4	Work with DDOT to install a dedicated pedestrian facility in the alley to tie into the new pedestrian connection at the northeast corner of site	DDOT	Medium	$$	Intermediate term
CHRC-5	Work with DGS/DDOT to implement continuous pedestrian connection through south side of site	DDOT, DGS	Low	$$ - $$$	Intermediate term
CHRC-6	Work with DGS/DDOT to adequately design and size pedestrian connections at the southeast and south edges of site	DDOT, DGS	Low	$$	Intermediate term
CHRC-7	Include wayfinding signage to indicate access points to and through the site	DDOT, DGS	Low	$	Intermediate term
CH-4	Enhance pedestrian comfort on Savannah St SE to establish a viable east-west alternative to Alabama Ave SE	DDOT, Property Owners	Medium	$$ - $$$	Long term
CH-5	Enhance pedestrian comfort on 6th and 13th Streets SE to enhance north-south connectivity	DDOT, Property Owners	Medium	$$ - $$$	Long term
GSC-10	Explore opportunities to repurpose a portion of PEPCO driveway for pedestrian connection into shopping center	DDOT, Property Owner (PEPCO)	High	$$$	Long term
MLK-5	Investigate existing lighting along corridor and identify needs for improved pedestrian-scale lighting, with focus on Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X Ave SE intersection	DDOT	Low	$$	Long term
MLK-6	Work with DDOT to conduct a pedestrian road safety audit on the corridor	DDOT	Low	$	Long term
MLK-7	Work with DDOT, WMATA, and Popeyes property owner to eliminate sidewalk pinch points and cross-modal conflicts around driveway and bus stop	DDOT, WMATA	Medium	$$	Long term

*DDOT to consider as part of ongoing Alabama Avenue SE Safety Improvement Study.

Cost

Low ($): <$10,000
Medium ($$): $10,000-$50,000
High ($$$): > $50,000

Time Frame

Short term: 1-2 years
Intermediate term: 3-5 years
Long term: >5 years