

AIRPORT WAY

FUNCTIONAL FEATURES ANALYSIS

IRIS Program No. NFHWY00268 / Federal Project No. 0610008

PLANNING SUMMARY

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FINAL

Prepared for:

Alaska Department of
Transportation & Public Facilities
Northern Region
2301 Peger Road
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709

Prepared by:

PDC ENGINEERS
1028 Aurora Drive
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709
T: 907.452.1414
F: 907.456.2707

17271FB

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1 PURPOSE

This planning summary is the first phase of the Airport Way Functional Features Analysis. This document sets the stage for subsequent analysis and serves four primary purposes:

- Characterize the Airport Way corridor and present statistical data
- Summarize planning efforts with relevance to this project
- Outline existing policy constraints
- Identify current projects within the corridor

Subsequent phases of the project will recommend treatments to improve the aesthetics, functionality, and safety of Airport Way, as well as produce a toolkit of treatment options.

2 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CORRIDOR

Airport Way is a major, controlled-access corridor linking Fairbanks International Airport (FAI) to Downtown Fairbanks and Fort Wainwright. When the corridor developed in the 1960s, it functioned as the only east-west arterial to serve local and regional traffic in the city. Since the development of the parallel Johansen and Mitchell Expressways, less than one mile north and south of the corridor, in the 1980s, Airport Way has come to serve mostly local trips.



Figure 1 - 1949 Aerial Photograph of Fairbanks Showing the Beginnings of the Airport Way Corridor
(source: FNSB GIS)

Projects over the past 10 years along the corridor have included reconstructions of intersections, new traffic signals, paving, and minor landscaping. Past plans have recommended increasing access to Airport Way, elimination of frontage roads and replacing them with vegetative buffers and paths, and intersection improvements.

The aesthetic appeal of the corridor has been of interest to Fairbanks residents for over a decade. It is seen by some as a major eyesore with its chain link fences, frontage roads, and bulky concrete barriers. The corridor is loaded with a multitude of user and community needs, including

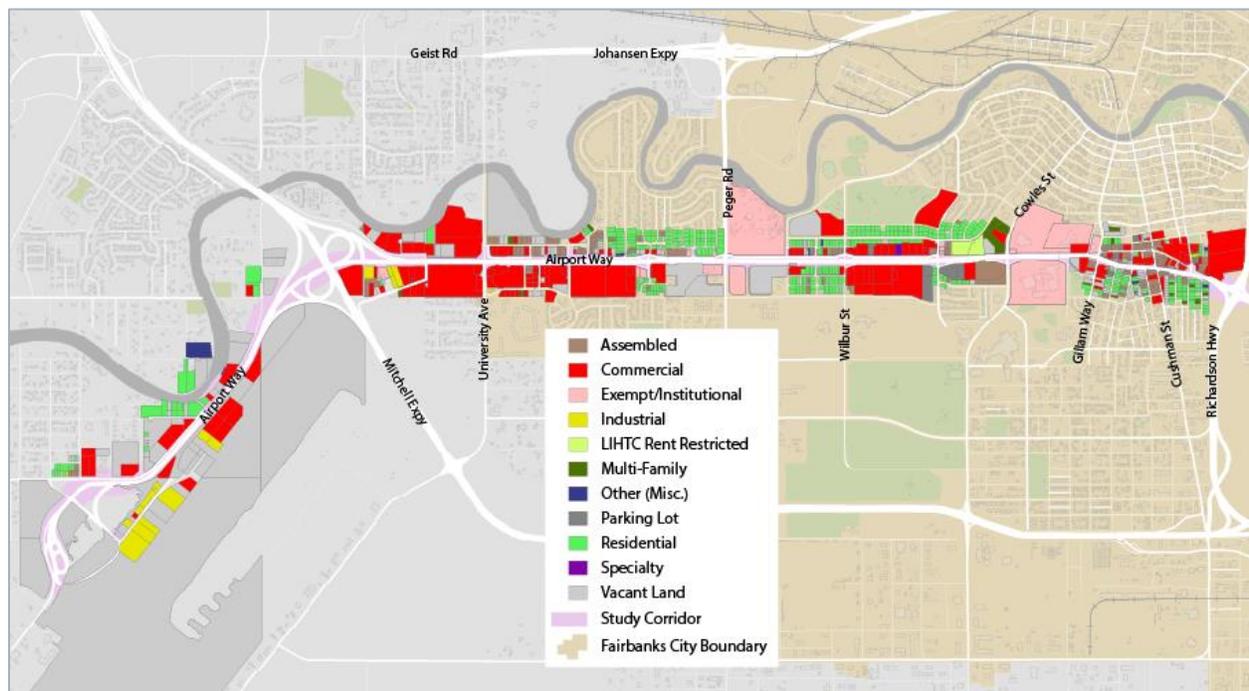
accommodation of vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles, transit users, emergency vehicles, maintenance equipment, and local freight traffic. Designated freight routes cross the corridor at Peger. In addition, there is encouragement from the Tanana Valley Watershed Association, Green Infrastructure Group, Chena Riverfront Commission and City of Fairbanks, for the corridor to function in a more environmentally sound way so that roadway runoff can be reduced, treated, or eliminated to mitigate impacts to the adjacent Chena River.

Airport Way is part of the Fairbanks Metropolitan Area Transportation System (FMATS), which is the local Municipal Planning Organization mandated by federal law. The FMATS Technical Committee and FMATS Policy Board typically review transportation projects within the Airport Way corridor.

2.1 Surrounding Land Uses

The Airport Way corridor has two distinct aesthetic segments. Beginning at the west end of the project the first segment extends eastward to commercial properties just west of University Avenue. This segment is classified mainly as Light Industrial (LI) zoning with a few small pockets of Rural Estate-2 (RE) and General Commercial (GC) zoning. Lots are large and land uses are spread apart allowing a greater sense of green space adjacent to the corridor. Views tend to be more open.

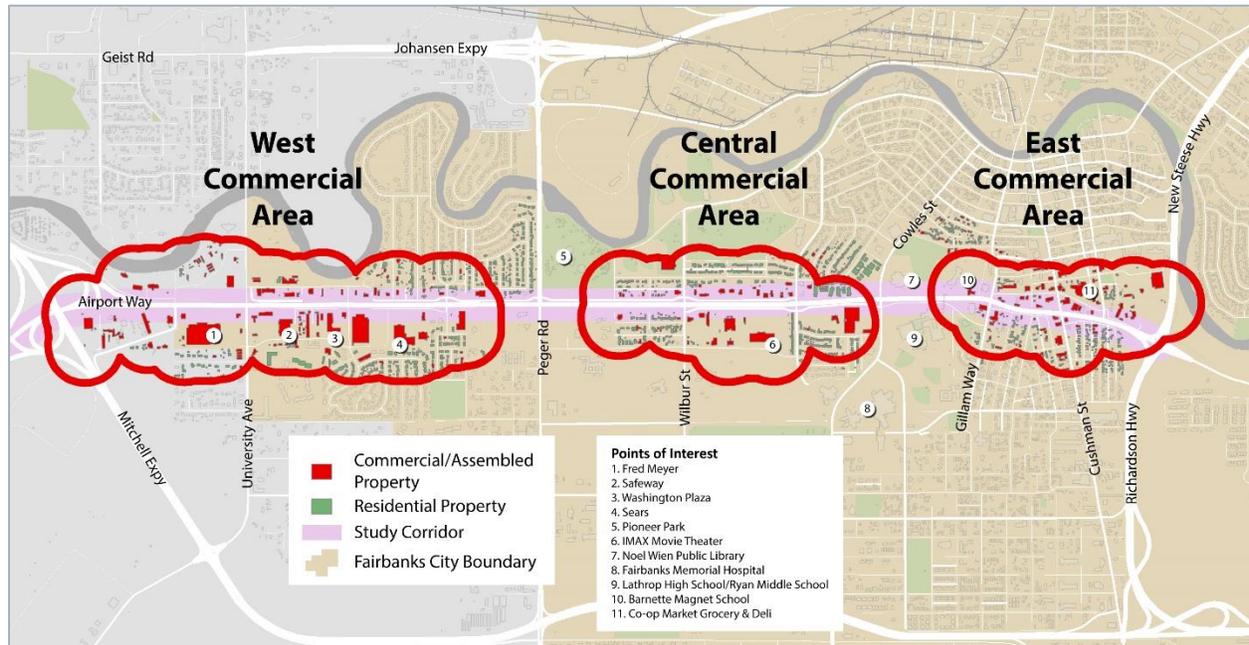
The second aesthetic segment begins at University Avenue and extends east to the Steese Highway. This segment of the project is a DOT controlled access corridor and includes the four lanes of road with numerous medians and frontage roads on one or both sides of Airport Way. Land uses vary. Overall it is a long stretch of commercially developed land with smaller sections of residential development. Zoning is General Commercial and Multiple-Family Residential; Professional Office (MFO)/Two-Family Residential (TF).



Map 1 - Zoning Map around Airport Way (map by PDC Engineers; source: FNSB GIS)

Secondarily, there are sections of the corridor devoted to institutional uses (a theme park, public library, schools, etc.) and residential uses. The limited access control to Airport Way means that most of the parcels adjacent to the roadway only have access to frontage roads rather than Airport Way itself. Limited access makes it difficult for users to traverse from one commercial area to the other across the street, or even the same side of the street, due to non-connecting frontage roads and cul-de-sacs.

In addition to the varied land uses along the corridor, there are three main commercial areas (Map 2). Commercial properties include retail, food service, grocery, entertainment, and healthcare, among others.



Map 2 - Commercial Areas along the Airport Way Corridor (map by PDC Engineers; data source: FNSB GIS)

2.2 Landscape Character

Overall, the roadside aesthetic within the project corridor varies widely. There are areas of natural vegetation, parking lots or hardscape to the edge of right of way, and areas of lawn and planted trees. Public facilities, businesses, and residences each present their own aesthetic; there is no central theme or identifier throughout the corridor. Instead, sections of roadway have fragments of landscaping and aesthetic improvements.

2.2.1 Fairbanks International Airport (FAI) to University Avenue

The corridor between Fairbanks International Airport and University Avenue is open and appears less developed due to the spread-out land uses, public airport, and significant areas of open land. Also, characteristic of this section is the horizontal curvature of the road. Views from vehicles travelling on curved roads are less focused on adjacent land uses and more on the sequential experience or the sequence of views. Large stands of native vegetation buffer and soften the roadway and create an impression of a more rural natural landscape.



Figure 2 - Bird's Eye View of Airport Way (West) (Source: <http://www.flickr.com/people/baggis>)

The westernmost segment of the corridor serves as the “welcome” and “farewell” to Fairbanks, as it contains the airport and several hotels that service the airport and cater to tourism. Many businesses are set back from the road with some green space in the foreground. Forested areas are typically across the road from businesses. Forested areas also help to reduce visual impacts of utility poles along the corridor. Large stands of native vegetation include birch, spruce, willow, and alder with a lush understory of herbaceous low shrubs, grasses, and forbs. Birch has a particularly strong presence in this section of the corridor and even in winter improves views by softening the impacts of adjacent, less aesthetically pleasing land uses.

There are two groupings of formally planted trees. One is located in front of Pike’s Waterfront Lodge. It provides a partial screen to the parking lot and includes a row of young Canada Red chokecherry and birch. Another non-native planting on the east side of the Parks Highway Interchange includes young Canada Red chokecherry and pine planted in a formal triangular planting bed. The “Fairbanks Welcomes You” sign with background heart-shaped seasonal planting provides a small-town style warmth at the overpass on the south side of the road. Most of the roadway ditches and medians within the ROW are mowed grasses with an occasional shrub. A narrow median begins close to Pike’s Landing and extends to University Avenue with breaks for turn lanes. The medians are typically low grasses that are mowed; however, several medium height shrubs have been planted in the median at 100-foot intervals. The size and spacing of the shrubs make them somewhat inconsequential in the landscape.

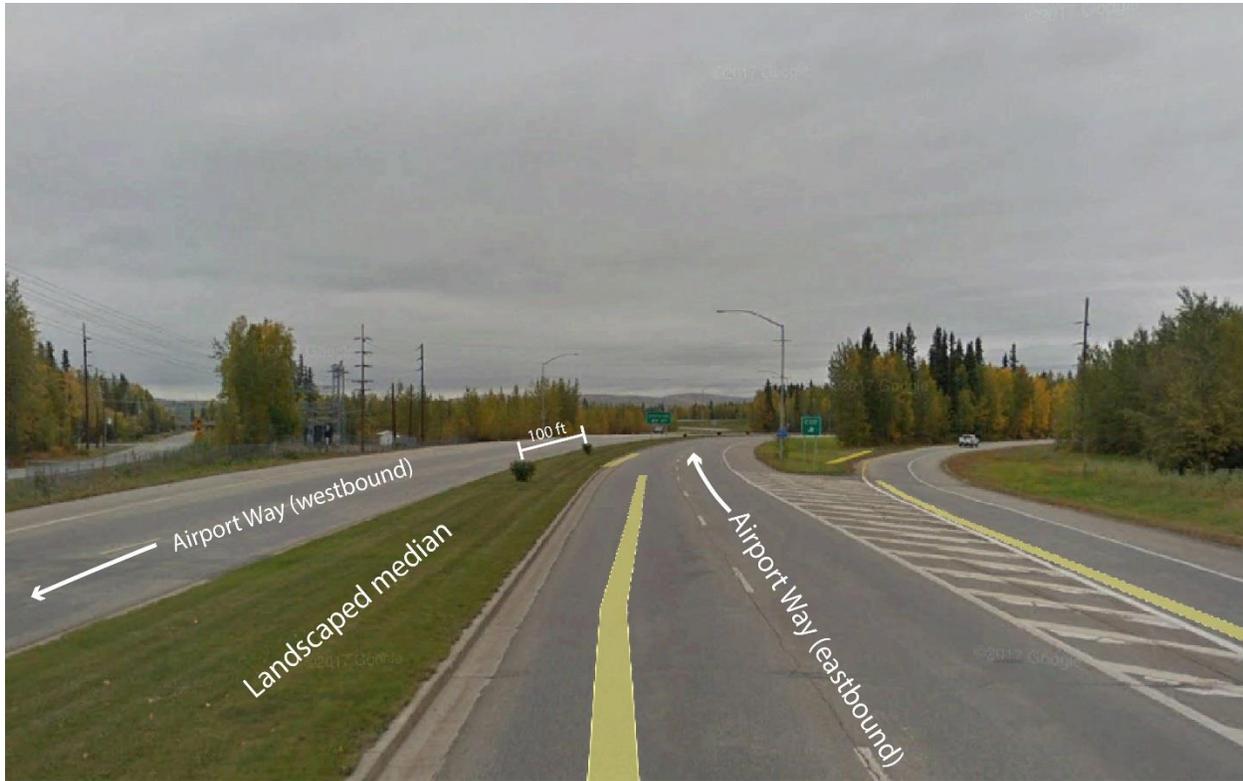


Figure 3 - Airport Way (West), showing median (Source: Google Street View)

Topography within the project area is generally flat. Some of the large, naturally vegetated forests contain areas of depression or swales, but most of the corridor does not have a significant elevation difference from that of the roadway.

Views of distant hills are mostly obscured by forests and businesses adjacent to the roadway. A few distant views occur southbound on Airport Way beyond the interchange. The interchange marks the entry to Fairbanks through signage, but also in a dramatic change in character.

2.2.2 University Avenue to Steese Highway

The second segment of the corridor, from University Avenue to the Steese Highway, has limited but intentional landscaping. Raised medians separate eastbound from westbound lanes for most of the length of this segment. There are eight landscaped medians, each approximately 10-15 feet wide at its widest, tapering to 2 feet wide to accommodate turn lanes. The medians are separated from the travel lanes with standard curb and gutter. Light poles are centered in medians spaced at approximately 150-foot intervals. In addition to lawn, landscaped medians include two lilac shrubs, one on either side, next to each light pole for the length of the median. The lilacs are somewhat mature, reaching heights of 6 feet. Narrower medians are surfaced with asphalt.

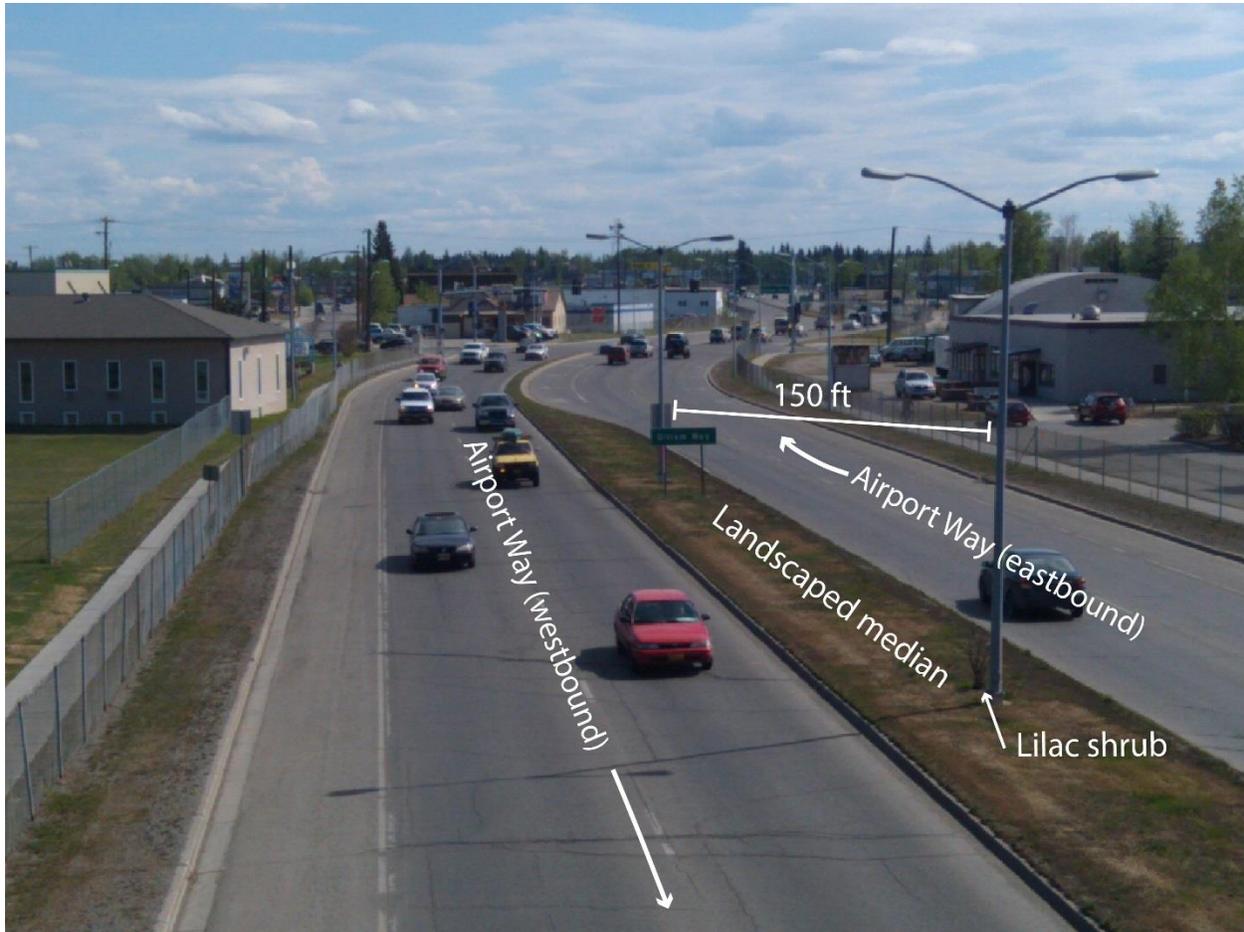


Figure 4 - Airport Way (East), showing median (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

Landscaping and beautification also exist at many of the intersections. There are ten intersections between University Avenue and Steese Highway. The frontage roads at many of the intersections include “bulb-out” areas that are large traffic islands that have all been landscaped in a similar manner. Seven of these bulb-out areas contain low, circular planting beds surrounded by large flat expanses of land that are contained by curb and gutter. These islands serve as traffic control elements by directing traffic on frontage roads further from each intersection to allow safer turning movements for vehicles. The islands contain low planting beds which are approximately 15 feet in diameter and constructed of a single layer of concrete landscape blocks that act to define the planter and contain topsoil. The landscaped beds are used for annual plantings that are planted and maintained by volunteers. The landscaped beds are typically surrounded by large flat lawn areas. However, many of the grassy areas around the planters have been wholly or partially covered with gravel. Snow storage appears to be the significant contributing factor to the large amount of gravel deposited and the resulting loss of grass. While the planters provide a spot of color during the summer, visually, they are small and disproportionate to their surroundings, so their impact on the overall appearance of the roadway is limited.



Figure 5 - Airport Way (East), seasonal planting bed at bulb-out (Source: Earthscape Alaska)

One block east of University Avenue, between the east side of Marlin Street and the east end of Geraghty Avenue, the frontage road is located behind businesses. As a result, a two-block section of concrete sidewalk with a slightly curvilinear alignment is located between Airport Way and businesses. The sidewalk has three bump-out sections, each containing a bench and raised, exposed aggregate concrete planter with a collection of small to medium shrubs. Between the sidewalk and the road several small pockets of landscaping have been installed that include a mix of boulders, potentilla, larger shrubs, and occasionally spruce trees that are less than 6 feet tall. A similar but smaller segment of sidewalk, bump-out, and landscaping is across Airport Way, east of Washington Street.

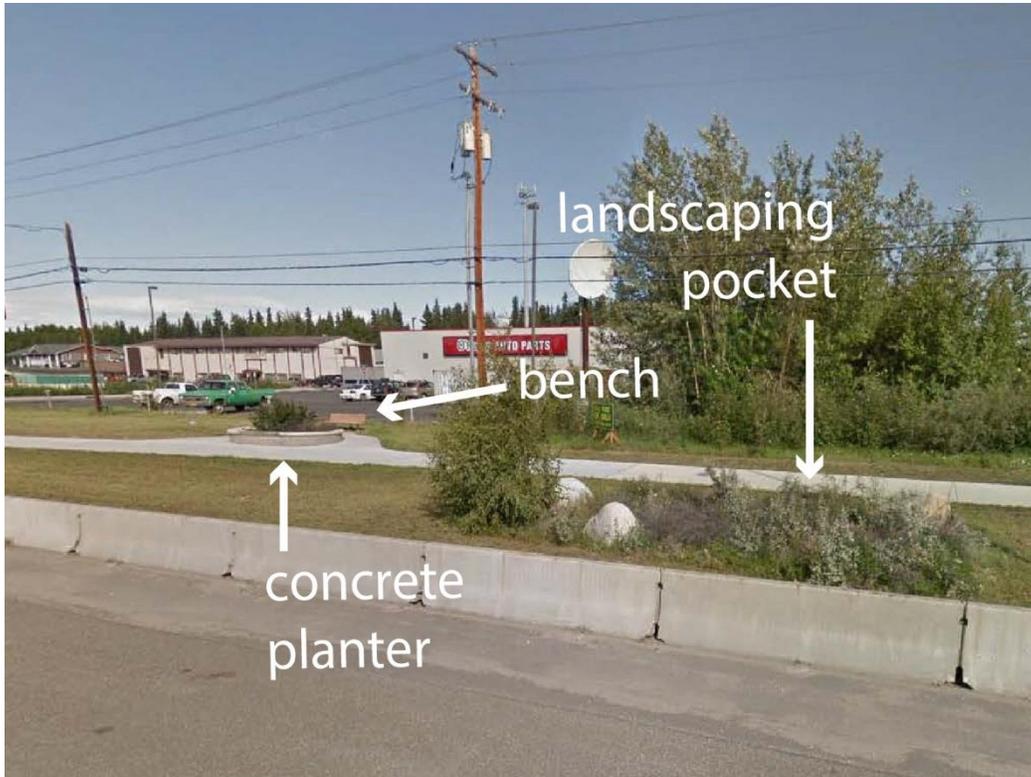


Figure 6 - Airport Way (East), landscaping where there are no frontage roads (Source: Earthscape Alaska)

Landscape improvements exist at the Cowles Street intersection where broader paved areas create small plazas, which have benches and trash receptacles, on the northeast corner adjacent to the Noel Wien Public Library. The northwest corner includes a round bench planter with annual plantings in the center. In addition to the library, the block between Cowles and Gillam includes numerous public facilities on both sides of the road. East of the library, Barnette Magnet School educates students grades K-8, and the Fairbanks Public Health Center is on the corner of Barnette Street. These facilities include large open spaces, some of which are heavily vegetated and provide a buffer from the road for site users and improve the aesthetic quality for Airport Road users.

Ryan Middle School and Lathrop High School abut Airport Way to the south, almost directly across from the library. The Mary Siah Recreation Center is located to the east of the high school one-half block off Airport Way. Landscape areas are narrow and less significant than those across Airport Way.

Two additional public facilities provide landscape amenities by saving large areas of native forest. The State of Alaska facilities on the northwest corner of the University/Airport Way intersection includes a mixed stand of spruce, birch, aspen forest. The Steese Highway interchange also includes large areas of open space with masses of native vegetation. On either side of Peger Road on the south side of Airport Way large native forests provides relief form commercial areas. This land is zoned for more intense development including General Commercial and higher density residential (TF) which could result in loss of the forests.

2.2.3 Landscape Analysis

Landscaping at businesses along the corridor includes small separated pockets of trees and shrubs that provide some, if minimal, visual separation between business parking lots, frontage roads, and Airport Way. There are a few exceptions, including the landscape area at Pioneer Park adjacent to the roadway where there is a broad landscape bed with small trees and display plantings.

Several prominent elements set the aesthetic character of the road and have been noted by Fairbanks residents as less than ideal. Barriers and fencing line most of the road on one or both sides from the Parks Highway on-ramp to the Steese Highway. These are part of DOT&PF's strategy to control access, since Airport Way is designated an access-controlled roadway. Frontage roads function to limit the number of driveways entering Airport Way, improving safety and meeting access control requirements. Concrete barriers are typically located along the roadway where frontage roads are present. In most other areas, chain-link fence is located along the road, separating the pathway from the road.

Signage concerns are typical of commercial strips such as portions of Airport Way. Pole-mounted signs can create visual clutter and confuse drivers if there are too many signs located too close together. Building-mounted signs can have a similar effect; however, they tend to alter the architectural character of the building versus altering the landscape character of the roadway. Businesses along Airport Way use both pole-mounted and business-mounted signs.

2.3 Traffic Volumes

Annual Average Daily Traffic Volumes (AADT) as reported by DOT&PF most recently in 2015 for the study corridor, Airport Way frontage roads, and adjoining streets are approximately 18,000 vehicles per day on the east section of the corridor and 10,000 vehicles per day near the airport.

As the regional population of Fairbanks continues to grow, traffic forecasts for the corridor predict that traffic volumes will only grow marginally (0.60% annual growth rate to 2040; source: FNSB MTP 2040). Significant annual growth in traffic volume is predicted for alternative major arterials: Mitchell Expressway (1.38%), and Johansen Expressway (1.02%). Airport Way is in the category of other local roads with limited expected traffic volume growth, including College Road and S. Cushman Street. These roads have stagnant volume growth because of competition from alternative routes that are more appropriate for traveling long distances, with characteristics such as higher design speeds, fewer traffic lights, and fewer access points.

Table 1 – Annual Growth Rates for Routes and Their Alternatives to 2040 (source: FNSB MTP 2040)

Subject Route	Annual Growth Rate (%)	2040 ADT Volume	Alternative Route	Annual Growth Rate (%)	2040 ADT Volume
Airport Way	0.60	26,700	Johansen Expy	1.02	34,400
			Mitchell Expy	1.38	19,200
College Rd	0.62	17,500	Johansen Expy	1.02	34,400
S Cushman St	0.66	12,500	Richardson Hwy	1.39	34,400



Figure 7 - Airport Way and Alternative Routes, ADT Volumes Forecast to 2040 (source: FNSB MTP 2040)

2.4 Crash Data

Airport Way between the Steese Expressway and the Parks Highway (except the segments between Cowles – Wilbur and Steese – Cushman) are in the top 20% of crash severity relative to similar facilities in the FMATS area. The Cowles-Wilbur and Steese-Cushman segments are in the top 40% of crash severity. Between 2010 and 2014, there were 3 fatal crashes and 11 crashes with serious injuries. By comparison, Johansen Expressway experienced zero fatal crashes and Mitchell Expressway experienced one fatal crash. Serious crashes tend

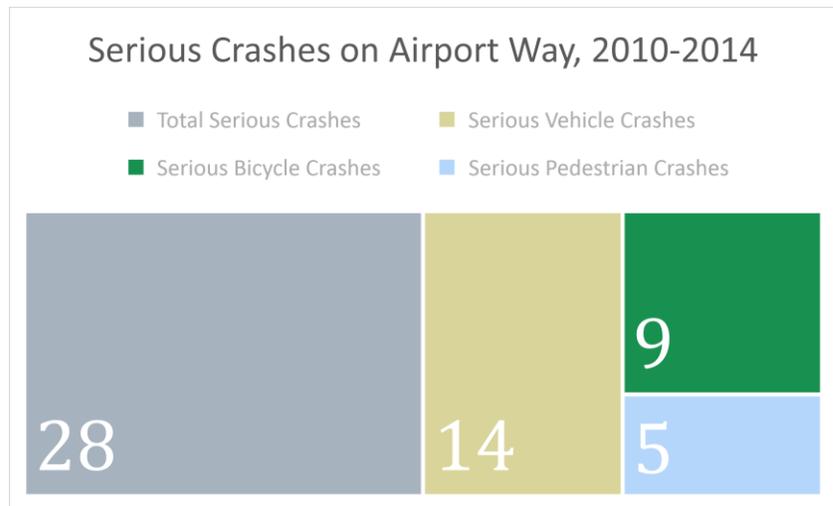


Figure 8 - Serious Crashes on Airport Way, 2010-2014 (source: DOT&PF Motor Vehicle Crash Data)

to occur at traffic intersections, of which Airport Way has many, whereas alternative routes have relatively few. Every intersection along Airport Way between University Avenue and the Steese Expressway/Richardson Highway (approximately 3 miles) are in the top 20% by crash frequency.

Bicycle and pedestrian crashes are similarly high along the corridor. Between 2010 and 2014, there were nine severe bicycle crashes and five severe pedestrian crashes along Airport Way between University Avenue and the Steese Expressway/Richardson Highway.

3 PREVIOUS AND CURRENT PLANNING EFFORTS

3.1 Goals & Objectives of Other Planning Efforts

The following table summarizes the goals and objectives for several recent and on-going plans that have implications for Airport Way. More detailed summaries of each plan follow.

Table 2 – Other Recent Planning Efforts

Plan	Goals and Objectives
2007 Airport Way Reconnaissance Study	Improve accessibility and safety, and create a welcoming atmosphere to visitors
2008 Vision Fairbanks	Develop a vision for downtown Fairbanks, including land uses, transportation network, and public areas
2012 Non-motorized Transportation Plan	Identify deficiencies in the bike/ped network, recommend improvements, and provide a toolkit to planners, engineers, and policy makers
2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan update	Improve regional transportation and comply with state and federal requirements
2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan update	Improve regional transportation and comply with state and federal requirements
FMATS Freight Mobility Study (underway)	Create a coordinated plan for freight transportation for the metropolitan area
2015 Fairbanks Urban Drainage Study	Map the stormwater network in a sub-section of Fairbanks and develop a scalable stormwater model for identifying deficiencies in the stormwater network
2013 Fairbanks Wayfinding Plan	Develop and implement a wayfinding plan for pedestrians and motorists with a standard look-and-feel, focused on the downtown Fairbanks
2015 Bjerremark Neighborhood Plan	Construct traffic-calming, beautification, pedestrian, and defensible space measures to revitalize the neighborhood, making it more livable, safe, and vibrant
Downtown Fairbanks Vision (underway)	Create a long-term vision for the development of downtown Fairbanks
2015 Richardson/Steese PEL Study	Identify alternatives and recommendations for the Steese/Richardson corridor through Fairbanks that integrates the pre-NEPA process

3.2 Airport Way Improvements Reconnaissance Study (2007)

The focus of this study was an evaluation of three vision concepts:

- Reduce level of access and increase posted speeds to 55 mph
- Maintain existing level of access and 45 mph posted speeds
- Increase level of access at mid-block locations and reduce posted speeds to 35 mph

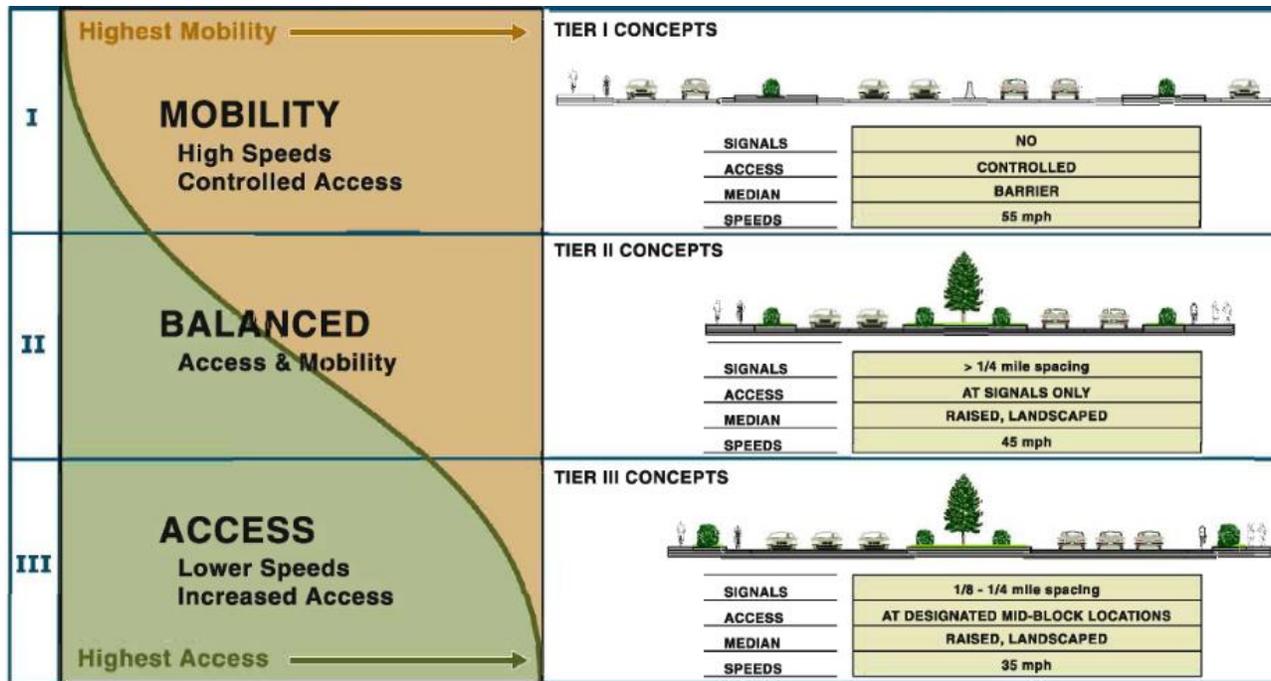


Figure 9 - Tier Concepts (source: 2007 Airport Way Study)

The project divided the study area into five distinct subareas and explored a range of possible improvement concepts within each subarea - up to seven different solution concepts were developed for each. After a public involvement process and technical evaluation of the concepts, the project identified the three most promising concepts to be carried forward for more detailed design and investigation. The study resulted in three alternatives, Alternatives “A,” “B,” and “C.”

Through an extensive public involvement process, the team developed a list of goals and objectives for the corridor.

Table 3 – Goals and Objectives Defined from the Public Participation Process in the 2007 Airport Way Reconnaissance Study

Goal	Objectives
To create greater accessibility to businesses and public facilities along this corridor while retaining as much mobility as possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve pedestrian, bicycle and automobile access to businesses and public facilities To improve the synchronization of traffic signals To attempt to preserve current mobility levels
To improve public safety along Airport Way.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To make the environment safer for automobiles, pedestrians, and cyclists To provide thoughtfully designed pedestrian and bicycle pathways and crossings to increase use and safety To use effective tools to limit speed on this corridor to the posted 45 mph speed limit

Goal	Objectives
<p>Create a greater sense of multiple-uses & neighborhood feel along the corridor.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To design corridor improvements which recognize and appreciate the smaller urban scale of Fairbanks as opposed to larger urban centers • To protect the character of residential neighborhoods along this corridor while improving accessibility
<p>To greet visitors with a colorful, welcoming first impression of Fairbanks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enhance the summer landscape and the winter light-scape along Airport Way • To enhance the night sky in our community by encouraging the use of human scale down lighting along this long corridor • To allow Airport Way to continue to be the backbone of our community while softening its current concrete-and-chain-link character

Many of the objectives in the list above suggest that the Airport Way Corridor should develop into a neighborhood-scale, accessible, non-motorized-oriented roadway, which also maintains its current level of mobility.

The 2007 Airport Way Study identified three tier concepts that would alter Airport Way’s mobility and level of access. Existing conditions are aligned with Tier II.

Conclusions of the visioning process identified two concepts as providing the “greatest benefit with minimal adverse impacts:”

- **Concept III-A:** Maintain traffic signals at the major street intersections and allow access at key mid-block locations. Provide a raised, landscaped median along the length of the corridor without left-out access provided at mid-block access points. Allow left-in movements and/or U-turns at mid-block locations through channelized median breaks. Remove frontage roads. In extra right-of-way, add through lane in each direction, and at intersections, a right lane acceleration/deceleration lane, and two left lanes.
- **Concept III-B:** Similar to Concept III-A, but replace traffic signals with roundabouts. Retain Steese Expressway intersection signalization. Provide mid-block access where spacing allows. Provide raised central median along length of the corridor and prohibit left-out turning movements from adjacent properties. All roundabouts are double-lane except for the Peger Road roundabout, which needs three circulatory lanes. Maintain two through lanes each direction. Provide right-turn deceleration lanes where warranted.

Similar vision concepts and evaluations were conducted for the five distinct subareas, which included new roadways connecting to Airport Way.

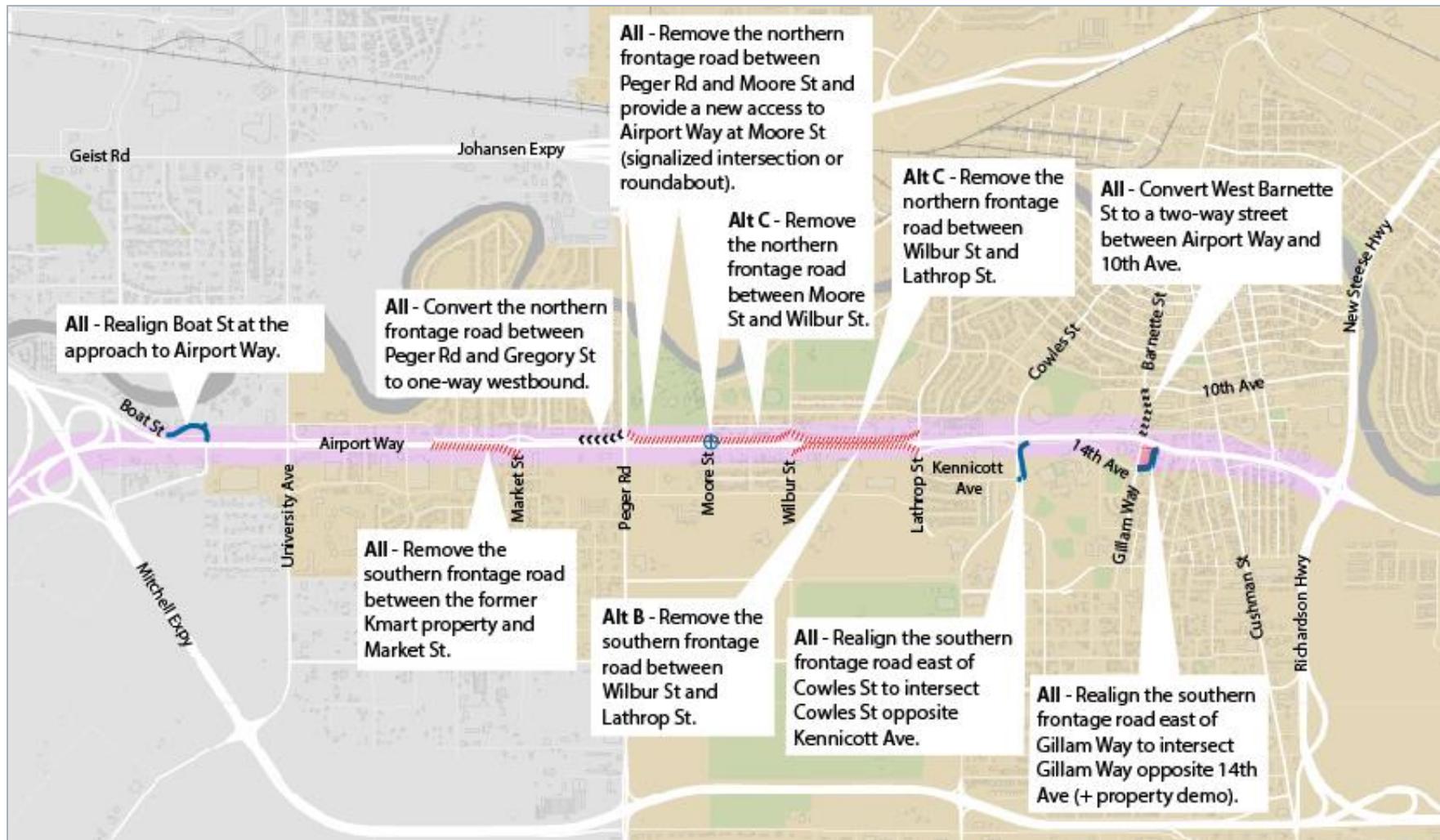
Alternatives A, B, and C were developed through a combination of Concept III-A, Concept III-B, and the concepts carried forward from the subareas.

Alternatives A, B, and C have the following features in common, of which the following could be implemented in the Airport Way Corridor Improvements projects in the long-term:

- 20-foot wide landscaped median (reduced to 8 feet with left-turn lanes)
- Landscape buffers on both sides
- 10-foot wide pedestrian and bicycle shared paths on both sides

- Remove, realign, or construct cul-de-sacs on existing frontage roads on both the north and south side of Airport Way

Furthermore, new roadway alignments and removals of frontage roads were common to all alternatives or particular to some, as represented in the map on the following page.



Map 3 - New Roadway Alignments and Removal of Frontage Roads Common to all Alternatives
 (map by PDC Engineers; source: 2007 Airport Way Reconnaissance Study)

With the removal of frontage roads and the retention of current streetscape features, the standard Airport Way corridor through section would look like Figure 10.

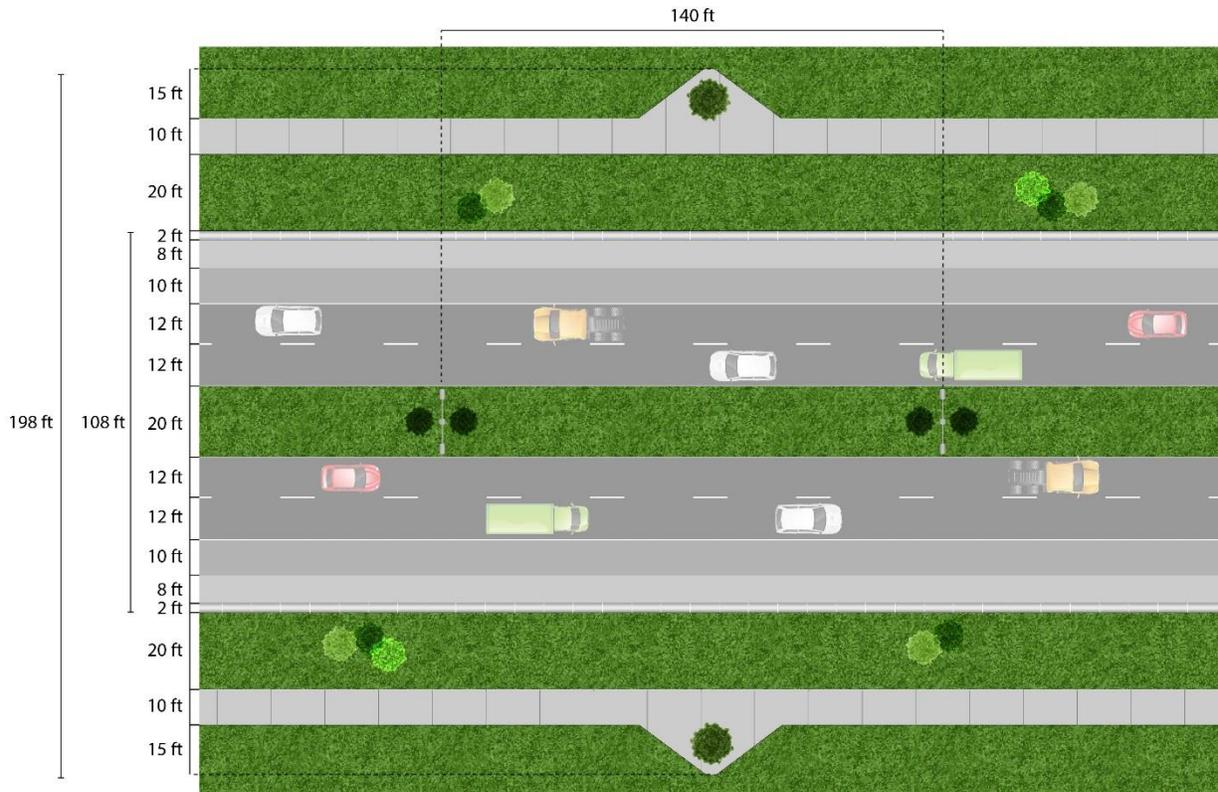


Figure 10 - Plan View of a Standard Airport Way Through Section, extrapolated from the 2007 Airport Way Study Recommendations Based on Removal of Frontage Roads (figure by PDC Engineers)

3.3 Vision Fairbanks Plan (2008)

The Vision Fairbanks Plan was published in 2008, *but was rescinded by the City Council in 2017*. A new Downtown Vision Plan is currently being developed.

The Vision Fairbanks Plan included several recommendations related to Airport Way, including:

- Appropriate landscaping at the Cushman Street/Airport Way intersection consistent with a recommended “tree-lined street and median [on Cushman] from 7th Avenue to Airport Way, connecting civic anchors with the retail hot spot.”
- Development of 230 units as a “residential anchor,” north of the Noble Street/Airport Way intersection.
- Redevelopment of the northeast lot at the corner of Barnette Street & Airport Way into a full-service grocery with commercial/retail services and landscaping along the north side of Airport Way.
- Creation of a “green, campus-like setting for civil and adjacent uses along Airport Way.”
- “Dense plantings of evergreen and flowering trees within a wide setback along the north side of Airport Way and within the right-of-way along the south side from Barnette Street to Noble Street.”
- Conversion to two-way traffic on Cushman and Barnette streets from 1st Avenue to Airport Way.
- Roundabout at Cushman Street/Airport Way intersection.

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3.4 Non-Motorized Transportation Plan (2012)

This plan documents the challenges to bicycle connectivity along the corridor and pedestrians crossing the corridor and at major streets along the frontage road as well as conflicts between bicycles and pedestrians on the sidewalk routes. The plan developed several alternatives for the corridor and classified creating a parallel bicycle route between the Parks Highway and the Steese Expressway as a high priority project.

According to the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan (NMTP), Airport Way between Parks Highway and Steese Expressway is rated High Priority for linear bicycle improvements. Airport Way is considered a Tier 1 Corridor, meaning that it is a top priority. The plan identifies that "Airport Way has a shared-use path along certain sections, with frontage roads providing alternative connection along much of the corridor." Airport way is a popular route for bicyclists, despite the discontinuous bicycle-pedestrian path, lack of bicycle-specific infrastructure, and bicyclist-unfriendly roadway intersections. Airport Way intersects popular bicyclist routes at University Avenue, Peger Road, Cowles Street, and Cushman Street.

From 2004-2008, Airport Way had a high, bicycle/pedestrian crashes-per-mile quotient of 5.3, similar to quotients on Cushman Street (6.4) and University Avenue (5.5), but dissimilar to College Road's relatively low quotient of 2.8.

The NMTP did an in-depth analysis of non-motorized crashes at major intersections on Airport Way. Several of the reported events involved one party being intoxicated (or suspected of being intoxicated) by alcohol. Most involving bicycles, however, were caused by failures to yield by the bicycle or driver or by cyclists disobeying traffic signals.

Specific functional features were identified as priority bicycle network issues:

- *"Frequent and closely spaced driveways along the strip retail development south of Airport Way [near the University Avenue intersection] create a number of potential conflicts for cyclists, especially since drivers may not expect cyclists riding on the sidewalk."*
- *"A particular problem occurs at the intersection of Cowles Street and the Airport Way frontage road. This unsignalized intersection features a pedestrian priority crosswalk with an opening in the Cowles Street median to permit bicycle and pedestrian through-movements. The crossing is slightly offset with the intersection which makes it awkward for cyclists. Moreover, the proximity of this intersection to the Cowles Street/Airport Way intersection causes queuing problems in both directions."*
- *"Bicycling is prohibited on Airport Way, but a separated bike path is provided west of Wilbur Street. East of Wilbur Street cyclists can ride on the Airport Way frontage road, which also provides local access to properties for vehicles. Several issues are noted along these routes, including path continuity, maintenance, crossings, and design. The frontage roads prioritize vehicle access and do not allow for comfortable through movements for cyclists."*

The NMTP identified pedestrian conflicts on Airport Way between University Avenue and Steese Hwy., and bike facilities are needed on Airport Way between Peger Road and Steese Hwy.

Five out of the top ten pedestrian count locations within FMATS are intersections on Airport Way.

Table 4 – Bicycle and Pedestrian Counts at Airport Way Intersections, 2017 (source: FMATS, volunteer counts from 4:30 to 6:30pm on one or more days in a single year)

Airport Way Intersection	Bicycle Counts	Pedestrian Counts
Barnette Street	25	37
Cowles Street	72	51
Cushman Street	59	74
Peger Road	66	23
Richardson/Steese Expressway	15	7
University Avenue	97	45

Figure 11 - Pedestrian Counts at Airport Way Intersections, 2011-2017 (source: FMATS, volunteer counts from 4:30 to 6:30pm on one or more days in a single year)

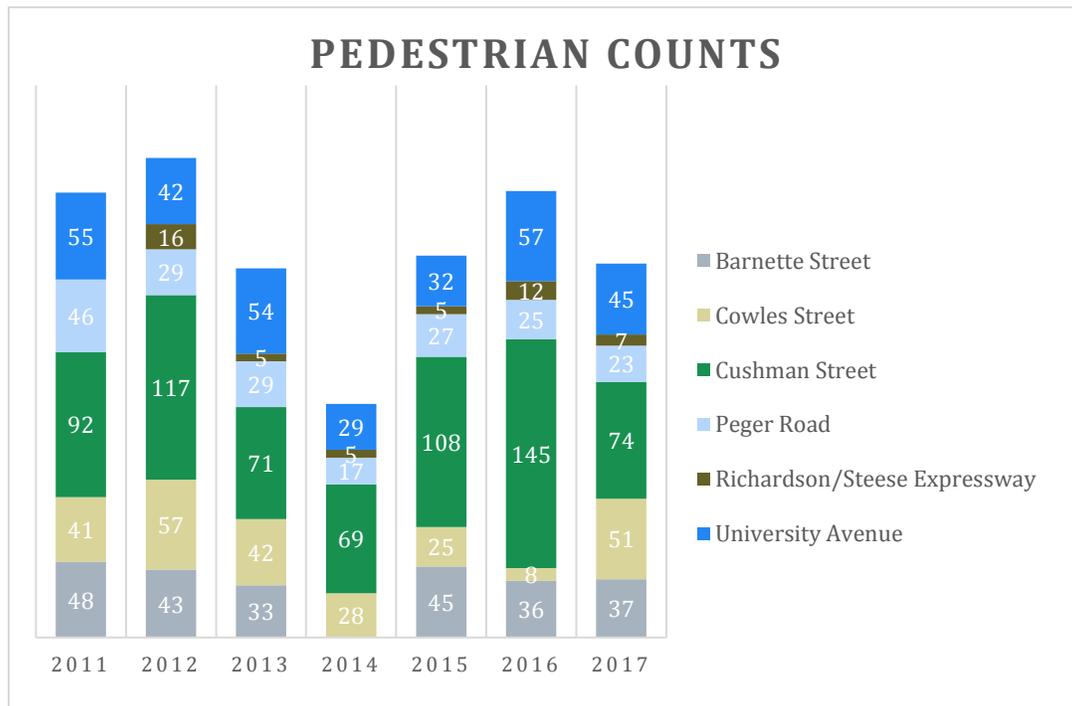
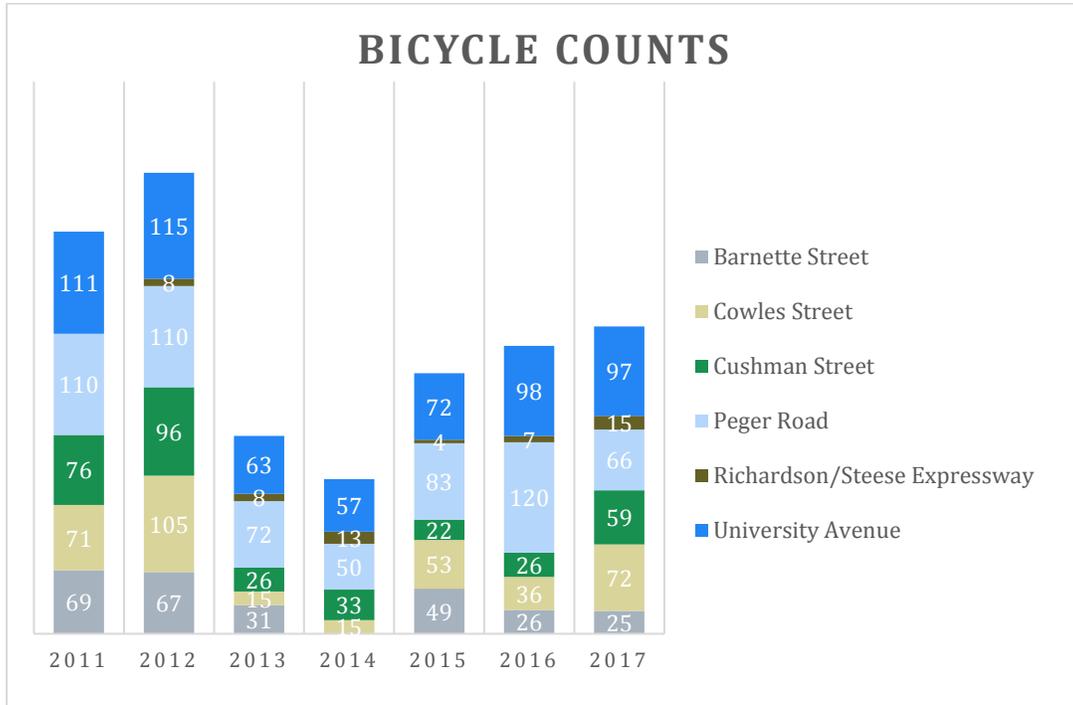


Figure 12 - Bicycle Counts at Airport Way Intersections, 2011-2017 (source: FMATS, volunteer counts from 4:30 to 6:30pm on one or more days in a single year)



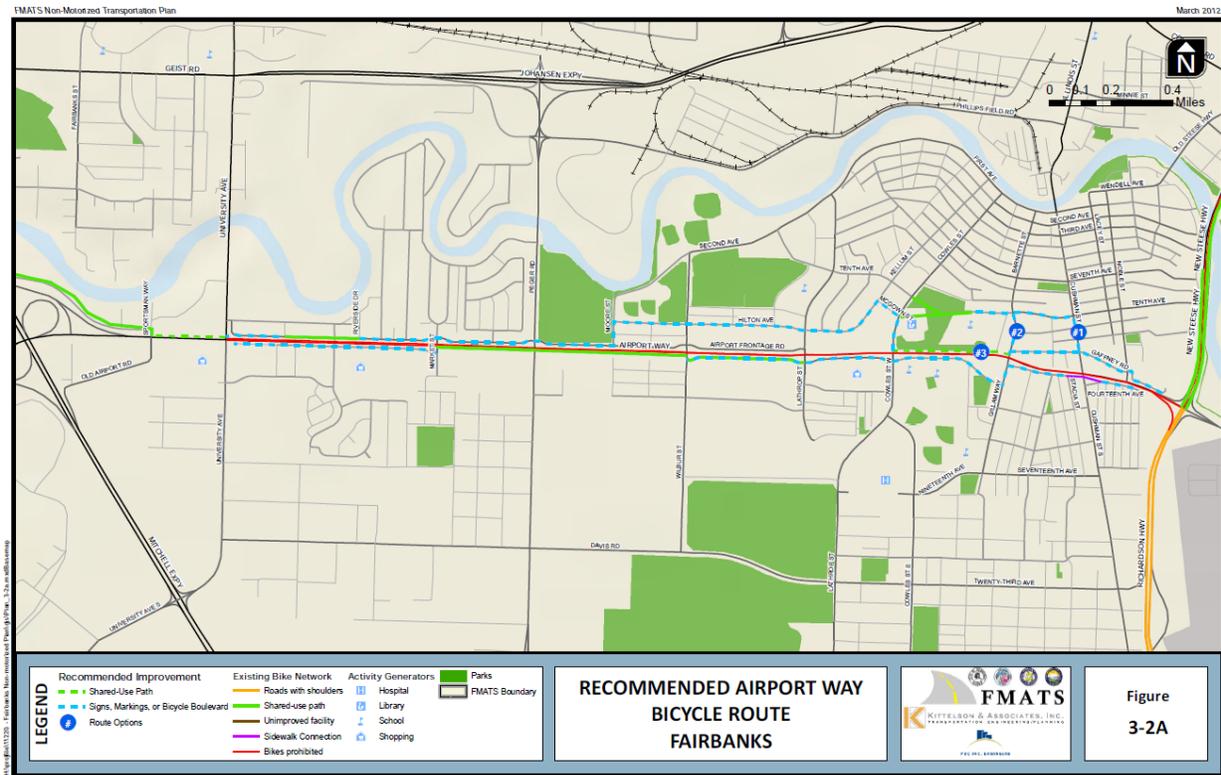
Dangerous pedestrian intersection crossings were identified, including:

- Cowles Street/Airport Way frontage road
- Parks Highway/Airport Way

Signs, markings, or a bicycle boulevard are recommended for the north and south frontage roads on Airport Way, including:

- Intersection crossing treatments at all crossing of major roads
- Pavement marking and signs to indicate a designated bicycle route
- Bicycle guide signs to direct cyclists along the route, especially at locations where the direction of the route is not obvious (e.g., when the route “T’s” into another road)
- Bicycle guide signs should be placed at nearby locations on major roads and other routes indicating where the routes are

The following figure from the NMTP shows the recommended Airport Way bicycle route.



Map 4. Recommended Airport Way Bicycle Route (source: 2012 Non-Motorized Transportation Plan)

3.5 Non-Motorized Transportation Plan Solutions Toolkit

The NMTP included a toolkit of bicycle and pedestrian facility options to serve as a guide for planners, designers, and elected officials when developing bike/pedestrian facilities.

3.6 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)

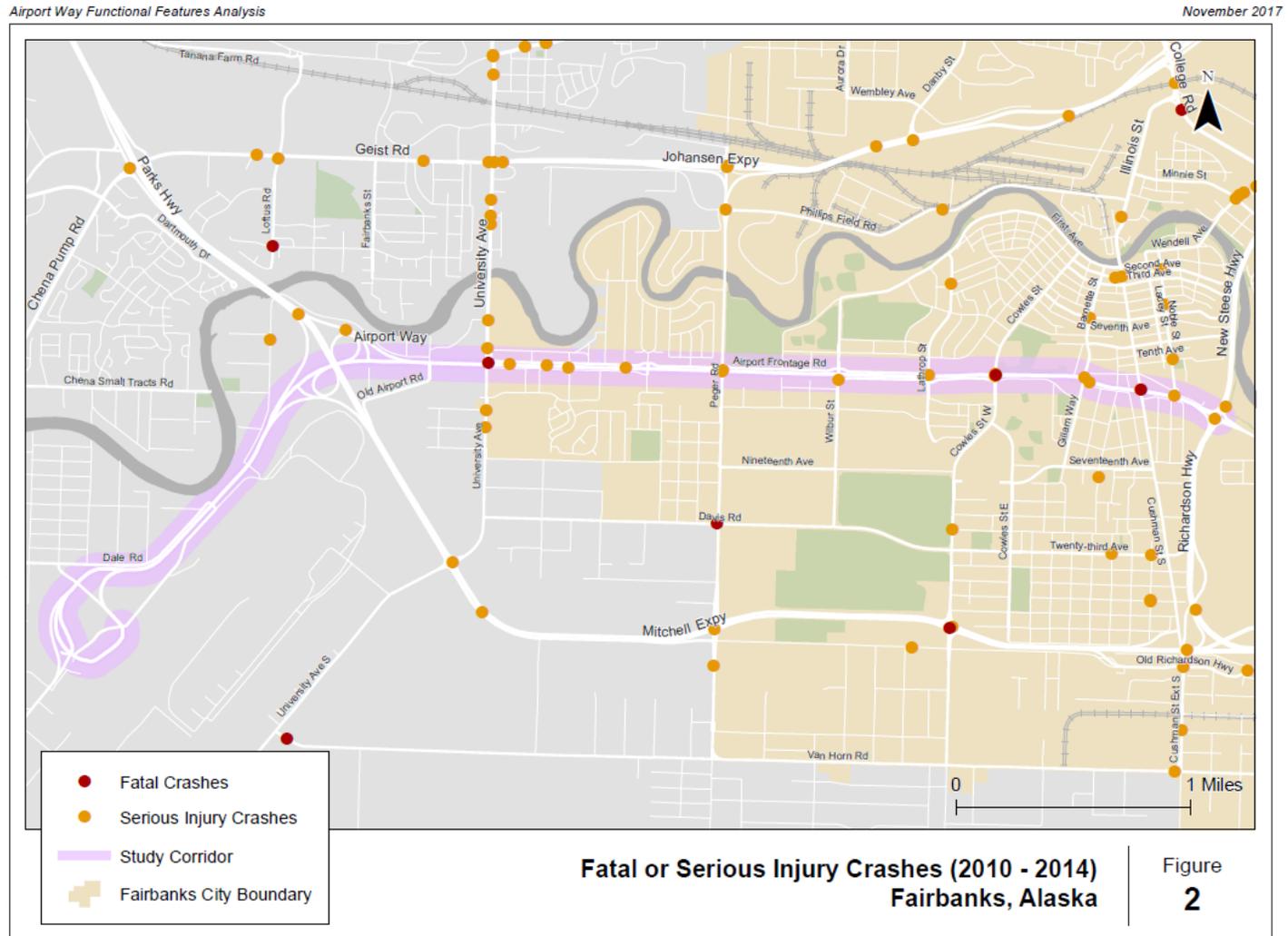
Planned corridor projects identified in the adopted 2040 MTP are listed in the current projects section.

3.7 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) (underway)

The 2045 MTP will be an update to the 2040 MTP. It is still in development and not adopted; however, an Existing Conditions Report was finalized in September 2017, and a Draft Needs Assessment Memo became available in January 2018.

- According to the Draft Needs Assessment Memo, there are a number of forecasts and needs applicable to Airport Way, including: Intersections at Cowles Street, Gillam Way, Lathrop Street, and Peger Road will be under capacity in 2045.
- Cushman Street/ Airport Way intersection is an existing freight bottleneck with congestion that is expected to degrade quality as travel demands increase over time.
- Needs better crossing facilities and continuity in non-motorized transportation facilities.

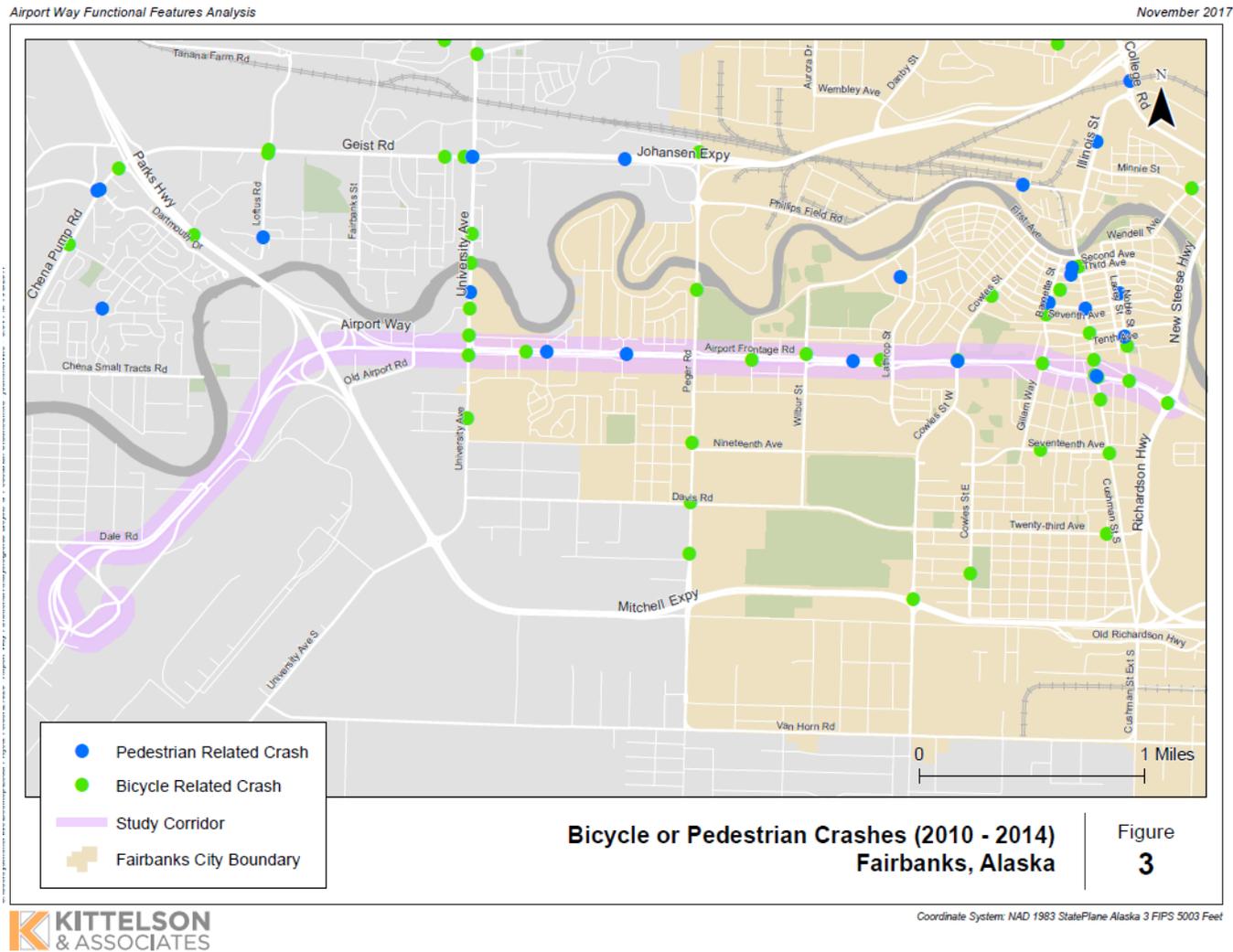
- Intersection improvements are needed at Airport Way's intersections with Cushman Street, Barnette Street, Parks Highway, and Cowles Street/Airport Way frontage road.



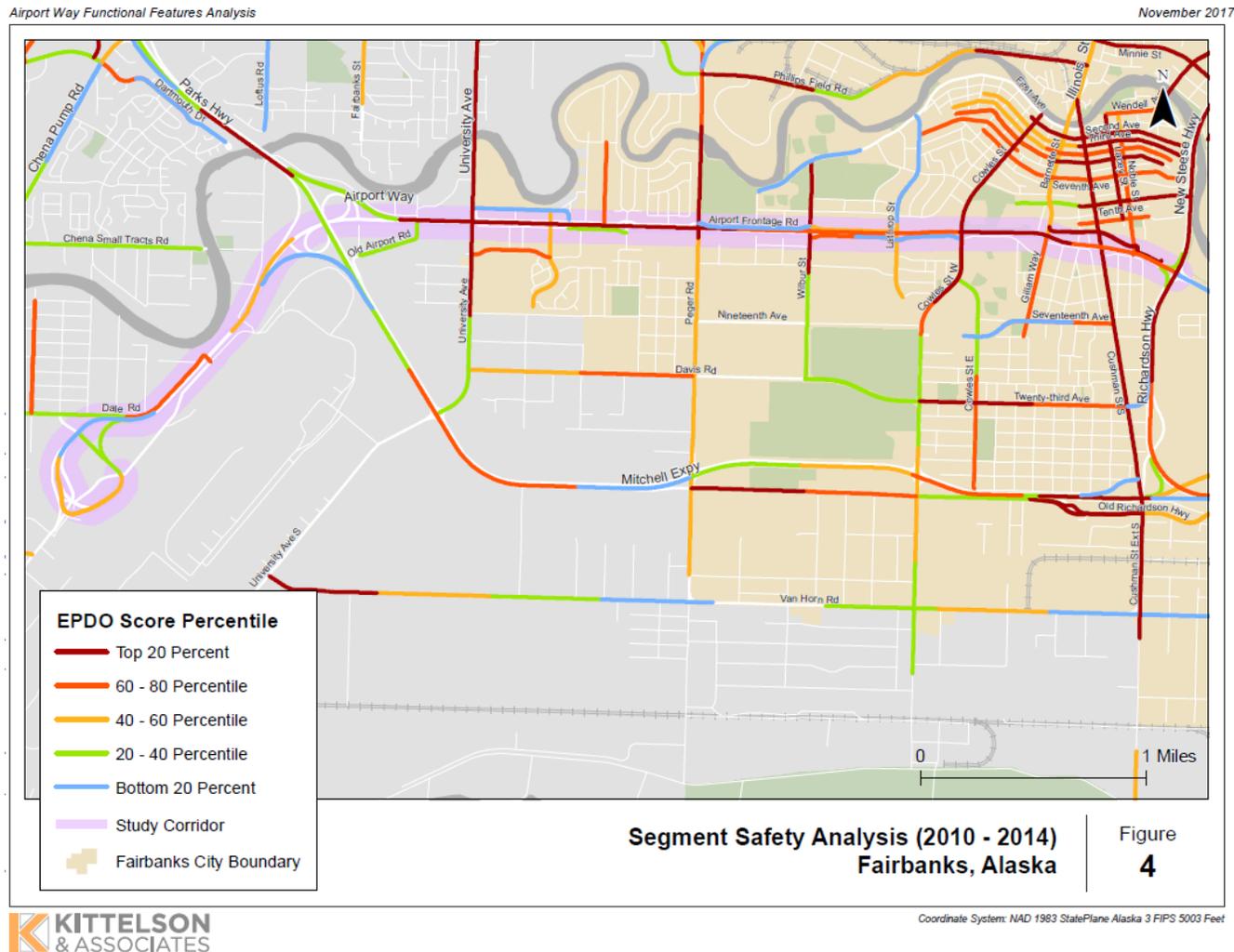
Map 5 - Fatal or Serious Injury Crashes (2010 - 2014) (map by Kittelson & Associates)

As part of this effort, the crash history and relative safety performance of the Airport Way corridor were analyzed. As shown above, three fatal crashes and 11 major injury crashes were reported along the corridor from 2010 to 2014.

The figure below illustrates the 10 bicycle and pedestrian crashes along the corridor. One bicycle crash and one pedestrian crash occurred at Cowles Street, and two bicycle crashes and one pedestrian crash occurred at Cushman Street. All of these crashes occurred between University Avenue and the Steese Expressway.

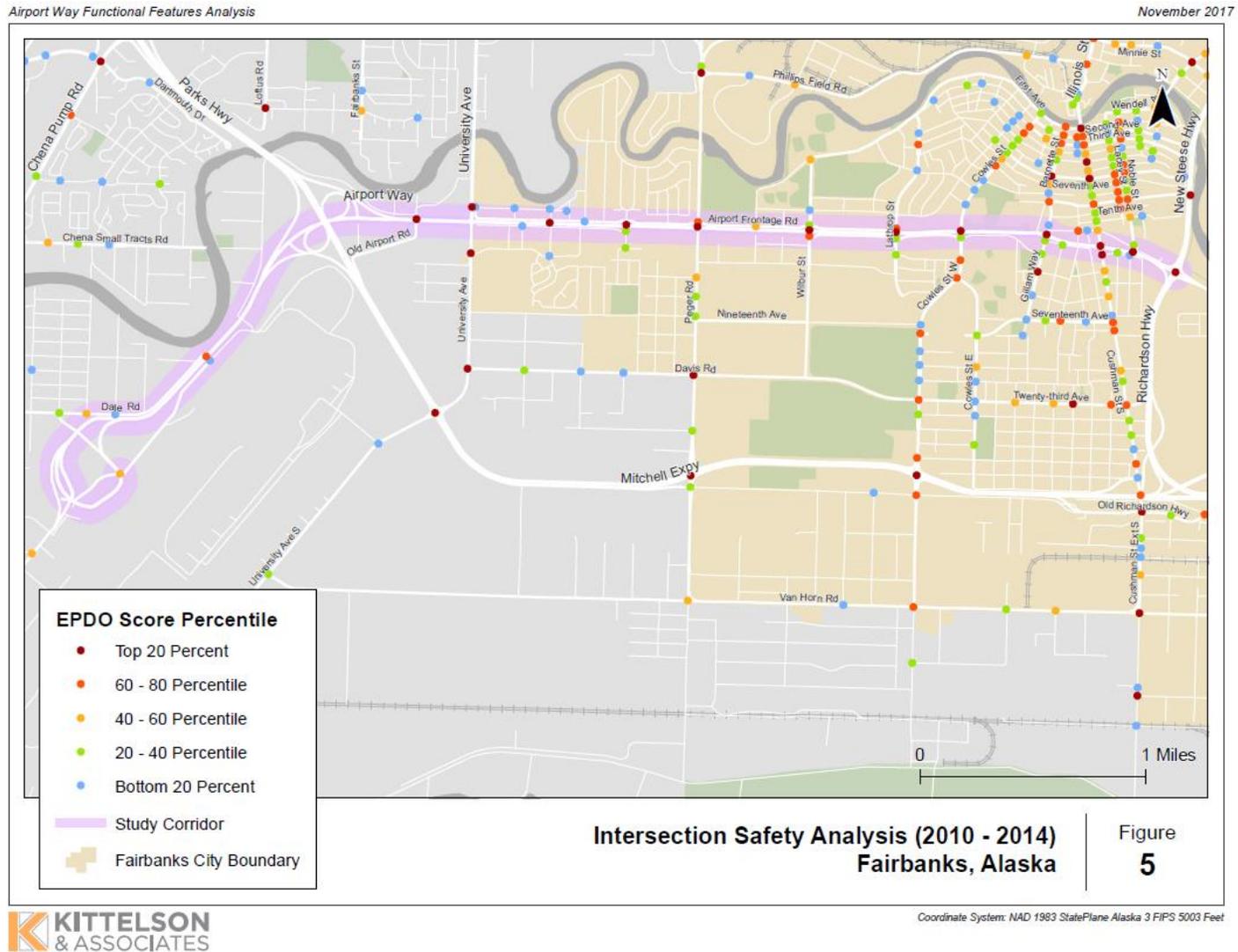


Map 6 - Bicycle or Pedestrian Crashes (2010 - 2014) (map by Kittelson & Associates)



Map 7 - Segment Safety Analysis (2010 - 2014) (map by Kittelson & Associates)

A statistical analysis of the crash data accounting for crash severity identified several parts of Airport Way to be relatively high crash segments. These findings are summarized in the above figure. Specifically, the analysis classifies the crash frequency for segments along Airport Way between the Steese Expressway and the Parks Highway in the highest 40% for similar facilities in the FMATS area. The frontage roads and Airport Way between the Parks Highway and the Airport are generally in the lowest 40% of like segments.



Map 8 - Intersection Safety Analysis (2010 - 2014) (map by Kittelson & Associates)

Similarly, every intersection along Airport Way between the Steese Expressway and the Parks Highway are in the top 20% by crash frequency, as shown in the figure above.

Based on the 2040 MTP, the NMTP, and recent data, the following pedestrian and bicycle deficiencies were identified in the study corridor:

- Bicycling is prohibited on Airport Way, but a separate bike path is provided west of Wilbur Street. East of Wilbur Street, cyclists can ride on the frontage road. Issues along these routes include path continuity, maintenance, crossings, and design.
- The unsignalized intersection of Cowles Street with the Airport Way frontage road is a particular problem, as there is a pedestrian priority crosswalk with an opening in the Cowles Street median for pedestrians and bicycles. The crossing is slightly offset, which makes it awkward for cyclists. Queuing problems also arise because of the proximity to the Airport Way intersection. A rectangular rapid-flashing beacon was installed for this crossing.
- The Parks Highway/Airport Way interchange is classified as a difficult intersection for pedestrians and bicycles to cross from east to west.
- Airport Way sidewalks are identified as having conflicts between bicyclists and pedestrians.

3.8 FMATS Freight Mobility Plan (underway)

The FMATS Freight Mobility Plan is in development; the Existing Conditions Report was finalized in February 2017. The report identifies Airport Way as National Highway System route and portions are included in the National Highway Freight Network and Primary Highway Freight System. Delay, congestion, and safety issues were identified at the Airport Way/Cushman Street intersection.

The following characteristics were identified in the report for Airport Way:

- Airport Way is critical to the region’s freight infrastructure.
- Airport Way is DOT&PF Level Two maintenance priority, meaning that it may take up to 36 hours to be cleared following a storm event.

3.9 Downtown Fairbanks Wayfinding Plan

In July 2013, the City of Fairbanks, with consultants Corbin Design and Bettisworth North, completed a Downtown Wayfinding Signage study, which determined location, design, and programming for wayfinding signage leading to downtown and nearby places-of-interest.

The Wayfinding Plan identifies several destinations adjacent to Airport Way, including:

- Noel Wien Public Library
- Weeks Field / Wien Park
- Barnette Magnet K-8 School
- Ryan Middle School
- Lathrop High School

Six DOT&PF Vehicle Guides, listed below, are recommended as additions to existing DOT&PF signs. The State Traffic and Safety Engineer reviewed the wayfinding plan and made several comments regarding the plan’s recommendations and their adherence to state standards. Most significant was the disapproval of listing the airport and Fort Wainwright on the signs; these are considered ‘primary’ destinations and are signed under a different program.

Table 5 - DOT&PF Vehicle Guides Recommended for Airport Way

Location	Signage
Eastbound, between Lathrop Street and Cowles Street intersections	< Public Library ^ Downtown ^ Fort Wainwright

Location	Signage
Westbound, between Cowles Street and Barnette Street/Gillman Way intersections	> Public Library ^ Pioneer Park ^ Fairbanks Airport
Eastbound, between Barnette Street/Gillman Way and Cushman Street intersections	< Downtown < Government Offices < Bus Transit Center
Eastbound, just east of Cushman street intersection	< Parking Garage (P) < Downtown ^ Fort Wainwright < Visitor Center (i)(P)
Westbound, just east of Cushman street intersection	> Downtown > Government Offices > Bus Transit Center
Westbound, between Cushman Street and Richardson Hwy/Steese Hwy intersection	> Parking Garage (P) ^ Fairbanks Airport > Visitor Center (i)(P)

Two Pedestrian Guide Signs are recommended for Airport Way at the following locations.

Table 6 - Pedestrian Guide Signs Recommended for Airport Way

Location	Signage
Southbound (north facing sign), northwest corner of Barnette Street/Gillman Way intersection	> Public Library < Fort Wainwright
Eastbound (west facing) and westbound (east facing), northwest corner of Richardson Hwy/Steese Hwy intersection	(West facing) < Downtown ^ Fort Wainwright (East facing) ^> Downtown ^ Public Library

Two Pedestrian Kiosk (No Base) Signs are recommended for Airport Way at the following locations.

Table 7 - Pedestrian Kiosk (No Base) Signs Recommended for Airport Way

Location	Signage
Eastbound and westbound, northeast corner of Cowles Street intersection	(West facing) < Public Library < Weeks Field/Wien Park < Chena River Walk ^ Downtown (East facing) > Public Library > Weeks Field/Wien Park > Chena River Walk

Location	Signage
<p>Eastbound and westbound, northeast corner of Richardson Hwy/Steese Hwy intersection</p>	<p>(West facing) < Downtown < Visitor Center (i) < Chena River Walk ^ Fort Wainwright (East facing) ^> Downtown < Visitor Center (i) ^ Public Library > Chena River Walk</p>

3.10 Fairbanks Area Drainage Improvement Plan (2015)

This plan developed a centralized GIS database to assist in asset management and stormwater modeling for a portion of the Fairbanks metropolitan Area. Phase I of the project included the area between Peger Road and Cowles Street, while Phase II continued east from Cowles Street to Steese Highway to encompass downtown Fairbanks

According to the plan, the Phase I segment of Airport Way’s storm water system is characterized as:

- A subdrainage area encompassing 169 acres and including Airport Way, its frontage roads from Peger Road to Cowles Street, and the Arctic Park subdivision residential neighborhood between Airport Way and Cowles Street.
- The main Airport Way storm sewers flow east from Peger Road and west from Cowles Street to Moore Street. From there a 36-inch wood stave pipe carries the entire flow north to the Chena River.
- The original storm sewer along Airport Way was wood stave, but much of it has been replaced by HDPE. Segments that are still wood stave include:
 - 265 feet crossing Peger Road
 - 3,100 feet between the Regal Movie Theater and Cowles Street
 - 1,100 feet along Moore Street
- Several catchments with high curve numbers (i.e., most businesses’ paved parking) along the Airport Way corridor contribute a large amount of flow into the storm sewer system.
- The storm sewer system within the subdrainage appears to have sufficient capacity for the 2-year and 10-year storm events, with the exception of two pipes along the Airport Way frontage road near Wilbur Street that exceed 100% capacity during a 10-year storm event. Both of these pipes have almost no slope, and one even has a slight reverse grade. The pipe diameter also decreases from 12 to 8 inches at this junction. This combination of flat slope and reduced pipe diameter causes the capacity issue.
- The only new capacity issue under the 25-year storm is a flooded manhole along Airport Road. The majority of the Airport Way subdrainage also appears to have adequate capacity for the 50-year storm event. Conduits along Hilton Avenue near Wilbur Street at greater than 100% capacity indicate another reverse-graded section, while the conduit along Kennicott Avenue near Cowles Street has little to no slope. These areas are also the locations of a manhole and catchbasin that flood under the 50-year storm.

In the concluding sections of the plan, the following relates to Airport Way:

- Aging wood stave pipe in the system is a major concern. The portions of the system where wood stave pipe is present (along Airport Way from west of Lathrop Street to Cowles Street and along Moore Street to the outfall at the Chena River) should be evaluated and the pipe's condition assessed as soon as possible. A video inspection would expose any major problems and determine if a plan for replacement, rehabilitation, or at least a regular inspection schedule is warranted. Considering the cost of earthwork and the impact to traffic of a full replacement, the wood stave portion of the storm sewer on Airport Way may be a good candidate for trenchless rehabilitation.
- The large strain on the storm water system due to impervious surfaces on Airport Way, including asphalt-lined ditches along frontage roads, make it prudent to implement storm water retention features into the landscape designs of the landscape buffers on the sides of the roadway.

3.11 Bjerremark Neighborhood Improvements Plan (2015)

The City of Fairbanks Engineering Division is seeking to construct traffic-calming, beautification, pedestrian and defensible space measures to revitalize the neighborhood, making it more livable, safe, and vibrant through improvements to the City's right-of-way.

The Bjerremark Neighborhood Project Area is southerly adjacent to Airport Way between Lathrop Street and Cushman Street.

The plan includes a summary of 2013 police calls in the project area. Incidents in the Airport Way Corridor study area portion include vandalism, traffic hazards, theft, incapacitated persons, assault, and vehicle collisions.

Local observations were compiled for the project area. Observations include:

- Gillman Way/Airport Way intersection
 - Left turn arrow needed, northbound at intersection
 - "No left turn lane causes backlog could be signal timing" (what mean?)
- Cushman St./Airport Way intersection
 - Left turn arrow needed, northbound at intersection
 - Illegal activities observed at corner liquor store
- Illegal activities observed at blocks between Mary Ann St. and Stacia St.

Various concept ideas for traffic calming and reduction in cut-through traffic are introduced in the plan. Gillam Way south of Airport Way is identified as a primary neighborhood road for through traffic and the plan recommends improved pedestrian pathways, neighborhood gateway features, a school zone sign, and chicanes (horizontal deflections used for traffic calming) south of 15th Avenue.

As of the publishing of the plan, the DOT&PF Gillam Way Rehabilitation project is scheduled for construction in 2019.

3.12 Richardson Highway/Steese Expressway Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study

This study evaluated the Richardson Highway/Steese Expressway Corridor and was completed in 2015. The PEL study reported the Airport Way/Steese Expressway intersection operates at level of service F during weekday peak hours under existing and future conditions and the intersection's crash rate is below the statewide average.

The study recommended an interchange be constructed at Airport Way and the Steese Expressway with medium priority. This project was adopted in the 2040 MTP and is beginning the environmental and preliminary design phase.

3.13 FNSB Downtown Plan (in progress)

[As of 11/15/2017, there is no public draft.]

4 POLICIES, GUIDELINES, AND STANDARDS

There are several overarching policies, guidelines, and standards that affect the considerations in this analysis. These include the FMATS Green Streets Policy, FMATS Complete Streets Policy, Landscaping policies, and ADOT&PF Standards.

4.1 FMATS Green Streets Policy

FMATS Policy endorses and encourages Green Infrastructure, such as stormwater retentive bioswales, for all projects within the Metropolitan Planning Area. Where practicable, projects should include native and site-adapted vegetation, landscaping and related environmental site design features to capture and filter stormwater runoff within the right-of-way.

This policy is consistent with numerous adopted goals of FMATS. Further, the policy helps to meet compliance requirements with Alaska Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (APDES) Municipal Storm Water Permit collectively held by the City of Fairbanks, City of North Pole, University of Alaska Fairbanks, and Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities – Northern Region; and APDES Permit held by the Fairbanks North Star Borough.

The policy points out that green infrastructure is generally more cost effective than traditional drainage approaches.

Stormwater pipes from Airport Way outfall into the Chena River, which is currently on Alaska's List of Impaired Water Bodies for sediment, a pollutant sourced from urban runoff. Green Infrastructure along Airport Way would collect sediment and allow public works maintenance staff to dispose of the sediment properly.

Policy requests that all FMATS member jurisdictions and agencies be involved in the implementation of Green Streets through a collaborative process.

4.2 FMATS Complete Streets Policy

The FMATS Complete Streets Policy was implemented to promote the consideration of all modes of transportation when developing a project. The policy's goal is to integrate the needs of all users into everyday transportation planning practices so that, gradually, a complete network of roads serves all users.

4.3 FMATS Landscape Policy

Landscaping is closely linked with Green Streets. An ongoing maintenance plan is needed for the landscaping elements.

Specific project planning and design, maintenance, and project and program funding requirements are especially relevant to Airport Way, such as:

- Planting design shall still meet jurisdictional requirements (for the Fairbanks North Star Borough, City of Fairbanks, City of North Pole and State of Alaska) in accordance with applicable regulations.
- Opportunities for long-term landscaping sponsors shall be explored.
- Plant selection should include only those that do not attract wildlife that could cause a collision within the right-of-way.
- Plant design should consider safety and not conflict or impact utilities or other infrastructure within or above the right-of-way.
- Landscaping shall only be done where a sponsor for maintenance is identified.
- Low-maintenance solutions are preferred.
- Develop partnerships with municipal jurisdictions, agency representatives, and non-profits to identify innovative financing options for landscaping and maintenance of the landscape.

The policy provides a list of approved and unapproved plant material requirements for all landscaping.

The project corridor is within the Fairbanks North Star Borough and the City of Fairbanks. Both the Borough and the City have a landscape ordinance; both are similar with the intent to improve livability within Fairbanks. The ordinances require landscaping to screen parking lots and improve street frontages where commercial and higher density residential development is proposed. A recommended plant list is referenced by both entities. They each have volunteer landscape review boards; the City's is the Landscape Review and Beautification Commission whereas the Borough uses a Landscape Review Board.

4.4 Seasonal and Event Related Banners

Annually, banners and flags are hung on Airport Way for summer and winter events. Multiple organizations hang banners and flags year-to-year for the Yukon Quest, Arctic Winter Games, arctic research summer events, and state/borough anniversaries.

4.5 Maintenance

DOT&PF maintains Airport Way at a priority level 2, which means that the road gets cleared during a snow/ice event after the priority 1 roads are cleared.

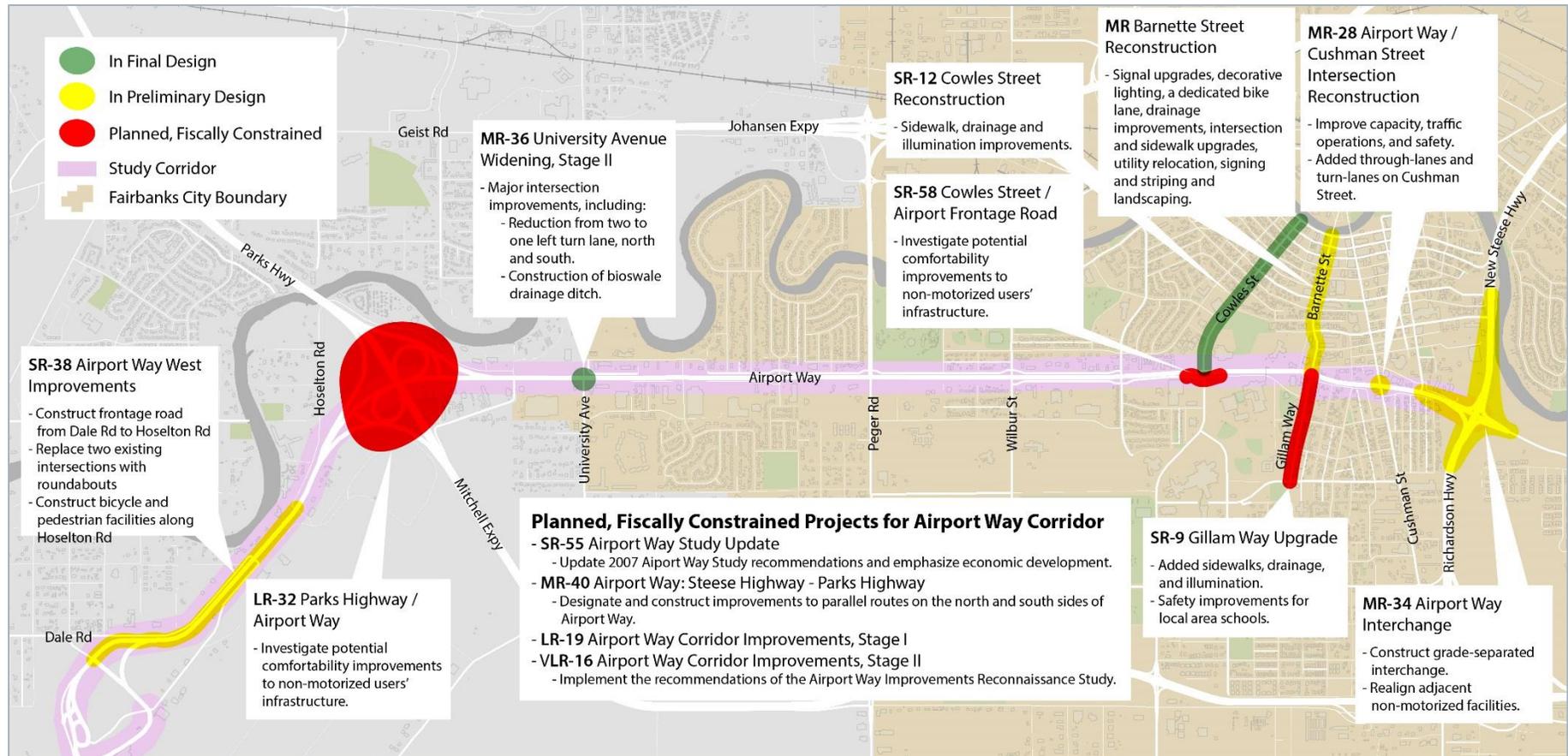
Maintenance challenges along Airport Way include finding enough snow storage space, removing snow from the medians in spring, and mowing the grassy medians in summer. Additionally, the storm drain network is old and requires considerable effort to maintain—from thawing pipes to removing grit. The concrete jersey barriers are also problematic as they are frequently damaged and require upkeep.

An area of concern is the short sidewalk segments at the corner of Airport Way and Market Street. The presence of a short concrete wall and several poles (lighting, electricity) require maintenance staff to hand clear the sidewalk of snow because large equipment can't maneuver in this tight area.

Maintenance funds have been reduced 31% over the past three years. Recommendations for Airport Way should keep this in mind and include elements that reduce the need for hand labor or specialized equipment.

5 CURRENT PROJECTS

A number of projects concerning Airport Way are in the planning, preliminary design, or design phases, as outlined in Map 9 and Table 8.



Map 9 - Current and planned projects affecting Airport Way corridor (map by PDC Engineers; source: FNSB MTP 2040)

Table 8 - Current and Planned Projects for the Airport Way Corridor

Timeframe	Name	Description	Status
Short-Term	Gillam Way Upgrade: Airport Way - 17 th Avenue	Upgrade Gillam Way to include added sidewalks, drainage, and illumination. Provide needed safety improvements in the area of local schools.	Planned, fiscally constrained
Short-Term	Airport Way Beautification	Construct landscape and hardscape improvements on Airport Way.	Planned, fiscally constrained
Short-Term	Airport Way West Improvements	Construct a new frontage road to link Dale Road and Hoselton Roads; construct a roundabout intersection to replace the two existing intersections; construct bicycle and pedestrian facilities along Hoselton Road.	Preliminary Design
Short-Term	Airport Way Study Update	Update 2007 Airport Way Study recommendations and emphasize economic development along the Airport Way corridor.	Planned, fiscally constrained
Short-Term	Cowles Street/Airport Frontage Road	Investigate potential improvements to make this unsignalized intersection crossing more comfortable for non-motorized users (possibly done in conjunction with the designation of the Airport Way bicycle route described previously).	Planned, fiscally constrained
Short-Term	Cowles Street Reconstruction	Sidewalk, drainage, and illumination improvements	Design
Short-Term	HSIP Signal Upgrades	Signal upgrades, including flashing yellow left-hand turn signals and upgraded signal heads	Design
Medium-Term	Airport Way/Cushman Street Intersection Reconstruction	Major intersection improvements to improve capacity, traffic operations, and safety. Work will include added through-lanes and turn-lanes on Cushman Street.	Preliminary design
Medium-Term	Airport Way Interchange and 10 th Avenue Frontage Road	Construct a grade-separated interchange at the intersection of Steese Expressway and Airport Way. Realign adjacent non-motorized facilities as necessary to accommodate the selected interchange configuration. Remove the signalized intersection at Steese Expressway and 10 th Avenue and construct a frontage road providing access to Steese Expressway via the Steese Expressway/Airport Way interchange.	Preliminary design

Timeframe	Name	Description	Status
Medium-Term	University Avenue Widening, Stage II: Chena River Recreation Site - Swenson Avenue	Major reconstruction of University Avenue from the Chena River Recreation Site to Swenson Avenue. This phase includes major intersection improvements at Airport Way.	Design
Medium-Term	Airport Way: Steese Highway – Parks Highway	Designate and construct improvements to parallel routes on the north and south sides of Airport Way.	Planned, fiscally constrained
Medium-Term	Barnette Street Reconstruction	Signal upgrades, decorative lighting, dedicated bike lane, drainage improvements and sidewalk upgrades	Preliminary design
Medium-Term	Preventative Maintenance – lighting upgrades	Retrofit high pressure sodium lights with energy efficient LED lamps along Airport Way	Preliminary design
Long-Term	Airport Way Corridor Improvements, Stage I	This is the first in a series of projects to implement the recommendations of the Airport Way Improvements Reconnaissance Study.	Planned, fiscally constrained
Long-Term	Parks Highway/Airport Way	Investigate potential improvements to make the crossings of the ramp terminals more comfortable for non-motorized users.	Planned, fiscally constrained
Long-Term	Bike Lane Signing & Striping	Install a network of striped and signed bicycle lanes on City of Fairbanks streets	Nominated
Very Long-Term	Airport Way Corridor Improvements, Stage II	This is the second in a series of projects to implement the recommendations of the Airport Way Improvements Reconnaissance Study.	Planned, fiscally constrained