

Summary taken from the ESF Downtown Master Plan, Spring 2004

Circulation

Circulation Downtown includes the combined patterns of vehicular and pedestrian movement, as well as those physical features that support the motorists, pedestrians and mass transit riders. Information was collected regarding vehicular circulation, pedestrian circulation and mass transit.

Inventory

Vehicular Circulation

Vehicular circulation inventory included 3 related elements: traffic patterns, traffic volume, and parking.

Traffic patterns

The majority of Downtown streets accommodate two-way traffic; however, there are several one-way streets:

- Market Street northbound
- Warren Street northbound
- Clinton Street southbound
- Montgomery Street southbound
- Madison Street eastbound
- Harrison Street westbound
- Adams Street eastbound from Montgomery to Almond Street
- Erie Boulevard eastbound from North Salina to Montgomery Street
- Jefferson Street eastbound from Montgomery to South State Street
- West Water Street eastbound from Franklin to Warren Street
- East Onondaga Street southbound from South State to Warren Street.
- West Onondaga Street northbound from South Salina to Warren Street

Interstate routes 81 and 690 provide direct links between Downtown and the regional transportation system. An egress ramp for I-81 North is located at Adams/Almond Streets, and an access ramp is at Harrison/Almond Streets. A second access ramp for I-81 North is just north of Downtown at Pearl Street. Egress ramps for I-81 South are located at Franklin/West, Salina, Clinton and Harrison/Almond Streets, and an access ramp is at Adams/Almond Streets. Egress from I-690 East is provided at West Genesee Street, and an access ramp is at McBride Street. An egress ramp from I-690 West is located at Townsend Street, and an access ramp is at Erie Boulevard/West Street.

Downtown streets are comprised of asphalt pavement with a limited number of blocks having decorative paving. Pavement conditions range from good to poor, with those rated as good having limited deterioration (e.g. potholes, cracking and warping) while those rated poor having significant damage. All streets are maintained by the City of Syracuse Department of Public Works with supplemental maintenance, such as debris pick-up, addressed through contractual services secured by the Downtown Committee, Inc. Traffic on Downtown streets is controlled primarily by a synchronized traffic signal system, although several intersections have 4- or 2-way STOP signs.

Traffic Volumes

Traffic volume information was obtained from the 2000-2003 traffic study by the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council. This study documents traffic counts from 39 locations throughout Downtown and its immediate surroundings and computations for yearly outputs of all appropriate directions. From these 39 street locations, 8 were identified as important Downtown locations with relatively high traffic volumes. The highest TVR AADT (Traffic Volume Report Annual Average Daily Traffic) of these 8 locations was 12,400 cars, documented from a recorder on West Genesee Street between Franklin and West Streets.

Parking

Approximately 60% of the available land area in Downtown is dedicated to parking, offering approximately 22,000 off-street spaces. Of that total, almost 12,900 are in garages open to the public. Monthly permit parking is available in most garages and surface lots. According to a late 1990s Downtown parking lot evaluation conducted by TNT Sector 1, only one of the total 125 surface lots received the highest (100%) rating. The evaluation criteria are based on the appearance, functionality, security controls, and other features; only 56 lots scored above 50%. There is no coordination of parking fees, hours of operation or signage, nor are there established standards for the design and/or maintenance of any public or private off-street parking facilities.

In addition to garages and surface lots, there are approximately 900 on-street spaces, with most regulated by parking meters. Other curbside locations provide limited parking for deliveries or loading, and many streets include designated HC accessible spots.

Pedestrian Circulation

Inventory of pedestrian circulation in Downtown included safety measures, street furnishings (lights, benches, trash receptacles, newspaper dispensers, bike racks, kiosks, etc.), pavement and sky bridges. Although pedestrian volume data was not collected, it can be assumed that most of the major vehicular corridors within the Downtown core support the greatest number of pedestrians.

Safety Measures

Almost all Downtown intersections provide marked pedestrian crosswalks and ADA compliant curb cuts. Intersections within the core also include mechanized pedestrian crossing signals.

Street furnishings

The type, design and materials of street furnishings vary throughout Downtown, with the most consistent installation found within the core on Salina, Warren, Water, Washington, Fayette and Jefferson Streets. These corridors were improved as part of a major streetscape project initiated in the 1990s and include decorative streetlights, kiosks and related signage, benches, trash receptacles, newspaper dispensers, and telephone booths. Other corridors include similar furnishings, but not executed in the same style or materials.

Pavement

Most Downtown sidewalks are concrete with a simple scoring pattern. Those corridors included in the 1990s improvement project (see above) also have multiple-color decorative pavement in one of several related patterns. The Armory Square Historic District, portions of sidewalks along Onondaga and Genesee Streets, and sidewalks near Clinton Square also include decorative paving, however each is different from the others as well as the patterns noted within the core.

Sky bridges

There are seven sky bridges Downtown connecting various properties:

- 500 South Salina Street Office Building to Hotel Syracuse Parking Garage (not in use)
- Niagara Mohawk Building to Ni-MO Parking Garage (in use)
- Atrium to Vanderbilt Plaza (not in use)
- HSBC Building to The Galleries of Syracuse (in use)
- Former Sibley's Department Store Building to the Galleries of Syracuse (not in use),
- Hotel Syracuse to The Hotel Syracuse Annex (in use)
- Hotel Syracuse to Hotel Syracuse Parking Garage (not in use)
- Onondaga County Convention Center to Convention Center Parking Garage

While these structures at one time accommodated second level pedestrian circulation in Downtown, a continuous circuit was never implemented.

Mass Transit

There are two main sources of public transportation that serve Downtown: the Centro bus system and the OnTrack train system.

Centro is the Syracuse metropolitan area bus system, serving approximately 25,000 riders per day system-wide. Roughly 20,000 of these passengers pass through the main Fayette/Salina Streets hub, where anywhere from 18-25 busses routinely stop. There are 37 Centro routes, all of which depart or arrive from the hub. Centro has fourteen Park 'N' Ride mostly suburban locations where patrons can park their cars and take advantage of Centro service. Centro users also can park at a designated Centro Parking lot, four of which are along Almond Street from Genesee Street to Erie Boulevard. By using this service, monthly patrons are entitled to free bus service between the designated lots and Downtown locations at any time. Centro also offers special event services to Carrier Dome events, OnCenter conventions, and SkyChiefs baseball games.

The hub at Fayette and Salina Streets provides basic schedule information and open-air shelter for Centro riders. The current size and design of the hub, however, does not adequately accommodate the volume of users at peak hours and results in conflicts between waiting riders and Downtown pedestrians. Most Downtown intersections serve as Centro stops, although few provide any rider amenities, such as schedule information, shelters or seating.

OnTrack provides limited passenger rail service within the Syracuse metropolitan area, currently offering eight stops:

-
- Carousel Center
- Armory Square
- Syracuse University
- Colvin Street
- Rock Cut Road
- Jamesville Village
- Jamesville Beach

OnTrack is only available from Wednesday-Sunday, with hourly pickups at its Carousel Center, Armory Square and Syracuse University stops. The Colvin Street, Rock Cut Road, Jamesville Village and Jamesville Beach stops are "flag stops", which are used only for special events. A single passenger car is available for regularly scheduled trips, with additional cars provided on higher-volume days. Riders can pay as they board the train, or tokens can be purchased at the

main station located in Armory Square. Riders boarding at the station can park the Trolley Lot, west of the elevated railroad or use several other lots and garages in the area, along with metered on-street parking. Like Centro, OnTrack also offers service to special events, such as those at the Carrier Dome or regional seasonal events.

Analysis

1. Confusing traffic patterns.

Incremental changes to traffic patterns have led to disjointed one-way pairs, truncated one-way routes, and opposing one-way flows on the same corridor. These patterns, while most confusing and disorienting to visitors, create frustration for Downtown workers and residents. Coupled with high volumes during peak hours, current traffic patterns contribute to the perception that it is difficult to drive to, through and from Downtown.

2. Perception that there is a lack of safe, convenient parking.

Although nearly 60% of Downtown property is dedicated in whole or part to parking, there is a widespread perception that there is insufficient parking available for residents, workers and visitors. This view is derived in large part from parking opportunities associated with suburban office parks and retail malls. Since the mid-20th century, citizens frequenting these developments have been conditioned to expect parking within view of—but not necessarily in close proximity to—their ultimate destination, something that is not always possible or desirable in a downtown. In addition because the operation and maintenance of off-street facilities is not coordinated in terms of fees, hours and signage, users are unaware of the all the parking options available to them.

3. Lack of enforcement of parking regulations.

Both on-street and off-street parking regulations are not routinely and consistently enforced. Failing to address illegal on-street parking contributes to traffic congestion and further reinforces the perception that Downtown lacks convenient, available parking. In addition, when owners of off-street lots are allowed to forgo required screening, install non-compliant signs or defer maintenance, unkempt lots become visually dominant and contribute to a negative Downtown image.

4. Inconsistent and less than optimum pedestrian environment.

Although most Downtown corridors provide passable sidewalks and some amenities, the experience for pedestrians varies. Within the core of Downtown, a greater variety of street furnishings offers a somewhat comfortable and pleasant experience. Outside of this area, however, streetscape conditions do not adequately address pedestrian needs. The situation is exacerbated along most surface parking lots and garages, where vehicular requirements are given precedent over the quality of the pedestrian experience.

5. Insufficient maintenance of Downtown streets and sidewalks.

Given the volume of users, routine functions and special circumstance associated with Downtown, the streets and sidewalks exhibit a high degree of deterioration and damage. Current public and private efforts fail to adequately meet daily, seasonal and cyclical needs.

6. Inefficient Centro Hub.

The traditional Downtown transfer point for the Centro system generates a significant amount of vehicular and pedestrian traffic, which creates conflicts with general circulation patterns. The volume of buses arriving and departing the hub impacts the already heavy traffic volumes on South Salina and Fayette Streets. Similarly, the large number of Centro riders waiting for scheduled buses stymies the high amount of pedestrians passing through this intersection. In

addition the current streetscape space makes it difficult, if not impossible, to provide adequate shelter for Centro users as well as accommodate pedestrians.

7. Lack of user amenities at Centro stops.

While Downtown stops are identified with the Centro logo, most do not provide any other user amenities, such as shelters, seating or schedule information. Lack of these elements might not impact user numbers, but it does decrease system visibility within and from Downtown.

8. Lack of comprehensive Downtown information sign system.

There is no single information sign system that provides information regarding Downtown districts, key places or significant properties. There are a number of partial, single-purpose systems, which together create clutter and confusion rather clear direction and a positive image. None of these systems adequately address the needs of motorists and pedestrians, nor does any system consider the transition from initial arrival through to final destination. In addition, several additional limited systems are under consideration, which will add further chaos to the visual quality of Downtown without substantially improving the dissemination of information.

9. Lack of distinct Downtown gateways.

Although arrival to and departure from Downtown is in large part acknowledged as one travels under the elevated highways or railroad, this experience fails to instill a positive and memorable image of the city center. The lack of comprehensive signage or other notable temporary or permanent features further detracts from one's sense of entering or leaving the heart of the city.