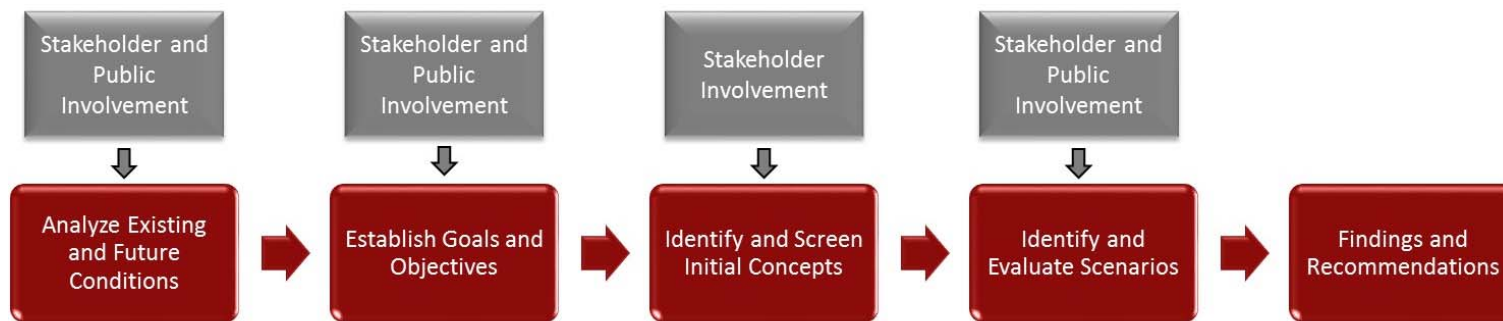


## Background and Purpose

The Regional Intergovernmental Council's (RIC's) long-range transportation plan, *Metro Mobility 2040*, included in its fiscally constrained project recommendations to "Widen and upgrade the Third Street underpass in St. Albans." The underpass consists of three bridges - Third Avenue, Fourth Avenue, and the CSX railroad. In 2012, RIC and HDR Engineering, Inc. completed the *St. Albans Railroad Crossing Study* which evaluated all CSX at-grade and grade separated crossings within St. Albans. The recommendation from this study was to widen and upgrade the Third Street underpass. This recommendation included lowering the vertical profile and reconstructing the walls of the underpass to improve horizontal and vertical clearances. HDR estimated cost of this project to be \$9.6 million. RIC, in cooperation with the West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT), retained Burgess & Niple, Inc. to lead a study to further identify and define current transportation problems and needs in the Third Street corridor, to examine the Third Street underpass upgrade option in more detail, to identify less costly solutions, and to determine the most cost effective improvements to address problems and needs in the corridor.

## Study Process

The following graphic illustrates the basic planning process for this study:



The study process engaged numerous stakeholders including local government agencies, community representatives, business representatives, and WVDOT. The involvement included individual meetings with many of these stakeholders. The process built off of the public involvement conducted during the 2012 HDR study, and an additional public meeting was held as part of the planning process. A Steering Group advised the Study Team during the study process. The Steering Group consisted of stakeholders that will ultimately be responsible to implementation of recommended improvements, and stakeholders to represent local citizens and businesses that might be directly impacted by the study recommendations. Members of the Steering Group included representatives from: West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOT), RIC, City of St. Albans, St. Albans Chamber of Commerce, and CSX.

## Corridor Issues and Needs

The primary corridor issues and needs identified were:

- Excessive delays, backups, and crashes at the intersection of Third Street and MacCorkle Avenue
- Insufficient width for wider vehicles (buses, trucks, ambulances) to pass each other in the Third Street underpasses
- Insufficient height for tall vehicles (semi-trailer trucks) to pass through the Third Street underpasses. The height is sufficient for other large vehicles (buses, smaller delivery trucks, fire trucks)
- Poor conditions in the underpasses for pedestrians and bicyclists including traffic backups, narrow lane widths, and water and debris falling from railroad tracks above

- The sudden shift in alignment of Third Street at south end of Fourth Avenue underpass

## Goals and Objectives

Based on the deficiencies and needs identified by the technical analysis and feedback from stakeholders and the public, the following goals and objectives were identified for the corridor:

- Create an attractive gateway for St. Albans
- Reduce congestion at the intersection of Third Street and MacCorkle Avenue
- Reduce congestion at the intersection of Third Street and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue
- Improve pedestrian access and experience across (over/under) railroad tracks
- Improve bicycle access and experience across (over/under) railroad tracks
- Minimal disruption to CSX railroad operations during construction
- Increase access to downtown St. Albans for economic development reasons
- Implement constructible and affordable solutions
- Increase width of underpasses so buses and fire trucks can use underpass without problems
- Improve width and height of underpass so semi-trailer trucks can clear the underpass
- Reduce driveway conflicts between underpass and MacCorkle Avenue

## Improvements Considered

To address the identified problems and needs, and to attempt to achieve the goals identified, a large number of improvement options were considered. These options were reviewed and evaluated and the most effective, feasible, and implementable options were presented as four corridor "Scenarios" for further analysis and evaluation. These Scenarios and their evaluation were presented to stakeholders and the public for review and comment. The Scenarios included improvements such as:

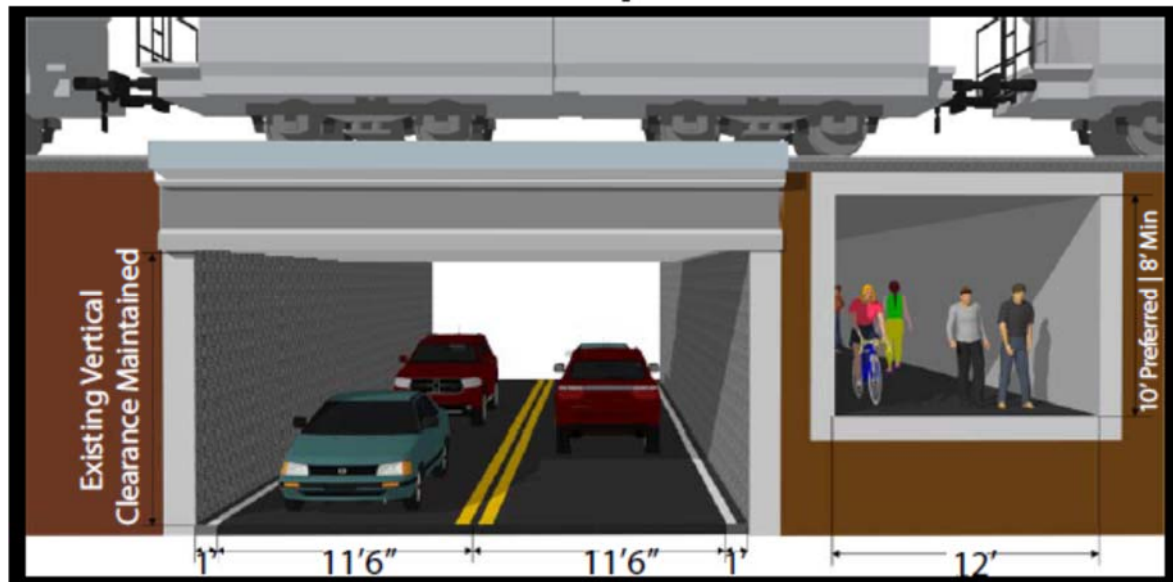
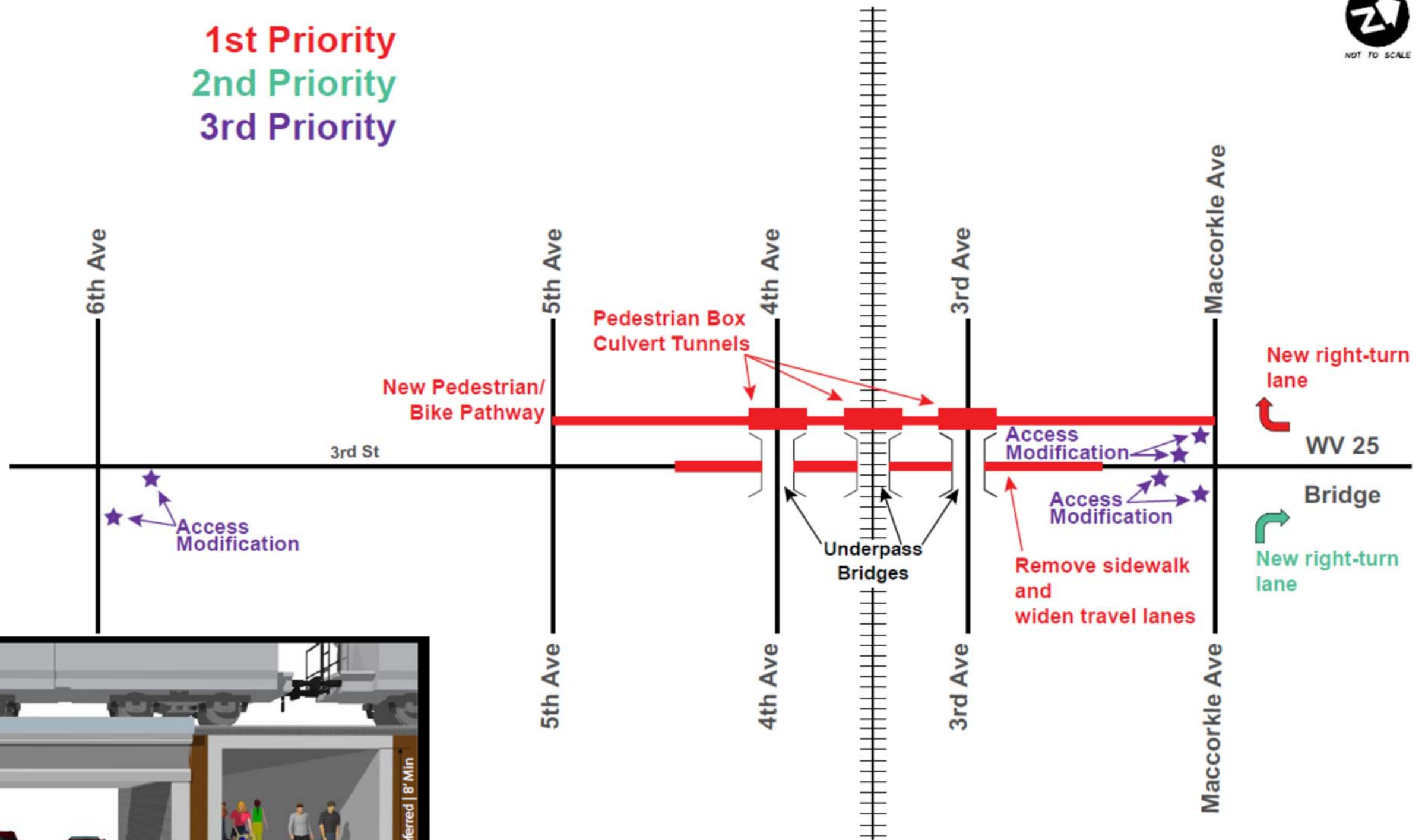
- Convert Third Street to one-way southbound, and add a new traffic signal at Fifth Street and MacCorkle Avenue
- Remove sidewalk in underpass to provide more width for vehicles (relocate pedestrian crossing)
- At-grade pedestrian crossing of railroad, Third Avenue, and Fourth Avenue
- Pedestrian tunnel under the railroad, Third Avenue and Fourth Avenue
- Add turn lanes at MacCorkle Avenue intersection
- Roundabout at MacCorkle Avenue intersection
- Left turn prohibitions at MacCorkle Avenue intersection
- Widen and raise underpasses

## Recommendations

Based on a careful analysis of the improvement Scenarios, the improvements illustrated in the figure on the next page are recommended. Phasing this project into a series of smaller projects is appropriate given the independent nature of many of the recommendations. Some of the recommendations are more readily implementable and will have greater benefits than others. Suggested priorities for implementing the "pieces" of the recommended Scenario are also illustrated in the figure on the next page and discussed further on **Page E3**.



1st Priority  
2nd Priority  
3rd Priority



Recommended Improvements

Suggested priorities for implementing the “pieces” of the recommended scenario are described as follows:

First Priority (\$2.5 Million plus low to moderate right-of-way costs)

- Remove sidewalk in underpass to provide wider travel lanes and construct pedestrian/bike tunnels under Third Avenue, the railroad tracks, and Fourth Avenue
- Straighten alignment of Third Street south of Fourth Avenue
- Construct southbound right-turn lane at Third Street and MacCorkle Avenue

Second Priority (\$340,000 plus extensive right-of-way costs)

- Construct westbound right-turn lane at Third Street and MacCorkle Avenue.

Third Priority (\$140,000)

- Modify driveways near 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue/Third Street intersection and Third Street and MacCorkle Avenue intersection to provide better spacing and location

**Other Short-Term Recommendations**

The following are other recommendations to address needs in the corridor for any recommended scenario. Many of these improvements can be done in the near-term for relatively low costs. Cost estimates were not made for these recommendations.

**Traffic Control Improvements**

The following improvements are recommended based on problems and needs discussed in Section 5:

- **Update pavement markings** – Ensure that pavement markings are well visible, especially in low-light and wet conditions. Consider using thermoplastic (on asphalt) or epoxy (on concrete) for long lasting, highly visible markings.

**Pedestrian Improvements**

The following pedestrian improvements are recommended based on field reviews and problems outlined in Section 5:

- **Implement a sidewalk maintenance program** – The sidewalk maintenance program would ensure that sidewalks are kept clean of debris, snow, and vegetation. This program could be supported by the City of St. Albans and could rely on citizens to report locations that are damaged or in need of cleaning. These reports would be funneled to appropriate personnel at WVDOH or City of St. Albans who would be dispatched to make the repairs.
- **Install parking blocks in the Rite Aid parking lot to prevent parked vehicles from blocking the sidewalk** – There is no separation between the parked vehicles in the Rite Aid parking lot and the sidewalk along Third Street. The study team observed parked vehicles obstructing the sidewalk. Installing parking blocks will ensure vehicles cannot extend onto the sidewalk.
- **Fix uneven sidewalk** – The sidewalk inventory also indicated several areas of uneven sidewalk which creates a tripping hazard. Efforts should be made to reconstruct the sidewalk in these locations. Uneven sidewalk areas could also be reported through the sidewalk maintenance program.
- **Update curb ramps, push buttons, and pedestrian heads to comply with ADA guidance** – Many of the curb ramps, push buttons, and pedestrian heads are not compliant with ADA standards. These should be upgraded to provide safer spaces for pedestrians, especially those with disabilities. The study team recommends ADA compliant ramps for areas where curb ramps do not currently exist. Field reviews indicated that the Walk signal on the pedestrian heads did not illuminate

for pedestrians to cross Third Street (parallel to MacCorkle Avenue). Without push buttons for this movement, the Walk sign should be shown every time the through movements on MacCorkle Avenue are given green time. This deficiency should be addressed.

**Bicycle Improvements**

The following bicycle improvements are recommended based on field reviews and problems outlined in Section 5:

- **Install new signage for the published bike routes through St. Albans** – As detailed in Section 5, there are several bike routes in St. Albans that are published on maps by the St. Albans Renaissance Group. However, the study team found that these routes were not well marked. Consideration should be given to installing signage and pavement markings along the routes to emphasize the routes for both motorists and bicyclists.
- **Implement a bike lane maintenance program** – The bike lane maintenance program would ensure that bike lanes on MacCorkle Avenue are kept clean of debris so that bicyclists do not encounter obstacles along their path. Damaged bike route signs could also be monitored and reported through this program. The City of St. Albans could support this program, relying on citizens to report locations that are in need of cleaning or signs that are damaged or missing. These reports would be funneled to appropriate personnel at WVDOH who would be dispatched to make the repairs.

**Transit Improvements**

The following transit improvements are recommended to address problems and needs identified in Section 5:

- **Improve signage at bus stops** – Illegible bus stop signage should be replaced. Signage should publicize the service and routes that are served by the stop. Post mounted route information signs could be installed to allow transit users to see the schedule and map of the route served by the stop.
- **Enhanced transit stops** – The study team recommends additional designated transit stops with enhanced amenities for passengers. Recommended amenities include large sidewalk area, shelters, benches, and trash receptacles. Shelters and benches provide places for passengers to more comfortably wait (out of precipitation) for the bus and are especially recommended when service is less frequent (like it is in St. Albans).
- **Route buses along Third Street** – Once the improvements are completed in the underpass, KVRTA’s new buses should have no difficulty using the underpass. Infrequent service along Third Street encourages passengers to walk longer distances to catch a bus. Consideration should be given to providing service to Third Street more frequent than three times per weekday.