6. TRANSPORTATION

INTRODUCTION

The transportation plan primarily addresses traffic issues for the town center environs.

The ability to enter, visit and leave Towson safely is important to its growth and vitality. The area's economic development depends on Towson retaining its accessibility. The public transportation system must be improved, but the planning efforts recognize that the automobile will continue to dominate personal trips. Therefore, there is significant emphasis on improving the street and arterial system.

A. Objectives

The Transportation Plan is designed to achieve an efficient street, parking and transit system. The Plan's objectives are:

1. to develop the most desirable usage of the street system;
2. to plan for the additional demands on the road network based on the envisioned growth and development;
3. to enhance York Road, the main street, segment between Joppa Road and Towsontown Boulevard;
4. to address the traffic volume using the local road system which passes through the residential communities;
5. to develop a parking management plan; and
6. to develop viable transit alternatives to serve the core.

B. Plan Elements

The elements of the Transportation Plan include:

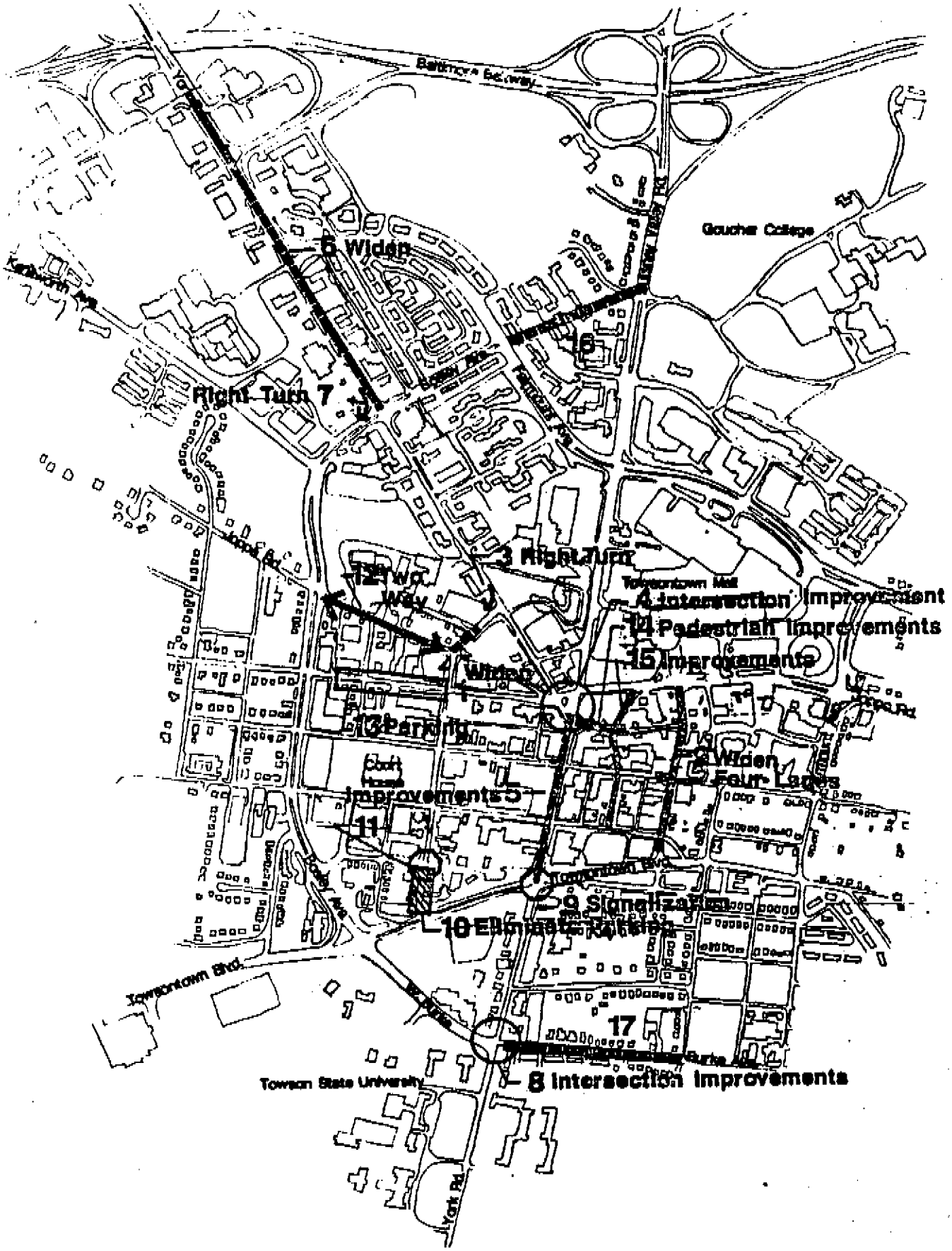
- Ring Road and Street Network
- Neighborhood Streets Southeast of the Core
- Parking
- Growth Potential and Basic Services
- Transit and Transportation Alternatives
- Creation of a Transportation Management Program/Authority

RING ROAD AND STREET NETWORK

The system which serves the town center is part of an integrated road network that makes its way to the core area from all directions. As a result, the movement of vehicles significantly affects the town center and the adjacent residential communities. Increases in

Core Transportation Map

MAP 19



January, 1982 North

traffic and parking demands have coincided with the growth of Towson's town center. The 1978 Plan proposed the completion of the Ring Road and the construction of two north-south distributors, Washington Avenue on the west side and Virginia Avenue on the east. The Ring Road and the distributors were designed to reduce the traffic on York through the Old Shopping District and to convert York Road into a semi-mall.

A. Ring Road

The ring road system originally designed for Towson has been completed except on the southeast side. Adjustments have been made to prevent further intrusion into the historic East Towson community. Southbound Fairmount Avenue traffic has been routed to turn right onto Pennsylvania, then left onto Virginia to reach Towsontown Boulevard. Fairmount is one-way northbound between Hillen and Pennsylvania. These diversions create an inefficient pattern and have not been effective in limiting traffic through the neighborhoods. In addition, Burke Avenue and York Road continue to carry heavy volumes of traffic.

The transportation recommendations for Towson are based upon the increased use of Bosley Avenue, Towsontown Boulevard and Fairmount Avenue and a de-emphasis of York Road for through traffic (see Core Transportation Map).

The roadway alternatives are designed to protect residential areas and to ensure that preferable improvements are not precluded by future development.

Recommendations:

1. Improve signage to encourage the use of Towsontown Boulevard.
2. Consider future right-of-way acquisition for improvements to Dulaney Valley Road at Fairmount.
3. Consider right-of-way reservation to further complete ring road system by connecting Bosley Avenue to Dulaney Valley Road in conjunction with redevelopment of residences (see #16, Transportation Map).

B. Street Network

York Road remains congested and pedestrians are not able to easily cross from east to west. The "Cross Roads" intersection of York-Dulaney Valley-Joppa-Allegheny intersection continues to be confusing and problematic.

The de-emphasis of York Road as a through street will place greater emphasis of traffic movement on the Ring Road and on Washington and Virginia Avenues. As a result, Washington Avenue, between Ware Avenue and Joppa Road, and Virginia Avenue from Pennsylvania to Joppa on its west side, will need to be widened

(Items 1, 2, Transportation Map). A capital program commitment of nearly $500,000 will be required for these changes. In addition, the southbound curb lane of York Road should be converted to right-turn-only lanes at the York and Bosley and York at Washington intersections (Items 3, 7, Transportation Map).

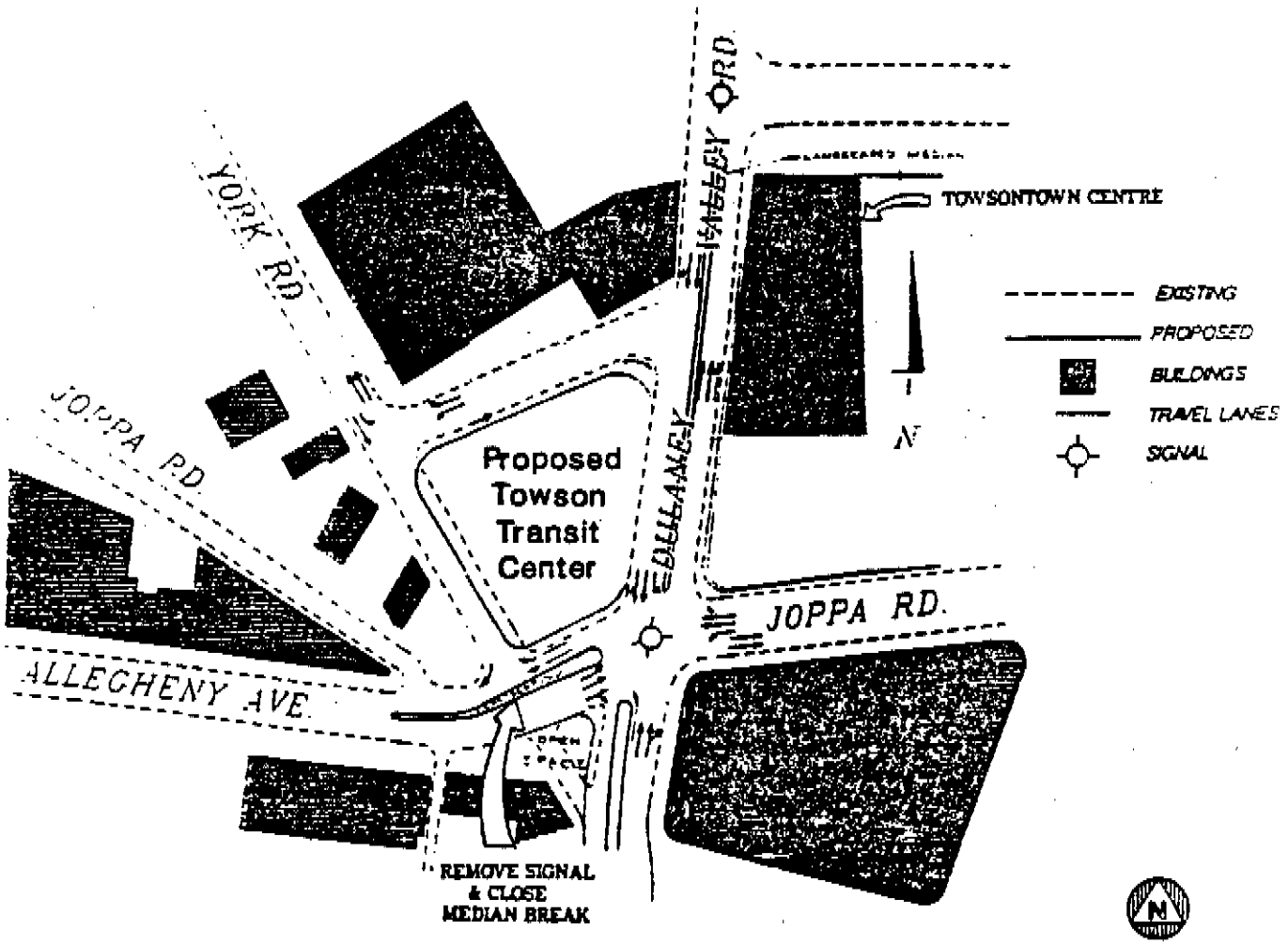
The "Cross Roads" intersection of Joppa-Dulaney Valley and York Road (#4, Transportation Map) should be reconfigured to prevent southbound York Road traffic to continue south of Joppa Road (Figure 1). York Road must be reduced from four lanes to three lanes between Joppa Road and Towsontown Boulevard (#5, Transportation Map). This should necessitate a crucial capital program commitment of approximately $1.3 million and could involve a transfer of York Road for Bosley Avenue with the State of Maryland. This exchange along with the other suggested modifications are recommended to improve pedestrian movement throughout the town center.

Recommendations:

1. Change the use of, and patterns on, York Road by:

   a. Increasing York Road to five lanes between Bosley Avenue and the Beltway, creating a center-turn lane (#6, Transportation Map).
   b. Make the curb lane on southbound York Road from the Beltway a right-turn-only lane onto Bosley Avenue (#7, Transportation Map).
   c. Investigate the need to the transfer of Baltimore County's Bosley Avenue (between York Road and York Road) for the State Highway Administration's York Road (between Bosley Avenue and Burke Avenue).
   d. Program Capital funds for the necessary requirements to reduce York Road between Joppa Road and Towsontown Boulevard from four to three lanes, and left turns at intersections (#5, Transportation Map).
   e. Make the southbound curb lane on York Road at Washington Avenue a right-turn-only lane (#3, Transportation Map).
   f. Change the signal at York and Burke to increase the time for left turns from northbound York to westbound Burke (#8, Transportation Map).
   g. Improve signalization and signage to direct northbound York Road traffic onto Towsontown Boulevard (#9, Transportation Map).
   h. Increase York Road to five lanes between Burke Avenue and Towsontown Boulevard, creating a center turn lane (#18, Transportation Map).

2. The intersection at York-Dulaney Valley and Joppa should be reconfigured as stated in the "County Interagency Comments to the Planning Board" (Figure 1), eliminating the southbound movement of traffic on York Road south of Joppa Road. This requires:



York Rd./Joppa Rd./Dulaney Valley Rd./Allegheny Ave.
Intersection

FIGURE 1

a. Making the southbound curb lane of York Road at Washington Avenue a right-turn-only lane (#3, Transportation Map).
b. Specifically addressing problems of pedestrians crossing Joppa Road to go to Transit Center or businesses on the north side of Allegheny, with the elimination of right-turn- on-red from southbound Dulaney Valley and an evaluation of a bridge, pedestrian light, timing of lights, etc. (#4, Transportation Map).

3. Widen Washington Avenue and Virginia Avenue, to emphasize their use as an alternative to York Road.

   a. Widen the north end of Washington Avenue to four lanes (between Ware Avenue and Joppa Road) (#1, Transportation Map).
   b. Eliminate on-street parking on Washington between Chesapeake Avenue and Towsontown Boulevard to create four through lanes (#10, Transportation Map).
   c. Evaluate the need for a traffic signal at Washington and Susquehanna to improve pedestrian crossing (#11, Transportation Map).
   d. Improve signage at York Road and Towsontown Boulevard. (#9, Transportation Map).
   e. Widen Virginia Avenue between Pennsylvania Avenue and Joppa Road to 4 through lanes and eliminate on street parking on Virginia; if any widening is necessary, it should be on the west side of Virginia Avenue (#2, Transportation Map).

4. Convert Joppa Road to a two-way street between Bosley and Washington (#12, Transportation Map).
5. The 100 block of West Allegheny should have two lane cartways plus short-term parking bays on both sides of the street (#13, Transportation Map).
6. Shealy Avenue along the south side of Hutzler's should become a walkway between York Road and the current parking lot entrance behind the stores on Shealy, open only to emergency vehicles (#14, Transportation Map).
7. Delaware Avenue should be made a 20-foot travelled way with a 7-foot wide parking bay on each side (#15, Transportation Map).
8. All new construction in the town center should include or incorporate off-street loading and unloading capability.

NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS

While vehicles must be able to easily enter and exit the center of Towson, it is critically important to take steps to mitigate the increasingly negative impact and stress experienced by the communities through which these roads pass. Joppa Road, Chesapeake Avenue, Burke Avenue, Hillen Road and York Road (from the south) are experiencing growing volumes of traffic. The preservation and well-being of the residential communities require new approaches to the expanding traffic problems which could ultimately cause their destabilization.

Recommendations:

A. **Hillen and Burke**

Hillen Road-Burke Avenue between Goucher Boulevard and York Road is a minor arterial which carries a heavy volume of traffic to Towson from the east. The 12,000 ADTs place enormous stress on the road system and on the residential communities of Greenbrier, Knollwood-Donnybrook, Aigburth Manor and Burkleigh Square. While action must be taken to reduce traffic volume yet enable vehicles to get into Towson, major road changes are not recommended at this time due to the critical shortage of capital funds and the potentially devastating implications for the communities. Major road changes should be studied by the Office of Planning and Zoning and the Department of Public Works to determine if widening, reconfiguration or other changes are warranted.

Steps must be taken to increase use of Towsontown Boulevard and Hillen Road by those entering and exiting Towson. By redirecting traffic on to these roads and making a section of Burke Avenue one-way the level of service at York and Burke will be lowered from its F-level status. Traffic will be routed into Towson and the negative impact on the residential communities of Burkleigh Square, Towson Manor Village, Aigburth Manor, Knollwood-Donnybrook and East Towson can be avoided. See Figure 2 for initial improvement to the Hillen Road/Burke Avenue intersection.

Ultimately, the intersection of Hillen and Burke should be reconfigured to direct all westbound traffic on to westbound Hillen Road to connect with Towsontown Boulevard (Figure 3). The curve on Hillen Road and Burke can be modified. Eastbound traffic will also find this route easier to use and, by signage and signalling, encouraged to use this road.

The de-emphasis of Burke Avenue as a major east-west connector should provide some overdue relief for residential communities that are being eroded by the increasing number of vehicles passing through.

B. **Other Street Improvements**

1. Install traffic signs, in consultation with the communities, to prevent right turns into the communities from southbound Stevenson Lane in the A.M. and to prevent commuter traffic from entering Stevenson Lane via the communities in the P.M.
2. Make Burke Avenue one-way eastbound between York Road and Maryland Avenue. (#17, Transportation Map).
3. Modify the curve at Hillen Road. (Figure 3).
4. Conduct a study within five years to determine other road changes which may be needed, including the possible widening of Hillen Road.

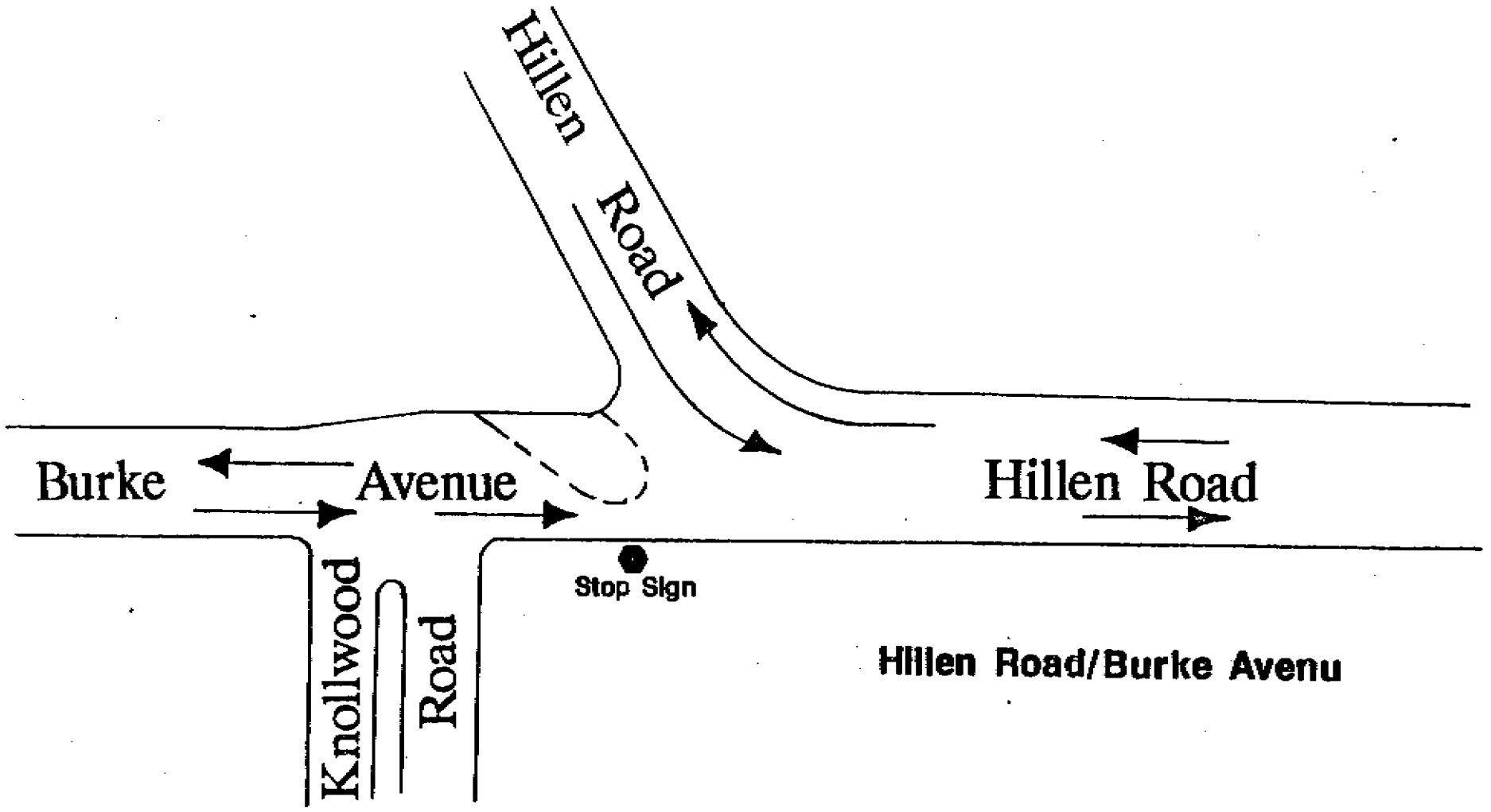

Hillen Road
Burke Avenue
Hillen Road
Knollwood Road
Stop Sign
Hillen Road/Burke Avenu

FIGURE 2

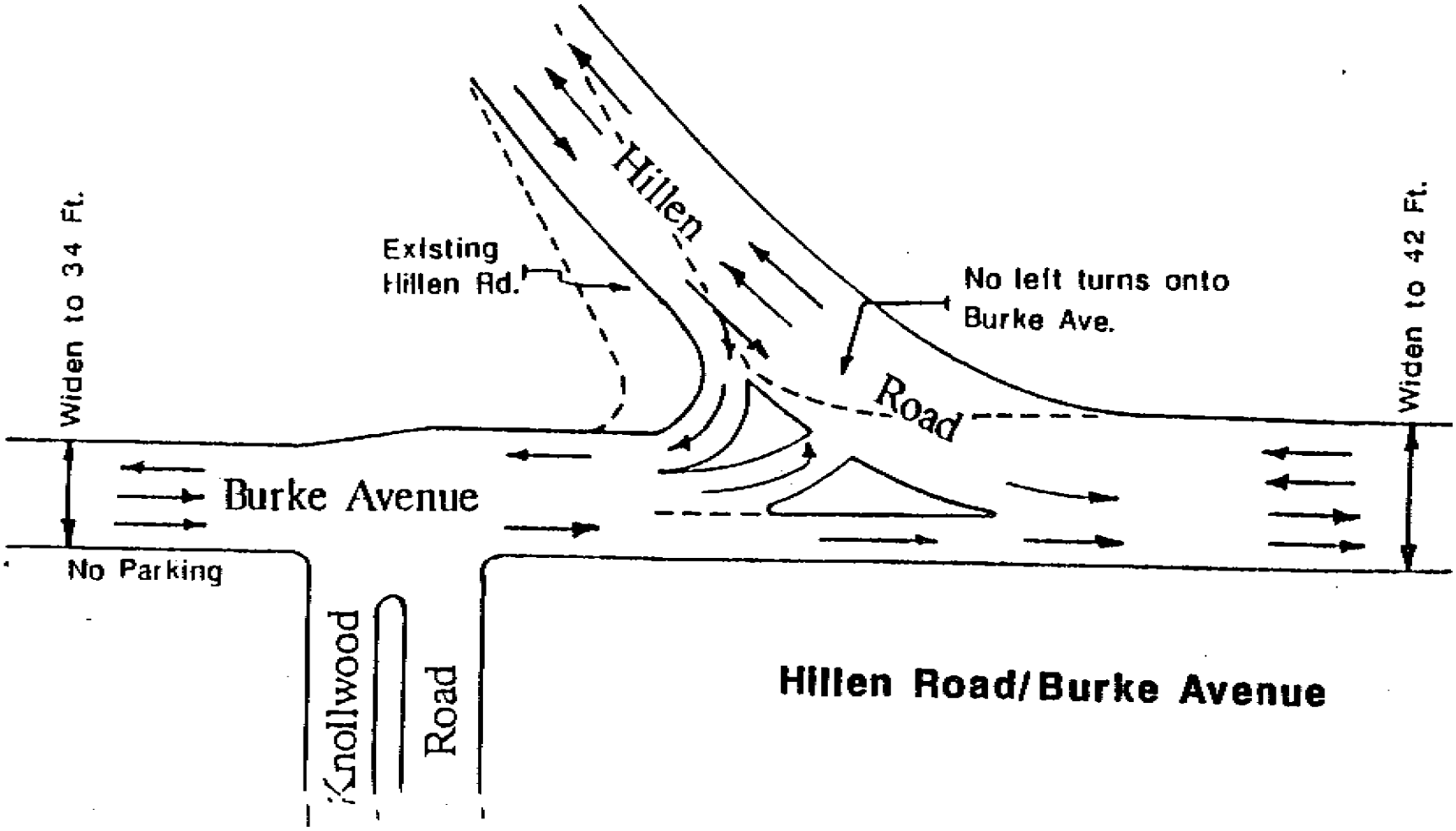

Widen to 34 Ft.
Existing
Hillen Rd.
Hillen
Road
No left turns onto
Burke Ave.
Widen to 42 Ft.
Burke Avenue
No Parking
Knollwood
Road
Hillen Road/Burke Avenue

FIGURE 3

BASIC SERVICES

The exemption from Basic Services legislation in Towson for transportation should remain in place. However, as development continues to bring increasing traffic volumes, strategies must be in place to address the increase in traffic volumes. Towson developers, businesses and residents need to work with the County and local civic groups to devise effective solutions. Strategies do exist to maximize the capacity of existing roads and intersections to offset the effect of additional traffic volumes. The following must be accomplished to assess the extent of the current problems and to plan for future traffic mitigation:

1. Conduct a complete transportation analysis of the study area, including origin/destination analysis; employer surveys of where employees live and types of transportation options available for workers; intersection volumes and turning movements; road capacities; placement of signal timing; placement of additional crossing signals and warning signs; and a connection to the light rail system.

2. Establish a Transportation Management Association to prepare long range programs to reduce the number of daily trips to Towson. Transportation problem solutions may include, but are not confined to: ridesharing; staggering work hours; expanding or initiating transit or paratransit services; parking management; and improving pedestrian facilities. An advantage of a TMA is that it is not restricted by bureaucratic constraints and is free to implement solutions in a creative and timely fashion.

   Central to the formation of a TMA is a firm commitment by the private sector. This is necessary since after the TMA is functioning properly (about 3 years) government support is usually limited to technical assistance. Baltimore County will assist in the formation of a Towson TMA and assist the group in identifying trip reduction strategies for the plan area. Public funding will be sought for the initial 2 or 3 years of operation. By then the TMA is expected to be totally self supporting.

3. Establish a parking management program that works in conjunction with the Revenue Authority to provide adequate parking in the garages at an appropriate cost, provide on-street parking for short term business and shopping, and coordinates an effective residential permit parking system.

4. Analyze the appropriateness of level of service designations for Town Center areas to determine appropriate criteria for urban intersections.

5. Adopt legislation for Community Conservation Areas.

If these five elements are not completed within five (5) years after the adoption of this plan, then the exemption from Basic Services should be lifted and Towson subjected to the same standards as the rest of the County.

PARKING

A. Introduction

Parking is of critical concern to merchants, property owners, and shoppers. A 1987 Barton Aschmann Associates, Inc. report inventoried a total of 13,750 spaces, including 4,200 off-street spaces available to the general public, 8,900 off-street spaces available to visitors and employees of private buildings, 300 metered on-street spaces and about 350 free on-street spaces.

Parking ratios were modified in 1978 to reflect the fact that suburban standards did not apply to a compact walkable town center, several "trips" could be accomplished without moving a parked automobile and much "sharing" could be expected.

Residential parking has also become a problem as vehicles driven by town center employees and university students have overflowed into the neighborhoods. The Residential Parking Program designed to deal with this problem has had only mixed success.

The Baltimore County Revenue Authority, a quasi-public agency, has been the key agency in providing parking for Towson and has done an outstanding job. In 1978, the Authority operated two garages of about 1,800 spaces, four surface lots with about 340 spaces and an on-street inventory of about 400 spaces, for a total of 2,740 spaces. In 1984, the Authority added a third garage behind the Baltimore County Office Building, bringing the total number of garage spaces to approximately 3,200. With the completion of the Tolbert Garage in 1989 and the Library Parking Facility in 1991, 1,800 more spaces have been added. The present supply for the town center is sufficient, although all parking is not provided at the front door of every business.

B. Parking Plan

A parking management plan, as a component of a Transportation System Management Program, must be established which addresses on and off-street parking in the town center and in the adjacent residential communities. The Baltimore County Revenue Authority is the appropriate body to lead the formulation and implementation of such a plan.

The parking management plan should maximize public parking benefits and result in a balanced mix of short-term and long-term parking strategically close to patron destinations, with appropriate pricing and enforcement hours. This plan should also

address issues of subsidized parking, ridesharing, and car and van pooling potential. Incentives for developers and businesses, as well as mandatory participation, to support alternative transit programs such as transit passes and carpooling should also be examined. Finally, the parking management plan should recommend opportunities for business participation in funding customer and employee parking programs such as Park-N-Shop validations and ridesharing programs.

Baltimore County does not dedicate the revenues generated from parking fines to the support of the County's parking program. In many other jurisdictions, parking fines are a pledged income source for the financing of parking facilities. Baltimore County should consider pledging this income stream to the County's parking program so that the Revenue Authority can continue as a self-sufficient parking provided in Towson.

Due to the relatively low initial fees charged in new parking structures, public garages rarely break even financially in the first few years of operation. This deficit, or "gap" can be offset by reducing construction costs, increasing initial patron fees or dedicating alternative revenue sources. In various locations around the country, parking district taxes have been successful in providing additional funding for the development of public parking. Alternative revenue sources such as ad valorem, parking district property taxes, tax increment financing and parking excise taxes should be explored by the Revenue Authority and Baltimore County as a part of its long-term planning for financing parking construction and implementing its parking plan strategies.

The Revenue Authority should also investigate the use of air rights in its plans for any future garages in the Plan Area and work with the future developers to integrate its structures with commercial and/or residential uses.

The meter district for Towson should be expanded to include other areas on the fringe of the town center that are now being used for long-term parking. This would better ensure the turnover of these spaces and prevent long-term parking in these fringe areas by employees who are working in the center of Towson. Although current zoning law precludes meters in residential districts, discussions should occur with communities in the inner impact area to determine if this could help reduce the non-residential parking.

The residential parking program should also be reviewed and possibly amended to further restrict town center employees and Towson State University students from parking on residential streets throughout the day. Consideration should be given to further restrictions on residential parking. However, the critical ingredient in the success of the program will be an increase in enforcement capability.

The Revenue Authority and County government should explore a means for shifting enforcement from the Police Department to the Authority and the use of meter and parking monitors with enforcement authority.

Recommendations

1. Work closely with the Revenue Authority in strengthening parking management and enforcement in the Towson Plan Area.
2. Provide the Revenue Authority with the powers to set on-street parking rates in conjunction with the rates charged in its off-street facilities to make on-street parking less desirable for long-term users. Presently the most valuable spaces (on-street) are the least expensive, encouraging meter feeding and, in effect, reducing the supply of short-term parking within the town core.
3. Increase the enforcement of parking regulations, including the residential parking program. Grant the Revenue Authority enforcement powers to assist the Police Department or transfer parking enforcement responsibilities from the police department to the Revenue Authority and/or private contractors. This can lower enforcement costs, encourage enforcement, and increase the efficiency of these services.
4. Pursue strategies to increase car-pooling and vanpooling by Baltimore County employees, including subsidies for car-pooling and van pooling. Successful programs with County employees could serve as models for the private sector. County employee parking subsidies should be reduced to economically motivate individuals to use other modes of transportation.
5. Baltimore County, as a component of a Transportation Management Program, should work with the Revenue Authority to develop a parking management plan for the Towson Plan Area.
6. Add on-street meters within the town center where appropriate.
7. Review residential parking standards to eliminate abusive use of residential streets by nonresidents.
8. Identify alternative revenue sources, other than receipts, such as parking district property taxes, parking excise taxes and fines from illegal parking or vehicle operation in Towson and its neighborhoods, etc. to facilitate a parking management plan.
9. Maintain current parking standards, except for providing compact car spaces.
10. Create shared parking code standards for the town center, retail, office and residential uses.

ADDITIONAL STUDIES

1. The Harms Report provided an excellent assessment of the road system within the town center. A serious problem, however, is the lack of information about traffic origins, destinations and

movement throughout the entire Plan area. Therefore, recommendations can only focus on the short-term. An area-wide study should be performed, as a component of a Transportation System Management Program, within twelve months of the Plan's adoption under the direction or supervision of the Office of Planning and Zoning so that decisions about long-term, capital improvements can be incorporated into the FY '94 budget. The study should examine:

- existing ground count of average daily trips (ADTs); - an analysis of ADTs generated by approved developments and planned construction;
- routings of existing and future traffic, including an examination of neighborhood impacts;
- the origins and destinations of traffic;
- intersection Level Of Service (LOS) including projections based on planned developments such as Towson Town Center;
- the implications for capital program;
- recommendations for re-routings and methods to enhance, improve the road system; and
- an examination of the turning opportunities, signaling and signage on roads close to neighborhoods and ways to minimize impacts of neighborhoods.

2. The Office of Planning and Zoning and Departments of Public Works and Environmental Protection and Resource Management should conduct a study of the existing, and potential, buffering for arterials feeding Towson through residential communities and work with the effected communities to develop funds to address landscaping needs.

3. The Bureau of Traffic Engineering should perform a survey of road patterns and signalizing in residential communities in the inner impact area and address identified problems with the communities.

TRANSIT AND TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES

Reliance on the automobile has not eased and other transit alternatives will have little or no immediate impact on the traffic problems in Towson and the Plan area. However, it is vital to Towson's long-term health that serious attention be given to identifying reasonable transportation alternatives and to the means for funding and publicizing them. The road system may be able to accommodate a modest increase, but unless steps are taken to mitigate the volume of motor vehicles, Towson's economic well-being will be jeopardized.

Plans for a Transit Center to coordinate the State Mass Transit Administration (MTA) regional bus service with other local transit services have been discussed and studied by a citizen's group and numerous County officials over the past four years. The triangle between York Road, Dulaney Valley Road and Investment Place is the selected site of the Transit Center. The proposed layout of the facility

will enable mixed use development at a later date. The Transit Center will be an important part of Towson's transit plan. Landscaping, pedestrian access, and functional design must be high priority components in the Transit Center's planning if it is to be an integral part of the town center. The County and MTA, however, must also develop a strategy to increase cross-County bus routes and ridership so that the Transit Center achieves its potential.

Access to the Transit Center by pedestrians is of great concern and must be resolved immediately. As changes in the York Road-Joppa-Dulaney Valley Road intersection are made, the County must establish clear, easy ways for pedestrians to enter and exit the site from the west, south and east.

The County, as a component of a Transportation System Management Program, in conjunction with the MTA, the Revenue Authority, and Towson civic groups should develop a program to encourage developers, property owners and employers to support transit passes for employees and other measures to reduce reliance on motor vehicles.

Towson must also be connected with the Central Light Rail Line which will connect Baltimore City, Anne Arundel County, BWI Airport, and Timonium-Hunt Valley. Although there are no funds planned or programmed for the Towson line, two steps must be taken: 1) develop a bus connection from Ridgely, with short headways during peak-use periods, to the Transit Center, and 2) initiate an alternatives analysis, including preliminary engineering, for future connections and the future location of the Towson line into or near the town Center.

A thorough analysis should be made to determine whether Towson can support a park-and-ride service for employees when parking facilities are located outside the town center. The use of existing, outlying parking, short shuttle bus headways and reduced parking incentives in the town center should be factored in. The best local example is the shuttle service to Annapolis from the Navy-Marine Corps Stadium. A park-and-ride program may work best with Baltimore County government employees.

Recommendations

1. Ensure that the development of the Transit Center at Dulaney Valley and York Roads has the highest standards for pedestrian access, design and landscaping. Evaluate plans to use Investment Place for transit vehicles only.
2. Initiate a strategy, in conjunction with the MTA, to develop the site for mixed uses.
3. Create a program to increase cross-County bus service which serves Towson.
4. Work with the Revenue Authority and local business groups, as a component of a Transportation System Management Program, to

develop a five-year plan to reduce reliance on motor vehicles and to encourage alternatives. This plan should consider:

a. support for transit passes as an employee benefit or instead of parking subsidies;
b. use of park-and-ride shuttles to move employees in and out of the town center; and
c. the development of incentives as part of the public benefit identified through the zoning and development process.

5. The County Department of Aging should analyze levels of service and need for the large number of elderly in Towson and expand County Ride or privately operated service to meet that need.
6. Expand discussions with the MTA to ensure that Towson is connected by buses with short headways to the Ridgely stop on the Central Light Rail Line (CLRL) when service opens in 1992.
7. Initiate an alternatives analysis, including preliminary engineering work, for the location of a light rail connection between the CLRL and Towson.
8. Investigate the creation of a shuttle park-and-ride service for Baltimore County government employees to reduce parking needs of workers who do not need their vehicles during the work day.
9. Support the widening of the Beltway and improvements to its ramps, in conjunction with the placement of sound barriers for existing neighborhoods such as Orchard Hills, Dulaney Valley Improvement Association, Stoneridge and Dulaney Towers.