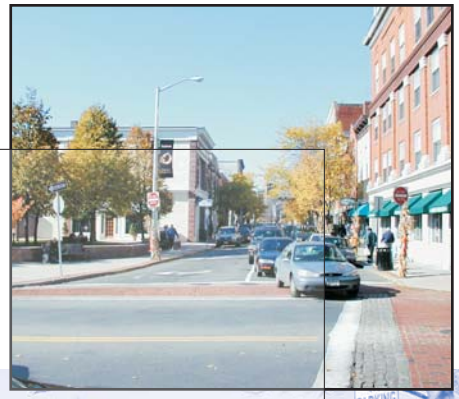
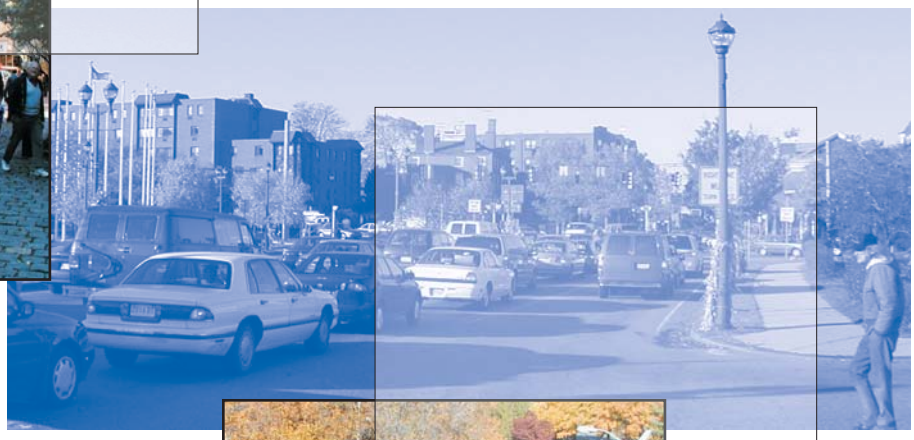
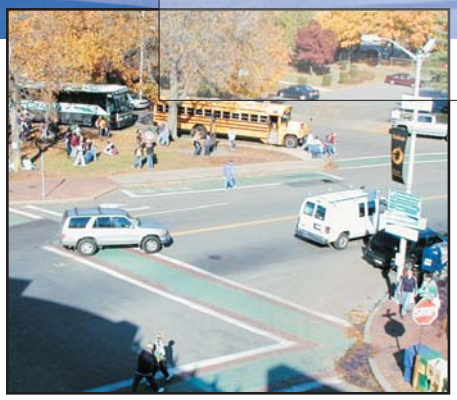
Transportation Improvement Study for Routes 1A, 114, and 107, and Other Major Roadways in Downtown Salem







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Transportation Improvement Study for Routes 1A, 114, and 107, and Other Major Roadways in Downtown Salem

Author
Chen-Yuan Wang
with
Efi Pagitsas
Lourenço Dantas

Contributing Staff
Kathy Jacob
Mark Scannell
Tom Nixon
Hiral Gandhi

Graphics
Kate Parker

Cover Design
Jane M. Gillis

Cover Photographs
Carol Gautreau Bent

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Central Transportation Planning Staff
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Study Advisory Committee

City of Salem
Lynn Duncan, Director of Planning and Community Development
Bruce Thibodeau, Director of Public Services
Robert Callahan, Safety Officer, Salem Police Department
Kate Sullivan, Chief Administrative Aide, Mayor's Office
Denise McClure, Deputy Director, Planning and Community Development

City Councilors
Michael Bencal, Ward Six
Lucy Corchado, Ward One
Michael Sosnowski, Ward Two
Matthew A. Veno, Ward Five

Interest Groups and Residents
Joseph C. Correnti, The Salem Partnership
Paul Durand, Salem Chamber of Commerce
Regina Flynn, Salem resident
Tim Jenkins, Salem resident
Mark Meche, Salem Main Streets
Christine Sullivan, Enterprise Center, Salem State College
Patricia Zaido, The Salem Partnership

Public Agencies
Sam Cleaves, Metropolitan Area Planning Council
David Mohler, Office of Transportation Planning
Steve Woelfel, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

Other Participants at Study Meetings

City of Salem
John Giardi, Department of Public Services
Valerie Gingrich, Department of Planning and Community Development
Joseph E. Nerden, Department of Public Services

Salem Residents
David M. Hart
Barry Heely
Martin H. Imm
James Kearney
Sandra Power
Walter Power, III
James Treadwell

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The 2000 Congestion Management System (CMS) report identified Routes 1A, 114, and 107 in Beverly and Salem as severely congested. In addition, the City of Salem requested in 2002 that the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization fund a study in downtown Salem to examine traffic- and pedestrian-related concerns, along with issues and opportunities related to South Harbor Garage, the Salem commuter rail station, the redesigned Riley Plaza, and the proposed Bridge Street bypass road, which are each located on Route 1A, Route 114, or Route 107.

Salem is a historic seaside community located approximately 16 miles north of Boston. The city, bordered by Swampscott and Lynn on the south, Peabody on the west, Beverly on the north, and Marblehead on the east, was once a trading, manufacturing, and retail center of the North Shore area. Its economy has been gradually transformed into a service-based economy in which tourism is also important. A number of major institutions, such as the Essex County District Superior and Probate Courts, the Peabody Essex Museum, banks, and other financial organizations, along with many tourist attractions, are all located in downtown Salem.

Three major regional highways, Routes 1A, 114, and 107, converge in the dense and constricted downtown area. They carry heavy traffic, both traffic that has its origin or destination downtown and traffic that passes through downtown. Recent CMS roadway monitoring results show that the downtown Salem sections of these roadways experience severe delays in both the morning and evening peak periods.

It is evident that potential traffic flow improvements in the downtown area would be highly beneficial to local and regional traffic on Routes 1A, 114, and 107. In addition to recommending traffic flow improvements, this study examines other transportation issues in the downtown area, primarily pedestrian circulation on Washington Street and pedestrian access to the commuter rail station.

1.2 Study Area

This study focuses on the downtown area, which is defined as the district surrounded by Bridge Street, Winter Street, Washington Square West, Hawthorne Boulevard, New Derby Street, Norman Street, Summer Street, and North Street, plus sections of Derby Street, Congress Street, Lafayette Street, Canal Street, Margin Street, and Essex Street. The study area is shown in Figure 1-1.

1.3 Objectives

The primary objective of this study was to develop strategies to improve traffic and pedestrian circulation in downtown Salem. To achieve this primary objective, three tasks were undertaken:

- Collect and analyze information on existing conditions related to traffic circulation, pedestrian mobility, and public transportation.
- Identify critical transportation issues and concerns through input from the study's advisory committee and field reconnaissance studies.
- Develop a transportation improvement plan that meets Salem's goals for economic development, effective traffic circulation, and a pleasant pedestrian environment.

1.4 Public Participation

An advisory committee was formed to provide knowledge, advice, and guidance for the study. The committee consists of City Council members; City planners, engineers, and officials; representatives from businesses and neighborhoods; and staff from key state agencies. The Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) carried out the study.

During the course of the study, the advisory committee and CTPS conducted four major meetings that were open to Salem residents and the general public. The purpose of the first meeting, held in April 2004, was to introduce the study's work program and to solicit concerns and opinions on transportation issues in the study area. At the second meeting, held in December 2004, the committee reviewed the analysis of existing conditions and identified transportation issues for further study. The purpose of the third meeting, held in March 2005, was to review proposed improvements for Riley Plaza and other congested locations. At the last meeting, held in June 2005, the committee reviewed proposed improvements for pedestrian circulation on Washington Street and pedestrian access to the commuter rail station. The agendas of these meetings are provided in Appendix A.

Figure 1-1 Study Area