TRANSPORTATION OVERVIEW
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Today’s successful cities all share an underlying quality: they understand that services must be provided for a traveling public that has changed dramatically since the early 1970’s. As the population continues to evolve in dynamic ways, cities are realizing that the transportation policies they implement have direct and lasting impacts on the future performance of the city as a whole. As with other critical elements in the design and development of Innovation Square, transportation planning requires a collaborative and thoughtful platform upon which to build the systems that will accommodate the future growth of the Innovation Square District and its connection to the city and region beyond. The underlying methodology for this process is one of alignment of the myriad users of transportation and their specific needs, and the various existing and proposed modes of transportation available to those users.

Innovation Square is emerging as a mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented neighborhood as well as a local and regional destination. The area is quickly becoming a desirable place to live for a number of different people: those employed in Gainesville, those seeking affordable housing, seniors, and others who generally desire a more comprehensive, urban lifestyle. This will precipitate a need for more choice and options in the way we move through the city. In order to respond to this changing environment, Innovation Square is designed to take advantage of these changing trip needs and to establish a model transportation system that is both effective and operationally sustainable. There are numerous travel determinants impacting mode choice based upon the nature of the trip and the characteristics of the trip maker. Trip purpose can influence the traveler’s selection of a particular travel option. Someone may typically bike to work but decide to drive or take a taxi when a formal business meeting is scheduled for that day. On average, eighty percent of one’s trips are to non-work destinations, such as the doctor’s office, grocery shops, or the homes of friends and families. Certain types of trips are more easily accomplished using transit or other alternatives to the car.
The capacity to estimate and adapt to these various demands is fundamental to the mission of Innovation Square. A vital component of the successful future of the district is the creation of a model transportation system that addresses the current needs of today but is flexible enough to serve future demands as the district matures. Innovation Square will be accessible through multiple transportation alternatives that clearly and appropriately match the travel demands of the changing population. This will ensure that the area achieves its maximum potential and maintains its success as both an environment for innovation, as well as a rich and rewarding place to live.

The transportation plan for the district is specific to district needs while being consistent with the university, city and county, as well as regional plans. Gainesville currently provides a robust biking system, as well as a cutting-edge regional transit system. Innovation Square will build on these significant assets and provide a platform for increasing accessibility. Issues that are addressed in the plan include: trip purpose, time of day (congestion levels), job types, transit availability and frequency, cost and availability of parking, trip length (time), proximity of stores and services, as well as others that provide the data and influence specific factors in the future design and deployment of the system.

Demographic and economic conditions are changing. The traditional nuclear family appears to be a thing of the past, as do the associated housing preferences and travel patterns. One must now consider both social aspects and individual choices when designing future transportation systems. In the near future, Gainesville will, like the rest of the country, experience historic and significant population shifts. The baby-boomer generation will begin to retire and often seek smaller houses closer to the city. A shift towards having fewer children later in life is emerging and the percentage of households with young children is at its lowest ever recorded. These changes are correlated with a rise in the student population and demand for more economical modes of travel, such as transit. Further, these modes typically appeal to people from around the world who seek out urban settings where they are employed in high-paying research sector jobs. As these changes continue to unfold, travel needs will be significantly different than they were in past decades. Innovation Square is creating an environment in which these alternative accessibility options can thrive and support the district well into the future.

Cities that invest heavily in building robust transportation systems offering a variety of travel options will be best equipped to serve their changing demographics and best positioned to attract new jobs and skilled workers.
The City of Gainesville currently has a robust transit system in addition to a well-operating transportation network. The central city and its environs enjoy a well-connected grid system that offers a number of travel routes, a pedestrian-scaled environment, bicycle facilities and vehicular travel speeds that are appropriate to a vibrant, urban area, as well as to less central urban area. In addition to this extensive road network, the city is also served by the Gainesville Regional Transit System (RTS). The Gainesville Regional Airport is also increasing its presence as a regional airport.

The present transit system of buses successfully addresses medium distance, rush-hour travel as well as internal circulation for students. There are over 30 routes of varying headways serving the greater Gainesville area, of which three serve Innovation Square (RTS City & Campus Bus Schedule, 2011). The RTS system is also flexible and has the ability to modify headways and routes as needed due to changing transit patterns, events, and development pressures around the city. The routes are comprehensive and well-tracked. The system utilizes an on-line, real-time locator for all busses in the system ensuring the most convenient accessibility to each route. Further the RTS has implemented a smart traffic management system for real-time updates and modifications to traffic flows for optimum efficiency (City of Gainesville Regional Transit System (RTS) Transit Development Plan, 2009).

The bicycle infrastructure is a vital component of the system with approximately 100 miles of lanes and trails (City of Gainesville and University of Florida GIS data, 2011). Compared to many cities, automobile drivers support the local commuter and recreational bicycle culture in their general acceptance and regard for bicyclists even on streets where striped bike lanes are not present. Gainesville and the University of Florida (UF) continue to successfully promote and fund a multi-modal system that is the envy of other cities throughout the country. The framework for a high quality system is in place and is continuing to expand; a number of modes of transportation are currently in place, and the number of users accommodated is expanding.
Above. Maps of the existing transportation system.

Below. Modes and users prioritized (orange) by the existing system.
TRANSPORTATION OVERVIEW. EXISTING SYSTEM.
Looking into the near future, Gainesville is maintaining its support for a balanced transportation system. Near term, funded transportation improvements cover a wide range of projects from expansion of bicycle facilities and traffic signal upgrades to the improvement and maintenance of the street network itself (Gainesville MTPO Transportation Improvement Program, 2011). Specific improvements such as the resurfacing of key streets and streetscape enhancements on South Main Street shows that the City is seeking to maintain the condition of its grid for motorists while keeping its streets pedestrian-friendly. Bicycle infrastructure is continuing to be expanded and supported by the addition of new facilities such as the completion of Archer and Bivens Braid Trails, the UF Campus Greenway, and a new dedicated bike path along W. 6th Street, which will directly serve Innovation Square.

The Gainesville area also benefits from active regional involvement and interest in the various planning efforts. An extensive bus rapid transit (BRT) and express bus system is prioritized for the greater Gainesville area (RTS Rapid Transit System Plan, 2010). Funding for right-of-way is being set aside on some projects and Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) applications are being introduced, including an interchangeable message sign for the 13th Street corridor (City of Gainesville Capital Improvements Plan, 2010). Other Transportation System Management (TSM) measures such as intersection signal-timing updates along 8th Avenue and the construction of several roundabouts along Depot Avenue are part of the City’s overall transportation strategy, which will improve traffic flow in the vicinity of Innovation Square.

The funded transportation improvements will significantly add to the type and availability of a number of modes of transportation that are currently in place, and the number of users accommodated will expand greatly as the future systems are expanded or introduced.
Above. Maps of the funded transportation system.

Below. Modes and users prioritized (orange) by the funded system.
IDEAL SYSTEM: TRANSPORTATION OVERVIEW.
As projects like Innovation Square continue to spur a renewed interest in Gainesville’s urban core, the city is positioned to take advantage of the opportunity to create a model transportation system that balances both mobility and accessibility. The principle of mobility - the ability to quickly and easily travel between destinations - is often at odds with accessibility, which emphasizes making destinations easy to get to for as many people as possible. And the future of the region’s transportation system is poised to realign these needs with the operation of the system.

Innovation Square is predicated on the idea that the maximum number of users are efficiently served by the appropriately implemented modes of transportation. As such, the district will be a major driver in the pursuit of the following enhancements to the already high-performing overall system: expanded bicycling facilities, stronger and more responsive local bus system, introduction of express bus systems, expansion of the current transfer facilities both in capacity and transit types, and support of an expanded traffic signal management system among others.

Innovation Square is committed to enhancing the overall system through advanced technology to improve system efficiencies, vehicle trip reduction to reduce motor vehicle demand and land-use compatibility with multi-modal solutions, including the reduction of parking needed in the district and the surrounding areas. The future transportation planning, as it continues through the life of the project, will include further accessibility analyses, investment strategies, prioritization of project implementation and other components to insure ease of movement and the highest level of accessibility possible.

The system is ultimately set up to allow the community to address future transportation needs without closing off precluding future innovation. By allowing the infrastructure to accommodate the most appropriate solutions to future challenges, it reinforces the fundamental idea of the interactive nature of cities and the production of innovative human interaction.
FURTHER OPPORTUNITIES AND INITIATIVES

The implementation of a bike share program for UF students would place the University in the forefront of reducing vehicular trips for mid-day short range trips. The installation of bike racks and bike stations in the Innovation Square District (ISD) would greatly enhance the visibility and usage of bicycle travel throughout the District.

An internal District circulator shuttle service is envisioned for the future effectiveness of coordinated transportation and parking systems. Running short-trip shuttle service within the District can address short-trip circulation needs for lunch trips, meetings and errands. Such service significantly increases the chances for success of any BRT or express bus service being implemented in the future.

Transit and park and ride facilities are being analyzed and will be implemented to provide an environment that does not impair or discourage pedestrian circulation.

Community benefits of transit investments will be maximized by incentivizing residential and jobs development in proximity of local and regional bus and future BRT service.

Current assessment of the organization of a Transportation Management Organization (TMO) administered through the Innovation Square District will benefit the overall operation of the area. TMOs leverage private funds with public sources to fund programs and incentives. Combined with diligent management of paid parking, TMO programs can encourage area residents, employees and shoppers to choose transit, walking, bicycling, ride-sharing and telecommuting over driving.

While Innovation Square is designed with the best bicycle, pedestrian and vehicular solutions, these streets are a portion of an area-wide system. As such, the district will continue to coordinate with areas beyond its specific boundaries to ensure efficient and appropriate operations.

Ultimately establishing a method for prioritizing and linking identified transportation improvements to appropriate funding mechanisms is an important piece of an implementation effort. Typically, projects are listed by funding source. However it is more effective to identify necessary projects and programs in a systematic nature regardless of project sponsor and this will be the foundation for prioritizing projects related to Innovation Square. This process is designed to display the necessary system and project sponsorship opportunities that can then be identified by responsible party, while also allowing for inevitable changes in the methods through which infrastructure will be funded. This will help ensure that the proposed systems are both responsive unfold in the appropriate sequence.

Transportation systems are extremely complex, and they have significant impact on the manner in which cities are developed. Innovation Square is providing a platform for the continued growth of a robust and highly efficient system. It has the potential to provide a model transportation system that aligns the myriad users present in a rich and vibrant community with the transportation support needed to see the successful development of a truly livable, walkable, adaptable, sustainable, and most importantly for transportation, accessible district, city and region.

REFERENCES


Bicycle & pedestrian GIS data provided by the City of Gainesville and University of Florida (Spring-Summer 2011).


An ideal regional & district transportation system includes:

- Expanded bike system and facilities
- Introduce bike share programs
- Repair & fill gaps in the sidewalks
- Ensure crosswalks are accessible and in a state of good repair
- Offer frequent express bus service during peak hour travel
- Implement frequent peak & off-peak circulator bus