

9.0 MOBILITY ELEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Currently, the vast majority of people visiting Downtown Omaha arrive by car. In order to be successful in creating the vibrant, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use environment that was desired by the majority of the participants in the Visioning Process, this modal split will need to change. Surface parking lots will need to be transformed into mixed-use building sites, traffic will need to be calmed, transit will need to be enhanced, commuting by bicycle will need to be encouraged, and the pedestrian experience will need to be improved. The following Mobility Elements are part of a complete package of enhancements that will alter the way people move in and through Downtown, resulting in increased accessibility and an improved quality of life for all.

9.1 TRAFFIC

Downtown streets were typically designed for two-way traffic movement. In locations where large volumes of traffic needed to pass through an area, two-way streets were often converted to a system of one-way pairs. This was the case with Downtown Omaha, where a high number of drivers from North Omaha worked in the stockyards, and intersected with commuters arriving from the west, causing significant traffic congestion.

Times have changed. Interstate 480 was constructed and now carries most through traffic around Downtown, commuting

patterns have changed, and best practices from around the country recommend conversion of one-way pairs back to two-way traffic movement in order to support neighborhood redevelopment goals. Results of the visioning process placed a high priority on examining the possibility of converting Downtown's streets back to two-way traffic movement. Working with the Public Works Department, a tiered approach for conversion was identified.

- Conversion from one-way to two-way can occur now:
 - 15th Street from Marcy Street to Capital Avenue
 - 17th Street from Chicago Street to Capital Avenue
 - 17th Street from Farnam Street to Jackson Street
 - 19th Street north of I-480
 - 20th Street north of I-480
 - Jones Street from 22nd Street to 26th Street
- Conversion from one-way to two-way will require additional study. An alternative would be to reduce lanes and add additional on-street parking
 - Study Priority #1: 24th Street and 24th Avenue between Dodge Street and Leavenworth Street
 - Study Priority #2: Leavenworth from 13th to I-480 and Howard Street/St. Mary's Avenue from 14th to I-480
 - Study Priority #3: Farnam Street and Harney Street between 10th Street and I-480.



- Must remain as one-way pair:
 - Dodge Street and Douglas Street from 8th Street to I-480
 - 13th Street and 14th Street from I-480 to Leavenworth Street
 - 19th Street and 20th Street from I-480 to Mason Street

Conversion of one-way pairs to two-way streets is not without its challenges and expense. The following need to be considered as the City studies the impacts of converting the 24th Street/24th Avenue, Leavenworth/St. Mary's, and Farnam/Harney corridors to two-way movement:

- Signal timing changes
- New signals to face opposite direction
- Possible need for left turn lanes
- Reduced capacity due to left turn lanes
- Parking structure entrances designed for one-way streets
- Real or perceived increase in congestion

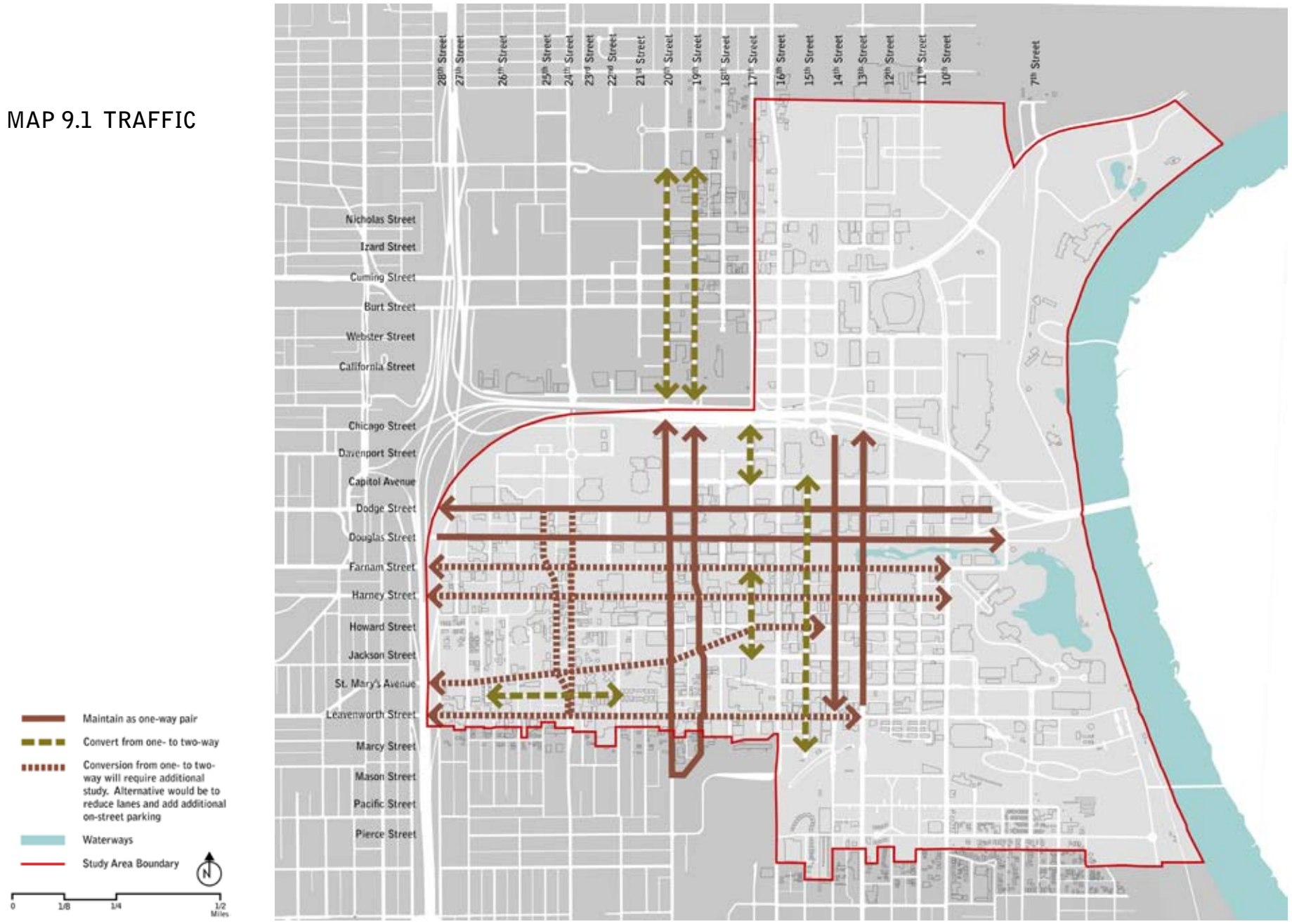
Traffic Implementation:

- Funding/Conversion of streets identified for immediate conversion
- Commencement of Traffic Studies for the three priority pairs identified for further study
- Implementation of results of Traffic Studies



Lunch time traffic on Douglas Street flowing smoothly with three lanes temporarily blocked by school buses

MAP 9.1 TRAFFIC





9.2 NEW STREET SEGMENTS

The Downtown Omaha Master Plan has identified a number of opportunities for new streets within the Study Area. These streets are designed to facilitate traffic movement and provide new connections between districts. The following is a summary of recommended new street segments.

- 11th Street/Nicholas Street/Cuming Street Intersection Reconfiguration** – The reconstruction of this intersection is intended to direct heavy truck traffic emanating from industrial areas to the north of the Study Area to Cuming Street. Trucks currently disperse throughout the area, and have a negative impact on redevelopment. This new alignment will provide a direct route to Cuming Street and then west to the regional freeway network.
- I-480 20th Street On/Off Ramp Reconstruction** – The 20th Street on and off ramps should be constructed as slip ramps connecting directly to Cass and Chicago Streets. The primary benefit of this reconstruction would be the provision of a second set of on/off ramps to service the Events District, thus helping to alleviate traffic congestion during major events. A secondary benefit would be the two blocks of redevelopment potential created by the vacation of the off-ramp on the blocks bounded by 19th, 20th, Chicago, and Capitol.
- Capitol Avenue Connection to 20th Street** – Reconstructing the 20th Street ramps would allow Capitol Avenue to connect directly with 20th Street, thus completing the grand axial relationship of Capitol Avenue and Central High School.
- 24th and Davenport Round-a-bout** – Construction of this round-a-bout would help calm traffic along 24th Street as it moves through the Joslyn District and Creighton University campus.

- 16th Street Connection** – By the end of the planning period, the Doubletree Hotel will be approaching 70 years in age. It is entirely possible that it will be at the end of its useful life span. If redevelopment of the site occurs, 16th Street should be reconnected between Capitol Avenue and Dodge Street, thus providing a direct connection (streetcar, vehicular, and pedestrian) between the Downtown Core and North Downtown.



The Double Tree Hotel currently terminates 16th Street

- 10th Street Bridge Reconstruction** – The 10th Street Bridge over the Gene Leahy Mall is currently being redesigned to accommodate an additional travel lane, streetcar tracks, and pedestrian walkways. Once reconstructed, traffic flow and pedestrian accommodations on this key link between the Qwest Center and Old Market should be greatly enhanced.
- 11th Street Pedestrian/Streetcar Bridge** – Enhanced connectivity between the Old Market and North Downtown/the Events District was identified as a key priority during a

design study of the Gene Leahy Mall funded by Omaha by Design. If the City moves forward with a Downtown streetcar system, and 11th Street is the recommended route due to traffic conflicts on 10th Street, a pedestrian/streetcar-only bridge should be constructed over the mall. Located at 11th Street, this bridge would be designed to accommodate both pedestrians and the streetcar.



10th Street Bridge looking north over the Gene Leahy Mall

- **Capitol Avenue Connection to Riverfront Drive** – As part of the previously mentioned Grand Lawn project, Capitol Avenue would be extended east, across the railroad tracks, to Riverfront Drive. This new elevated connection would provide a direct vehicular and pedestrian link connecting the Downtown Core with the Riverfront.
- **Douglas Street Connection to Riverfront Drive** – As part of the previously mentioned Douglas Street riverfront connection, Douglas Street would be extended east, across the railroad tracks, to an extended Riverfront Drive. This new elevated connection would provide another direct vehicular and pedestrian link connecting the Downtown Core with the Riverfront.



The T-intersection of Douglas Street at 8th Street would connect to an extended Riverfront Drive.

- **Little Italy Connection** – In order to encourage additional redevelopment along the South Riverfront, it will be necessary to provide additional access to and from this isolated area. As such, Leavenworth Street and Marcy Street should be extended to the east, where they would intersect Riverfront Drive South (a new street that would parallel the Missouri River) and extend south, under the Union Pacific Missouri River Railroad Bridge, and ultimately connect with Pierce Street. This series of new streets would establish an interconnected network that would assist in opening up this isolated area.

New Street Segments Implementation:

- Construct those segments that have already been designed and funded
- Prioritize the list of new street segments identified above
- Design and fund construction of new segments based on the priority list



MAP 9.2 NEW STREET SEGMENTS



9.3 BIKE ROUTES

During the Visioning Workshop, advocates of commuting to and from work on bicycles lobbied for identifying appropriate bike routes within the Study Area. The result is a bike route map that incorporates their ideas and identifies several key opportunities. Key elements include connections to residential neighborhoods to the west via the proposed 20-Mile System and Aksarben Bikeway, completion of the Riverfront Trail through Downtown Omaha, additional multi-use trails, bike lanes, streets with shared bike/parking shoulders, and bicycle boulevards (sharrow routes). In addition, advocates helped identify appropriate locations for Bike Centers, which would provide bicycle locker, shower, and repair facilities. Details are identified on the Bike Route Map.

Bike Route Implementation:

- Confirm locations for Bike Centers
- Co-locate/coordinate construction of Bike Centers with new MAT bus transfer center and future multi-modal center
- Prioritize the list of new bike routes identified on the map
- Design and fund construction of new segments based on the priority list



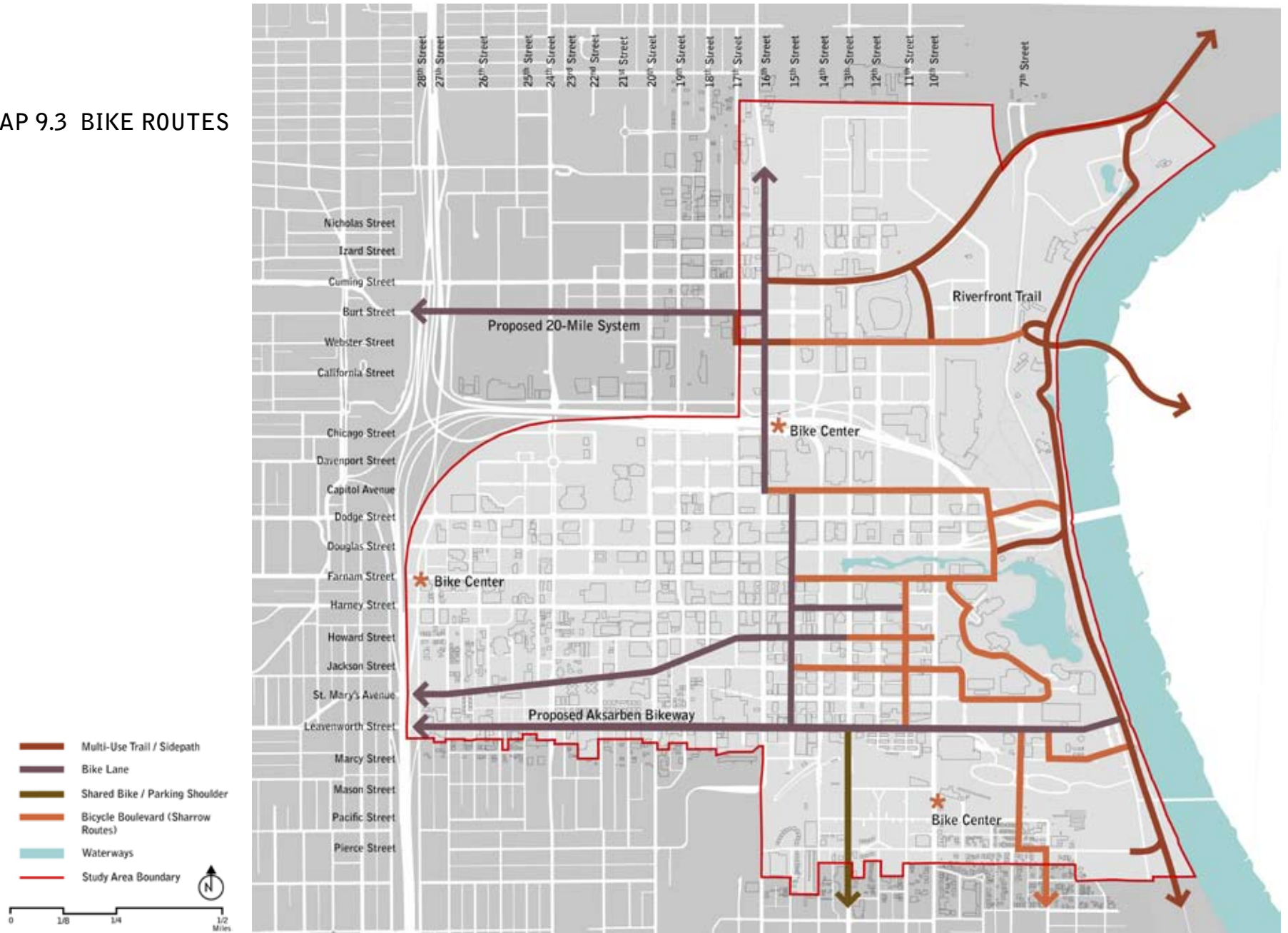
Striped bike lane on arterial roadway



Bike lanes and bike boxes designated with solid green paint



MAP 9.3 BIKE ROUTES



9.4 TRANSIT

The Transit Map identifies future opportunities for downtown transit service. In addition to the streetcar lines that were mentioned in the Framework Elements chapter, the Plan also identifies Downtown as a hub for future light rail and/or commuter rail lines. The former Burlington Station would be converted into a Multi-Modal Center that would accommodate commuter and/or light rail, streetcars, inter-city bus, MAT bus, taxis, jitneys, and bicycles.

A preferred location has also been identified for a new MAT Transit Center. This facility is currently located on 16th Street between Dodge and Harney, and accommodates approximately 355 busses per day. The new site would be located farther to the north on 16th Street, adjacent to I-480 (on State of Nebraska



Current bus transit center on 16th Street

right-of-way). This new site could accommodate streetcars, busses, and bicycles (see concept plan), and is centrally located between the Downtown Core, Creighton University, and the Events District. Relocating the transit center to the north would allow for the redesign of 16th Street between Dodge and Jackson, something identified during the Visioning Process as a high priority.

Transit Implementation:

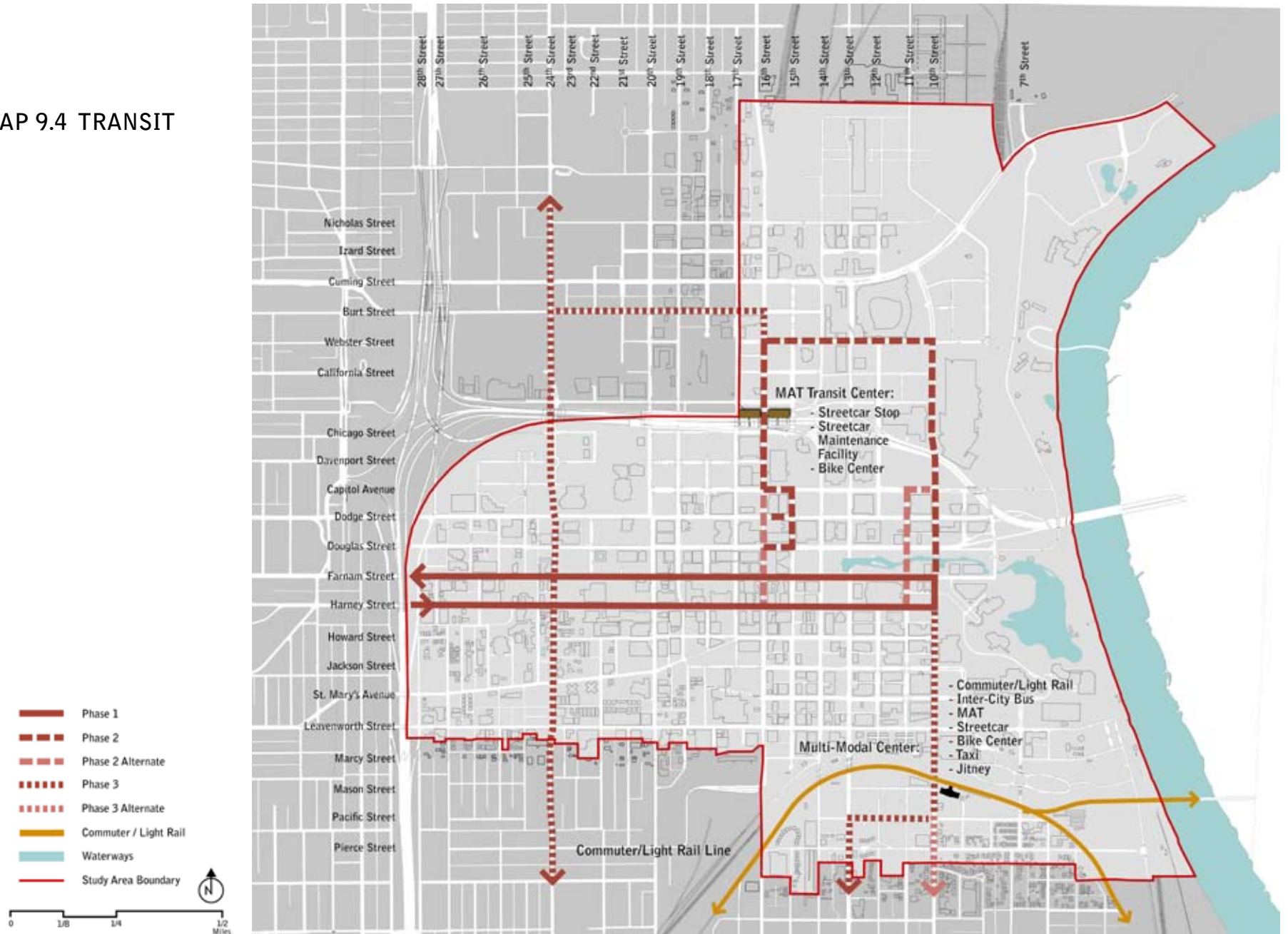
- Confirm location for new MAT Transit Center
- MAT negotiate with NDOR for long-term lease
- MAT apply for Federal funding
- Secure Burlington Station for Multi-Modal Center
- Prioritize future transit investments (i.e. light rail, commuter rail, etc.)



Conceptual plan of a new MAT Transit Center at 16th and Cass Streets



MAP 9.4 TRANSIT



9.5 PARKING

The majority of those visiting Downtown Omaha arrive in their personal vehicles. To help keep Downtown vibrant, and until more visitors and employees choose other transportation options, it will be necessary provide parking. New public parking should be in the form of parking structures instead of surface parking lots. In addition, these structures should not front onto the sidewalk but should instead be hidden from view, behind liner buildings that contain active uses.

The Parking Structures Map identifies all existing parking structures within Downtown Omaha. In addition, it identifies public parking structures proposed during the planning process. These structures are dispersed throughout Downtown, and serve a variety of purposes. Parking structures near Qwest Center Omaha are designed to replace parking on a 1:1 basis so that new development can occur on the large surface parking lots. These parking structures are designed to not only provide replacement parking, but to also accommodate additional demand brought about by new development and TD Ameritrade Park. Elsewhere throughout Downtown Omaha, new parking structures are strategically located to accommodate new development.

Parking Structure Implementation:

- Coordinate with the proposed Parking Management Study identified in the Plan
- Identify key priorities in terms of highest demand or potential as a catalyst for new development
- Develop appropriate funding sources/mechanisms



Parking garage built behind historic structures



Parking garage tucked behind retail in Dubuque, IA



MAP 9.5 PUBLIC PARKING STRUCTURES

