

# Bus 'backbone' and two-way streets part of new downtown Waco transit study

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Major upgrades to the public bus system and an end to one-way streets in downtown are among the ambitious proposals from a consultant the city hired for a downtown transit study.

The \$300,000 study is focused on a vision for redeveloping Greater Downtown as a dense, walkable core of the city where people don't have to depend on cars to get around.

The preliminary proposals were presented at two open house events Tuesday, and final recommendations and cost estimates are expected in the next few months.

Mayor Malcolm Duncan Jr., who was among 17 who attended the first meeting at noon Tuesday, said the study is on the right track.

"I think there's a real community interest in improved public transit," he said.

"I was really impressed with the priorities they had and the way they timed them. It is going to take time to fund all of it."

The proposal to revert Franklin and Washington avenues and Fourth and Fifth streets to two-way streets is intended in part to make downtown more bike- and pedestrian-friendly and less confusing to out-of-town drivers.

But the study has implications for the whole city and county.

Among the proposals is to scrap Waco Transit's hub-and-spoke system that routes most riders to the downtown station to change buses.

Instead, riders could take neighborhood "collector" buses to new stations on a transit "backbone" that would run east to west, possibly along Franklin Avenue. Those "bus rapid transit" lines would synchronize with traffic signals to increase speed, with an estimated 30-minute run between Bellmead and Hewitt Drive.

## Reducing trip time

CDM Smith Vice President Michael Townes said Tuesday that the reorganized system would greatly reduce trip times, which now are typically around an hour. He said the first phase of the reorganization would be a detailed planning analysis that would determine routes and alignments for the system.