

# Guadalupe Corridor Study

AURA's Recommendations



## Background

The Austin Transportation Department has initiated a [corridor study](#) of Guadalupe Street from MLK to 29th Street, along with surrounding areas. The goal is to “identify and recommend short to long-term transportation improvements to enhance mobility, safety, and quality of life along the Guadalupe Street Corridor.” A preliminary set of recommendations is expected to be announced in the fall of 2015, with the project completed in the winter.

AURA encourages the Austin Transportation Department to boldly reimagine the corridor, above all in terms of people. We recommend the following three improvements in particular.

## Extend transit priority lanes from Downtown to the Drag

At peak periods, transit moves [roughly half](#) of the people passing through the corridor. This is to be expected in a central location like the Drag, as transit is by far the most efficient way to move people in a city.

Given the anticipated growth of the city, increasing the throughput of people in the corridor is of paramount importance. The city should plan ahead for increased frequency of existing bus routes, and continue to examine the viability of Guadalupe as a [future corridor for rail service](#). Buses should not have their effectiveness limited by less efficient forms of



mobility. Two lanes of Guadalupe should be dedicated solely to transit.

Transit priority lanes come in more than one variety. [Side-running \(curbside\)](#) lanes generally require less space for waiting passengers, but buses may be slowed by cars turning right. [Center-running \(median\)](#) lanes usually need islands for passengers to wait in, similar to those already in place on the west side at 21st and 23rd Streets. [As was done recently in Seattle](#), the city should have both scenarios modeled, and the release of the results should be the occasion for a public discussion of their advantages and disadvantages.

Mayor Adler [recently observed](#) the effectiveness of transit priority lanes in Dublin, Ireland. We encourage other city officials to look at successful implementations in other cities.

## Remove the wall on the east side of Guadalupe

The wall serves no useful purpose. Ugly and unwelcoming, it contains a large amount of wasted space in a neighborhood where space is at a premium. The shade trees inside the wall mostly provide shade to dirt.

[Historical photographs](#) show an attractive lawn where the wall now stands. UT has beautiful lawns on the south and east sides of the tower, and a small park and pond on the north. Why should the west side of UT have a wall?

We look forward to the city's recommendations on improving the pedestrian and bicyclist experience on the west side of the Drag. But there is no reason to ignore half of the problem. We support a bold vision for both sides of the street.



*Interior of the wall south of 24th street.*

## Remove on-street parking from the west side of the street

The space currently occupied by parked cars should instead be used for pedestrian, bicycle, or transit facilities. Abundant parking exists in garages on San Antonio and on streets and lots nearby. There are seventy parking spaces on the Drag, roughly the same number in one of the many nearby lots. By contrast, San Antonio Street has over 120, St. Austin's garage over 200, and the University Co-op garage about 400. The area does not lack adequate parking.

It is often said that on-street parking spaces are very important to businesses on the Drag. We encourage the collection and analysis of data on the matter. Last spring, over the course of several weeks, AURA members spent a total of ten hours observing three familiar businesses on the Drag: a coffee shop, a convenience store, and a restaurant—none of which have free parking in garages nearby. During that time, 2,142 people entered the businesses. Only 14 of them (0.65%) parked in the block of ten spaces in front prior to entering. The other 2,128 either parked a distance away and walked, or arrived by some other method.

Parking right in front of a business is a common expectation, but the Drag is not a common location. It is both the front door to UT and an important thoroughfare for West Campus, [one of the most urban neighborhoods in Texas](#). In recent months, wayfinding signs have been installed, which direct drivers new to the area to parking garages. This initiative should be encouraged and expanded. It should be immediately obvious to visitors that parking for UT and the Drag should not be looked for on the Drag itself.

