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# Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.................................................................................................................. 1  
Project History .................................................................................................................................. 1  
Study Team ....................................................................................................................................... 2  
Study Area....................................................................................................................................... 2  
Public Outreach............................................................................................................................... 2  

CHAPTER 2: EXISTING CONDITIONS DATA COLLECTION AND MAPPING........................................... 2  
Review of Area Master Plans ........................................................................................................... 2  
Data Collection.................................................................................................................................. 6  
Structures......................................................................................................................................... 7  
Existing Transportation Network ...................................................................................................... 13  
Existing Environmental Resources .................................................................................................. 20  
Traffic Data...................................................................................................................................... 44  
Public Outreach.............................................................................................................................. 48  
Summary of Existing Conditions ...................................................................................................... 48  

CHAPTER 3: ECONOMIC MARKET ANALYSIS......................................................................................... 77  
Background ...................................................................................................................................... 77  
Existing Market Dynamics.................................................................................................................. 89  
Strategic Analysis.............................................................................................................................. 91  

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF THE EXISTING TRANSPORTATION NETWORK........................................ 99  
Barriers to Multimodal Safety, Connectivity, and Accessibility .......................................................... 99  
Bridge Structures ............................................................................................................................ 108  
Existing Roadway Conditions ......................................................................................................... 118  
Existing Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities and Demand ................................................................. 120  
Existing Freight Operations ............................................................................................................ 128  
Existing Transit Services and Operations ......................................................................................... 130  
Existing Traffic Operations ............................................................................................................. 141
Public Outreach.......................................................................................................................... 148
Summary ...................................................................................................................................... 148

CHAPTER 5: DESIGN OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS.................................................................. 158
Roadway......................................................................................................................................... 158
Pedestrian and Bicycle ................................................................................................................ 159
Transit ........................................................................................................................................... 169
Freight ........................................................................................................................................... 179
Urban Design .................................................................................................................................. 179
Bridge Structures .......................................................................................................................... 197
Traffic – Future (2040) Conditions .............................................................................................. 208
Public Outreach ............................................................................................................................ 218
Summary ...................................................................................................................................... 219

CHAPTER 6: CORRIDOR PLAN AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES................................................................ 230
Guiding Principles ......................................................................................................................... 230
Short-Term Bridge Maintenance Work .......................................................................................... 231
Corridor Recommendations ......................................................................................................... 231
Corridor Cost Estimates ................................................................................................................ 234
Public Outreach ............................................................................................................................. 237
Next Steps / Key Factors to Advance the Project ......................................................................... 237
Summary ...................................................................................................................................... 240

APPENDICES
Appendix A – Agency Correspondence
Appendix B – Existing Market Dynamics Analysis
Appendix C – Additional Economic Data
Appendix D – Bridge Cost Estimates
Appendix E – Corridor Cost Estimates
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Project History

The historic Hanover Street Bridge, officially renamed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge in 1993, was constructed in 1916, and is a major gateway into Baltimore City from I-95 and the Port of Baltimore. This 100-year old drawbridge is located on South Hanover Street and crosses the Middle Branch of the Patapsco River between West Cromwell Street and Waterview Avenue. The bridge is the primary access corridor into the city for many south Baltimore neighborhoods.

In 2016, The Baltimore City Department of Transportation (BCDOT) began a study of improvements to the bridge and adjacent corridor. The goal of the Hanover Street Corridor Study is to identify ways to upgrade and enhance the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge and Hanover Street corridor that will improve accessibility for local and regional motorists to and from the Port of Baltimore, promote better connectivity between Local Bus and Light Rail services, provide the surrounding communities with safe and reliable access to key quality of life resources, and maintain a critical link between existing and planned bicycle and pedestrian trails.

The Hanover Street Corridor Study is the first step in the larger project development process and includes the following:

- Data collection and evaluation to determine how the Hanover Street corridor is currently being used and assess how it is expected to be used in the future
- Assessment of ways to improve mobility and safety for all users of the bridge and the adjacent corridor
- Evaluation of the existing bridge and determining next steps for rehabilitation or replacement of all or some of the structure

The major corridor elements to be considered include pedestrian and bicycle facilities, recreational facilities, transit facilities, freight and goods movement, and safety amenities. All of this data informs the development of the feasibility study for the transportation corridor and the guiding principles for BCDOT to use when finalizing plans to address the future needs. Future steps in the project development process, which are not part of this study, include identifying future funding, conducting planning and environmental regulatory reviews, and performing detailed design and construction of improvements.

The Hanover Street Corridor Study is being funded with a $1.1 million U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Grant, which is a means of funding needed transportation projects through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, as well as $700,000 in matching funds from Baltimore City.

The Work Plan from the TIGER Grant application outlined six milestone tasks, which are discussed in this report:
- Develop and Implement a Comprehensive and Robust Public Outreach Strategy
- Assess Existing Conditions and Collect Data
- Conduct Economic Market Analysis
- Study Existing Transportation Network
- Identify Design Opportunities and Constraints
- Develop Corridor Plan Document

Study Team
The Hanover Street Corridor Study is being led by BCDOT, the project owner. The Study Team is comprised of BCDOT, two stakeholder groups – a Community Advisory Panel (CAP) and an Interagency Advisory Group (IAG), and the consultant team made up of AECOM, Assedo Consulting, LLC, Sabra Wang & Associates, and Straughan Environmental, Inc. More detailed information on the stakeholder groups are provided later in this chapter in the Public Outreach section.

The Study Team will also obtain information from the general public in a series of public meetings throughout the duration of the project.

Study Area
As shown in Figure 1-1, the Study Area includes the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge and extends along Hanover Street from Wells Street in South Baltimore to Reedbird Avenue in Cherry Hill, a distance of approximately 1.4 miles. While the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Bridge is a major component of this study, the Study Area also contains the adjacent roadway and neighboring communities so that the relevant engineering and environmental resources of potentially impacted areas are investigated as the study progresses.

Concurrent studies in the area are shown in Figure 1-2. These studies include the joint Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) and BCDOT I-95 Access Improvements Study and two Port Covington development projects led by Weller Development and Under Armour. The study teams for these projects are working together to share information.

Public Outreach
A key success factor in a planning study is engagement of key stakeholders to educate them and obtain input regarding the study. For the Hanover Street Corridor Study, the Study Team requested feedback from a combination of community, business, and agency sources so that the team could develop a full understanding of the needs, challenges, and desires of the most frequent users of the corridor and those responsible for protecting the facility and the surrounding natural and human environment.
Two stakeholder groups were formed as part of this study – a Community Advisory Panel (CAP) and an Interagency Advisory Group (IAG). The CAP is comprised of representatives from local businesses and community leaders that provide insight into how the corridor is currently being used and advise on the changes the communities have expressed a desire to see. The IAG is comprised of representatives from various federal, state, and city agencies who are tasked with providing information on current and future projects adjacent to the Hanover Street corridor. Information was shared with the general public through three primary methods – a project newsletter, BCDOT’s website, and a series of public meetings. All stakeholder and public meeting summaries are available on the project website: http://transportation.baltimorecity.gov/tiger/hanover-st/