

Are Two Ways Better Than One?

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In 2003 Chattanooga converted MLK Boulevard and McCallie Avenue from one-way to two-way traffic. The enthusiasm of Chattanooga citizens for this project was impressive; both those in favor of and those in opposition to these changes. Even with a vocal opposition - a group called "Save our Streets," made dire predictions about the conversion at the time - support for the project was strong. Much of the supporting data at the time suggested outcomes could include urban reinvestment, lower traffic crash rates, and generally safer and more comfortable streets for pedestrians.

Since the conversion, speeds and crashes along both McCallie and MLK have fallen considerably, so both streets have become safer. Also, pedestrian traffic data shows a consistent increase in pedestrians on both corridors. This corridor has a lot to offer to its neighborhood: diversity in restaurants and stores and interesting public art that are now more accessible and enjoyable. The transformations of these streets into great places is due in part to the fact that they are no longer split down the middle by high speed, one-way thoroughfares.



Which way? (Credit: [CityLab](#))

CDOT is now considering additional one-way to two-way conversions in Chattanooga's thriving downtown. CDOT is interested in studying this conversion based on the success of MLK and Bailey, recommendations of previous studies (Chattanooga Forward Downtown Task Force, City Center Plan) and other documented [benefits](#): Safety: traffic conflicts are most pronounced at intersections, and one-way street grids require drivers to proceed through unnecessary intersections. Navigation: two-way travel removes confusing redundant turns. Engaging the public space: traffic calming allows pedestrians and cyclists to enjoy the urban commercial districts. Economic benefit: Two way streets are known to benefit businesses; the reasoning being that oftentimes businesses on one-way streets effectively have half of the exposure than streets with the same amount of two-way traffic.



One-way street downtown (Credit: [Times Free Press](#))

Based on the enthusiasm around the McCallie and MLK conversions and the feedback we continue to receive about CDOT's recent projects, it is clear Chattanooga highly value and closely guard our streets. Our streets are one of our greatest assets and public spaces. CDOT strives to understand and balance the needs of all users in that space. For that reason, CDOT looks forward to hearing from the Chattanooga community and business owners as we explore this opportunity to improve downtown. Keep up to date with the study, sign up for updates, and learn more about what the next steps will be by visiting the [Downtown Two-Way Conversion website](#). Please join us on December 7 at 5:30pm at the Development Resource Center (1250 Market Street, Room 1A) to hear details about the study and provide input on the two way conversions.