

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) initiated a corridor study for KY 168 (Blackburn Avenue/Wheatley Road) between US 60 (13th Street) in Ashland and Hoods Creek Road in Westwood. The 1.65-mile-long segment includes areas within the city of Ashland and rural Boyd County. The goal of the study is to support increased safety and mobility for all modal users—including transit riders, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

Existing Conditions

KY 168 has two 10-foot lanes, narrow shoulders, some sidewalks, and a 35-MPH posted speed limit. It is an urban minor arterial with several sharp curves and steep hills through a primarily residential area. Paired with 6th Street and Roberts Drive, KY 168 acts as a “cut-through” route for drivers avoiding the more congested US 60, US 23, and downtown Ashland streets. Over 30 cross-streets and numerous driveways intersect KY 168 within the study limits. The highway carried 5,800-9,200 vehicles per day (vpd) in 2023, forecast to grow to 6,600-10,400 vpd by 2045. The corridor operates at Level of Service (LOS) D or better today, with only the stop-controlled Roberts Drive approach over capacity in the 2023 PM peak hour. By 2045, intersections with 6th Street and US 60 are projected to reach LOS E/F in the PM peak.

There were 99 crashes reported during 2018-2022, including no fatalities and 12 injury collisions. By type, most were angle collisions (34%), rear end crashes (21%), and single vehicle crashes (17%). There is one at-grade rail crossing that limits visibility, just north of Roberts Drive, resulting in a cluster of crashes.

Sidewalks exist on at least one side of KY 168 through the Ashland city limits; there are noncontiguous sidewalk segments through Westwood. Sidewalk width, condition, and treatments approaching cross streets vary by location, so some sites do not satisfy American Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. Ashland Bus Service operates fixed-route transit services with seven stops along the west edge of the corridor.

Land use along the study corridor is mainly residential, with most homes clustered in established neighborhoods. A few small-scale commercial businesses are interspersed, with the highest concentration approaching the US 60 intersection. Additional community resources include six churches, a Hospice Care Center, two parks, and a cemetery abutting the corridor. A fire station and high school on Main Street in Westwood also rely on KY 168 for access. Nearly half the study area includes low-income populations, suggesting consideration may be necessary to minimize impacts on environmental justice (EJ) populations should a project advance. Pollard Cemetery and a building west of the US 60/KY 168 intersection were noted as potential historic concerns, but no potential districts or other resources were noted during windshield surveys.

Coordination Meetings

Coordination occurred throughout the study process to inform decision-making, including meetings with the project team, local officials and stakeholders, and a public website/survey.



Of 112 public surveys collected online during November 2023, 96% of participants agreed improvements to the corridor are needed. Top concerns with KY 168 were stopped cars waiting to turn, poor visibility, narrow lanes/shoulders, and the at-grade railroad crossing.

Concepts

Build concepts focused primarily on intersections, areas with existing safety concerns identified by documented crash records, and community input. Summarized in **Figure ES-1**, improvement options were identified at four intersections and a fifth concept for corridor-wide improvements. Concepts ranged from small-scale maintenance activities up to large-scale corridor reconstruction. Some were dismissed as they would provide limited benefits to traffic and result in high costs and property impacts. Other concepts were developed in greater detail, with costs in 2023 dollars, associated impacts, and community input for each. **Table ES-1** summarizes key facts for each of the detailed Build Concepts.

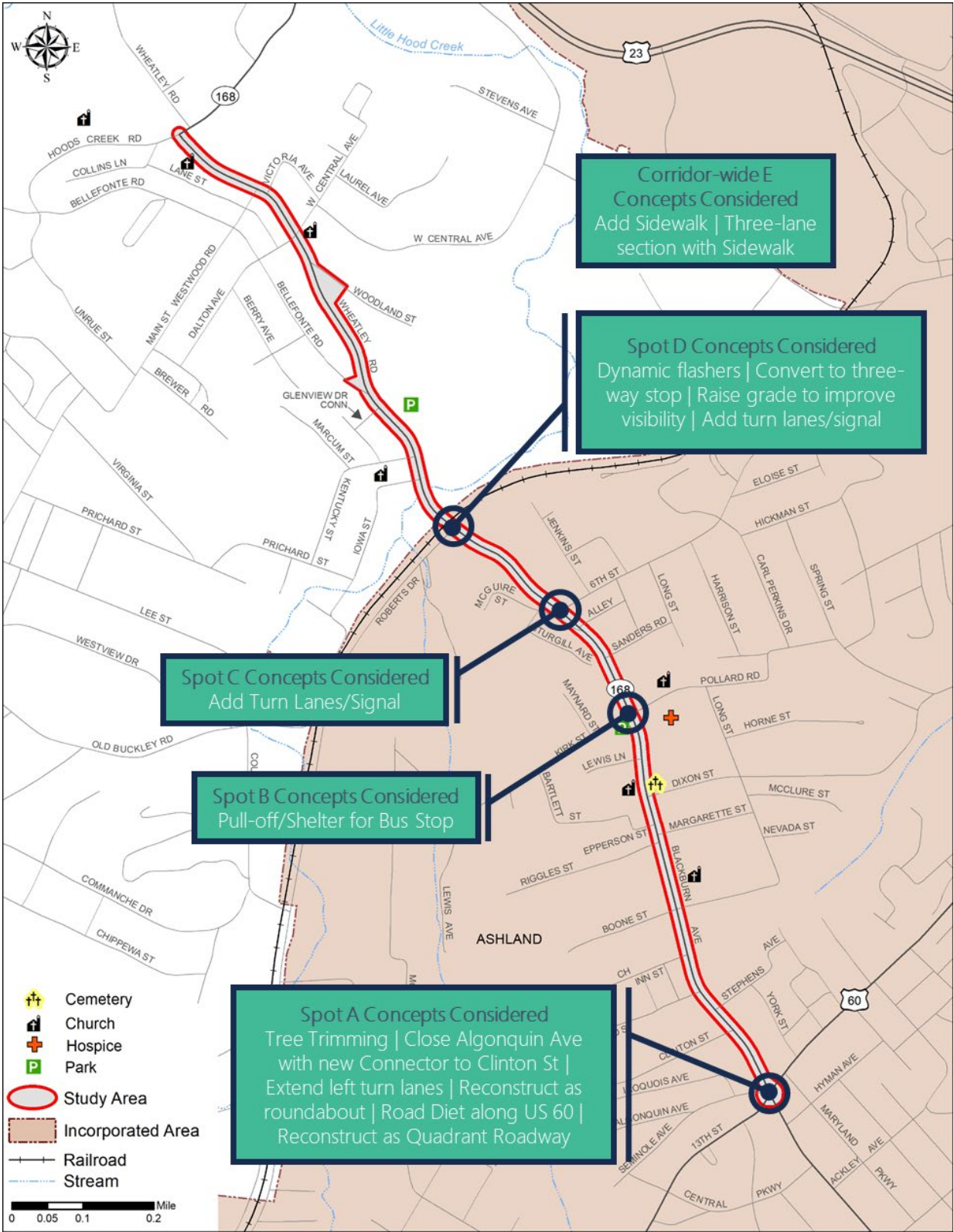


Figure ES-1: Build Concepts Considered

Table ES-1: Comparison of Build Concepts, Costs, Benefits, and Impacts

ID	Concept	Cost	Benefits	Impacts	Community Input	Priority
A.1	Tree Trimming	\$10k	Safety	Within existing right-of-way	US 60/KY 168 rated third priority from public surveys	Medium
A.2	Close Algonquin <i>Optional Connector to Clinton</i>	\$1.3M - \$1.9M*	Capacity	0-2 relocations		Low/Long-Term
A.3	Eastbound US 60 Turn Lane	\$3.0M	Safety + Capacity	4 relocations	Third priority from public surveys; turn lanes preferred over other A options	High
A.3	Southbound KY 168 Turn Lane	\$4.9M	Safety + Capacity	3 relocations		High
B	Pollard/Kirk Bus Pull Off	\$150k*	Safety + Capacity	New right-of-way within park	Lowest priority from public surveys	Combine with E.1
C	6 th Street Turn Lanes	\$6.5M	Capacity	Additional right-of-way but no relocations	Fourth priority from public surveys	Medium
D.1	Conflict Warning System	\$50k	Safety	Within existing right-of-way	Top priority from public surveys	Dismissed
D.2	3-way Stop	\$20k	Safety	Within existing right-of-way		Highest/Quick Hit
D.3	Raise Grade/Turn Lanes	\$7.4M - \$7.9M	Safety + Capacity	4 relocations; Potential EJ; Floodplain	Second priority from public surveys; support divided over three-lane	Long-Term
E.1	Reconstruct/Add Sidewalk	\$13.3M	Safety	Strip takings with 0-1 relocations		High
E.2	Three-Lane with Sidewalk	\$43.2M	Safety + Capacity	40-50 relocations; Potential EJ; Impacts church or cemetery; Floodplain; Hazmats		Dismissed

* Costs/impacts driven by optional new connection to Clinton St; * excludes cost of shelter

Overall, Concept D.2 (three-way stop at Roberts) is the highest priority, representing a low-cost, easy-to-implement solution to a demonstrable crash problem garnering substantial public interest. Stopping KY 168 thru traffic reduces travel speeds, increasing visibility and response times approaching the Roberts Drive intersection. Concept D.3 (turn lanes and grade change with potential signalization once volumes meet warrants) is a long-term priority as increasing traffic volumes degrade operations.

Concept A.3 (extending turn lanes on two approaches at US 60/KY 168 intersection) is also a high priority for implementation to help address capacity and safety concerns at the five-leg intersection. During future design phases, opportunities to improve access management for adjacent businesses should be examined. Concepts A.1 (tree trimming) and A.2 (close/connect Algonquin Avenue) were rated as medium and low/long-term priorities, respectively.

Concept E.1 (consistent 5-foot-wide sidewalk) is another high priority for implementation, divided into manageable construction sections: US 60 to Boone Street, Boone Street to Roberts Drive, and Roberts Drive to Hoods Creek Road. Concept B (bus stop) can also be folded into the central section of Concept E.1 but Concept E.2 (three lanes with sidewalk) is not recommended for further consideration due to the high costs and impacts.

Concept C (turn lanes at 6th Street) is a medium priority; signalization should be considered as increasing traffic volumes warrant increasing capacity.

Figure ES-2 presents a visual summary of high priority concepts.

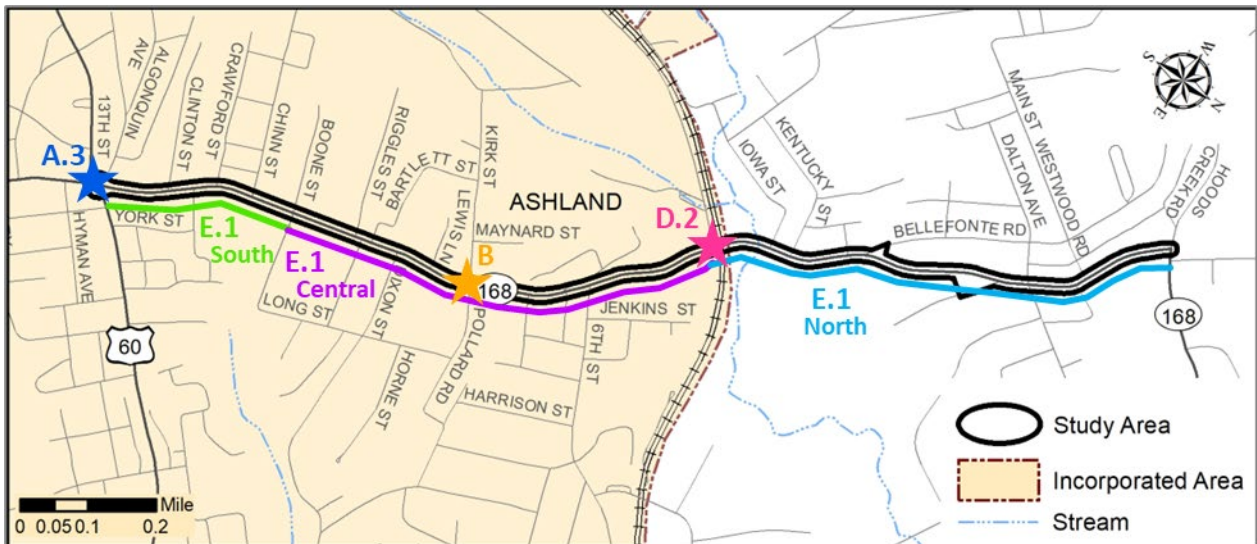


Figure ES-2: High Priority Project Recommendations