



## **Northwest Corridor Project Station Area Development Planning Phase Two, Meeting Six**

October 26, 2006  
6:30PM-8:30PM  
The Center for Family Resources

### **Welcome and Introduction**

1. Upon arrival to the meeting, citizens were greeted by project staff, asked to sign in, and provided with handouts (meeting agenda and comment sheet). Attendees were given an opportunity to view project boards and speak one-on-one with project staff. The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM. Approximately 38 members of the public were present.
2. Roger Henze, GRTA, welcomed the attendees and thanked everyone for coming. He introduced himself as the manager of the Station Area Development Planning program and explained that the evening's meeting was the final meeting in Phase 2 of the program. He provided some background information on the SADP program noting that the program was the recipient of the Georgia Planning Association's 2006 "Innovative and Effective Planning Process" award. Mr. Henze then identified the following objectives for the night's meeting: **1)** to conclude phase 2 of the station area development planning process, **2)** to review the status of the overall NW I-75 HOV/BRT/TOL project, **3)** to review the draft station area land use & development plans in the presentation and in one-on-one conversations to obtain public comment, **4)** to preview where we go from here, and **5)** to continue discussion and respond to your questions.

### **Status of Overall NW I-75 HOV/BRT/TOL Project**

3. Wanda Van Zandt, GRTA, provided an overview of the process and results of the 2006 Customer Satisfaction Survey for Regional Express passengers. Ms. Van Zandt explained that the survey was administered to Cobb Community Transit, Gwinnett County Transit, and GRTA transit users. Over 2600 riders completed the survey. Overall, all three express bus services were very highly rated by the riders. The full report of the study is located at [www.expressga.com](http://www.expressga.com).
4. Roger Palmer, Parsons Brinckerhoff (PB), provided a brief overview of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, including the alternatives currently under consideration and an outline of the DEIS preparation and submission schedule.
5. Crew Heimer provided an overview of the bus rapid transit (BRT) funding outlook. He explained the project assumes the State and Federal governments will each pay 50% of the capital costs, and Cobb County will operate the BRT system. Currently, the Federal portion of the funding is uncertain, due to challenges concerning ridership numbers. Mr. Heimer stated that if Federal funding is not available for the project as it is currently defined, a "Reduced BRT" alternative will most likely be implemented. This alternative reduces the number and scale of the BRT stations, but still makes a considerable investment in transit service within the corridor.



## **Presentation of Draft Station Area Land Use Plans, Development Plans and Land Use Controls**

6. Ed Womack, PB, began by reviewing the history of the SADP program and outlining the program's next steps. He explained that the Northwest Corridor project is comprised of two parts, the highway/transit improvements and the Station Area Planning program. The two parts parallel each other with some influence, but are not bound together. In fact, the SADP program is out in front of the DEIS and is preparing for the Final EIS.
7. Mr. Womack continued by defining relevant planning terminology for the audience, including land use terms such as "Transit-friendly" and "Transit-oriented development". He also reviewed planning concepts such as "theoretical TOD station impact area," and types of TODs including "Highly Urban" TOD areas such as Midtown and Lindbergh, "Edge City" TOD areas such as Cumberland, and the "Transit Village" TOD. He then reviewed the key market and land use findings for the BRT station areas.
8. Mr. Womack then reviewed in detail the display boards for each of the stations. Included in his presentation were slides depicting the Draft Station Area Land Use Plans, Example Development Plans & Overlay Zones. Also included was a list of action items for each of the stations.
9. Mr. Henze stated that the presentation and the display boards would be available on the project website [www.nwhovbrt.com](http://www.nwhovbrt.com) within two weeks. Also posted on the website is the market and economic analysis report for each of the five stations. By the end of the year, final documentation for Phase II SADP program will be completed and uploaded as well.

## **Where Do We Go From Here?**

10. Mr. Henze reviewed GRTA's roles in the next steps of the SADP program including developing SADP plan refinements for the FEIS, providing technical assistance to the City and County, and conducting land use planning coordination for the MARTA Arts Center Station. He then asked representatives from the City, County and the Community Improvement Districts to say a few words on their organization's next steps.
11. Brian Binzer, City of Marietta, stated that the City enjoys a great working relationship with GRTA and GDOT and that the GPA award is well-deserved. He stated that the City is currently working with concerned property owners to investigate impacts of the project. The City is concerned about dislocations and is trying to find ways to help businesses. As far as next steps for the SADP development plans, the City has no specific plans. The staff will take back the findings to the City Council and look at how the plans compare to the City's Comprehensive Plan. Potentially, the Comprehensive Plan could be updated and eventually ordinances revised.
12. Mike Tuller, Cobb County stated that SADP plans meet with the County's ideas regarding Regional Activity Centers and that much of the same ideas concerning land uses and intensities are compatible. He further stated that if and when the Northwest Corridor comes about, possibly January 2008 when the Record of Decision is made, the County will look at



potential changes to policies and ordinances concerning development around the station sites.

13. Tom Boland, Cumberland CID, stated that his organization worked very closely with GRTA and Cobb County in developing the SADP plans. Transit and related sustainable development are important elements of the Cumberland area and the SADP plan will be incorporated into the CID's Master Plan, Blueprint Cumberland. He added that the potential of the Cumberland Station will not fully be realized until the I-285 BRT system comes online. At that point, the station will be the busiest station in the whole system. He added that the CID will continue to work with GRTA and the County, and update its master plan as necessary.
14. Roger Henze stated that in early 2007, the DEIS would be available for public review and the next opportunity for public input would be the Public Hearing Open House in March 2007. He added that there was a possibility of additional SADP public meeting as Final EIS is developed in mid 2007.
15. At 8:15PM, Mr. Henze opened the floor to questions from those in attendance.

#### **General Question & Answer Session**

16. **Seems like the access into the Town Center station has been modified. Please explain.** Mr. Womack and Mr. Palmer explained that the HOV entrance is shown directly off of Big Shanty Road to take advantage of the road extension project. Previously, a separate bridge structure was proposed. Mr. Palmer added that the original bridge will be shown in the DEIS and that the Big Shanty access is an "FEIS Idea". **I think the original is better because congestion on the general purpose streets will impede the buses and take away from the BRT efficiency.** Mr. Palmer replied that the point was well-taken and that a traffic assessment will be conducted.
17. **What is the estimated timeline for the Federal funding? When will you have a definite answer?** Crew Heimer stated that the project team first needs to decide on what approach to take in applying for the funds. A decision should be made in about six to twelve months on how to move forward.
18. **The price of everything is going up, how will rising costs affect this project?** Mr. Palmer agreed that rising costs of such materials as concrete and steel are an issue and will be looked at by the Public Private Initiative team, the Georgia Transportation Partners.

#### **Conclusion and Wrap-Up**

19. Mr. Henze then concluded the presentation and invited the attendees to view the station display boards.
20. Mr. Womack reiterated to the attendees that this meeting signaled the beginning of the end of the consultant team's involvement in the Station Area Development Planning process. He stated that it is up to the public and City/County staff to continue the process to implementation. He thanked everyone for their participation and the opportunity to work with them.



## General Written Comments

There were five written comments submitted at the meeting.

1. I know there is an alternative to the Allgood Road HOV access, however, no plans were shown at tonight's meeting. The access at Allgood Road should be removed because of the significant negative impact to the surrounding community. Presentations should be shorter and more concise.

The presentation went on too long and loses public interest.

2. I don't think the Franklin Station is needed. It is too close to the Terrell Mill and Marietta Stations. The fifth station should be located at Canton Road so that the five stations will be evenly spaced along the 15-mile length of the HOV lanes – not bunched together in the southern half of the project. The Franklin Station is also too close to a residential area. It will be too noisy. All stations should be in commercial or industrial areas so as not to impact residential areas. If there are people in the Franklin area that need to/want to ride the BRT bus, put them on a local bus and get them to the Terrell Mill or Marietta Stations only a mile or so away. If the City of Marietta wants a big station with lots of development, make it the Marietta Station – near to Marietta square. Area around station needs redevelopment, not near residential area.

The speakers at these meetings would be easier to hear if the officials at the meeting that are not speaking at the podium would take their conversations out into the hallway. These officials speaking together at the back of the room often make it difficult to hear the speakers at the podium.

3. What can be done to assist in the parking issues (obtaining land) at the Cumberland Station?

I would like to see TOD's established at all stations if possible. What can be done to make that happen?

I like using the LCI with Franklin Road (moving the station)

I like the idea of not impeding BRT traffic at the Big Shanty Extension

4. You have totally ignored the major need! The masses of people in this northern sector. We need a circumferential expressway close in to I-285. Make an expressway out of GA 92, Holcomb Bridge, Jimmy Carter to connect I-75 around to I-85.
5. If the feds don't fund the BRT/HOV it is very important that emphasis be put on BRT where possible and not just adding lanes to the interstate – this should not end up as a roads building project alone – focus should be on transit.