



## **Northwest Corridor Project Station Area Development Planning Phase Two Kickoff Summary**

February 2, 2006  
6:30PM-8:30PM  
Cobb Central Library

### **Welcome, Introduction and Background**

1. Upon arrival to the meeting, citizens were greeted by project staff, asked to sign in, and provided with handouts. Attendees were given an opportunity to view project boards and speak one on one with project staff. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM. Approximately 50 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 Planning program and explained that the evening's meeting was the kickoff for Phase 2 of the program. He then asked Darryl VanMeter, GDOT Northwest Corridor Project Manager to say a few words. Mr. VanMeter welcomed the group again and expressed his appreciation for the attendees' involvement in the project.
3. Mr. Henze reviewed the handouts including the meeting agenda and copy of the presentation. He noted that the project staff would remain after the meeting to discuss the displays and answer any questions. He then began the presentation.
4. Mr. Henze provided the group with an overview of the project including a brief history. He explained that the purpose of the station area planning program is "to fit the BRT stations into the context of the area in which they will reside, assuring successful operations while supporting the aspirations and needs of the community." He noted that the City of Marietta and Cobb County have the final responsibility for land use planning and implementation of the plans developed as part of the program.
5. Mr. Henze explained that the station area planning process is comprised of two phases. Phase One took place from March to June of 2005 and included over 350 participants at seven meetings. Phase Two began in February 2006 and extends through the summer. Mr. Henze asked the attendees, with a show of hands, how many participated in last year's meetings, and the majority of attendees responded. He then reviewed the objectives of the evening's meeting and introduced Roger Palmer, Consultant Team Project Manager.
6. Mr. Palmer provided an overview of the Northwest Corridor Project and the changes to the project concepts. He presented the project history, purpose and need, the addition of the truck only concept and typical sections of I-75 and I-575 depicting potential lane configuration options.
7. Mr. Palmer discussed the Public Private Initiative proposal and its relevance to the Northwest Corridor Project. He noted the prime benefit of the PPI is a shortened construction period. Mr. VanMeter added that currently the Department is negotiating with the PPI team, but a



contract finalizing the arrangement has not been signed. Mr. Palmer continued the presentation with a discussion of the estimated project schedule.

### **Conceptual Station and Area Land Use Plans**

8. Ed Womack, Project Consultant Team, explained that there are two processes associated with each station: the design of the station itself and the general planning around the station. The Northwest Corridor Project will be responsible for the design and construction of the stations, while the City and the County have authority over the surrounding land use. The purpose of the station area planning program is to coordinate the two processes with input from the community.
9. Mr. Womack provided an overview of the station and land use plans and the issues and features related to each. The station plans depicted the station sites with conceptual locations and design elements. The land use plans reflected the input received in Phase I, where participants flagged surrounding areas for change or preservation. He noted that the two previously proposed stations at Allgood and Bells Ferry had been dropped as a result of Phase 1 input.

### **Station Area Design Guidelines**

10. Mr. Womack continued the presentation with a discussion of station area design guidelines. He explained the purpose of the guidelines, how they will be used and examples of guideline content including site and building design, streetscape and implementation strategies.

### **Phase 2, SADP Schedule**

11. Mr. Womack, reviewed the schedule for Phase 2 of the station area planning process. He noted the analyses to be conducted as part of the process and highlighted where in the schedule public meetings would occur.

### **Next Steps**

12. Mr. Henze reviewed the next steps. He announced that the next public meeting will be held on Thursday, March 2 at the Cobb Central Library and that the meeting would be interactive in format. He also pointed out station area design charrettes are scheduled for late March and mid April. Locations and dates will be announced. Finally, he noted that there will be a Northwest Corridor Public Information Open House held on April 25 at 5:00pm at the Cobb Civic Center. He then invited the attendees to ask questions.

### **Questions and Answers**

13. I don't understand the lane configuration around the Town Center station. It looks like there is an intersection in the I-75 facility. Mr. Womack responded that the station plan is depicting a ramp for the HOV access only and not a through lane.
14. Are walkways at the stations enclosed? Mr. Womack responded that the walkways will at least have a roof and be covered. Whether the walkways will be climate controlled is yet to be determined.



15. Will there be more meetings focused on the HOV lanes? Mr. Henze responded that the April 25<sup>th</sup> meeting is a Public Information Open House and will include the entire project.
16. Will there be a possibility of eminent domain being utilized for private development surrounding the stations? Mr. VanMeter responded that the only property that will be taken as part of the Northwest Corridor project will be for the necessary right of way for the construction of the transportation facility. There are no plans for the State to acquire any land for development purposes. The purpose of the station area planning program is to help develop a vision for the community to be implemented by the City and County.
17. I like all the stations but Franklin Road. It seems to be at the bottom of a deadend. Shouldn't there be more access roads? Mr. Womack responded that out of all the stations, Franklin Road is the most conceptual in nature. As the City fleshes out its redevelopment plans for the area, the station design can change. It is currently designed with the least intrusive footprint to affect the smallest number of impacts to the existing land use. He added that more access points will be included as the plan is finalized.
18. At the last round of meetings, I remember it was pointed out how congested Franklin Road was already. The road you are showing leading to the station looks small. I am not sure how well a small road leading to a congested road will work. Mr. Womack responded that, again, the design will change as development plans are revealed. Mr. Henze added that detailed traffic analysis around the station will be performed.
19. Is the station platform a pay area? Crew Heimer, GRTA, replied that the project team is considering that option. The overall assumption is that the user would pay before boarding the vehicle.
20. Then why do you have bus bays? Mr. Heimer responded that there are a number of bus routes utilizing the station so each route has a bay. Multiple bus bays expedite the boarding process and organize the traffic flow.
21. It looks like the Franklin Station is in the middle of nowhere. How did you come up with the location? Terrell Mill at least has a road, and some connectivity to the other side of I-75. This site doesn't look like it has that ability. Mr. Henze replied that the City of Marietta has identified the area as a redevelopment priority. In addition, a Livable Centers Initiative study has been completed on the area. Mr. Womack reiterated that the design concept will change as development plans are finalized to make the station more in tune with surrounding conditions. Lynn Buffkin, City of Marietta, added that Tuxedo Estates, across I-75, requested that no access be created connecting the neighborhood to the station.
22. If there is public opposition, then maybe the station shouldn't be there then! Mr. Palmer responded that the area has a high density of HOV trip ends, or a wide market of HOV users, therefore justifying its existence.
23. Mr. Ron Sifen made the comment that the Franklin Road station will be a very important component of the redevelopment plan and is very much needed.



24. What kind of timeframe is the City working on to iron out its Franklin Road redevelopment plan? Ms. Beth Tippins, City of Marietta replied that there were challenges associated with the plan. For instance, property values are high, making some developers' projects not feasible. She added, however, that there had been increased interest in the past year.
25. Where will the current residents on Franklin Road go if the area is redeveloped? It seems there will be a significant decrease in rental properties. Ms. Tippins replied that since property values are so high, it is likely that density of the redevelopment projects will be as well, offering a number of housing options. Ms. Buffkin added while the impact seems large, in actuality it is not. Currently there is a 20% vacancy rate on Franklin Road and the population tends to be very transient. She added that the 2000 Census revealed the City has a 63% rental rate, implying there are many opportunities for renters. She also noted that crime and prostitution is a problem along the Franklin Road corridor.
26. It looks like the truck only lanes are on the outside. What are the plans for noise abatement? Mr. Palmer responded that the truck lanes may very well be placed on the inside when the project is in final design and construction. For purposes of the environmental process, the trucks are on the outside as a "worst case scenario" for the impact evaluation process. To address any noise issues, Mr. Palmer added that mitigation measures such as sound barriers will be utilized as much as possible.
27. What if there is a major accident in the truck only lanes? How are emergency vehicles going to respond? Mr. Palmer replied that the Department is currently developing an incident management plan in conjunction with the Northwest Corridor Project. Later in the month, an incident management workshop with HERO, City and County staff will be conducted.
28. Will the truck lanes be mandatory? Mr. Palmer responded that currently, the lanes are assumed to be optional. The project team is in the process of collecting data on truck volumes. Once the team has the data, then a final analysis can be made.
29. If the truck lanes are a pipeline (for through trucks only), then how will local deliveries in Cobb County be made? Mr. Palmer replied that trucks with local deliveries would continue to use the general purpose lanes. He added that the addition of the truck only lanes for through trucks only would remove a significant amount of trucks traffic out of the general purpose lanes. Mr. VanMeter added that a recent study showed that 60% of all Southeastern truck trips travel through Atlanta on their way to another destination. He further stated that the State Transportation Board has adopted a vision for a region-wide truck only lane system; the I-75 corridor is a piece of the larger puzzle.
30. Roger Henze thanked the attendees for coming. He invited the group to visit the display boards and speak one on one with staff. The meeting was adjourned at 8:30pm.