



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

June 8, 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. 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 58 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 fourth meeting in Phase 2 of the program.
3. Mr. Henze reviewed the handouts including the meeting agenda and notice for the next (July 20th) public meeting. He stated that the meeting notice is a bit misleading as it states that the July 20th meeting is the "final meeting". Mr. Henze clarified that the next meeting will not be the final meeting of the SADP planning process. He also stated that copies of the presentation would be available on the project website.

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

4. Mr. Henze briefly reviewed the Station Area Planning process through a discussion of the project objective and the issues to be addressed during the planning process. He offered an outline of the SADP Coordination Team members and explained that the purpose of this meeting is to review project activities to date, to introduce the economic analysis completed for the study area, to become more familiar with the facility plan and land use options during the break out session, and to continue to receive public input and comments.
5. Roger Palmer provided a brief overview of the status of the project, including the DEIS timeline. He stated that the environmental analysis is currently underway and that five of eight DEIS chapters have been initiated or completed. Mr. Palmer reviewed the alternatives being considered for the study and stated that the project team is on track with the proposed schedule for completion. According to Mr. Palmer, the final EIS should be complete in November 2007.
6. Crew Heimer updated the group on the status of the New Starts application currently being prepared for submission to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and that the last meeting with FTA indicated that the project appeared to meet required financial goals. Mr. Heimer explained that the application is being submitted for the purpose of seeking a 50% Federal funding match for implementation of the BRT portion of this project. Mr. Heimer stated that the application must be submitted by August 18th and that the team is in the process of developing a baseline alternative.



Update on Station Area Planning Activities since Last Meeting

7. Mr. Womack described the purpose and outcome of the five station design charrettes held in the late spring. The charrettes (one charrette per station area) allowed meeting attendees to review presentation boards specific to each station which focused on three technical areas - land use, circulation, and station facility design. Mr. Womack commented that the charrettes were well attended and that the one-on-one question/answer sessions allowed for better understanding of the plans and meaningful input.
8. Mr. Womack also briefed the group on two informal meetings held with other community stakeholders. A meeting was held on May 16, 2006 with Cobb County and the Cumberland and Town Center CIDs. At this meeting the Cumberland, Terrell Mill, and Town Center stations were discussed in detail. Another meeting was held on May 17, 2006 with the City of Marietta, where the Franklin and Marietta stations were the topics of discussion.

Perspective on Station Area Land Use & Economic Potential

9. Ken Bleakly provided a detailed summary of the development potential of each station in the study area. He began the summary with a review of the market trends in the corridor, including population trends, commercial retail space availability, the climate of the residential market, and distribution of housing types. The Northwest Corridor will experience significant growth in population and households over the next fifteen years. That growth will result in increasing demand for new housing and retail uses. During the last three years there have been approximately 2,500 new home sales in the corridor annually, which is approximately half of all new home sales in Cobb County. Townhomes and condominiums now represent roughly half of all new home sales, which is a dramatic increase from approximately 1/3 in 2003. Sixty-two percent of townhomes and condominiums sold for \$200,000 or less, versus 5% of single family homes. The median price of new homes sold in the corridor is \$358,000 in 2005.
10. Mr. Bleakly then presented square footage and cost analysis estimates for the amounts of residential, office and retail space that could realistically be added at each station. Over the next fifteen years (2006-2021) the five station areas combined have the potential to attract:

5,257 new housing units
450 hotel rooms
1,850,000 s. f. of new office and retail development

The stations with the greatest development potential are Cumberland and Town Center

Review of New Project Facility Options

11. Mr. Womack briefly reminded the group of the facility options at each station. Mr. Womack reminded attendees that there is still an opportunity for input and that the facility options are merely ideas at this point. He encouraged people to participate in the breakout session and to provide additional comments about the station facility options. Mr. Womack reminded meeting attendees that the presentation slides will be made available on the project website.



General Question & Answer Session

12. Who is doing the EIS? Is it an in-house contractor?

Mr. Henze responded that Parson's Brinkerhoff is preparing the EIS for GDOT and GRTA. He stated that the object of tonight's meeting is to discuss the station area planning process, not to provide detail regarding the EIS. A public hearing will be scheduled for January where stakeholders may comment on the draft EIS. Copies of the EIS will be made available at county offices, city offices, on the website, GRTA offices and perhaps in libraries. Mr. Palmer urged people to use the website as the main source of information and for obtaining a copy of the EIS when it is available.

13. Does an EA have to be completed before an EIS is developed?

Mr. Womack stated that for a project of this magnitude and at this level, an EIS is the required type of analysis. Mr. Palmer added that the EIS is the highest level of detail for any environmental project, so it will provide the highest level of analysis. The team that will complete the EIS is comprised of scientists, biologists, planners and engineers and they provide a recommendation independent of the client, GDOT.

14. Can the parking decks be expanded 10-years in the future if it is determined that more parking is needed?

Mr. Womack responded that the parking facilities are being designed in a way such that they may be expanded vertically or horizontally, if necessary. Some stations will provide parking in underground facilities.

15. Are there five parking facilities?

Mr. Womack responded that each of the five stations will have its own parking facility for a total of five parking garages, in addition to park-and-ride lots at additional locations.

16. What is the total number of people and vehicles that will be eliminated off the road due to this project?

Mr. Heimer stated that there are approximately 55,000 users of the transit system per day, or approximately 110,000 boardings daily. However, these numbers are being revised and then we will recalculate the number of people and vehicles will be eliminated.

17. Do the EPA studies project differences in air quality due to travel to and from Cherokee County?

Mr. Palmer indicated that the Draft EIS will include a detailed environmental analysis.

18. Has a Cherokee County station been considered?

Mr. Henze answered that the project is receiving strong support from Cobb County. Cherokee County has not been as supportive of transit; however there may be opportunities in the future to develop stations and park-and-ride lots.

19. Will this project be a boon for Cherokee County developers or other counties to the north?

Mr. Henze responded that the project will provide a great benefit to Cherokee County. Approximately 25% of current CCT express ridership is from Cherokee, Bartow and other counties to the north.



20. Have there been any studies completed regarding the practicality of this project considering the lifestyle of the residents of Cobb County?

Mr. Heimer stated that this project will alternatives to driving alone. People may choose to use the new HOV lanes by sharing a ride or use public transit to reduce their travel time or stress.

21. With the high number of single occupancy vehicles, will the system be heavily used?

Mr. Henze stated that it is believed that the system will be greatly used. Express bus services run by GRTA to downtown are very well used and are usually operating at capacity during peak hours and at other points throughout the day. The system will also provide an advantage for commuters traveling downtown as commute times continue to increase.

22. Have any surveys or sampling of riders been complete?

Mr. Palmer stated that this study uses data compiled by the Atlanta Regional Commission which is used to forecast ridership and travel demand. These numbers are based on statistical samples.

23. Why is there more space forecasted for residential development than for retail development?

Mr. Bleakly answered that in the station areas there is a lot of existing retail and strong demand for additional residential development. Therefore, there is no need to project for the development of much more retail to serve persons living in the study area. There will likely be some upgrades to existing retail and some businesses will change in type and tenancy, but the overall square footage will not increase by much.

24. At the Franklin Road station, is there a plan to widen the street?

Mr. Henze answered that there are no plans to widen Franklin Road at the present time. Detailed traffic analysis at each station will be done. Project activity at Franklin station may not produce more traffic.

25. Will the construction projected at each station result in higher property taxes?

Mr. Palmer stated that this is not known, since most development at the stations will be private development.

Charge to Meeting Participants

Attendees were asked to inspect foundation plans for the five station areas and plans for the five stations. Participants were encouraged to write comments, ask questions and raise issues concerning the plans on display. Comment forms were made available at each station for the public to provide input regarding the facility plans (denoted by blue banners and blue comment forms) and land use options (denoted by yellow banners and yellow comment forms).

The following documents the comments made for each of the stations and station areas. Comments are grouped by "general comments" (recorded on flip chart pads at the stations), those relating to "option comments" (recorded on yellow comment forms), those relating to "station comments" (recorded on blue comment forms), and "miscellaneous comments" recorded on the standard comment form issued at sign in for all meetings. Where the intent of the comment was implied or where the geographic location of the comment's topic is unclear from the written words, additional



words in italics were inserted between parentheses to clarify the respondent's meaning. Other non-italicized words between parentheses were provided by the respondent in their written comment.

General Comments

Cumberland Station Area:

- No comments collected.

Terrell Mill Station Area:

- No comments collected.

Franklin Station Area:

- A pathway through *the station area should be developed*
- Parking needs to be expanded
- Truck lanes *should be placed* to the inside of the route

Marietta Station Area:

- I like the retail and plaza space adjacent to the garage

Town Center Area:

- No comments collected.

Option Comments

Responses to this comment form are summarized below. Station names are included in parenthesis at the end of each comment to indicate which station is being referenced in the responses. When stations were not specified on the comment forms, "None" is in parenthesis at the end of each response.

Do you believe that the optional facility plans should be refined and incorporated into the BRT system plan during the FEIS refinement period?

- Has consideration been given to truck only lanes on the inside of I-75? There possibly would be noise and pollution issues if the truck only lanes were on the outside, so if the truck only lanes were to be moved to the inside how would this affect access to the station? (Franklin)
- Yes! I really like the new idea for retail space and a landscaped plaza at the garage. (Marietta)

Are there other alternative facility plans that you think should be investigated for the station? Please describe.

- Hopefully, there will be enough parking. Would ask that you carefully consider parking needs as insufficient parking could limit ridership. (Franklin)

Do you believe the land use recommendations shown the "Draft Long Range Land Use Options" would be a wise course for local government to follow in guiding land use change in the area? Why or why not.

- I think we should plan for housing for senior citizens such as cluster homes, 1-story housing. How about grocery store, library or post office? (Franklin)
- I didn't see the existing plan to compare it to. (Franklin)
- City of Marietta needs to encompass station area in Roswell St. upgrade plans (Marietta).



What do you like most about the Draft Long Range Land Use Options?

- More owner occupied (Franklin)
- It appears to be realistic/reasonable for my home area (Franklin)
- Redevelop and upgrade of existing retail (Marietta).

What do you like least about the Draft Long Range Land Use Options?

- Too dense. How about single family attached such as cluster homes? (Franklin)

What alternative land use options would you support in the station impact area?

- How about pedestrian trails like the Silver Comet Trail to the station? (Franklin)
- I would suggest ensuring that there is good design/signage to facilitate safe movement of people driving to the station who park their cars and walk (hopefully safely) to the buses, i.e., minimize pedestrian-bus conflicts as pedestrians walk from their cars to the bus. (Franklin)

Station Comments

Responses to this comment form are summarized below. Station names are included in parenthesis at the end of each comment to indicate which station is being referenced in the responses. When stations were not specified on the comment forms, "None" is in parenthesis at the end of each response. Questions that received no responses are left blank.

Do you have any observations to share about the current DEIS plan for the station?

- The noise is bad now. Are we adding a wall to stop some of the noise? A trail system would be great for access to the station and other facilities (Franklin).
- Do an independent EIS with an independent contractor (None).
- This station location is a real bottle neck. All other stations have great access. Franklin Rd. is too narrow to be a main access to the station. Tonight, it was said that there would not be that much activity at this station, so Franklin Rd. would be okay. If there will not be that much activity, why build a station at this location? The Marietta station is being developed as a very nice main station (gateway to Marietta). Why build a smaller Franklin station within a mile or two of a main station like Marietta? Buses should be used to transport Franklin riders to nearby Marietta & Terrell Mill. I don't think the Franklin Road Station should be build. Let the City of Marietta build this area without a BRT station (Franklin).

Do you have any observations to share about the current Comprehensive Plan or LCI Plan for the station's impact area (½ mile radius from the station)?

- We need nice quality drug stores and/or grocery stores (at least one grocery). Also library and post office (Franklin).
- Okay to get people out of cars but you should avoid unsightly large parking areas or lots. Prefer underground (None).

Miscellaneous Comments

- These one-dimensional plans are difficult to read. Hopefully the concept plans can be designed to scale models to help the public "see" what is being done. Plans should be modeled to clarify purpose
- K-Mart should survive. My father opened the store in the late fifties.
- Should have MARTA rail lines through Marietta, Cobb County in order to get to other areas of Atlanta
- Include more green space on Roswell Road



- Provide ways to get to other areas of Atlanta via rail
- HOV access at Allgood Road must be removed – the new alternative must be incorporated into the project that takes access away
- Like the TOL lanes but they must be mandatory to be effective
- Trucks should be prohibited during peak rush hours on I-75 until the TOL are completed
- With the way we live in Georgia, I do not think that this project overall addresses and will solve our traffic problems
- Parking decks should all be underground
- Pictures of I-75 should have north up on the slide show, if not it is very hard to get oriented.
- Want alternative intermediate for Allgood Road (with flyover connections)
- During peak travel hours (5-9 am and 3 – 7 pm) restrict truck traffic on I-75. This would improve passenger car travel and lessen truck/car accidents. Also it might actually reduce emissions (truck) and enable the trucks to get through in less “road time”. Would this not be more cost effective?
- Great job with all of these station area planning meetings!
- The Franklin station is in a bad location. All stations should be in a commercial or industrial area. The Franklin station is too close to the neighborhoods on the east side of I-75. There will be too much noise made by buses coming and going 18 to 20 hours a day. The bus ramps are elevated and the noise will travel over noise walls and in to the neighborhoods. The new/proposed location of the Franklin station is even closer to the neighborhoods. There will be noise from the station.
- All stations should be built further from neighborhoods. Don't damage these neighborhoods by trying to fix the problems on Franklin Road.
- Please put the station area plans and also the slide show on your website for our review. Thank you.
- *Regarding the Marietta Station* I was shocked to see the new option for location of *the* BRT parking garage. It will necessitate more land acquisition and more control of future development by the city. The first option is much preferred. It will leave more land for private development. Also, under the optional plan, aligning the new Chert Road and Frey's Gin Road is absurd. This will only increase the congestion back toward Hwy 41. I still think the best location is on either the K-Mart property or across I-75 – Bulington property.