



Northwest Corridor Project Station Area Development Planning Phase Two, Meeting Five

July 20, 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 75 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 fifth meeting in Phase 2 of the program. Additionally, he stated that over the last year and a half, the coordination committee has met 13 times to shape the planning process and respond to community input. Mr. Henze identified the following meeting objectives: **1)** continue phase 2 of the station area development planning process, **2)** review the overall status of the NW Corridor project, **3)** introduce anticipated process for the public-private initiative, **4)** present the current land use visions and draft land use plans, and **5)** respond to public questions and encourage continuing participation.

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

3. Roger Palmer provided a brief overview of the entire project, including project history and evolution, roadway design, and location.
4. Crew Heimer provided a brief overview of the bus rapid transit (BRT) portion of the project, including the purpose and need for transit and the location of the transit components. In addition, Mr. Heimer thanked U.S. Senator Johnny Isakson and U.S. Congressman Phil Gingrey for their support of the NW Corridor project.
5. An audience member asked if the proposed BRT routes from Cumberland still included the route to Northside Hospital in the I-285/SR 400 area. Mr. Heimer responded that there are three routes to Perimeter (two to the North, one to the South) and that the South route will loop to the medical center.
6. Roger Palmer provided a brief overview of the DEIS, including the alternatives that are currently under consideration and an outline of the EIS schedule.

Introduction to Public-Private Initiative Project Responsibilities and Involvement

7. Mike Dover provided a brief overview of the public-private initiative. He stated that public-private initiatives have the opportunity to cut the NW Corridor construction time from 20-25 years to 6-7 years. On May 18, 2006, a "Developer Services Agreement" was signed



between the private “Georgia Transportation Partners” group and GDOT. This agreement allows GDOT to receive private money which, at this time, is mostly being used to cover the environmental assessment. The design/build phase of the NW Corridor could begin as early as Summer 2008.

Update on Station Area Planning Activities since Last Meeting – Development of Draft Plans

8. Mr. Womack presented the draft station area planning concepts, starting with Cumberland Station. At Cumberland, a “Cumberland Downtown” would be created by segmenting the existing “superblocks” into smaller “internal” blocks with good pedestrian movement. The Cumberland CID has launched an update of the Blueprint Cumberland Master Plan that will detail land use and supporting transportation improvements for the long term in the station area.
9. Mr. Womack presented Terrell Mill Station, which would be above the freeway, covered and weather-protected. He stated that there are few suggestions on potential land use in the station area, as the current area is stable. However, the former AT&T property is prime for redevelopment.
10. Mr. Womack presented Franklin Station, where the station location isn’t as certain as other sites, and the proposed location will act as a “placeholder” for a potential site. Details about the location and form of the station may become clearer in the near term as the City of Marietta defines the implementation of the LCI plan for the area adjoining the station. The current site would serve existing and future multi-family development. The station and HOV ramps are within the Marietta LCI boundary, as currently approved. The core of the development in the area may be stimulated by the City of Marietta planning process.
11. Mr. Womack presented Marietta Station, where the Cobb Community Transit system would have a transit transfer facility adjacent to the freeway. Mr. Womack stated that in the Marietta Station area there is a substantial amount of commercial property that is ripe for redevelopment.
12. Mr. Womack finished by presenting concepts for the Town Center Station area plan.
13. Mr. Womack continued by defining relevant planning terminology for the audience. These terms included: “Transit-friendly” land uses, “Transit-oriented development,” “theoretical 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. Mr. Womack showed pictures of 3-story development to illustrate the likely “intensity of development” in the station areas, as well as pictures of 3-story buildings with first-floor retail with residential above to illustrate “mixed-use development.”
14. Mr. Womack explained that while the station impact area is often shown as concentric half-mile and quarter-mile concentric circles, actual ground conditions rarely accommodate circles and usually end up with a more irregular shape. He stated that the key factor in determining the shape and scope of the station area development plans was what the consultant team considered the “prime walking area.”



15. Ken Bleakly provided a more in-depth discussion of each station area's land use and economic potential. Mr. Bleakly presented Cumberland Station first, identifying it as the station area most likely to be intensely developed, consistent with its role as an "edge city."
16. An audience member asked if Mr. Bleakly saw this development happening before the construction of the station or afterward. Mr. Bleakly responded that most of the development would happen after construction, but some of it would occur before. Historically, in similar development scenarios, about one-third of projected development happens before, and the remainder occurs after construction. The development potential for Cumberland is as follows: 1,175 new residential units, 1.3 million sq. ft. of office space, 110,000 sq. ft. of retail space, and 450 hotel rooms. The three key points about Cumberland development are: **1)** A lot of what is being projected are trends that are already occurring. **2)** The Cumberland Community Improvement District (CID) plan will guide the form and function of station development. **3)** Cumberland represents the highest development intensity along the NW Corridor.
17. Mr. Bleakly presented Terrell Mill Station next. The key property at the site is the AT&T property, zoned as light industrial. There may be some additional developable property on the east side of I-75. The south side of the Terrell Mill area is stable. The development potential for Terrell Mill is as follows: 200-225 new residential units, 150,000 to 250,000 sq. ft. of retail space, 5,000 sq. ft. of retail space, and no new hotel rooms. The three key points about Terrell Mill Station are: **1)** The AT&T site adjoining the station is the focal point for redevelopment. **2)** The target land uses are residential and/or office with minor retail potential. **3)** The area surrounding the station is relatively stable and long term uses are set.
18. Mr. Bleakly presented Franklin Station next. No change in land use is projected for the area east of the freeway. The potential core area for land use change roughly follows the prime redevelopment area to the west of the freeway. There is limited potential for office development here; it is seen as a residential TOD. The development potential for Franklin is as follows: 1,192 new residential units, no new office space, 20,000 sq. ft. of retail, and no new hotel rooms. The three key points about Franklin development are: **1)** City of Marietta is committed to upgrading the area through an adopted LCI plan. **2)** Residential use has the most potential, with minor retail development. **3)** There is the possibility of coordinating the BRT plan with Marietta's LCI/redevelopment plan.
19. Mr. Bleakly presented Marietta Station next. The critical property is the "super-block" containing the Big Chicken and bound by Cobb Parkway, Gresham Road, I-75 and Roswell Road. This area is envisioned to be the "Marietta Gateway." Harry's Market is included in the station's core area, not to be redeveloped but to create a better entrance along Roswell and potentially introduce new retail next to the market. The development potential at Marietta is as follows: 790 new residential units, 340,000 sq. ft. of office space, 115,000 sq. ft. of retail space, and 125 new hotel rooms. The key points about Marietta Station are: **1)** The potential for this being a signature redevelopment area. **2)** The target development is commercial/office with accompanying residential. **3)** There is potential to extend the "Envision Marietta" plan along the Roswell Corridor to include the station area.
20. Mr. Bleakly presented Town Center Station next. The prime area is the intersection of Big Shanty Road and Busby Parkway. Mr. Bleakly stated that the "wonderful" thing about the Town Center area is that it has several large sites available for development. However, the area is currently under major development pressure, and these areas may be all developed



by the time the station is constructed. There are lots of possibilities for this area. The development potential for the portion of the Town Center area in the station-influence area is as follows: 1,950 new residential units, 100,000 sq. ft. of office space, 65,000 sq. ft. of retail, and 100 to 150 new hotel rooms. The key points about the Town Center Station are: **1)** It is the subject of the Town Center LCI plan adopted by Cobb County. **2)** The development potential exists on the perimeter of the Town Center core. **3)** The target development is residential, with minor office and retail land uses.

21. Mr. Womack and Mr. Bleakly closed the presentation by summarizing the total projected development along the NW Corridor and sharing key economic observations. The total projected development along the entire corridor is as follows: 5,300 residential units (60 single family, 1,507 townhomes, 2,900 condos, and 850 apartments); 1.8 million sq. ft. of office/industrial development; 515,000 sq. ft. of retail space; and 700 hotel rooms. The key economic observations were: **1)** Over the next 15 years, the corridor will add 70,000 residents and attract 50% of the county growth. **2)** The average home value along the corridor is \$40,000 higher than the County average. **3)** Townhomes and condos are 50% of new home sales.
22. Mr. Womack stated that the work remaining to be accomplished includes completing the draft plans and then working with the city/county/CID to adopt the TOD features suggested for the station areas.
23. Roger Henze stated that this phase of the planning process includes one more SADP public meeting in late August or early September. Also, the PowerPoint presentation would be available at www.nwhovbrt.com. At 8:18PM, Mr. Henze opened the floor to questions from those in attendance.

General Question & Answer Session

24. **Are there plans to accommodate the new development by building taller buildings rather than building outward?** Mr. Womack stated that this can be done, but building upwards adds construction cost. **Yes, but we will pay a pretty penny for land, too.**
25. **If the truck lanes are placed on the outside, how will general-purpose traffic get across them?** Mr. Palmer stated that the general purpose interchanges will be elevated, and that TOL lanes will be like express lanes, in that trucks will only be able to enter and exit the freeway at the north and south end of the truck lanes.
26. **Truck lanes in the middle of I-75 seem to be the most feasible.** Mr. Palmer agreed, stating that from structure cost and a location perspective, putting truck lanes in the center is probably the most feasible.
27. **At I-75 and I-285, you have to cross 6 lanes of traffic to get to the Delk Road exit (for northbound traffic). This is dangerous.** Mr. Palmer stated that the outside northbound lane will be a tunnel straight to Delk Road. We're not proposing to add general purpose lanes, but taking truck traffic off of that area will make the existing configuration adequate.
28. **You indicated that the Franklin Road Station plan was a "placeholder." Will the Franklin Road Station be dropped? There are 2 other stations very nearby, about one**



mile in each direction. Mr. Henze stated that the Franklin Rd. Station was included at the request of the City of Marietta. We have called the draft station location a “placeholder” because we don’t know what the city may do around it. Mr. Womack stated that the traffic analysis does show high HOV demand at the Franklin location, indicating the need for a station there.

29. **But, your intensity chart showed a low intensity of development at Franklin Road Station.** Mr. Womack stated that the chart wasn’t literal; it was meant to show types of development as a proportion of all Franklin station development.
30. **For how many hours per day will buses run into and out of Franklin?** Mr. Heimer stated that the buses would run from 5:00AM until midnight, with six buses per hour at peak times, two buses per hour at off-peak times, and one bus per hour during the evening.
31. **A big concern is going to be noise. Over the long-term, will technology allow for quieter buses?** Mr. Henze stated that many people are concerned about noise and that new vehicle traffic will create lots of noise, too. The EIS will assess noise and propose mitigation where appropriate so that the public can take a look at the noise levels that are projected.
32. **Will ridership fees allow the BRT to break even, financially?** Mr. Heimer stated that no transit system breaks even from ridership fees. Ultimately, a combination of ridership fees, Cobb County funds, and federal funds for buses/facilities will cover the costs. Generally, ridership fees account for approximately 25% of the cost, while the remainder is roughly split between local and federal funds.
33. **What is the cost per ride?** Mr Heimer stated that the planned fare cost is \$1.75.
34. **Will the Franklin Road Station be constructed because the City of Marietta wants it or because the people who live there want it?** Mr. Henze stated that the Franklin Station is in the plan because the model shows lots of HOV trips for the area.
35. **But the stations next to Franklin Rd. are so close.** Mr. Henze stated that those nearby stations are hard to walk to, though, and we’re looking at lots of pedestrian ridership in the Franklin Rd. area.
36. **Why is the Franklin Rd. Station located in a residential area and not in the redevelopment area?** Mr. Womack stated that the station is located where it is so it can be near the Interstate. We’d like to have an unobstructed road with no crossing traffic between the Interstate and the station. Therefore, constructing the station far away from the Interstate would create a long barrier through the neighborhood. Also, the current planned location of the station is outside the floodplain area of the creek.
37. **But is it possible that the station could be moved farther from the Interstate?** Mr. Womack stated that it was possible.
38. **I have a comment about the frequency of the stations. The further you get out along the corridor, the less frequent the stations are. I would think it would be the reverse.** Mr. Womack stated that even though there is lots of development to the south, there will be much more. Mr. Henze stated that the stations are more frequent to the south because there



are more people there. Two stations between Marietta and Town Center were removed because citizens demanded that we do so and the modeling indicated low ridership in those locations.

39. **Have you noticed the citizens' opposition to Franklin Road tonight? Please note it!** So noted.
40. **I live on the eastern side of the Interstate at the Franklin Road station location in Cobb County. As a county resident, what do I get out of this project? I am a big supporter of the transit; Atlanta is long overdue. But what do I get out of this?** Mr. Henze stated that the suggested land use changes are only on the City of Marietta side of the Interstate.
41. **I think the City of Marietta would be fine with just the LCI; it's not necessary to do the HOV plan. Please make a note of this.**
42. Mr. Henze thanked the audience and concluded the presentation at 8:41PM.

Charge to Meeting Participants

Attendees were asked to inspect land use plans for the five station areas. 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 and land use options.

General Written Comments

There were seven written comments received (four at the public meeting and, as of 7/28/06, three via U.S. mail). A summary of the comments follows.

Of the seven comments received, five regarded the Franklin Road Station, one the Marietta Station, and one was a barely-completed survey about Town Center Station. The Town Center survey indicated only that the respondent felt well-informed about the status of the NW Corridor project and understood the TOD core and ring concept.

The five Franklin Road comments were split between three respondents who felt the proposed station was unnecessary and two who support the station and want construction to begin as soon as possible. The three who opposed the station were all skeptical of the need for three BRT stations in such close proximity. Two comments expressed concern for the noise from buses & trucks heard on the east side of the Interstate. One comment expressed concern for run-off into Rottenwood Creek, indicating that Burns Drive is "in a flood zone already." One comment expressed the need for more BRT/HOV in the North, where so much growth is occurring in Cobb, Bartow, and Cherokee Counties. One additional comment requested that the draft Franklin station plan reflect low-density residential rather than high-density residential in the southeast corner of the ½ mile core TOD area (on east side of Interstate). All three respondents indicated on their survey that they felt well-informed, supported transit, and understood the TOD core and ring concept.

The two respondents in favor of the Franklin Road station expressed urgency, stating "go for it" and "the sooner, the better." One indicated that it was important to Franklin Rd. residents to focus



redevelopment around the bus station. One expressed that they would change the TOD concept by including more office space and better access for parking and improved traffic flow on Franklin Road. The one respondent who used a survey form indicated that he/she felt well-informed, supported transit, and understood the TOD core and ring concept.

The respondent addressing the Marietta Station, Kay L. Dempsey, indicated herself as the property owner of the land on the corner of Roswell Road and Hagood Circle, which has belonged to her family for over 100 years. She does not want to lose the land through eminent domain and expressed hope that the proposed parking deck would be built north of her property. She intends to develop her property in coordination with the station area plans, and is excited about the planned revitalization of the area.