



# NORTHWEST CORRIDOR NEWS

## Northwest Corridor I-75/I-575 Project Project Newsletter

Winter 2005

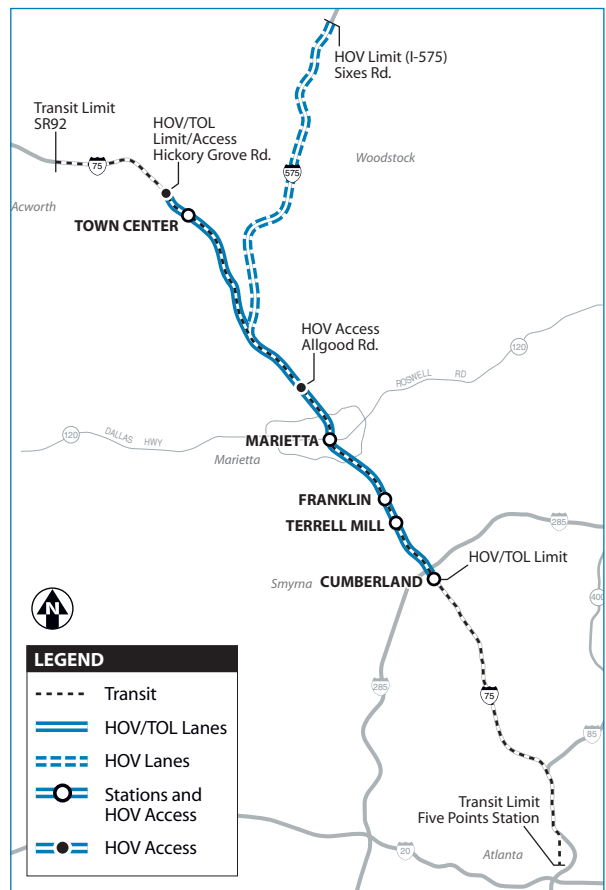
### Public Information Open House

*Tuesday, November 15, 2005  
5:00-8:00PM  
Cobb County Civic Center  
548 S. Marietta Parkway  
Marietta, GA 30060*

### Northwest Corridor Project Adds Truck Only Lanes

In May of 2004, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) and the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) combined resources to kick off the Northwest Corridor I-75/I-575 High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lane/Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Project. Governor Sonny Purdue identified the project as a priority in his Fast Forward Transportation Program as a means to improve mobility and increase transportation options in the Atlanta Region.

The project includes the extension of HOV lanes along I-75 from Akers Mill Road to Hickory Grove Road in Cobb County and along I-575 to Sixes Road in Cherokee County. The development of a Bus Rapid Transit system along I-75 in Cobb County is also included with proposed station sites between the Cumberland and Town Center area.



Early this year, the Georgia State Road and Tollway Authority (SRTA) explored truck-only lanes (TOL) as a means to reduce truck congestion in general use highway lanes. Study results suggested substantial travel time benefits to interstate system travelers could be realized with the inclusion of truck only lanes on the I-75 corridor. In September, the TOL concept was added to Northwest Corridor Project along I-75 from Akers Mill Rd to Hickory Grove Road.

### Environmental Analysis Continues

The Northwest Corridor Project is currently in the Alternatives Analysis (AA)/Draft Environmental Impact Study (DEIS) phase of project development. During the





## Alternatives Under Consideration

### 1) No-Build

Evaluates what happens without building the project.

### 2) HOV/TOL

HOV and Truck Only Lanes without expanded transit services.

### 3) HOV/TOL/TSM

HOV, TOL and expanded bus services without stations.

### 4) HOV/TOL/BRT

HOV, TOL and expanded bus services with transit stations.

AA/DEIS phase, we examine the potential environmental impacts of the project as well as the costs and benefits of proposed alternatives. The process allows for the public and the decision makers to reach a consensus on the alternative that best meets the goals and objectives of the project. The result will be the Locally Preferred Alternative, or *LPA*.

Since initial public meetings held in August and November of 2004, the alternatives under consideration have evolved. What's new and different? The addition of the TOL concept into the alternatives is one difference. Also the managed lanes approach for the project has required that tolling for the HOV system and the truck only lanes be considered. High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes allow single occupancy vehicles to access HOV lanes for a price. These concepts have emerged with strong potential for congestion relief. As congestion is forecasted to rise along with population and employment growth in the I-75 corridor, these innovative strategies are important to study. Additionally, the number and configuration of BRT stations proposed has changed. There are five stations now instead of seven.

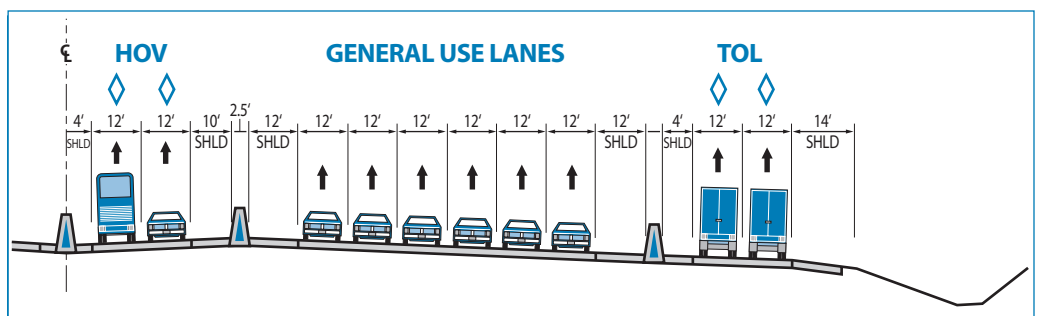
The alternatives currently under consideration include: 1) no-build alternative, 2) HOV plus TOL alternative, 3) HOV/TOL plus Transportation Systems Management (TSM) alternative, and 4) HOV/TOL plus BRT alternative. The HOV/TOL/BRT alternative includes the construction of five BRT stations. All of the alternatives, with the exception of the no-build, locate the HOV system in the center of the corridor.

With the addition of the TOL concept to the project, the schedule for completion of the environmental work has shifted. The AA will continue through spring of 2006. It is expected that the DEIS document will be submitted for federal agency review next summer. It is estimated that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) will issue a Record of Decision (ROD) on the project in the fall of 2007. If approved, construction on the first phase of the project could begin as early as mid-2009.

## What are TOL?

The Northwest Corridor Project is one of the first transportation projects in the Atlanta Region to incorporate truck-only lanes. While only a few communities across the nation are currently utilizing the concept, many states such as California, Virginia and Georgia are studying the use of this innovative strategy.

Truck-only lanes are lanes designated for the exclusive use of trucks. These lanes are physically separated from general purpose traffic. Removing a large percentage of the heavy trucks with trailers from the general purpose traffic will stabilize traffic flow since these vehicles generally do not maneuver and change speeds as readily as smaller vehicles. Separating trucks from other mixed-flow traffic will enhance safety as well as improve mobility.



Potential I-75 North Lane Configuration



So what will I-75 look like? There are many possible configurations for the relative location of the general purpose lanes, managed lanes (HOT and HOV) and truck-only lanes. The depicted schematic is one potential option. Other options are being considered. However, all configurations will have a similar footprint with similar impacts. Make sure to attend the public meeting on November 15 for more information.

## BRT Station Area Planning News

A successful series of public forums were held between March and June of this year discussing community compatible development around the proposed BRT station sites. Hundreds of residents from Cobb County including civic, neighborhood, and special interest groups met with GRTA, GDOT, City of Marietta, and Cobb County staff to discuss current development patterns and future options. The input received varied by station site but the overall opinion focused on preservation of existing stable neighborhoods. Many attendees were concerned about impacts to traffic and the environment. A number of participants viewed the stations as an opportunity for revitalization, adding new housing and retail options.



Citizens and staff at BRT Station Area Planning meeting

Seven original station sites were proposed as part of the BRT transit alternative. As a result of public input and technical analysis, five stations are currently being considered. The two stations no longer being studied are Bells Ferry and Allgood. Among the comments heard from the public were: a concern over impacts to the surrounding neighborhoods and lack of need for stations in those areas. Technical analysis supported the omission of the two stations.

The addition of the TOL concept to the Northwest Corridor Project does not affect the valuable work already completed by the station area planning process. The only adjustment is to our schedule while we wait for the environmental work to catch up. Look for the next phase of station area planning to start early next year. This next phase will include a more in-depth look at station area sites utilizing market analysis studies, exploring traffic impacts, and examining other area-specific data as well as specific station layouts. Stay tuned for exciting interactive workshops and design charettes!

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### **Public Private Initiative Proposed for Northwest Corridor**

In November of 2004, Georgia Transportation Partners (GTP), a team of national and local private transportation builders and developers, submitted a proposal to GDOT for improvements in the Northwest Corridor.

GTP proposes to design and construct congestion-priced express toll lanes along I-75 and I-575, from I-285 north to Hickory Grove and Sixes roads. Existing lanes along I-75 and I-575 would remain free for all motorists. A BRT system is proposed to operate in the express lanes as well. The plan also includes an option for truck-only toll lanes.

The GTP proposal was submitted to GDOT under the recently enacted Public-Private Initiatives legislation. Under its proposal, GTP would design and build the project, and the tolls would be collected by the State. The project would be financed through a mix of federal funds, toll-backed revenue bonds and state sources. Using the public-private initiative approach, GTP proposes to save both time and money over the traditional transportation project development process.

The proposal is currently under review by GDOT. If selected, the proposed concepts would build on the environmental work being conducted through the existing Northwest Corridor Project. Look for an informational booth about GTP’s proposal at our public meeting on November 15, or view their Web site at [www.georgiatrainingpartners.com](http://www.georgiatrainingpartners.com).

### **Get Involved!**

For project updates and to join the mailing list or provide feedback:

Voice Mail Hotline: (404) 377-4012

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### **Lexicon**

- AA:** Alternatives Analysis
- BRT:** Bus Rapid Transit
- DEIS:** Draft Environmental Impact Statement
- FEIS:** Final Environmental Impact Statement
- FHWA:** Federal Highway Administration
- FTA:** Federal Transit Administration
- GDOT:** Georgia Department of Transportation
- GRTA:** Georgia Regional Transportation Authority
- HOT Lanes:** High Occupancy Toll Lanes
- HOV Lanes:** High Occupancy Vehicle Lanes
- LPA:** Locally Preferred Alternative
- PPI:** Public Private Initiative
- TOL:** Truck Only Lanes
- TSM:** Transportation Systems Management