



NORTHWEST CORRIDOR NEWS

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

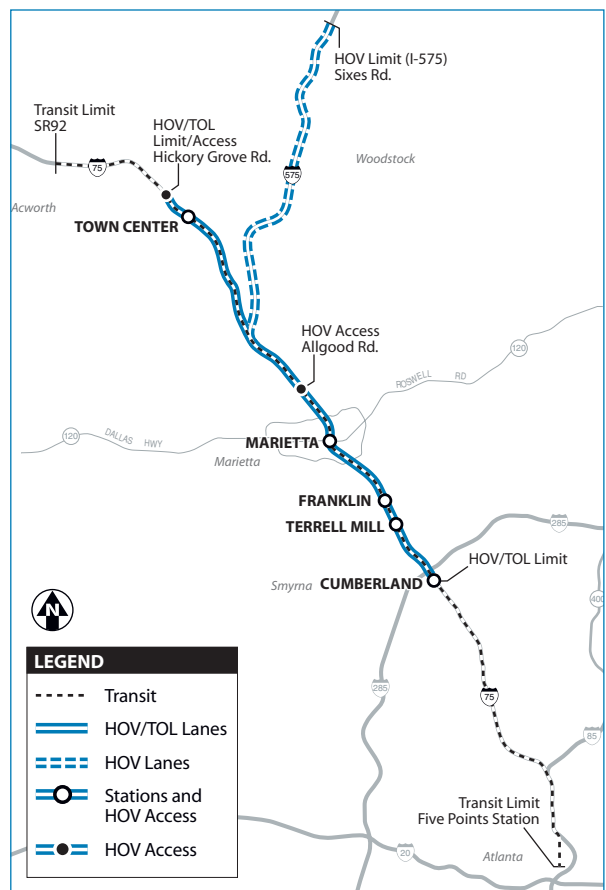
Fall 2006

A Public Private Initiative (PPI) team has been added to the Northwest Corridor team to provide support in some aspects of the preliminary engineering and environmental process. A Developer Services Agreement was signed by Georgia Transportation Partners (GTP) and GDOT in May 2006.

Environmental Impact Analysis in Full Gear

The Environmental Impact Analysis for the Northwest Corridor is well underway. The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) and Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA), in collaboration with their consultant, Parsons Brinckerhoff, are working to complete the necessary tasks associated with preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

On any project requiring federal funding or approval, its potential environmental impacts must be assessed as part of the project planning process. This is the case for major highway and transit projects, such as the Northwest Corridor. Environmental impacts are not limited to just those affecting the natural environment. In addition to assessing potential noise and air quality impacts, potential impacts to the human environment, such as environmental justice and socioeconomic factors must also be carefully analyzed. The findings of an EIS are intended to inform both the public and decision-makers in advance of the construction of a project, so that important decisions about alternative preferences are made with a full understanding of both positive and negative impacts that may arise from them.



Noise impacts are assessed using mathematical models to forecast the potential decibel level created by expected traffic on the new facility. Factors that impact decibel level are traffic volume, vehicle speeds, and distance of the new facility from the surrounding residential or commercial areas. A project such as the NW Corridor adds lanes to accommodate higher traffic volumes, allows for faster speeds, and brings lanes closer to the public in some areas. As such, its noise impacts must be fully understood, and where appropriate, minimized and mitigated before construction.





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.

Air quality impacts are assessed by establishing baseline air quality levels and then quantifying the amount and concentration of emissions that could potentially be added as a result of the project. This calculation is based on vehicle speeds and traffic volumes on the planned infrastructure. Factors such as a vehicle's age, the degree to which the engine is warmed up, and the size of the vehicle also affect the amount of emissions it produces. Industry-standard emissions estimates are used for a typical region-wide fleet of vehicles and combined with traffic volumes to arrive at a forecast for total emissions. The air quality impacts of these forecasted emissions are also important in understanding the overall effect of the construction of a project like the NW Corridor.

Potential impacts to the human environment include community and socioeconomic impacts. Community impacts are being carefully considered as part of the NW Corridor project, with a particular focus on potential environmental justice issues. Environmental justice refers to the fair treatment of all people -- regardless of education, race, or income -- in the planning and implementation of major projects. Historically, low-income racial and ethnic minorities have borne a disproportionate share of the negative impacts of projects, while not being afforded the opportunity to participate in the project's plan. Equity, in an environmental justice sense, is an important aspect of analyzing environmental effects and specific efforts are being made to include all impacted residents in the planning process. Socioeconomic impacts, including tax revenue impacts and impacts on area businesses, are also being assessed.

The DEIS is both a document, a compilation of project details and environmental analysis, and it is a decision-making process. The document will be available to the public in early 2007. Final decisions about the Preferred Project Alternative are reserved until the DEIS process is completed. Public input is received throughout the process, and an important Public Hearing is held in concert with the completion of the DEIS. The Public Hearing is anticipated in late January/February 2007.

Public Information Open House – 04.25.06

On April 25, 2006, a Public Information Open House (PIOH) was held to update the public on the alternatives under consideration for the NW Corridor project, and to get their input on refinements to the alternatives. Attended by 145 people, the meeting addressed topics



Members of the public examine aerial photos of NW Corridor project area



such as: how truck-only lanes (TOL) might be integrated with the existing alternatives, potential issues of environmental concern, current planning for the areas around bus rapid transit (BRT) stations, and continuing opportunities for public involvement.

Sixteen written, and numerous verbal, comments were received at the PIOH. Representative issues raised were: a) a desire to place truck lanes in the center of the highway, adjacent to the HOV lanes; b) a request to develop an alternative to HOV access to Allgood Road; and c) a request to develop additional alternatives for consideration, such as a reversible Toll Express Lane that would mix cars with truck traffic, and commuter rail.

Stakeholder Involvement

An important focus of the DEIS process is consultation and coordination with potentially affected parties. During 2006, while alternatives were being refined, GDOT, GRTA, and their consultants made a special effort to get input and feedback from numerous constituency groups. One key group is the motor trucking industry.

Trucking Industry

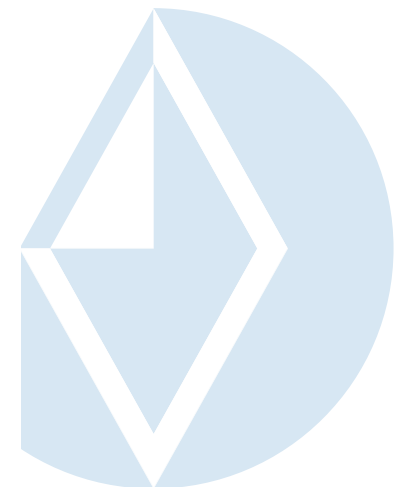
In 2005, as a result of the State Road and Tollway Authority's "High Occupancy Toll and Truck Only Toll" study, a truck-only lane (TOL) concept was added to the Northwest Corridor project. Understanding that the trucking industry's input was integral to the DEIS, GDOT met with representatives of the Georgia Motor Trucking Association on several occasions to discuss features of the TOL concept, such as types of tolling, price sensitivity, travel patterns, and access to the TOL. Two Truck Industry Forums were held – the first in December 2005 and the second in May 2006. These forums garnered important input for consideration as the NW Corridor project continues.



Station Area Development Planning

Station area development planning for the NW Corridor bus rapid transit (BRT) stations has been an important feature of the project. Since our last newsletter, four additional meetings and workshops have been held, including station charrettes for each of the areas around the five proposed stations, and status workshops to keep the affected public informed and involved in decision-making. On average, the meetings have been attended by approximately 50-75 people from the community. At each meeting, members of the project team have been present to share the latest iterations of station area designs (including station/road location and possible land uses for the surrounding area) and outline the development potential at each site. The public has been encouraged to give written or oral input on the projects, and this input has directly affected key aspects of the station area plans.

Station area planning efforts are now winding down, and a description of the planning process for station area development will be included in the New Starts application for federal funds, which is due to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) on August 18, 2006. It is anticipated that one additional station area planning workshop will be held in late summer or early fall





Roger Henze and the project team present station area designs to the public.

to review the recommended land use plans for the five station areas. Next year's update of the New Starts material could include the results of the local planning jurisdiction's review and action on the proposed station-area plans.

In addition, the project planning staff will focus on modifications needed for the MARTA Arts Center Station in the City of Atlanta and will be coordinating closely with the City of Atlanta and MARTA on that activity.

Get Involved!

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

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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