NWCP
NORTHWEST CORRIDOR PROJECT

NORTHWEST CORRIDOR PROJECT NEWS

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

What's New with the Northwest Corridor?

Work is continuing at a fast pace as the team strives to complete the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) by this summer. For any project receiving federal funding or approval, potential environmental impacts must be assessed as part of the project planning process. Environmental impacts are not limited to just those affecting the natural environment, like noise and air quality. Potential impacts to the human environment, such as those affecting low-income and minority groups and social and economic factors must also be carefully analyzed. Stakeholder and public input is also very important.

The Northwest Corridor is required to complete a SDEIS because of the revisions to the alternatives presented in the Draft EIS (DEIS) in April 2007. A comparable level of analysis for all the alternatives is necessary to provide equal information for the decision-making process. For the SDEIS, the studies completed under the DEIS will serve as a base, with updates of current data completed where necessary. The project will also continue to bring information to the public and ask for input. Once the document is published, the project team will distribute copies to various public outlets and hold a public hearing open house for public comment. Please visit the project website www.nwcproject.com for information on all the project alternatives and for the most current news.

The Project Reaches Out

Several kiosk events were held in March and April to distribute information about the project and allow citizens to talk with staff, ask questions and leave comments. The kiosks included two staff people (one fluent in Spanish), project displays, bi-lingual fact sheets and comment forms. On March 8, the team visited the Cobb County Tag Office on South Cobb Drive and on March 14, the Transfiguration Church on Blackwell Rd. In total, over 150 fact sheets were distributed at these two events. An unstaffed kiosk was also placed at the Mansour Center on Roswell Road in April containing fact sheets in both English and Spanish.

In addition, project newsletters and fact sheets were delivered to Cobb and Cherokee County libraries, churches, government offices and social service organizations. A fact sheet in Portuguese was also developed and sent in late April to outlets such as the Atlanta-Rio de Janeiro Sister Cities Committee, Brazilian Community Association of Atlanta, Brazilian-American Chamber of Commerce of Georgia, Inc. (BACC), and several churches serving the Portuguese community for distribution to their members. If you or your organization would like hard-copies, or an electronic version of any of the project materials, please call the project hotline at 404-377-4012.

Citizen and staff at project kiosk event.

The majority of comments received so far have expressed support for the project. Some have also voiced concerns over tolling, and construction, noise, and property impacts. Several comments expressed a desire for additional transit in the corridor. If you have questions or comments, please contact the project team via the website form at www.nwcproject.com, email at nwcpcomments@projectsolvemail.com, or telephone at 404-377-4012. You can also send a letter to the contacts found on the back page of this newsletter.

The Project Up Close

What's the Project all about?

The Northwest Corridor Project is examining the potential of the addition of a managed lane system, built separately from the current general purpose lanes on I-75 and I-575.

Early analysis shows a reversible system would offer significant traveler benefit and travel time savings, meeting the project's original purpose and need including reducing congestion, improving mobility and improving safety, while being considerably more cost effective than the alternatives previously considered in the DEIS. Since the project is proposing a smaller footprint, it results in fewer environmental impacts, like reduced noise and vibration and significant decreases in the need for right of way and property acquisitions. There are also fewer construction impacts such as reduced disruption of traffic and reduced construction time.

What about the Truck Only Lanes and Bus Rapid Transit?

The alternatives in the DEIS included both truck only lanes (TOL) and a bus rapid transit (BRT) system, including additional routes and supporting stations. In the refinements of the alternatives, both these components were eliminated. Truck only lanes were cut based on cost, related studies that concluded the lanes were not affordable or recommended and comments from the trucking industry. Mandatory tolling was also not supported by trucking industry.

The BRT component, including stations and park-n-ride lots, was eliminated mostly due to lack of anticipated funding. Feedback from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) indicated that the much needed funding from the New Starts Program was not likely. Additionally, comments were heard expressing concern over additional bus traffic on midtown Atlanta and the impacts to the MARTA Arts Center Station. It is important to note that the current project does not preclude the addition of transit in the future. The reduced footprint of the managed lane system leaves ample room and right of way for a future system. The managed lanes also encourage and support transit by allowing buses to access and use the system for free.

What are Managed Lanes?

Managed lanes utilize a special design or operational feature to improve traffic flow and safety. A high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lane is one example, allowing use by only those vehicles meeting the occupancy requirement. By restricting general use, the amount of traffic can be limited offering control over congestion levels. Often managed lanes are barrier separated from the general purpose traffic. Managed lanes can also be tolled. The price of tolls can vary based on congestion levels, to maintain a minimum operating speed and level of service. For example, tolls would be higher during peak periods when demand is high. Tolls are typically collected electronically with no need for toll booths.

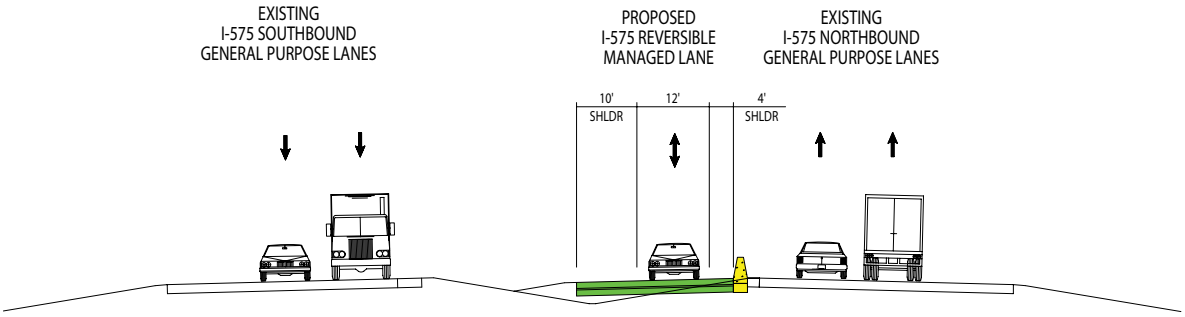
For the Northwest Corridor Project, high occupancy toll (HOT) lanes and express toll lanes (ETL) are being considered. For the HOT lanes, those vehicles with three or more occupants could access the lanes without paying a toll. With the ETL, all vehicles regardless of occupancy would pay a toll. For both options, vanpools and transit would use the lanes for free. It has not yet been determined which tolling option will be used.

How does a Reversible System work?

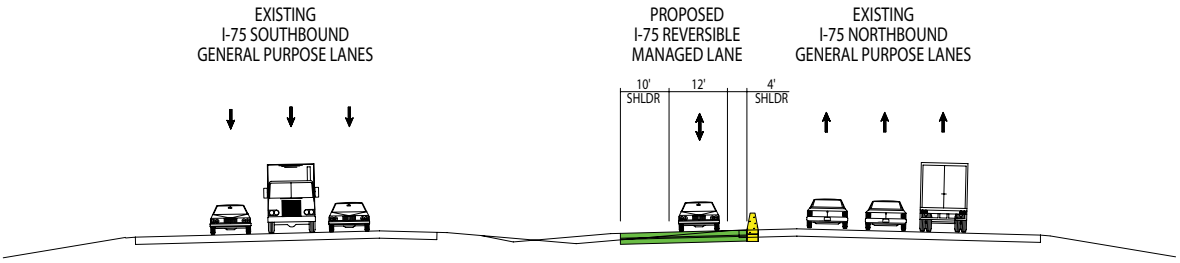
A reversible lane controls the direction of travel depending on the time of day. Typically, they improve traffic flow in the peak direction of travel during both the morning and afternoon rush hours. The lanes can be open in any direction needed during the off-peak hours. By using additional lanes in the direction that demands more capacity, congestion can be reduced. Signage alerts drivers as to which direction traffic is moving. Care is also taken to "flush" the system of motorists between directional changes.

The Northwest Corridor Project is considering two reversible lanes on I-75 from Akers Mill to the I-575 interchange with one reversible lane continuing to north of Hickory Grove Road. On I-575, the project proposes one reversible lane from the I-75 interchange to south of Sixes Road. Access points along I-75 are proposed at I-285, Terrell Mill Road, Roswell Road, I-575, Big Shanty Road, and Hickory Grove Road. On I-575, access points are proposed as slip ramps - three southbound and three northbound. A slip ramp allows motorists to transition from the managed lane to the general purpose lanes or from the general purpose lanes to the managed lane. The I-575 access points also have the option of being direct access interchanges rather than slip ramps.

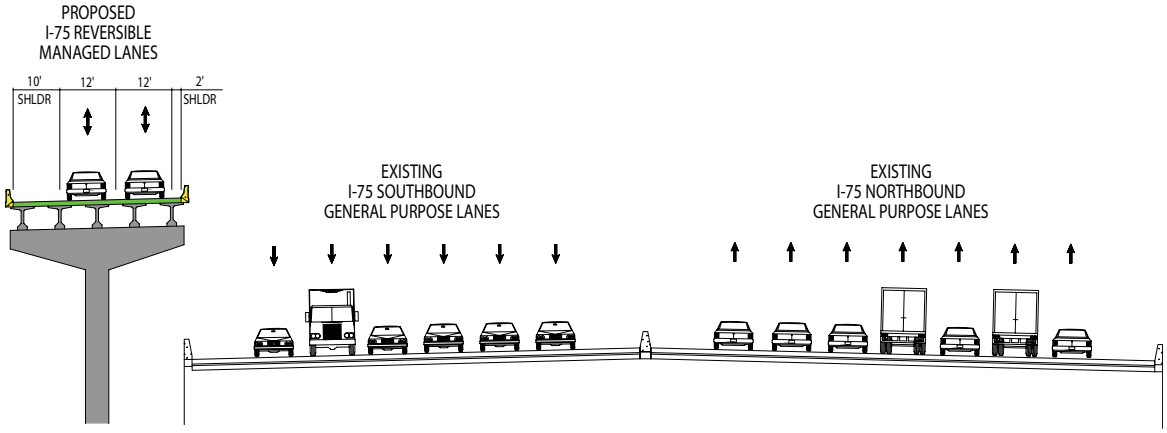
The additional lanes of traffic on I-75 and I-575 during peak period would provide travelers the option of saving considerable amounts of commuting time. Initial analysis shows that motorists using the managed lanes system could save from 35 - 40 minutes in the morning peak and from 40 - 50 minutes in the afternoon peak. Those choosing to stay in the general purpose lanes would also see some time savings benefit due to a reduction in volume in those lanes.



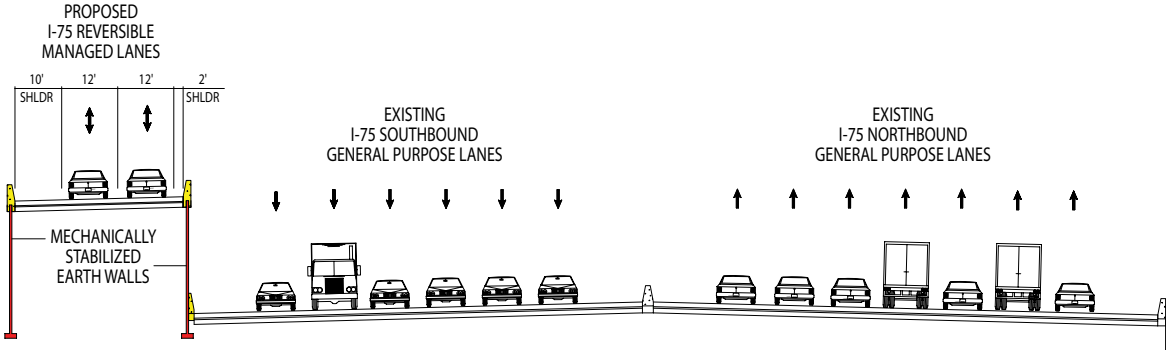
I-575 TYPICAL SECTION NORTH OF I-75



I-75 TYPICAL SECTION NORTH OF I-575



I-75 TYPICAL SECTIONS BETWEEN DELK ROAD AND SOUTH 120 LOOP – ON BRIDGE



I-75 TYPICAL SECTIONS BETWEEN DELK ROAD AND SOUTH 120 LOOP – ON WALLS

Public Private Partnership (P3) Corner

On February 26, 2010 GDOT issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) soliciting a public private partner for the construction of the West by Northwest Project. The project includes two complementary managed lane project sections, the Northwest Corridor and Western Corridor sections. The Western Corridor section anticipates adding managed lanes to portions of Interstates 285 and 20, including approximately 9.5 miles of improvements along I-285 and approximately 6.5 miles along I-20. It contemplates two managed lanes in each direction along I-285 West from I-75 to I-20 and along I-20 West from I-285 to Thornton Road. Issuance of the RFQ marks the first step in a two-step procurement process. A shortlist of private partner teams will be selected on June 1, 2010 and asked to respond to a Request for Proposals (RFP), which is expected to be issued in final form this September. Selection of the private partner is projected to occur in early 2011.

The P3 process will not interfere with the required environmental work for the Northwest Corridor. The EIS and approval for the Northwest Corridor section are expected to be completed and a Record of Decision (ROD) obtained from FHWA before the selection of a private partner. The Western Corridor section still requires environmental work and approval before the project can advance to construction. Construction on the Northwest Corridor is anticipated to start in late 2011, and is expected to take between three and four years.

Information on Georgia's P3 program is available on GDOT's P3 section of its Web site, located at www.georgiaP3.com. Information on the West by Northwest Project, including the RFQ, can be accessed directly at www.georgiaP3.com/WNW.

Get Involved!

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

Voice Mail Hotline: (404) 377-4012

Email: nwcpcomments@projectsolvemail.com

Website: www.nwcproject.com

To submit written comments, or for more information please contact:

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ACRONYMS

DEIS: Draft Environmental Impact Statement

ETL: Express Toll Lanes

FEIS: Final Environmental Impact Statement

FHWA: Federal Highway Administration

GDOT: Georgia Department of Transportation

HOT Lanes: High Occupancy Toll Lanes

HOV Lanes: High Occupancy Vehicle Lanes

LPA: Locally Preferred Alternative

MARTA: Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority

PPP: Public Private Partnership

RFP: Request for Proposals

RFQ: Request for Qualifications

ROD: Record of Decision

SDEIS: Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement

TOL: Truck Only Lanes