

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

Public Hearing Open House  
October 21, 2010

Thank you for attending the public hearing open house for the Northwest Corridor Project. We hope that you will find the information provided in this project overview, video simulation and in the displays around the room helpful. Several public meetings about this project were held in May and June 2007. The project has changed significantly since then based on a number of factors. If you missed the first events, don't be concerned – we will cover the important points as we go along. The presentation will last just a few minutes and will help you become more informed about this important project and better understand the issues so that you can become an informed participant in the process of developing transportation improvements for the I-75 and I-575 corridors. The improvements are designed to provide additional transportation choices and improve mobility on the corridors.



# Purpose of the Meeting

- Provide Project Background
- Discuss the Current State of the Project
- Discuss the Recently Completed Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS)
- Present the Alternatives being Considered and Impacts of the Alternatives
- Obtain Comments from the Public

So, why are we here? A lot has transpired since the Project was initially conceived and the concept has evolved. The purpose of tonight's meeting is to present the environmental document and describe the background planning efforts leading up to the current project as well as recent activities associated with the Managed Lane project we are presenting this evening. The meeting will provide some detail on the new Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (or SDEIS), discuss the options under consideration and ask for your input on the process. Responses to your comments will be addressed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (or FEIS). You are encouraged to review the SDEIS that is now available.

# Where to find the SDEIS



- The new project website at [www.nwcproject.com](http://www.nwcproject.com)
- Georgia Department of Transportation Main Office
- GDOT District 6 Office
- GDOT District 7 Area Engineer's Office
- Local Libraries
  - Central Branch of the Atlanta/Fulton County Library
  - Cobb County Central Library in Marietta
  - Sequoyah Regional Library in Cherokee County
- City of Atlanta Planning Department
- City of Marietta Planning Department
- County Clerks Offices in Cobb and Cherokee County
- Cobb County Department of Transportation
- The original website is still active at [www.nwhovbrt.com](http://www.nwhovbrt.com), if needed

If you have not had an opportunity to begin reviewing the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement, it is available from several sources as shown here. The addresses of where to find and review a copy of the SDEIS are spelled out in detail in the handout material you were provided as you entered the facility. A good start might be the project website to familiarize yourself with the two volumes of the SDEIS and the various technical reports that make up the complete document.

# The Alternatives



- Detailed discussion of a proposed Build Alternative and the No-Build Alternative
- Benefits associated with each Alternative
- Measures of Effectiveness
  - What are the Measures
  - Comparison of the alternatives
- A Recommended Preferred Alternative based on agency and public input

The SDEIS provides an analysis of a Build Alternative to be considered as well as analysis of the No-Build Alternative along with a comparison of the two. Each is evaluated against measures of effectiveness that are based on the Purpose and Need for the Study Area to determine how well each performs. The displays on the meeting room floor will help provide the details for you. A summary of the Purpose and Need associated with the Project is provided in your handout package. The concept of a recommended preferred alternative will be a topic of conversation here tonight. This does not mean that a decision has been made but does indicate that a significant amount of analysis has been prepared and measures of effectiveness evaluated to determine how each alternative addresses the purpose and need for the study area. This is part of the process of selecting the Recommended Preferred Alternative but it is only a recommendation. We ask for your review of the information and your opinion of the analysis as presented in the SDEIS.

# Public Input



- We are interested in your opinion
- Translation services are available at this meeting
- Options for providing input
  - Court Reporter
  - Comment forms
  - By email – send comments to [nwcpcomments@projectsolvemail.com](mailto:nwcpcomments@projectsolvemail.com)
  - Visit our Web site at [www.nwcproject.com](http://www.nwcproject.com)
  - Call our Voice Mail Hotline at (404) 377-4012

We are very interested in your comments. There are several options for you to let us know what you think. Translation services are available, if required. Each comment you provide will become part of the official record of the EIS process and each question or comment will be addressed individually. A court reporter is on site this evening if you prefer to express your comments verbally. Your comments will be transcribed and made a part of the record. Alternatively, you may fill out the comment form provided as you entered the meeting. If you choose this option, we encourage you to leave your comment form with the meeting staff, but comments can be mailed to GDOT by November 3, 2010. You can also email us at the address shown, visit our website, which has a comment page or call our hotline number and leave a message. The email address, website address and hotline number are provided in the handout package. However you choose to provide it, we encourage and welcome your input.



# Displays & Additional Information

- Managed Lane System Configuration
- Proposed Project Operation Simulation
- Google Earth Interactive Layout Display
- Concept Roadway Layouts
- Environmental Constraints maps
- Typical Section Information
- Tolling information provided by State Road and Tollway Authority
- The Public Private Partnership (P3) Approach to Implementation

In the meeting area, several large format displays depict the configuration of the proposed managed lane system. These displays are very detailed with the proposed road network depicted on accurate aerial photography. They attempt to visually convey the impacts as accurately as possible. The displays of the typical sections for each option should aid in understanding the concepts. There is also a simulation of how the project will appear after construction is complete and the system is in operation. It will be presented at the end of this presentation. If you believe in the old adage that a picture is worth a thousand words, please stay to see this and we think you will agree that putting it all in motion is even more valuable to an understanding of the proposed project. We also have an interactive display based on a overlay of the Project on the Google Earth photo database that can be paused so that a staff member can zoom in on any portion of the project alignment and let you study it in detail if you wish. Please take a few minutes to look over all this information and feel free to ask questions.

There are individuals from GDOT and the consultant staff at each of the display areas. These individuals will be able to help you with your questions or preparation of any comments you may have.

Representatives from the State Road and Tollway Authority will be at the meeting, if there are questions regarding tolling for the project. You will also find an information booth for the Public Private Partnership process. Staff members are available to answer any questions you may have about this innovative initiative to deliver the project. While a separate series of public meetings about the P3 process is planned by GDOT, it is a good idea to get a handle on this approach, since it is central to the success of this project.

# Brief Project History



- Begun by GDOT as a simple extension of the HOV system along I-75 and I-575 in early 2002
- The project was combined with the Northwest Connectivity Study prepared by GRTA in May 2004 to include Bus Rapid Transit on the I-75 corridor
- In response to studies by SRTA the project was modified in August 2005 to include truck only lanes on the I-75 corridor
- DEIS Completed and signed by FHWA and GDOT on April 26, 2007
- The national economic situation deteriorated rapidly in 2008 and the construction of the project as envisioned became a remote possibility

Since the project has changed a lot since GDOT presented the details in the summer of 2007, we think it is appropriate to discuss the history of the effort, if only briefly. If more detail is desired, please visit the old project website at [www.nwhovbrt.com](http://www.nwhovbrt.com).

Prior to May, 2004, Georgia Department of transportation and Georgia Regional Transportation Authority were separately studying roadway and transit improvements in the corridor. Realizing that there were many common goals associated with the two projects, the decision was made by GDOT and GRTA to combine the projects from a design and environmental documentation standpoint. Work began on this combined project in May 2004.

As the combined project was being developed, the State Road and Tollway Authority published draft reports on two studies in the Atlanta region in April 2005. The studies concluded that the addition of truck only lanes to the Interstate corridors outside the Perimeter could produce substantial travel time savings for motorists in the general purpose lanes. So, in August 2005, GDOT made the decision to add truck only lanes to the study on the I-75 corridor. Work began immediately on adding truck only lanes to the roadway and BRT station concepts and modifying the already completed chapters of the Draft EIS.

The project limits were also extended to Hickory Grove Road to avoid the complications of tying the system to the existing general purpose interchange at Wade Green Road that is already experiencing congestion issues.

The Draft EIS was completed by the Project Team and subsequently signed by FHWA on April 26, 2007. Shortly thereafter, the economic climate changed drastically and the realization that the project must be scaled back forced GDOT to reconsider the concept.



# Project Overview

OK, lets get started.

As noted previously, the Northwest Corridor Project has evolved over the period of time since it was first envisioned. It has grown in scope from a simple to a very complex project. It has now been modified to a practical solution that GDOT has the resources to implement.

# A New Concept

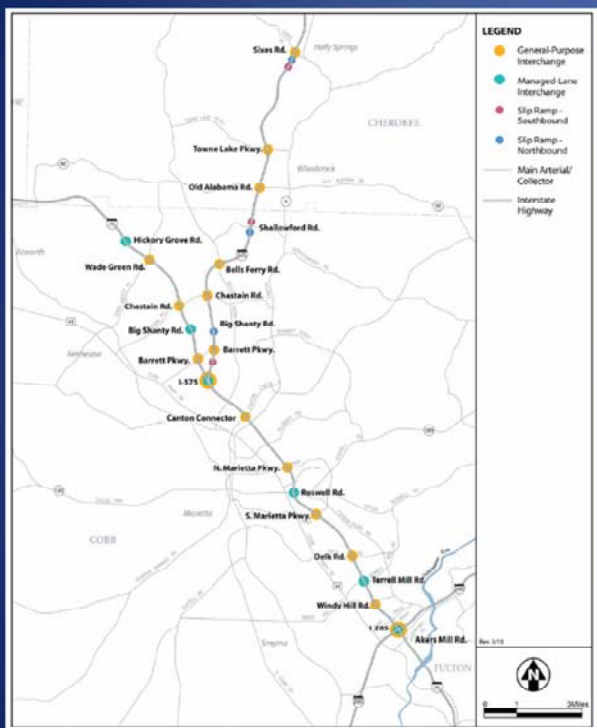


- Retain the existing general purpose lanes in their current basic configuration
- Reduce cost by eliminating truck only lanes and the BRT system.
- Evaluate reversible lanes on I-75 and I-575
- Manage the lanes using variable tolling
- Focus on travel time improvements between activity centers
- Dramatically reduce the project footprint
- Limit right of way requirements using bridges and walls
- Limit construction cost insofar as practical
- Use a Public Private Partnership (P3) to finance, construct, operate, and maintain the project

There were several basic guiding principles established during the consideration of how the project would be reconfigured. First, the general purpose lanes will remain as they currently exist. At the outset, the truck only lanes were eliminated from consideration along with the Bus Rapid Transit stations and park and ride lots based on negative reaction from the agencies providing comments. This began the process of paring down the proposed work to a financially feasible project that still meets the need for reliable travel time on the corridors. This left the addition of two managed lanes on I-75 between I-285 and I-575 and a configuration to be determined north of that point. With this start, a new travel demand forecasting model from the Atlanta Regional Commission was used for evaluation. This model indicated that using managed lanes in both directions was not very cost effective since the lanes in the off-peak direction would not be used to a great extent. The model also led to the conclusion that one reversible lane on I-75 and I-575 north of the I-75/I-575 Interchange is appropriate. Therefore, a look at a reversible system revealed that travel time savings could be realized at a fraction of the cost of a bi-directional system and with it came drastically reduced impacts to right of way and the environment. Legislation passed in 2009 also offered the possibility of innovative financing that will also reduce the initial and overall cost of constructing, operating and maintaining the project. The Public Private Partnership (P3) approach that would use a combination of businesses for financing, construction, operation and maintenance with tolling to offset and limit the overall cost to the State. An area has been designated on the display floor for you to ask questions about the P3 Process. We encourage you to talk with the staff there and find out about this important, innovative, new way to deliver projects.



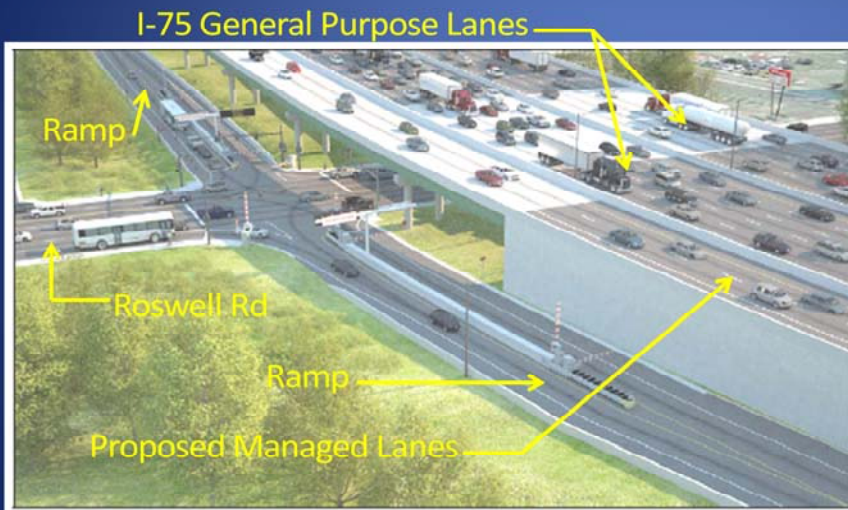
# Project Location



- Reversible managed lane system on I-75 from Akers Mill Rd to Hickory Grove Road
- Reversible managed lane system on I-575 from I-75 to Sixes Road
- Managed lane interchanges proposed on I-75 at I-285, Terrell Mill Rd, Roswell Rd, I-575, Big Shanty Rd and Hickory Grove Rd.
- Slip ramp access on I-575 located in the vicinity of Barrett Pkwy, Shallowford Rd and Sixes Rd.

The reversible managed lane system on I-75 will consist of two lanes between I-285 and I-575 and a single lane between I-575 and Hickory Grove Rd. Access points on I-75 would be provided at I-285, Terrell Mill Rd, Roswell Rd, I-575, Big Shanty Rd and Hickory Grove Rd. The reversible, managed lane system on I-575 will consist of a single lane with slip ramp access located in the vicinity of Barrett Pkwy, Shallowford Rd and Sixes Rd.

# The Roswell Rd Interchange



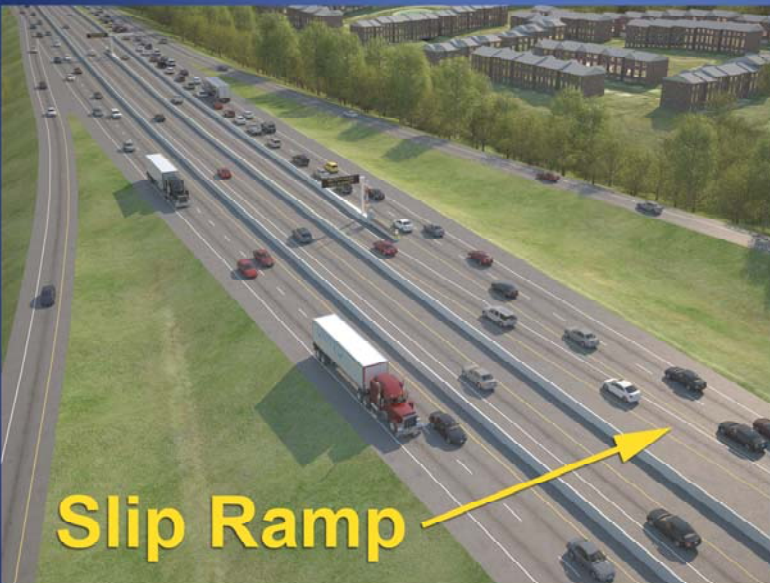
The Roswell Rd Interchange would provide access to and from the I-75 Managed Lane System

Note: This is an artist's rendering of the proposed interchange. It may not appear exactly like this when constructed.

As an example of how access to the reversible system would operate, the illustration here is for the Roswell Rd interchange. Note that the ramp approaches to the interchange split into two lanes separated by a barrier. Managed lane traffic approaching the interchange on the ramps would keep to the right of the barrier regardless of the direction of operation. Depending on the direction of operation, the gates as shown here will block off the unused side of the ramp to prevent wrong-way movements. In this configuration, the operation would be for southbound managed lane traffic on I-75 during the morning commute. During a period in the middle of the day when demand for the managed lane system would be light, the system would be completely shut down while the system is reconfigured for reverse operation during the evening commute. The system would be closed and switched back to southbound operation before the following morning commute. In this case, the gates shown in the open position would be closed and the gates in the closed position would be opened.

In general all of the direct access points at cross streets on I-75 will be configured in this fashion.

# Slip Ramps on I-575



Slip ramps would be located in the vicinity of Barrett Parkway, Shallowford Rd and Sixes Rd.

Note: This is an artist's rendering of the proposed interchange . It may not appear exactly like this when constructed.

Slip ramp access on I-75 will be located in the vicinity of Barrett Pkwy, Shallowford Rd and Sixes Road. The northbound and southbound slip ramps will be slightly offset so that the system will fit into the existing median. The gates that control use of these slip ramps will be configured appropriately based on the morning and afternoon commutes.

# Incident Management



- Barrier separated approach raises new issues for addressing accidents
- Critical planning for accidents is required
- Planning for accident location identification using the ATMS system and GDOT TMC personnel and HERO Units
- Planning for State, Cobb County, Cherokee County, the City of Atlanta and City of Marietta involvement as responders

As previously mentioned, the two traffic streams on the corridor are proposed to be separated by a barrier. With the barrier separated managed lane and general purpose systems and the limited access points associated with each one, incident management becomes a significant issue. It is absolutely essential that a plan for responding to accidents on the corridors be prepared. This will require the use of the available resources in the region to identify the specifics of the accident location, identify the appropriate facilities for treatment of accident victims, notify the facilities, arrange for transportation of victims and finally efficiently clear the accident to minimize disruption of traffic flow. An Incident Management Plan will be developed to deal with this important issue. It will involve the existing GDOT Traffic Management Center, State HERO units, Cobb County, Cherokee County, the City of Marietta and others.



## **Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement**

Because of the extent of the changes to the project alternatives evaluated in the DEIS, it was determined that a Supplemental DEIS should be prepared in order to evaluate the new impacts and communicate the changes to the project to the public.

The completion of the SDEIS is a major milestone in the development of the Project. This document summarizes the efforts considered to date that would solve or improve identified problems on the corridor and presents detailed information about the alternatives that are being considered. This includes disclosing impacts and discussing efforts to avoid, minimize or mitigate those impacts. Our goal tonight is to provide information about the project, hopefully stimulate your interest in reviewing the alternatives in greater detail and identify locations where you can read the SDEIS then decide for yourself which approach makes the most sense to you. There is a tremendous depth of detail in the document for the alternatives and we encourage you to become involved and help determine the direction the project will take. Immediately following the public comment period is the identification of the Recommended Preferred Alternative. We would appreciate your input to determine what that alternative might be.

# Alternatives Under Consideration



- The No-Build Alternative
- The Build Alternative
  - Two reversible managed lanes on the west side of I-75 between I-285 and I-575
  - One reversible managed lane on I-75 between I-575 and Hickory Grove Rd
  - One reversible managed lane on I-575 between I-75 and Sixes Rd

The two alternatives that have been considered for the SDEIS are shown here. First, to satisfy the NEPA process, consideration must be given to what happens if the proposed project is not built. Actually, the No-Build Alternative does include all of the other projects planned in the region that are unrelated to the Northwest Corridor Project.

# Tolling



- Variable pricing employed to manage the use of the lanes at 45 mph free flow speed
- Open Road tolling
  - Use of electronic transponders to collect tolls
  - No toll booths
- Tolling policy options still under consideration
  - HOT3+
    - High Occupancy Toll with three or more occupants
  - ETL
    - Express Toll Lanes

It should be noted that tolling is going to be required in some form in order to manage the usage of the lanes and for this project to be financially feasible. The pricing will be varied to manage the use of the system and keep traffic flowing at a minimum of 45 miles per hour. It is also important to understand how the system will obtain information about the users of the system for tolling purposes. At this point, the use of transponders for this purpose is currently proposed. This eliminates the need for toll booths.

Two tolling options are also explored in the SDEIS. HOT3+ which simply means that vehicles with three or more occupants can use the facility without a toll while vehicles with one and two occupants can use the facility by paying a toll. The other option is called Express Toll Lanes, or ETL. In this option all vehicles will pay a toll. Both options exclude emergency vehicles, transit busses, vanpools and other specialty vehicles from paying a toll. The tolling methodology has not been determined at this point. The decision will be made after comments from the general public and agencies are received and analyzed. Additional information on this topic is available in the display area. It is suggested that you find out more details of these tolling options by visiting the SRTA booth on the display floor and provide your opinion.



# Next Steps



- Review and summarize comments on the SDEIS from State and Federal agencies and the general public
- Prepare the Final EIS identifying the recommended preferred alternative and responding to comments on the SDEIS.
- Obtain the Record of Decision (ROD)

The SDEIS has been available for review since September 16, 2010. The next step is holding a series of public hearing open house events soliciting public comment. After all comments from the public hearing open house events are compiled and addressed, a Preferred Alternative will be identified and the Final Environmental Impact Statement will be prepared. The FEIS will respond to all substantive comments received on the DEIS and the SDEIS and describe the mitigation measures that have been incorporated into the project. The final milestone for the EIS is the approval and signing of the Record of Decision by FHWA. After this, the project could proceed into right-of-way acquisition and design/construction if the build alternative is selected.

We encourage you to become an active participant in the process by reviewing the SDEIS and providing your input. All comments will be addressed and incorporated into the FEIS.



# Thank You

Thank you again for taking time out of your busy day to help us with this project.

If you missed the beginning of this presentation, please remain seated. A short video depicting the operation of the proposed system will be played next. Following the video, the presentation will start over in approximately 15 seconds.