Russell R. McMurry, P.E., Commissioner

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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December 14, 2015

Proposed SR 20 Improvements from Canton to Cumming
Projects STP00-0002-00(862), STP00-0003-00(681), STP00-0003-00(682)
P.I. Nos. 0002862, 0003681, 0003682, Cherokee and Forsyth Counties

Re: Responses to September Public Information Open House Comments

Dear Citizen:

Thank you for your comments concerning the proposed project to improve State Route (SR) 20 between Interstate (I)-575 in Cherokee County and SR 400 in Forsyth County. The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) appreciates your participation and all of the input that was received as a result of the September 15 and 17, 2015 Public Information Open Houses (PIOHs). A total of 487 people attended the PIOH in Ball Ground on 9/15/15 and 440 attended the PIOH in Cumming on 9/17/15. In addition, there were 4,388 visits to the MetroQuest survey website. From the comments received at the PIOHs and in the subsequent comment period several themes emerged: the project is needed, it should be constructed as quickly as possible, and that a vast majority of people support improvements to widen existing SR 20 rather than alternatives that would go onto new location.

Earlier this year the Governor and Legislature passed the Transportation Funding Act of 2015 which provides transportation funding at the state level and reduces our dependency on federal funding. State funding allows for an accelerated project development process, with the end result being a potentially reduced timeframe for project approval and letting for construction. It also allows GDOT to focus on widening the existing roadway where prudent. As a result of the community's outcry for this crucial project and the desire for improvements to remain on existing SR 20, the GDOT Commissioner, Russell McMurry, announced on December 8, 2015 that improvements to this vital corridor will now be state funded.

The September PIOHs' offered the public an opportunity to review the conceptual alternatives identified for further study under Screen 2. Information was provided on the alternatives' performance, environmental and community impacts, and costs. Comments were taken that will be considered as part of the decision making process and will be part of the official record of the project. Below is a summary of results based on evaluation of the comments received.

Of the respondents who submitted a formal comment as of October 19, 2015, the distribution of comments was as follows:

- 2,416 comments including:
    - 236 comment forms
    - 1,943 MetroQuest comments
    - 22 court reporter comments
    - 2 letters
    - 176 emails
    - 26 phone calls
    - 11 visitors to kiosk events

This summary includes the following caveats. Several individuals submitted comments in a variety of ways (e.g., MetroQuest and email), some commenters provided feedback forms with partial feedback, and many comments were submitted without contact information. In addition to the comments received above by October 19, 2015, several comments were received after the deadline. These include: a letter from Cherokee County; a batch of 50 post cards transmitted to Cherokee County and subsequently submitted to GDOT; and a letter from the Southern Environmental Law Center. Cherokee County expressed support for the alternatives which widen existing SR 20 as it would be least impactful to residents and natural and cultural resources. The Southern Environmental Law Center offered comments about the Need and Purpose and the Screen 2 analysis.

The results of the MetroQuest Survey and the comment form, which mirrored each other and asked specific questions regarding the potential alignments, are included in Table 1. Please note, these results are not considered votes but rather provide an indication of the general public's opinion or preference of a particular alternative. They will be used as a tool by the project team to better understand the issues and guide the development of solutions. The rows with italicized text in Table 1 highlight the results for the alternatives that would widen SR 20.

Table 1: Public Input for Conceptual Alternatives

Conceptual Alternative Presented in Screen 2	For		Against		Total Comments Received
	Number Comments Received	%	Number Comments Received	%	
Corridor Wide					
Alternative 1 - Transportation Systems Management	663	43	865	57	1528
Alternative 2 - Widen Existing SR 20*	*1511*	*89*	*192*	*11*	*1703*
Alternative 3A - New Location Freeway to the North	734	45	894	55	1628
Alternative 3B - New Location Freeway to the South	264	16	1424	84	1688
Alternative 4* - Widen Existing SR 20 with localized bypasses	722	45	879	55	1601
Alternative 5A - Widen Existing and Reroute onto SR 369	656	43	884	57	1540
Alternative 5B - Widen Existing and Reroute onto Bethelview Rd	396	25	1189	75	1585
Buffington Link					
Alternative 4B-1 - Blue (Localized Bypass to the North)	246	26	709	74	955
Alternative 4B-2 - Green (Localized Bypass to the North)	260	28	673	72	933
Alternative 4B-3 - Red (Widen Existing)*	*850*	*88*	*116*	*12*	*966*
Alternative 4B-4* - Yellow (Localized Bypass to the South)	296	30	677	70	973
Macedonia Link					
Alternative 4C-1 - Pink (Localized Bypass to the North)	473	41	671	59	1144
Alternative 4C-2 - Teal (Localized Bypass to the North)	417	37	702	63	1119
Alternative 4C-3 - Red (Widen Existing)*	*999*	*87*	*155*	*13*	*1154*
Alternative 4C-4* - Orange (Localized Bypass to the South)	231	20	927	80	1158
Lathemtown Link					
Alternative 4D -1* - Blue (Localized Bypass to the North)	453	54	390	46	843
Alternative 4D -2 - Green (Localized Bypass to the North)	153	18	681	82	834
Alternative 4D -3 - Red (Widen Existing)*	*744*	*87*	*110*	*13*	*854*
Alternative 4D -4 - Yellow (Localized Bypass to the South)	85	10	766	90	851
Ducktown Link					
Alternative 4E – 1* - Pink (Localized Bypass to the North)	476	55	387	45	863
Alternative 4E – 2 - Red (Widen Existing)*	*799*	*91*	*79*	*9*	*878*
Alternative 4E – 3 - Teal (Localized Bypass to the South)	66	8	809	92	875
Alternative 4E – 4 - Orange (Localized Bypass to the South)	54	6	832	94	886
Cumming Link					
Alternative 4F-1* - Green (Sawnee Drive)	686	63	410	37	1096
Alternative 4F-2* - Yellow (Elm Street)	604	57	451	43	1055
Alternative 4F-3[1,2] - Red (Widen Existing)*	*53*	*50*	*52*	*50*	*105*
Alternative 4F-4* - Pink (Tolbert Street)	615	59	421	41	1036
Alternative 4F-5[2] - Orange (Veterans Memorial Blvd)*	*748*	*72*	*290*	*28*	*1038*
Alternative 4F-6 - Blue (Chamblee Gap Road)	183	17	908	83	1091

* Screen 2 Recommendation for Advancement for further analysis

[1]MetroQuest data not solicited; therefore, 'comments received' represents comment forms only.

[2]Both 4F-3 and 4F-5 reflect alternatives that would widen existing SR 20 because part of SR 20 follows the existing alignment and part of SR 20 has been re-designated along Veterans Memorial Blvd.

The most common theme among the public input is the support for the alternatives to widen existing SR 20. These alternatives included Alternative 2, 4B-3, 4C-3, 4D-3, 4E-2, and 4F-3 and 4F-5. Support for widening alternatives ranged from 50 to 91 percent, representing a majority preference for an alternative that widens existing SR 20.

More than half of the commenters who provided specific feedback on the alternatives within a link also indicated level of support for the overall recommendations within a link. These results are outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Public Input for Link Alternatives

Overall Recommendations Within a Link	AGREE with Overall Recommendations Within a Link		DISAGREE with Overall Recommendations Within a Link		Total Comments Received
	Number of Comments Received	%	Number of Comments Received	%	
Buffington	554	58	405	42	959
Macedonia	539	49	559	51	1098
Lathemtown	503	61	319	39	822
Ducktown	556	67	277	33	833
Cumming[1]	29	49	30	51	59

[1]MetroQuest data not solicited; therefore, 'comments received' represents comment forms only.

Written comments have been received and fall into the following general comment categories: Need and Purpose; process and schedule; alternatives (including new solutions, support/opposition for Screen 2 alternatives); environmental and community impacts (churches, historic resources, wetlands, farms, air pollution, noise pollution, displacements); right of way concerns; and project costs (purchase of right of way and loss of business revenue). Each of these comment categories and the individual comments will be considered as the project design moves forward. The GDOT will continue to work diligently to ensure that environmental impacts are avoided, minimized, and/or mitigated. As the project moves through to the construction phase, communities in and around the corridor will be kept informed of its progress.

We anticipate presenting the conceptual layout to widen the existing roadway in the Spring of 2016 at another round of public meetings. We hope you will attend and provide your input.

Again, thank you for your observations and remarks. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact the GDOT Project Manager, Nicole Law, at sr20improvements@dot.ga.gov. For project status updates, schedule information, information about our process, and other additional information, please visit the project website at: http://www.dot.ga.gov/BS/Projects/I575SR400.

Sincerely,

Hiral Patel

Hiral Patel, P.E.
State Environmental Administrator

HP/ab/ld

cc: Nicole Law, GDOT OPD AVS
Scott Gero, AECOM