



SR 400 & SR 365 Corridor Studies
Public Meeting #2 Summary – SR 365 Corridor

March 4, 2008
5:00 - 7:00 PM
Lula Elementary School

Objectives

- To review study purpose and goals
- To present study key findings and recommendations
- To gather input on recommendations
- To discuss next steps

Notification Strategy

Written notification in the form of a postcard was mailed to all stakeholder database entries. An e-mail reminder was also sent to all persons with email addresses listed in the stakeholder database.

News releases were coordinated with Teri Pope at the GDOT Office of Communications. Display advertisements – each publicizing both meetings within the same advertisement – were placed in the following papers on the following dates:

Newspaper	Ad Run Dates
Mundo Hispanico	Feb 14 & 26
Dahlonega Nugget	Feb 13 & 27
Dawson News & Advertiser	Feb 13 & 27
Northeast Georgian	Feb 12 & 26
Gainesville Times	Feb 12 & 26

More than 70 meeting notifications were sent to service providers and organizations throughout the study area accompanied by a GDOT letter asking that they be posted in highly visible locations. These included:

- Public libraries
- Municipal buildings
- Chambers of Commerce
- Division of Children & Family Services offices
- Schools/Colleges
- Churches and places of worship with identified Hispanic ministries (EJ)
- Social services organizations with a focus on serving Hispanic populations (EJ)

Format of Meeting

An open house format with an emphasis on education and receiving public input was used. A Welcome Station was set up to sign in meeting participants and to orient them to the meeting format and expected outcomes. A multi-part Public Meeting Handout was distributed which contained an SR 365 Fact Sheet, a "What we heard from you" and "How can I provide input?" section documenting and summarizing the public involvement input to date, and a Frequently Asked Questions section. Participants were also given a combined Comment Form and Meeting Evaluation Form to complete after visiting the various meeting stations.

Stations with display boards were arranged around the meeting room. These stations, which were staffed by project team and consulting team members, provided information on the following project elements:

- Meeting purpose



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- Summary and use of public involvement input received to date
- Summary of existing and future conditions
- Scenario performance for each alternative studied
- Recommended scenario and next steps

A Comments Station was also set up with tables, seating, pens, and a comment box to allow participants to complete Meeting Evaluation and Comment Forms.

Meeting Attendance

A total of 55 individuals signed in.

Project Team Attendees

Olen Daelhousen, ARCADIS
 Maureen Gresham, ARCADIS
 Tim Preece, ARCADIS
 Anie Bassegy, GA Department of Transportation
 Bill Cantrell, GA Department of Transportation
 Jason Crane, GA Department of Transportation

Robert Mahoney, GA Department of Transportation
 Ulysses Mitchell, GA Department of Transportation
 Mary Huffstetler, MPH and Associates, Inc.
 Beth Radke, MPH and Associates, Inc.
 Jay Pease, PBS&J

Summary of Comment Forms

Meeting participants were given a Comment Form with instructions for providing opinions on the preferred improvement scenario for SR 365. Study goals and objectives were presented in a table and participants were asked to provide feedback on whether the preferred improvement scenario would meet the objectives associated with each goal. Space was also provided on the form for additional comments. A total of 21 responses were received. The following is a summary of the responses received

Goals	Objectives	Scenario: 6-Lane Freeway		
		YES this scenario <u>does</u> meet the objectives for this goal	NO this scenario <u>does not</u> meet the objectives for this goal	Comments
Goal 1 – Improve Safety	Reduce potential for vehicular conflicts	18	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There are a lot of accidents on this road.
	Increase safe crossings for bicyclists and pedestrians	14	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Should cross only at specific crossings. ▪ Limit ability for pedestrian crossing of freeway. ▪ What crossing? This was not discussed.
Goal 2 – Increase Mobility	Reduce corridor trip times	16	1	
	Reduce system-wide hours of delay	16	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In case of a wreck, ability to turn off onto a side road would not be available as it is now. ▪ Not enough alternative routes if roadway is blocked. ▪ Hopefully!



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Goals	Objectives	Scenario: 6-Lane Freeway		
		YES this scenario <u>does</u> meet the objectives for this goal	NO this scenario <u>does not</u> meet the objectives for this goal	Comments
	Decrease corridor mileage operating at unacceptable levels of service	15	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No detail presented.
Goal 3 – Better Manage Access	Reduce corridor access points	17	1	
	Increase connectivity	15	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To thru traffic, not to local traffic. ▪ Not sure.
	Increase average speed in congested conditions	17	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Only maybe – more cars!
Goal 4 – Encourage transportation best practices	Minimize environmental impacts	11	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Environmental impact cannot always be avoided. ▪ No info provided. ▪ Please! ▪ Unsure what this means.
	Maximize benefit/cost relationship	12	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 6-lane limited access is better. ▪ We hope! ▪ Unsure what this means.
	Promote appropriate land use decision-making	10	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Can politicians do this? ▪ Failed to address development (land use) rights from now until 6-lane F/W approved and funded. ▪ Unsure what this means.

Respondents were asked to offer **additional comments** regarding study goals, objectives, and the preferred improvement scenario. Responses provided are presented below.

- I think this needs to be set up so it can progress in steps as needed. However, the plans need to address the “staging” to reduce costs and impacts as much as possible. We don’t need anymore waste in our methods of bringing the project to the final stage.
- How will requests for improved access (signals) be handled? Will GDOT restrict future building until project is approved and funded? Will property owners be compensated for restricted use?
- Priority – Traffic signals are a must now to provide safety in the area of Lula. I understand the importance of planning ahead to 2030 – I am walking away hoping that the traffic signals will soon be in place even if it is only a small part of the picture.
- Sounds great for the general public, but established businesses on 365 would suffer. Would cost not 500 million but billions. Spend a billion or more to increase speed or trip time does not make good sense.
- Make sure you provide parallel access road to Mountain View Industrial Park. Could use Mountain Center Plaza – call to schedule a meeting as I can adjust future building plans. Thanks, Dennis Powell
- Right of way acquisition needs to begin immediately. Purchase of access rights should include purchase of ROW for parallel access roads. Access roads should not be immediately adjacent to the



freeway ROW but should leave room for commercial development on both sides of the access road. This should be done immediately from I-985 Exit 24 to Hall-Habersham County line.

- The counties and DOT need to agree on a short term plan to keep short term development from driving the cost out of site – i.e. stop commercial development right against right-of-way – no more median and curb cuts – an active plan to create access roads.
- I would like to see the State roll the hay that they cut instead of let it lay there or go to waste. Farmers need this.

Summary of Meeting Evaluation Forms

Meeting participants were given a meeting evaluation form. The following are responses received. A total of 24 responses were received.

- 1) How would you rate this meeting overall?

Response	# Responses
Very Good	7
Good	10
Average	6
Poor	0
Very Poor	0
N/A	1

- 2) Are the presentations and display boards informative and easy to understand? If not, please explain.

Response	# Responses
Yes	17
No	5
N/A	2

Common Explanations & Responses

- Not enough detail presented
- Maps/diagrams not large enough – hard to see streets, etc. (3)
- Yes, if not, questions were answered
- There could be more descriptive headings on boards that have dual displays as comparisons
- OK
- Excellent

- 3) Has the study team been helpful in answering your questions? If not, please explain.

Response	# Responses
Yes	18
No	4
N/A	2

Common Explanations & Responses

- Partly – The process to move from study to implementation was not clear.
- No – They could not answer detailed questions about the results of the study. Most did not offer any information without being questioned.
- Very helpful (2)



- 4) What did you like most about the meeting?
- Seeing long-range plan for 365 from Gainesville to Habersham County
 - Explanation of recommendations (2)
 - Opportunity to make input
 - Helpful staff (2)
 - Good location (2)
 - Location to corridor (2)
 - Good lighting
 - Detail and time
 - The interaction of DOT personnel
 - Available assistance to respond to questions/comments
 - Interaction with consultants
 - Gaining information of the studies (2)
 - Opportunity to get good, direct discussions
 - Informality, the informal setting with opportunities for discussion (2)

- 5) In what areas do you feel the meeting could have been improved?
- Maps could have been bigger
 - More maps, hard to see through the crowds
 - Really needed short presentation rather than unstructured walk-around
 - Be more forthcoming with details and data/assumptions used in study
 - None (2)
 - Detail (2)
 - Timeframe issues
 - Clockwise (Meeting flow was arranged counterclockwise)

- 6) Regarding what you have learned, how would you rate the following statements?

I learned new information

1	Strongly Agree	6
2	Agree	6
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree	2
4	Disagree	0
5	Strongly Disagree	0

Seven respondents just checked "I learned new information" but did not record a number.

I was given an opportunity to provide input.

1	Strongly Agree	7
2	Agree	6
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree	0
4	Disagree	1
5	Strongly Disagree	1

- 7) How did you find out about tonight's meeting?
- Postcard (8)
 - Newspaper/newspaper article (7)
 - Word of mouth (4)
 - Email



- County Planning Commission
 - Flyer
 - Media
 - Previous meetings
- 8) Please provide any additional comments on any aspect of the SR 400 & SR 365 Corridor Studies:
- I would extend the six lane freeway to the SR 365/US441 split at Tom Arendale Intersection
 - The study should have gone further in Habersham County (Arendale Interchange).
 - The counties and DOT need to begin working together immediately to help make the plan possible. Uncontrolled development in the corridor is making it more costly to implement.
 - Due to many new developments along SR 365, restricted access should be kept to a minimum to allow potential growth of business as well as encourage new business growth.
 - Right of way acquisition needs to begin immediately. Purchase of access rights should include purchase of ROW for parallel access roads. Access roads should not be immediately adjacent to the freeway ROW but should leave room for commercial development on both sides of the access road. This should be done immediately from I-985 Exit 24 to Hall-Habersham County line.
 - I am developing 30 acres of the Mountain View Industrial Park and within 60 days start construction on 2 each 10,000 square foot retail/warehouse condos.
 - Construct interchanges at major crossroads, i.e. SR 52 and SR 384. Make all other crossroads, driveways and other access points right in right out. Construct mid-block "U" turn bridges to accommodate movements in the opposite direction from these locations.
 - No red lights/limited access (2)
 - ROW acquisition should start soonest to prevent SR 316 scenario.
 - Some existing businesses on SR 365 would suffer. We own Jaemor Farm Market – the oldest business on 365, open since Jan 1981. What price would you value our access to 365? Our business would have to close if it depended on an access road – not convenient for customers.
 - SR 365 needs to become freeway. Do away with so many streets that cross over.
 - Where is the money coming from? Plan just doesn't seem realistic. DOT hasn't kept Highway 85 in good shape – why have another 6 lane highway more or less going in the same general direction to keep up when there isn't money to spend on Highway 85?
 - Hurry-up
 - The study failed to consider adjacent landowner impacts.
 - Safety is the primary issue. I travel the SR 365 corridor daily from Cornelia to Atlanta and encounter serious accidents too frequently. I understand installing more intelligent signals would have adverse impacts on traffic flow, but I believe that would decrease accidents.
 - Need more options for funding road improvements – gas tax. Please keep in mind scenic assets along the route and how to maximize those.
 - SR 365 in Habersham County needs stronger measures to avoid curb cuts and development. Freeway alternative needs looking at more closely.

Use of Comments in the Study Process

The comments gathered at the public meeting are being used in various ways to aid the study team. The information gathered from the public is being provided to the study Technical Advisory Committee which consists of local, regional, and state agency staff representatives in the areas of planning, public works, and engineering as well as representatives of the schools and major employers in the corridor. The TAC has used feedback to further guide their recommendations for improvements to be considered in the corridor. All operational comments are compiled in a memorandum provided to GDOT District 1 for review and consideration for any short term solutions to identified issues in the corridor. The study team has used this input to gain a better local understanding of the travel patterns and issues in the corridor. The study team also



used the information as input to refine the transportation model and as guidance in the development of any infrastructure or policy improvements necessary to ensure efficient operation of the corridor into the future. In this final public input opportunity, the feedback from the public will be used to gauge support for the recommended improvement scenarios.

Overall Evaluation of Round II Meetings

Evaluation of the effectiveness of public involvement efforts is a key aspect in documenting the level of public involvement achieved. This synopsis uses the performance criteria identified in the Public Involvement Plan for this study (meeting attendance and participant feedback, which includes comments received and the types of comments received) to assess the effectiveness of the meeting. The written comments received via the standard meeting evaluation form distributed at the workshops are the basis for analysis.

Since public notification efforts were combined for both the SR 400 and SR 365 corridors, this synopsis examines the effectiveness of both meetings, combined. Recommendations for improvements are also included.

Meeting Attendance

A combined total of 135 people signed-in at the SR 400 and SR 365 public meetings held on March 4 and March 6, 2008. Of these individuals, 83 were contacts who had not attended the previous round of public meetings for either corridor. The local newspapers prove to be the most effective means for informing the public, followed closely by those receiving the postcard notification and by word of mouth. Overall, meeting attendance was very good.

Participant Feedback

Comments Received (Meeting Evaluation Forms)

Of the 135 attendees, 46 (approximately 34%) submitted meeting evaluation forms. The standard return rate of 25% was greatly exceeded. This could be due to public interest in the project and a desire to "weigh-in" on the recommended scenarios presented for the corridors. High return rate of meeting evaluation forms could also be due to the type of meeting that was held. Open houses and other interactive meetings where participation is encouraged can translate into a greater willingness for people to participate overall, meeting evaluations included.

Types of Comments Received (Meeting Evaluation Forms)

Meeting attendees were asked to weigh in on the recommended scenario for each corridor and its ability to meet the objectives and goals for the study. For each scenario in both corridors, the majority of respondents felt that the recommended scenarios to meet the goals and objectives of the study. People were also asked to provide any additional comments on any aspect of the study. These comments varied across many topics including concerns for businesses and commercial growth on SR 400 to issues of safety on SR 365.

Overall, the amount of participant feedback received greatly exceeded expectations.

Recommendations

1. Provide information regarding the change of the study website to all SR 365 contacts as well as to stakeholders who did not attend the SR 400 meeting. The postcard was made available to SR 400 meeting attendees only and since, in the days following public meetings, it is expected that people may check the study website. It would be a good idea to ensure that everyone is aware of the change.
2. At the conclusion of the study, it would be a good idea to send a postcard to all database entries that directs them to the website or to the GDOT office where they can review the final report.