

**SUMMARY OF NORTH GEORGIA-ATLANTA
PUBLIC MEETING**

**GDOT Truck Lane Needs Identification Study – May 22, 2007
KSU Center – Kennesaw, Georgia**

The first public meeting for the GDOT Truck Lane Needs Identification Study was held at the KSU Center in Kennesaw, GA on May 22, 2007, beginning at approximately 5:10 PM. Matthew Fowler, GDOT Planning, welcomed the group. He turned the floor over to Andrew Smith, Consultant Project Manager for HNTB.

Mr. Smith started the meeting by talking about the upcoming video and presentation. The video was then shown. A number of questions and answers and comments then ensued.

Mr. Smith discussed the agenda and gave an overview of today's meeting. He said that the study is at the halfway point and that the most promising segments for truck only lanes on Georgia's highways have been identified. He then explained that a video with 3-D animation was created to help people visualize the truck only lanes concept. The video was then played.

After the video, Mr. Smith continued with the PowerPoint presentation. He touched on the Guiding Principles of the study. At this point, Dike Ahanotu was then introduced to talk about the data collection.

Mr. Ahanotu began by stating the types of data that was used: GDOT traffic counts, the crash/accident database, O/D surveys, and a national database, the TRANSEARCH database. He said that the amount of truck traffic passing through the state accounts for one third of total trips. Georgia's trading partners are the neighboring states and the map shown indicated the truck travel between states.

Mr. Ahanotu then discussed the results of the crash analysis; that is, how do truck accidents compare to auto accidents. The data indicated that trucks have roughly the same amount of crashes as autos, though the more severe accidents, fatal accidents, involve trucks. Although trucks and cars appear to have the same number of accidents, the truck crashes are 3 times more fatal than auto accidents.

A parking analysis was also conducted and Mr. Ahanotu explained that trucks sometimes have no choice but to park on ramps and shoulders. If truckers do not take their mandatory rest breaks, this too can be a safety hazard to the motoring public.

Mr. Ahanotu said truck volume is going to be increasing and that the most intensive activity right now is south of Atlanta. However, in 2035, basically the entire interstate system will have intensive truck activity.

At this point, Mr. Ahanotu turned the floor back over to Mr. Smith, who then discussed the evaluation framework.

Mr. Smith said as we start to piece together the different factors that help determine if truck lanes are warranted, you start to see that the conditions are ripe for investment. He discussed the three network scenarios that showed an investment in truck lanes leads to more efficient travel and that this has a positive impact on congestion. Moving from a LOS E to A LOS D is a significant difference. (LOS stands for Level of Service.)

Mr. Smith then identified the 3 distinct highway segments that emerged as recommendations for truck only lanes: I-75, Tennessee state line to Macon; the radial freeways of I-85 and I-20; and the Chatham County-Savannah area.

Mr. Smith wrapped up the presentation portion of the meeting by discussing the next steps of the study. He said we will look at where we should be providing access, investigating the engineering work that needs to be done – are truck only lanes possible to construct?, and determining the cost/benefit. The study is scheduled to be completed in October of this year.

At this point, Mr. Smith opened the floor for questions.

C: A representative from the Vinings Homeowner Association stated that his group had been looking into this project since March and they were close to some recommendations. A huge volume of cars and trucks intermingling is a safety issue. They think this is the most important project to be done in the Atlanta region. Their recommendation is to make truck lanes mandatory and completely separate trucks from cars.

R: Mr. Smith replied that these are great points and that reducing fatalities is extremely important. Freeing up capacity and operations would be a big improvement. Regarding policies, we're just trying to quantify benefits.

Q: Who suffers, in the fatality?

A: Ultimately, the auto doesn't win.

C: When you have cars, you can have more than one life in the car, whereas a truck, it's usually only 1 driver. I think the fatality rate when it comes to truck/car accidents is skewed.

Q: Are you focusing on existing corridors or building new ones?

A: This study focuses on existing corridors.

C: About congestion, the State has a lot of ROW bought up already. I've talked to the Governor about this and he still has a plan to do a Northern Arc.

R: Not real familiar with the specifics on that project.

C: You might want to become familiar with the plan.

R: If we're completely bypassing Atlanta, we are missing a market.

Q: About HOV lanes, where are buses supposed to go? I'm with the United Motor Coach Association and I would like for you to talk to our national chapter.

A: Absolutely, we would talk to your national chapter. No decision has been made on buses at this point though.

C: Some of our most precious commodities are on those buses and we don't want buses to be lumped in with trucks. Once that happens, it's hard to get separated from the trucks.

C: I own J&M Tank Lines. Lot of trucks, think trucks and autos can coexist on interstate with control measures if we control speed, etc. We have just-in-time delivery. If we get on the toll road, we have no way to get off if an accident occurs. Then it's a parking lot and we can't make our delivery.

C: I'd like to give you an example I saw in Arkansas. Trucks stay in the right lane, drive 5 mph slower than rest of traffic, and can't pass. It is tranquility on the interstate. Contrast that with

Georgia and trucks are not staying in the right lane, they are coming over to the left and staying there. The picture on your website shows trucks in 3 left lanes. In Missouri, from Kansas City to St. Louis, they are putting freight on rail. We are nuts not to do that in Georgia. With the price of gas, how can we afford it? I think you guys need to think outside the box a little more. Build new roads across the state. If we can widen roads, we can build new roads.

R: We hear the rail comment frequently and the rail industry is facing the same issue – congestion.

C: I'm a truck driver and cars entering the interstate have no idea how to enter onto an interstate. Cars hate to drive along trucks and if it rains and water splashes all around them and they can't see for a second, they freak out. Driver education is needed. Developing a bypass to separate traffic, I don't think will help because trucks are still consuming a spot on the road. I think GDOT has a very poor track record of forecasting traffic. Better off to develop flow: 285 to 20 West has a hill. If you have a 60K lb truck, it's not going anywhere. There are limitations on grade.

R: There is a project that is looking into grade at 285 and 20.

C: Flow is the key. Truck restricted lanes are better and education for consumers driving. If a car gets in a space that I have left open between me and truck in front of me, I have to slow down to open that space up again. Trucks aren't the bad guys.

C: The picture you had on the screen, it is a rolling roadblock of trucks restricted to the right lane. Trucks feel they need to move over to let cars onto the interstate. 75 north of 285 has an incline and trucks have to stop and then it takes them longer to speed up. The other issue is law enforcement. It will take more money but it should be considered. 2035 is a long way away, but I'm from Boston and the Big Dig is a fiasco and is overgrown already.

R: It's a tough situation for everybody.

C: It's not a good guy/bad guy concept. Car drivers don't know how to get on the interstate or safely change lanes. There are differences in reaction time between cars and trucks. If you're adding capacity, TOL makes the most sense. If they are going to be mandatory, you need entrance and exit points.

R: The DOT shares your safety concern.

C: Any roadway touching the perimeter needs help. Chances are trucks are coming through Atlanta. Give them a road to go to Commerce to Macon so they can bypass Atlanta.

R: There are tons of trucks and we are definitely interested in accommodating their movements.

Q: What size of truck are you considering for TOL?

A: 18-wheeler, 5-axle or higher.

Q: Where's the money coming from?

A: We are studying that.

C: We pay enough road taxes as it is. Let me repeat, we pay enough road taxes.

Q: Are you considering the rings of growth past Atlanta? The Home Depot has trips from Savannah to Atlanta to Braselton. Who knew that there would be a Home Depot in Blue Ridge? Most of Atlanta has no natural boundaries to stop the growth.

A: We're definitely taking into account future growth.

C: If 30% traffic is through traffic, let's get those folks out of Atlanta; we would have flow, safe flow. We don't want to be any closer to cars as they want to be to us. We need education. It's an extra cost to create TOL with exits and entrances. We need to expand the roadway to accommodate future growth. If Atlanta wants to continue to get good, we have to improve flow.

R: The second phase of the study kicks off soon and is looking at the cost to construct TOL.

C: About the Arkansas example earlier: Ohio did that but accidents increased and it created frustration. Not always helping flow when you do that.

C: We need signs on entrance ramps that tell cars to increase their speed to 60 mph to get on the interstate. I've been behind cars going 35 mph trying to get on the interstate.

Q: If the cost to do the I-75/I-575 project is \$4B, is this a proposal to expand all interstates? Are you considering bypassing Atlanta – just have trucks go from TN straight to FL? Land is expensive and we should consider building north/south and east/west facilities.

A: We did think about that and there are design trade-offs.

C: We may have to think about moving distribution centers. Trucks are doing more of what rail use to do. We need to work with the railroads.

R: We have had discussions with the railroads on this matter.

Q: Is there no more capacity on the rail. I disagree with that. Rail can carry freight more efficiently.

A: There are a lot of trade-offs.

Q: The point we're missing is that Atlanta needs its goods. There is no rail to Home Depot, got to have trucks to get it there.

Q: Fiscal responsibility is a major goal. Are you looking at tolls? Would the truckers pay these tolls?

A: We're not determining how to pay for them right now.

Q: What about metering devices?

A: The Governor's Fast Forward Program has implemented these metering devices on portions of the interstate. That's a great point.