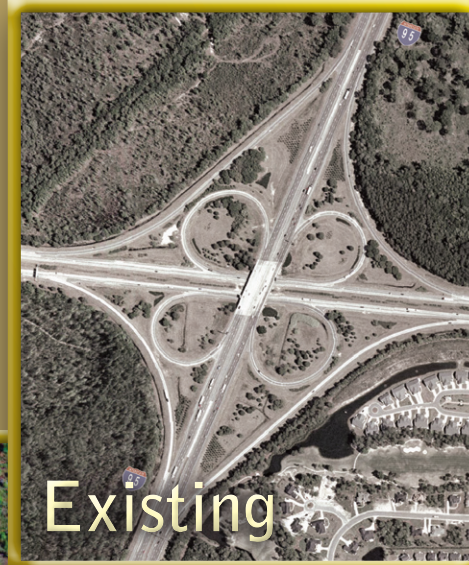
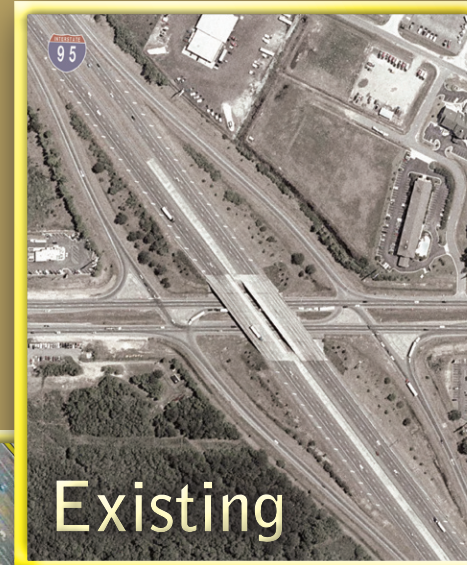




Existing



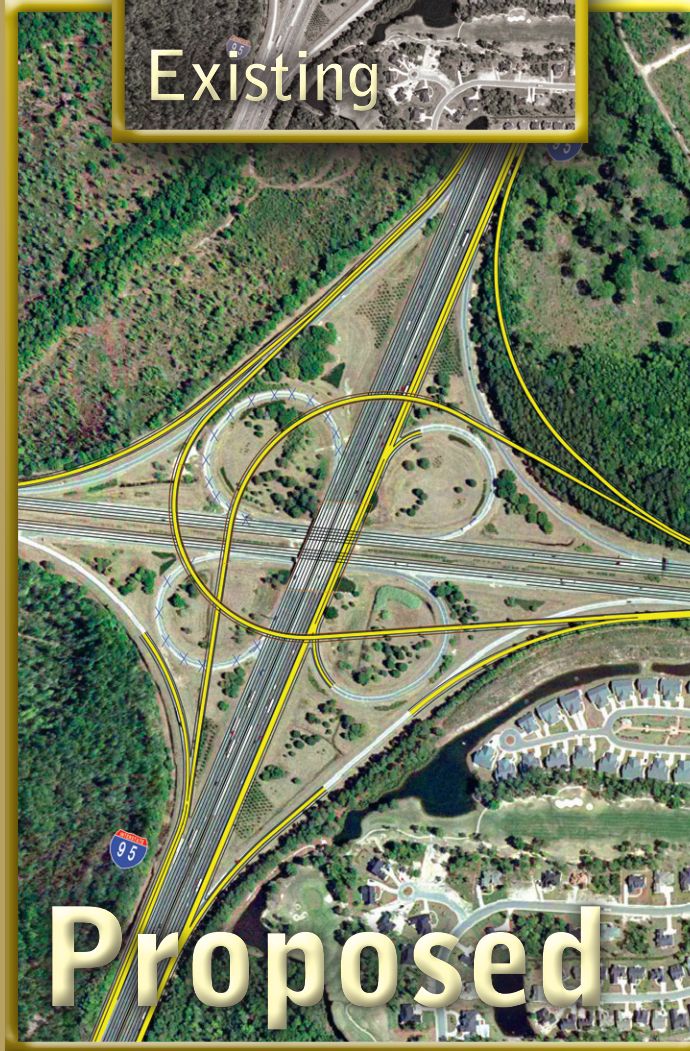
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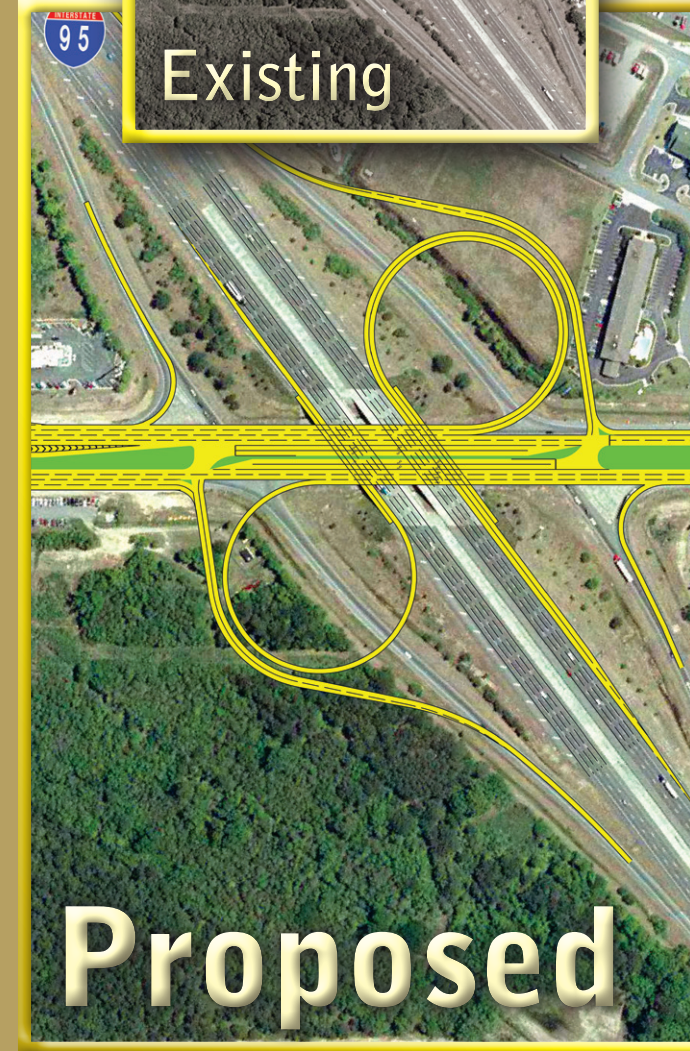
Existing



Proposed



Proposed



Proposed



## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Study Overview

The Chatham County Interstate Needs Analysis and Prioritization Plan (Plan) is an effort by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) to study the existing Interstate transportation network for Chatham County and develop a prioritized list of potential improvements to this system based on need. The prioritization process included the evaluation of projects currently in the Chatham Urban Transportation Study (CUTS) 2030 LRTP, and the consideration of new projects. This study considered congestion, the impact of development, truck and freight traffic, port access, and the potential impacts any proposed alternatives may have on the historic, community, and natural resources in Chatham County.

The study area for this project is completely contained within Chatham County, and includes the entire Interstate system within the county and its areas of influence. The study was limited to the areas in the county near the existing Interstate facilities and did not include the coastal areas in the eastern edge of the county. At the same time, external traffic has been accounted for, particularly in “suburban Savannah” locations such as Effingham County. A map of the study area is provided on **Figure 1.1** (see page 1-2).

The Plan was undertaken through the following three-step process.

**Step 1: Baseline Conditions and Needs Assessment** – An assessment of the existing and projected future conditions of the Interstate system and associated factors that influence travel along the system within Chatham County in order to identify existing and future needs and deficiencies.

**Step 2: Evaluation of Scenarios/Concept Layout Development** – Analysis Areas within the Interstate system were identified. Concept layouts of the potential project recommendations within these areas were developed. The candidate projects were then evaluated for constructability, based on preliminary cost estimates, potential environmental and social impacts, and the project’s relationship to other proposed or planned projects. The result was a set of recommended high priority locations.

**Step 3: Final Report Recommendation and Phasing Plan** – Refined concept layouts were developed for the identified Proposed Project Recommendations. Right of way and construction cost estimates were then refined for the potential project recommendations. Finally, a prioritized project list was developed based on a comprehensive list of quantitative and qualitative performance measures.

### 1.2 Report Overview

The purpose of this report is to document the steps of the process of developing the Plan. As such, this document is organized as follows:

#### Section 1: Introduction

#### Section 2: Potential Project Recommendations

Section 2 presents the project recommendations for the Chatham County Interstate Needs Analysis

and Prioritization Plan. This section includes conceptual layouts, detailed project descriptions, Need and Purpose statements, and preliminary construction and right-of-way cost estimates for each recommendation.

#### Section 3: Baseline Conditions

Section 3 provides an overview of the baseline conditions that were considered and evaluated in order to develop an assessment of the overall needs of the Chatham County Interstate System. More specifically, the section discusses pertinent issues such as truck traffic characteristics, existing and projected travel demand, and an overview of the needs and deficiencies derived from this analysis.

#### Section 4: Analysis Areas

Section 4 presents 27 Analysis Areas identified by the analysis documented in Section 3. A description and technical justification for each Analysis Area improvement is presented. An Analysis Area refinement then provides a list of projects that were eliminated from further consideration, along with the technical justification behind their elimination. The final 12 remaining Analysis Areas identified for detailed analysis are then presented. These locations are the 12 project recommendations presented in Section 2.

#### Section 5: Environmental Screening

Section 5 provides a description of the sensitive environmental, social, and cultural resources that could serve to preclude the implementation of transportation improvements at each of the 12 project recommendation locations. This section includes an analysis of the potential impacts to historical and natural resources as well impacts to minority and low-income (Environmental Justice) communities. Since these all project recommendations would require compliance with the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) of 1969, this screening was performed in order to identify environmental fatal flaws that could preclude the implementation of a Proposed Project Recommendation.

#### Section 6: High Priority Locations

Section 6 presents the four project recommendations with the greatest demonstrated need. These locations were further analyzed in order to identify feasible conceptual alternatives, select a recommended alternative, and develop a detailed right-of-way and construction cost estimate for each recommended alternative.

#### Section 7: Project Prioritization

Section 7 provides a ranking of the project recommendations in order to assist GDOT and Chatham County with prioritizing the Interstate projects for the CUTS 2030 LRTP and Construction Work Program. This prioritized list of potential project recommendations is based on demonstrated needs as well as the ability of each project recommendation to address that need.

#### Section 8: Public Involvement and Coordination Efforts

Section 8 describes the public involvement process that was undertaken by the project team during the course of Plan development. This includes discussion of the stakeholder involvement, public meetings, and the coordination efforts with other ongoing planning efforts undertaken during the development of the Plan.

Figure 1.1: Study Area

