

I-285 Top End Express Lanes

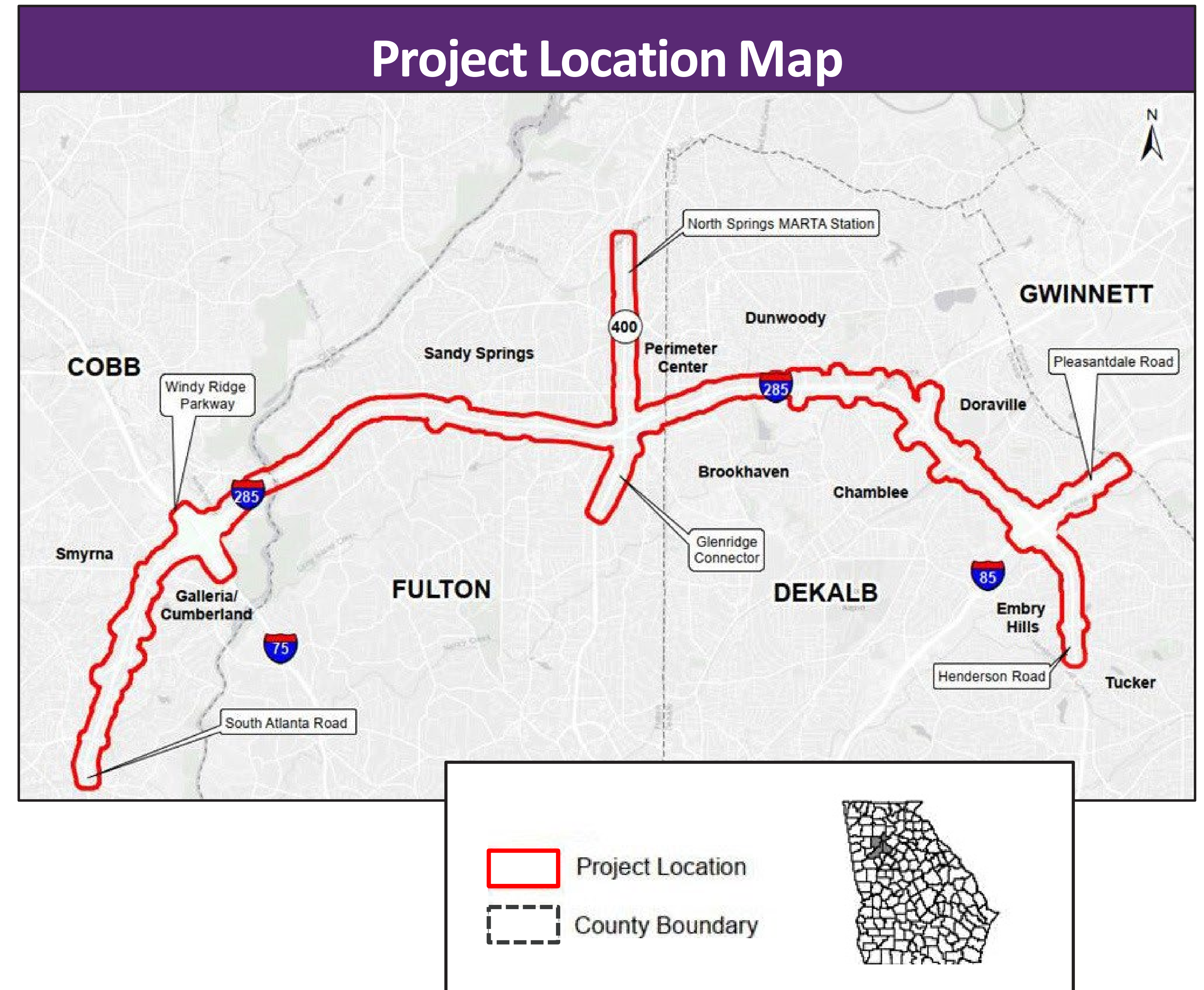
Public Hearing Open House

Welcome to the I-285 Top End Express Lanes Public Hearing Open House

Why am I Here?

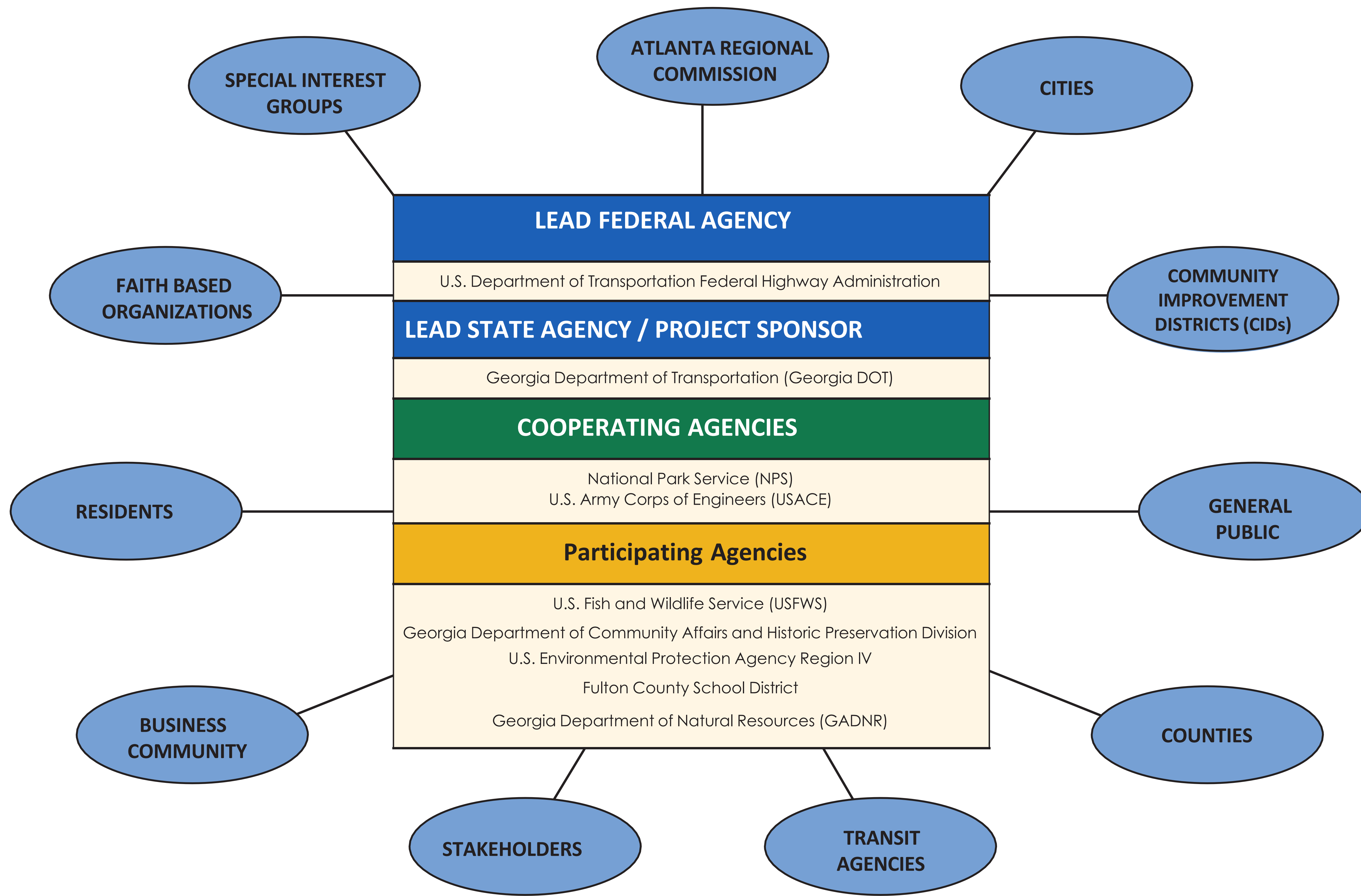
- Learn about the proposed project
- Ask questions and provide your input
- Find out about next steps and project schedule

Thank you for attending!



I-285 Top End Express Lanes

Who is Involved in the Proposed Project?



A **project stakeholder** is an individual or group who has an interest in, or may be affected by, the outcome of a transportation project.

Cooperating agencies are invited by the lead agency to help with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. They have special expertise or authority related to the project and they can provide valuable input to the lead agency.

Participating agencies are any other agencies that have an interest in the project. Participating agencies may provide comments and suggestions on the environmental review process, but they do not have the same level of authority and responsibility as cooperating agencies.

I-285 Top End Express Lanes

Proposed Project History and Timeline

Project Milestones



1 Community Conversations:

Georgia DOT held a series of meetings to discuss the transition from the Revive285 project to the proposed I-285 Top End Express Lanes Project.

2 Notice of Intent (NOI):

NOI was Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA's) public notification of plans to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed I-285 Top End Express Lanes Project.

3 Public Information Open House (PIOH):

The purpose of the PIOH (public meeting) was to share information and invite public input about the I-285 Top End Express Lanes Project.

4 NEPA Review Paused:

Georgia DOT paused the NEPA review for the I-285 Top End Express Lanes Project in order to update its Express Lanes Program and funding model.

5 Draft Environmental Impact Statement

A Draft EIS is a report that describes the potential environmental impacts of a proposed project and is released for public review and comment.

6 Public Hearing Open House

The purpose of a Public Hearing Open House is to provide the public an opportunity to learn about the proposed project; review the Preferred Alternative, Draft EIS, and proposed mitigation measures; and submit input via formal comments that will be considered in the Final EIS.

7 Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS)/Record of Decision (ROD)


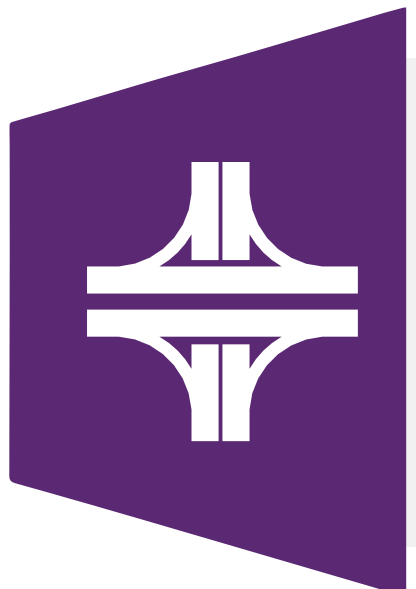

The Final EIS describes the project's potential environmental impacts, and the ROD announces FHWA's decision on project approval and alternative selection, informed by public and agency input.

*Future dates subject to change

I-285 Top End Express Lanes

Need and Purpose

Need and Purpose

	Summary of Needs	Corresponding Project Purposes
	Trip times on the proposed project corridor are anticipated to become more unreliable in the future as traffic volumes and corresponding delays increase	Provide reliable trip times
	The existing express lane network is missing a connection in this part of Atlanta, which creates interruptions in driver route options	Improve regional accessibility and connectivity through priced express lanes that integrate with the greater Metro Atlanta express lane network
	Delayed solutions to the current and future traffic concerns will be inconsistent with Transportation Funding Act of 2015 legislation*	Accelerate project delivery following the Transportation Funding Act of 2015 legislation in response to the urgency of traffic conditions

*Georgia House Bill 170 (HB170), Transportation Funding Act, 2015.

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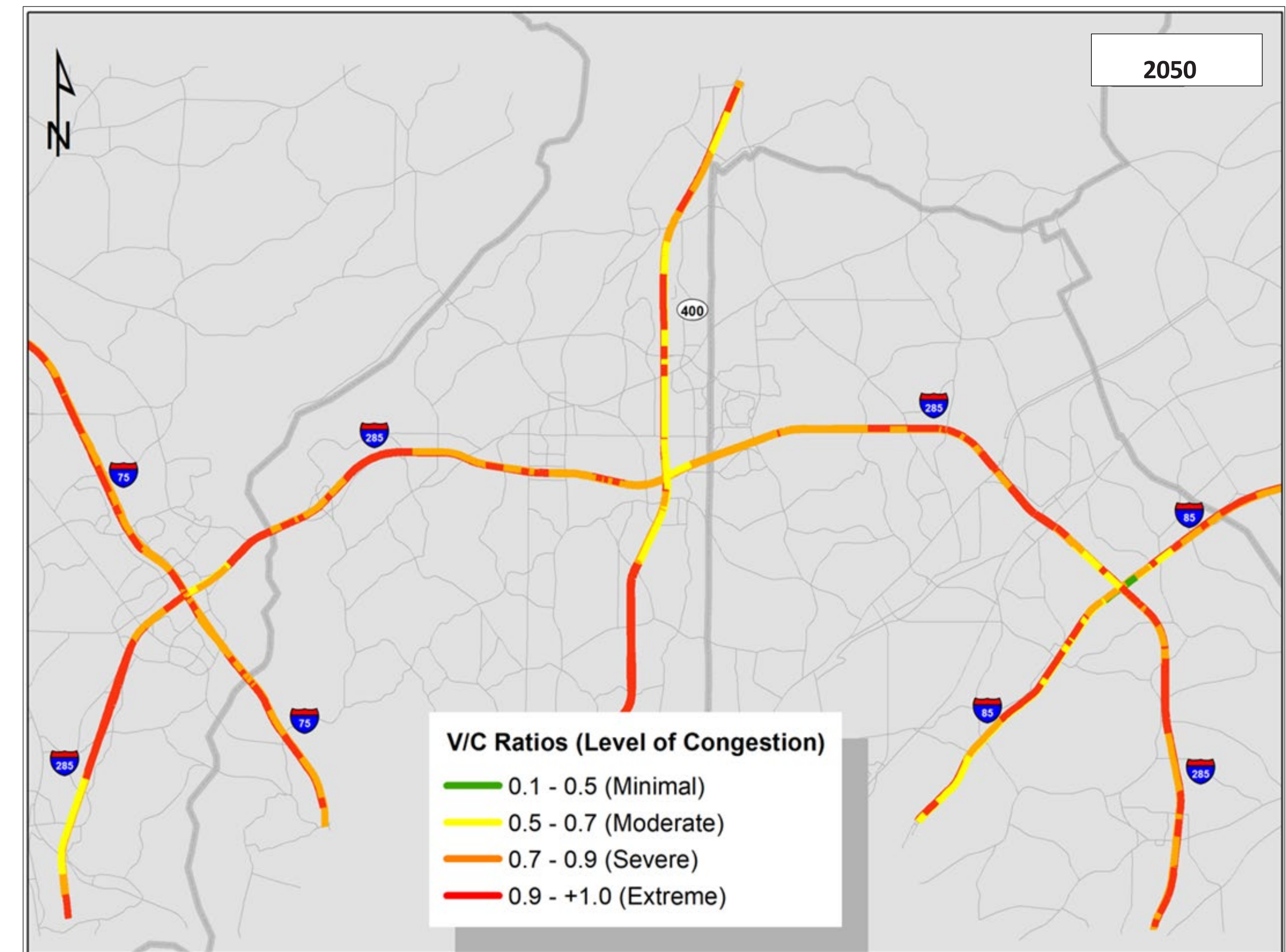
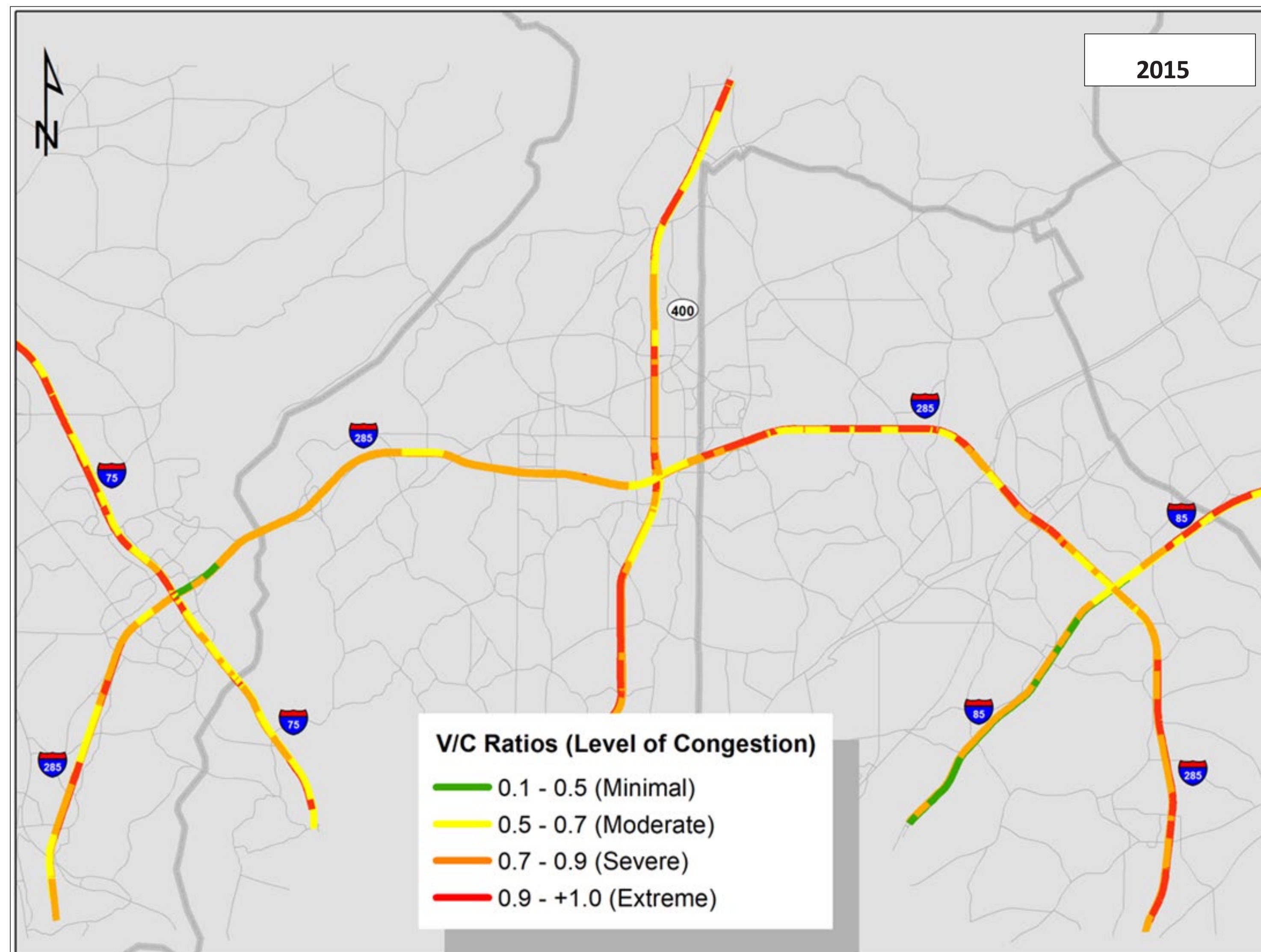
Need and Purpose

Provide Reliable Trip Times for Commuters

Without the proposed express lanes, commuters will spend more time on the road and experience more severe and extreme congestion in 2050

- AM peak period is expected to increase to 98% in the eastbound direction and 95% in the westbound direction
- PM peak period is expected to increase to 98% in the eastbound direction and 98% in the westbound direction (figures below)

Volume to Capacity (V/C) Ratio PM Peak Period 2015 and 2050



Source: MMIP v2022 ARC Travel Demand Model, 2022.

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What's Changed?

A Public Information Open House (PIOH) was held for the proposed I-285 Top End Express Lanes Project (proposed project) in January 2020. The PIOH presented the need & purpose for the proposed project, featured an initial concept and alternatives, and sought public feedback. Following a pause in the proposed project's environmental review (2021 to 2023), Georgia DOT has considered public feedback, identified and refined the concept design for the Preferred Alternative, and prepared the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) assessing environmental effects that could occur as a result of the proposed project. Advancements and changes have been made to the proposed project since January 2020 and are summarized below:



- ❖ From 2021 to 2022 Georgia DOT reconsidered the delivery approach for the proposed project and how it would be phased and procured as part of the Major Mobility Investment Program (MMIP).
- ❖ The environmental review of the proposed project was resumed in March 2023, and environmental studies were updated to reflect project refinements.



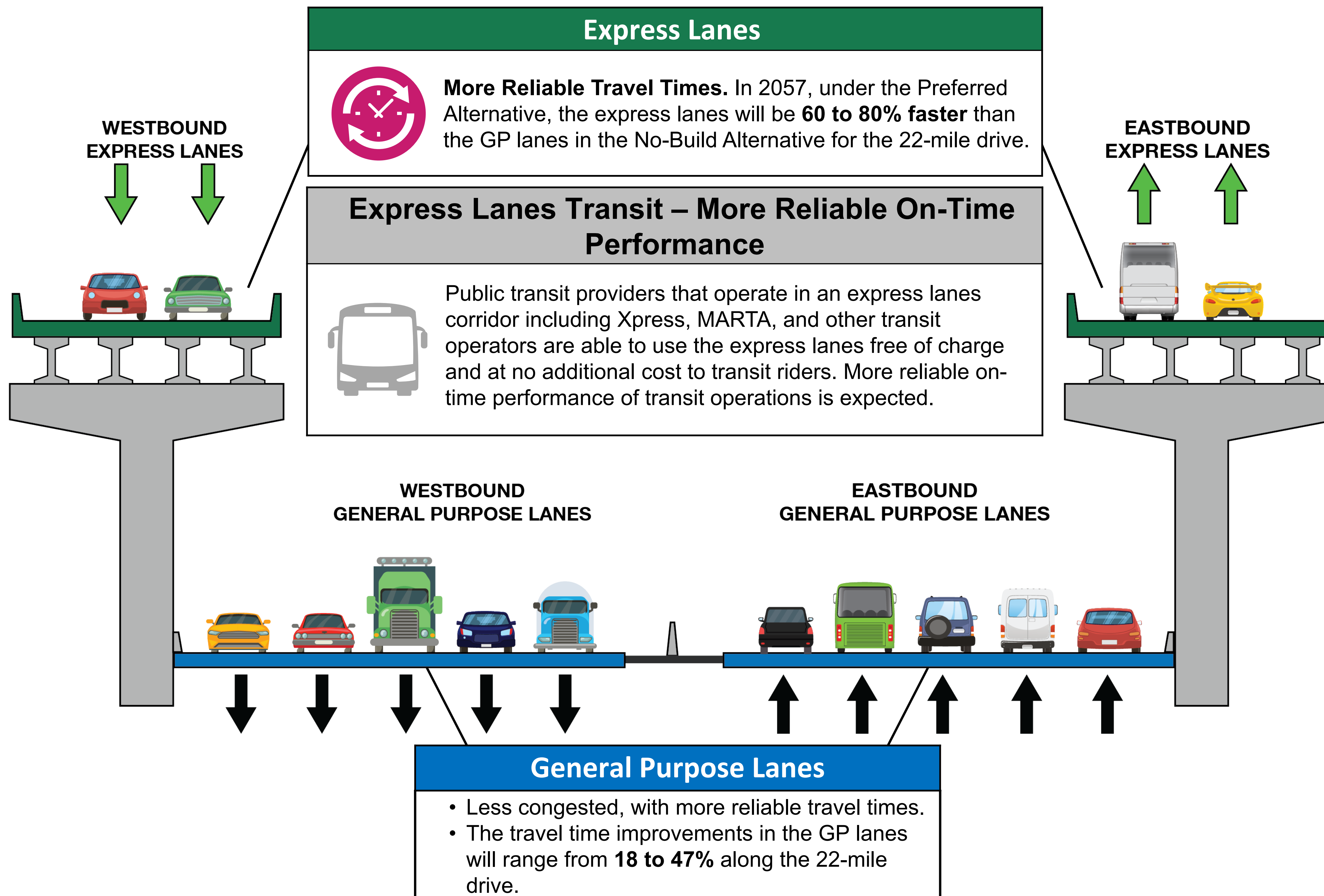
- ❖ At the proposed project's improvement limits, the express lane layout has been updated to an outside tie-in rather than the previous inside tie-in layout.
- ❖ A right turn lane has been added for the express lane entrance ramp at Johnson Ferry Road, which extended the improvement limits along Johnson Ferry Road.
- ❖ North Shallowford Road has been widened north of Cotillion Drive and south of Savoy Drive to allow travelers a smoother merge.
- ❖ Westbound express lane exit ramp to New Peachtree Road has been reconfigured to exit to the south side of I-285.
- ❖ Flowers Road intersection has been reconfigured to a roundabout north of I-285.
- ❖ Continued development of the concept design for the Preferred Alternative has considered a more detailed understanding of the local terrain and built environment. This has led to changes to the project design that have required, in a few areas, additional right-of-way and easements to implement the project. These design refinements include updates to accommodate stormwater and drainage features, existing or future utilities, roadway design requirements, bridge pier locations, and proposed express lane elevations. Design refinements also reflect measures to avoid or minimize impacts to natural resources, residences, businesses, and civic/community facilities.

Project information is subject to change. Published June/July 2024.

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Typical Section

The Preferred Alternative will significantly improve travel time reliability for all users, regardless of how they choose to travel. Drivers and transit riders will be able to budget their travel time more effectively.



I-285 Top End Express Lanes

Reasonable Range of Alternatives Considered

LEGEND	Direct Access Locations	Direct Merge Locations
At-Grade express lanes	Cumberland Blvd (I-285)	I-75/I-285 Interchange
Elevated express lanes	Johnson Ferry Rd (SR 400)	Raider Dr
	Mt. Vernon Hwy (SR 400)	N. Shallowford Rd
EL System Interchanges	Perimeter Center Pkwy (I-285)	Terminal Ramps at Henderson Rd
14 I-285/I-75	N. Shallowford Rd (I-285)	Terminal Ramps North of S. Atlanta Rd
15 I-285/SR 400	Flowers Rd (I-285)	Terminal Ramps at SR 400
16 I-285/I-85	New Peachtree Rd (I-285)	

Build Alternative 3 (At-grade, Inside)

Alternative 3 consists of widening to construct two ELs in each direction with shoulders along I-285 primarily on the inside of the existing GP lanes, at-grade:

- Would require extensive reconstruction of existing GP lanes and bridges
- Costliest alternative and the most disruptive to motorists during construction
- Would require the most right-of-way and result in the greatest environmental impacts

Build Alternative 1 (At-grade, Outside)

Alternative 1 consists of widening to add two ELs in each direction with shoulders along I-285 primarily to the outside of the existing GP lanes and at-grade:

- Addresses proposed project's need and purpose
- More environmental impacts than Build Alternative 2

Preferred Alternative

Build Alternative 2 (Elevated, Outside)

Alternative 2 consists of constructing two ELs in each direction with shoulders along I-285 to the outside of the existing GP lanes on elevated structures:

- Addresses proposed project's needs and would improve travel reliability for motorists and transit users; would improve access to major regional centers; and would be consistent with legislation aimed at addressing urgent traffic concerns
- Fewer environmental impacts than Alternatives 1 and 3
- Lower construction costs and less disruptions during construction
- Overpass option for the ELs between Raider Drive and Riverside Drive was selected as it would result in less environmental impacts and minimize implementation risks. Options were considered based on input received from the January 2020 Public Information Open House Meetings.

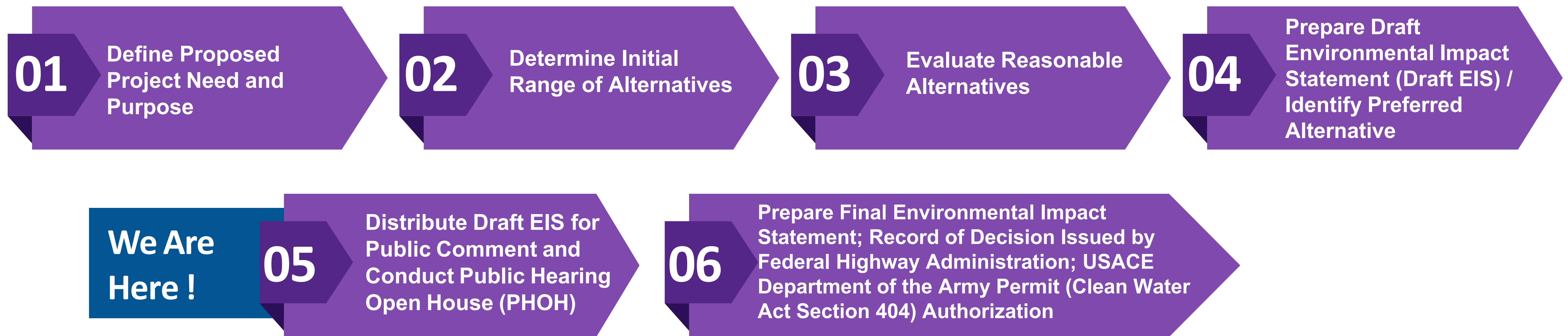
Process of selecting Preferred Alternative

I-285 Top End Express Lanes

NEPA Process

What is NEPA?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires the consideration of environmental effects and impacts for federally funded projects.



The NEPA process is intended to help agencies make decisions about proposed improvements with knowledge of potential environmental consequences and public input.

Environmental Resource Study Process



I-285 Top End Express Lanes

Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) Document Guide

- ❖ **Chapter 0. Table of Contents and Executive Summary**
List of Chapters, Sections, and Appendices included in the Draft EIS. The Executive Summary highlights the content and intention of the environmental document as a whole.
- ❖ **Chapter 1. Need and Purpose**
Details the Need and Purpose of the proposed project, illustrating the mobility challenges the proposed project aims to address in the region.
- ❖ **Chapter 2. Alternatives Evaluation**
Describes the full range of alternatives evaluated for the proposed project and the rationale for identifying Build Alternative 2 as the Preferred Alternative.
- ❖ **Chapter 3. Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, and Mitigation**
Details the full suite of environmental studies conducted and their findings, environmental impacts as they relate to the Preferred Alternative, and potential proposed mitigation measures.
- ❖ **Chapter 4. Section 4(f) and Section 6(f) Resources**
Describes all publicly owned recreational facilities, such as parks, trails, and conservation areas, and certain historic sites related to the Preferred Alternative and details coordination with involved agencies.
- ❖ **Chapter 5. Consultation and Coordination**
Describes local agency, stakeholder, and public involvement efforts that have informed planning of the proposed project to this point.
- ❖ **Chapter 6. Next Steps**
Highlights the next anticipated stages for the proposed project.
- ❖ **Chapter 7. List of Preparers**
Index of agencies and personnel who assisted in the preparation of the Draft EIS.
- ❖ **Chapter 8. Distribution List**
List of agencies and elected officials who will be informed of the Draft EIS' availability.
- ❖ **Chapter 9. References**
Comprehensive list of works cited throughout the Draft EIS.
- ❖ **Glossary**
List of terms and accompanying definitions that are mentioned in the Draft EIS.
- ❖ **Appendices**
Appendices include more detailed information, including special studies reports, as it relates to the subjects featured in the main text of the Draft EIS.

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Environmental Impacts



Air Quality

The Clean Air Act requires the Georgia DOT to make sure that the proposed I-285 Top End Express Lanes Project does not violate national air quality standards.

In terms of air quality, the Preferred Alternative requires no mitigation measures as it does not anticipate causing or exacerbating any violation of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) and conforms to all air quality regulations. By improving mobility and reducing congestion, the project is anticipated to generally improve air quality in the project area, particularly for Mobile Source Air Toxics (MSATs).



The State of Georgia is in attainment under the NAAQS for carbon dioxide (CO) and particulate matter (PM10/PM2.5), so Georgia DOT does not need to do any additional studies on those pollutants.



The proposed project would not result in a violation of the United States Environmental Protection Agency's 2015 ozone NAAQS. Georgia adheres to a maintenance plan to ensure continued attainment of the 2015 ozone NAAQS.



Due to an expected growth in population leading to an increase in commuter traffic, Georgia DOT expects that greenhouse gas emissions will increase in future years when compared to the existing condition. The proposed project's Preferred Alternative would have GHG emissions slightly higher than the No-Build Alternative due to increased traffic.



Within the affected network, as well as all areas with an anticipated change in traffic due to the proposed project, an MSAT emissions analysis was conducted. The MSAT analysis indicates that projected emissions along the proposed project corridor would be lower than those documented today due to expected improvements in vehicle fuel efficiency and emissions.

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Am I Getting a Noise Barrier?

Traffic Noise Analysis

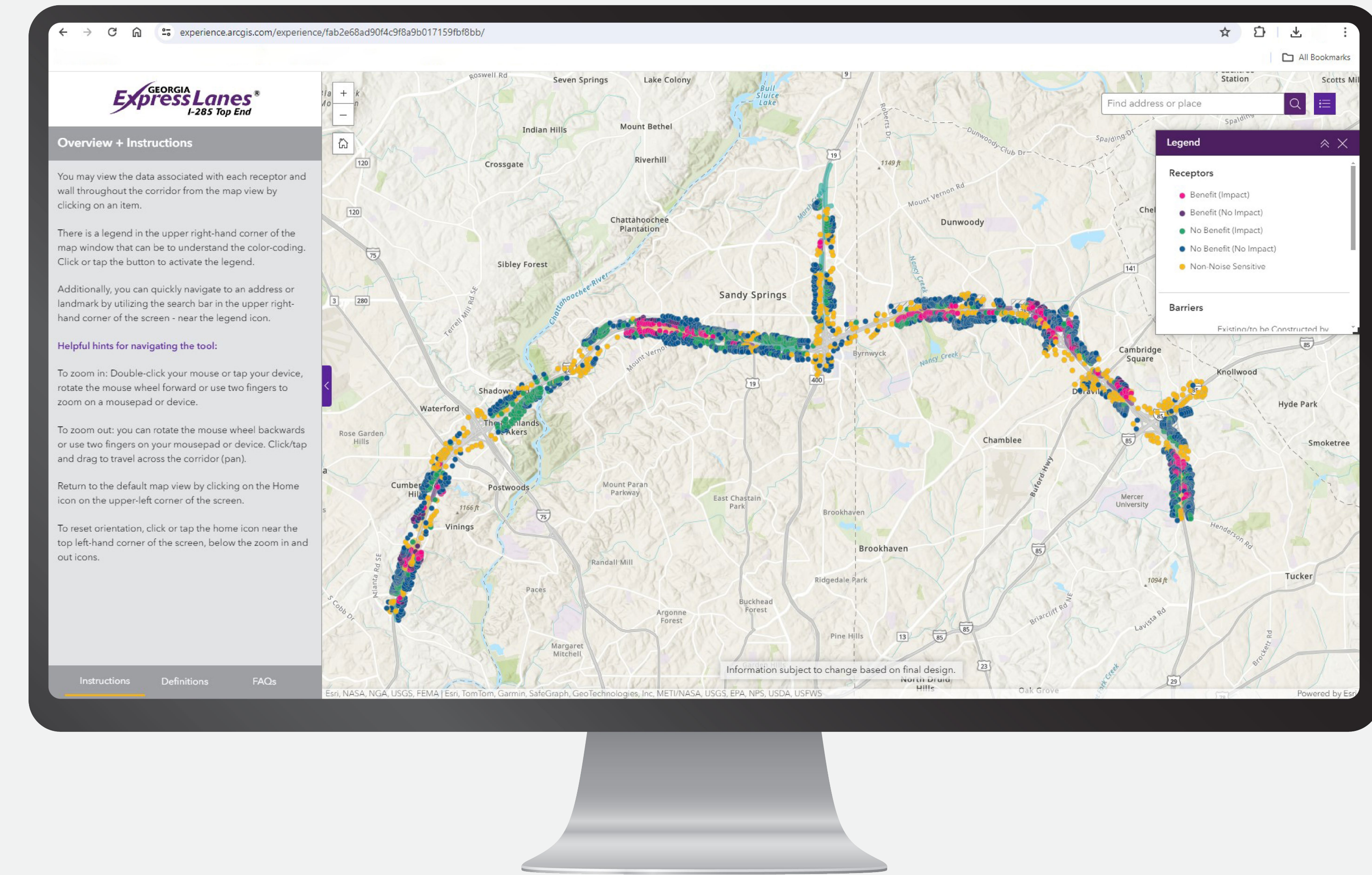
A traffic noise analysis was conducted to determine the acoustic impact of the proposed I-285 Top End Express Lane Project on noise-sensitive receivers, such as single and multi-family residences and public outdoor spaces in the project corridor.

Results*

Based on the studies and conclusions of this analysis, noise abatement is proposed to be provided via:

- **13 existing noise barriers** that would remain (including one barrier with a feasible and reasonable extension).
- **14 noise barriers** that would need to be replaced with barriers of similar or greater length and height.
- **15 locations** where noise abatement is likely, but not guaranteed. At these locations, it is possible that new noise barriers would be feasible and reasonable.

*Anticipated locations of new noise barriers that would be feasible and reasonable, and of replacement noise barriers. Locations are based on conceptual design and Noise Impact Analyses provided in the Draft EIS and are subject to future refinement.



VISIT OUR NOISE STUDY TOOL!

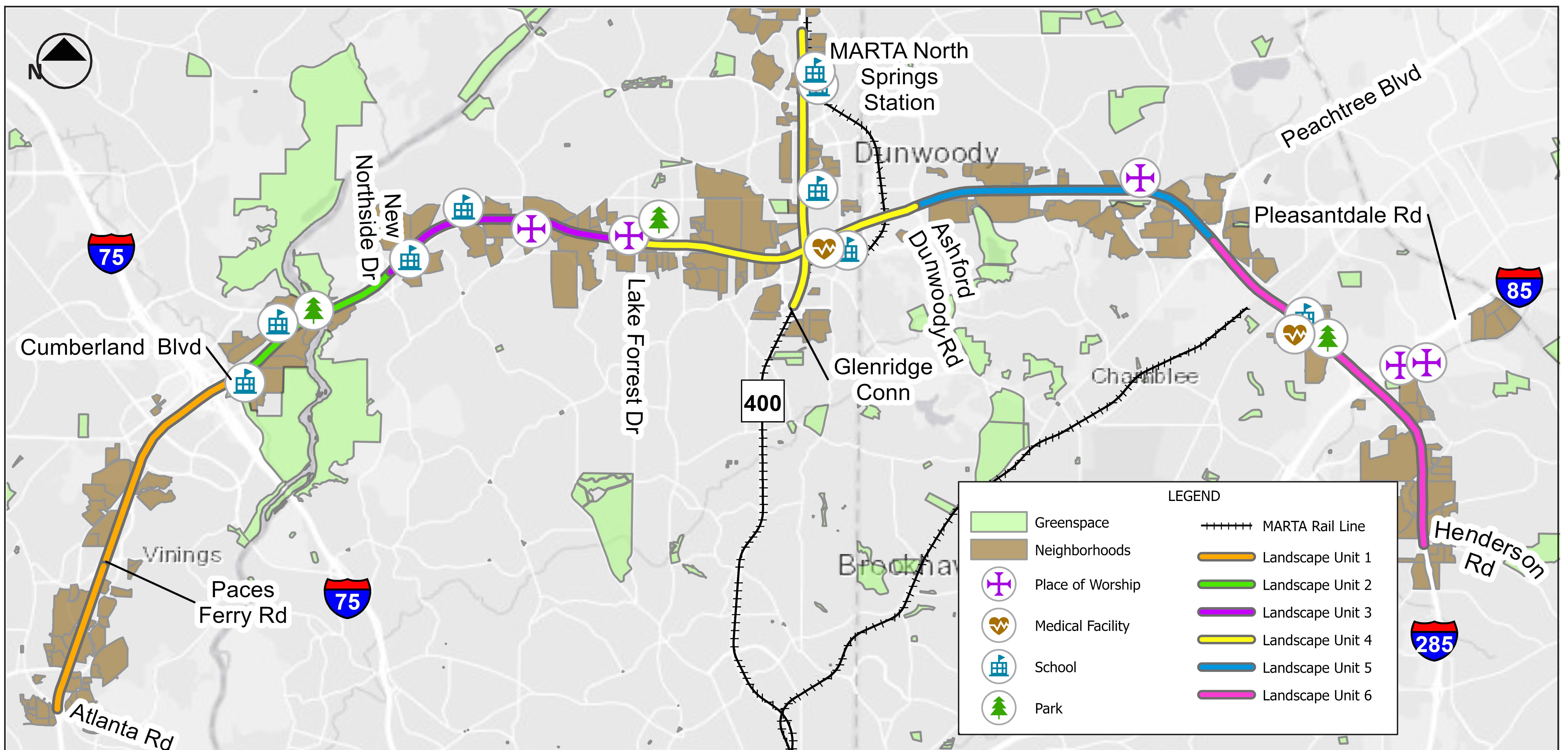
Scan the QR code to learn more about where noise impacts are anticipated and where noise barriers are recommended.

Proposed noise barriers are also included on the maps in our Preferred Alternative Features station.



I-285 Top End Express Lanes

Potential Visual Impacts and Mitigation Measures



Areas with Potential Adverse Visual Impacts

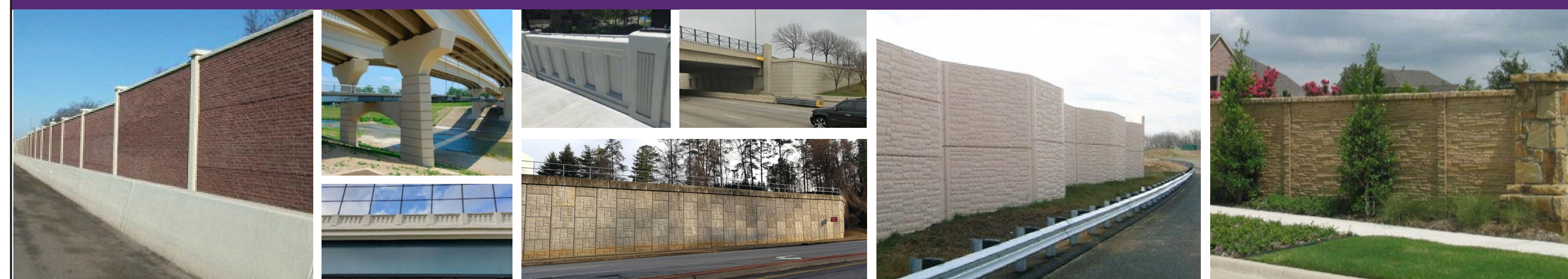
*Affected viewer groups include people in the affected environment. The viewers can be static (stationary viewers such as residents) or dynamic (mobile viewers such as drivers). They can also be users of resources like parks, schools, and churches in the project area.

Areas with Adverse Visual Impacts	Affected Viewer Groups*	Potential Mitigation Measures
LANDSCAPE UNIT 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paces Ferry Road to Cumberland Boulevard SE on I-285 Ramp connections with I-75, the existing Express Lane network on I-75 	Highway travelers on I-285	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lighting Visual treatments on elevated express lanes Context-sensitive design solutions
LANDSCAPE UNIT 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cumberland Boulevard SE to New Northside Drive on I-285 	Local roadway travelers and park and residential neighbors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lighting Visual treatments on elevated express lanes, walls and barriers Context-sensitive design solutions Right-of-way (ROW) landscaping
LANDSCAPE UNIT 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Northside Drive to Lake Forrest Drive on I-285 	Local roadway travelers and educational neighbors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lighting Visual treatments on elevated express lanes, walls and barriers ROW landscaping
LANDSCAPE UNIT 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lake Forrest Drive to Ashford Dunwoody Road on I-285 Glenridge Connector to the North Springs MARTA Station on SR 400 	Highway travelers on SR 400 and park and residential neighbors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual treatments on elevated express lanes, walls and barriers Context-sensitive design solutions ROW landscaping
LANDSCAPE UNIT 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ashford Dunwoody Road to Peachtree Boulevard on I-285 	Local roadway travelers and residential neighbors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lighting Visual treatments on elevated express lanes, walls and barriers ROW landscaping
LANDSCAPE UNIT 6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peachtree Boulevard to Eastern Termini at Henderson Road on I-285 Ramp connection with the existing High Occupancy Toll lanes network at Pleasantdale Road on I-85 	Local roadway travelers and park neighbors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lighting Visual treatments on elevated express lanes, walls and barriers Context-sensitive design solutions ROW landscaping

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Examples of Potential Mitigation for Visual Impacts

Structures, Walls, and Barriers



Landscaping – Medians



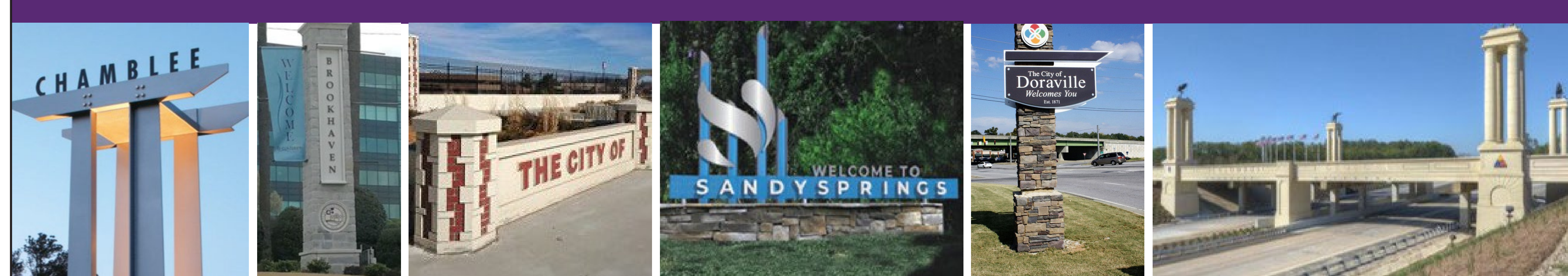
Decorative Lighting



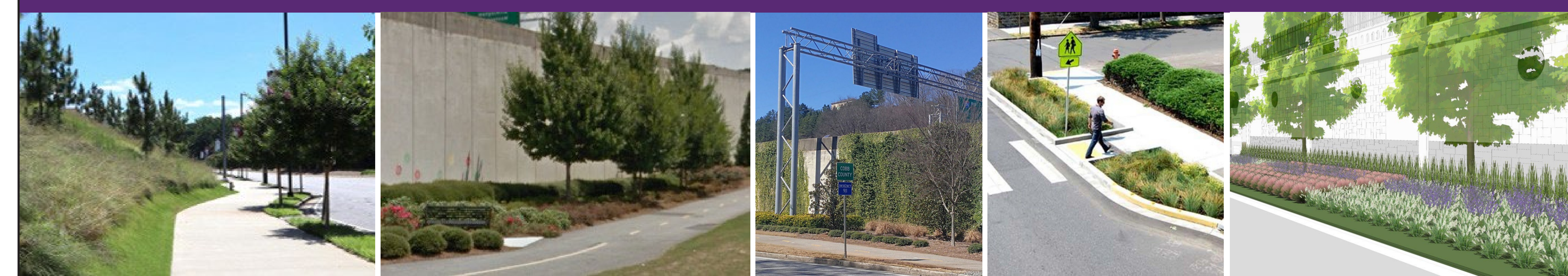
Landscaping – Grade Transition



Gateway and Entrance Monuments



Landscaping – Right-of-Way



Mitigation Measures

The proposed project may consider implementing mitigation measures to minimize the visual impact of the Preferred Alternative on the surrounding area.

These measures include:

- **Lighting:** Use appropriate lighting levels and fixtures to minimize glare and light pollution.
- **Elevated express lane structures, walls, and barriers:** Use materials and finishes that blend in with the surrounding environment. Consider incorporating decorative elements or landscaping to soften the appearance of these structures.
- **Context-sensitive design:** Work with local stakeholders to develop design solutions that are compatible with the surrounding area.
- **ROW landscaping:** Plant trees, shrubs, and other vegetation to screen the project from view and improve the overall appeal.

Funding for Mitigation

Costs for implementing and maintaining mitigation measures will depend on location, type of measure, and community preferences.

Public Involvement

Coordination with the public as well as leadership of adjacent cities, counties, and Community Improvement Districts (CIDs) is a key step in determining visual mitigation. Recommended mitigation measures will be included in the Final EIS/Record of Decision (ROD).

I-285 Top End Express Lanes

Mitigation Measures

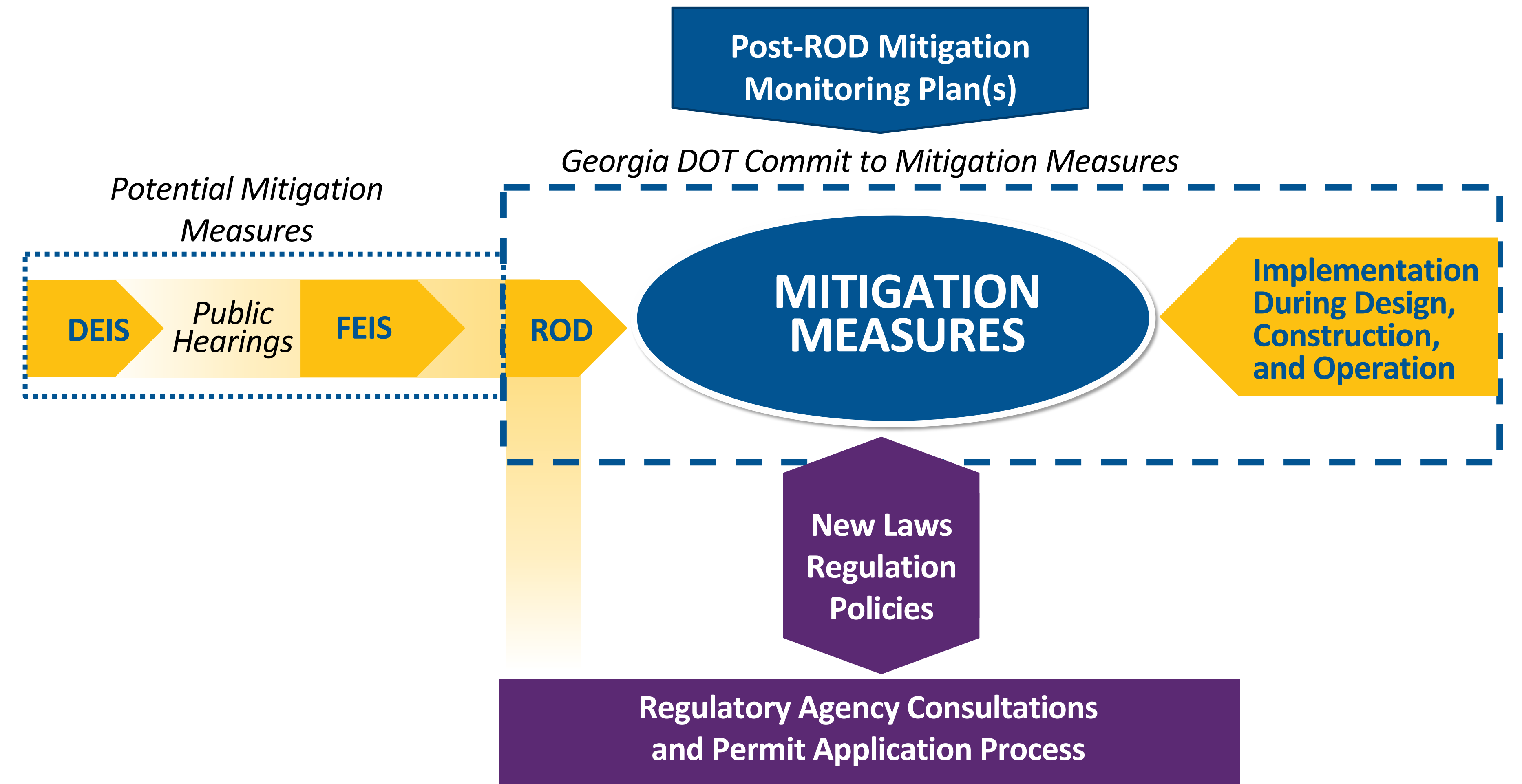
Mitigation Measures*

Georgia DOT identified proposed mitigation measures for adverse impacts that would occur when implementing the Preferred Alternative.

Proposed mitigation measures include, but are not limited to:

- Noise barriers
- Visual enhancements and landscaping features
- Hazardous waste management
- Traffic management plan
- Water resources and air quality management
- Measures to alleviate during-construction inconvenience

***A mitigation measure is an action that is implemented to minimize, reduce, or off-set an environmental impact.**



Provide Your Input!

- Georgia DOT is seeking your comments on:
 - Viewer sensitivity and visual preferences
 - The visual impacts of the project without mitigation
 - A suite of potential mitigation measures and enhancements
- Your input during the Draft EIS comment period will be important in helping Georgia DOT to determine the best mitigation measures for the Preferred Alternative.



I-285 Top End Express Lanes

Comment Card

Georgia DOT is Seeking Public Comment on the Draft EIS for the I-285 Top End Express Lanes Project

Guidelines for Commenting:

- All project-related comments are welcome
- All comments are given the same consideration regardless of how they are submitted
- Comments must be submitted by **July 29, 2024**:
 - Use the electronic comment form which can be accessed via QR code or this link: <https://tinyurl.com/285GEL-Comment>
 - Email to: TopEndExpressLanes@dot.ga.gov
 - Mail to: Mr. Eric Duff, Georgia Department of Transportation, 600 West Peachtree Street NW, 16th Floor, Atlanta, Georgia 30308
 - Call the project hotline at (470) 978-7490 to leave a message with your comment

How to submit comments during this open house:

- ✓ Digitally using a tablet at the comment station
- ✓ In writing by submitting a comment form (available at the comment station and in your meeting handout) in the comment box
- ✓ Verbally with the court reporter
- ✓ Call the project hotline at (470) 978-7490
- ✓ Via the electronic comment form which can be accessed via QR code or this link: <https://tinyurl.com/285GEL-Comment>

Please note that all comments will be made public as part of the proposed project's official record and included in the Final EIS.

Your input matters!

All questions and comments submitted will be responded to following the close of the public comment period. Georgia DOT will consider all comments equally and collected feedback will be part of the official project record.



Right-of-Way Acquisition Process



Pre-Acquisition Activities (60 Days)

- Special Assistant Attorney General (SAAG) prepares Preliminary Title Reports
- Appraisal and Special valuation needs assessed and assigned
- Outreach to property owners to explain Right-of-Way Plan and Acquisition Process, which includes letters, in-person meetings, among other ongoing communications



Appraisals (90 Days)

- Independent appraisers contact impacted property owners to schedule property inspection
- Appraisal report developed and shared with Georgia DOT for review
- Offer Package prepared on behalf of Georgia DOT based on Appraisal report



Negotiations to Purchase (120 Days)

- The offer, referred to as Initiations of Negotiations, is presented to property owner in writing based on the Fair Market Value (FMV) appraisal
- Reasonable negotiation period is allowed for Good Faith Negotiations
- Settlement is reached



Closing (90 Days)

- Special Assistant Attorney General (SAAG) performs the closing at no cost to property owners
- Funds disbursed to owner (after satisfaction of any applicable liens)



Relocation, if necessary (90 Days)

- In the event that any person, family, business, or farm is displaced, they shall be offered relocation assistance services, or a Relocation Benefits Package at time of “Initiations of Negotiations”
- If property owners or tenants are required to relocate they will be treated fairly, equitable, and in compliance with the Uniform Act. Since relocation occupants vary, relocation benefits and payments may also vary. The property owner’s assigned Relocation Agent will explain more specific benefits or payments for those who may be eligible for Relocation Advisory Services.
- Property owner has a minimum of 60 days to vacate property after closing

In the event that an amicable settlement cannot be reached, Georgia DOT could exercise its authority of Eminent Domain, and only do so after exhausting all other remedies to reach a settlement.

Express Lanes Transit

What is Express Lanes Transit (ELT)?

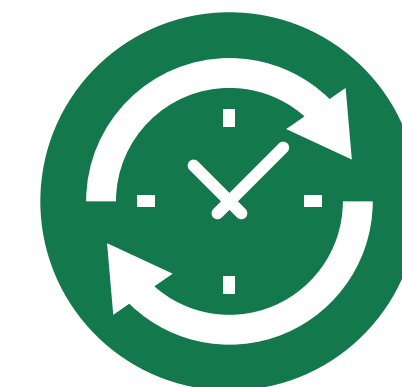
Georgia Express Lanes are multimodal commute options that promote transit use and operations in a corridor.

Benefits to Transit Customers and Providers who use Express Lanes:



Provides More Reliable Transit Travel Times

- Up to 44% travel-time reduction for transit vehicles improving operations and performance
- Xpress transit bus service had to adjust route schedules 15 minutes due to earlier arrivals after the Northwest Corridor Express Lanes opened



More Consistent Travel Speeds

- Speeds in express lanes can be up to 30% faster than general purpose lanes during peak travel periods
- General purpose lanes on I-75 and I-575 in Cobb and Cherokee counties are seeing up to 20 mph faster speeds than before the Northwest Corridor Express Lanes opened



Transit Vehicles Operate Toll-Free

- Transit riders and registered vanpool riders will only need to pay their standard transit rider fee



Enhances Transit Operations in Corridor

- Promotes transit opportunities with current and future transit partners
- Promotes transit-oriented development and expands transit accessibility

Regional Transit Partners

Public transit providers that may plan to operate in future express lanes corridors on SR 400 and I-285.



Georgia Express Lanes Network Map



In Operation

I-85 Express Lanes
 I-75 South Metro Express Lanes
 Northwest Corridor Express Lanes
 I-85 Express Lanes Extension

MMIP

SR 400 Express Lanes
 I-285 Top End Express Lanes*
 I-285 Eastside Express Lanes*
 I-285 Westside Express Lanes*

Long-Range

I-20 East Express Lanes
 I-20 West Express Lanes
 I-75 Gap Express Lanes

Key:

- In Operation
- MMIP
- Long-Range
- Open to Traffic Date

*Procurement, final design, and construction of the proposed express lanes on I-285 will be delivered in phases pending the finalization of the environmental documents.