

# NORTHWEST CORRIDOR PROJECT NEWS

Northwest Corridor (I-75/I-575) Project Newsletter

## Northwest Corridor Completes Additional Environmental Studies

The project team has completed an Environmental Reevaluation to document the changes, and any impacts of the changes, to the Northwest Corridor Project since the publication of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) in October 2011.

Since the publication of (FEIS), changes in the project delivery/procurement process with regard to financing, operations, maintenance and tolling have occurred. Previously, the project was to be delivered under a long-term toll concession strategy. In return, the investors, not the State, would collect tolls on the new managed lanes and retain some level of control over future improvements in the corridor. Under the proposed new approach, the private sector will contribute a reduced amount of initial funding and be responsible for design and construction of the project, under the State's oversight. Responsibility for operations, maintenance, tolling and long-term financing will be retained by the State.

Additionally, the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) has updated its long range transportation plan and transportation model from *Envision 6 to PLAN 2040* and new animal and plant species have been added to federal and state threatened and endangered species lists.

As part of the Environmental Reevaluation, the environmental resources previously documented in the FEIS were reviewed to determine if any of the data/impacts had changed. Changes in the following areas are documented in the Environmental Reevaluation:

- Project Delivery/Procurement Process
- Relocation Potential
- Environmental Justice (Title VI/Executive Order 12898)
- Public Involvement
- Economic Impacts
- Waters of the U.S./State Waters
- Protected Species
- Noise
- Air Quality
- Hazardous Waste Sites
- Traffic

The Environmental Reevaluation also contains an updated list of environmental commitments that will be implemented for the project. An environmental commitment is a measure that the Department, a local agency, and/or the developer commits to implement in order to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate a real or potential environmental impact. Specifically, the table lists each environmental commitment or requirement made for the project; identifies how each commitment will be met; and documents the completion of each commitment. The table ensures that all known impacts are documented and mitigation will be provided.

## Results of the Environmental Reevaluation

Through the process of the Environmental Reevaluation, it was discovered that there are some changes to the environmental impacts listed in the FEIS. However, the changes are not so great that the conclusions reached in the FEIS must be modified. The project concept as described in the FEIS and on page 3 of this newsletter remains the same. The text below describes the highlights of the Environmental Reevaluation. A summary table in the insert of this newsletter details all the impacts of the proposed project. Updated values based on the results of the Environmental Reevaluation are noted in red on the table.

## Protected Species

In the summer of 2012, the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) expanded the summer nesting and hunting range of the federally endangered Indiana bat, and the hunting range of the gray bat, to include Cherokee County, GA. Two federally protected plant species, the federally threatened little amphianthus and the federally endangered Tennessee yellow-eyed grass were also listed by the USFWS. Additionally, one state protected bird species, Henslow's sparrow was listed by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GDNR) Wildlife Resources Division as occurring near the project area.

Surveys were conducted to determine the presence of the species in the project area, and whether they would be affected by the NWCP. While no Indiana or gray bats were captured, the area was found to have suitable habitat. The survey concluded that the proposed project may affect the Indiana and the gray bats, but is not likely to adversely affect them. No suitable habitat was found for the little amphianthus and Tennessee yellow-eyed grass or the Henslow's sparrow, and the conclusion is that the project would have no effect on them.



Indiana Bat

Adam Mann, Environmental Solutions and Innovations

## Traffic

The traffic analysis for the FEIS was performed using data from the Atlanta Regional Commission's (ARC) Envision6 Regional Transportation Plan and associated travel demand forecasting model. This plan was updated in 2011. The new regional transportation plan, referred to as the PLAN 2040 Regional Transportation Plan, was adopted by ARC on July 27, 2011. The overall traffic volumes, with the exception of truck volumes, are lower in the Northwest Corridor using the PLAN 2040 model than were forecast by the traffic analysis presented in the FEIS using the Envision6 model.

## Noise

Using the ARC's forecast traffic volumes for the new regional transportation plan, the potential noise impacts of the NWCP were reevaluated. As a result of the new noise impact analysis, a greater number of impacts to properties along the project corridor were identified. The main reason for the increase is the greater volume of heavy truck traffic projected with the PLAN 2040 traffic model. The study also identified the need for three additional sound barriers along I-75, bringing the total number of proposed sound barriers to thirty-four for I-75 and nine for I-575. Per GDOT policy, those property owners and tenants identified as being eligible to receive the proposed new sound barriers will be coordinated with to collect their input. Opportunities to collect input from the property owners and tenants will continue if the Build Alternative is selected and the project progresses into final design.

## Air

The Reevaluation also took another look at the potential air quality impacts using the PLAN 2040 traffic volumes. The results of the analysis were similar to those in the FEIS. Specifically, the project:

- is not expected to cause a violation of the applicable National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS);
- is not a project of air quality concern for particulate matter as determined through the interagency consultation process; and
- would have no meaningful impact on regional air quality and mobile source air toxics levels as compared to the No-Build Alternative.

## How to Review and Comment on the Environmental Reevaluation

The Environmental Reevaluation is available on the project website, [www.nwcpproject.com](http://www.nwcpproject.com) and at the following area libraries, the Department's Office of Environmental Services and the Department's District Offices:

- Atlanta-Fulton County Library, One Margaret Mitchell Square, Atlanta GA 30303,

- Cobb County Central Library, 266 Roswell St, Marietta GA 30060,
- RT Jones Memorial Library, 116 Brown Industrial Pkwy, Canton GA 30114,
- Georgia Department of Transportation, Office of Environmental Services, 600 West Peachtree Street, NW, 16th Floor, Atlanta, GA 30308,
- GDOT District 6 Main Office, 500 Joe Frank Harris Parkway, Cartersville, GA 30120,
- GDOT District 6 Cherokee Area Engineer’s Office, 874 Peebles Valley Road, NW, Cartersville, GA 30120,
- GDOT District 7 Main Office, 5025 New Peachtree Road, Chamblee, GA 30341, and
- GDOT District 7 Office, Cobb Area Engineer’s Office, 1269 Kennestone Circle, Marietta, Georgia 30066.

You may also request a DVD of the Environmental Reevaluation through the “Contact Us” tab on the website; by emailing us at [nwcpcomments@projectsolvemail.com](mailto:nwcpcomments@projectsolvemail.com) or by calling our Voice Mail Hotline at (404) 377-4012. Paper copies may be requested by contacting Darryl VanMeter at Georgia Department of Transportation using the phone number or email address on the back of this newsletter.

A ten (10) day public comment period beginning on March 20, 2013 accompanies the availability of the Environmental Reevaluation. You may submit your comments by email, phone or mail with the contact information listed on the back page of this newsletter. To be included in the official project record, please submit your comments by March 30, 2013.

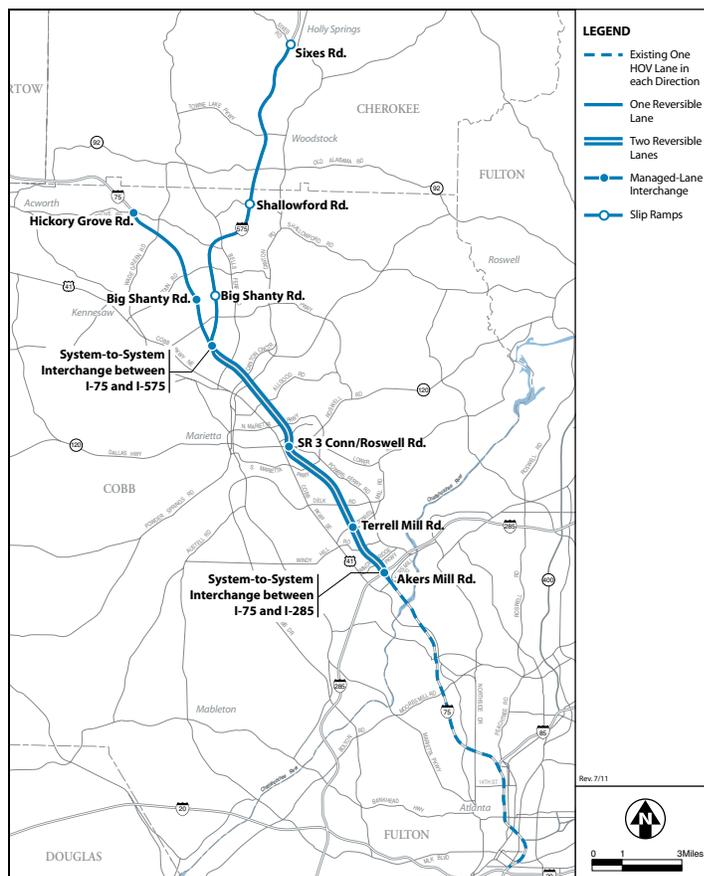
## The Northwest Corridor Project Concept

The project includes the addition of a managed lane system to I-75 and I-575. The lanes would be tolled to help manage, or control, demand in the lanes and work to keep traffic in the lanes free-flowing. The managed lanes would be Express Toll Lanes where all vehicles using the lane would pay except exempt registered users like emergency responders, transit, and military vehicles.

The new managed lanes would be reversible to help minimize traffic congestion in the direction with the most demand, for example southbound in the morning commute period and northbound in the afternoon commute period.

Features of the project include:

- Two new tolled managed reversible lanes on elevated structures or walls on the west side of I-75 between Akers Mill Road and I-575.
- A single tolled managed reversible lane continuing north on I-75 from the I-75/I-575 interchange to just beyond Hickory Grove Road.
- A single tolled managed reversible lane continuing north on I-575 from the I-75/I-575 interchange to a point north of Ridgewalk Parkway and south of the Sixes Road interchange.
- Six new managed-lane interchanges on I-75 constructed at the following locations: I-285, Terrell Mill Road, Roswell Road, I-575, Big Shanty Road and Hickory Grove Road.
- Three pairs of slip ramps on I-575 constructed near the existing general purpose interchanges at Barrett Parkway, Shallowford Road and Sixes Road. The slip ramps allow traffic in the inside general-purpose lanes to merge to the new tolled reversible lane in the highway median.





## What's Next?

As the next step in the environmental process, a determination on the project's concept, known as the Record of Decision (ROD), is expected to be issued by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in the second quarter of 2013. The ROD will identify the alternatives considered, including the no-build; the selected alternative; list and describe any measures needed to minimize effects to the natural, human and built environments, and contain the comments received since the publication of the Final Environmental Impact Statement and the responses.



Artist rendering of the Managed Lane System Flyover at Windy Hill Road

The process for contracting private partners to develop the final design, build and finance the project will also continue with GDOT reviewing proposals from the shortlist of three finalists in the summer of 2013. Final design of the project is anticipated to start in 2013, and construction is anticipated to start in 2014. The managed lanes could be open to traffic as early as the spring of 2018 🇺🇸

## Get Involved!

For project updates and to join the mailing list or provide feedback:

Voice Mail Hotline: (404) 377-4012

Email: [nwcpcomments@projectsolvemail.com](mailto:nwcpcomments@projectsolvemail.com)

Website: [www.nwcproject.com](http://www.nwcproject.com)

To submit written comments, or for more information please contact:

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## ACRONYMS

- ARC:** Atlanta Regional Commission
- ETL:** Express Toll Lanes
- FEIS:** Final Environmental Impact Statement
- FHWA:** Federal Highway Administration
- GDOT:** Georgia Department of Transportation
- GDNR:** Georgia Department of Natural Resources
- HOV Lanes:** High Occupancy Vehicle Lanes
- NAAQS:** National Ambient Air Quality Standards
- P3:** Public Private Partnership
- RFQ:** Request for Qualifications
- RFP:** Request for Proposals
- ROD:** Record of Decision
- SRTA:** State Road and Tollway Authority
- USFWS:** US Fish and Wildlife Service



## ENVIRONMENTAL REEVALUATION SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

(changes or additions to impacts published in the FEIS are noted in red)

Impact	Selected Alternative
Acquisitions and Displacements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>14</b> (13) full and <b>65</b> (63) partial acquisitions, totaling <b>79</b> (76) acquisitions.</li> <li>• 6 residential and 8 commercial properties, including 12 businesses.</li> </ul>
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportive of ARC planning policies and local plans/policies.</li> </ul>
Population and Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residential and business acquisitions would result in the displacement of an estimated 15 people and 33 employees.</li> </ul>
Economic Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approximately \$105,000 reduction in property taxes due to acquisitions.</li> </ul>
Neighborhoods and Community Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community effects would be limited to a small number of neighborhoods adjacent to the highway, primarily located on the west side of I-75 in the Marietta area. Effects include potential increases in noise levels.</li> <li>• Disruptions would be on the edges of existing neighborhoods, so no substantial change to cohesion.</li> <li>• No effects to community facilities or cohesion in any neighborhoods along the project corridor.</li> </ul>
Environmental Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acquisition of 5 (of 6 total) residential and 7 commercial parcels located in minority and low-income neighborhoods.</li> <li>• Displacement of 15 people, 12 businesses, and 33 employees in low income and minority neighborhoods.</li> <li>• Adverse effect but not disproportionately high as a result of property acquisitions.</li> <li>• Adverse effect but not disproportionately high due to tolling.</li> </ul>
Safety and Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency response times would improve.</li> </ul>
Visual Quality and Aesthetics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential to generate less than substantial visual impacts to viewers of the road from adjacent land uses, but not out of context with the existing highway setting.</li> <li>• The use of aesthetic finishes, treatments, and landscaping can create a positive change in the corridor by creating a potentially unifying visual element along the highway for both views from the roadway and views of the roadway from adjacent properties and roadways.</li> </ul>
Parklands and Other Section 4(f) Properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No impact to Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, Olde Rope Mill Park, or a baseball field in the Deer Run Neighborhood.</li> <li>• No right-of-way or easements required from parklands.</li> <li>• Temporary construction impacts would occur on the Bob Callan Trail, but no anticipated permanent adverse impacts. Because the trail is a Section 4(f) resource and the project would have temporary impacts on the trail, the project would need to comply with the requirement for Section 4(f) approval based on Section 774.13(d).</li> <li>• Would not prevent the future construction of any of the programmed or proposed trails within the study area.</li> </ul>
Historic and Archaeological Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No historic resources affected.</li> <li>• No archaeological resources affected.</li> </ul>
Air Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not expected to violate current applicable NAAQS. Would have no meaningful impact on regional air quality and mobile source air toxics levels as compared to the No-Build Alternative.</li> <li>• Project is in a non-attainment area for PM<sub>2.5</sub>. Based on the results of the interagency consultation process, it was determined that the project is not a project of air quality concern and a quantitative hot-spot analysis is not required.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Along I-75, road traffic noise would affect approximately <b>1,639</b> (1,451) Activity Category B sites, <b>482</b> (467) Activity Category C sites, and <b>411</b> (59) Activity Category E sites.</li> <li>• Along I-575, road traffic noise would affect <b>198</b> (139) Activity Category B sites and <b>34</b> (19) Activity Category C sites.</li> </ul>
Geology and Soils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No impact.</li> </ul>
Ecosystems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No effect on <b>23</b> (10) threatened and endangered species.</li> <li>• “May affect, not likely to adversely affect” <b>Indiana bat, gray bat,</b> and Cherokee darter.</li> <li>• “No significant adverse affect” to <b>Bluestripe shiner, Highscale shiner, delicate spike,</b> Chattahoochee crayfish and lined chub.</li> </ul>
Water Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>3309</b> (3,025) linear feet of streams impacted.</li> <li>• 17 acres of 100-year floodplain impacted.</li> <li>• <b>0.0</b> (0.3) acre of wetlands impacted.</li> <li>• CLOMR and LOMR required for crossing of Hope Creek and Rottenwood Creek</li> </ul>



**ENVIRONMENTAL REEVALUATION  
SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS**  
(changes or additions to impacts published in the FEIS are noted in red)

Impact	Selected Alternative
Hazardous Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 11 medium-rated potentially contaminated parcels are located along I-75.</li> <li>• Of these 11 medium-rated parcels, <b>4</b> (8) parcels could be affected by potential right-of-way purchase and construction easements.</li> </ul>
Construction Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short-term impacts related to noise, visual quality, dust, vehicular access, and water quality.</li> <li>• <b>1.3</b> (0.7) mile of longitudinal encroachments to 25-foot vegetative buffers as a result of the construction activities.</li> </ul>
Indirect and Cumulative Effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No adverse indirect or cumulative effects.</li> </ul>