



SUPPLEMENTAL DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Executive Summary

September 2010

NORTHWEST CORRIDOR PROJECT

prepared by:
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION and
GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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S. Summary

This chapter presents a summary of the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) prepared for the proposed Northwest Corridor Project. It describes the highway improvements proposed for I-75 and I-575 in Cobb and Cherokee Counties and explains why the SDEIS has been prepared. It also describes the project purpose and need and alternatives under consideration. The transportation and environmental impacts are described as well as the trade-offs of the alternatives. Lastly, agency consultation and public involvement activities conducted to date are summarized.

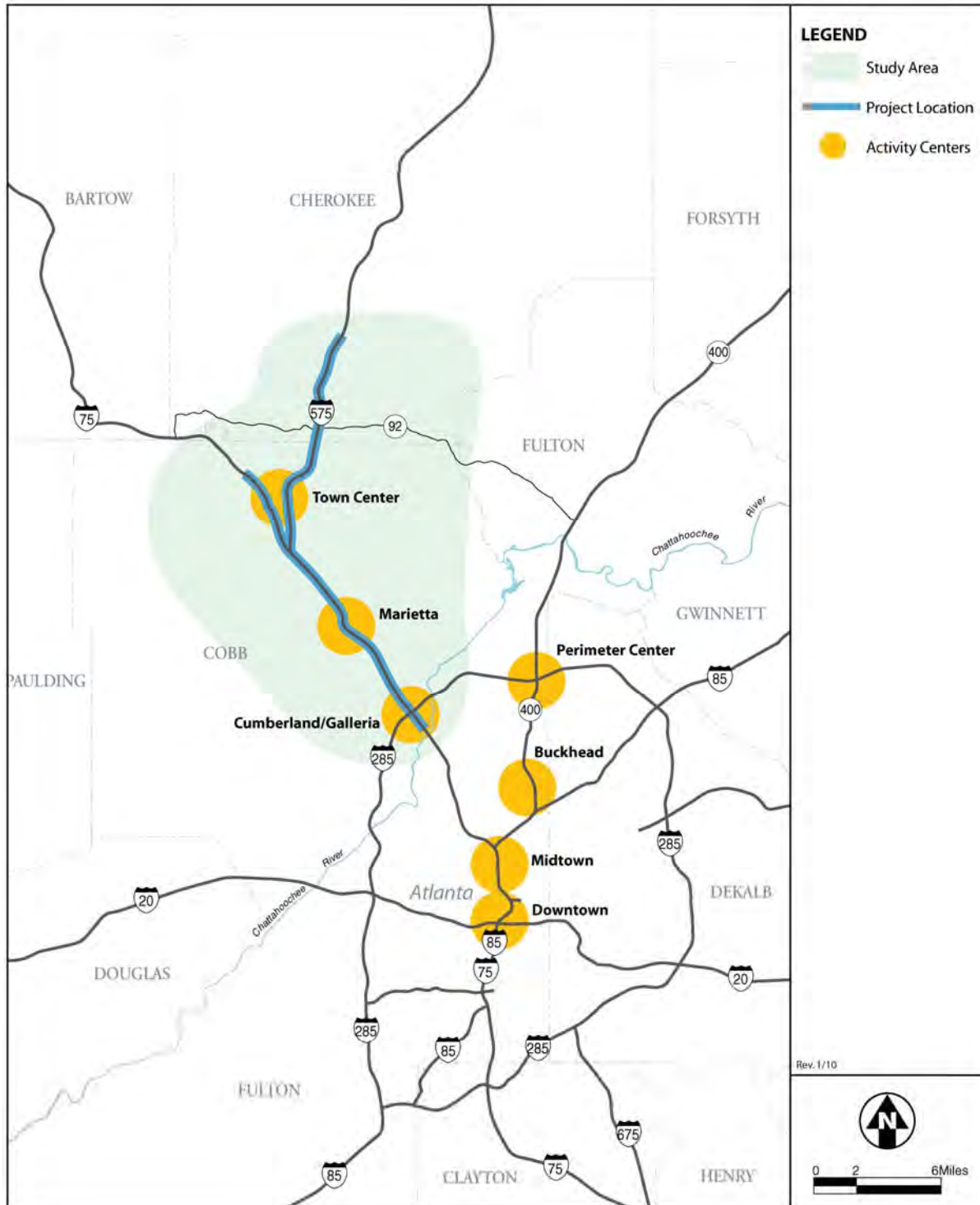
S.1 The Proposed Action

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) propose to make transportation improvements to I-75 and I-575 in the Atlanta metropolitan area. The improvements would be made on I-75 from just south of the I-285 interchange at Akers Mill Road northwesterly to north of Hickory Grove Road and on I-575 from I-75 northeasterly to Sixes Road. The total length of highway corridor improvements is about 27 miles. The location and termini of the proposed improvements are shown in Figure S-1. The proposed transportation improvements are referred to as the Northwest Corridor Project.

Because federal approvals, permits, and funding assistance would be used to construct the improvements, the proposed project must be evaluated for potential environmental impacts as required by the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA). The first Notice of Intent published to announce the planned preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement appeared in the *Federal Register* on March 9, 2004. In May 2007, the *Northwest I-75/I-575 Corridor Alternatives Analysis/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (AA/DEIS)* was published. The document evaluated four alternatives that included different combinations of transportation system management, high-occupancy vehicle (carpool) lanes, truck-only lanes, and bus rapid transit (buses operated similar to a train servicing a limited number of bus stops) improvements. Since May 2007, however, a number of changes occurred that affected the completion of the environmental review process. Towards this end, this SDEIS was prepared to address the changed conditions affecting the project as well as evaluate a new alternative – the Two-Lane Reversible Alternative (referred to as the Build Alternative). This Build Alternative more closely matches the financial resources available to GDOT for implementation. Under the Build Alternative, tolled reversible managed lanes would be constructed in the project corridor.

S.2 Purpose and Need

The need for and the purpose of the proposed project are the same as described in the AA/DEIS. The Northwest Corridor is one of the most severely congested highway corridors in the Atlanta metropolitan region and improvements are needed to reduce congestion. Urban development, both population and employment growth, in Cobb and Cherokee Counties over the past decades has substantially increased traffic congestion on both I-75 and I-575. The amount of time required to travel to and from destinations has increased and the ability to accurately estimate the time it would take to reach a destination has declined. Moreover, the severe congestion in the Northwest Corridor affects all types of vehicles – private passenger vehicles, carpools and van pool vehicles, public transit buses, delivery and freight trucks.



Based on these transportation problems, the purpose of the project is to make improvements to the highways in the Northwest Corridor that:

- Improve the transportation effectiveness of I-75 and I-575 to accommodate additional travel and to contribute to the improved performance of the regional highway system;
- Provide additional transportation choices or options that increase the capacity of I-75 and I-575;
- Improve the quality of life by improving mobility and minimizing effects to both natural resources and the built environment;
- Improve transportation equity by providing an equitable distribution of benefits and impacts to all populations; and
- Provide cost-effective and affordable transportation improvements.

In addition, the Atlanta metropolitan area currently does not meet all of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for regulated air pollutants. The metropolitan area does not meet federal standards for ozone (the 8-hour standard) and small particulates in the atmosphere (the annual standard). These air quality concerns are related to the substantial traffic congestion in the Northwest Corridor. And, the forecast increase in traffic congestion would be expected to reduce air quality in the Atlanta metropolitan area in the future.

S.3 Project Update

Since publication of the AA/DEIS in May 2007, a number of changes have occurred that affect completion of the environmental review process. These changed conditions include:

- The GDOT's review of comments on the AA/DEIS identified substantial opposition and concern over anticipated costs for both the truck-only lane and bus rapid transit elements of the four build alternatives previously evaluated in the AA/DEIS.
- The national economy is in a substantial recession and GDOT has determined there are substantially reduced funding options for the alternatives evaluated in the AA/DEIS. In addition, these conditions affect the amount of money available to construct any improvements to the highways in the Northwest Corridor.
- In April 2008 GDOT completed a statewide truck lanes needs identification study that concluded truck lanes in metro Atlanta were not financially feasible. The study included four public meetings across the state.
- In addition, in December 2009, GDOT adopted a regional managed-lane system plan. This plan provides motorists with substantially improved level of service (i.e., less congestion) on the proposed managed-lane system to encourage people to carpool compared to continued use of the general-purpose lanes. The tolling policy for the proposed managed lanes would be structured to provide opportunities for increased transportation mobility for its users.
- The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) updated its Travel Demand Forecasting Model in 2008, which replaces the computer model used to conduct the traffic analysis for the AA/DEIS.

As a result, GDOT decided in 2008 to eliminate the truck-only lanes and the bus rapid transit elements of the build alternatives evaluated in the AA/DEIS. This essentially left only the high-occupancy vehicle or carpool lane element of the project. To identify a lower-cost and highly effective alternative, traffic modeling was performed using the new ARC 2008 Travel Demand



Forecasting Model to ensure the most current and best available information was used. This analysis considered the following concepts:

- Concept A – a two-lane bi-directional managed-lane system (two lanes in each direction) on I-75 between the I-285 and I-575 interchanges, and a single bi-directional managed-lane system (one lane in each direction) from the I-75/I-575 interchange to north of Hickory Grove Road on I-75 and to Sixes Road on I-575;
- Concept B – two reversible managed lanes (highway lanes that only allow vehicles to travel one way during specified times of the day) on I-75 between the I-285 and I-575 interchanges, and a single reversible lane northwards to Hickory Grove Road and Sixes Road; and
- Concept C – three reversible managed lanes on I-75 between the I-285 and I-575 interchanges, two reversible managed lanes on both I-75 and I-575 north to Big Shanty Road, and single reversible managed lanes north to just beyond Hickory Grove Road on I-75 and Sixes Road on I-575.

The purpose of the computer modeling was to determine the optimal number and type of highway lanes needed to accommodate the forecast traffic, particularly the daily peak periods – the commute periods. Concept B would have the same number of lanes as Concept A during commute periods, but would not accommodate reverse commute traffic. Concept C would have an additional lane, which could accommodate a larger share of the traffic using nearby major streets that parallel the highways.

Using a wide variety of transportation measures of effectiveness, the analysis pointed out the advantages of Concept B, the two-lane reversible-lane system. The amount of time it would take to travel to desired destinations in the morning (southbound) and evening (northbound) would be substantially less than for the No-Build Alternative (no changes made to the highway system) for all three concepts. Under Concept B, the reversible lanes would be used nearly at full capacity during the commute periods. In contrast, for substantial additional cost, the counter-flow direction traffic would not fully use available capacity under Concept A. And, for the additional cost to build the extra reversible lanes under Concept C, projected high level of service during peak periods for directional flow traffic indicated unused capacity. Considering these findings, GDOT concluded that limited financial resources should not be spent on constructing new highway lanes that would not be used to near capacity; and therefore, Concept B was identified as the most appropriate design concept.

S.4 The New Project Alternative

This SDEIS evaluates potential environmental effects of a new project alternative – the Two-Lane Reversible Alternative (referred to as the Build Alternative) and compares it to the No-Build Alternative as required by the NEPA. The new Build Alternative is not compared to the build alternatives evaluated in the AA/DEIS because those alternatives are no longer under consideration. Furthermore, the Build Alternative evaluated in this SDEIS is evaluated against a new No-Build Alternative because the new ARC 2008 Travel Demand Forecasting Model incorporates updated forecasts for future land use and planned transportation projects.

The No-Build Alternative includes all existing highway, transit services, and transit facilities within the project corridor and remainder of the region. In addition, it includes the updated planned long-range improvements from *Envision6, Volume 1: 2030 Regional Transportation Plan* (ARC, 2007b) located outside the project corridor, except for the planned improvements to I-285. As a conservative approach to the analysis, the improvements to I-285 were excluded because they improve the

performance of the proposed improvements to I-75, and there is risk that implementation of the improvements may not occur as planned. The No-Build Alternative is the baseline for comparison of potential transportation and environmental effects resulting from the Build Alternative.

All proposed transportation facilities and services considered part of the No-Build Alternative also are included under the Build Alternative, plus the additional proposed improvements for both I-75 and I-575. The Build Alternative would extend the existing two I-75 managed lanes (high-occupancy vehicle lanes, one in each direction) that currently terminate at Akers Mill Road south of the I-75/I-285 interchange. Two new managed lanes would be on elevated structures or walls on the west side of I-75 between Akers Mill Road and I-575 (see Figure S-2 and Figure S-3). Along this segment, the managed lanes would be elevated on structures over exiting roadways that cross the highway (see Figure S-4 and Figure S-5). The managed lanes on I-75 would connect to proposed managed lanes on I-285.

Figure S-2. I-75 Typical Elevated Managed Lanes on Structures (South of I-575) – Looking North

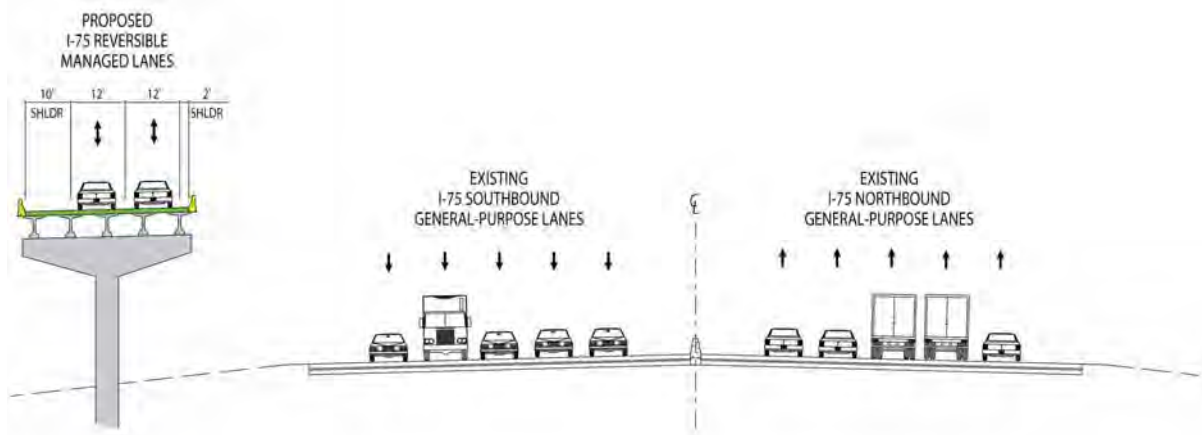


Figure S-3. I-75 Typical Elevated Managed Lanes on Walls (South of I-575) – Looking North

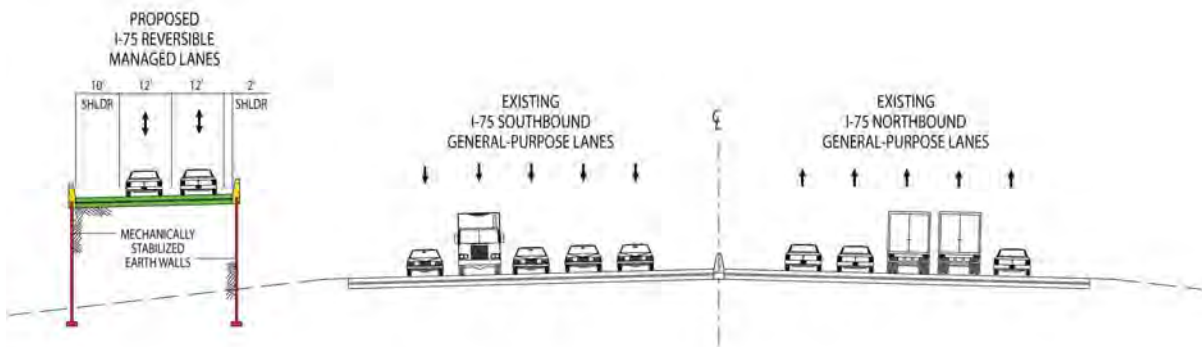


Figure S-4. I-75 Typical Elevated Managed Lanes Overpass (South of I-575) – Profile Looking West and Section Looking North at Windy Hill Road

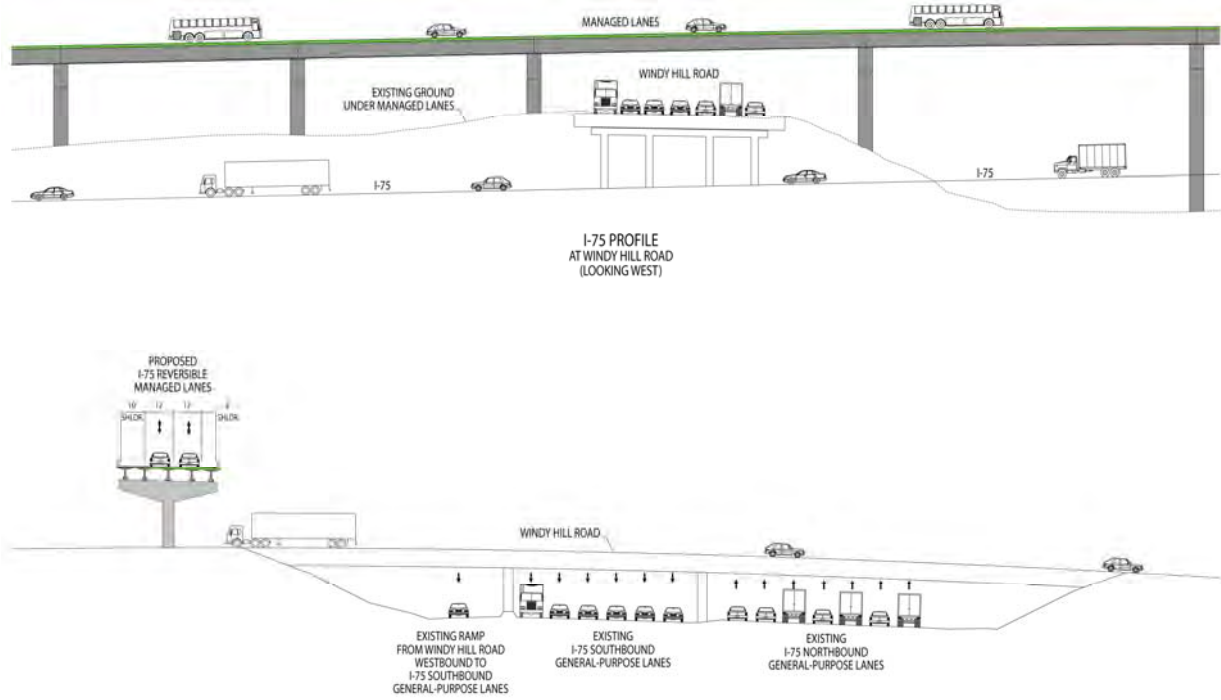


Figure S-5. I-75 Managed Lane Interchange (South of I-575) – Simulation Looking North at Roswell Road



Rather than the high-occupancy vehicle lanes serving both directions of traffic during the peak period that was evaluated in the AA/DEIS, the proposed new managed lanes on I-75 would be reversible managed lanes that would only serve the peak period main direction of traffic flow. During the morning peak commute period, both lanes would accommodate southbound traffic. During the evening peak commute period, the directional flow of the traffic would be reversed to accommodate northbound traffic. In this way, the two additional lanes would add substantial capacity to accommodate current and forecast traffic on I-75, particularly during peak periods.

At the I-75/I-575 interchange, the two reversible lanes would split and a single reversible lane would continue northwesterly on I-75 to north of Hickory Grove Road and northeasterly on I-575 to Sixes Road. Figure S-6 shows a typical cross-section of the proposed single managed lane improvements proposed for I-75. Figure S-7 shows a typical cross-section of the proposed single managed-lane improvements proposed for I-575. Figure S-8 is a visual simulation of the slip ramp concept proposed for the single managed lane on I-575. In both cases, the single managed lane would be located in the existing highway medians. In addition, while the existing general-purpose lanes and shoulders may be relocated slightly, neither would be reduced in width. Like the two reversible lanes on I-75 south of the I-75/I-575 interchange, the single reversible lanes would only accommodate peak period directional flows.

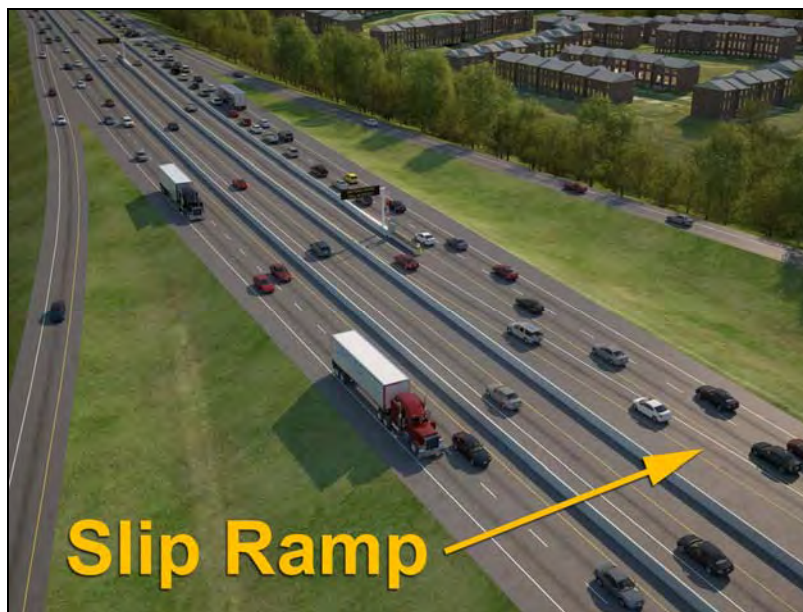
Figure S-6. I-75 Managed Lane (North of I-575) – Looking North



Figure S-7. I-575 Managed Lane (North of I-75) – Looking North



Figure S-8. I-575 Managed Lane (North of I-75 and Typical Slip Ramp – Looking South

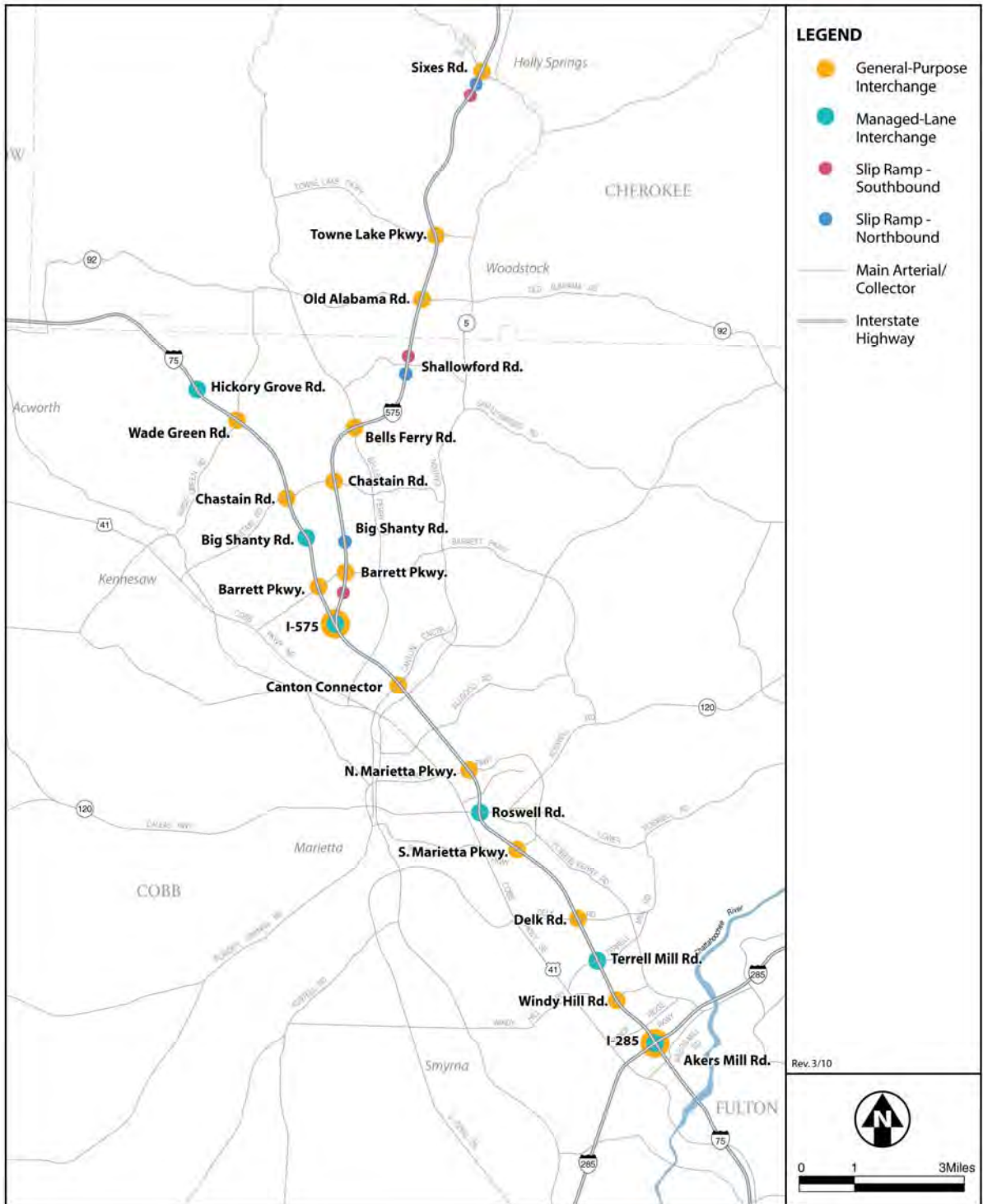


Vehicles would use both managed-lane interchanges and slip ramps to access the reversible lanes (see Figure S-5 and Figure S-9). A total of six managed-lane interchanges would be constructed on I-75. These would be at the following locations: I-285, Terrell Mill Road, Roswell Road, I-575, Big Shanty Road and Hickory Grove Road. On I-575, three pairs of slip ramps would be constructed. These would generally be located near existing general-purpose interchanges at Barrett Parkway, Shallowford Road and Sixes Road. The exact location, however, differs for southbound and northbound slip ramp accesses at each of these three locations.

For safety reasons, the southbound managed-lane interchange on-ramps and managed-lane slip ramps would only allow vehicles to enter the reversible-lane system and travel southbound during the morning peak period. Similarly, the northbound managed-lane interchange on-ramps and managed-lane slip ramps would only allow vehicles to travel northbound in the evening peak period. Mechanical gates would be lowered to prevent use of the northbound accesses during the morning southbound operation of the managed lanes, and would change to prevent use of the southbound accesses during the evening northbound operation of the managed lanes. Moreover, access to the managed-lane system would be prevented for a period of time prior to changes in operational direction of the reversible lanes to prevent crashes.

S.5 Affected Environment

The Northwest Corridor is located in an urbanizing area largely characterized by residential subdivisions with major commercial and employment centers located around the major highway interchanges and downtown commercial and industrial areas of the corridor's major cities – Smyrna, Marietta, Kennesaw, and Woodstock. The affected environments described in the SDEIS include the following topics: land use, population and employment, neighborhoods and community facilities, transportation services and facilities, safety and security, visual quality and aesthetics, parklands, historic and archaeological resources, air quality, noise, ecosystems, water resources, geology and soils, and hazardous materials.





The Northwest Corridor extends from just south of I-285 northwesterly through Cobb County and northeasterly into Cherokee County. According to the 2008 American Community Survey, it is home to approximately 15 percent of the population and represents almost 13 percent of total employment in the ARC 20-county region. The Atlanta metropolitan area, and particularly the Northwest Corridor, has experienced tremendous growth. Between 1990 and 2010, the study area population increased by almost 59 percent and employment increased by 76 percent. In particular, the percent increase in population was slightly less the region's growth between 1990 and 2010, but employment growth was substantially greater than that experienced in the region. Moreover, this trend of urbanization is expected to continue in the future.

The study area is part of a large metropolitan region and the composition of its population reflects the region's diversity. There are large numbers of families, children, and elderly. The 2008 American Community Survey reported the study area population is nearly 35 percent minority populations – largely African American and Hispanic. However, this is less than the region's 46 percent minority characteristics. The study area also includes a sizable Brazilian community. Only about 7 percent of the population is linguistically isolated with Spanish being the predominant non-English language spoken. The study area is somewhat more affluent than the metropolitan region with an estimated 6 percent compared to 8 percent of the population living at or below the poverty level. Over 70 percent of the households own their own home.

The Northwest Corridor is one of the most economically important areas in the Atlanta metropolitan area. It contains several of the region's major activity and employment centers, including Cumberland-Galleria, Marietta, and Town Center. The Dobbins Air Force Base is located in the southwestern portion of the corridor in Smyrna and the Kennesaw State University is located in the northwestern portion of the corridor between Town Center and Hickory Grove Road. These centers of employment and Perimeter Center to the east on I-285 serve as major destinations for travel to and from the Northwest Corridor. Land uses in the area are diverse and encompass residential, commercial, office, industrial, public/institutional, transportation/utilities, and park/open space uses. The Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area is located south of the southern terminus of the project and the Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park is located to the west of I-75 near Marietta. The Woodstock Olde Rope Mill Park is located adjacent to the I-575 right-of-way. Existing and planned recreational trails are adjacent to and cross under the highway corridor.

As an urbanized area, there are many community facilities and services located within the study area. These include educational institutions, health care clinics, hospitals, libraries, senior centers, and recreation centers. The land use controls and policies are governed by local governments including Cobb and Cherokee Counties and the cities of Smyrna, Marietta, Kennesaw, Acworth, and Woodstock. The Atlanta Regional Commission reviews local government comprehensive land use plans within the Study Area. Local government zoning ordinances regulate land use and development.

Both I-75 and I-575 are major highways serving commuters in Cobb and Cherokee Counties, as well as interstate travelers. Both highways currently experience considerable congestion as a result of insufficient capacity to accommodate peak period traffic demand. Peak periods are growing longer and congestion is spilling over to routes parallel to I-75, such as Cobb Parkway. The principal source of noise in the corridor is vehicular traffic – from automobiles, trucks, and buses moving along I-75 and I-575 and the access ramps to these highways. Adjacent residential communities and commercial areas are currently exposed to moderate levels of traffic noise. Both noise and air quality issues are major public concerns.

Among the important natural features of the Northwest Corridor are streams and floodplain areas. The four major streams within the study corridor are Rottenwood Creek, Sope Creek, Noonday Creek, and Little River. All of the streams have been degraded by the effects of urbanization, including non-point source pollution and altered hydrology. The Chattahoochee River is located approximately one-quarter mile south of the southern terminus of the proposed transportation improvements. Portions of the study area are within 100-year floodplains designated along Rottenwood Creek, Hope Creek, Sope Creek, and Poorhouse Branch (a tributary of Rottenwood Creek).

There are a number of properties along the corridor that are known to be contaminated and construction of the project may involve some of these properties. In addition, petroleum and hazardous materials on nearby properties could be seeping into the ground, flowing into groundwater, and contaminating properties to be acquired for project construction.

S.6 Transportation Impacts

Traffic analysis in the SDEIS was prepared using the ARC 2008 Travel Demand Forecasting Model for the 20-county Atlanta metropolitan region. This is an updated computer model from the one used to conduct the traffic analysis in the AA/DEIS. It is a trip-based model that represents the state of the practice in travel demand modeling and meets all federal modeling requirements. A single trip involves travel between two destinations, e.g., home to work, and a round trip consists of two trips, e.g., home to work and work to home. The model output is traffic volumes for four periods of the day plus estimates for daily transit riders. The model also contains four sub-models for trip generation, trip distribution, mode choice, and trip generation inside and outside of the region. Calibration assures that the model reasonably replicates existing travel patterns before it is used to forecast future traffic conditions. In addition, the model was modified to address the reversible lanes and managed lane attributes of the proposed Build Alternative. A sensitivity analysis determined that traffic volumes did not substantially differ between an assumed high-occupancy-toll with three or more persons (HOT3+) tolling policy and an express toll lanes) tolling policy. The resulting travel forecasts cannot be precise, but are considered valid for the purposes of evaluating the effectiveness of the proposed Build Alternative compared to the No-Build Alternative.

Similar to the analysis in the AA/DEIS, the regional travel effects of the project were measured through changes in the number of daily person trips by travel mode, by trip purpose, and by total person hours of travel. The region is forecast to generate a total of about 27.1 million daily person trips in 2035. The No-Build Alternative would result in an estimated 27.11 million highway trips and the Build Alternative would result in approximately 3,000 fewer due to carpooling. However, the distribution of trips by mode indicates an increase in over 6,000 carpools and a decrease in single-occupancy vehicles by an estimated 9,000 single-occupancy vehicle person trips for the Build Alternative. Though nearly 80 percent are non-work related, the work-related trips get "squeezed" into a short period of time (mostly the two peak periods – the commute periods) and would decrease by an estimated 2,000 person trips. The total number of person hours of travel would decline by an estimated 47,000 hours with the proposed managed lanes for the Northwest Corridor. Moreover, vehicle miles of travel would increase by over 512,000, while vehicle hours of travel would decrease by over 36,600 hours. Together, this data shows improved regional access and mobility under the Build Alternative.

More detailed analysis was conducted for the Northwest Corridor to assess the advantages of the Build Alternative. With the proposed managed lanes, the Northwest Corridor would have increased capacity. For three major segments on I-75 and for I-575, the 2035 average daily



traffic volumes would increase between 7 and almost 14 percent per highway segment, while average daily traffic volumes in the general-purpose lanes would decrease and improve the level of service. The arterial roadways crossing I-75 at general-purpose lane interchanges would remain about the same. On I-575, the proposed slip ramp accesses to the managed lanes would generally result in somewhat decreased congestion at the general-purpose lane interchanges on I-575 due to the increase in carpools. The daily travel conditions would improve slightly for the arterial roadways that parallel I-75 and I-575, including Cobb Parkway (US-41), Powers Ferry Road, Canton Road and Bells Ferry Road.

Under the Build Alternative, vehicle and person throughput on both I-75 and I-575 would increase substantially. For the Northwest Corridor (both highways), the critical morning peak period direction of traffic flow is southbound and it reverses to northbound for the evening peak period. The 2035 modeling indicates vehicle throughput for I-75 segments south of Hickory Grove Road, Chastain Road, I-575, and Delk Road would increase during the morning peak period by 15 to 23 percent. And the person throughput for the same highway segments would increase between 25 and 35 percent. Similar analysis was conducted for segments south of Sixes Road, Towne Lake Parkway, SR-92, and Chastain Road on I-575. Under the Build Alternative, southbound morning peak period vehicle throughput would increase between 15 and 24 percent over the No-Build Alternative, and person throughput would increase between 22 and 33 percent. Analysis was also conducted for the evening peak period northbound traffic for both segments. Under the Build Alternative, vehicle throughput in the I-75 segment would increase between 14 and 24 percent and the person throughput would increase between 22 and 40 percent. On I-575, the northbound vehicle throughput would increase between 16 and 26 percent and person throughput would increase between 21 and 35 percent. In summary, for both the I-75 and I-575 segments of the Build Alternative, both critical peak periods direction of flow vehicle throughput would increase more than 14 percent and person throughput would increase more than 20 percent compared to the No-Build Alternative.

As a result, the level of service, shown in Table S-1 in the Northwest Corridor is improved under the Build Alternative. During both peak periods, the peak period direction of flow in the general-purpose lanes at the southern end of I-75 would improve from level of service (LOS) F under the No-Build Alternative to acceptable LOS D or better. Elsewhere, traffic conditions would be no worse than they would be without the improvements. But for the tens of thousands of vehicles using the managed lanes, conditions would consistently be LOS D or better. Similarly, traffic conditions on I-575 would be improved for peak period direction of flow from generally LOS E and LOS F to LOS E or LOS D in the general-purpose lanes. And again, the thousands of vehicles using the proposed managed lane would experience LOS D and LOS C. LOS D is consistent with the anticipated minimum performance standard of 45 mph for the managed lanes. The increased capacity of the highway would also attract vehicles from nearby parallel arterials and could reduce congestion on the arterials.

Operational analysis of both the 2015 opening and 2035 build year peak hour conditions also show unacceptable (LOS E or F) conditions. There is a total of 11 ramp terminal or arterial intersections where LOS degradation from acceptable to unacceptable operations occurs due to the proposed project in the opening year, and mitigation improvements at these intersections would be included as part of the project. Proposed mitigation measures include (but are not limited to) adding left and right turn lanes at intersection approaches and modifying signal phasing and/or timings. Build year No-Build and Build Alternatives were evaluated to determine if additional improvements may be required to mitigate future intersection deficiencies. These improvements will be refined prior to issuance of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) to determine: a) if the improvements are warranted before the build year, b) if an

Table S-1. 2035 Basic Freeway Segment Levels of Service

Location	2035 No-Build Alternative		2035 Build Alternative			
	AM Peak Hour	PM Peak Hour	AM Peak Hour GP	AM Peak Hour ML	PM Peak Hour GP	PM Peak Hour ML
I-75 Northbound						
N. of Hickory Grove Rd	D	E	E	n/a	F	n/a
S. of Hickory Grove Rd	D	E	E	n/a	F	D
S. of Big Shanty Rd	C	D	E	n/a	E	D
S. of I-575	D	F	D	n/a	E	D
S. of Allgood Rd	D	F	D	n/a	F	D
S. of Roswell Rd	C	E	D	n/a	D	D
S. of Terrell Mill Rd	D	F	D	n/a	D	D
S. of I-285	E	F	C	n/a	C	C
S. of Akers Mill Rd	E	D	C	B	C	B
I-75 Southbound						
N. of Hickory Grove Rd	E	C	F	n/a	E	n/a
S. of Hickory Grove Rd	E	C	F	C	E	n/a
S. of Big Shanty Rd	E	D	F	D	E	n/a
S. of I-575	E	D	F	D	D	n/a
S. of Allgood Rd	E	D	F	D	D	n/a
S. of Roswell Rd	F	D	E	D	D	n/a
S. of Terrell Mill Rd	F	E	F	D	D	n/a
S. of I-285	E	E	D	C	D	n/a
S. of Akers Mill Rd	E	E	D	C	C	B
I-575 Northbound						
N. of Sixes Rd	B	C	C	n/a	E	n/a
S. of Sixes Rd	C	E	C	n/a	E	C
S. of Towne Lake Pkwy	C	F	C	n/a	D	C
S. of SR 92	C	E	D	n/a	F	C
S. of Bells Ferry Rd	B	E	C	n/a	E	D
S. of Big Shanty Rd	C	D	C	n/a	E	D
S. of Barrett Pkwy	B	D	C	n/a	D	D
I-575 Southbound						
N. of Sixes Rd	D	C	E	n/a	D	n/a
S. of Sixes Rd	F	D	E	C	D	n/a
S. of Towne Lake Pkwy	E	C	D	C	C	n/a
S. of SR 92	E	C	E	C	D	n/a
S. of Bells Ferry Rd	E	C	D	C	D	n/a
S. of Big Shanty Rd	E	C	E	C	D	n/a
S. of Barrett Pkwy	D	C	D	D	C	n/a



intersection project could be constructed under an independent environmental study and intersection improvement design process, and c) which projects would be committed by the Public-Private Partnership (P3) Team, GDOT or local governing agencies. A final list of projects and responsibilities will be included in the FEIS.

Under the Build Alternative, the 2035 average forecast travel time in the corridor general-purpose lanes would improve compared to the No-Build Alternative. A comparison of travel times under the 2035 No-Build and Build Alternatives is shown in Table S-2 and Table S-3. These calculations are based on traffic volumes, average travel speeds, reduction in traffic congestion, and changes in distances as a result of changes in travel patterns. Under the 2035 No-Build Alternative, the average travel time southbound on I-75 from Hickory Grove Road to Akers Mill Road is projected to be approximately 61 minutes in the morning peak period; as compared to 52 minutes in the general-purpose lane and 26.5 minutes in the managed lanes under the Build Alternative. Similarly, the northbound travel during the evening peak period for the same segment would be 76 minutes for the No-Build Alternative; and an estimated 62 minutes for the general-purpose lanes and 35 minutes for the managed lanes under the Build Alternative. Thus, the Build Alternative would reduce average travel time in the corridor general-purpose lanes by more than 9 minutes and travel using the managed lanes would be less than half the travel time required under the No-Build Alternative.

Similar benefits would be experienced by users traveling the Sixes Road to Akers Mill Road segment of the Northwest Corridor. During the morning peak period, average southbound travel time for the No-Build Alternative would be nearly 74 minutes as compared to about 65 minutes in the general-purpose lanes and 34 minutes in the managed lanes under the Build Alternative. During the evening peak period, travel in this same segment northbound would be over 97 minutes and travel under the Build Alternative would be approximately 82 minutes in the general-purpose lanes and 45 minutes in the managed lanes. Again, travel using the proposed managed lanes would reduce average travel time between Akers Mill Road and Sixes Road by more than half.

Table S-2. Travel Time Comparison for I-575 SB and I-75 SB under 2035 AM Peak Conditions

I-75 / I-575 Corridor Travel Time (in Minutes) For Trips in 2035 AM Conditions								
Origin		Destination On I-75 SB						
			Akers Mill Road	Delk Road	S. Marietta Pkwy	N. Marietta Pkwy	I-575 /I-75 JCT	I-575 SB @ SR-92
I-575 SB @ Sixes Road	GP Lane (No-Build)		73.8				37.2	16.5
	GP Lane (Build)		65.4	n/a	n/a	n/a	32.9	13.8
	Managed Lane (Build)		33.6				16.2	5.4
I-75 SB @ Hickory Grove Road	GP Lane (No-Build)		60.7	49.6	43.0	35.6	24.1	n/a
	GP Lane (Build)		52.3	42.5	36.9	30.1	19.9	
	Managed Lane (Build)		26.4	20.8	17.9	14.7	8.9	

Table S-3. Travel Time Comparison for I-75 NB and I-575 NB Under 2035 PM Peak Conditions

I-75 / I-575 Corridor Travel Time (in Minutes) For Trips in 2035 PM Conditions									
Origin on I-75 NB			Destination						
			I - 75 NB @				I - 575 NB @		
			Delk Road	S. Marietta Pkwy	N. Marietta Pkwy	I-575 / I-75 JCT	Hickory Grove Road	SR-92	Sixes Road
Akers Mill Road	GP Lane (No-Build)		10.6	19.2	27.4	48.0	76.1	73.3	97.4
	GP Lane (Build)		9.5	16.6	23.6	40.7	62.3	62.2	81.7
	Managed Lane (Build)		6.0	10.4	13.5	23.0	34.9	38.0	45.2

Moreover, transit riders could benefit under the Build Alternative. Transit routes could be revised to take advantage of the managed lanes. As indicated in Table 7-3 in Chapter 7, transit riders would be able to bypass the congested general-purpose lanes on both I-75 and I-575 under the Build Alternative and their travel time could generally be reduced by about half, for the interstate portion of the route, compared to using the general-purpose lanes under the No-Build Alternative described above. Additionally, the forecast travel time could be more reliable due to the improved level of service.

Freight and commercial trucks would not be permitted to use the managed lanes under the Build Alternative, but travel time using the general-purpose lanes on both I-75 and I-575 is expected to improve somewhat. These travel time improvements would be the same as described above for the Build Alternative general-purpose lanes.

S.7 Environmental Consequences

The SDEIS presents a comprehensive analysis of potential environmental impacts of the proposed Build Alternative and compares these impacts to those of the No-Build Alternative. The analysis assessed traffic impacts as well as effects on land use, social, cultural, visual and aesthetics, air quality and noise, and natural resources. Both long-term operational impacts and short-term temporary construction impacts were evaluated. Indirect and cumulative effects are discussed as well as recommended measures to mitigate the effects. The updated impact assessment resulted in the preparation of 8 new technical reports to support the preparation of the SDEIS.

The Build Alternative would largely be constructed within the existing highway rights-of-way of I-75 and I-575. Along the 27-mile corridor proposed for transportation improvements, only 12 full and 59 partial acquisitions (mostly narrow slivers of land) would be required for the project. An estimated 8 properties affected by property acquisition are expected to have contamination, which would require additional investigations during future phases of this project study as well as special procedures during construction. A total of 6 residences and 6 commercial properties would be acquired, which would require relocation of the estimated 15 household members and 11 businesses with an estimated 27 employees. These property acquisitions would not affect any historic sites, known archaeological sites, or parklands. The federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act and the Georgia Relocation Assistance and Land Acquisition Policy Act would provide for the fair and equitable treatment of persons displaced by the Build Alternative. Continued



outreach to minority and low-income populations in the project area may identify additional mitigation for these impacts prior to the publication of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD).

The displaced households and businesses are located in minority and low-income neighborhoods in the Marietta area adjacent to the existing I-75 right-of-way. These displacements are not expected to substantially disrupt existing neighborhood character or cohesion. The purchase of the private property for public use would reduce the Cobb County property tax base by an insignificant amount. The new managed lanes would be located along the west side of I-75 south of the I-75/I-575 interchange to avoid impacts to streams, wetlands, two cemeteries and historic resources. In addition, the managed lanes would be elevated on structures, where necessary. These structures would include both bridges and mechanically stabilized earth walls. This would result in a moderate change in the visual character, but not out of context to the existing highway setting. Community outreach during final design would be used to identify context-sensitive design issues such as special finishes, treatments, and landscaping would mitigate these visual effects. The proposed alignment of the single reversible lanes in the median of the existing I-75 and I-575 highways north of the I-75/I-575 interchange would not change the visual quality along these segments of the Northwest Corridor. Noise levels would increase along the corridor and noise walls could be constructed to mitigate these impacts. Focused public outreach will occur with those impacted by increased noise levels to determine appropriate noise mitigation measures during preliminary engineering. Best management practices also would be required during construction to reduce and minimize dust, noise, light and glare, and temporary traffic detours.

The Northwest Corridor project would result in impacts to natural features such as streams, floodplains, and wetlands. In total, 150 linear feet of streams, 17 acres of floodplain, and 0.3 acres of wetlands would be affected by the Build Alternative. Efforts to mitigate these effects would need to be implemented during preliminary and final project design. In addition, best management practices would be used to minimize construction effects on these resources. For example, mitigation measures could include rehabilitation and restoration of the streams, floodplain, and wetlands following construction.

In addition, potential indirect and cumulative effects of the Northwest Corridor Project were evaluated. The indirect effects are foreseeable actions that would occur later in time or farther removed in distance. Further urban development in the corridor would be consistent with local and regional land use plans. As a result, no substantial induced growth or shift in land use, population, employment, or traffic would be anticipated. So, no indirect effects are expected to occur. In contrast, cumulative effects consider the proposed project combined with reasonably foreseeable future actions, particularly programmed road improvement projects and planned redevelopment in Cobb and Cherokee Counties. Those elements of the environment that would not result in substantial direct effects during construction or operation would not contribute to cumulative effects. Further investigations, however, were conducted for the following issues: acquisition and displacement, environmental justice, aesthetics, noise, and water quality. Considering the limited scope of these potential effects, no indirect or cumulative effects are expected.

Table S-4 summarizes and compares the environmental impacts of the Build Alternative and the No-Build Alternative. This assessment of environmental impacts is considered reasonably representative for the purpose of comparing alternatives and selecting a preferred alternative. In addition, changes may result from additional information obtained during preliminary engineering and/or public comments. An updated assessment of environmental impacts of the No-Build Alternative and Build Alternative will be prepared and presented in the FEIS.

Table S-4. Summary of Potential Environmental Impacts

Impact	No-Build Alternative	Build Alternative
Acquisitions and Displacements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 full and 59 partial acquisitions, totaling 71 6 residential and 6 commercial properties, including 11 businesses
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not fully supportive of ARC planning policies and local plans/policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supportive of ARC planning policies and local plans/policies
Population and Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residential and business acquisitions would result in the displacement of an estimated 15 people and 27 employees
Economic Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately \$131,000 annual reduction in property taxes due to acquisitions
Neighborhoods and Community Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. Disruptions would be on the edges of existing neighborhoods, so no substantial change to cohesion. No effects to community facilities or cohesion in any neighborhoods along the project corridor.
Environmental Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquisition of 6 residential and 6 commercial properties located in minority and low-income neighborhoods. Displacement of 15 people, 11 businesses, and 27 employees in low-income and minority neighborhoods.
Safety and Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergency response times would improve
Visual Quality and Aesthetics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. The use of aesthetic finishes, treatments, and landscaping could 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.
Parklands and Other Section 4(f) Properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact to Chattahoochee River National Recreation Area, Olde Rope Mill Park, or neighborhood baseball field. No right-of-way or easements would be required. Temporary impacts would occur on the Bob Callan Trail. There would be no anticipated permanent adverse impacts. No Section 4(f) use of the Bob Callan Trail anticipated. Would not prevent the future construction of any of the programmed or proposed trails within the project area.
Historic and Archaeological Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact

Table S-4. Summary of Potential Environmental Impacts (continued)

Impact	No-Build Alternative	Build Alternative
Air Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not expected to violate current applicable NAAQS or MSAT levels. Project is in non-attainment from PM2.5. The project will undergo interagency consultation to determine if it is a project of air quality concern and a determination will be made prior to issuance of the FEIS.
Noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Along I-75, road traffic noise would affect approximately 659 Category B sites (e.g., residences, hotels, nursing homes, churches, parks) and 82 Category C sites (e.g., developed or urbanized land uses, non-residential or other uses not included in Category B). Along I-575, road traffic noise would affect 133 Category B sites and one Category C site.
Ecosystems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No adverse effect on 10 species "May affect, not likely to adversely affect" Cherokee darter "No significant adverse affect" to Chattahoochee crayfish and lined chub
Water Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 150 linear feet of streams impacted 17 acres of 100-year floodplain impacted 0.3 acre of wetlands impacted
Geology and Soils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact
Hazardous Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11 Medium-rated sites are located along I-75. Of these 11 Medium sites, 8 sites could be affected by potential right-of-way purchase and construction easements.
Construction Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short-term impacts related to noise, visual quality, dust, vehicular access, and water quality. 1.3 miles of longitudinal encroachments to 25-foot vegetative buffers as a result of the construction activities.
Indirect and Cumulative Effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No adverse indirect or cumulative effects.

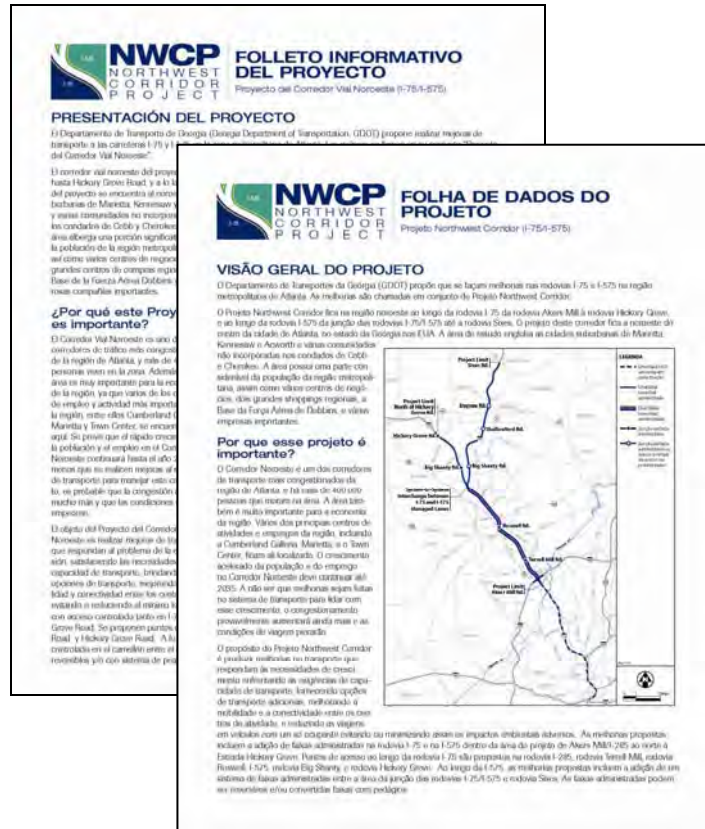
S.8 Consultation and Coordination

Since publication of the AA/DEIS, public involvement and agency coordination has continued for the Northwest Corridor Project. Good communication between affected parties, the public, and agencies is of paramount importance in the overall success of any transportation project. It is an especially important component of the environmental review process. As such, input has continued to be solicited from federal, tribal state, and local agencies and jurisdictions, interested organizations, as well as the general public.

The public involvement program since May 2007 was designed to involve all project stakeholders, and to obtain meaningful input on the outcomes of the environmental review process. As the stakeholders were numerous and varied, so were the techniques developed to meet their individual needs. Techniques included public meetings in the form of workshops and small group meetings. Supporting handout materials such as an updated project map and fact

sheet and newsletters were developed to help explain the ongoing project development process. A new website and the project telephone hotline were updated to provide project information and to record public comments.

In recognition of the potential disproportionate impacts on minority and low-income communities under the Build Alternative, the project team developed an environmental justice outreach program. This program was designed to build and sustain meaningful participation for all interested parties. Techniques for obtaining participation by minority and low-income communities included distribution of project handouts distributed through study area churches, civic organizations, and social service agencies; and a number of staffed kiosk events. Handouts were translated into both Spanish and Portuguese and paper and electronic versions were sent to community organizations for distribution to their members.



Spanish and Portuguese translations of the spring 2010 project fact sheet.

In addition, interagency consultation and coordination was used to facilitate open communication and information sharing. Project team members from the GDOT met with individual local government agency representatives. Coordination pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act was done, including invitations to the following tribal governments: Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas, Chickasaw Nation, Eastern Band of Cherokees Indians of North Carolina, Muscogee (Creek) Nation of Oklahoma, Poarch Band of Creek Indians, Seminole Nation of Florida, Thlopthlocco Tribal Town, and the United Keetoowah Band of Indians. Of these tribes, the Chickasaw Nation responded and requested future notices concerning the project be directed to the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and the Cherokee Nation. The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians responded to concur with the findings of the archaeological study. Coordination efforts with review and permitting agencies also included solicitation of agency perspectives on the project and review of draft technical reports.

S.9 Evaluation of Alternatives

As part of the analysis presented in the SDEIS, the No-Build and Build Alternatives were evaluated against the project goals, compared, and trade-offs discussed. The findings of this analysis are presented in the sections below. In addition, the process by which a preferred alternative will be identified and selected is presented.

S.9.1 Evaluation Based on Project Goals

The goals of the Northwest Corridor Project are derived from the project needs. Current travel conditions in the corridor are highly congested, which increases travel time and reduces transportation system reliability. Access to regional activity centers is poor and safety is reduced due to congestion levels. Travel efficiency also is low, resulting in comparatively high vehicle emissions. To address these issues, goals were identified for the Northwest Corridor Project.

The extensive traffic modeling and analysis concluded that the Build Alternative would better address project needs than the No-Build Alternative. By constructing new managed lanes on I-75 and I-575, the Build Alternative would increase the capacity of the Northwest Corridor to accommodate existing as well as future travel demand through 2035. These improvements would require the acquisition of only 12 properties and effects on natural resources would be minimal. With these improvements, congestion under the Build Alternative would be less than what is projected under the No-Build Alternative.

Because overall corridor travel times for both the general-purpose lanes and particularly the managed lanes would decrease, mobility would be improved for all users. These users would include drivers and passengers in high-occupancy vehicles, transit passengers, and potentially drivers of single-occupancy vehicles. Drivers and passengers in personal vehicles would have the choice to pay a toll and use the managed lanes to substantially reduce travel time and improve transportation reliability compared to continued use of the general-purpose lanes. In addition, all transit passengers, including many low-income persons, would be provided with similar benefits at no additional cost as all express buses in the Northwest Corridor would be re-routed to the managed lanes. By making these improvements to the Northwest Corridor, access to regional activity centers in Marietta, Downtown Atlanta, Midtown, Perimeter Center, Buckhead, Cumberland-Galleria, and Town Center would be improved. The managed-lane improvements would increase highway capacity and could also attract traffic from parallel arterials. This in turn could reduce congestion, improve reliability, and improve safety on those roads. Finally, the travel advantages of the Build Alternative would likely contribute to improved air quality by managing congestion, though the project will undergo interagency consultation to determine if it is a project of air quality concern.

These improvements to the transportation system would result in both short-term temporary construction and long-term operational adverse effects. These effects to both the natural and built environment, however, can be mitigated such that the adverse effects could be avoided, reduced, or minimized. In particular, adverse impacts on a relatively small number of minority and low-income populations due to right-of-way acquisition could be mitigated, and would be outweighed by the transportation improvements minority and low-income populations as a whole would realize during the operational phase of the project.

The Build Alternative and its benefits – improved transportation effectiveness, additional transportation options and choice, improved quality of life, and improved transportation equity – come with a financial cost. And that cost must be affordable based on the financial resources available to the region. Preliminary analysis indicates there is financial capacity to implement the Build Alternative, which is estimated to be approximately \$1.0 billion. This compares very favorably to the alternatives evaluated in the AA/DEIS, which ranged from \$3.52 and \$4.07 billion.

Moreover, GDOT is projected to have sufficient resources to match anticipated Federal Highway Administration funding. A total of \$960 million in federal funds and \$240 million in state funds

are identified as long-range in the constrained ARC *Envision6*, Volume I: 2030 *Regional Transportation Plan* (RTP), as amended (ARC, 2009c).

However, GDOT has concluded that harnessing private-sector innovation and resources through a public-private partnership (P3) developer agreement would be the best way to ensure cost-effective and expedited delivery of the proposed project. The agency anticipates the developer agreement will obligate the developer to design, construct, help finance and operate and maintain the project in return for the right to retain toll revenues from the users of the toll portions of the project. The developer agreement may allow the developer to use identified public funding to make the proposed project financially feasible. Other potential sources of funds anticipated by GDOT to construct the Build Alternative include: private activity bonds, senior bank debt, Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (TIFIA) loan, and private equity. Toll revenues from the Northwest Corridor Project would be used to partially support both construction and operation of the project. In accordance with FHWA's Major Project Guidance, an Initial Financial Plan will be prepared for the project prior to the award of the developer agreement.

S.9.2 Trade-offs of the Alternatives

As part of the analysis presented in the SDEIS, a trade-offs analysis was conducted. This analysis evaluated the Build Alternative across the project's five goals – transportation effectiveness, transportation choices, quality of life, cost-effectiveness, transportation equity, and cost-effective and affordable improvements.

The No-Build Alternative encompasses planned highway and transit improvements that would be built whether or not the improvements in the Build Alternative are implemented. Compared to the No-Build Alternative, the Build Alternative would provide improved transportation effectiveness, additional transportation choices, and improved quality of life. The Build Alternative would be affordable and financially feasible. Under the No-Build Alternative, there would be no adverse effects as a result of the proposed improvements of the Build Alternative, but the benefits of the Build Alternative, likewise, would not occur.

More importantly, the Build Alternative would be more effective in meeting the project goals. The Build Alternative would provide additional transportation options that increase transportation system capacity in the Northwest Corridor and would improve access to activity centers. The improvements would enhance mobility and support the public and private investments consistent with local land use and transportation plans without degrading air quality. The improvements would be equitable in terms of benefits provided to the various project area population groups, and, in general, environmental impacts. For some elements of the environment, no significant adverse impacts would occur. For others, no significant adverse impacts would result following the implementation of best management practices and recommended mitigation measures.

S.9.3 Selection of a Recommended Preferred Alternative

Following the circulation of the SDEIS and after the 45-day public review and comment period, FHWA and GDOT will review the agency and public comments received on the SDEIS. After careful consideration of the comments, GDOT will select a recommended preferred alternative for the Northwest Corridor Project. The technical information included in this document, particularly the comparative evaluation of alternatives and input from agencies and the public will provide the basis for this decision.



The recommended preferred alternative could be the Build Alternative evaluated in this SDEIS, or the Build Alternative with minor design or operational changes based on comments received during the review of the SDEIS. If a decision is made to advance the Northwest Corridor Project to the preliminary engineering and FEIS phase, the recommended preferred alternative and the No-Build Alternative will be carried forward for evaluation in the FEIS. In addition, this evaluation of alternatives will address substantive issues presented in the agency and public comments received on the SDEIS. A compendium of these comments was published as a stand-alone report supporting the preparation of this SDEIS. All comments received on the AA/DEIS as well as the SDEIS as well as responses to all of the comments will be reproduced as an appendix to the FEIS.

S.10 The Next Steps

Consultation and coordination with government agencies, stakeholders, and members of the public will continue through the completion of the environmental review process for the Northwest Corridor Project and will continue through project construction and operation.

In the near-term, a number of public outreach activities will occur associated with the publication of this SDEIS and the subsequent 45-day comment period on the document. The SDEIS is posted on the project website www.nwcpproject.com. Paper copies also will be sent to the following libraries: Atlanta-Fulton County Library, Cobb County Library, and the Sequoyah Regional Library. The comment period will extend from Friday, September 17, 2010 to Wednesday, November 3, 2010. All comments must be received by the last day of the comment period for consideration in the preparation of the FEIS.

As described in the Notice of Intent published in December 2009, public hearing open houses will be held during the comment period. The date, time, and place of the two planned public hearings are listed below:

Thursday, October 21, 2010	Tuesday, October 26, 2010
4:00 pm to 7:00 pm	4:00 pm to 7:00 pm
Woodstock High School (Cafeteria)	Doubletree Hotel - NW Marietta (Ballroom)
2010 Towne Lake Hills South Drive	2055 South Park Place

Notices for these public hearings will be published in several local newspapers including the following: Atlanta Journal Constitution, Marietta Daily Journal, Cherokee Tribune, and Mundo Hispanico. In addition, announcements will be made on local radio stations. Flyer notices will be sent in English, Spanish, and Portuguese to language-specific media outlets. Signs will be placed adjacent to the corridor announcing the meeting locations and times.

The purpose of the formal public hearings will be to solicit both agency and public input on the SDEIS. This may include comment on the purpose and need for the project, the alternatives under consideration and evaluated in the SDIES, as well as the methodology and analysis presented on the environmental consequences of the No-Build and Build Alternatives. And for persons with limited English proficiency, both Spanish and Portuguese translators will be available at the public hearings. Persons with disabilities, a hearing impairment, or limited-English proficiency can call for assistance in either attending the public hearings or making comments on the SDEIS by calling tel. (404) 377-4012.



For all agencies, organizations, stakeholders, and members of the public, there will be a number of ways to submit comments. They may be submitted at the public hearings in written or oral form. During the comment period, comments may be sent to nwcpcomments@projectsolve.com or by leaving a message at tel. (404) 377-4012. In addition, written comments and/or questions about the SDEIS or the public hearings should be directed to:

FHWA Contact

Rodney N. Barry, P.E.
Division Administrator
Federal Highway Administration,
Georgia Division
61 Forsyth Street, SW
Suite 17T100
Atlanta, Georgia 30303-3104
Phone: (404) 562-3630
Email: Rodney.Barry@dot.gov

State Agency Contact

Darryl VanMeter, P.E.
Office of Innovative Program Delivery
State Innovative Program Delivery Engineer
Georgia Department of Transportation
One Georgia Center
600 W. Peachtree Street NW, 27th Floor
Atlanta, Georgia 30308
Phone: (404) 631-1703
Email: dvanmeter@dot.ga.gov

Comments must be received no later than Wednesday, November 3, 2010 for consideration in the preparation of the FEIS. All comments will be welcomed and considered in future phases of this project study.



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