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August 13, 2007

Mr. Harvey Keeper
State Environmental / Location Engineer
Georgia Department of Transportation
3993 Aviation Circle,
Atlanta, Georgia 30336-1593

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Northwest Corridor Project

Dear Mr. Keeper:

As President & CEO of Pedestrians Educating Drivers on Safety, I'm writing to express concerns about the impact of the proposed Northwest I-75 / I-575 Corridor project (the Project) on bicyclists and pedestrians in Midtown, which were not adequately explored in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) prepared for the Project by the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, Georgia Regional Transportation Authority, and Georgia Department of Transportation.

The proposed update to the Atlanta Region Bicycle Transportation and Pedestrian Walkways Plan shows Midtown and Downtown Atlanta as areas of the metro Atlanta region with the highest latent demand for walking and cycling. The increasing density in these areas—combined with its appeal to young professionals and the location of jobs, retail, and other destinations here—makes bicycling and walking feasible for many intown trips.

Meanwhile, the Peachtree Corridor project proposes installing streetcar tracks in the right lane on Peachtree Street, which will make cycling more dangerous on what is currently cyclists' safest and flattest north-south bicycle route in Midtown and Downtown Atlanta. When this happens, the Peachtree Corridor Task Force predicted this spring in its final report, bicycle traffic will be diverted to West Peachtree Street and Spring Street, where bike lanes would be added to accommodate cycling. Bicycle lanes currently exist on a 1 mile segment of West Peachtree Street and are planned for Spring Street and other sections of West Peachtree Street.

The Project would greatly increase the number of buses traveling on West Peachtree and Spring Street, however. Because these buses would not have dedicated lanes, however, they would travel in lanes located to the left of all existing and future bicycle lanes on these streets. At stops, buses would have to pull into the bicycle lane to pick up or drop off passengers on the sidewalk, forcing cyclists to pull into the regular travel lane to pass the buses. Buses have large blind spots, which makes this extremely dangerous for cyclists.

By making cycling more dangerous on West Peachtree Street and Spring Street, the Project is likely to encourage cyclists to either give up cycling altogether, which

will have negative impacts their health and on regional air quality – or else to ride on the sidewalks on these streets or Peachtree Street, which will endanger pedestrians.

The possibility of having mandatory Truck Only Toll lanes (TOT) endangers pedestrians and cyclists in Cobb, Cherokee, and Fulton counties. If truckers are required to pay a toll to use the interstate, many trucks will be diverted to arterial streets, where they will need to share the road with cyclists and pedestrians, both of which are prohibited from using the interstate. The lack of significant access management on most arterial streets—together with the presence of the transportation system's most vulnerable users, makes this a deadly combination. The increased presence of truck traffic on streets such as Cobb Parkway and Northside Drive would also reduce the quality of life in these areas.

Adding eight lanes to I-75 is likely to worsen air quality in the Atlanta region, which would have negative health impacts for pedestrians and cyclists throughout metro Atlanta. Athletes inhale more deeply than people otherwise do – which makes particulate matter especially damaging to their lungs. This, too, would likely discourage walking in cycling throughout the region, adding to the spiral of ever increasing car dependency and worsening air quality in the region.

I encourage you to require the Agencies to issue a revised DEIS which examines the impact of the Project on the safety, convenience, and health of pedestrians and bicyclists in Midtown, Downtown, and throughout the region.

Sincerely,

Sally Flocks

Sally Flocks

cc: Hon. Shirley Franklin, City of Atlanta
Hon. Sam Olens, Cobb County
Regan Hammond, ARC
Charles Krautler, ARC
Harold Linnenkohl, GDOT
Susan Mendheim, Midtown Alliance
A. J. Robinson, Central Atlanta Progress
Steve Stancil, GRTA