

***Transportation Improvement Program
2008-2013***

***Appendix D
Public Comments***



2030 LRTP Update/2008-2013 TIP

The public involvement effort for 2030 LRTP Update was uniquely designed to obtain local input through stakeholder discussions. Building on the experience of previous success in public outreach efforts, the GHMPO developed a process consistent with the adopted Participation Plan to:

- **Involve** the stakeholders with early opportunities for participating in the decision-making process, particularly minority and low-income persons.
- **Listen** to the concerns and issues of the stakeholders living in the community;
- **Inform** the stakeholders in a timely manner of progress and recommendations;
- **Learn** from the stakeholders ideas for solutions to transportation problems;
- **Consult** with stakeholders and provide reasonable opportunity to comment; and
- **Develop** an effective outreach process that includes an integrated feedback process for evaluation and improvement.

Throughout the LRTP Update process, opportunities for citizen input through staff, elected officials, and stakeholders have not only been encouraged but also institutionalized. A project newsletter was developed and distributed to stakeholders and the general public. The newsletter included announcements of upcoming meetings and events, project status reports, informative articles about the study process, public involvement opportunities and study team contacts. The newsletter served as an effective means of notifying citizens of upcoming meetings.

Evaluation of Public Participation Efforts

Periodic review of the participation activities to evaluate program effectiveness is beneficial for maintaining a good participation program. Overall evaluation of participation efforts on a regular basis helps answer whether the program is meeting the key Participation Plan objectives. Specific evaluation measures can be used to quantify the level of participation. This can help to determine under what circumstances participation tools are effective or not. Through the evaluation process, the participation strategies can be refined and improved.

The evaluation of the GHMPO participation process will focus on an assessment of each program's overall success and effectiveness in achieving its participation goals. Strong participation numbers and inclusion of a broad range of interests is of particular concern to the GHMPO staff. As additional participation techniques are developed, each new strategy will be evaluated for effectiveness. Table B-1 outlines the evaluation criteria, both qualitative and quantitative, of GHMPO's past and current participation techniques.



Table D-1 - Evaluation Criteria

Participation Tool	Evaluation Criteria	
	Quantitative	Qualitative
Outreach Meetings	Attendance Diversity of Representation Quantity of Feedback Received	Was Input Used in Planning Process? Meeting Convenience: Time, Place, and Accessibility Effectiveness of Meeting Format
Media Relations	Extent and Quantity of Media Coverage Number of Avenues Used to Reach Non-English Speaking Communities	Timing of Notification Effectiveness of Notification and Communication Tools How Often Contact is Made
Mailing List	Number of Additions to a Mailing List Diversity of Representation	Concise and Clear Information Portrayed Effectiveness of Notification Format
Public Information Meetings	Number of Meetings/Opportunities for Public Involvement Number of Comments Received Number of Participants Number of Avenues Used to Reach Minorities and Non-English Speaking Communities Diversity of Attendees	Effectiveness of Meeting Format Public Understanding of Process Quality of Feedback Obtained Timing of Public Participation Meeting Convenience: Time, Place, and Accessibility Was Public's Input Used in Developing the Plan?
Consultation Process	Number of Agencies Invited Number of Agencies Attended Number of Specific Small Group Meetings Number of One-on-One Meetings	Effectiveness of Communication Format Coordination Between the Agencies Agencies Understanding of Process

Source: GHMPO Participation Plan, Adopted May 2007



GHMPO Public Involvement Activities

In May 2006, the GHMPO initiated an update of the currently adopted 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) that was adopted in December 2004. The existing LRTP base year was 2000 with a future year of 2030. The 2030 LRTP update revised socioeconomic data and land use assumptions to reflect a base year of 2005 and a future year of 2030. This update provided new information to identify transportation needs, re-evaluate project cost estimates, reprioritize existing projects in the LRTP and it allowed for an opportunity to evaluate new projects. The GHMPO conducted three rounds of public meetings; as well as, an outreach meeting. An outreach meeting took place on June 15, 2006 and three meetings were held for the general public on June 29 and December 7 in 2006; as well as, a final meeting on June 12, 2007.

GHMPO staff initially developed a list of areas to examine in the 2030 LRTP throughout the study area (intersection, corridors, new location roadways) and presented each area to the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) for review and additional input. After the review, 15 Focus Areas were developed throughout the study area. Based on this input, 10 Focus Areas moved forward. In August 2006, MPO, GDOT, County and City staff along with transportation planners, traffic engineers and designers from the consultant team met together to discuss potential Focus Area improvements. Potential alignments were identified by using aerial photography, as well as fieldwork. These projects were included in the travel demand model to evaluate the impacts on the Gainesville-Hall transportation system and if and when the improvement was needed.

Outreach meeting held on June 15, 2006

The meeting was held on at the Hall County Planning Department's Development Service Center in Gainesville, Georgia.

Objectives of Meeting

The purpose of the first targeted stakeholder meeting is to inform and get input from the local Hispanic community on issues affecting the update of LRTP. The main objectives of the meeting were to find out:

- How would they like to see travel in Hall County improved?
- Are there specific locations that need improvements?
- How can the Gainesville-Hall MPO best get input from all the residents?

Public Meeting Format

The meeting format consisted of a "roundtable discussion" that fostered an open dialogue from the attendees while the meeting facilitators posed questions to the attendees to incite responses.

Comments Received

General questions posed to the attendees included:

- What are your transportation issues/concerns?
- What about transit? Bike/Ped issues?



- Where would you like to see improvements?

The following summarized comments are categorized for each of the general questions posed and answers are italicized.

What are your transportation issues/concerns?

- There are several negative effects of congestion and sprawl in this county. One solution is to maximize the business community to help in addressing some of the issues. There are dual markets in Hall County and transportation can play a role in bridging the gap between those markets.
- Atlanta Highway has several issues that need to be addressed such as parking concern, safety and traffic congestion.
- There is too much freight traffic in the downtown area...adds to congestion
- Another issue is the lack of connectivity to other regional areas
- We have too many Spanish enclaves...particularly in rural areas. It doesn't make sense to have them grouped together like that because it contributes to traffic issues.

What about transit? Bike/Ped issues?

- Transit needs to have better information promoted to potential users.
Hall Area Transit has a "Travel Training Program" that will help in promoting the use of transit in the area.
- The Red Rabbit is not convenient in all areas for users especially for parents with kids in school (single mothers) because the taxis are too expensive for them and the current bus system isn't convenient. Hall Area Transit is also working on a survey to get feedback from riders.
- Although transit works in some areas, it will conflict with our local taxi service, which is a major source of entrepreneurship for some. The buses will contribute to congestion and it should only be looked at from a cost-benefit approach.
- We need to be mindful of "gradually introducing" any changes to the transit system.
- Although sidewalks are an issue in some areas, they aren't being used in others. People don't utilize them and we need to not put them everywhere
- If bike lanes or sidewalks need to be included, they should be viewed from a health standpoint (exercise) since most people don't use existing sidewalks for transportation.
- There are no sidewalks along Enota, Harmony Church Road or Atlanta Highway

Where would you like to see improvements?

- We should look at the possibility of a bypass to redirect some of the traffic from downtown.
- We should look at the expansion of certain routes and later times, for some of the high school students who need more flexibility to participate in extracurricular activities and weekend service for families shopping.
- There is good potential for the HAT to expand in order to connect to park & ride lots for Gwinnett Transit.
- A good way to promote transit service (routes, time) is in the schools and churches.



- Sidewalks are indeed being used. We need more of them, particularly along Athens Highway (US 129).
- We need pedestrian signals on Shallowford Road.

Comments/concerns were provided from citizens in advance who could not attend the meeting. Those comments included:

- Gillsville Highway needs widening and we hope to see that project happen soon
- Atlanta Highway needs to be widened between Memorial Park Drive and Industrial Boulevard. Traffic is very bad, there are many accidents and more development is making it worse
- Hall county residents need a larger network of public transportation, especially around the Johnson HS school zone as well as some limited public transportation from the Gillsville area. Currently, there are hundreds, if not thousands of families who take taxis to work from these areas

The issues of how to best reach the Hispanic Community and what methods of outreach should be used to include them in the rest of the planning process was also discussed. Overall, the intent was to find out the best ways to ensure Hispanics to attend future meetings. Several suggestions are summarized with more frequently heard comments appearing higher on the list below:

- Solicit the views of the population either through the school PTSA's or the local churches. Let school children take information home to parents.
- Trust will be hard to gain...new residents are fearful and unfamiliar with the area and local government.
- Sundays are good meeting days but weeknights are not due to work conflicts.
- Meeting places are unfamiliar and meetings must be packaged properly.
- Advertise to more Hispanic businesses... Use the tax assessor's office to find Hispanic businesses and send them direct mailings.
- There are too many cultural issues/differences between the Hispanic community and the at-large community.
- Develop a survey that reaches the Hispanic community.
- Go to the employment centers/jobs where the Hispanics are and promote meetings.
- Allow Latinos to be involved on the "front end" of the planning process (proactive), particularly the local leaders. They need to be involved before the meeting dates/times are set.

First public meeting held on June 28, 2006

The public meeting was held at the Georgia Mountains Center. The GHMPO staff and members of the Wilbur Smith Associates consultant team helped to facilitate the meeting.

Objectives of Meeting

The purpose of the public meeting was to provide citizens an opportunity to educate the public on the 2030 LRTP planning process and to identify focus areas that will be studied further. The meeting was the first opportunity in LRTP development process for local citizens to provide their transportation needs to GHMPO staff. The overall objective of the meeting was to provide the community an opportunity to share their ideas, recommendations and thoughts about issues such as:



- Identifying focused transportation improvements in the area
- Providing transportation options
- Mitigating environmental impacts
- Coordinating land use and transportation
- Relieving congestion

Public Notices and Informational Materials

The GHMPO was responsible for the comprehensive mailing list of attendees in the County as well as distribution of the public meeting notices. The WSA Project Team assisted in the creation of informational material for public notice that announced the public meeting date. The GHMPO then mailed the notices to several hundred residents in the weeks leading up to the meeting. Notices were also sent to elected officials and professional staff from other city/county offices (in both English and Spanish) in addition to the local newspapers. Additionally, the GHMPO provided data on the existing LRTP and more information on their website, www.ghmpo.org.

Public Meeting Format

The meeting was designed as an “open house” format, with boards and maps placed all around the room. The room was divided into two sides, one for the Focus Area Exercise and one for the Overall Transportation Issues Exercise. A PowerPoint presentation was given by the WSA Project Manager and GHMPO staff provided the attendees with a summary of ideas that were written down by on the boards and maps.

Focus Areas Exercise

Citizens were given four dots to rank their preferred focus areas. They could use all dots on one project or spread them out between the 15 projects. They could also use their dots to put THEIR focus area ideas on the blank map of the County or they could write their issues on the blank map.

The results of the exercise were:

Intersection Improvements	Dots/Comments
1. Jesse Jewel Parkway and John Morrow Parkway	3
2. MLK, Jr. Blvd. and E.E. Butler Parkway	7
3. Queen City Parkway with Palmour Drive/I-985 ramps	2 (problem with turns by trucks)
4. Limestone Parkway and Jesse Jewel Parkway	4 (need more left-turn lanes and need to finish sidewalk leading from Jesse Jewel to J&J Foods and Dollar General)
5. McEver Extension and Dawsonville Highway	1
6. Palmour Drive Corridor and Atlanta Highway	4 (need good quality streetlights for crime prevention deterrent, need wider streets & sidewalks and bike/ped routes)



Interchange/Ramp Improvements	
7. I-985 Ramps at Parmour Drive	1
8. Spout Springs Interchange Improvements	0

Corridor Improvements	
9. Mundy Mill Road Corridor from I-985 to McEver Road	6 (because of recent developments, need to address traffic; need sidewalks from Gainesville State College to Wal-Mart; need sidewalks from assisted living area to Wal-Mart)
10. E.E. Butler and Jesse Jewell Corridors through heart of Downtown	12

Accessibility Issues	
11. More accessibility across I-985, particularly in Gainesville area	8
12. North-South Access Through/Around Downtown Flowery Branch	0

Connectivity Issues	
13. "Outer Loop" north of Gainesville including potential crossing of Chattahoochee	28 (Good concept, not enough traffic; high priority)
14. East-West Connectivity in South Hall	6
15. South east perimeter in the vicinity of Turk Road and Union Church Road	3

In the focus area exercise, there were also a few comments written directly on the blank Hall County base maps by the attendees. These few comments were:

- Connection needed from Limestone Parkway to I-985
- Need to deal with truck traffic
- MLK at McDonald Street – Intersection Improvements needed
- Signal timing upgrades needed for Athens Highways (SR 129) at MLK and at College St. intersections.

Issues Exercise

Citizens had 3 orange dots to put on one or more boards of their issue choice (they could use all on one board, if they wanted). Citizens then were able to write issues, recommendations, or general comments on the attached post-it note sheet to support the particular board topic. More frequency mentioned written comments are listed first along with the number of times cited.

Coordinating land use and transportation (18 dots)



- Build so people can go from neighborhoods, homes, to work at industrial sites by bus, bicycles or walk safely (3)
- Connectivity in downtown

Providing transportation options (17 dots)

- More bike paths and sidewalks in Gainesville (3)
- Link bicycle/pedestrian routes to (various destinations): bus stops, future mass transit, parks, shopping centers & recreation (i.e., Elachee Nature Center), downtown and trails (3)
- Designated crosswalks (especially at signals)
- Incorporate existing bicycle routes used on evening & weekend rides
- Commuter rail from Athens to Atlanta
- Atlanta-Athens-Gainesville Rail Triangle (Golden Triangle)
- Trolleys connecting commercial areas
- Controlled access on SR 365

Relieving congestion (17 dots)

- Need for an outer loop connection all the way around Gainesville, 53 Dawsonville Highway to SR 365 (2)
- Move Post Office (2)
- Gaines Mill Rd at US 129 intersection traffic signal (2)
- Double-Deck Jesse Jewell
- Widen MLK
- Improve Ridge Road as better through route
- Traffic signal timing & possible computer/camera coordination

Mitigating environmental impacts (12 dots)

- Protect neighborhoods, wetlands, lake from “superhighways” (loop)
- No truck routes through neighborhoods
- Hope the loop is finally dead
- Foster alt-fuel vehicle; use electric charge station; lane preference for alt-fuel vehicles
- No trucks on Ledan Road (put on Sardis Connector)

Other transportation concerns/issues (9 dots)

- RR crossing on Old Athens Highway between MLK & Ridge Road needs to be repaired or upgraded
- Need traffic signal at SR 129 South at Lenox Park Dr., before folks die
- Need lighting at night in areas where people walk; winter a.m. hours & winter p.m. hours

Presentation

The WSA staff delivered a formal presentation that described an overview of the 2030 Planning Process. The presentation provided information on the following:

- Purpose of the meeting
- Background/history and purpose of the planning process
- The citizen's input
- Next steps in the process



Following the presentation, there was a brief question & answer period for the attendees. The questions included:

- There was a traffic accident on Ledan Road that resulted in a fatality, what is being done about it? Parsons Brinkerhoff is the consultant for Sardis Road Connector project.....
- There is too much traffic on Jesse Jewell Parkway; will the inner loop project help that issue?
- The traffic signal timing is off on Jesse Jewell Parkway and causes severe time constraints and congestion
- The left turns should be prohibited at Ridgewood Drive on Green Street (the light before split at Thompson Bridge).

Priority Survey Results/Comments

Each participant was asked to complete the priority survey and questionnaire they received as handouts. There were 21 respondents who participated in the priority survey given to the meeting attendees. The citizens were asked to circle the number (1-4) that best represented the level of priority and how desirable the option is for their area. The rating system is as follows:

- 1 = First Level Priority/Highly Desirable
- 2 = Second Level Priority/Desirable
- 3 = Third Level Priority/Somewhat Desirable
- 4 = Not a Priority/Not Desirable

The results of the survey are shown below:

Improvement Option	Results
New Roads/Road Widening	(1) 43% (2) 14% (3) 19% (4) 24%
Traffic Signal Improvements – (Intersection Improvements, Signal Timing)	(1) 62% (2) 19% (3) 14% (4) .05%
Pedestrian Improvements - (Increased Sidewalks, Pedestrian Signals at Crosswalks, Mid-Block Crossings, Crosswalk Improvements)	(1) 52% (2) 19% (3) 29% (4) 0%
Transit Improvements – (Route Expansion, More Frequent Service, Bus Shelters)	(1) 24% (2) 19% (3) 24% (4) 33%
Bicycle, Multi-Use Trail projects	(1) 33% (2) 19% (3) 24% (4) 24%
Access Control Improvements (Raised Medians, Curb-cut consolidation, Cross-Access Improvements)	(1) 33% (2) 29% (3) 33% (4) .05%



In addition to the priority survey, meeting participants were also provided a “general questionnaire” in which they were to address three general questions regarding the meeting and the overall plan.

Twenty-one participants responded to the questionnaire and the four questions and related answers are as follows and similar comments are grouped by number of responses:

1. Describe any improvements or projects that you would like to see in the upcoming Gainesville-Hall Long Range Transportation Plan.

- An outer loop of some kind around the City of Gainesville (7)
- Bicycle/pedestrian routes between neighborhoods and local supermarkets, pharmacies, post offices, physician offices, ecotourism to parks; link to bus stops; reduce low income resident dependency on taxi service (2)
- Gainesville – Athens – Atlanta – Gainesville commuter rail triangle
- More forms of transportation; better streets

2. What do you think are the most important transportation needs for this community?

- Need more sidewalks; need more traffic signals (3)
- Northern loop/arc AKA Sardis Connector (3)
- Transit connecting major areas (2)
- Relieve congestion by promoting alternative transportation, alternative fuels, etc. (2)
- Bicycle & pedestrian routes tied or linked to bus transportation to combat childhood obesity
- Intersection improvements
- Relieve congestion
- Dangerous roads such as Ledan Road need immediate relief (i.e., via Sardis Connector) 2 deaths this year
- Wide bike paths on every major road; mixed use land planning; keep lake clean
- There is a lot of family foot traffic along the edge of the road between neighborhoods & Wal-Mart Shopping Centers. Unsafe for adults and especially dangerous for young children walking with parents who are carrying bags of groceries

3. How did you learn about the meeting?

- E-mail (4)
- Notification by mail (4)
- Newspaper (3)
- On a committee (2)
- Word-of-mouth (2)
- Radio
- Hall County
- Myrtle Figueras

Findings

The individual comments generally ranged from pedestrian improvements to roadway upgrades to traffic signals, but the most popular and overall themes from the first round are as follows:

- The need for an outer loop or bypass around the City of Gainesville.



- Specific new roadway projects and widening projects throughout the County, some of these projects not in the current long-range plan.
- The need for sidewalks and connectivity issues throughout the City of Gainesville and some support for sidewalks throughout the county.
- A more coordinated approach of linking transportation decision-making and land-use decision-making within the county.
- Coordinating traffic signals along arterial corridors, especially along Jesse Jewell Parkway.
- Numerous suggestions of specific traffic congestion reducing projects and improvements at specific hot-spot congestion intersections throughout the county.
- The need for expansion and/or improved quality of the local transit service (routes, days, hours, etc.)
- Provide some alternative mode of transportation throughout the county including more bicycle paths and commuter rail to Atlanta.

Second public meeting held on December 7, 2006

Summary

The GHMPO held its second public meeting at the Georgia Mountains Center in Gainesville. The purpose of the meeting was to hear from the public about transportation priorities and to update them on the development of potential projects for the plan.

The open-house format meeting had five stations set up around the room where the public could review information and provide comments: 1) Potential Focus Areas, 2) Upcoming Projects, 3) Traffic Analysis, 4) Bicycle and Pedestrian Issues, and 5) Transit Service. After initial public input at the stations, the GHMPO staff gave a presentation, and then each station facilitator provided a summary of ideas that were shared by the public.

Below is a synopsis of the principal themes heard at the meeting.

- While one citizen did express concern that an outer (northern) loop would negatively affect the rural way of life in northern Hall County, most of the comments heard at the meeting were in favor of an outer loop around the City of Gainesville.
- The Ridge Road widening project received positive and negative comments. Some of the feedback was related to environmental concerns and negative effects to the community.
- At the upcoming projects station, several projects that are already slated for construction in the near term were chosen as priority projects—widening of Friendship Road, Flowery Branch historic streetscape, Sardis Road Connector, and widening of Cleveland Highway/US 129.
- There is interest in commuter service to Atlanta and the airport (bus or rail). The majority of comments indicated a more desirable location for a park-n-ride lot would be in or north of the City of Gainesville.
- The need for improved east-west connectivity and access to Forsyth County.
- Lula, Gillsville, and Clermont need direct representation in the MPO.
- One citizen commented that bicycle and pedestrian projects are a “waste of money.” However, some projects were selected as priorities for advancement.
- The need to address the rapid growth within Hall County with transportation improvements.
- The widening of I-985 was well received.



Plan Development

In May 2006, the Gainesville-Hall MPO initiated an update of the currently adopted 2030 Long Range Plan (December 2004). The existing plan will be revised with newer land use assumptions and transportation needs, re-evaluate project cost estimates, reprioritizing existing projects in the plan and with the potential addition of other projects. The GHMPO intends for the 2035 LRTP process to build consensus on transportation and related improvement strategies in the community, and in an effort to develop that consensus, the GHMPO is conducting three rounds of public meetings.

Fifteen focus areas were initially developed throughout the study area to examine potential new projects. At the first public meeting in June, citizens were asked to identify focus areas that would be studied in detail in development of the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan, as a way to address current and long-range transportation needs in Hall County. Based on this input and later input by the GHMPO committee members, 6 focus areas emerged for further study.

Meeting Format

The public meeting was held the Georgia Mountains Center. The GHMPO staff and members of the Wilbur Smith Associates consultant team helped to facilitate the meeting. The meeting was designed as an open house format, with boards and maps placed at five stations around the room: 1) Potential Focus Areas, 2) Upcoming Projects, 3) Traffic Analysis, 4) Bicycle and Pedestrian Issues, and 5) Transit Service. After initial public input at the stations, the GHMPO staff gave a PowerPoint presentation, and then each station facilitator provided a summary of ideas that were shared by the public. A copy of the presentation and a comment form were provided as handouts.

Stations

Focus Areas Station

The goal of this station was to hear which focus area projects are most wanted in the community in light of high cost and shrinking available funding. A map of the focus area projects was provided. The results of the dot exercise were:

Focus Area Projects	Dots	Comments
1. Connection between SR 53/Dawsonville Hwy and SR 365 (Outer Loop)	1	Outer Loop – most important project (2 comments)
2. Widening of Ridge Rd from Queen City Pkwy to Jesse Jewel Pkwy		Do not widen Ridge Rd b/c of environmental concerns; Ridge Rd widening bad for community
3. East-West Connection between I-985 and I-85		
4. Jesse Jewel Pkwy and John Morrow Pkwy Intersection		
5. Extension of Spout Springs Rd to McEver Rd		
6. Six-Laning of I-985 from Hall County Line to Exit 24		Do widen I-985



General comments included:

- Better East-West connections needed between Cherokee/Forsyth/Hall, i.e., SR 53 and SR 369
- Better transportation system needed as northern Atlanta counties are becoming a city in their own right

Upcoming Projects Station

The goal of this station was to hear which current LRTP projects are most wanted in the community and to impress that there is an increasingly limited amount of funding. Some of the projects in the draft plan are already moving forward; reprioritization of the projects is important so that we can best match projects with dollars. The existing LRTP map and two boards listing the LRTP project names with space for placing dots were provided at this station. Several projects that are already slated for construction in the near term were chosen as priority projects—widening of Friendship Road, Flowery Branch historic streetscape, Sardis Road Connector, and widening of Cleveland Highway/US 129. All of the projects that were ranked (each with one dot) are listed below:

- SR 347/Friendship Rd from I-985 to SR 211
- Upgrade traffic signals along Jesse Jewel – Pearl Nix to Downey
- Flowery Branch historic streetscape
- Sardis Rd Connector – SR 60/ Thompson Bridge to Sardis/Chestatee Rd
- SR 52/Lula Rd – 1 mile north of SR 365 to south of Julian Wiley Rd
- SR 52/Lula Rd at Chattahoochee River – Bridge
- US 129/Cleveland Hwy – Limestone Rd to Nopone Rd
- US 129/Cleveland Hwy – north of Nopone Rd to SR 284/Clarks Bridge Rd
- US 129 – SR 284/Clarks Bridge Rd to White County Line
- SR 11 Bus/Park Hill Drive – South Enota Dr to Limestone Rd
- SR 60/Thompson Bridge Rd – SR 136/Price Rd to Yellow Creek Rd
- Limestone Pkwy Extension – Limestone Pkwy to new Interchange at I-985

General comments recorded on the flip chart included:

- Concern that the northern loop will be an engine for high density development affecting the rural quality of life (people have moved to north Hall County to get away from high density development)

Traffic Analysis Station

The goal of this station was to demonstrate the technical tool used for analyzing the projects' ability to relieve congestion and hear the public's input on potential traffic improvements versus cost and impact of project. Boards that were provided at this station included the 2005 Base Year Model Results, the 2030 Build-Out Map with Existing plus Committed Projects Model Results, Scenario 1 Model Results, Scenario 2 Model Results, and Scenario 3 Model Results.

Comments heard at this station included:

- Northern Loop is a “must” (4)
- Widening I-985
- Need “Inner Loop”
- Widening of Ridge Rd – “great idea”
- Double-decking of congested roadways; underground tunnels



Bicycle and Pedestrian Issues Station

The goal of this station was to hear from the public which bike and pedestrian projects are most wanted in the community. Maps provided included 1) Potential Hall County Bicycle Projects, 2) Potential Gainesville Sidewalk Projects, and 3) Potential Sidewalk Projects in Other Jurisdictions. Dots were placed on the following projects:

Proposed Bicycle Network

- Bicycle lane project on Ledan Rd (short term)
- Wide curb lane project on Mount Vernon Rd (long term)
- Bicycle lane project on Thompson Bridge Rd (long term)
- Signage only project in downtown Gainesville (short term)

Proposed Pedestrian Network – Gainesville

- Sidewalk projects at intersection of Martin Luther King Jr Blvd (short term) and EE Butler Pkwy (midterm), near Mill St
- Sidewalk project on Martin Luther King Jr Blvd (short term) at Chestnut Street
- Sidewalk project on Martin Luther King Jr Blvd (short term) at Grove Street
- Multi use path project beginning south of Davis Street (short term)

Proposed Pedestrian Network – Other Jurisdictions

- Lula: Sidewalk project on Athens St at Chattahoochee St (long term)
- Gillsville: Sidewalk project on Bryant Quarter Rd at Hwy 52 (long term)
- Oakwood: Sidewalk project on Mundy Mill Rd at Mathis Dr (long term)
- Clermont: Spring Street at Main St (long term)
- General comments provided at the bike/pedestrian station included:
 - Spending money on bike/pedestrian projects is a waste of money. “If we can’t get money to spend on projects, we shouldn’t do projects that only 2 people walk on.”
- Lula, Gillsville, and Clermont are not directly represented in the MPO.

Transit Services Station

The goal of this station was to hear where the public wants to see transit service in Hall County, including mode choices, as well as what regional connections the public is interested in. A regional map showing existing Fixed Hall Area Transit Routes, and a potential park-n-ride location for service between Hall County and Atlanta, was provided. The following is a summary of the feedback provided by the public:

In general, transit service between Hall County and Atlanta is a good idea. However, park-n-ride lots farther north are preferred to a lot at Exit 16. Alternative locations include Queen City Pkwy; north of Gainesville where Jesse Jewel Pkwy ends – for Habersham County and Cornelia commuters; north of Gainesville along US 129.

- Bus or rail service to the Airport is desirable (multiple comments).
- Transit stops should be located in areas where ridership is most likely, such as apartment complexes (northwest of Gainesville, off of Thompson Bridge Rd).
- East-West connectivity is a major problem; we should look at additional mode choices for addressing travel needs related to growth in Cherokee, Forsyth, Hall, Jackson, and Clarke Counties.
- Safety concerns related to bringing rail service into Hall County were raised.



- Maintenance and reliability are major factors influencing whether or not one would choose to use transit service.
- In the interim, people could be bused from Hall County to Exit 4, and they can catch the Express Bus in Buford to Atlanta and the airport.

Following the presentation there was a brief question and answer period. The questions and comments are listed below.

- Please expand on the comment related to environmental concerns associated with the Ridge Rd widening project. A citizen explained that the area is already highly developed and that there is concern that additional lanes will result in more traffic and thus, increased ozone and other air quality concerns. Staff mentioned that the project received positive feedback when presented to the Chamber of Commerce, who felt it would alleviate some of the traffic in the city of Gainesville. Staff also pointed out, however, that all of the focus area projects are conceptual at this point.
- Is a new proposed southbound exit ramp off of I-985 at US 129 still being considered, so that when exiting, both lanes of traffic wouldn't have to be crossed? GDOT representatives commented that reconstruction of the interchange is currently in the concept design phase; right-of-way has not been purchased. There is currently an interim project for signalization of the Exit 22 ramp.
- It was recommended that proposed HOV lanes on I-985 be extended from Exit 24. Staff commented that the proposed widening is currently for general-purpose lanes.
- One citizen commented that there is currently a statewide bike plan initiative.

Third public meeting held on June 12, 2007

Summary

The Gainesville-Hall MPO (GHMPO) held its third public meeting at the Georgia Mountains Center in Gainesville. The purpose of the meeting was to receive feedback from the public about the draft 2030 LRTP. There were 43 attendees at the meeting, consisting of citizens, local officials, and media.

The GHMPO staff and members of the WSA consultant team facilitated the meeting. The meeting was designed with the same open house format, boards and maps as the second public meeting.

Stations

Draft Project List/Priorities Station

The goal of this station was to present the draft priorities of the LRTP projects that were determined based on the modeling efforts, MPO Committee comments, and comments from previous public meetings. Some of the projects in the draft plan are already moving forward. Reprioritization of the projects on important projects, such that the projects can be matched with available funding sources. The Draft 2030 LRTP Update map was presented with the projects divided by the following four tiers:

- Tier 1 – TIP Projects 2008-2013
- Tier 2 – 2014-2020 Projects
- Tier 3 – 2021-2030 Projects
- Tier 4 – Beyond 2030 Projects



Several projects that are already programmed for construction in the near term as priority projects, such as the widening of Friendship Road, Flowery Branch historic streetscape, Sardis Road Connector, and the widening of Cleveland Highway/US 129. All of these projects are contained in Tier 1.

General comments recorded at this station included:

- Northern Connector is an excellent project. (5)
- Get more traffic off of Green Street

Focus Areas Station

A map of the focus area projects was provided, as well as recommended tiers for each of the projects.

Focus Area Projects	Tier
Connection between SR 53/Dawsonville Hwy and SR 365 (Northern Connector)	GHMPO will conduct an initial planning feasibility study in 2007
Widening of Ridge Rd from Queen City Pkwy to Jesse Jewel Pkwy	Tier 2
Jesse Jewel Pkwy and John Morrow Pkwy Intersection	Tier 2
Extension of Spout Springs Rd to McEver Rd	Tier 2
Six-Laning of I-985 from Hall County Line to Exit 24	Tier 3 for Preliminary Engineering/Tier 4 for Construction

General comments included:

Four lane Spout Springs Road is needed

Modeling Results Station

This station presented the level-of-service (LOS) results from the travel demand model. The following maps were provided at this station:

- (2005) Existing Conditions Level of Service (LOS)
- 2030 Existing plus Committed (E+C)
- 2030 Build Conditions.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Issues Station

This station provided the public with information on bicycle and pedestrian facilities planned in the study area based on comments from the MPO Committees and previous public meetings. This station included maps of the planned bicycle and pedestrian facilities and the time frame in which they are planned.

General comments provided at the bicycle and pedestrian station included:

- No bicycles on the roads; they should stay on dedicated paths.
- More bicycle projects should be in the short-term rather than the long-term list.
- Plan for a bicycle lane when planning a new road or changing an existing road.



- Bike lanes should be located:
 - Coming in and out of N. Hall Middle and High Schools.
 - Down Lake View Drive
 - Going to Chestatee High School and on the new Sardis Connector.

Transit Services Station

This station provided a map of the existing transit services in the study area and also announced the Transit Development Plan (TDP), which will begin this summer. No comments were provided on the flip chart for this station.

Following the presentation there was a brief question and answer period. The questions and comments are listed below:

- Is there any way to make a left-hand turn lane on Green St, to create room to help alleviate evening congestion? Green Street is in a historic district and right-of-way issues would need to be examined closely; the City of Gainesville needs to be consulted, since Green Street is a city street.
- Would like to have Gainesville remain a city that people would like to live in but would not like to see the city move congestion from one area to another.
- Sprout Springs Road is a traffic disaster. About 500 square feet of new retail is going in and we don't have the roads to handle this traffic. Staff commented that it is a city road and they are working with the developers to ensure proper improvements are made for access to these new retail developments. At this time, GDOT cannot add additional projects to their constrained plan due to funding constraints. Local jurisdictions are trying to address this problem. The City responded that there is no funding outside of the 6-year window from the State at this time.
- One citizen commented that in 4 months a Home Depot is going to be built on Sprouts Springs Road and that not having funds until 2014 is not going to work, it is not good planning.
- One citizen commented that the significantly more traffic on Sprouts Springs Road than Friendship Road should be addressed.
- A citizen commented that they did not understand why Hall County planners would approve the 500 square foot development without planning the roads.
- One citizen commented that he would like to see two projects moved forward:
 - Friendship Road – This project has been in planning for over 10 years, it should not stop at 211, and the original concept was to get from I-985 to the islands from 347. This plan would keep people from having to go into Atlanta first.
 - Sardis Road – delighted to see this underway and opening up sections of Hall County that are new.
- One citizen commented that when he built his home 8 years ago there were final plans for US 29 Cleveland Highway widening and the right-of-way was established. Now he is hearing that there are plans to redesign the highway – Why are we spending money on redesigning something that is already designed?
- How often are the 6-year and 20-year plan updated? The 20-year is updated every 3-4 years and has to be coordinated with the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) for Air Quality Analysis purposes. The 6-year is reviewed on a quarterly basis and a major update is completed annually.
- One citizen commented that they would not have bought their property if they had known how the 4-lane up Cleveland Highway was going to be redesigned.

