



Citizen Input Summary

Narrowing the Alternatives

July 2011

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Introduction

This document summarizes all the comments received related to the **revive285 top end** project between May 2010 and June 2011.

This summary focuses on the public's comments and perceptions regarding alternatives advancing in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Over the past year, there have been many opportunities provided to corridor stakeholders and the general public to view the project's progress, details of the alternatives moving forward, and evaluation criteria for each alternative. The project team has heard strongly held opinions on the nature and causes of the problems along the corridor, the likelihood of an alternative to be successful in addressing the problems, and concerns over costs and community impacts of the alternatives, including impacts to quality of life, transportation conditions, property values, and access to neighborhoods and activity centers. The following sections provide a summary of all comments received.

1.2 Need and Purpose

Most comments indicate that there is too much traffic and traffic delay on the top end of I-285. Comments describe the need for improving traffic flow, the need for operational and safety improvements, and the desire for transit improvements along the corridor. Traffic delay and safety are perceived as a problem that affects the entire corridor, and there is generally no expectation that just one thing will fix the widespread nature of the problems.

1.3 Alternatives

By the summer of 2010, the eight alternatives were narrowed down to the No-Build Alternative and three build alternatives. Over the course of the past year, the public has become familiar with the four alternatives moving forward and their various components. Based on public comments and feedback received over the past year, it can be concluded that there is clear agreement that improving traffic delay and safety along the corridor is important. It can also be concluded that costs of the alternatives and funding for the implementation of the alternatives is an important component in the public's decision-making process.

As in seen in previous summaries, many comments continue to be enthusiastic about the prospect of more transit service in the corridor and offering current drivers an alternative to having to drive.

Furthermore, as also seen in previous summaries, there is less enthusiasm about the proposed managed lanes. Overall, the impacts to the communities along the corridor and projects costs for implementing the

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managed lanes seem to outweigh the potential benefits to improving the perceived problems along the corridor.

1.4 Corridor Improvement Recommendations and Suggestions

Along with expressing specific opinions about the alternatives moving forward, recommendations and suggestions for improving the corridor are not uncommon and can provide insight into the public's perceptions as to whether it is believed that the alternatives moving forward are adequately addressing the scope of the traffic problem. A continuous comment seen throughout the development of the project is the desire for an outer loop and parallel facilities to help alleviate the traffic on I-285. Operational improvements continue to be prevalent in suggested improvements with many offering opinions about specific interchanges.

1.5 Transit

There is the general belief and perception that the addition of transit service in the corridor would be beneficial to addressing the existing traffic problems; however there is a mix of opinion of what the transit should be. The preservation of right-of-way for future fixed guideway transit is clearly supported by the public; while the general concern regarding express bus is that it would be ineffective along the corridor unless it operates in a dedicated lane.

1.6 Toll Lanes

With respect to toll lanes, the general perception by the public is the notion of the 'lexus' lanes, meaning only those drivers who are perceived as 'wealthy' will be able and willing to use the lanes. In regards to Alternative 6B, there is strong opinion that existing general purpose lanes should not be converted to toll lanes.

1.7 Environmental Justice Outreach

The project team conducted targeted outreach along the corridor in an effort to distribute project information and collect input from identified target populations. Overall, the transit component ranked high among the participants, agreeing that more transit is needed in the corridor. In contrast to the comments received via the website and email from the general public, comments received during this targeted outreach generally recognized that the use of tolling is a growing financing toll and that the region will soon follow. While not necessarily supporting the idea, many of the participants acknowledged that tolling may be inevitable.

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1.8 Social Media

In May of 2010, the project team launched Facebook and Twitter accounts as a means to engage the public on a regular basis and provide the most up-to-date information on the project. Both accounts have steadily grown throughout the year with reaching nearly 800 users. Social media has proven to be a successful way to engage the public in conversation about the project.

2. INTRODUCTION

This Public Perceptions and Preferences Summary is designed to provide the project team with an overview of the issues, concerns, and suggestions provided by the public between May 2010 and July 2011. It provides information that must be taken into account as the project team develops the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). To engage the public throughout the process, tools developed early in the project process were geared toward receiving input on concept development, the alternatives under consideration, and system impacts and improvements. Over the past year, the project team has sought response from the public on the advancing transportation alternatives in the **revive285 top end** corridor using the following venues:

| Data Source | Notes |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Written Comments | Includes input provided via email, U.S. mail, and hotline between May 2010 and June 2011 |
| Stakeholder Field Briefings | Includes input from stakeholder briefings to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Perimeter Community Improvement District (CID)/June 14, 2010 ➤ Main Street Alliance/July 16, 2010 ➤ Perimeter CID/August 18, 2010 ➤ Sierra Club, Gwinnett Chapter/August 18, 2010 ➤ Citizen Advisory Committee/August 24, 2010 ➤ Lilburn CID/November 7, 2010 ➤ Chattahoochee Chase Homeowners Association/December 7, 2010 ➤ Georgia Motor Trucking Association/March 31, 2011 |

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The following report summarizes the comments received between May 2010 and June 2011 as they relate to the four alternatives under consideration. They are presented in this document in the following order:

- Need and Purpose
- Alternatives
 - No Build
 - Alternative 4
 - Alternative 6A
 - Alternative 6B
- Corridor Improvement Recommendations and Suggestions
- Transit
- Toll Lanes
- Environmental Justice Outreach
- Social Media

3. NEED AND PURPOSE

Early on in the process, the public was asked to comment on the Need and Purpose being developed by the project team. Most of the comments specifically relating the Need and Purpose were received in the first two years of the project's study process. However, expressed concerns about improving traffic, decreasing congestion, improving connections, and improving transit options have recurred throughout the past year, as seen in representative comments below:

- The safety and operational improvements are the most important, and the most beneficial improvements under consideration. These will clearly, profoundly, improve traffic flow throughout the corridor.

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- Traffic flow at intersections has become the major source of congestion and accidents on I-285. The best investment would be to perform long-term urban planning and invest in upgrading MARTA into a subway system similar to the DC Metro system.
- Safety and traffic flow are the biggest issues.
- I can tell you that the congestion is primarily caused by the exit/entrance ramp configurations at 75, 400, and 85.

4. ALTERNATIVES

By the summer of 2010, the original eight alternatives were narrowed down to four alternatives that would be moving forward for further development, analysis, and documentation in the DEIS. Over the course of the past year, the public has become familiar with the four alternatives moving forward and their various components. Based on comments received over the past year, Alternative 4 is the most preferred due to the least amount of property impacts, improvements to travel time, and the least expensive of the four alternatives moving forward.

4.1 No-Build

Even though the majority of respondents agree that something must be done to improve the top end of I-285, there were comments received supporting the No-Build Alternative. Support for the No-Build Alternative appears to be based on the opinion that the components of the other alternatives are not viable or effective in alleviating the current traffic problems. Representative comments are below:

- Of the alternatives moving forward, I would prefer alternative 1- No Build. I believe that the cost/benefit of managed lanes would be unsatisfactory, and the visual and environmental impact would be un-mitigatable. The express bus or transit options would be sadly ineffective.
- How about the no build (option 1) and acquire the right of way for the future light rail.
- The best alternative isn't actually on here. It would be a 6A alternative without the bussing system. Bussing is a boondoggle that never pays off, doesn't produce expected results, and cause more headaches than the good it does. The limited entry/exit managed access roads alongside the interstate highway is a great way to relieve some of the traffic particularly for those that are on and off the interstate in a short distance...but since this alternative carries the bus service and right of way for buses, the next cheapest alternative is 4, but contains the bus service too. So I guess I would have to go with the no build Alt. 1.

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4.2 Alternative 4

Of the four alternatives moving forward, Alternative 4 is most supported in the comments received due to it being the least expensive of the build alternatives and improvements to traffic congestion. Below is a small sample of the comments that have been documented.

- I have a strong preference for Option 4. I believe that Option 4 takes care of safety problems, plus allows long term considerations for the whole area. Moreover, Option 4 is cheaper than doing the others.
- I believe that alternative 4 is the best available solution under consideration.
- Alternative 4 will fix various interchanges and improve traffic flow, at a tiny fraction of the cost of the other alternatives.
- I prefer Alternative 4- it costs less and gives significant rush hour improvements.
- I like Alternative 4. Most bang for our bucks.
- Please support Alternative 4 and no other choice.
- We support Alternative 4 which will reduce rush hour traffic jams, improve daily traffic flow while saving billions that could be used on other regional projects to improve traffic congestion elsewhere.

Several comments include the preservation of right of way for future fixed guideway transit as part of Alternative 4; similar to Alternative 6A and Alternative 6B. Consider the following comments:

- "Reserve future right-of-way" should be added to Alternative 4.
- As a tax paying citizen of the metro-Atlanta area (Cobb County/City of Marietta), I prefer the Alternative 4 option, "safety and operational improvements plus express buses." The goal of the Revive285 project is to improve traffic flow on the top end of I-285 and this alternative seems to do that more quickly and for less cost and less future restrictions on the other options. "Reserve right-of-way" could be added to Alternative 4 for a bit more costs and would make it an even stronger alternative.

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- I support a modified Alternative 4 that would move forward with the safety and operational improvements and reserve a future transit corridor.
- “Reserve future right-of-way” should be added to Alternative 4, which would raise the cost to \$1.2 billion, instead of \$1.1 billion and insure the availability of land for future collector-distributor lines or other transit alternatives.

4.3 Alternative 6A

There was very little expressed support for Alternative 6A in the comments received over the past year primarily due to the addition of managed lanes and the project costs, as seen below in representative comments received.

- I am opposed to 6A. I have lived in Cobb County for 38 years, growing up in the Windy Hill and Powers Ferry area and this is not a good option. We already have free lanes on I-75 and they should not be turned into toll lanes.
- We are strongly opposed to Alternative 6A- the addition of 4 managed lanes. An expansion of I-285 at this magnitude would have resounding negative effects on our neighborhood.
- Alternative 6A includes significant expenditures for future transportation that are not complete in this project, and thus provides little added improvement to the present day commuter for the money. There is no guarantee of funding for the added work needed to rebuild the future transportation options. This is a non-starter.

4.4 Alternative 6B

In review of the comments, the public is generally opposed to the re-designating of a general purpose lane to a managed lane and the implementation timeline of the operational and safety improvements, with the general assumption being that implementation of the operational and safety improvements would be delayed in order to fund and construct the managed lanes. Representative comments include:

- I am opposed to the traffic deal called Alternative 6B. It will not help traffic flow and will waste millions of dollars.
- I am opposed to Alternative 6B, unless you build all of the safety and operational improvements first, and don't add the managed lanes before the safety and operational improvements are completed. Alternative 6B will reduce capacity in the general purpose lanes. I am opposed to reducing capacity

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in the general purpose lanes before the safety and operational improvements are implemented, so that they can help to offset the reduced capacity.

- I oppose Alternative 6B because it will take away an existing free lane, and convert it to a toll lane. It will also postpone needed interchange improvements that really would improve traffic flow.
- The removal of existing lanes on I-285, which have already been paid for by the taxpayers, will do nothing to decrease congestion on I-285 and, in fact, there is a high probability that such action would increase congestion in the remaining general purpose lanes to the over-all detriment of the traveling public and increase local air pollution.
- Alternative 6B spends \$2.5 billion to result in unacceptable performance in the general purpose lanes. Alt 6B unconsciously takes away a general purpose lane that taxpayers have already paid for.

Although the majority of the comments received did oppose Alternative 6B or aspects of Alternative 6B, there was expressed support of the alternative in the below referenced comment:

- I am in favor of removing an existing freeway lane and making it into a hot lane. Hot lanes are definitely the way to go. Users should pay. Also, I should have the right to pay for a faster lane if that is what I want to do.

5. CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Comments received often include recommendations and suggestions for the project team to consider. Comments range from recommending improvements along the top end of I-285 to considering alternative and parallel routes to I-285 across the northern section on the metro region. Representative comments are below:

- Build some freeways parallel to I-285 across the north so traffic can flow.
- I believe that SR 20 should be improved to at least a 4-lane divided highway between I-575 and I-85. I believe that a project such as this would have a much better cost/benefit and substantially address the purpose and need of revive285.

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- Work on I-285 should be limited to widening the existing mixed flow lanes to standard (12') width, bridge and ramp projects such as proposed Roswell Road, and a relatively modest improvement to the interchange at SR 400.
- Improvements to I-285 should not move the edge of the pavement to the south. We support the operational improvements and light rail or bus rapid transit in dedicated right-of-way provided better sound walls, storm water management, and landscaping are included. Also improved pedestrian and bike amenities in this corridor are a necessary component that should be addressed.
- The operational improvements will provide more benefit to the community than the managed lanes.
- Operational improvements are needed to fix many of the interchanges. There needs to be a better way to get traffic on and off the interstate.
- Double deck is the only alternatives to shrink the traffic and double the size of the road.
- Double deck 285 north arc and be done with it. Make it a toll.
- I drive this section of road daily from Atlanta Road to Roswell Road. It seems to be the only true solution is to build an elevated east/west roadway over the existing 285 and use it as an express path with limited exits. Two lanes in each direction plus rapid transit down the middle of this roadway.
- Look at the area of Peachtree-Dunwoody exit (w-bound). Ashford-Dunwoody traffic is entering, Peachtree-Dunwoody traffic is trying to get off, GA 400 traffic is trying to get off. Clear this up and get traffic off of Ashford Dunwoody better, and a whole lot of the problem will clear up.
- The DOT should offer trucks to use the managed lanes because trucks are generally just moving through the Atlanta area along the top end.

6. TRANSIT

There is a mix of opinion on the proposed transit in the corridor. As mentioned earlier, there was support for including the preservation of right-of-way for future transit in Alternative 4, as it is now proposed in Alternative 6A and 6B. For express bus, the overall general public perception is that it would be ineffective to operate in the general purpose lanes. Consider these representative comments:

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- It seems to be that the best solution adopted by the DOT is at best interim solutions. Why not admit that the long term solution is fixed rail transit and move aggressively towards that goal? Otherwise the process will have to repeat itself in ten to twenty years. The top end arc has a defined beginning, middle, and end. A fixed rail transit system would serve as the perfect catalyst to sustainable growth in all three areas (Cumberland, Perimeter, Doraville).
- Express bus is a misnomer if the buses are to travel in the existing I-285 lanes. Until the I-85 HOT lanes are expanded with direct connectivity into some sort of high occupancy vehicle lane (probably HOT) on I-285 then the buses would get stuck in the same traffic as exists today. And that makes getting people onto express bus extremely difficult.
- Why can't there be a rail system that goes all around 285 with branches into the existing lines?
- In considering the traffic congestion along I-75 and I-285 corridor, a feasible solution would be to extend the MARTA rail system into Cobb County offering park and ride stations to commuters.

7. TOLL LANES

The comments about managed lanes and tolling indicate that the public believes that improvements to traffic congestion and travel time yielded by inclusion of manage/toll lanes do not justify the expense

In reference to specifically to toll lanes, the general perception is the notion of the "lexus" lanes, meaning only those drivers who are perceived as 'wealthy' will be able and willing to use the lanes. In regards to Alternative 6B, there is strong opinion that existing general purpose lanes should not be converted to toll lanes.

Consider the comments below regarding managed/toll lanes:

- The proposed creation of a toll lane to improve traffic does not make sense except that a few privileged drivers would have a clear lane while packing the rest of us into fewer lanes and more congestion. I vote no to this idea.
- You should not be allowed to create toll lanes out of existing lanes that have already been paid for by the taxpayers.

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- I am opposed to the toll lane on I-285.
- Please do not invest our tax dollars in toll lanes, especially to convert ones we have already paid for. The construction of tolls lanes will have a more negative impact on traffic flow in the short term and causes choke-points on traffic flow in the long term without address the traffic flow issues we deal with today in a timely manner.
- The traffic problems in Cobb County cannot be solved by creating toll lanes. They are too expensive and will not help the current traffic concerns.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE OUTREACH

In late 2010 and early 2011, the project team held a series of staffed kiosks and multi-lingual staffed open houses in a continuing effort to distribute information and collect input from the targeted populations.

8.1 Staffed Kiosks

Three staffed kiosks were held at the locations and times listed below.

Table 1: Staffed Kiosk Dates, Times, and Locations

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Time</i> | <i>Location</i> |
|------------------------------------|------------------|--|
| Tuesday, November 16, 2010 | 4:00pm to 7:00pm | Dunwoody MARTA Station Atlanta, GA |
| Thursday, November 18, 2010 | 4:00pm to 7:00pm | Doraville MARTA Station Doraville, GA |
| Tuesday, December 7, 2010 | 3:30pm to 5:30pm | CCT Cumberland Transfer Center Smyrna, GA |

While written comment forms were provided, most kiosk attendees preferred to leave verbal comments with staff members. Below is a representation of the written and verbal comments received.

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8.1.1 Alternatives

Alternative 6A was preferred by those who commented, in part because of the transit component. The No-Build alternative was disliked by most since it appeared to offer little congestion relief. Many of the comments received expressed that more transit is needed in the region.

- I like 6A because it keeps the same number of lanes we have currently and plans for mass transit.
- Any of the three build recommendations would be better than nothing because the traffic is unbearable.
- Alternative 6A. It has the benefit of addition a strong transportation options. 6B results in more traffic along the four lanes left. (For Alternative) 1, the status quo cannot be maintained.

8.1.2 Tolling

Most people recognized the fact that the use of tolling is a growing financing tool in other states and that the Atlanta region will soon follow. While not necessarily supporting the idea, some people resigned to the fact that it may be inevitable. Consider the comments below:

- I personally would not pay a toll. I currently avoid the GA 400 corridor for this reason.
- Yes, I would pay a toll.
- How else would we pay for it? The state has no money.

8.1.3 Information and Outreach

People were generally pleased that the project made an effort to meet them at their own location. Those who spoke Spanish were please to see the materials in Spanish. Most people had not heard of the project before.

8.2 Community Open House Series

The Community Open House Series consisted of six meetings held at the locations and times listed below.

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Table 2: Community Open House Dates, Times and Locations

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Time</i> | <i>Location</i> |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|---|
| Wednesday, January 19, 2011 | 12:30pm to 2:30pm | Dorothy C. Benson Senior Multi-Purpose Complex, Sandy Springs, GA |
| Sunday, January 23, 2011 | 12:30pm to 2:30pm | Salvation Army Doraville Corps Community Center, Doraville, GA |
| Thursday, January 27, 2011 | 5:00pm to 8:00pm | Smyrna Community Center, Smyrna, GA |
| Sunday, January 30, 2011 | 12:30-2:30pm | Holy Spirit Catholic Center, Sandy Springs, GA |
| Tuesday, February 8, 2011 | 5:00pm to 7:00pm | Las Colinas Apartments Clubhouse, Marietta, GA |
| Thursday, February 17, 2011 | 5:00pm to 7:00pm | Center for Pan Asian Community Services, Inc., Atlanta, GA |

Comment forms were developed and provide in hard copy as well as electronically through the website in six languages. In total, 141 comments were received. Findings from the comment form are summarized below.

8.2.1 Travel Behavior

- 32% of the respondents travel the I-285 top corridor one to two times per week, 22% travel it four to five times per week, and 17% use it daily.
- 31% travel the corridor during the afternoon hours followed by the morning hours (25%) and the weekend (22%). Approximately 20% use it in the morning and in the evening.
- 51% travel with two or more people in the car with them. The average number of people in the car was three, with responses ranging two to six people.

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8.2.2 Travel Conditions

- 62% state that they are somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the current travel conditions.
- 88% believe that improvements to the top end of I-285 do need to be made.
- 57% suggest improvements of more or new lanes, followed by more transit (22%), and added safety (15%).

8.2.3 Tolling

- 51% are not willing to pay a toll with 49% willing to pay a toll.
- The average toll individuals were willing to pay was \$0.75, with responses ranging from \$.025 to \$5.00

8.2.4 General Comments

The comment form also provided an opportunity for participants to leave any general comments. Below is a representation of the comments received.

- No tolls; should be from tax revenues.
- If I were choosing from alternatives, I would vote for 6A.
- I like 4- costs the least, still see benefit. Let's optimize what we have first. I also like 6A, but the costs are outrageous.
- Addition of extended and accessible public transportation to high retail/residential density areas. Simply adding more lanes will alleviate traffic conditions briefly but as traffic/commute times only increase and never decrease, another solution is necessary to supplement how people travel.

9. SOCIAL MEDIA

In May of 2010, the project team opened **revive285 top end** Facebook and Twitter accounts. These accounts were launched to engage the public on a regular basis and to provide the most up to date information on the **revive285 top end** initiative and happenings along the top end of I-285. The key to social

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media is “conversation,” meaning prompt responses and interaction. The role of the project team is to interact with the Facebook fans and Twitter followers as community outreach coordinators, using the project’s communication objectives as its foundation: educate, inform, and engage only to obtain public feedback on the project.

As of May 2011, there are 200 active users on the project’s Facebook page and 575 Twitter followers on the project’s Twitter page. Social media has been successful with engaging the public in dialogue about the project. Furthermore, social media has been used to quickly disseminate time sensitive project information. Below is a representation of the comments posted on the project’s Facebook and Twitter accounts.

- Not enough is being done (potentially) for the GA 400/I-285 interchange. Unless plan 6B is chosen, we’ll still have two left-handed entrances to GA 400 from I-285 in two directions (I-285E to GS 400N and I-285W to GA-400S). That is unacceptable in this day and age.
- Would the right-of-way be purchased when the right-of-way for the additional road space was purchased? And what measures would be put in place to assure the land was preserved only for transit and not for future road widening?
- Why is the potentially affected area being expanded? Have you changed the scope from the scenarios that were presented and commented on previously? This expansion is of great concern.
- One easy and quick fix that would immediately help congestion on 285 would be to take one of the left 400 northbound lanes where the west bound 285 traffic merges onto northbound 400 and dedicate it solely to the 285 traffic. Sort of like how you took a lane away from southbound 85 to give an extra land to the 400 southbound merge.