

Technical Advisory Committee – Meeting #1

March 27, 2017 | 3:00 – 5:00 PM

Forsyth County Government – Commission Chambers

110 East Main Street; Cumming, GA

Attendees

Gerald Blackburn, City of Cumming

Megan Weiss, AICP, GDOT Planning

Scott Morgan, City of Cumming

Tim Allen, Forsyth County Engineering

Tim Amerson, Forsyth County Schools

Tom Brown, Forsyth County Planning & Community Development

Ben Finley, Forsyth County Sheriff's Office

Barry Lucas, Forsyth County Water & Sewer

Mayor H. Ford Gravitt, City of Cumming

Summary of Presentation

Michael Kray, Consultant Team Project Manager, opened the meeting with a brief presentation about the planning process and outcomes and the overall goal, which is to identify projects that can be funded and implemented. A review of the 2011 plan showed a high percentage of projects funded/implemented. He next reviewed funding sources which included the SPLOST, the bond program and other resources that the County uses to implement transportation projects.

Funded through the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), local transportation plans are the building blocks to a larger, regional transportation plan. The ARC provided 80% of the funds for this three step process which includes an inventory of existing conditions, an assessment of needs, and recommendations. The plan horizon is 2040 and is currently in the inventory of existing conditions phase. The assessment of needs phase will analyze strengths and weaknesses and is comprehensive, encompassing roadways, bike ped, freight, and transit. Identified needs will become recommended projects that can address the major issues. Projects will be prioritized and presented to the Committees and to the public before the recommendations are finalized. The process concludes in December of 2017 with the County Commission Board to adopt in January 2018.

Data analysis methods will examine a range of demographics using census data such as poverty, minority, zero car households, senior populations, and population density. Land use and community facilities identified through the recently completed Comprehensive Plan will also be assessed. Roadway characteristics such as level of service/roadway congestion, and bridge status are being evaluated using County data, model projections, and roadway volumes.

Public and stakeholder input was identified as another important data collection method. Outreach is scheduled to occur at an ongoing rate throughout the process and will use a variety of methods to share and collect information including a project website, public meetings and a community survey. The project will have a presence in the community as well as online.

The presentation concluded with an overview of plan goals and objectives. The US Department of Transportation's seven goal areas were referenced as a starting point as well as the Georgia Statewide Strategic Plan goals, which are aligned with the federal goals. The Forsyth Plan goals should align well with the federal and state goals. They should also be "SMART" (Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound) in order to quantify the success of the transportation program.

Summary of Action Items

Review Plan Goals + Objectives

- Most important goals/objectives:
 - Reduce congestion
 - Improve mobility
 - Safety
- Other feedback
 - Infrastructure conditions need to be addressed as well as funding opportunities
 - Arterials are now more impacted due to congestion and their use as alternate routes.
 - Traffic/congestion is the biggest problem in Cumming/Forsyth
 - SR 9 and SR 20 need improvements to help move traffic along
 - A traffic center inside of City Hall could be an option for the County as a way to see issues and to respond quickly.
 - Add additional goal for ITS technology

- GDOT has a similar system to monitor some of the major areas through the Regional Traffic Operations Program (RTOP)
 - Can explore expanding RTOP program
 - Concern with the widening of SR 20, which comes to the city limits and will funnel traffic into town with no thought about what to do on local streets.
 - Veteran's at Maple Street towards Hwy 9 east on that road – widening here can alleviate congestion onto Hwy 9. Also on Castleberry Road.
- Community Development
 - Congestion is the most common complaint as well as school overcrowding
 - Also hear more over last few years re: how the streets look and how they relate to the property around them.
 - More demand for street trees, streetscaping, sidewalks, bike trails.
 - Not just about moving cars or bikes, but also about aesthetics.
 - Can be a challenge for the county; we have a lot of roads.
 - How can the look of a street tie into the community
 - Can be expensive to maintain and upkeep.
 - Have this issue with sidewalks around schools as well
 - Installation of sidewalks is a positive but it also now requires that they be maintained.
 - Is an opportunity for some developer maintained landscaping. Someone has ownership – this is the best position to be in.
- Schools
 - Traffic is 60% bus/40% carpool lane.
 - Under 5% walk/bike – not enough infrastructure or roadway speeds are too high
 - Schools experience 20 – 30 min backup sometimes in AM with drop offs.
 - Schools stack traffic afterschool for dismissals
 - Older schools are built on what are now major highways and are close to the road without a lot of front driveway access and nowhere to queue cars.
 - Newer schools can accommodate cars more efficiently.
 - All new schools have been identified to be built off of the major roads to try to get traffic to feed into school without backing up onto major arterials.
 - Bus policy is to pick up anyone who requests it. Things have changed over the years.

- Try to incorporate new schools into areas with residential support. Get feedback that residents do not want connections from schools to subdivisions/neighborhoods.
- Greenway
 - Would be nice to have greenways to connect to schools.
 - School system is trying to look at making connection points at some school sites.
 - Nothing in goals that talks about greenway system. Should that be called out?
 - May be appropriate for long range.
 - Much of these recommendations are in the current bike/ped plan
- Since 2011 goals are still valid as is, the Consultant Team will add performance measures to the objectives and will present at the next meeting.

Review Existing Conditions Data

This included review of a series of maps depicting Level of Service during AM and PM peak flow, Bicycle and Pedestrian amenities, and High Crash Intersections. The Committee discussed issues and concerns, which were recorded directly on the maps.

Review Community Survey + Public Involvement

The Committee was provided with a draft of the community survey questions. Input was received during the session and can be submitted to the Consultant Team via email over the next week before the survey is finalized and launched on April 12th.