

## **Technical Advisory Committee – Meeting #2**

June 29, 2017 | 3:00 – 5:00 PM

Cumming- Forsyth County Chamber of Commerce

212 Kelly Mill Road, Cumming, GA 30040

### **Attendees**

Megan Weiss, AICP, Georgia Department of Transportation

Mayor H. Ford Gravitt. City of Cumming

Jodi Gardner, Forsyth County Communications

Tim Allen, Forsyth County Engineering

Tom Brown, Forsyth County Planning & Community Development

### **Summary of Presentation**

The purpose of the second meeting of the Technical Advisory Committee was to bring the group up to date on the latest project deliverables, including the completed Existing Conditions report; feedback collected from the public via the open house sessions and the online survey; other public engagement completed to date; and to get feedback on the goals and objectives. Michael Kray, Consultant Team Project Manager, highlighted several components of the Existing Conditions Report as summarized in the sections that follow. Comments offered by the Committee members are shown as bulleted items.

The full Existing Conditions report can be found on the project website at <http://forsythtransportationplan.com/review.php> under "Reports & Maps."

### Demographics Overview

Mr. Kray discussed population growth and projections. On the spectrum of density, Forsyth is between an exurban and suburban county. The median household income is higher than the Atlanta Metropolitan Statistical Area. Low income pockets in the County were examined. There are some anomalies in the data that show low income/poverty near Lake Lanier which could be explained by retired families/individuals who do not report an income.

- Members of the Committee also noted that housing is relatively affordable around the lake in the Shady Shores community. Homes at Jot Em Down Road are more expensive/less affordable.

The Team will dive deeper into the low income occurrence around the lake. The Existing Conditions data also shows most of the County's diversity in the south and in Cumming. Minority and poverty do not overlay/coincide in Forsyth as in most communities. However, high income does correspond to automobile ownership, as most have access to a car. Only 2.4% of Forsyth residents do not have access to a car at home.

### Travel Patterns

The County's population is dense in the areas south of SR 20, where most origins and destinations occur. Major trip generators such as large retail centers were also mapped and are proven sources of travel demand. Most commercial development is along major routes in the County. There is not heavy strip commercial development throughout Forsyth, which is beneficial to mobility as it reduces turning movements, curb cuts, etc. The County does not have to deal with many of these issues that impact mobility. The Team recommended shared access/shared driveways for future development.

Employment density is concentrated in specific areas. Census data shows that people who live in Forsyth work along SR 400 even as far south as Perimeter, Midtown, Buckhead, and Downtown. There are also some employment centers in Cumberland and Gwinnett, however, most flows are along SR 400. Many jobs are close to the County boundary. Many people who work in Forsyth also live in Forsyth. The Regional Travel Demand model outputs show most daily flow out of Forsyth goes to Hall County and North Fulton. Trips also go to the airport, Midtown and Downtown. The majority of trips are closer to home. The same is true of daily flows entering the County. Job centers are the big draw for destinations. The Travel Demand Model also validates SR 400 as the most heavily used road in the County.

Lastly, the Team measured traffic volumes from traffic counts. The traffic counts confirm the findings of the Travel Demand Model in most areas, however there were some discrepancies. The Travel Demand Model undercounts Ronald Regan Parkway, Bethelview Road, Post Road, SR 20, and SR 369. The Team will do scenario testing within the Travel Demand Model to try to

create a closer representation of what is actually happening. SR 400 was also modeled to include current and future projects including projects to add additional capacity. This scenario resulted in reduced congestion and an improved Level of Service in the AM and PM peaks.

### Network Summary

The data shows that major arterials – SR 400, SR 121 and SR 20 – are handling the majority of the mobility within the County. Most of the delay is on the minor arterial network and secondary roads. Travel shed analysis, which measures how far a car can travel away from the centroid of the County in 15 minutes. AM and PM travel sheds were computed. Data shows a large percentage of commuters are within a 30 minute travel shed in the AM. The PM travel shed shows that it would take drivers longer than 30 minutes to return to the same point. Real (INRIX) data shows a similar pattern but with a PM commute time that is much worse. SR 20 shows a serious congestion issue, however, planned improvements are expected to address these concerns.

- City of Cumming is talking to GDOT about some solutions for the 6 lanes that will dump out into Cumming from SR 20. They are considering different ways to divert the traffic, including the widening of SR 371.
- Cumming is also talking to GDOT about the concrete median.
- Cherokee County commissioners have talked about some changes to the design of SR 20, as well. The idea is to use a 6-lane section to SR 369 east; reduce SR 20 to a 4-lane section into Cumming; and to use a 4-lane section from SR 369 to Hall County.

### Transit

Mr. Kray presented some 2016 operating statistics of the Dial-A-Ride service in the County. The system does get used but many trips were rejected because the system is at capacity. Fleet services is addressing the capacity need by providing additional vans. There will be new County services for disabled citizens that will be coordinated with transportation services, as well. GRTA is also available in Cumming with three routes leaving from the Park and Ride lot in Cumming and serving Downtown, Perimeter, and Emory. Amending the Xpress services to serve north Fulton is a consideration.

### Freight

There are a number of freight/truck routes since Forsyth is served by many state routes. Committee members confirmed that SR 369, SR 306 and SR 53 have heavy truck traffic. The Committee did not recommend adding any local roads to the freight network.

- The new interchange at McGinnis Ferry may present an opportunity to serve as a freight route in the future.
- The County confirmed that per the truck ordinance, every route that is not a truck route is closed to truck traffic. Delivery/pick up is allowed but no through trucks.

### Public Engagement

Jen Price provided an overview of the first round of public open houses and the community survey. The input collected at the public open house sessions confirmed what the Team heard from the Technical and Stakeholder Advisory Committees at the first meeting. The online survey responses also confirmed many of the findings including automobile ownership, commute patterns, transit usage, and concerns about congestion. The public is likely/extremely likely to vote for the next SPLOST.

The Team also logged and mapped public comments in regards to specific congested corridors. This data will help the Team compare to analytical needs that has been identified to be sure the Team is making recommendations where they are most needed.

- SR 9 north was built in 1923 and is still a 2-lane road. Surprised DOT has not shown more interest in this corridor
  - There are some GDOT plans in long range that are on the books for this corridor.
- Arterial routes are the ones that were mentioned by the public but many of these roads will be improved or built within the next 10 years. Improvements will clear up much of what is happening on the south end. The County will keep growing.
  - Forsyth has been aggressive with getting projects done but there is still not enough money to go around.
  - Bond money/referendum has been a huge contributor to getting projects going and for getting them built.

- Feeder roads are becoming more than feeders. Kelly Mill/Post Road is the next major road that needs to be worked on.
- Majors Road is a bond project that will connect to Ronald Regan Parkway. Majors Road can feed east/west traffic and will be a secondary roadway. It will be able to better handle capacity.

The Team also mapped public comments on problem intersections. Many comments are off of the major route system. The Team will look at this information more closely during the Needs Assessment phase.

### Schedule

The remaining schedule was reviewed. At this time, the Existing Conditions report is currently being reviewed for comments. The Team will finalize the Needs Assessment by mid-August. The final plans will be submitted in the December timeframe.

### Goals & Objectives Discussion

Goals presented were from the 2011 Comprehensive Transportation Plan. The Team has added some objectives to these goals. The Committee reviewed and discussed the Goals and Objectives, offering the following comments.

#### *Goal #4: Ensure financial viability of transportation system*

- Do not see 75% of the SPLOST going towards transportation. Is this realistic?
  - If we want to keep projects moving forward, we need to allocate more. The Bond will be gone in the future. How can we maintain if we do not dedicate more funds? If not, the system will degrade.
  - There is a Commission wish list of over \$500 Million worth of projects which is twice the amount that is projected to be collected.
  - If we do not commit funding, we will be back where we were.
  - This is a goal; something to shoot for.
  - The goal will be balanced by the financial capability of the County in the financial projections.
  - The Team may consider a range instead of a number.

*Goal #1: Develop project and policy strategies to complement and implement the County's Comprehensive Plan vision and Goal #7: Promote appropriate economic development relevant to desired land use.*

- The Team wants to make sure that infrastructure investments match the future land use plans.
- The Foster Forsyth Comprehensive Land Use Plan will hopefully be adopted next Thursday as transmitted to the Department of Community Affairs.
- Road improvements can be phased and increased in capacity over time so that they match land use plans and development.
- On the north end of the County, do not refer to this area not as rural, as it can have a negative connotation. Some residents feel that they are missing out on the type of development that the south of the County has benefitted from.

#### Prioritization Structure – Draft

Mr. Kray reviewed the draft prioritization structure and explained that the Team can prioritize projects based on geography or other factors, and can adjust measures to achieve the outcomes that are desired for a certain area, activity center, or node. Different projects with different needs/outcomes can be weighted differently based upon where they are located or the project scale. Prioritization weights are not final.

- In the past, prioritization of roadway projects boiled down to Level of Service. Projects that resulted in an improved Level of Service were a priority. This will keep a minimal acceptable Level of Service throughout the County.
- The simpler and cleaner you make it, the better. Prioritization should avoid subjective projects/options.
- We will have to make the best choices based on limited resources.
- Delay and Level of Service are concepts that the public understands.
- This structure would be good for prioritizing intersection projects and minor corridor improvements. For major roadways, make Level of Service the major consideration in prioritizing projects.

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**Next Steps**

The Committee was asked to review and offer comments on the 2017 CTP Goals and Objectives and the Prioritization Structure. Materials will be sent to all Committee members. The date of the next Committee meeting will be in the September/October timeframe.