



**Russell R. McMurry, P.E., Commissioner**  
One Georgia Center  
600 West Peachtree NW  
Atlanta, GA 30308  
(404) 631-1990 Main Office

**MARCH 27, 2020**

Re: Responses to Public Information Open House Comments for PI# 0001758, Cobb, Fulton, and DeKalb Counties, I-285 Top End Express Lanes

Thank you for your comments concerning the proposed I-285 Top End Express Lanes project. The proposed project would construct approximately 22 miles of new at-grade and elevated, barrier-separated express lanes (EL) in both directions on I-285 from just south of Paces Ferry Road in Cobb County to Henderson Road in DeKalb County, and along SR 400 from the Glenridge Connector to the North Springs MARTA Station. Two lanes in both directions are proposed between I-75 and I-85, and single lanes in both directions are proposed from I-75 south to Paces Ferry Road and I-85 south to Henderson Road. The proposed express lanes would improve mobility and travel-time reliability along the Top End for drivers and improve connections between regional destinations through express lanes that integrate with the greater metro Atlanta express lanes network.

We appreciate your participation and input from the Public Information Open Houses (PIOHs) held on January 21, 23, 28, and 30, 2020. Every written, electronic, and verbal comment given to the court reporter will be part of the project's official record. A total of **722** people attended the PIOHs. Of the **485** respondents who formally commented, **82** were in support of the project, **250** were opposed, **33** were uncommitted, **109** expressed conditional support, and **11** were unspecified.

The attendees of the PIOHs and those submitting comments raised a number of questions. Due to the volume and breadth of comments, not all topics can be covered in a response letter. Therefore, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) has provided a summary of comments and responses herein. GDOT will provide additional detailed responses in the future to more thoroughly address the comments received as an update to this summary letter. This first response letter is intended to provide guidance on how to review our full detailed response which will be available online in April/May 2020. The public will be notified once the full detailed response is available on the I-285 Top End EL project website housed in the "Document Library" portion of the website: <https://majormobilityga.com/projects/topend/>. To request a hard copy of the full detailed response which will be available later in the spring, please contact GDOT environmental analyst Kaelin Priger at 404-631-1362. Please note, a full detailed response for the three I-285 Top End Advanced Improvement Projects (AIP) presented at the January 2020 PIOH series will be distributed in conjunction with this summary letter.

It should be noted that the comments addressed in this response are related to GDOT's responsibilities on the I-285 Top End EL project only. There are several other major transportation projects currently underway in the same area: SR 400 EL, I-285 Eastside EL, I-285 Westside EL, and three of the six I-285 AIPs, which are all currently in conceptual planning. For more information on those projects, please visit the Major Mobility Improvement Program (MMIP) website: <https://majormobilityga.com/> and click on "Projects" to learn more. For information on the Transform 285/400 Interchange project, which is currently under construction, please visit <http://www.dot.ga.gov/BuildSmart/Projects/Pages/I285SR400.aspx>. We have received comments related to these projects and have forwarded public input to the appropriate project teams.

There were a number of comments received covering various topics which are anticipated to be covered in the official I-285 Top End Express Lane detailed response to public comments. These include:

- *Project Information and Schedule* – Information about the project development process, funding, public involvement, local government involvement, and project timeline.
  - The project is currently in the preliminary engineering phase which includes the environmental process. The final project design will be advanced by the successful bidder (Developer) upon award of the contract.
  - Project funding comes from the passage of the 2015 Transportation Funding Act (TFA) by the Georgia General Assembly and from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Additionally, the project is anticipated to be delivered using a Public-Private Partnership (P3) contracting model, whereby GDOT solicits bids from private investors, equity partners, and Developers for the project. The successful bidder will partner with GDOT and secure financing for the design and construction of the project.
  - The project will be constructed as two smaller packages to maximize competition, maintain competitive pricing, and phase construction for improved maintenance of traffic during construction. The eastern portion of Top End is proposed to begin construction in 2023, and the western portion of Top End is proposed to begin construction in 2026. The schedule can be viewed online as part of the MMIP here: [https://cdn.majormobilityga.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/25141413/MMIP-Timeline-Updated\\_03-1.pdf](https://cdn.majormobilityga.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/25141413/MMIP-Timeline-Updated_03-1.pdf).
  - The project website serves as an information hub with project updates, fact sheets, displays, meeting announcements, and contact information.
- *Design Considerations and Alternatives Analysis* – Information about the current design of the project and suggestions for alternatives. The displays shown at the PIOHs represent the current proposed concept based on data and input received to date. The project team will continue to refine the concept as additional project information and data are collected through coordination with stakeholders, public comment, and technical studies. The public will have an additional opportunity to view the concept, including any revisions, at the Public Hearing Open House (PHOH). Concerns from the community included at-grade vs. elevated lanes, pedestrian facilities, proposed bridge replacements, and potential detour location and duration.
- *Access Points* – Information about how access points were identified based on travel demand, stakeholder input, and potential changes in local traffic patterns/volumes.
- *Express Lanes and Tolling* – Information about tolling from the State Road and Tollway Authority (SRTA), and equity considerations. General information about express lanes can be found at this link: <http://www.dot.ga.gov/DriveSmart/GEL/Documents/GEL/FAQ.pdf>.
- *Noise* – Information about the noise analysis GDOT uses as a part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process and potential noise abatement measures (i.e., barriers). The I-285 Top End EL project noise impact assessment is underway, and results will be shared at the PHOH anticipated to be held next year. Noise barriers along part of the corridor will be installed in multiple locations as a part of the Transform 285/400 project. The Transform 285/400 noise barriers will be installed independent of the assessment for the I-285 Top End EL project. The project team recognizes the concerns voiced by the community regarding noise, the potential noise impacts of the project, and the desire for timely information regarding noise barriers.

- *Potential School Impacts* – Information about potential right-of-way (ROW), air, noise, and traffic impacts to schools along the corridor, in addition to concerns regarding safety in proximity to elevated lanes, noise/air pollution/visual impacts to students and staff.
- *Right-of-Way* – Information on GDOT's ROW and property acquisition process, proposed schedule, and property appraisals. For more information on the GDOT's ROW process, please visit: <http://www.dot.ga.gov/PS/ROW>.
- *Transit* - Information about the role of transit in the express lanes system and the I-285 Top End EL. The project is being designed to not preclude studies or implementation of transit by others.
- *Community Concerns* - Information on specific concerns voiced by communities within or near the project corridor including property impacts, potential land use and landscaping, visual impacts, noise, amenities, environmental impacts and concerns, and effects of multiple construction projects occurring along the Top End corridor, and more. As the comments received touch upon a variety of topics, the project team will address those related to this project and forward those outside the scope of the project to the appropriate parties.

Again, thank you for your comments. The concerns of the stakeholders along the corridor are being considered by subject matter experts. We take your comments seriously and information on the above topics, and others, will be made available on the project website in April/May 2020:

<https://majormobilityga.com/projects/topend/>. In addition to this letter, there will be more opportunities in the future for continued engagement with GDOT as the design of I-285 Top End EL project progresses. If you would like to receive email updates about this project, please email [TopEndExpressLanes@dot.ga.gov](mailto:TopEndExpressLanes@dot.ga.gov) and request to be added to the email list.

Should you have further questions, comments, or concerns, please contact the MMIP program manager Tim Matthews, P.E. at [tmatthews@dot.ga.gov](mailto:tmatthews@dot.ga.gov) or 404-978-7490 or the environmental analyst, Kaelin Priger, at [kpriger@dot.ga.gov](mailto:kpriger@dot.ga.gov) or 404-631-1362.

Sincerely,



Eric Duff  
State Environmental Administrator

ED/KP/md

cc: Tim Matthews, P.E., GDOT MMIP Program Manager (via email)  
Representative Erick Allen  
Representative Teri Anulewicz  
Representative Matt Dollar  
Representative Scott Holcomb  
Representative Josh McLaurin  
Representative Deborah Silcox  
Representative Mike Wilensky  
Representative Matthew Wilson

Senator John Albers  
Senator Sally Harrell  
Senator Emanuel Jones  
Senator Jennifer Jordan  
Senator Michael Rhett  
Senator Horacena Tate  
Kevin Abel, GDOT Board Member  
PDF for Project File