

2020 Public Information Open House Response to Public Comments

I-285 Top End Express Lanes GDOT PI 0001758, Cobb, Fulton, and DeKalb Counties

Version 1
 April 2020

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In January 2020, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) hosted seven Public Information Open Houses (PIOHs) to provide project information and to solicit public comments on the Interstate 285 (I-285) Top End Express Lanes Project. The attendees of the PIOHs and those persons submitting comments within the comment period raised a number of questions. GDOT has developed this summary of comments and responses to provide clarity on the project's features and process. Below, the project team has organized the comments into broad topics. In each section, individual comment themes are presented in italics followed by GDOT's response to each comment. GDOT anticipates additional responses will be added to this summary in the future to more thoroughly address the comments received and will update this summary as the project concept evolves and more project details become available.

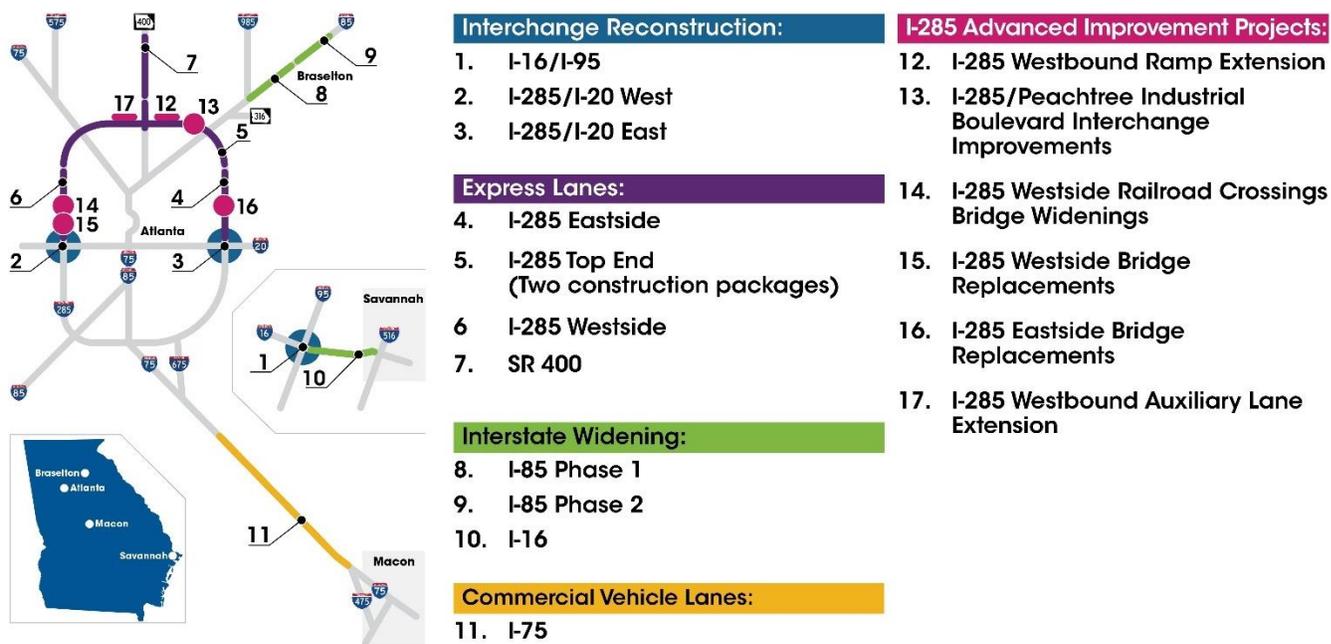
Express Lanes Overview

Georgia express lanes are optional, priced lanes that complement the general purpose lanes along the interstates in some of the most congested corridors around metro Atlanta. These lanes provide a choice for drivers to bypass congestion when desired, offer a clear path for transit operators, and add an alternative to the general purpose lanes that exist today.

The result will be a network of express lanes that provide more reliable and predictable trip times. All Georgia express lanes rely on congestion-based toll pricing to provide reliable travel times, especially during peak congestion.

An important part of this network is the Major Mobility Investment Program (MMIP). The MMIP consists of 17 transportation projects including the metro Atlanta express lanes noted in purple on the map below.

Exhibit 1: Georgia Express Lanes Network



Through the development of the MMIP, we have considered industry feedback regarding the quantity and timing of major procurements, as well as the size of the procurement packages. After assessing the state of the program, the I-285 Top End Express Lanes 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 projects will cover the same areas of I-285 and SR400 but will be constructed separately as the I-285 Top End West Express Lanes and I-285 Top End East Express Lanes.

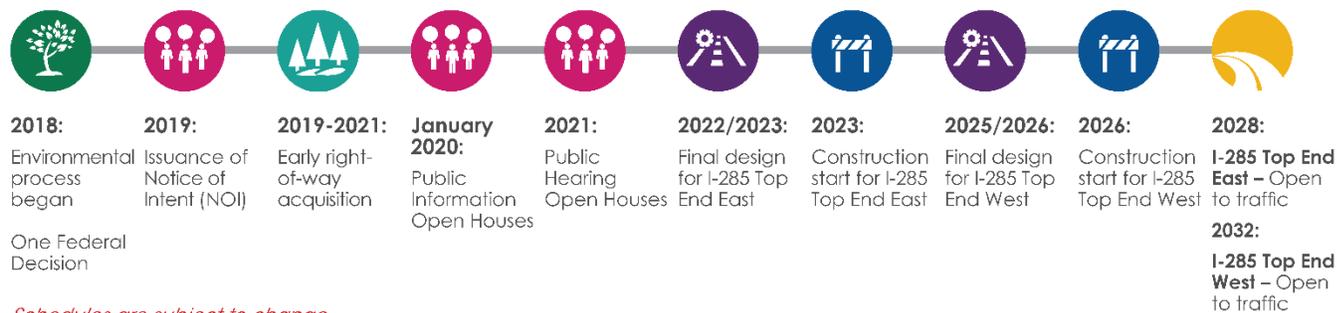
Project Overview

Project Need and Purpose

The project is needed to provide reliable travel times for drivers and transit users and to improve connectivity between regional destinations through priced express lanes that are proposed to integrate with the current and future metro Atlanta express lanes network. An average of more than 240,000 vehicles per day rely on the I-285 top end corridor, especially during commuting hours. It is estimated that the growth in traffic volumes will reach more than 300,000 vehicles per day by 2052.

Project Schedule

A general project timeline is shown below, from the current environmental process through the public hearing, final design, and construction phases.



The current project schedule for the I-285 Top End Express Lanes project is phased as part of the overall MMIP schedule, which is available for access at your convenience at this link: https://cdn.majormobilityga.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/25141413/MMIP-Timeline-Updated_03-1.pdf.

Comments and Responses

Project Process

Comments were received requesting increased and continuing transparency, public notice, and coordination with local governments.

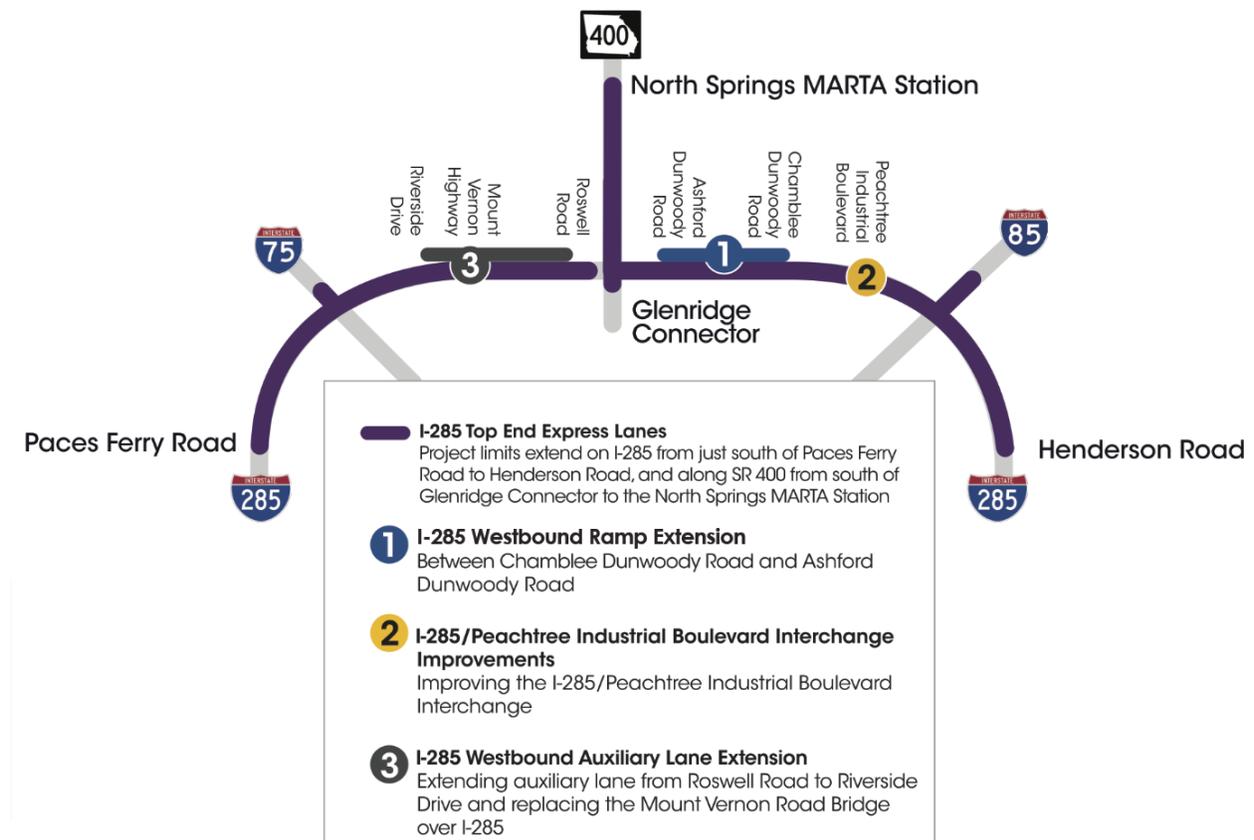
Since the I-285 Top End Express Lanes project was announced in early 2016 as part of the larger Major Mobility Investment Program (MMIP), GDOT has coordinated with stakeholders and sought to inform the public about the project. GDOT has held more than 300 presentations and meetings to educate and seek input from stakeholders and local citizens in the past three years. These include concept coordination meetings with elected officials and local government staff as well as numerous public presentations to city councils, homeowners' associations (HOAs), and other civic organizations. Information on the project has been shared by both traditional and social media outlets. GDOT has also undertaken activities to distribute and gather more information about the project, including:

- Sending early coordination letters to federal, state, and local agencies;
- Soliciting feedback from organizations along the corridor;
- Requesting civic and religious organizations along the corridor to share information with their contacts and distribution lists about the project and public meetings;
- Posting information along the corridor; and
- Publishing legal ads and posting road signs advertising the public meetings.

In addition, GDOT hosted seven PIOHs along the corridor in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); posted meeting materials online at the project website (<https://majormobilityga.com/projects/topend/>); and solicited comments via the project website, email, letters, and court reporters. The PIOHs attracted 722 attendees and generated 485 public comments, in addition to the project team receiving numerous phone calls, letters, and emails. As the project is still in the concept design/environmental review phase, GDOT will continue to coordinate with local governments on the project's preliminary engineering. GDOT will continue to receive and respond to comments submitted by emailing TopEndExpressLanes@dot.ga.gov.

Three of the six I-285 Top End Advanced Improvement Projects (AIP) were also presented at the January 2020 PIOH series. These projects include I-285 Westbound Ramp Extension (PI 0017125), I-285/Peachtree Industrial Boulevard Interchange Improvements (PI 0017126), and I-285 Westbound Auxiliary Lane Extension (PI 0017130) (see Exhibit 2: I-285 Top End Express Lanes Project Map). A full detailed response for these three I-285 Top End Advanced Improvement Projects (AIP) was distributed in March 2020 and can be found here: <https://majormobilityga.com/advancedprojects/>.

Exhibit 2: I-285 Top End Express Lanes Project Map with Advanced Improvement Projects



The I-285 Top End Express Lanes project website will continue to be updated during the environmental process. A more refined project concept will be presented at the project's Public Hearing Open Houses (PHOHs), which are proposed to be held in early 2021. The PHOHs will be publicized via web, road signage, media outlets, and other methods to allow the public the opportunity to learn about the project's progress. The project website will continue to be updated as new information becomes available. The design-build contractor, referred to as the Developer, would be responsible for completing the final design for the project.

Funding

Comments were submitted regarding the funding and cost of the project and included suggestions about funding different types of projects, such as bridge and other infrastructure replacement, as well as rail transit projects such as MARTA expansion. Additionally, concerns were expressed about the cost of maintenance for the express lanes.

The I-285 Top End Express Lanes project was made possible by the General Assembly's passage of the Transportation Funding Act (TFA) of 2015 and funding 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 entities, equity partners, and Developers for the project. In Georgia, P3s are formed between public entities like GDOT and private engineering/developer firms to design and build infrastructure projects. The successful bidder will partner with GDOT and secure financing for the design and construction of the project.

GDOT is responsible for planning, constructing, maintaining, and improving the state's roads, bridges, and interstates. Investments in MMIP projects will create additional capacity, improve freight movements, provide transportation improvements and efficiencies, enhance safety, and decrease travel times. Express lanes support these efforts by offering a new mobility choice to drivers and providing more reliable trip times.

Transit operators receive funding from different sources. While GDOT maintains mobility partnerships with local and regional authorities, it does not have a role in expansion of any systems or their operations. The Atlanta-Region Transit Link (ATL) Authority collaborates with regional transit authorities, such as Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), CobbLinc, Gwinnett County Transit, and State Road and Tollway Authority (SRTA) that are responsible for operations of heavy rail, light rail, vanpools, and bus transit operations and the advancement of transit in the region.

Access Points

Multiple comments were submitted concerning eliminating, moving, and/or adding access points.

It is GDOT's general practice not to combine a proposed express lane access point with an existing general purpose access point. General purpose and express lanes interchanges remain as separate facilities to avoid potential operational impacts of combining both traffic types into a single location. Therefore, GDOT is not considering some of the suggested locations as potential access points.

All existing general purpose interchange access points will be maintained under the future build condition of the proposed express lanes (EL) project. For example, drivers entering or exiting I-285's existing general purpose lanes from Roswell Road or Ashford-Dunwoody Road will still be able to do so as they do now, which is the same for other existing interchanges in the Top End Corridor.

Determining new EL access point locations proposed as part of the project requires thorough analysis of several factors that must be carefully balanced with each other. This analysis includes evaluation of environmental impacts, community impacts, right-of-way impacts, connectivity to the overall EL system, and also includes assessing the potential operational impacts to roadways that are immediately adjacent to the proposed EL access.

Specific locations of potential access points and the comments received about them are listed below. The criteria detailed above regarding access point analysis apply to all the comments received about access points, so detailed responses are limited. All access points continue to be evaluated as the design progresses.

1. **Western Section of I-285 Top End** – *comments were received about this section of the project corridor including requests for additional access points west of SR400 and questions about access for EMS to reach potential roadway incidents.*

Access points west of SR400 will be evaluated as the project progresses. The project team coordinates with public safety officials at state and local levels as part of the planning and design process to assure adequate EMS access and response time are maintained.

2. **Mount Vernon Highway** – comments were received suggesting moving the access point to Hammond Drive/Abernathy Road or other areas or eliminating this location as an access point altogether because of increased traffic on local roads.

A traffic study will be performed to assess the anticipated future traffic volumes and traffic pattern changes that will be utilizing the Mt. Vernon Highway bridge (over SR400) under the future build condition of the proposed express lanes project.

The project team is assessing various alternatives for this interchange and is currently analyzing environmental, design, and traffic data to determine potential impacts of project implementation and future operational feasibility. This information, along with public feedback received as part of the PIOH series, will help to inform the design of the proposed access point.

The bridge at Mt. Vernon Highway over I-285 is now programmed for replacement in the I-285 Advanced Improvement Project (AIP) Westbound Auxiliary Lane Extension project.

3. **Flowers Road** – comments were received expressing concerns about trucks and industrial use in this area related to the safety of vehicular traffic; additional requests were received for a turn lane and one lane in each direction instead of two lanes in each direction.

The project team is performing a traffic study to determine the number of lanes and potential addition of turning lanes as required. Additionally, a safety analysis will be completed before final design.

4. **I-285/SR400 Interchange** – comments expressed wanting more access in and out of EL system at SR400.

Access in and out of the EL system will be refined at the I-285/SR400 interchange during the ongoing traffic studies and design. Potential locations for access and merging in this area require close coordination with the design and construction teams working on the Transform 285/400 and SR400 EL projects.

5. **North Peachtree Road** – comments requested an option on Peachtree Industrial Boulevard to be able to exit at North Peachtree; comments were also received suggesting a diverging diamond interchange.

Drivers could still use northbound or southbound Peachtree Industrial Boulevard as they do today, merge onto I-285 heading west, and then almost immediately enter the EL system at the direct merge to travel westward without using local streets. The reverse commute would be similar for drivers traveling northbound or southbound on Peachtree Industrial Boulevard wanting to go in the eastbound direction of I-285. The project team is evaluating interchange and intersection configurations as part of the project's Intersection Control Evaluation (ICE) study

to determine the appropriate configurations for each interchange/intersection that would be modified by the project.

6. **Perimeter Center Parkway** – *comments requested for this access point to be changed to Perimeter Parkway East.*

Changing this access point would displace major commercial properties at an existing cross street east of Perimeter Center.

7. **Johnson Ferry Road** – *comments requested for access point interchange to be inside I-285 to mitigate traffic collecting on local roadways.*

Potential traffic impacts related to this proposed express lane access point will be further studied within the confines of GDOT's Intersection Control Evaluation (ICE) policy. Extensive coordination is being conducted with local government staff, as well as local elected officials, to determine the most feasible and efficient express lanes access solution within the area.

8. **Cumberland Boulevard** – *comments suggested addition of a full interchange at this location.*

This area is the transition point between the I-285 Top End EL and the I-285 Westside EL. Currently, the design for Top End includes a north-facing half diamond. The south-facing ramps are included in the I-285 Westside EL at Mt. Wilkinson. Constructing a full interchange at Cumberland Boulevard would be impractical, as the south-facing ramps would directly conflict with an existing railroad bridge and pedestrian bridge, which crosses I-285 immediately south of Cumberland Boulevard. The ramps would require replacement of the existing railroad bridge and pedestrian bridges, raising the profile of the railroad so that it would be elevated over the express lanes. For these reasons, a full interchange is not planned.

9. **Pleasantdale Road** – *comments suggest extending the EL exit from Pleasantdale Road to I-85.*

Access to and from the ELs in the vicinity between Pleasantdale Road and I-85 will be considered as part of the ongoing traffic studies and design.

10. **Cobb Parkway** – *request for access to be added here into ELs westbound on I-285; additional request to move Paces Ferry access point to Cobb Parkway to alleviate traffic weaving issues.*

The direct merge access is located at Paces Ferry Road to provide enough distance for drivers to exit the express lanes and weave across multiple general purpose lanes to access I-75. Likewise, in the westbound direction this provides enough distance for drivers entering I-285 from I-75 to weave across multiple general purpose lanes and enter the express lanes system. GDOT does not generally combine general purpose interchanges with express lane interchanges.

11. **Riverside Drive** – requests received to add access.

Access to and from the ELs in the vicinity of Riverside Drive will be considered as part of the ongoing traffic studies and design.

Design

Multiple comments were submitted regarding the concept layouts and proposed design including suggestions for general adjustments as well as requests for changes at specific locations. Several of the areas receiving comments have also been referenced in the above access point discussion. The comments and suggestions for design are listed below to reflect the variety of feedback received from community members.

Please note the design is still in progress, and any adjustments must comply with all local, state, and federal laws, regulations, and guidelines as well as GDOT's policies and standard practices for design and operations.

1. **Mt. Wilkinson Parkway** – request received for full turn access for the interchange.

This interchange falls within the parameters of the I-285 Westside EL project scope; more information on the Westside EL project can be found at <https://majormobilityga.com/projects/westside/>, or the project team can be reached via email at WestsideExpressLanes@dot.ga.gov. This request will be routed to the Westside EL project team.

2. **At-Grade vs Elevated Lanes** – specific requests were made for at-grade design at Raiders Drive and Riverside Drive, while other requests were made for elevated lanes along the corridor to avoid impacts to residential and historic resources.

Elevated lanes are necessary in some areas. The project team is attempting to incorporate community feedback with other design considerations to determine if and where adjustments can be made. As part of the alternatives analysis, the amount of required elevated lanes may be reduced if the change does not create additional design and/or operational challenges elsewhere on the corridor. Locating express lanes at grade would increase property impacts, so studies are being performed along the project corridor to balance the costs of elevated structures versus the more impactful at-grade options.

3. **Safety concerns for north and south exit ramps from I-285 to Peachtree Industrial Boulevard**

The I-285 Advanced Improvement Project (AIP) for the Peachtree Industrial Boulevard Interchange Improvements (PI 0017126) proposes to flatten the existing horizontal curve and dip along the northbound exit ramp from westbound I-285, which would improve the geometry and operation of this ramp. The project also aims to reduce conflict points, which would improve safety, along I-285 westbound approaching this interchange. Improvements to other movements at this interchange are beyond the scope of the AIP.

4. **More general purpose lanes from I-285 eastbound to I-85 northbound or reconsidering an Outer Perimeter** – suggestions were made to revisit plans for the Outer Perimeter or widen existing I-285 instead of adding express lanes.

Based on GDOT policy adopted in 2007, any new interstate lanes constructed in the Atlanta Metropolitan area are required to be managed lanes, as a more effective alternative to the continued widening of general purpose lanes. A new Outer Perimeter is not part of the scope or need and purpose for the I-285 Top End Express Lanes.

5. **Peachtree Industrial Boulevard** – request to provide full access in all directions and reconfigure the interchange.

This suggestion does not comply with GDOT's standard practice that general purpose and express lanes interchanges remain as separate facilities to avoid potential operational impacts of combining both traffic types into a single location.

6. **Diverging diamond interchanges** – requests were received for this type of interchange in areas where it has already been noted that design changes would not meet GDOT's regulations and policies.

These locations include:

- North Shallowford Road
- North Peachtree Road
- Chamblee Dunwoody Road interchange
- Lake Forrest Drive (half diamond requested)
- Cumberland Boulevard

7. **Conversion of Savoy Drive and Cotillion Drive to a one-way pair** – comments including support for and opposition to the proposed one-way pair.

Potential traffic impacts related to the planned North Shallowford Road access point and one-way pair will be considered during the traffic analyses. The one-way pair is necessary to support the proposed access point. However, the traffic analyses will determine the intersection and lane configurations that provide the level of service in accordance with GDOT's standard practices.

A number of general comments about the design were also received and are catalogued here.

1. **Elevated vs. At-Grade Sections** – *comments were made in both support of and against elevated lanes along the corridor.*
 - For the I-285 Top End Express Lanes project, elevated lanes are necessary in select locations. As part of our alternatives analysis and design process, the project team is reviewing the corridor to assess where elevated lanes are needed. For example, the express lanes are proposed to be elevated between Roswell Road and Chamblee Dunwoody Road and along SR400 to avoid reconstructing the SR400/I-285 interchange currently being constructed as part of the Transform 285/400 Project (PI 0013546).
 - Elevating the express lanes when they could otherwise be at-grade is cost prohibitive. The effort of this project is to incorporate express lanes as cost effectively as possible. There are areas that require GDOT to elevate lanes due to the complexities of the system.
 - The project's goal is to first avoid, and second minimize, and finally mitigate any right-of-way, utility, and environmental impacts. In many cases an avoidance measure is elevating lanes. One of the benefits of elevated lanes includes a minimized project footprint, however, this needs to be balanced with costs and visual impacts as well as engineering constraints.

2. **Heights of Elevated Lanes** – *comments requested clarification regarding specific heights of the proposed elevated lanes for the I-285 Top End Express Lanes project at specific locations along the corridor.*
 - While elevated portions of the express lanes will be required, the project team is currently developing preliminary plans that will be finalized by the Developer who successfully bids on the project.
 - Final design plans, including final elevations, will be the responsibility of the Developer during final design phases (2022-2023 for the east section and 2025-2026 for the west section) and will meet the required design height standards.
 - The general range of elevations is 30 to 120 feet depending on the required clearances of active lanes, other roadway facilities, and other structures or based on other restrictions.

3. **Trails and Multiuse Paths** – *general requests were received to incorporate multiuse paths such as a “greenbelt” along the corridor to increase bikeability and walkability, including comments requesting pedestrian access across I-285 to Doraville MARTA station.*

Existing pedestrian and bicycle facilities will be maintained throughout the corridor, including bridge crossing and multiuse paths. Requests for adding greenspace or bike and pedestrian access, specifically facilities on local roads, are outside of GDOT's purview and are managed by local municipalities. The

project team has coordinated with local planners to ensure the project would not preclude any programmed or ongoing complete streets initiatives.

4. **Safety Concerns**

- *Concerns about design speed and potential for increased accidents*
- *Requests for clear and effective signage when entering/exiting ELs*

GDOT standards for operational safety are factored into the project design. All roadway signage must meet GDOT and National safety standards as well

5. **Request for two lanes in each direction eastbound on I-285 from Cumberland Boulevard** – this request is addressed in the [Access Points](#) section.

6. **Double Decking** – comments were received about the feasibility of building directly above existing I-285 lanes.

Double decking (constructing ELs above existing general purpose lanes) as a design approach was considered and eliminated based on extensive costs, construction delays, and challenges with safety, technology, and GDOT design and operations policy.

7. **Suggestions were received for specific transit facilities**, including potential transit “bulb-out” locations if bus-rapid transit or other transit initiatives from other agencies are implemented at these locations:

- *Powers Ferry Road*
- *Northside Drive*
- *Savoy Drive*
- *Cotillion Drive*
- *Henderson Mill Road*

Please refer to the Transit section of this document for more information. The I-285 Top End Express Lanes project is being designed so that it does not preclude studies or implementation of transit by others; however, transit implementation is outside of the scope of this project.

8. **Preferences and input about Alternative 1:**

- *General support for the following reasons:*
 - *Direct merge at I-75/ I-285*
 - *Lanes inside and at-grade decreases noise and visual impacts to residents, as well as allow for potential Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).*
- *Suggested design modifications:*
 - *Access to Northwest Corridor and Paces Ferry with full-turn access.*
 - *Current design for Alternative 1 precludes the ability to access Paces Ferry Road from the Northwest Corridor.*

9. **Preferences and input about Alternative 2:**

- *General support for the following reasons:*
 - *EL access to SR400 EL system south of I-285.*
 - *Less right-of-way (ROW) acquisition required.*
- *Suggested design modifications:*
 - *Access to Paces Ferry Road because of existing general purpose lanes and access for EMS.*
 - *Concern that there is no direct merge between Chamblee Dunwoody Road and North Peachtree Road.*

Alternative 2 does provide a direct merge between Chamblee Dunwoody Road and North Peachtree Road. Alternative 1 does not.

These suggestions about design are appreciated and will be reviewed during ongoing project tasks for design, environmental, and traffic analyses. As the project continues and more information becomes available, GDOT will update this comment response package periodically with those outcomes.

Bridges

Commenters requested that GDOT maintain traffic on bridges including on Chamblee Dunwoody Road and to coordinate needed bridge closures to reduce local traffic impacts.

GDOT will coordinate the bridge construction schedule to reduce traffic impacts where feasible. Before bridge reconstruction begins, GDOT will work with the local municipalities to identify viable detours, if needed, which will consider and minimize impacts to schools, first responders, and mobility.

Commenters asked about replacement of aging bridges, including Raider Drive and Riverside Drive.

Bridge replacements in the current concept were shown at the PIOH in the layouts. The concept report and PIOH layouts are available online for download and viewing. Five bridges are slated for replacement within the project limits for the I-285 Top End Express Lanes (which includes the three I-285 Advanced Improvement Projects that were represented as well). The bridge replacements are proposed, and the number of bridge replacements are subject to change based on how the design of the project continues to be refined. Other bridges that are within the project limits may require design modifications.

Bridges that are to be replaced based on the current concept of the I-285 Top End Express Lanes are the following:

- *Mt. Vernon Highway over I-285 (This is now programmed into the I-285 Westbound Auxiliary Lane Extension, an I-285 Advanced Improvement Project)*
- *Mt. Vernon Highway over SR400*
- *Johnson Ferry Road over SR400*

- Chamblee Dunwoody Road over I-285 (This is now programmed into the I-285 Westbound Ramp Extension Project, an I-285 Advanced Improvement Project)
- Northcrest Drive over I-85

Based on the project's need and purpose, funding is limited to replacing or rehabilitating those bridges required to construct the express lanes. Other bridges on the interstate system are inspected on a regular basis for maintenance and future programming of replacements when warranted.

Commenters asked about maintaining existing pedestrian access on bridges during construction and after replacement on Johnson Ferry Road, New Peachtree Road, and Chamblee Dunwoody Road.

To the extent allowed near construction zones and consistent with all safety requirements, GDOT will maintain existing access during construction including pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Where closures to these facilities are necessary to construct the project, a detour would be considered as needed.

Construction

Commenters requested to see construction plans and schedules.

The construction of this project is expected to be undertaken in two construction packages and is currently proposed to start in 2023 for the I-285 Top End East Express Lanes and 2026 for the I-285 Top End West Express Lanes. Opening of the Top End East and Top End West Express Lanes is proposed in 2028 and 2032, respectively.

Detailed construction plans and schedules outlining phasing are not currently available and will be designed after multiple rounds of public comment and in coordination with the Developer once the project is let (awarded). The current project schedule is available for access at your convenience at this link: https://cdn.majormobilityga.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/25141413/MMIP-Timeline-Updated_03-1.pdf.

Requests were made to install noise barriers before construction begins.

GDOT encourages progressing construction in such a way that priority is placed on installing noise barriers as early as practical. There may be some design and/or constructability conflicts in areas along the project corridor which prevent GDOT or the Developer from physically constructing a noise barrier early in the construction phase.

Residents requested that GDOT not allow construction traffic on neighborhood streets and also that residential and commercial access be maintained during construction.

Generally, when constructing the I-285 Top End Express Lanes, contractor vehicles will access the project from I-285 top end or from roads that are part of the project; however, there may be constructability needs in areas that may require access by local roads during certain points of construction. Use of local

streets that may cause impacts are coordinated and permitted through local jurisdictions, including any necessary traffic control measures. Public notices within the project area regarding construction needs and permits for temporary closures, detours, etc. will be provided in advance.

Residents requested that construction materials be placed on the interstate/state route side of any noise barriers and that any construction supplies, flammable, or hazardous materials should not be parked overnight at locations where homes are removed.

Construction materials will be placed and stored in GDOT right-of-way in compliance with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards. GDOT will follow established policies on the storage and handling of flammable and hazardous materials.

Remaining residents near residential displacements asked how long the period is between the removal of homes and the construction of the project, requested landscaping to be installed on the right-of-way before construction begins, and requested that GDOT property be landscaped and/or turned into a neighborhood park.

Early right-of-way acquisition is currently underway for the I-285 Top End Express Lanes project. Upon completion of the acquisition of a property, removal of structures, foundations, and general grading will be performed. Typical GDOT erosion control measures will be implemented. These areas may be used by the Developer for construction activities and project needs. GDOT is maintaining acquired properties until the Developer takes over. Final grading and site cleanup will commence at the end of work activities. This work includes reestablishment of natural vegetation and removal of any silt fence and other erosion control materials. Landscaping is not performed by GDOT contractors and is usually implemented under a separate agreement and by permission from GDOT with a local government or other stakeholder.

Acquired properties will become GDOT right-of-way and as such, GDOT cannot commit to any additional landscaping beyond grassing, due to maintenance concerns and the imminent need for the land to construct the project. GDOT does not perform maintenance of landscaped facilities within GDOT right-of-way; GDOT only allows its right-of-way to be landscaped and maintained by others under separate agreements. If a landscaping plan and agreement is in place, this work is typically performed at the completion of construction activities in the affected areas.

Commenters requested to know how GDOT will monitor and enforce construction and safety standards and specific requests to have vibration monitoring devices placed on surrounding buildings.

As part of the project, construction inspectors will be required to ensure standards are being met for quality and safety. GDOT will monitor vibration, as needed, at nearby structures during use of heavy equipment or required blasting activities. Monitoring will be conducted in accordance with current construction policies and contract documents.

The Developer will be responsible for vibration-related damages to existing structures and other facilities located in the vicinity of construction-related activities. Where vibration-inducing construction activities are to be performed, the Developer will be required to analyze the potential impacts to existing properties, structures, utilities, and other facilities and provide the results of the analysis in a vibration impact report. If the analysis identifies potential impacts, the Developer will prepare a vibration control plan with specific methods of monitoring to be approved by GDOT.

Residents and commuters requested limitations on the times of construction to reduce travel and noise impacts. Stakeholders also requested that construction near schools take place during the summer.

GDOT will review construction time periods and lane closures during the Request for Proposal (RFP) process that defines the scope of work for the Developer to follow. Additionally, the Developer will be required to adhere to the requirements set forth in the RFP. The project team and GDOT will coordinate with the local jurisdictions and municipalities to determine requirements for allowable construction time periods and lane closures, which the Developer will be required to follow.

Stakeholders have requested a weekly construction schedule and a point of contact to reach out to with questions or concerns.

Road closure and major construction would be communicated to stakeholders along the corridor in a timely manner by the project team through the project website (<https://majormobilityga.com/projects/topend/>) and email at TopEndExpressLanes@dot.ga.gov.

A primary point of contact for GDOT and the eventual Developer will be identified before the start of construction activities and provided on the project website. The Developer also will be responsible for maintaining a project hotline number throughout construction, which will be communicated to the public.

Environmental Impacts

What environmental impact studies are being done for the project and when will a report be available?

Environmental studies are currently being conducted in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which is required for federally funded projects. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is being prepared to summarize the process including findings about impacts, mitigation, and comments from the public and resource agencies. The process involves the following:

- Technical studies are being conducted to assess potential impacts on the social environment, cultural resources, natural environment, physical environment, and indirect and cumulative effects. The EIS will include any technical reports prepared for the project in Appendices while findings will be summarized in the main document.

- The Draft EIS will describe the project and findings including the alternatives, potential impacts, a draft mitigation plan, and public/stakeholder comments and coordination. Once the Draft EIS is completed in late 2020, it will be provided for public and agency review during a 45-day period. Similar to the format of this recent PIOH series, the PHOH series will be conducted to provide an opportunity for comments on the EIS findings and refined concept plans, anticipated in early 2021.
- Following the comment period, documentation including responses to comments will be updated as part of a combined Final EIS and Record of Decision (ROD). The EIS process is scheduled to be completed with the ROD in Fall 2021.

A more complete list of environmental study subjects can be found at this link: http://www.dot.ga.gov/PartnerSmart/DesignManuals/Environmental/GDOT-EPM-Chap05_1.pdf

Air Quality

Concerns were raised about air quality impacts during construction.

Construction of the I-285 Top End Express Lanes will follow all applicable, current GDOT policies and standards including the Department Construction Manual, available online at:

<http://www.dot.ga.gov/PartnerSmart/Business/Source/construction/cm001.pdf>

Commenters expressed concerns about potential air quality impacts from the I-285 Top End Express Lanes project once open to traffic.

Based on the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) set by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Georgia is currently in attainment for the following pollutants: NO₂, PM₁₀, PM_{2.5}, Pb SO₂, and CO. The Atlanta region is in a non-attainment area for O₃. The Clean Air Act requires Transportation Plans and Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) in areas not meeting the NAAQS to conform to the emissions budget of the State Implementation Plan for air quality.

Previous planning studies by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) considered whether the proposed express lanes would affect regional air quality. The project has been evaluated in previous versions of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) including the associated Air Quality Conformity Determination in the financially-constrained six-year TIP for the region as early as 2014. More background information about regional air quality is available at:

<https://atlantaregional.org/natural-resources/air-quality/air-quality/>.

The proposed I-285 Top End Express Lanes project is included in ARC's new update to the RTP, *The Atlanta Region's Plan (2050)*, adopted in February 2020. This new RTP also includes a new Air Quality Conformity Determination Report, which can be found at this link: <http://documents.atlantaregional.com/The-Atlanta-Region-s-Plan/rtp2050/2050-rtp-cdr.pdf>. All updates to the plan require a conformity determination prepared by ARC for approval from FHWA, in consultation with EPA. The most recent air quality conformity determination was

approved in May 2019 as an amendment to the TIP. Additional information about the ARC's TIP amendment process can be found at this link: <https://atlantaregional.org/transportation-mobility/transportation-planning/tip-amendment/>.

A project-level air quality analysis will be conducted based on guidance from FHWA, EPA, and GDOT. The analysis will consider the potential impacts and benefits of the project's alternatives on air quality and examine whether the project could result in any new excess or exacerbation of any existing excesses of the NAAQS.

A primary indicator of potential air quality concerns near sensitive areas is a project's effects related to Mobile Source Air Toxics (MSATs). An MSATs analysis will be conducted using FHWA guidance to determine potential levels of nine specific pollutants identified by EPA, including diesel particulate matter. The analysis will compare Build and No-Build conditions based on the projected traffic volumes on the general purpose and express lanes.

Trees

Commenters requested information on how wooded areas will be maintained on GDOT right-of-way. Commenters' concerns about tree removal were related to loss of visual buffers, and potential increases in greenhouse gas emissions.

The GDOT right-of-way is maintained to facilitate sight distance, clear zone requirements, and safety considerations, which may require the removal of trees. Multiple activities could occur in this right-of-way as part of routine maintenance or during construction including staging areas, utility maintenance/relocation or other infrastructure needs.

Stormwater Drainage and Water Quality

Comments were received seeking justification for additional stormwater detention ponds along the project. Safety concerns were raised regarding stream realignments, pedestrian access to proposed stormwater detention ponds, and potential mosquitos near the ponds.

As more lanes are added to I-285 via the I-285 Top End Express Lanes project, additional stormwater runoff will occur along the corridor. Detention ponds are essential to reduce the risk of flooding on neighboring properties. The roadway's drainage design will be brought to current standards, where possible, as part of the overall design process and conform to best management practices. The project corridor falls within a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permitted area which consists of a system of conveyances owned by the state or local municipalities that discharges to waters of the U.S. Therefore, this project is subject to the requirements of the MS4 permit. The stipulations to comply with this permit will require treatment of the runoff and protection of area surface waters and water quality. To address drainage concerns, design features in this project include, but are not limited to, detention basins, curb inlets and pipes (e.g., a closed drainage system), and ditches along the corridor where feasible to convey stormwater away from the roadway.

The detention ponds are stormwater management systems that will be used to both remove some of the pollutants in the roadway runoff (improve water quality) during a storm as well as to prevent downstream flooding. They are not intended to be permanently wet but rather to detain the water and allow it to slowly trickle out at or near the pre-widened roadway rate so as not to flood downstream. It is intended for these ponds to release all the water within 48 hours of most rain events and not to serve as permanently wet ponds. Stormwater detention ponds will include fencing to discourage unauthorized access to GDOT right-of-way.

The detention ponds are being designed by registered design professionals in accordance with GDOT policies and standards. All stream alignments will be designed to safely convey water back to the existing riverbed. As part of the installation of these basins, routine maintenance will be conducted. Being dry between rain events greatly reduces the attractiveness to nuisance species.

Commenters questioned if water quality will be impacted by the project, including the Chattahoochee River and its biodiversity.

The proposed project would be designed to comply with current water quality standards. The project corridor falls within a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permitted area which consists of a system of conveyances owned by the state or local municipality that discharges to waters of the U.S. Therefore, this project is subject to the requirements of the MS4 permit. The stipulations to comply with this permit will require treatment of the runoff and protection of area surface waters.

Existing stream impairments are taken into consideration when implementing best management practices (BMPs) to contain and gradually disperse runoff within the corridor. These measures help protect aquatic life in major streams including the Chattahoochee River. Certain perennial streams, including the Chattahoochee River, have been identified in the project's ecology studies as supporting state protected aquatic species. Where applicable, the special provisions will require the Developer to follow certain protective measures near and within those streams during construction.

Commenters expressed concerns about increases to impervious surface and the potential for flooding and stormwater runoff along the I-285 corridor.

Ongoing consideration is being given to the potential impact to floodplains by the project. As the design is refined, it will be determined whether the proposed project would encroach on the 100-year floodplain or impact the regulatory floodway. If so, GDOT will initiate coordination with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This coordination includes an assessment of the Federal Insurance Rate Maps to determine a community's participation in the National Flood Insurance Program and ensure mitigative efforts if floodway impacts are anticipated.

Other Environmental Impacts

A variety of comments were received related to general interest in the environmental process or specific topics including:

- Concerns about noise impact to wildlife.
- Concerns about light pollution to residential properties.
- General inquiry about the designation of and potential impacts to historic properties.

In alignment with the NEPA process for the project, analyses are being completed to address specific impacts including but not limited to parks/recreation facilities/wildlife & waterfowl refuges, visual impacts, and historic resources. These environmental studies are ongoing throughout project development, beginning during concept development and continuing into preliminary design. Many studies occur in two phases: resource identification followed by evaluation of project impacts. These studies provide key information for use in project development as well as agency coordination. Within the actual NEPA document, the environmental study findings will be summarized. Copies of the technical reports for each of the studies are referred to in the NEPA document and maintained at GDOT and FHWA.

Considerations for mitigating impacts from highway traffic generated noise, including noise barriers, are part of the planning, location, and design of the I-285 Top End Express Lanes. Noise impacts are assessed with priority given to residents and businesses along the corridor.

Historic properties are designated through the GDOT and State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) list of eligibility criteria. As a part of the evaluation of the project impacts, avoidance and minimization efforts are employed to reduce impacts to historic properties where feasible.

A lighting study will be conducted during the EIS development to determine types and locations of lights needed along the newly constructed express lanes. Consideration will be taken to minimize light pollution while adhering to state lighting requirements. Once approved by GDOT, the lighting locations will be added to the RFP document to ensure the Developer incorporates them into the project.

Right-of-Way

Comments were received from property owners along the corridor regarding right-of-way acquisition.

During the project development process, if it is determined your property is required in total or in part, GDOT's right-of-way team will meet individually with each property owner to discuss the project and the impacts to the specific property. At that time, the property owner will be shown design drawings and

have the opportunity to discuss their specific property and access needs. More information regarding the acquisition process can be found in the pamphlet titled "What Happens When Your Property is Needed for a Transportation Facility," which can be found on the GDOT website at <http://www.dot.ga.gov/PS/ROW>.

Concerns were expressed about widening I-285 and converting individual-owned land to roadways with requests made to reduce right-of-way impacts wherever possible or to impact commercial properties instead of residential.

GDOT makes every attempt to minimize property acquisition and relocations during the project design phase. Unfortunately, property acquisitions and displacements are unavoidable for some projects. As the design progresses, GDOT will make every effort to minimize the amount of right-of-way impacts to the greatest extent possible.

GDOT must make right-of-way decisions based on what is required for the project's engineering and design while conforming with the NEPA decision-making process and not based on parcel type. When feasible and practical, GDOT first tries to avoid right-of-way impacts. If they cannot be avoided, GDOT works to minimize right-of-way impacts. While the recent Public Information Open Houses (PIOH) identified preliminary right-of-way, the project team continues to identify needs based on the evolving engineering and design refinements.

Comments were received requesting information regarding the schedule for right-of-way acquisitions that will be made as part of the I-285 Top End Express Lanes project, as well as timing and format of GDOT's coordination with property owners.

Early right-of-way acquisition is currently underway for the I-285 Top End Express Lanes project; however, not all right-of-way will be acquired early. The Developer will be responsible for any remaining right-of-way acquisition required as part of their final design in the construction phase. The project's final design will be completed by the Developer and approved by GDOT in 2024 with right-of-way acquisition extending through 2026. If a property owner would like to be considered for early acquisition in advance of the project's final design, please email TopEndExpressLanes@dot.ga.gov.

In the event your property is required in total or in part, a certified appraiser from GDOT's appraiser prequalification list will make a fair market value appraisal of the area to be acquired. The appraisal will also include values for improvements required or damages that may be applicable.

Should you be required to relocate as part of this project, a GDOT representative will assist you during your relocation. You will have sixty (60) days to relocate from the date title passes to GDOT. The relocation program is explained in greater detail in the pamphlet titled "What Happens When Your Property is Needed for a Transportation Facility," which can be found on the GDOT website at <http://www.dot.ga.gov/PS/ROW>.

Homeowners expressed concerns that their property values would be negatively impacted by the project based on anticipated visual and noise impacts, increased traffic in close proximity to properties, and disruption to cohesiveness of neighborhoods.

The final plans for the project are still under development. The conceptual drawings presented will continue to be refined with a focus on avoiding perceived negative impacts when possible. If avoidance is not possible, the project team will explore opportunities to minimize or mitigate these impacts while adhering to the scope limitations of the project.

Noise/Noise Barriers

Noise was the most common topic discussed by commenters. The comments and questions are divided into several categories as follows:

Are noise barriers part of the project?

Yes, considerations for mitigating impacts from highway traffic generated noise, including noise barriers, are part of the planning, location, and design of the I-285 Top End Express Lanes.

How are noise barrier locations determined?

A Noise Impact Assessment Study will be conducted to determine the acoustic impact of the proposed project and the need for abatement measures for noise-sensitive receivers (e.g., residences and public outdoor spaces, etc.). During the planning phase, the analysis will focus on identifying potentially impacted noise sensitive receivers. Final location of noise barriers will be determined during final design with the input of affected landowners and residents. Benefited landowners and residents will be invited to participate and vote on whether they would like to have the barrier constructed. Only at that point will a final decision be made. For the walls/barriers to be installed the vote will need to be more than 50 percent in favor.

The determination of noise impacts and abatement measures will comply with Title 23, Code of Federal Regulation (CFR), Part 772, and GDOT's policies for highway noise barrier construction. More information regarding GDOT's noise barrier policy can be found in GDOT's Environmental Procedures Manual: <http://www.dot.ga.gov/PS/EnvironmentalProcedures/AirandNoise>.

When will noise barriers be built? When will barrier locations be confirmed? Will they be there during construction?

Noise barriers are built by the Developer, usually at the end of construction phase of the project. Noise barriers are built in-line with construction schedule, which is determined by the Developer. The construction of this project is currently expected to be undertaken in two construction packages. The Top End East package, from Henderson Road to SR400, is scheduled to **start** in 2023 and continue through 2028. The Top End West package is scheduled to start in 2026 and continue through 2032.

Can noise barriers be built on elevated lanes?

Feasibility of noise barriers on elevated lanes are being evaluated during design to ensure compliance with safety and constructability requirements.

What will the noise barriers look like? Requests for aesthetically pleasing noise walls.

Currently the preferred noise barrier material is concrete, however, in areas where a lighter weight material is necessary, such as on bridges and retaining walls, steel panels would be used. Final determination of the material and finishes will be determined as the project advances through letting (awarding of project).

What will happen to the noise barrier that is already planned to be installed under a separate, adjoining project?

Noise barriers will be constructed under a separate project in which they were planned as a need and voted on to advance. The schedule for that is dependent on the unique construction timeline for each project. Noise barriers constructed as part of adjoining projects may be removed temporarily as part of the construction process for the I-285 Top End Express Lanes. It is GDOT's approach to attempt "in-kind" replacement of any existing barrier that would require removal due to construction conflicts, with the exception of those that are no longer feasible or constructible. The Noise Impact Assessment for the I-285 Top End Express Lanes will determine the acoustic impact of this specific project, and the need for abatement measures is being evaluated separately from previously analyzed projects. It is important to evaluate impacts as a result of the express lanes project, and ensure that any noise abatement (e.g., barrier) would be effective at noise reduction and meet the cost feasibility requirements. As mentioned above, the determination of noise impacts and abatement measures will comply with Title 23, Code of Federal Regulation (CFR), Part 772, and GDOT's policies for highway noise barrier construction.

Commenters requested that trees and other foliage be used for noise abatement.

Vegetation must be high enough, wide enough, and dense enough that it cannot be seen through to provide noise reduction similar to that of a noise barrier, and typically vegetation provides more of a perception of noise reduction to the human ear. Therefore, it is not considered a noise abatement/reduction option by FHWA and is not included in GDOT's Noise Abatement Policy.

Commenters expressed concerned about noise impact on specific groups and communities and suggestions for mitigation including the following:

- School children
- Religious institutions
- Historic Districts – Georgetown
- Noise from truck traffic
- Request for anechoic sound dampening materials

The project team will continue to consider noise-sensitive areas during the noise modeling and documentation.

Potential School Impacts

Several comments were received concerning the safety of express lanes near Fulton County Schools sites within the project corridor.

Given the proximity of existing I-285 and the proposed express lanes to Fulton County schools and other sites, the project team is coordinating with leadership of Fulton County Schools (FCS) during environmental and traffic studies to help minimize impacts to its facilities. Given the proximity of schools adjacent to the existing I-285 corridor, FCS has been added as a participating agency for the project.

Comments were submitted expressing concerns over increased traffic and consequential safety impacts at nearby schools, located near new direct access points bringing new travel patterns and traffic volumes.

As part of this project, GDOT is conducting traffic analysis studies to identify potential traffic impacts near local access points. Express lanes will be designed and constructed according to GDOT specifications of safety standards.

Physical barriers and noise walls were requested to be placed along GDOT right-of-way near schools.

If additional right-of-way is required, any existing physical barriers that separate the proposed project from school property would be replaced. Additional barriers, including noise barriers, will be further evaluated as part of the design process.

Comments were received regarding potential air quality impacts near schools.

A project-level air quality analysis will be completed as a part of the environmental process. The regional level Conformity Determination is described in the Air Quality section of this letter. At a more localized level, a primary indicator of potential air quality concerns near schools and other sensitive areas is a project's effects related to Mobile Source Air Toxics (MSATs). An MSATs analysis will be conducted using the currently approved FHWA model to determine potential levels of nine specific pollutants identified by EPA, including diesel particulate matter. The analysis will compare Build and No-Build conditions based on the projected traffic volumes on the general purpose and express lanes.

Commenters requested that bridge closures be coordinated to limit disruptions for school traffic.

All potential closures or detours at bridges will be coordinated with local governments, first responders, and schools to ensure continued access to parcels and minimize impacts during construction when feasible.

Traffic

We received comments regarding the current traffic levels along I-285 top end; some said that the levels are acceptable, while others said they are not acceptable.

The level of congestion varies within the project area during weekday commuting times depending on peak versus off-peak times and the presence of other conditions such as weather or a highway incident. With the region's continuing growth, the I-285 top end traffic volumes will continue increasing with worsening conditions so that trip times become less reliable.

Comments were submitted expressing traffic and safety concerns on the local road network near the proposed express lane direct access points, including conditions on Glenridge Drive, Riverside Drive, and Barfield Road.

As part of this project, GDOT is conducting traffic and safety analysis studies, which will include the No-Build and Build conditions for local roads near proposed access points. Any project-related traffic concerns identified through these studies will be evaluated further.

Commenters asked about the timing and availability of traffic data for the project.

The traffic studies and data are underway throughout the next 18 months, with applicable data available as part of the Draft EIS public comment period in late 2020 and other data completed concurrent with the Final EIS in Fall 2021.

Commenters requested clarification of potential traffic impacts of existing construction along the corridor overlapping with the construction of the I-285 Top End Express Lanes.

The active construction for the I-285 Top End East Express Lanes begins in 2023 with lanes opening for traffic in 2028. Active construction for the I-285 Top End West Express Lanes begins in 2026 with lanes opening for traffic in 2032. Current construction activities in this area include the Transform 285/400 project, which is scheduled to be completed prior to start of this project. If there are changes to project schedules, the public will be notified. As part of this project, potential traffic impacts during construction will be further studied. GDOT will coordinate with local governments, first responders, and schools to ensure continued access to parcels and to minimize traffic impacts during construction.

Comments about truck traffic included concerns over the increased truck traffic in general purpose lanes and suggestions for a dedicated truck lane and time-of-day restrictions for trucks to use the interstate lanes.

I-285 is a designated truck route for the movement of goods throughout the Atlanta region and state. Restricting lanes or time-of-day for freight movement within the existing I-285 lanes is not within the scope of this project. Any restrictions of truck operations in the corridor would be guided by local government ordinances.

Commenters questioned the ability of ELs to alleviate traffic congestion, stating the project could become a short-term solution that induces more demand and benefits from other EL systems in the Atlanta metro area could be overstated.

The performance data on other existing EL projects indicate that trip times are improving in terms of reliability and overall duration—not just in ELs but also in the general purpose lanes. As the EL concept is relatively new in Georgia, research and data analysis are ongoing. The tolling and operational approaches are monitored and updated as needed to manage effective use of ELs.

Tolling/Business Rules

Commenters requested information regarding why the new lanes are being priced, how pricing is set, and who can use the lanes for free. Suggestions for incentives include allowances for hybrid and electric vehicles, carpool and vanpools, and tiered pricing of Peach Pass for seniors and those with limited mobility.

Unlike a tax that everyone pays, the tolls on express lanes are user fees based on congestion (congestion-based pricing). Only those who choose to use those lanes to minimize their travel times are charged. Motorists always have the option to use the existing general purpose lanes without any toll charges, just as they do today. Rates on any express lane vary, changing based on congestion/demand to provide reliable trip times for those utilizing the express lanes including those in transit vehicles. The result will be a network of express lanes that provide more reliable and predictable trip times.

The occupancy policy that has been adopted for the I-285 Top End Express Lanes is Express Toll Lanes (ETL), which provides toll-exempt access to a limited group of vehicles. State-registered transit vehicles, vanpools, and emergency management services (EMS) are the only vehicles that can ride toll-exempt (free) on the express lanes. State-registered alternative fuel vehicles, motorcycles, and all carpools must pay the toll on the I-285 Top End Express Lanes.

The tolls for using the Top End ELs will be part of Georgia's Peach Pass network. Operation of the pricing aspects of the lanes, including all customer service functions related to the Peach Pass system, is managed by SRTA and not a private entity.

Commenters expressed concerns that the lanes would only benefit those who can afford the toll.

Express lanes users only pay if they choose to travel on the express lanes. Motorists will continue to have the option to use the existing general purpose lanes, as a toll-free option. Rates on the express lanes vary, based on congestion/demand, to manage the number of motorists that use the lanes while still meeting expectations for free-flowing travel to ensure reliable trip times.

In addition, transit vehicles traveling the express lanes will experience a more reliable trip, improving the overall transit experience for the numerous riders who

choose transit as a mobility option. The express lanes support the existing general purpose lanes by providing travel choices in mobility to make a behavioral decision based on the need of a reliable trip time.

How will the toll revenue be spent?

Toll revenues are used to fund operations, maintenance, and renewal and replacement costs of the roadway and toll infrastructure, as well as to support the payment of any loans and/or bonds used to fund the upfront capital cost of constructing the roadway.

Transit

Requests were made to enhance transit service along the corridor to help mitigate any traffic delays due to construction.

A number of public transit providers currently operate routes within or adjacent to some sections of the I-285 corridor, including [Xpress](#) (operated by [SRTA](#)), [MARTA](#), [Gwinnett County Transit](#) (GCT) and [CobbLinc](#). Those routes and any future ones would remain accessible during construction, as traffic will be maintained in the general purpose lanes. SRTA will identify service changes needed during construction and long-term with the addition of express lanes along the corridor. Existing and future transit providers will be able to use the I-285 Top End Express Lanes free of charge. Any additional state or county transit agencies that expand or introduce operations within the area will also have free access to the lanes, including buses and state-registered vanpools.

Why did you choose to build more highway lanes rather than building more transit?

The purpose of the I-285 Top End Express Lanes is to provide drivers an option for more reliable trips, and state-registered transit vehicles and vanpools can ride toll-exempt (free) on the express lanes. The I-285 Top End Express Lanes project is being designed so that it does not preclude studies or implementation of transit by others. Future transit options including BRT on the proposed I-285 express lanes are being studied by others within the region independently of this project. On the MMIP program level, coordination and collaboration have been ongoing with our partners, such as DeKalb and Fulton counties, the mayors of the seven municipalities within the project limits, and [the ATL](#) on future transit and transportation endeavors.

The MARTA External Affairs Department welcomes additional comments about transit including plans within the I-285 top end, by emailing [L-285expansion@itsmarta.com](mailto:285expansion@itsmarta.com) or by calling 404-848-3016. When available, MARTA's responses to these comments will be posted on the I-285 Top End Express Lanes project website: <https://majormobilityga.com/projects/topend/>.

For more information on transit options provided by other service providers, please visit the individual organizations' websites.

Additional Comments

Individuals and groups are encouraged to provide feedback or submit inquiries about the project at any time and will receive a response. Any comments and/or questions received outside of the official PIOH public comment period will be logged and may be incorporated into the environmental document expected to be available by the end of 2020. To provide additional responses to public comments received, the project website will continue to be updated during the preliminary engineering process and a more refined project concept will be presented at the project's PHOHs that are proposed to be held in early 2021.