

I-16/I-75 Improvement Project

A Project of the Georgia Department of Transportation



SPRING 2000

VOLUME I

ISSUE I

MESSAGE FROM JOE PALLADI

State Urban Design Engineer

I am pleased to introduce to you this first newsletter of the I-16/I-75 Improvement Project. The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) understands that this is an important project to citizens who live in and around Macon. We want to involve you early in the design stages of this critical interchange project.

This project is aimed at improving the operational efficiency of the I-16/I-75 interchange and the I-16 corridor through downtown Macon. GDOT recognizes

there are several areas of environmental and cultural significance within close proximity of this project. To ensure that impacts to these areas are minimized, extensive environmental studies are being performed and closely coordinated with the development of the project.

GDOT began work on a concept for this project in the mid 1990s. Work began in earnest in the fall of 1999 with a public information meeting held November 16, in the Macon Auditorium. The meeting produced a number of suggestions and comments which are being incorporated into our engineering efforts. The goal is to develop a preferred alternative that will meet the needs of both the traveling public and local community. A summary of these comments and GDOT's responses, can be found on the I-16/I-75 web site, www.i16i75.com, along with up-to-date information about the project.

We have also initiated a number of other ways to keep you involved and informed throughout the project. These include a project mailbox, telephone hotline and e-mail address to receive your comments. Specific contact information can be found on the back page of this newsletter. In addition, we will hold public meetings at key milestones in the project. I encourage you to stay involved as the project evolves and look forward to your participation.

Key Project Milestones To Date

November 16, 1999	First Public Meeting
March 2, 2000	First Advisory Committee Meeting
March 24, 2000	Need and Purpose Completed
March 28, 2000	Agency Coordination Meeting
Ongoing	Environmental Fieldwork
Ongoing	Preliminary Concept Development
April 27, 2000	Second Advisory Committee Meeting



I-16/I-75 **Comments**
P.O. Box 4305
Macon, GA 31208
Hotline: 1-800-470-2344

E-mail comments to:
Comments@i16i75.com
Web Site: www.i16i75.com

GEORGIA DOT DEFINES NEED AND PURPOSE OF PROJECT

Defining the need and purpose is a first step of any transportation project. It is a formal process in which GDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) review existing conditions and determine the objectives and reasons for the project. A need and purpose statement for the I-16/I-75 Improvement Project was approved by FHWA in March 2000. A summary of the statement follows.

The proposed I-16/I-75 Improvement Project represents a proposal for the reconstruction of the I-16/I-75 interchange and other I-16 interchanges within the City of Macon. The purpose of the project is to improve the operational efficiency of the following Interstate interchanges in Macon:

- Mainline I-75 @ Mainline I-16
- Coliseum Drive @ I-16
- Second Avenue @ I-16
- Spring Street @ I-16

The project would reduce congestion, improve safety and provide better access to and from the downtown Macon area. Improving traffic conditions in this area would accomplish an additional purpose of the project which is to lower the

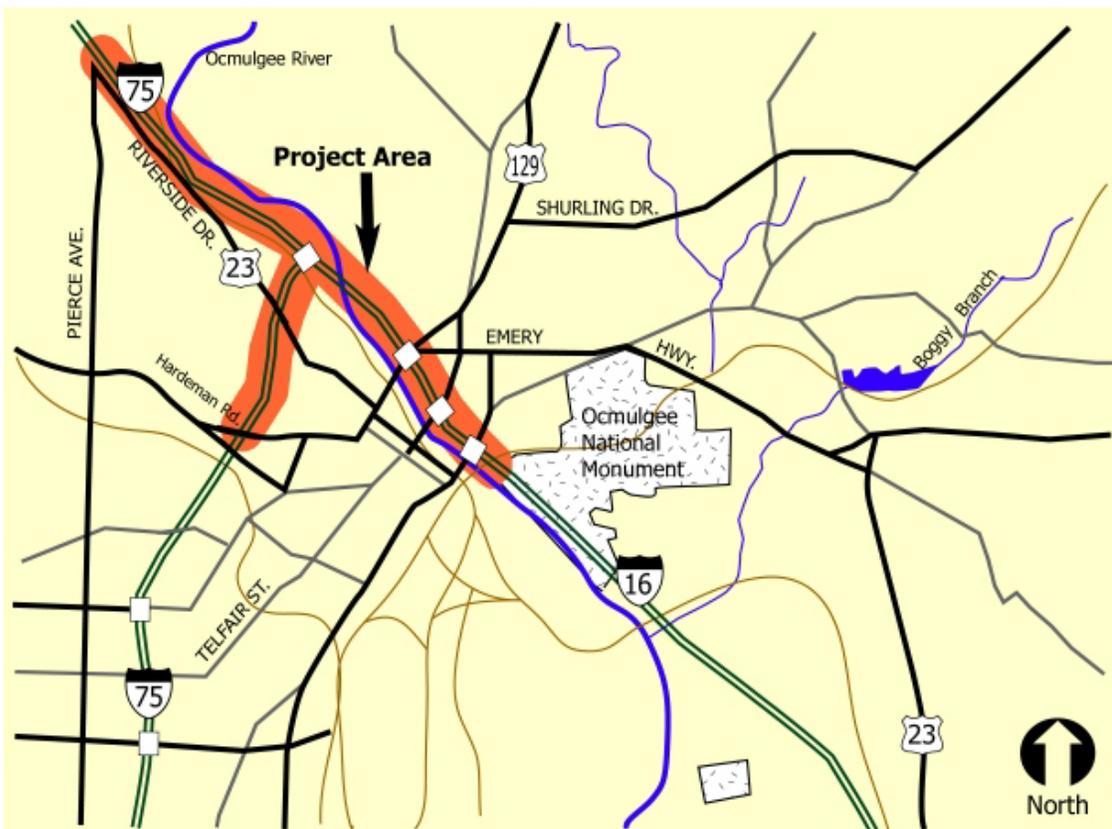
high accident rate within the project area. Improving sight distances, separating through-traffic from local traffic, and improving the existing interchange operations on I-16 should substantially contribute to reducing the accident rate.

The section of I-16 to be improved currently has two lanes in each direction throughout the project limits. The section of I-75 to be reconstructed currently has two lanes in each direction north of I-16, and three lanes in each direction south of the I-16 interchange. Key problems of the facility include the presence of partial interchanges, inadequate signage, poor sight distance due to existing horizontal and vertical geometry and weaving and congestion problems due to close spacing of interchanges.

Accident data also indicates the need for major improvements to the congested I-16/I-75 interchange. From 1995 through 1997, there were 554 accidents on the mainline of the two Interstates. As a result of these accidents, 292 injuries and 2 fatalities were recorded in the proposed project area. For 1997, the accident rate on the portions of I-16 and I-75 to be

reconstructed was approximately 1.4 times the statewide rate for comparable roads. In 1997, the injury rate in the project area was approximately 2.5 times the statewide rate for comparable roads.

■ *In 1999, Hurricane Floyd threatened the Georgia coast and evacuation of coastal areas was advised. East-bound traffic was halted on I-16 and all lanes were used for the westbound evacuation. The I-16/I-75 interchange proved to be*



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a major bottleneck for traffic headed away from coastal areas. The current proposed project addresses existing operational conditions that contributed to congestion during the 1999 evacuation, thereby improving the interchange's ability to serve as an evacuation route in the future should the need arise.

Public Involvement is a Key Component of the I-16/I-75 Project

GDOT recognizes that a project of this magnitude requires a public involvement plan that informs and involves Macon-Bibb County citizens in a meaningful and comprehensive manner. An extensive public involvement plan, with numerous elements, has been designed in an effort to keep interested parties involved at key milestones throughout the project.

As one of the first activities of the public involvement plan, stakeholders were identified by local agencies and community leaders. This was done during the Fall of 1999. These stakeholders serve as the foundation of a communications network that will be used to inform other interested parties about the project. Other techniques that will be used to keep the public involved in the project include:

- Public meetings at key project milestones
- Speaking engagements at local group meetings
- Project newsletters
- Information kiosks
- Telephone hotline
- Website
- Project mailbox

Another important component of the Public Involvement Plan includes the *Advisory Committee*. The Advisory Committee is comprised of 15 members who represent diverse perspectives regarding the project. The members were pulled

from the extensive list of stakeholders identified earlier in the public involvement process. The Committee will meet several times during the project to discuss project developments and advise the project team on various issues.

Where to Find Ongoing Information About the Project

There are several ways to obtain current information about or make comments regarding the I-16/I-75 project. The newsletter will be mailed periodically to interested citizens who are on the project mailing list. The project web site hosts the most recent information and is an excellent way to stay informed of the project's progress. Comments can also be e-mailed via the Internet. If you would like to receive the newsletter or make comments any time throughout the project, please contact us by one of the means listed below.

- **I-16/I-75 Comments**
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I-16/I-75

Improvement Project

NEXT STEPS IN THE PROJECT

Currently, conceptual engineering alternatives are being developed to explore possible ways to address the issues of the I-16/I-75 Improvement Project. Environmental studies are also underway to document existing conditions of the project area.

Our next milestone step in the process will be a public meeting to obtain comments on the preferred concepts. It is anticipated to be in late summer 2000. Advertisements will be made once the meeting is scheduled. Stay tuned!



***I-16/I-75 Comments
PO Box 4305
Macon, GA 31208***