

# The Interchange

The Georgia Department of Transportation Newsletter  
for the I-16/I-75 Improvement Project

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## Preferred Concept Alternative Unveiled to the Public

The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) would like to thank everyone who participated in the Public Information Meeting (PIM) held last Fall. The comments and suggestions received at this meeting reflect a community that not only cares about its heritage and environment, but also understands the need to ensure public safety and economic stability through improvements to infrastructure. Comments received will be given careful consideration during the upcoming preliminary design phase of the project. This newsletter will provide an update on the design and environmental phases of the project for those who were unable to attend the PIM.

### Status of Project Concept

The planning and engineering process for this project began in the early 1980s. Based on accident and traffic data, GDOT identified the need for improvements to the I-16/I-75 corridor through downtown Macon. In 1995, a concept for the I-16/I-75 interchange improvements was developed by GDOT in coordination with both the regional and state transportation improvement plans (RTIP, STIP). In 1999, GDOT hired a team of consultants to validate the conceptual design, conduct environmental studies, and provide preliminary engineering for the I-16/I-75 project.

To aid in the development of a project concept that would best meet the goals of the community, a list of specific areas of concern was developed based on comments received from the Advisory Committee (a panel of local civic and business leaders). This list included the following categories: safety, driver expectancy, congestion, constructability, cost, property impacts, environmental impacts, cultural resources, aesthetics, and pedestrians. All design alternatives considered were graded and compared based on the above criteria.

On August 3, 2000, GDOT and members of the Advisory Committee reached a consensus on a preferred concept alternative for the I-16/I-75 interchange improvements. This concept was displayed to the public at the PIM held on October 24, 2000 (see article on page 2).

### Preferred Concept Alternative - Proposed Improvements

#### *I-75 from Pierce Avenue to I-16*

The existing four-lane interstate section will be widened to six lanes with 12-foot paved shoulders and a concrete median barrier. The majority of the new construction will occur within the existing median of the interstate.

#### *I-16 from I-75 to Coliseum Drive*

The existing four-lane interstate section will be widened to six lanes with 12-foot paved shoulders and a median barrier (similar to I-75). In addition, collector-distributor (C-D) roads will be constructed parallel to the interstate for the purpose of separating mainline through-traffic from traffic accessing the interchanges at Spring Street, Second Street, and Coliseum Drive. The C-D roads will be either two or three lanes wide (depending on location) and will be separated from the interstate mainline by median barriers.

#### *I-75 from I-16 to Hardeman Avenue*

There are no proposed capacity improvements to this section of I-75. Proposed construction in this area will be limited to ramp tapers from the I-16/I-75 interchange.

#### *I-16/I-75 Interchange*

Each of the existing ramps will be widened and reconstructed to meet current design standards. This will include reconstruction

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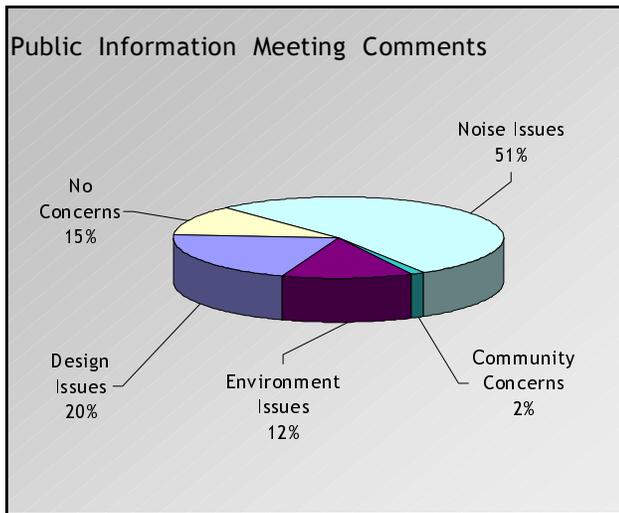
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# Public Comments On Preferred Concept

# Did You Know?

Representatives from the Georgia Department of Transportation hosted a Public Information Meeting at the Macon Centreplex on October 24, 2000. The purpose of the meeting was to present the preferred concept alternative and to receive comments on the preferred alternative from the public. Approximately 100 people attended the meeting, and the department received 131 comments. Individuals could submit their comments on a comment form, by speaking to a court reporter, through regular mail or by e-mail. An overview of the comments received appears below.



Macon's first bridge over the Ocmulgee River was the Fifth Street Bridge, completed in 1826. This wooden covered bridge carried horses, wagons and pedestrians that once depended on a ferry to cross the Ocmulgee River. It featured granite pillars which held for half of a century, though its wood superstructure often washed away in overflowing flood waters. Built for \$9000, the bridge was privately owned until it was purchased by the city of Macon in 1829.

The largest share of comments (51 percent of the total) pertained to potential noise impacts. Specifically, a number of residents from the Shirley Hills neighborhood submitted comments requesting that special attention be given to sound barriers to alleviate a noise problem in their community. Other areas of environmental concern included historic preservation, encroachment into residential areas, flooding and the Ocmulgee River, and potential conflict with the Ocmulgee Greenway Project. The comments related to environmental issues accounted for another 12 percent of the total comments received.

Comments pertaining to design issues accounted for 20 percent of the total comments received. In this area, residents cited a desire for aesthetically pleasing structures and plantings for beautification. Other residents made specific suggestions for design improvements, such as improving traffic flow to the Second Street exit to alleviate Gray Highway traffic at Spring Street.

In general, a vast majority of comments expressed support for the proposed improvements to the I-16/I-75 corridor in Macon. ♦



Today the Fifth Street Bridge (now M.L. King Drive/Coliseum Drive) is a steel girder structure, facilitating pedestrians and four lanes of vehicular traffic. Also known as the Otis Redding Memorial Bridge, it was completed for the city of Macon in 1974 for \$1.2 million. ♦

\* Top photograph courtesy of the Middle Georgia Archives, Washington Memorial Library, Macon, Georgia

# *Status of Environmental Analysis*

All environmental studies to analyze potential impacts from the preferred concept alternative are in progress. Preliminary results of these studies indicate low-to-moderate environmental impacts from the proposed concept alignment. As discussed in past project newsletters, areas of evaluation include social, cultural, natural, and physical environments. The following is a brief description of impacts expected to these areas.

## **Social Environment Impacts**

Presently being completed is a comprehensive community impact analysis. Ongoing surveys have identified that adverse impact to the existing residential communities within the corridor will be insignificant. It does not appear that any residential structures will need to be relocated, and impacts to existing businesses will be minimal. Although the project will require some right-of-way from the adjacent riverfront area, impacts to the Ocmulgee National Monument have been avoided. Meetings with the Advisory Committee and neighborhood organizations to discuss the implications of the project will continue until the draft environmental document is complete, at which time the detailed environmental impacts will be presented at the project public hearing.

## **Cultural Environment Impacts**

Both the historic structures and Phase I archaeology surveys have been completed and concurred with by the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). A total of four resources, one national monument and six historic districts (which were determined to be eligible for listing or listed on the National Register of Historic Places), were identified within the project area of potential effect (APE). No National Register eligible archaeological sites were identified in the field survey. Additionally, for the purpose of this project, a boundary adjustment was made to the Shirley Hills Historic District to include the residences located on Parkview and Glenridge Drives, which are directly adjacent to the existing Interstate 16. The document, which analyzes the potential effects to these identified historic resources, is presently being completed. This document is known as the "Assessment of Effects" or AOE.

## **Natural Environment Impacts**

Based on the intensive field investigation of the corridor, there were a total of 14 wetland areas and 12 riverine areas (streams and creeks including the Ocmulgee River) identified. Preliminary estimates have determined that approximately 2,600 linear feet of the streams and creeks and 2.5 acres of the wetland areas would be impacted by the proposed project. Since all local, state, and federal regulations regarding soil erosion would be followed during and after construction, it is not anticipated that the project would cause a long-term adverse impact on water quality. Over the past year, intensive field investigations have been completed within the corridor in an effort to identify the presence/absence of threatened and endangered wildlife, as defined by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Although there was a great diversity of both flora and fauna species identified, there were no threatened or endangered species encountered within the corridor.

Another area of potential concern is the impact on the current floodplain. Hydraulic studies of the area to determine existing flood elevations have been completed. These studies will help define the areas where additional embankments would need to be limited or other alternatives investigated in order to avoid adverse impacts.



## **Physical Environment Impacts**

Impacts analyzed include noise, air, existing infrastructure, energy and mineral resources, and hazardous materials. The surveys for the resources have been completed while analysis and reporting is ongoing. Since the majority of the project would be constructed within existing right-of-way, impacts to these physical environmental areas would be minimal.

Some potentially sensitive noise receptors were identified throughout the project area. Field measurements of existing noise levels have been recorded at several locations within the corridor. Over the next couple of months, a model which predicts future noise levels relative to the proposed road project will be completed. This model will help determine if any of the potentially sensitive noise receptors would be adversely impacted by increased noise levels. Noise barriers or berms will be constructed in these locations.

## **Permits**

An Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) 404 permit would be required since this project would impact jurisdictional waters. Also, a storm water discharge permit would be required since the proposed project would disturb more than five acres.

## **Mitigation**

A mitigation plan that compensates for adverse impacts to jurisdictional waters would be necessary as a condition of the ACOE 404 permit. Additional project mitigation measures will be considered to compensate for both noise and visual impacts of the project. ♦

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of the two existing bridges over the Ocmulgee River. Four additional ramps will be constructed, connecting the I-16 C-D roads with northbound and southbound I-75. This will require construction of four additional bridges over the river. The new C-D bridges will serve as temporary detours for mainline traffic during construction.

***I-16 Interchanges with Spring Street, Second Street and Coliseum Drive***

The interchange at Spring Street will remain a partial cloverleaf with the ramps realigned to accommodate the proposed C-D system and widening of I-16. Additional ramps will be constructed to provide full access to and from Second Street. The interchange at Coliseum Drive will remain full-access with the ramps widened and reconstructed in conjunction with the proposed C-D system.

***Coliseum Drive from Riverside Drive to the Macon Centreplex***

The existing four-lane roadway will be widened to six lanes with a raised, landscaped median. The "Otis Redding Bridge" over the Ocmulgee River will be widened to accommodate the additional lanes and reconstructed as a pedestrian friendly gateway to Macon. Special features on the proposed bridge include 10-foot sidewalks and lighting.

For more information regarding the conceptual layout for the proposed improvements, please visit the project website at [www.il6i75.com](http://www.il6i75.com) or a project information kiosk at one of the following locations: Macon City Hall, Macon Chamber of Commerce, or the Bibb County Administration Building. ♦

***Next Steps...***

Over the next several months, coordination will continue between GDOT, the Georgia Rail Passenger Authority (GRPA), and the City of Macon concerning the possibility of relocating the Norfolk Southern Railroad within the project corridor. An additional concept alternative will be developed and thoroughly analyzed in an effort to accommodate future rail construction. ♦

# Keeping in Touch

Your involvement is one of the most important elements of the I-16/I-75 Improvement Project. You can learn more about this project or contact the Project Team in any of the following ways:

**Website:**

[www.il6i75.com](http://www.il6i75.com)

**Project Contacts:**

- Joseph P. Palladi, P.E.  
State Urban Design Engineer, GDOT
- Angela Alexander  
Asst. State Urban Design Engineer, GDOT
- Genetha Rice-Singleton,  
Urban Design Project Manager, GDOT  
(404) 656-5436

**Project Hotline:**

1-800-470-2344

**E-Mail:**

[comments@il6i75.com](mailto:comments@il6i75.com)

**Mailing Address:**

I-16/I-75 Improvement Project  
P.O. Box 4305  
Macon, GA 31208



**Georgia Department of Transportation**  
**I-16/I-75 Improvement Project**  
P.O. Box 4305  
Macon, GA 31208

