

Citizens Advisory Group Meeting Report April 27, 2011

OVERVIEW

The Skanska Team, in conjunction with the Gwinnett County Department of Transportation (referred to as “Project Team”) held the ninth meeting of the Citizens Advisory Group (CAG) for the proposed Ronald Reagan Parkway Extension on April 27, 2011 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at Berkmar High School in Lilburn. Full meeting materials are available at www.ReaganExtension.com.

OBJECTIVES

- Educate about the Reagan Extension project and the “Interface” project
- Update attendees about the relationship with Georgia Department of Transportation
- Describe reasons for the break in meetings
- Explain how the transportation investment act (tax) relates to this project
- Describe what to expect in the coming months.



WELCOME

To open the meeting, Brian Allen, Director of the Gwinnett County Department of Transportation, welcomed the CAG and members of the public in attendance. He thanked them for their time and input.

Jon Abercrombie, who is an independent facilitator, reviewed the guiding principles that the members adopted, reviewed the agenda for the evening, and thanked the members for their work.

PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER COMMENT

Mr. Abercrombie asked attendees to voice areas of interest for tonight’s meeting and the following topics were noted on the easel:

Traffic	Any action during hiatus	What other activities
State \$750,000	Impact of Snellville hospital	Preliminary results – traffic, construction
T-SPLOST List	Need for the extension	Make link to new easier
Effect of economy	January 18 – what was agreed	What about bike trails?
Meeting schedule	Questions about Skanska	
Revised timeline		

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A member of the public who is new to the area asked to be included in future updates about the project.

Mr. Abercrombie encouraged attendees to reach out to him directly if needed, asked CAG members to introduce themselves and the area/interest they are representing, and reminded attendees of the guiding principles of the CAG.

Mr. Allen thanked the group for their attendance and reiterated aim of meeting is to convey information that addresses their areas of interest.

Members of the public were then asked if they had comments and the following was voiced:

- A member of the public said he has seen the maps, thinks that the project is going to impact people's properties and is questioning the project's purpose.
- Another member of the public reiterated interest in understanding what the January 18 agreements of the Gwinnett Board of Commissioners involved.
- Another member of the public asked for clarification of Mr. Abercrombie's role and it was explained that he is paid by the Project Team but maintains independence; Mr. Abercrombie reiterated his availability to be contacted directly and his primary objective is for fair conversation.
- Another member of the public asked about the contractor's performance and alluded to seeing something negative online.

INTRODUCTIONS & BUSINESS ITEMS

Mr. Abercrombie then asked Mr. Allen to begin with his presentation.

Mr. Allen told the group that the break from meeting in the past months was because the Project Team wanted to be able to have something productive to discuss, and there hasn't been a lot to talk about recently. Tonight we are here to talk about the I-85 project, and why the RRP feasibility results are not ready.

Mr. Allen then explained why the project was included in the unconstrained list of projects and provided an overview of the Transportation Investment Act of 2010. Under terms of the Act, signed into law in June 2010, there were a number of things put into place including a format for putting projects in list that the region would vote on; there was a process for determining how officials would develop a project list for 12 regions. There could be a ballot referendum in 2012 for an additional 1% tax to fund projects on this list. There are milestone dates prior for the regions to develop their list. A roundtable formed last December (2010) detailed the types of projects that should be included. The investment criteria were adopted and local jurisdictions were to submit project requests to the Director of Planning by March 30,

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2011. The state planning director will have to put together for each of the roundtables an unconstrained list of projects. That regional unconstrained list is a source from which the roundtable can choose to create the projects list that will be presented to voters; any future amendments must draw from the projects on the unconstrained list.

Gwinnett County, its municipalities and CIDs decided to coordinate and submit one comprehensive list of potential projects. One criterion is that projects have to already be identified in a prior plan. The first place the County looked was to prior Comprehensive Transportation Plans. These plans contain a number of both short and long range projects that result from an extensive community involvement process. The list that was submitted to the state planning director consists of 74 projects at a cost of approximately \$3.4 billion. Of course, not all of the projects on the draft unconstrained list will be funded. If the referendum passes, the regional sales tax will generate \$7-8 billion overall statewide. The list will include transit, biking and any other type of transportation projects.

Gwinnett County submitted the Ronald Reagan Parkway Extension (RRPE) project because it's been part of its comprehensive transportation plan for years.

Some have asked if this is an attempt to provide gap funding. County officials answered that, no, that is not the intent. Just because we submitted it doesn't mean it's on the planning director's list or passes the scrutiny. After several public hearings, and other input, the Regional Roundtable will develop a list that is both financially constrained and appealing to a wide range of voters.

If, by Oct. 15, 2011, the roundtable cannot agree to a final investment list, there will not be a referendum in 2012.

The list submitted by Gwinnett County, its municipalities and CIDs were sent to the entire Gwinnett legislative delegation and, overall, the feedback was positive. The list is readily available on the Gwinnett County web site.

A CAG member asked if the list had been released publicly; Mr. Allen stated that the list is published on the ARC web site.

Another CAG member asked if other projects got bumped off the list because this project was included and Gwinnett County DOT staff answered that all projects in the mid- or short-range were submitted.

A CAG member voiced support for inclusion of the project on the list.

Mr. Allen explained that the cost attributed to the project was an estimate that could change in the future. A CAG member offered that the Georgia DOT (GDOT) was costing all the projects independently. The ability of the project to be delivered in a timely basis will also be examined.

Mr. Abercrombie then transitioned the group into the next portion of the meeting.

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PROJECT TEAM FEEDBACK & PRESENTATION

David Nachman of Skanska began his presentation, which is available on www.ReaganExtension.com.

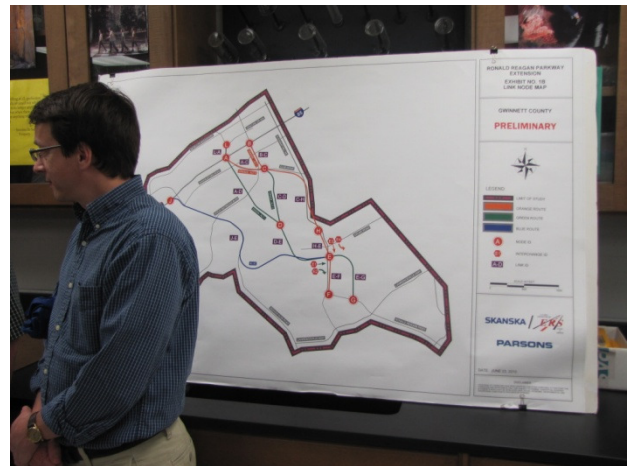
Key points from his presentation included:

- Details about resuming the CAG meetings, including what happened since the last meeting
- With input from the CAG, the Project Team recognizes the interrelation of the I-85 connection to possible extension of the RRP. Therefore it required an initiation of closer collaboration with the Georgia Department of Transportation, via a Project Framework Agreement, a change order to the PDA and extension of the feasibility study.
- A recap of the last meeting where the concept of a public-private partnership was reviewed in detail.

A traffic and revenue study is attempting to forecast the demand for the facility if tolled. The traffic and revenue experts found that the utility of a RRP extension is high; it would attract approximately 45,000 vehicles daily. An estimated reduction in traffic of around 20% on Pleasant Hill, 12% on Steve Reynolds and 10% on Beaver Run was predicted under the toll-free scenario during peak periods.

Using generally established values of time that have been localized for this area, traffic and revenue experts apply a range of tolls on the toll-free traffic to determine how many people are likely to use this route. Due to the shortness of the facility, the time savings isn't great, which resulted in far less demand for the roadway under the non-tolled condition. Secondly, when RRP users got to I-85 there was a logjam of congestion.

Each alignment has its own variability as far as construction cost. For example, the Blue alignment happens to be longer and therefore costs more. The Project Team is interested in ways to optimize any investment. The road could provide excellent traffic relief to roads within study area but a problem exists with connection to I-85. The Project Team spent a lot of time with GDOT and devised some global ideas that could mitigate congestion on I-85 and, as a result, improve the utility of the RRPE.



GDOT agreed to participate in a feasibility study and commit to a portion of the costs (\$750K). The cost of the I-85 Interface study is not part of the RRPE feasibility study. The scope begins with the interaction of RRPE and extended to include the scope of the HOV to single HOT conversion project.

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GDOT has the ability to contract with Gwinnett via a project framework agreement (PFA) to ask Gwinnett to perform the work for them. In this case, they have passed it on to the Project Team. The change order extends the contract and expands work scope.

In January, 2011, the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners acted on two agenda items: one, to accept the PFA and the \$750K and, two, ~~second~~ to amend the pre-development agreement (PDA) with Skanska. The I-85 Interface study will be done at no additional cost to the County. The costs and deliverables associated with the predevelopment agreement between Skanska and Gwinnett County remain the same.

A CAG member asked if the primary objective was to build a toll road and Mr. Allen said no. He referenced the HOT lane project on I-85 being implemented by GDOT. For many years, GDOT has studied ways to reduce congestion in the I-85 corridor and plans more than one lane of HOT. The current lane has been put in without barriers. GDOT has accepted that it needs to study the corridor for a number of options, probably prompted by the RRPE feasibility study but not dependent on it.

Mr. Nachman gave a briefing on the I-85 HOT Lanes project. More information is available at: <http://www.dot.state.ga.us/travelingingeorgia/expresslanes/I85hotlanes/Pages/default.aspx>

Mr. Nachman then reviewed the potential extensions of the RRP to I-85. The orange alignment ended with connection at Steve Reynolds Boulevard, where we've reconfigured the existing bridge. This is not the most desirable situation from an access situation because of the existing ramps are currently overloaded; this didn't provide the best capacity solution either ~~here~~.

The second idea is to tie the green alignment to West Liddell, including a direct connection from RRPE into the (soon to be) existing HOT lanes.

Another option is to connect the end of the Blue alignment to the outside of the interstate. Besides the high cost of this option, GDOT approval is uncertain at this time.



DISCUSSION AND PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Abercrombie then transitioned into the opportunity to discuss and comment on the presentations.

The following points were expressed:

- A CAG member asked what the “Interface” study area includes and Mr. Allen explained that the study area is the I-85 corridor, from I-285 to SR 316.
- Mr. Nachman explained that one of the potential solutions is reversible managed lanes. The current managed lane solution is underutilized in the peak periods in the off-peak direction. During heavy southbound times, the northbound has open capacity.

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There are many systems around the country where reversible lanes manage traffic through peak periods. There may be a way to reverse that underutilized lane to use it in the morning. The room out there allows you to have two lanes, barrier separated, reversible; it's different from what's out there now. This managed lane would operate separate from the general purpose lane. A CAG member expressed familiarity with this concept having experienced it in the Washington, DC, area.

- The Project Team asked attendees to consider that any widening of I-85 would be very expensive, if not impracticable, and that solutions would first consider using the existing footprint.
- A CAG member said an education program was needed so drivers understand that the solid white line means do not cross.
- Mr. Nachman explained that the Project Team is assessing the feasibility of these lanes and ability to connect into I-285. The Project Team is working closely with GDOT on this project; having technical meetings. Traffic and revenue studies are much more complex. It is expected, schedule-wise, to have a draft study by the end of August.
- A CAG member asked if the Interface project is being proposed as a PPP and the Project Team explained that the final business arrangements have not been decided.
- The Project Team cautioned that nobody should expect to see reversible lanes anytime in the near future.
- The Project Team explained that the traffic on the proposed RRPE is also very directional – meaning that it is largely one way at various times of the day. There is a potential to build the extension as a reversible lanes, or a three-lane road but depends on where you tie-in. Some CAG members said this was great thinking.
- Mr. Allen reiterated that the first GDOT meetings kicked off in March and hoped the CAG now has an understanding of why we haven't met in the last few months.
- A CAG member asserted that the potential extension won't generate enough revenue to flow by itself but if there is a way for it to flow into I-85 more smoothly it could be viable—to which the Project Team confirmed, saying there were variables that would have to be considered as well.
- There was brief discussion by the CAG and Project Team about the business model of users paying for the roads they use, helping to ensure that anything built would be supported and well used.
- The timeframe of end of August for the draft study was reiterated.
- It was described that the Interface Project will not have a formal separate process for public involvement as relates to CAG; those activities would fall into GDOT's public involvement process. It is expected that there will be some public presentations at the P3 Committee.
- The Project Team expressed that the RRPE technical committee hasn't met on the Reagan project in months, because the focus of the work has been on the I-85 interface project.
- The Project Team also described that all of the findings of the feasibility study are of value to the County regardless and that traffic and revenue results will be shared in the future.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

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Mr. Abercrombie brought the meeting to a close and a member of the public asked when a bike trail would be built in the area, perhaps like along Sugarloaf Creek. The individual's contact information was taken for follow up.

A CAG member wanted to reaffirm the concept of feasibility as applied to a potential extension and it was affirmed by the Project Team that the County can negotiate next steps and the studies are of value regardless.

Mr. Allen again thanked attendees and the meeting was adjourned.

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