



**RE: Responses to Virtual Open House Comments for
PI#: 0017118, Fulton County, Midtown Connector
Transportation Improvement Project (MCTIP)**

Thank you for your comments concerning the proposed project referenced above. We appreciate your participation and all of the input we received as a result of the *July 27, 2020 – August 5, 2020 Virtual Public Information Open House*. Every comment will be made part of the project's official record.

A total of **4,177** people participated in the virtual public information open house. Of the **230** respondents who formally commented, **55** were in **support** of the project, **45** were **opposed**, **8** were in **conditional support**, and **122** were **uncommitted**.

The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) has prepared this one response letter that addresses all comments received so that everyone can be aware of the questions raised and the responses given. Please find the comments summarized below followed by our response.

Why does this need to take up so much space?

The project limits were selected to address the most severe bottleneck conditions of the North Avenue/10th Street interchange, while also connecting east and west Midtown. This concept includes a slightly widened footprint for the Connector to accommodate new walls and foundations for the cap structure and safety improvements. These features include interstate shoulder widening for vehicular safety and the creation of emergency egress stairways for the proposed interstate tunnel. In addition, significant topographic elevation differences between the cap and surrounding area require the reconstruction of roadways that extend beyond the immediate cap area.

Can you just build a park capping the highway and offer more connection for Midtown residents?

No. Capping the highway, alone, does not address key traffic and transportation improvements on the Connector that are central to meeting the purpose and need of the project.

Will the Project filter more cars from the highway onto the collector and surface streets not built for them?

No. The design concept would redistribute Connector traffic already bound for North Ave and 10th Street onto a new pair of one-way streets. These new streets should better distribute existing Midtown-bound traffic through the local street network, improve operations and reduce crash frequency and severity on the Connector.

What will happen to the 3rd Street tunnel?

The 3rd Street tunnel will remain.

Please explain the 4th Street concept. Why does the planned 4th Street extension curve south to Bobby Dodd Way, instead of continuing west to the existing 4th Street on Tech's campus?

The conceptual roadway alignment is intended to overcome steep grade changes and maintain safe and pedestrian-accessible roadway slopes. Alignment refinements may be possible.

Why does the concept not run from the 6th Street bridge directly east from Georgia Tech campus to connect to Williams Street?

The grade differences and alignment between Williams Street and 6th Street across the proposed cap prohibit connectivity between the two streets.

Will the proposed structure cover the highway?

Yes. The deck proposed is a continuous covered structure over the Connector from approximately 200ft south of North Ave to approximately 200ft north of 10th Street.

Is this project created with pedestrian use in mind?

Yes. The proposed roadways are envisioned as pedestrian-friendly streets with landscaping and amenities. Several additional pathways are planned to support bicycle and pedestrian movement along and across the proposed park area.

Please explain how traffic will be redirected.



The project proposes to reconfigure local-bound traffic distribution into Midtown Atlanta and the Georgia Tech campus by relocating an exit in both the north and southbound directions and redistributing local traffic through a system of new frontage roads and local streets. Southbound exit ramp 249D to North Avenue and northbound exit ramp 250 to 10th and 14th Streets will be removed. The connectivity these exit ramps provide will be replaced by a one-way couplet adjacent to the Connector that connects to Interstate 75 exit 250 and Interstate 85 exit 84 in the southbound direction and exit 251A in the northbound direction.

How were these project limits determined? Why does this project not extend to 14th Street?

The project limits were selected based on the need to address interstate safety and the traffic bottleneck of the North Avenue/10th Street interchange caused by the close spacing of North Avenue, Spring Street and 10th Street interstate entrance/exit ramps, as well as the need to address public-space deficiencies in the area. Increasing the limits to 14th Street would be beyond the scope of this problem.

Will the pedestrian infrastructure for this project be safe for people in wheelchairs and strollers?

Yes. The entire project is designed with continual and optimal compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Please coordinate with local bike/ped organizations such as PEDS Atlanta and Atlanta Bicycle Coalition.

There will be additional public input opportunities as the project advances, including PEDS Atlanta, Atlanta Bicycle Coalition, and other bicycle/pedestrian interest groups.

Bringing more traffic onto Georgia Tech's campus will be dangerous for pedestrians.

The project team is working closely with Georgia Tech to ensure roadway changes prioritize pedestrian and bikeway safety. This project is intended to improve pedestrian and bicycle access and safety, and not expected to introduce additional traffic on Georgia Tech's campus.

Will the 25-acre park be interrupted by new street connections?

Yes. As currently proposed, crossroads would transverse the connector at grade with the proposed park at Ponce de Leon Avenue, 4th Street and 6th Street; however, there will be an elevated promenade across 4th Street and 6th Street.

Please consider bike and scooter safety.

Light Individual Transportation (LIT) modes of transportation, inclusive of scooters, are being considered in the design of transportation infrastructure. Details on LIT infrastructure are forthcoming as concepts are detailed and refined.

Will this project increase VMT?

No.

This project will turn Techwood Drive into a dangerous highway offramp.

Techwood Drive is proposed to function as a local street and would not be designed to function as a highway off-ramp. This project is redistributing existing traffic in the area and is not expected to induce additional traffic. Traffic analysis models confirm that vehicular traffic volumes on Techwood Drive are expected to stay nearly the same as they would without the project.

Will Techwood be extended to 10th Street?

Yes, Techwood Drive would be extended north of 6th Street to connect with the existing portion of Techwood Drive that is north of 10th Street. In the new configuration, 10th Street would bridge over Techwood Drive, eliminating the closely spaced Techwood Drive intersections currently at 10th Street immediately west of the Connector.

If exit 250 off of I-75/85 N is eliminated where would all that traffic exit the interstate to access Midtown?

Exit 250 is being retained and improved as part of the project.

During construction, how does the project plan to manage massive traffic delays? Where will traffic be rerouted during construction?

During the Maintenance of Traffic (MOT) process the project team would establish a plan for transportation management and temporary traffic control during off-peak hours. Detours for access during construction will be addressed as the project advances. The MOT would include public notification of traffic detours and temporary traffic control procedures.

Are there any examples of highway tunnels of a similar scale you could share?

This project addresses unique challenges and site conditions. However, there are lessons to be learned from peers who have done similar projects in various cities, of which the following have been most relevant to the project team: The Central Artery project (also known as the Big Dig) in Boston, MA; Klyde Warren Park in Dallas, TX; Freeway Park in Seattle, WA; Millennium Park in Chicago, IL; Ronda de Dalt in Barcelona, Spain.

Will this project be detrimental to the Georgia Tech campus?

No, this project would not be detrimental to the Georgia Tech campus. MCP Foundation is working closely with Georgia Tech to ensure project design and impacts align seamlessly with Georgia Tech's vision, character and future for its campus.

What effects will there be on the buildings that this project is moving from Georgia Tech's campus?

The project team is working closely with Georgia Tech for potential relocations of any buildings that must be moved from Georgia Tech's campus.

What will the expanded feeder roads mean for pedestrians moving around campus (especially between the area near the arena and the rest of the campus to the South)?

Cross streets and pathways would add new pedestrian connections across the Connector. These new roadways will be designed with bicycle and pedestrian safety in mind.

Will this project increase traffic significantly on the Georgia Tech Campus?

No. This project would not induce more traffic on Georgia Tech's campus and in the Midtown area; rather, it will redistribute traffic onto different routes.

How will this project impact the Greek Community; specifically, Alpha Xi Delta Sorority and Zeta Beta Tau Fraternity?

These impacts continue to be studied during the project's feasibility stage. Additionally, the project team is working closely with Georgia Tech and the Georgia Tech Greek Community to address impacts to this important segment of campus.

How will this project be funded? Will this project be publicly funded by taxpayer money?

Cost and funding will be determined as part of the feasibility study. Planning and design will explore what improvements are possible and from there, assign costs and benefits of the project. Those costs and benefits will determine the potential for public and private contributions to fund the project.

What is the timeline of this project?

Timing to complete is being determined as part of the feasibility study which is at its mid-point of a 3-year process. Several factors, including funding and community support, will be essential to determining the final timeline for completion.

Has this project been coordinated with other GDOT projects such as the Downtown Connector study?

Yes. This project has been coordinated with the Downtown Connector study and with other GDOT projects within the project area.

How much of the proposed cost estimate is tied to transportation improvements versus the park aspect of the project?

The overall cost estimate, including the distribution of costs for all improvements, is a major focus of the current feasibility stage.

Is the project team considering a greenspace minimum on the project to retain as much greenspace from development as possible?

Yes. One of the project goals is to maximize the greenspace within this corridor. During the feasibility stage the project team is evaluating all options to accomplish this goal.

Is it possible for the park to include a man-made river with fountains and pools?

No. Structural loading requirements and elevations/grading of the site do not permit the possibility of a man-made river with fountains and pools; however, appropriately scaled water features are being considered.

How will crime be handled in the park and tunnel?

The project team is working with all public safety entities – Georgia Tech Police Department, Atlanta Police Department, Georgia State Patrol and Midtown Blue – to develop a coordinated public safety plan for the park and tunnel, including on-site patrol and integrated modern safety technology.

What are the park's plans for homelessness?

The project team is working closely with both public safety and homeless outreach organizations to ensure a safe and secure environment for all.

Will panhandling be regulated?

Yes. This component of security will be developed in conjunction with the overall park safety plan.

How will the properties affected by this project be compensated?

GDOT and FHWA require fair compensation based on fair market value.

What are the plans for the Olympic Torch?

The Olympic Torch is privately owned. Any plan will be coordinated with the owner.

Could the Midtown BID increase its assessment of properties?

Property assessments made by the Midtown Improvement District, a self-taxing district created by commercial property owners, is outside the scope of this project.

It would be nice to see a map on which properties would conceivably see redevelopment in this concept?

Redevelopment is occurring in the study area with or without this project; however, there is no map available at this time that shows potential for redevelopment.

Will the tunnel deck be publicly owned/managed by the City or State or will it be privately owned?

The deck will be publicly owned by the State and privately managed.

Is there potential to tie this into The Stitch project CAP/ADID has been developing?

No. Expanding this project beyond its current limits is technically infeasible and beyond the scope of this project.

Is there a way to include MARTA in this project? Will MARTA be a funding partner?

MARTA is a stakeholder within the feasibility stage of this project. Funding partners for this project are yet to be determined.

Again, thank you for your comments. Should you have further questions or comments please contact the MCP Foundation at [404-214-3478](tel:404-214-3478) or feedback@mctip.org.

Sincerely,

Paul Morris

Chief Executive Officer, MCP Foundation, Inc.

cc: *Stacey Key, GDOT Board Member (District 5)*

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PDF for Project File

