



**Russell R. McMurry, P.E., Commissioner**  
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September 19, 2019

Re: Responses to Public Information Open House (PIOH) Comments for PI#: 0006446, Harris/Muscogee Counties, State Route (SR) 1/ US 27 Widening from Turnberry Lane in Muscogee County to SR 315 in Harris County, Georgia.

Thank you for your comments concerning the proposed project referenced above. We appreciate your participation and all of the input that was received as a result of the July 8, 2019 Public Information Open House (PIOH). Every written comment received, and verbal comment given to the court reporter will be made part of the project's official record.

A total of **197** people attended the open house. Of the **19** respondents who formally commented, **5** were in **support** of the project, **2** were **opposed**, **4** were **uncommitted**, and **8** expressed **conditional support**.

The attendees of the open house and those persons sending in comments within the comment period raised the following questions. The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Transportation Investment Act (TIA) program 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 (in *italics*) followed by our response.

- *Opposed to proposed roundabout.*

Response: Roundabouts have been demonstrated to provide safety, operations, and other benefits when compared to other types of intersections through providing fewer conflict points, lower speeds, reduction in crashes and crash severity, and reduction in traffic delays. The GDOT's policy is if an intersection meets the warrants for a signal, a roundabout must be considered. The GDOT's Intersection Control Evaluation (ICE) is then used to determine what type of intersection control is feasible and has the best possible overall value in terms of performance-based criteria. For the intersection of SR 315 at SR 1/US 27, a roundabout design was analyzed and determined to provide the best performance, and thus was used in the proposed design. At the Public Involvement Open House (PIOH), the GDOT provided educational materials on roundabouts in order to ensure the public had access to information on roundabouts how to properly navigate them.

Roundabouts have been identified as one of nine proven safety countermeasures to reduce intersection crashes by the FHWA. Studies have shown that roundabouts are safer than traditional stop sign or signal-controlled intersections. Roundabouts reduced injury crashes by 75 percent at intersections where stop signs or signals were previously used for traffic control, according to a study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS). Studies by the IIHS and FHWA have shown that roundabouts typically achieve:

- A 37 percent reduction in overall collisions
- A 75 percent reduction in injury collisions
- A 90 percent reduction in fatality collisions
- A 40 percent reduction in pedestrian collisions

- In addition to the safety benefits when compared to a traffic signal, roundabouts decrease delay (a benefit of not having to wait at a red light), are less expensive to build and maintain, and take up less space.
- *Is there a way to consider a short, middle “safe lane” just south of the Bonacre turn lane and intersection with that road, where drivers could enter into to assure that the southbound lane is clear and safe to enter?*

Response: Projects programmed utilizing Transportation Investment Act (TIA) funding are under budget constraints that allow for maximum utilization of regional tax dollars. One of these constraints is a ‘design to budget’ approach that is utilized as needed during the project timeline. The project as currently proposed fully utilizes and maximizes the funds allocated to the project and as a result of such budgetary constraints, no additional roadway lanes (center two-way left turn lane) can be added at this time. At this location (Bonacre), the proposed design has two lanes in each direction which should allow a driver making a left turn from side roads or driveways more space to complete the maneuver. The addition of additional turn lanes will be reviewed during the design process to address this concern.

- *I would recommend realigning east and west Bonacre...so east and west Bonacre are aligned, adjacent to one another.*

Response: The team appreciates the local insight into a potential design consideration and has reviewed this proposal. This area was reviewed, and it was determined if East Bonacre was realigned with West Bonacre, there is a risk of displacing two potentially historic properties and a commercial property that lie to the southeast of East Bonacre. If West Bonacre was realigned with East Bonacre, there is a risk of displacing at least two residential structures and one commercial structure that lie to the northwest of West Bonacre. In general, opposing side roads are realigned with each other if there is a conflicting movement (left turning vehicles maneuvering at the same time from both side roads) and potential of accidents due to the conflicting movement. These side roads are separated by approximately 645 feet and should have adequate spacing to remove the conflicting movements accident potential, therefore realigning them is not necessary.

- *Preference for a three-lane typical section throughout the corridor and removing the four-lane section.*

Response: The design team analyzed several alternatives including a three-lane section throughout the corridor; however, the total cost of this design was beyond the programmed budget. Additionally, the southern portion of the project has much higher traffic counts that would benefit from a four-lane section, while the northern portion has traffic counts that support the decision to leave the current lane configuration intact. Meetings with local stakeholders and GDOT’s TIA personnel have produced the current design as a compromise action based on budgetary limitations.

- *Do not need a median in the middle of the roadway at Winchester Drive.*

Response: There is not a proposed median located at this location (Winchester Drive and SR 1/US 27). The design at this intersection includes four lanes with a left turn lane that can be utilized at Winchester Drive or slightly further north at West Bonacre Road. South of the intersection there is a four-foot flush (flat) median proposed, which vehicles can be cross to access driveways and properties.

- *Expressed support for the proposed roundabout.*

Response: Thank you for your input. Roundabouts have been demonstrated to provide safety, operations, and other benefits when compared to other types of intersections by providing fewer conflict points, lower speeds, reduction in crashes and crash severity, and reduction in traffic delays. Please see the response to the first comment for further information on the expected benefits of the proposed roundabout.

- *Requested/suggested improvements to the intersection of US 27 and Pierce Chapel Road.*
- *Light needed at Pierce Chapel Road due to accidents.*
- *Consideration for L[eft] & R[ight] Turn lanes on Pierce Chapel at the Veterans intersection.*
- *There is no need for sidewalks in the area near Pierce Chapel Road (no schools nearby).*

The proposed design on SR 1/ US 27 at Pierce Chapel Road includes four lanes (two through lanes in each direction) and dedicated right and left turn lanes onto Pierce Chapel Road. Analysis of existing traffic data and projected traffic data (forecasted based on a 20-year projection from the current traffic counts) and turning movement data indicates these improvements are appropriate and sufficient. Per analysis of the crash data from 2014 to 2018, the majority of the accidents at this intersection were rear end accidents (21 of 38 recorded accidents) from vehicles traveling southbound on SR 1/US 27 and turning left onto Pierce Chapel Road. Additionally, the next highest accident type involved collisions with an animal or structure (other than a vehicle), which was 11 of the 38 recorded accidents.

The design team has evaluated potential variables contributing to the accident rate at this intersection. Variables include a hill and limited sight distance on Pierce Chapel Road at the intersection, lack of dedicated turn lanes along approaches, as well as driver expectation of a stop condition at the intersection. To address these variables, the proposed project would consist of several improvements that would contribute toward reducing the potential for accidents at this intersection. Pierce Chapel Road is proposed to be lowered to remove an existing crest vertical curve prior to the stop sign, which would improve sight distance. In addition, roadway rumble strips would be added to the westbound traffic lane approaching the intersection with SR 1/US 27, which would help to alert drivers of the upcoming stop condition at the intersection. There would also be advanced warning signs placed on Pierce Chapel Road that should reduce the amount of accidents resulting from people not stopping at the stop sign. The addition of a left and right turn lanes and the wider footprint on SR 1/US 27 is expected to also reduce the types of accidents noted above. As a result of the previously noted budgetary constraints associated with this project, no other improvements (such as right and/or left turn lanes) are proposed on Pierce Chapel Road.

The design team analyzed numerous alternatives in this area to determine the most budget-conscious and American Association of State Highway and Transportation officials (AASHTO) compliant design resulting in the least impacts to property owners. It was determined in this area that use of curb and gutter and sidewalk (e.g., a smaller project footprint as compared to the use of rural shoulders without sidewalks) would impact the property owners the least and result in lower overall project costs. In accordance with the Department's Design Policy Manual, pedestrian accommodation shall be included in all reconstruction projects which include curb and gutter as part of an urban border area; therefore, sidewalks were included in the project concept in this area. The design team also determined that the close proximity to multiple subdivisions, local schools (with a driveway located 1.5 miles from this intersection), and numerous planned new developments (e.g., assisted living facility, discount retailer, new subdivisions, etc.) in the area warranted the use of sidewalks for multi-modal connectivity and future pedestrian accommodations.

- *Concern was noted about a dangerous curve located on SR 1/US 27, approximately 0.25 mile south of the intersection with Pierce Chapel Road.*

Response: The current proposed design would improve the existing curve by flattening the curve (make it not as tight) which would improve sight distance, and adding a wider roadway (footprint) through additional lanes, resulting in an alignment that would have the potential to reduce accidents.

- *Glad the proposed project includes a dedicated turn lane from US 27 South onto East Bonacre.*

Response: Thank you for your input. This turn lane is required based upon traffic counts and turning movements.

- *Light needed at Coca Way (Coca Lake Subdivision) due to traffic and land uses (day care, restaurant, gas stations, etc.).*
- *Concerned about safety at Coca Lake (somebody will get killed). You can't come out of there from here and make a right or left turn. It is almost impossible.*

Response: Motorist and pedestrian safety is always the priority of the GDOT. In the concept design phase of the proposed project, the engineering team carefully reviewed the existing traffic patterns in the entire project area, including at the intersection of Coca Way and SR 1/ US 27, and found the current traffic levels do not indicate the need to provide a traffic light. The proposed design would, however, add a southbound left turn lane allowing vehicles to turn left onto Coca Way, as well as a dedicated northbound right turn lane allowing vehicles to turn right onto Coca Way. The design also proposes an additional southbound through lane that would serve the Coca Way intersection area. According to the accident data from 2012 to 2018, 9 of the 12 accidents recorded at this intersection were rear end accidents (3 northbound, 5 southbound, and 1 eastbound). Additionally, 3 of the 12 accidents recorded were a right-angle accident and include the following: a motorist traveling southbound and turning left onto Coca Way colliding with a northbound motorist; a motorist traveling southbound and colliding with a westbound motorist; and a motorist traveling northbound and turning left onto Secretariat Dr. and colliding with another motorist. The proposed design improvements at this intersection

should reduce these types of accidents. However, the proposed design can accommodate a potential future installation of a traffic signal should future traffic increase and warrant it. This comment has been forwarded to the Harris County Planning and Zoning Office for future consideration.

- *If the [highway] is expanded from 3 (current) to 4 lanes plus a 4-foot median, my back yard would be cut into (as would be the case for all the other residents on Pintail Drive), which would drastically reduce the value of our homes/property and make the ability to sell them very difficult.*
- *Concerned about the extent of right-of-way needed from their property.*
- *Concerned about changes of access to their property.*
- *Concerned about loss of parking to business.*

Response: The current concept level design in this area proposes asymmetrical widening, which results in balancing impacts to all properties on either side of SR 1/US 27, providing the overall benefit of being least impactful to properties on both sides of the road. The widening is proposed to minimize impacts to properties, structures, utilities, and parking areas and is needed to reduce accidents, control runoff, and provide additional capacity. All areas impacted with either proposed easements or proposed right-of-way will be discussed with the individual property owners during the right-of-way negotiations. These discussions will occur after the preliminary design phase is complete. For further information, please review GDOT's brochure on when your property is needed for a transportation facility, which can be found at this location on GDOT's website:

<http://www.dot.ga.gov/PartnerSmart/Public/Documents/Right-of-Way/ROWBrochure-English.pdf>

- *Light needed at Wooldridge Road due to traffic.*
- *Wooldridge/Veterans intersection will require Left and Right Turn Lanes on Wooldridge(sp.) at a minimum of 200 feet in length to allow access to Veterans, North & South.*
- *Expansion might be needed towards the northeast side of Muscogee County to accommodate traffic, especially near the intersection with Wooldridge Road, which is dangerous.*

Response: As part of the design process associated with this project, GDOT carefully reviewed the existing traffic patterns in the project area and found that the current traffic levels do not indicate the need to provide a traffic light at intersection of Wooldridge Road and SR 1/US 27. However, the current design can accommodate a potential future installation of a traffic signal at this location should the future traffic volumes increase and warrant it. Analysis of traffic count and turning movement data have indicated that the proposed improvements in this area are appropriate for the 20-year design horizon using approved traffic growth projections and will result in an acceptable Level of Service (LOS). The LOS is a grading system from A to F that indicates traffic congestion, where LOS C is acceptable. No other improvements are required on SR 1/US 27 at Wooldridge Road to accommodate the projected traffic movements. The addition of additional turn lanes in these locations will be reviewed during the design process to address this concern.

- *Lot marked 52 on the map, 8850, Mark & Debra McQuagg will require a concrete Driveway curb cut. To facilitate this cut, the Box Culvert depicted will have to be extended into the right of way to allow creek crossing. [Provisions provided for all three lots to receive US Mail on the EAST side of Veterans. Boxes may be consolidated location].*
- *Lot marked 53 on the map, 8866, Joy McQuagg will require a concrete Driveway curb cut. [Provisions provided for all three lots to receive US Mail on the EAST side of Veterans. Boxes may be consolidated location].*
- *Lot marked 54 on the map, 8880, Sam & Lucy McQuagg will require a concrete curb cut similar to the current configuration. 12' minimum width, radiused to the current 75' width at the roadway. Minimum length will be 75' from the roadway to the gate access point. [Provisions provided for all three lots to receive US Mail on the EAST side of Veterans. Boxes may be consolidated location].*
- *ANY above road level infrastructure required on the east side of Veterans in front of Lot 52, 8850, Lot 53, 8866 & Lot 54, 8880 should meet FINAL approval of said lot owners.*

Response: Reconstruction of the proposed driveway will be in accordance with the GDOT's driveway design manual. Residential driveways in curb and gutter sections require concrete valley gutters, however the design team may change the design to include radii if vehicles with larger turning radii use said driveway. The length of the tie-in is determined by existing and proposed topography in accordance with the design manuals. All areas impacted with either proposed easements or proposed right-of-way will be discussed with the individual property owners during the right-of-way negotiation stage. This stage will occur after the preliminary design phase is complete. For further information, please review the Department's brochure on when your property is needed for a transportation facility, which can be found at this location on GDOT's website:

<http://www.dot.ga.gov/PartnerSmart/Public/Documents/Right-of-Way/ROWBrochure-English.pdf>

To request a new driveway access to a state route, the property owner must follow the Department's 'Regulations for Driveway and Encroachment Control' manual, which can be found here:

<http://www.dot.ga.gov/PartnerSmart/DesignManuals/Encroachment/Driveway.pdf>

Upon approval of the driveway (access) permit provided by GDOT's District Permit Engineer, the design team would include the driveway location in the design plans. Additionally, more-detailed discussions would occur during individual right-of-way negotiations for construction of the driveway and proposed easements and/or proposed right-of-way.

- *Work being done to focus runoff/drainage from the [highway] into the median and then drained elsewhere, NOT forcing runoff water (current situation) down to the homes on the east side of the [highway] in Coca Lake. Currently, when it rains heavily, myself and the other residents on Pintail Drive who back up to Hwy 27 receive an inordinate amount of runoff that is starting to deteriorate our back yards and make septic system issues (with saturated field lines) come up. Please address this problem.*

Response: All transportation projects are designed to accommodate the drainage that will occur on the roadway. This project will be designed to direct roadway drainage into appropriate drainage structures. The existing topography along the east side of SR 1/US 27 paralleling the homes on Pintail Drive has a shallow ditch that runs north to south and crosses westward under SR 1/US 27 through an existing cross drain approximately 350 feet north of the subdivision entrance. The design team will work to provide roadway ditches and/or storm drain systems to capture the roadway runoff/drainage and transfer the water into established outlets. The proposed drainage design will be analyzed during the preliminary plan phase to ensure it complies with GDOT's Drainage Manual criteria with regards to storm events to prevent additional flooding.

- *The value of my property and that of other residents on Pintail and Pintail South will be negatively impacted by the proposed widening unless a noise barrier is constructed. A single sound wall solution will offer the security, privacy, and noise reduction from the proposed widening.*

Response: For TIA/State-funded projects, a noise study for the project corridor is not required. The exception to this is when one is required to assist in the determination of potential effects to eligible historic properties as is required by the Army Corps of Engineers and the State Historic Preservation Office. If a historic property meets the eligible criteria for a noise wall, it will be evaluated through the noise wall process. At this conceptual point in project development, it is not anticipated that a noise wall analysis will be completed for individual properties for this project.

- *General problems at the corner of Denny Road and Lynn Drive – three way stop. It needs to be a four-way stop.*

Response: This location is outside the scope of this project, and therefore is not included in the proposed design. Please contact GDOT's District 3 Office in Thomaston (706-646-6900) to share your concerns and obtain information on any future improvements in the area.

- *The intersection of Preston Road and US 27 is a dangerous intersection. Many people turning left to Preston Road into the post office.*

Response: The current design has been developed through a process that involved consideration of input received from various meetings with local stakeholders and GDOT's TIA personnel, considerations associated with budgetary constraints, and analysis of traffic data. The TIA Program coordination with local representatives regarding this intersection resulted in the determination that no other construction activities other than mill and overlay of the existing asphalt are proposed at this intersection. The design team reviewed accident data from 2011 through 2018 at this intersection and found that a total of 13 accidents occurred at this intersection during that 8-year timeframe. Of those 13 accidents, 7 involved rear end collisions, 4 involved collisions with animals or structures (primarily north of the intersection), 1 involved a sideswipe, and 1 involved a southbound motorist colliding with a northbound motorist making a left-hand turn. The addition of additional turn lanes will be reviewed during the design process to address this concern. The GDOT has also forwarded this comment to the Harris County Planning and Zoning Office for future consideration.

- *Expressed general support of the project.*

Response: Thank you for your comment.

- *Just north of the fire tower, on the west side of US 27, mapping indicates a wetland. The land on the east side of the marked wetlands on the west side of US 27 is a bigger wetland – more springs and also receives all the water from the west side of the road. The road needs to move further west to avoid wetlands.*

Response: During project design, impacts to waters are minimized or avoided where possible in compliance with the GDOT Environmental Procedures Manual, as well as the Clean Water Act. Design features, including retaining stream buffers within the right-of-way in their natural state to the maximum extent practicable, will be incorporated to minimize water quality degradation. During construction, impacts to waters will be minimized through standard control measures to prevent erosion and sedimentation (such as silt fences) and these measures will be further determined as the design develops. Any impacts to wetlands that are found unavoidable will undergo compensatory mitigation in the form of wetland restoration, establishment (creation), or enhancement.

The east side of SR 1/US 27 has a larger wetland area based on ecological field survey efforts at this location in 2016 and 2017. The proposed roadway alignment is based upon minimizing impacts to multiple resources of concern that include historic properties, like the fire tower on east side, wetlands and streams (located on both the east and west sides of the roadway in this area), existing houses and detention ponds on the west side, and existing right-of-way. It has been determined that the proposed alignment is the best fit to minimize adversely impacting all of the environmental and community resources.

- *House located on the west side of US 27 and the corner of Pierce Chapel Road was built in 1900 and is a historical site.*

Response: The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic and archaeological properties and afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) a reasonable opportunity to comment on such undertakings. The goal of such consultation is to identify historic properties that have the potential to be affected by an undertaking (and what these effects may be to historic and archaeological resources), as well as identify ways to avoid, minimize harm, or mitigate any of these adverse effects on historic and archaeological properties.

As an ongoing part of the design phase, the environmental team is currently evaluating all structures located within this project's Area of Potential Effect for eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and the potential impacts associated with the proposed project. As part of this effort, all structures, including the one noted in this comment, will be evaluated for NRHP eligibility and, if determined eligible, avoidance and minimization measures will be analyzed.



Again, thank you for your comments. Should you have further questions, comments or concerns, please call the project manager, Joe Gillis, at 404-347-0233 or the environmental analyst, Laura Dawood, at 770-548-9904.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Franks  
State TIA Administrator

JG/rd

cc: Joe Gillis, GDOT Project Manager (via email)  
PDF for Project File