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Study results help “The Gulch” build momentum

With population growth expected to reach 8.3 million people in the metro Atlanta area by 2040, one can logically defend the need to build alternative transportation options such as the Green Line and Multimodal Passenger Terminal (MMPT), also known as “The Gulch.” However, it takes more than sound reasoning to clear lots and build infrastructure. The State Transportation Board (STB) received a preview of the economic impact assessment report findings on “The Gulch” during their monthly meeting.

Central Atlanta Progress (CAP), a private nonprofit organization that works to protect and strengthen the fiscal strength of Downtown Atlanta, conducted the economic impact analysis, which is scheduled to be released this fall. CAP used the services of the Bleakly Advisory Group, Economic Development Research Group, and Kimley-Horn and Associates to determine the overall financial impact of “The Gulch” project.

According to Gary Mongeon of the Bleakly Advisory Group, the Green Line and MMPT have the potential to provide positive financial gains for the metro Atlanta area and the state. The projects are expected to address congested commutes and the struggling job market impacting Georgia residents.

The MMPT and related transit investments are anticipated to save commuters time and money once they are complete. Findings from the report show that the new transit options would help to remove 568 million vehicle miles from area

highways, reduce automobile trips by 13 million, and reduce the time commuters spend in automobiles by 77 million hours. Residents and businesses would save nearly \$2.2 billion in travel costs annually by clearing up highways.

Though fewer vehicles would make their way downtown as a result of installing the MMPT and Green Line, more businesses could travel to the area, according to the study. In comparison to a no-build scenario, implementing the MMPT and associated amenities could increase investment in downtown Atlanta by nearly \$3.1 billion. The project would also create nearly 15,700 more jobs within the study area, according to Mongeon.

The full-build scenario has even larger projected economic impacts based on the 2040 Impact Summary, which will be included in the final report. The project has the potential to add nearly 47,000 jobs statewide by 2040. It could also increase the state’s annual economic output by more than \$5.3 billion.

“The economic impacts to the state are almost equally split between regional transportation benefits and downtown redevelopment effects,” Mongeon said.

The preview of the results supports the financial feasibility of building “The Gulch.” The STB members expressed their gratification in the study’s findings, and encouraged using the information to educate the community.

Gateway Subcommittee holds first meeting

The State Transportation Board’s Gateway Subcommittee heard a presentation on a 20-year program to beautify interchanges and gateways in Columbus, GA. The Gateway Subcommittee members are charged with examining possibilities for enhancing the appearance of major entrance points into the State of Georgia from its surrounding states, especially the interstate system.

Mr. John F. Flournoy, founder of Flournoy Development Company, has overseen and managed the Gateway program in Columbus for 20 years. He gave a presentation on the ongoing effort to improve the aesthetic appeal of key areas in the

city. Currently, the Columbus program is working on the entrance and exit at Fort Benning, one of America’s premier military installations.

The Gateway Subcommittee is chaired by Sam Wellborn who has served on the DOT Board and its various committees for over twenty years representing citizens of the Third Congressional District. “I am very excited to see what possibilities there are available to improve the appearance of major roadways into Georgia,” said Wellborn. “I want to make a positive impact on visitors entering our state that will leave a lasting impression,” he added.

Several Board committees met in advance of the full Board Meeting. Meeting highlights are below:

Public Private Partnerships (P3): The committee was given status updates on the North by Northwest, Multi Modal Passenger Terminal (MMPT), Rest Areas/Welcome Centers projects were given.

Intermodal: The committee was given updates on the status of the Rural Human Service Transportation Coordination, Atlanta—Chattanooga High Speed Ground Transportation and Intermodal programs. The findings from the Atlanta Metropolitan Airport Capacity Study were also shared with committee members.

Program Delivery: A period of instruction was given on the Plan Development Process introduction and overview.

Statewide Transportation Planning: The committee received a review of the Departments 2012 Strategic Plan Update.

Did You Know?

STATE FUND COLLECTIONS

The estimated motor fuel collections, fiscal year to date, are \$85,661,597.66 and is 2.54% over budget. This represents an increase of 4.99% over last year’s collections of \$81,592,341.91 for the same time frame.

TOTAL GDOT EMPLOYMENT FIGURE

The total employment figure for the month ending July 31st is 4,571.

Next Board Meeting: Atlanta, Georgia – September 15th