

Public Outreach Events

Thursday, February 7, 2013

Lou Walker Senior Center | 2538 Panola Road | Lithonia, GA

Saturday, February 9, 2013

Maloof Center Auditorium | 1300 Commerce Drive | Decatur, GA

Monday, February 11, 2013

Exchange Park Intergenerational Center | 2771 Columbia Drive | Decatur, GA

Tuesday, February 12, 2013

Doraville Civic Center | 3770 Central Avenue | Doraville, GA

Attendance

A total of 67 people signed in at the four meetings.

Elected Officials

The Project Management Team recognized the following elected officials in attendance at the meetings:

- February 7, 2013: Patricia Miller (Councilmember), City of Lithonia; Tracy Ann Williams (Councilmember), City of Lithonia
- February 9, 2013: Kathie Gannon (Commissioner), DeKalb County
- February 11, 2013: Larry Johnson (Commissioner), DeKalb County
- February 13, 2013: Emanuel Ransom (Mayor), City of Clarkston; Leslie Robson (Councilmember), City of Chamblee

Meeting Agenda

- Open House
- Welcome and Introductions
- Presentation of Key Ideas
- Facilitated Discussion of Vision/Goals
- Wrap-Up and Next Steps

Meeting Summary

Members of the DeKalb County Project Management Team welcomed attendees to the DeKalb County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) meetings. Team members discussed the importance of public

involvement in the update process and how other planning processes throughout the County work together to further the transportation vision of DeKalb.

The Consultant Team delivered a PowerPoint presentation that began with an overview of the importance of planning in the County's ability to prepare for growth. The Team talked about the project logo which depicts an inclusive transportation planning process with the community playing a critical role. The purpose of the county transportation plan and how it fits into the larger Atlanta Regional Commission 2040 plan was also discussed.

The transportation plan will be inclusive of all transportation modes and will include motor vehicles, rail, freight, bus, pedestrians, bicycles, and air travel. Other considerations throughout the planning process will include an analysis of land use, which furthers an understanding of where different land uses are and how they connect to transit. Market conditions, schools, and natural disaster response will be also considered. Throughout the planning process, the Project Management Team will be focusing on equitable target areas which give consideration to every cross section of the community, especially those who are traditionally underrepresented in the transportation planning process.

Next, the Project Management Team talked about the anticipated outcome of this plan – a prioritized list of projects to make the County competitive with other metro Atlanta counties and across the region and nation. This process will also help the County determine how to use its resources most wisely by prioritizing projects.

The CTP update will involve a variety of stakeholders including members of the public and elected officials, stakeholder committees, project management team and the consultant team. Gathering different perspectives is a central theme in this process. While everyone will not agree with everything in the plan, a major goal of public involvement is to be sure that everyone feels that they were heard and that collective public involvement has a significant influence on the outcomes of the plan. The Team discussed the different options for becoming engaged: public meetings, online meetings, focus groups, surrounding county meetings (coordinating with DeKalb's neighboring counties), a public opinion survey, the project website, Facebook, twitter, and newsletters. Additionally, there are two different stakeholder committees: the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and the Community Advisory Committee (CAC). Both committees will help gather input from a wide variety of collaborators for a successful process.

The project schedule was briefly discussed. Currently, the Team is completing data collection and the public meetings, and will be back in April to talk about future needs. Over the summer, the Team will draft a list of recommendations and will return in September to get feedback on the draft recommendations. In the fall/winter the team will finalize the plan and present it to the CEO and the County Commission for adoption.

The Team expressed that the purpose of the first round of public meetings is to refine the plan vision and goals, which will set the framework for the rest of the process. The vision and goals will be directly related to the criteria that are established for prioritizing projects. The process for refining the plan

vision and goals began with a meeting of the TAC and CAC members. These committees brainstormed about the transportation vision and ideas. The most popular concerns and feedback received were connectivity, safety, funding, and sustainability. These ideas were used to develop the following draft vision statement.

The Transportation Plan will:

- Improve mobility for all people.
- Enhance the quality of life.
- Facilitate economic vitality.
- Focus on implementation.

The public was encouraged to stay involved throughout the process through public meetings, the project website, Facebook, and twitter.

Open Forum Questions and Answers (from Initial Meeting)

2/7/13

Q: What can DeKalb County do about getting rail in DeKalb?

A: During this process, the Team will take an independent look at rail options to include an analysis of land use across the county and what is needed to make rail a possibility.

Q: We need rail in south DeKalb. It would facilitate older adults who cannot get around. Special emphasis should be put on rail.

A: The Team will be looking at new funding sources, but we have to also consider what the County can do with the resources it currently has.

Q: Thank you for an excellent and informative presentation. Are you working as a consultant directly for DeKalb?

A: Yes.

Q: Who is funding this work and to what extent? Is this a contract?

A: The funding for this process includes a 20% match by DeKalb and an 80% match through the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC). The total contract amount is \$1.25 Million. All counties in the ARC's 10-County region must complete a transportation plan in order to be eligible for funding.

Q: How did your firm get this project?

A: This team of firms was selected through an open selection process. The County released an RFP and received solicitations from 10 teams. A shorter list of firms that responded to the RFP was interviewed by the County and a recommendation was made to the Board of County Commissioners for this team.

The selected team is led by Kimley-Horn and Associates and consists of significant representation of local small businesses (more than 30% of the contract value).

Q: How much of the TSPLOST is being considered in this process?

A: The projects submitted through the TSPLOST will be considered, as well as the ARC's Livable Center Initiative plans, DeKalb's master active living plans, the County Comprehensive Plan, and the original CTP. Starting out, we will want to thoroughly document all previously proposed projects from all plans.

Q: Regarding funding, plans are being made to ask the state legislature to raise the sales tax by another penny. Please make sure this [transportation plan] is not another attempt to get the penny sales tax.

A: We have to be honest about the funding situation. There will be a challenge to make a plan that can find innovative ways to get funding. We have to use the vision and goals to streamline and prioritize the projects. It will be a painful process but we have to go through it. The vision and goals are important.

The County's transportation planning process started well before the TSPLOST and this plan can be used to help position DeKalb to get things like more rail. For example, good connectivity needs to exist before rail is an option. This planning process can help support the transportation needs that will make rail possible in south DeKalb. A penny sales tax is only one possible funding option, but one good thing about the penny option is that, should it go through, we will have greater control on how the penny gets used whereas with the TSPLOST, the project list was developed on a regional scale with more limited input from individual counties. This process gives us more time to vet the projects, prioritize them, and to get them lined up in a way that you see fit.

Q: The Project Fact Sheet says that this process happens every 4 to 5 years. What has been implemented from past updates to the transportation plan?

A: One of the problems we had was that the 2006 plan had a very rosy outlook for funding. We've done some of those projects and are progressing in some areas. A few examples include the Wesley Chapel Road interchange, sidewalks on Memorial Drive, and lots of intersections throughout DeKalb.

It is important to understand that DeKalb does not have a SPLOST like some other metro Atlanta counties where their penny goes 100% to infrastructure. In DeKalb, 80% must go to property tax relief. For the remaining 20%, the Board of Commissioners votes yearly to determine whether this remaining portion will fund additional property tax relief or infrastructure projects. The cities in DeKalb get their allotment and what remains can be used for the County. Compared to other jurisdictions, DeKalb gets much less.

Q: We are not interested in what is being built everywhere else. We have to do something in DeKalb and not worry about what everyone else is doing. What can DeKalb do?

A: DeKalb spends about \$5 Million on infrastructure. This plan will help us come to grips with what we want to do with what we have.

Public Comment: DeKalb is very limited in the money it has to spend and has never been able to pick and choose projects w/o extenuating circumstances. This dates back to a referendum that was passed in the late 90s. A referendum would be required to change this.

Q: We have to have something done for DeKalb County. Everyone wants to move out and make themselves a city. Something has got to give about prioritizing. We've been asking for rail for years.

A: Most of the County's transit planning is funded through MARTA. This team will look at rail independently. We have to also look at density needed to justify rail. We need infrastructure to get the rail by way of sidewalks and connectivity. We have to prioritize and coordinate in order to support and pay for rail.

Q: When does the homestead reduction come up again for renewal?

A: It is ongoing indefinitely until voted out.

Q: My suggestion would be that the first recommendation is to abolish the homestead tax and make it for transportation.

A: This will be a hard sell and would take an effort to educate the public.

Q: North DeKalb is growing like crazy. Where will these project go, to north or south DeKalb? The Perimeter area has grown but we're still sitting here in south DeKalb. Where will the bulk of these projects go?

A: A bulk of the programmed projects are in south DeKalb including widening of Panola Road, Lithonia Industrial Boulevard and Turner Hill Road.

Q: These are widening projects. Everyone here wants a rail system. DeKalb has supported MARTA for years and south DeKalb has not gotten any of the benefit.

A: This is the kind of input we need. This is actually a big part of why we're going through this planning process. We need to document these kinds of viewpoints and concerns throughout the County.

Q: DeKalb needs to be able to financially build its own rail system.

A: Federal funds for supporting a transit system must go through a transit agency such as MARTA.

Q: Is this the same as the MARTA I-20 East Transit Initiative?

A: No, this planning process is for all modes of transportation and for the entire county.

Q: Are we trying our best to get the funding we need for a constructive plan for rail? Are we trying to get this money from the fed government? Are we factoring in neighboring counties that use the system?

A: While this is not a MARTA project, they are a partner in our planning process. MARTA is factoring in other counties and how they use the system. Everyone is fighting for limited funds.

The CTP takes into account the ARC's 20-County planning region. DeKalb also participates in planning processes for neighboring jurisdictions, as well. It is a collaborative process.

Q: How you are notifying people about the meetings? What efforts are you making to get people who are not online information about the meetings? Can elected officials come to the meetings?

A: We are coordinating closely with the Board of County Commissioners as members of our CAC and they are invited to participate in all public meetings. The team put out press releases to all of the papers who covered the story. The County's ONE DeKalb system is also a great way to get updates. We are sending information out to major employers and have also asked members of the CAC and TAC to help distribute meeting details. The public will also be able to interact through the website and social media. We want input and want to hear from the public.

Vision & Goals Feedback from Group Discussions

2/9/13

Improve Mobility

- Make sure we look at expansion of rail service – this includes heavy rail and commuter rail.
- Need to ensure equitable treatment of all people in the plan.
- Need rail transit to south DeKalb.
- Freight and Air should not be considered for connectivity under the Improve mobility for all people goal.
- Vehicular should not be considered for connectivity under the Improve mobility for all people goal.
- There should be more emphasis on age and physical mobility when equity is considered in the Improve mobility for all people goal.
- Providing for the efficient movement of goods on both rail and truck should not be a goal .

Facilitate economic vitality

- Schools need to be an important part of this plan.

Focus on implementation

- We [the public] need to make sure the political leadership in DeKalb knows how important this process is.
- The goals of all of the transportation planning efforts in the county tend to be the same with no implementation that ever follows.
- Develop a renewed trust in elected leaders and public confidence in the process should be the highest priority.
- Residents would like to actually see implementation of projects from the various plans.

Other items to consider

- The stakeholder groups and public meeting process should be combined.
- Project Team needs to rethink meeting format.
- Project Team should conduct a meeting in South DeKalb Mall.
- Meeting notice should be sent to schools and senior centers (Particularly in South DeKalb Mall area).

2/9/13

Improve Mobility

- Is light rail being considered?.
- Better connection needed to places outside DeKalb (Macon, Athens, etc).
- DeKalb needs better MARTA service especially in south DeKalb.
- Better mobility needed from south DeKalb if traveling on transit.
- Need to consider bringing park and ride lots back (Rainbow at Candler Road; Gresham Road). MARTA should look into park and rides at shopping malls since those lots are underutilized. The Emory bus model works.
- In Stonecrest, the closest park and ride lot is at Panola Road.
- Extending the MARTA east line to Stonecrest would get people into Atlanta quicker and easier.

Enhance the quality of life

- Want improved economic development.

Facilitate economic vitality

- Stonecrest needs to eventually build the density to warrant rail.
- Economic vitality has to be improved to justify the need for rail.

Focus on implementation

- How can we convince the public that there are resources available?
- How can we identify more funding?
- How can we give people more confidence in government? Should there be a SPLOST oversight committee?
- South DeKalb needs to feel that they will benefit from this project.
- We need a change in MARTA legislation.

Other items to consider

- Need better maintenance.
- Supporting technology (electric energy, infrastructure).
- Examine green standards: are they too strict? Do the standards deter businesses?
- Zoning is an issue that the community should be involved in.

2/11/13

Improve Mobility

- MARTA:
 - I like the plan to bring rail to Stonecrest.
 - MARTA does not go to where the people go. There are too many transfers needed and they are not free.
 - MARTA needs greater access while being more affordable.
 - MARTA should be more efficient.

- There are gaps in MARTA's service that need to be addressed (Wesley Chapel Road and Flat Shoals Parkway areas).
- Parking at MARTA lots should be free; otherwise it is cheaper to drive.
- The funding needed to run MARTA is the main issue.
- MARTA should be more regional.
- Citizens deserve to get what was promised to them [by MARTA].
- Progress seems to get bogged down because of MARTA's process.
- Anti-rail (transit) rumors are a concern.
- South DeKalb MARTA is an issue.
- The community is going to be selfish about the Rail line to Stonecrest.
- Increase accessibility to MARTA and encourage neighboring counties (Clayton, Henry, etc.) to support MARTA.
- Public safety resources are needed.
- Sidewalks are too narrow to walk side-by-side, for strollers, and for wheelchairs.
- New sidewalks are needed and should be accessible for all mobility needs.
- Sidewalk guidelines need to be in the County ordinance.
- Decorative pavers take away the availability of green space along sidewalks.
- Sidewalk maintenance and landscaping should be taken care of prior to construction.
- Sidewalks need to be better connected to where people actually walk.
- A mix of transportation technology (mono-rail, streetcars, etc) should be considered until we can get what we really want.
- The Park and Ride on Gresham road is an issue. "Something seriously needs to be done."
- Unused bicycle lanes are a concern.
- There is a desire for more transit options in DeKalb.
- New sidewalks should all be handicap accessible.
- Bicycle lanes are a waste of money; we need sidewalks instead of bicycle lanes.

Enhance the quality of life

- Need more bike routes in certain areas.
- People love to walk and ride.
- Development plans need to factor use of both the aging and young population.
- The County needs to clean up the streets, and if new landscaping is going to be incorporated it needs to be maintained.

Facilitate economic vitality

- How did we go from having schools where people could walk to school to ones where all students have to be bussed?
- A major issue with Environmental Justice neighborhoods not getting good development; if any at all.

- Higher income neighborhoods in DeKalb continue to get unnecessary development brought to them, but the neighborhoods that really need developing never get any useful development if any.

Focus on implementation

- Funding is a concern.
- There needs to be equal distribution of tax dollars to help develop the entire County.

Other items to consider

- All of I-20 should be included in the CTP.
- Major concerns regarding equality within community development and CTP.
- Representatives from the police and fire department should be involved in the CTP process- (Dealing with Safety).
- Equality is a major issue.
- Concerned about demographics not playing a significant role in development in the County.
- Demographics should be considered when creating new plans.

2/12/13

Improve Mobility

- Transit centers need better connectivity apart from roads.
- More consideration needs to be given to incorporating Mobility Pathways- (Non-Segregated walk, bike and trail pathways that co-exist with highways) into the CTP. An example of this would be the Atlanta BeltLine.
- DeKalb needs transportation options that provide for efficiency in connectivity.
- The existing hubs need to be expanded.
- Bike lanes that are incorporated into auto lanes are unsafe.

Enhance the quality of life

- Enhancing quality of life should be a top priority of the CTP.

Facilitate economic vitality

- There needs to be more retail options located around transit centers.

Focus on implementation

- CTP goals should also be consistent with transportation goals of all cities located in DeKalb County.

- Intergovernmental collaboration should be an emphasis in the plan in an effort to set realistic and tangible goals.

Other items to consider

- The current transit offerings in the region don't follow the migration patterns of the people.
- Providers of public transportation need a better understanding of the needs of the people.
- More education and communication of transit and transit options in DeKalb.
- There is a need to start dealing with what transit will look like in all cities and counties in the region in the next 75 years.
- Establishing a phone tree may be a good way to get the message out about meetings.