



Cobb County...Expect the Best!

Northwest Transit Corridor Alternatives Analysis



Stakeholder Roundtables Summary December 2011

In December 2011, a series of five stakeholder roundtables was conducted for the Connect Cobb Alternatives Analysis. The purpose of the roundtables was to gain insight from community members, planning partners, key stakeholders, special interest groups, elected and appointed officials, and agency staff about the study's purpose, need, goals and objectives as well as the criteria that will be used to evaluate the study's alternatives.

The individual roundtables were organized by topic and included transportation and air quality, land use, economic development, environment, and financial. Over eighty attendees participated in the roundtables, many attending more than one or even all five. A broad cross-section of stakeholders was achieved with representation from the general public; local, state and regional agency staff; the business community; environmental groups; civic organizations; and advocacy groups. The following table lists the details for each roundtable. All roundtables were held at Cobb County Department of Transportation.

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Date and Time</i>	<i>Number of Attendees</i>
Transportation and Air Quality	December 6, 2011 4:00 - 5:30pm	43
Land Use	December 6, 2011 6:00 -7:30pm	30
Economic Development	December 8,2011 4:00 - 5:30pm	29
Environment	December 8, 2011 6:00 – 7:30pm	19
Financial	December 13, 2011 4:00 - 5:30pm	21

Upon arrival at the roundtables, attendees signed-in, were offered an information folder and asked to select seating in at a six-person group table with a facilitator. Each roundtable began with a short presentation directed at the entire audience, followed by a breakout group exercise. See attached documents for agenda and handouts for each roundtable.

In the breakout exercise, attendees were asked their thoughts on the draft goals and objectives, specifically how well they reflected the issues in the study area and if any pertinent statements had been left out. Next, attendees were asked to discuss the draft purpose and how well the statement married with the goals and objectives. A facilitator guided the conversation, and a recorder documented the verbal comments. The following summaries detail the collective conversations compiled from each table at the individual roundtables. Also included are comments submitted by attendees after review of the summary notes.



Transportation & Air Quality Roundtable Stakeholder Comments December 6, 2011

General Discussion

- Buses would be more efficient with shorter trips
- No one serves the school board or Lockheed Martin, both big employers. There are 8500 employees at Lockheed. No transit at Lockheed, and people drive there from all over Cobb County and beyond, e.g. Ellijay, Paulding County
- Rail system could offer an option for folks not on the I-75 corridor
- Project should focus on congestion not biking or walking
- Reduce wait times and increase travel destinations
- Better served for or with short trips
- Consistency and reliability
- Parking – Necessary for any Transit System
- Express Lanes
- What other infrastructure improvements
 - Dedicated lanes
- We need to keep in mind that the primary reason for trip generation is the commute. All other trip purposes will only account for a fraction of the total trips. Where trips begin and end is important, especially the density and location of employment centers.
- Every bus route begins and ends at either the Marietta or Cumberland Mall transfer centers, but this doesn't have to be the case.
- Buses could intersect a high capacity transit line at any station
- The P3 corridor along I-75 has a proposed ramp at Roswell Road. Is there potential to use this? Pick up traffic originating in both east and west Cobb County.
- Is there a need for two types of service? For example, if the alignment is along Cobb Parkway, it will likely be slow and serve only local trips, as it would take too long to get to downtown Atlanta. What about express service?
- There are two distinct needs, peak versus everything else.
- Add "pedestrian" to the objective.
- Improve pedestrian movements at the stations
- Users could realize a cost savings by not having to pay for parking.
- As a representative of the City of Atlanta, we'd love to provide alternatives to take congestion off roads. There are 9 miles of the NW corridor within the City of Atlanta. We already have issues with buses (express buses). If we could connect to MARTA people would have alternative means of travel
- Transit trip times? Surveys show they will be longer. Depends on type of rail; heavy is faster than light rail. Trolley for short distances bad

- Increase capacity with minimal costs, e.g. build heavy rail so that as ridership increases, you can add more cars to the train
- Station design needs to accommodate future conditions.
- alternatives should include making Cobb Parkway more walkable
- Extend transit up the East/West Connector to Town Center Mall to the Silver Comet Trail
- Connectivity – a regional transit network
 - Cost effective solution to enable the transit network
 - Reduce need to change vehicles (modes of travel)
 - Cost effective operation
- Providing connectivity and additional travel choices from Cherokee and North Cobb will be key. We need to plan for the increase in population in North Cobb and Cherokee.
- There should be a goal about educating the public on the viability of transit options.
- Convenience needs to be considered. Express routes to serve commuters and choice riders, but there should be a balance to serve service employees.
- Convenience is missing (and important). Transit might not reduce trip time, but by taking transit to the airport, for example, would mean there is no need to park.
- Consider the choice rider – limit number of stations to ensure that those with options will be willing to use the system.
- Appropriate station locations might be:
 - Cumberland
 - Dobbins
 - Kennestone Hospital
 - Kennesaw State University
 - Town Center
- Other counties are impacting traffic more than Cobb residents, is there a way to fix this, are there spur studies included?
- Concern for congestion coming from west Cobb into Marietta.
- Want connection from I-575 to get to I-75.
- Needs a shuttle or rail up I-575.
- 3 employment centers at Dobbins accounting for 10,000 workers.
 - Should survey Dobbins employees to see how they are getting to work
 - Could SPSU and Life share a spur with Dobbins?
 - Aircraft issues, encroachment.
- Do the US 41 alternates include taking lanes away, or adding to existing R/W?
 - Think using BRT in existing lane is going to make traffic worse.
 - Put something in center of roadway.
- Existing CCT doesn't have a pull off, just stops in lanes.
- Park and Ride at green area owned by Dobbins at SR 280 and Cobb Parkway
- Lengthening HOV on I-75
- Flyover from I-75 to I-575 instead of rail.
- Are there issues coming from Art Center to Cumberland?
 - Elevation issues

- Should it connect to another area?
 - BRT from one point to Arts Center Station.
- Powder Springs
 - Have GRTA take people up north to Kennesaw.
 - Use East-West Connector and Thornton Road.
- Multiple Park and Rides along Cobb Parkway.
- Needs to be a combination of rails and buses. Also needs to be able to collect cars coming into the county.
- Express connection from North Cobb to South Cobb.
 - Use bus solution in between where there aren't stops in the express routes.
- Park and ride access will be very important to choice riders.
- Need to be able to beat travel times of the interstate driver.
- The HOT lanes will be a viable option for BRT.
- LRT – a seamless LRT system with 2-3 stops would be awesome.
- Parking is key. Must be easy as possible to use. Cobb density does not support walk up stations.
- Galleria area loses out on conferences because there is no direct transit access to the airport.
- There are more than 42,000 students attending universities in Cobb. Consider the campuses – KSU, Southern Poly, Life University, and Chattahoochee Tech.
- Less stops during the commute is important for commute time
- Light rail in the area of SPSU is very desirable. It does not just provide access to the campus but helps with parking and other land use concerns on campus.
- Light rail in the area of KSU is also desirable to provide access and reduce parking requirements. Plus, it would result in less vehicles “milling” and congestion which would improve air quality.
- The timing and reliability of a transit commute should be comparable or better than that of driving your own vehicle or you will not get the ridership needed to support transit.
- Buses are never going to be as reliable. Ridership will come from the people that rely on it for transportation and from the people with the “mind set” that it might take longer or be more unreliable but it is worth it to be able to do other things rather than drive.
- Transit is a quality of life thing, some people would rather take longer to get there but be less stressed. The benefits of transit for some people are that they can do other stuff they would rather do besides drive and they do not have to worry about getting in an accident.
- We need to consider now, or in the future expansion: access to Perimeter Center and access from the west (i.e. Douglas and Paulding Counties) and the I-575 area into the study corridor.
- Transit system has to take a rider from his origin to his destination or he will not use it. That “first mile” getting to the system from your origin and that “last mile” from the system to your destination is key/critical.
- We don't need a system where one has to switch from car to bus to transit; people will most likely use their cars.
- The connection points should be at the congested areas only, other than a set distance between connections.
- Ridership in conjunction with costs (cost effectiveness) is an important consideration.

- Given the congestion levels on I-285, maybe an alternative to be explored is a direct connection to Perimeter.

Safety Considerations

- MARTA – possibility of violence
- Access to rail stations across high speed suburban roads for bicyclists and pedestrians
- Equitable access – elderly, disabled, low income. The Rt. 10 bus, as crowded as it is, is the only option for folks who are car-less and need a way to get from Cobb County to downtown Atlanta for work
- Parking for transit modes. In Atlanta, it's problematic to retrofit stations with parking – need to plan smarter
- How people see it - their perception
- Lighting
- Security Patrols

What should system accomplish?

- Make Cobb more attractive to young professionals – they like transit to travel to and from Atlanta
- Improve quality of life – transit riders can do other things while commuting
- Solution may not be the one you choose but may solve your problem by taking folks off the road
- Need to stay ahead of congestion
- Need to orient public facilities next to transit stations
- Transit fosters community and interstates don't

Connections to activity centers

- McCollum Airport near KSU (corporate jets)
- Cobb to Perimeter across I-285
- Atlanta Road
- Atlantic Station (covered by midtown)
- Town Center to Atlanta or Cumberland – circulator or regular bus
- Town Center would serve KSU – 24,000 students plus employees. KSU is an \$800 billion asset to Georgia. The Town Center CID tax themselves to pay for projects in the area – CID advances projects. KSU has a new shuttle service in the Town Center area
- Light rail from Acworth to Arts Center very long – 35 miles – need to see about making it heavy rail
- Connect to Buckhead/Lenox/Lindbergh
- Bus connection to Sandy Springs would help
- Downtown Marietta
- Community transit shuttles feeders?
- Commuter rail consideration? As opposed to LRT?
- Marietta Boulevard
- Cumberland area – 2nd largest suburban office market in the US

- Dobbins
- City of Marietta
- Universities – Southern Poly, KSU, Life, Chattahoochee Tech
- WellStar
- Canton Road
- Cobb Energy Performing Arts Center
- CCT Transfer Center

Regional Connectivity

- Perimeter
- Airport
- Midtown/Colony Square
- Downtown
- Reverse commute to KSU/Cobb Performing Arts Center, etc.
- High Museum
- Georgia State University
- Shopping

Air Quality

- Diesel verses Natural Gas
 - Light rail
 - Electric
 - Buses that run on overhead electrical lines
- Air quality
 - Really need flyover to I-575 and connections to I-575.

Comprehensive List of Comments Received Regarding the Proposed Need and Purpose Statement:

“This Alternatives Analysis will focus on public transportation improvements that can best serve future demand, by building an integrated regional network that can support existing and future needs in the Northwest Corridor.”

- Mirrors what came out of Concept 3
- May want to add something about the corridor’s congestion ranking - from a listing of bad bottlenecks in the US. Also, the corridor is home 3 Fortune 500 Corporations – Home Depot, Genuine Parks, Coca Cola Enterprises.
- Include statement about importance of clean transportation alternatives. Prefer CNG/light rail over diesel.
- Clarification
 - Reduces Traffic Congestion
 - Sustainable Financially

- Optimize trip time
- Corridor Development
- Interface with future regional transit networks while reducing travel times versus the no-build condition.
- There is nothing about cost effectiveness or accommodating bicycles and pedestrians
 - Planned bicycle and pedestrian facilities will help access to potential transit stations.
- Need to add Health Systems, this is a very important component
- Need to incorporate minimizing adverse environmental impacts into the need and purpose
- With regards to financial aspect of the Need and Purpose Statement
 - The primary objective is that this needs to be as cost effective as possible.
 - The secondary objective needs to include that the project be financially realistic to build/operate.
- Clarification
 - The P3 project should be included in analysis
 - It can be utilized for BRT
 - There would be a seamless integration for long distance and corridor commuting

Post Meeting Review Comments Submitted by Ron Sifen

From: Rsifen@aol.com [<mailto:Rsifen@aol.com>]

Sent: Tuesday, December 20, 2011 2:02 AM

To: hansen-dederick@sycamoreconsulting.net

Subject: Re: Connect Cobb Roundtables Summaries

Hi Kristine. I am requesting that this email be included in the official comments for this Alternatives Analysis study.

I have reviewed the meeting summaries from all 5 AA Roundtables, and I am alarmed at several omissions.

It is my understanding that the purpose of the 5 Roundtable sessions was to obtain and document public input. It is my understanding that the discussion summaries should include and document all comments, and not selectively omit or alter any comments, nor target certain types of comments for omission. Accurate consolidation would have been acceptable. Outright omission is unacceptable, and is evidence of bias.

I made the following comments during these Roundtables, and these comments should have been included in the meeting summaries. In most cases, there was extensive discussion about these points, so it is surprising that these points are completely omitted from the summaries of various Roundtables.

Transportation Roundtable

The following points were discussed at the Transportation Roundtable, and should be included in the discussion summary for the Transportation Roundtable..

* The primary objective of this project should be alleviating traffic congestion.

* Other objectives are ok as long as they do nothing to obstruct alleviating traffic congestion.

- * This project will cost billions of taxpayer dollars. The only way this is a good investment for taxpayers is if taxpayers get substantial traffic congestion relief for their investment.
- * This project cannot contribute to alleviating traffic congestion unless it provides a transit alternative that meets the needs of commuters who currently drive their cars.
- * Commuters will not use transit as an alternative to driving unless transit provides trip times that are reasonably competitive with driving. I reminded everyone of GRTA's conclusions in the Northwest Connectivity Study that a commuter would be unlikely to trade an existing 50 minute door-to-door commute for a more-than-2-hour commute each way.
- * Time-competitive trip times cannot be achieved if there are too many stops. More stops results in slower trip times.
- * Alleviating regional traffic congestion cannot be achieved by spending all available transit dollars on one ultra-expensive project that will not likely provide seamless connectivity to any other transit. We need the most cost-effective project that will provide seamless connectivity to other destinations throughout the region. Ultra-expensive light rail in this corridor will cannibalize transit dollars from other needed projects throughout the region.
- * We need to find the most cost-effective mode and route to provide the most time-effective commute for suburban commuters.
- * Express bus should be included as an alternative. (There is an item in the summary that just simply says Express Lanes. That doesn't really make any sense. I am guessing that that item should read "Express Bus". However, to be complete, the point is that Express Bus should be included as an official separate alternative in this study.)
- * There has been discussion of running the Fulton County portion of this project in the I-75 corridor. The Northwest Connectivity Study discovered that most of the Fulton County portion of I-75 right-of-way is maxed out, and that all of the alternatives (elevated, underground, or neighborhood buyout) would add massively to the cost. (There is an item in the summary "Are there issues coming from Arts Center to Cumberland?" I raised the I-75 right-of-way issue in association with this topic. We also discussed steep slopes in regard to this question. All of these points were discussed, and should be included in this portion of the summary.)
- * The summary mentions where people advocated light rail to provide a choice for someone who preferred to ride transit for short distance trips. Yes, that was discussed. But it was also discussed that we already have bus service that provides that function, and we are talking about spending billions of dollars to offer an alternative choice for people who already ride transit. I challenged whether this was a cost-effective choice. And since we are supposed to be including all comments in this summary, the summary should include my comments.
- * There is an item that reads "Ridership in conjunction with costs (cost-effectiveness) is an important consideration." It would be more accurate for this point to read "Ridership calculated as a function of costs (cost-effectiveness) is an important consideration." We need to know total ridership, but we also need to know net new ridership (as opposed to those who are switching from one form of transit to another), and at what cost per net new rider.

* If this project is going to seriously address traffic congestion, we need data to show how many commuters, and particularly rush hour commuters, are likely to get out of their cars, and ride transit as an alternative to driving.

* We also need to know how many of the projected riders are already transit riders, and would merely be shifting from one form of transit to another.

* There is a bullet point heading in the summary that reads "What should system accomplish?" This item should include my comment that a primary objective should be cost-effectively alleviating traffic congestion. This point should also be included in the general comments, but it should also be included here as well.

- All of the above was discussed at the Transportation Roundtable, and it should be included in the discussion summary for the Transportation Roundtable.

Purpose and Objectives statement

* At all 5 Roundtables, when we got to this part of the discussion, I recommended that the statement needed to state that cost-effectively alleviating traffic congestion was a primary objective.

Please also note. This project is already marred by bias. Several Cobb County officials repeatedly declared this would be light rail, before the AA even started. This continued until numerous citizens questioned whether the AA was a sham, and the conclusions had already been predetermined. Even worse, at one point, Cobb almost approved spending millions of dollars to start building a transit station and parking in a specific location, which led to questions as to whether the AA was a sham, and that the conclusions were already predetermined, and also raising questions as to whether Cobb was attempting to force the AA to approve what was already being built!!!

If the process is supposed to document all points of view, and all comments and recommendations, then that is what this record should reflect. The summaries should not have all of these selective omissions. The meeting summaries be corrected. And again, I want all of my comments in this email to be included in the official records for this AA study.

Thanks

Ron Sifen

Post Meeting Review Comments Submitted by Bob Hovey

Equitable access: A disproportionate part of the low income ridership potential in Cobb is not served by the proposed system. Citizens in District 4, principally Powder Springs, Austell, Mableton, Six Flags are not served at all.

Travel sheds in Cobb are East - West oriented. The selected system should serve these Cobb citizens. The plan serves people traveling North - South, a great percentage of who are not Cobb County residents.

Goal #1 "Choice": To provide a "choice" is not the key goal. This is not an appropriate choice of terms. "Increase Capacity", shown as an objective, would be a better "Goal"

Air Quality:

Was barely mentioned in our group.



**Transportation Roundtable
Stakeholder Exercise
December 6, 2011**

DRAFT Transportation and Air Quality Goals and Objectives

Goals	Objectives
Provide viable travel choices	Increase transit capacity Reduce wait times for transit Increase travel destinations Increase safety of transit facilities Increase reverse commute options
Promotes equitable access	Increase elderly, disabled, low-income and choice riders Distribute services and facilities fairly Increase links to local and regional resources
Reduce traffic congestion	Reduce vehicle trips Increase biking and walking trips Increase shared trips Increase transit ridership
Reduce travel delay	Generate travel time savings
Improve travel efficiency	Increase riders per hour Increase vehicles per hour Improve connectivity
Improve travel safety	Reduce Vehicular crashes Reduce vehicular and bicycle/pedestrian conflicts
Improve air quality	Reduce emissions/fuel consumption

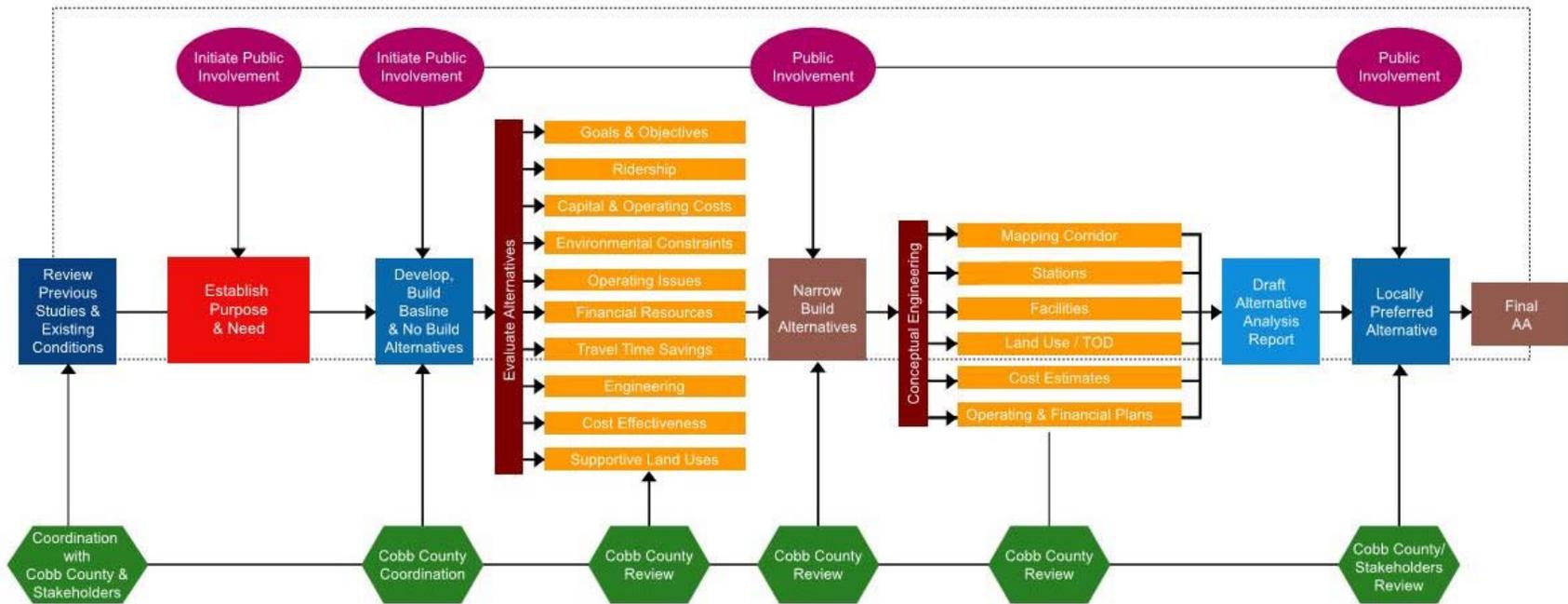
Transportation and Air Quality Issues Identified From Kick-Off

- Add Marietta Blvd alignment within the City of Atlanta
- Air quality (particulates, ozone)
- Airfield and airspace issues near Dobbins AFB along US41
- Circulators from neighborhoods to transit line
- Connect Cobb County first
- Connect Lockheed, Wellstar, Cobb County School Board line
- How will development and walkability be accomplished along an interstate alignment?
- Improved access to activity centers (employment) in corridor
- Need "hub" to service Life University and SPSU students/employees
- Need improved travel times in corridor
- Need more mobility options for choice riders
- Smooth connections to MARTA
- Station spacing: closer = better local use and loading, slower end to end VS. apart = less local use and faster end to end
- Support for stations along I-75 may be lacking in NW Atlanta

- Traffic gridlock
- Vehicular idling time
- You can't really walk up Windy Hill – terrain is too steep for walkable stations.

Connections Identified from Kick-Off

- Lake Park Dr/US 41 800K+ square foot office
- West Paces Ferry Rd at I-75, Atlanta Beltline, Atlantic Station
- Connect Cumberland to Arts Center Station.
- Connect Cumberland to KSU (approximately 22,000 single occupancy vehicles)
- Connection to Smyrna
- Connections to all major employees and universities
- Convenient access and parking
- Dallas Hwy at Paulding County Line
- Downtown Marietta
- Employment/activity centers on US41 Dobbins AFB/Lockheed/Clay NGL, KSU, Cobb Energy, etc.
- Financial center at Lenox-Buckhead
- KSU – Town Center – Cumberland - Midtown
- KSU!
- MARTA at 400
- Must have rail connection from Cumberland to MARTA south and north to Kennesaw (at some point).
- East connection to Perimeter at some point.
- System should be implemented in stages and made to be expandable in future (Gwinnett, Alpharetta, etc)
- Perimeter Mall Circulator to Northside Hospital
- Sixes Road
- Transit to big events, Braves game, bus service to Falcons, GA Tech
- Woodstock



Connect Cobb Alternatives

Travel Sheds and Activity Centers

- North/South Travel Sheds:
 - US 41/Cobb Pkwy
 - I-75
 - I-285/Atlanta Road/S. Cobb Drive
 - MARTA North-South Rail Line
- Connections to Activity Centers
 - Midtown/Downtown Atlanta
 - Cumberland Area
 - KSU , SPSU, and Life University
 - Dobbins ARB
 - Town Center Area

