



CITY OF ATLANTA

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DATE
OCTOBER 29, 2019

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Re: Responses to Open House Comments for PI#: 0015890, Fulton County, 10th Street Bridge Multi-modal Connection Project

Dear Stakeholder:

Thank you for your comments concerning the proposed 10th Street Bridge Multi-modal Connection Project. We appreciate your participation and all of the input that was received as a result of the *September 5, 2019 Public Information Open House*. 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 **100** people attended the open house and **64** of those people provided comments at the event. An additional **34** people submitted comments via email or the online survey. Of the **98** respondents who formally commented, **74** were in **support** of the project, **1** was **opposed**, **5** were **uncommitted**, and **6** expressed **conditional support**.

The attendees of the open house and those persons sending in comments within the comment period raised the following questions. The City of Atlanta, in partnership with Midtown Alliance, has prepared this response letter to address 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.

- *Some people expressed support to construct one-way bike lanes on both sides of the roadway instead of the two-way cycle track only on the south side of 10th Street as currently proposed. One person also expressed concern that cyclists will not use the cycle track and the associated crosswalks.*

Response: While developing different alternatives to balance the different users of 10th Street, Midtown Alliance considered options for one-way buffered bike lanes moving in the direction of traffic and putting the cycle track on the north side of 10th Street. The two-way cycle track on the south side is the preferred option because origins and destinations for walking and cycling are denser on the south side and, as a result, the south side sidewalk is more heavily used by pedestrians and cyclists alike than the north side.

With one-way cycle tracks on either side of the bridge, cyclists coming from MARTA or the student housing on the east side of I-75/85 would have to cross 10th Street twice to legally bike to Georgia Tech, which is the largest destination on the west side of the bridge. Further, coordination with Georgia Tech revealed that they are working on constructing a

multi-use trail on the south side of 10th Street beginning at Fowler Street, which means the cycle track on 10th Street as currently proposed would transition directly to these improvements once implemented. This multi-use trail is part of Georgia Tech's 2015 Bicycle Master Plan. The Bicycle Master Plan can be viewed at www.space.gatech.edu/bicycle-master-plan.

Finally, experience has shown that most cyclists prefer using the separated facilities and cross walks. We expect that there will still be some of the most skilled and experienced cyclists will prefer to ride in the travel lanes. However, several people have stated that they currently avoid riding on 10th Street or refuse to bicycle at all until separated facilities are provided.

- *We received suggestions that the bike facilities should extend further west on 10th Street and provide connections to destinations on the north side of 10th Street or the cycle track will not be used much.*

Response: Georgia Tech's 2015 Bicycle Master Plan identifies the 10th Street corridor (west of the bridge) as a key connector between Georgia Tech, Home Park, Midtown and beyond. As stated in the prior response, the Plan proposes constructing a multi-use path along the south side of 10th Street to connect these key destinations and to Georgia Tech's larger bicycle network. In coordinating with Georgia Tech for this project, we learned that this project remains a priority and is currently being further analyzed.

- *The cycle track on 10th Street needs to extend to destinations east of I-75/85. The Midtown MARTA station and 10th Street cycle track along Piedmont Park need to be linked to the proposed project.*

Response: This project is one part of a larger effort by Midtown Alliance to improve the walkability and accessibility of Midtown, and to build out Midtown's bicycle network. Midtown Alliance's 2017 Transportation Plan identifies several projects that would immediately connect to this project and allow bicycle traffic to access destination east of the 10th Street bridge. Midtown Alliance expects to begin work on a Peachtree Place Corridor Master Plan in 2020, which would include enhanced bike facilities along Peachtree Place that would connect to the proposed Williams Street cycle track that is part of this project. The Peachtree Place facilities would allow east/west cyclists to connect to the Midtown MARTA station and to the Juniper Street and Piedmont Avenue Complete Street projects, which are scheduled to begin construction next year. Cyclists traveling to/from the 10th Street cycle track along Piedmont Park could use Peachtree Place to connect over to Myrtle Street, which leads directly to the western entrance of the cycle track. Finally, the City of Atlanta recently announced plans to expedite the Spring and West Peachtree Complete Street projects, which would provide further connectivity to various destinations north and south of 10th Street. To view the full Transportation Plan, visit www.midtownatl.com/resource-center/transportation.

- *Some expressed concern that removing a lane in the eastbound direction from 10th Street will increase traffic congestion. One comment specifically expressed concern about the quality of the traffic studies. There was also one comment in regard to the passage of emergency vehicles.*

Response: In May 2018, Midtown Alliance commissioned a study, titled "Pedestrian Analysis using Alternative Data Collection Methods," to quantify the frequency of near misses between both pedestrians and vehicles and cyclists and vehicles at the southbound entrance to I-75/85. The study demonstrated that 10% of pedestrians and 15% of cyclists were involved in near miss collisions. The study results show a strong justification that some changes are needed for 10th Street between the southbound ramps and Williams Street to improve the overall operations of the roadway for all users.

While developing the project concept, the consultant team analyzed traffic performance within the project area with the current lane configuration, and then compared its performance to several scenarios. The different scenarios included 1) no changes; 2) no physical changes to 10th Street but instead only operational changes (such as modifying signal phasing) aimed at reducing the number of near-miss incidents; and 3) several bike facility concepts. Traffic analysis showed that traffic operations and timing of the existing configuration do perform better than every other scenario, including the preferred alternative. However, the preferred alternative performs as well as the second scenario, which was only the operational changes, and operates acceptably to Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). The preferred alternative is deemed to be the best balance of overall improvements and traffic operations for all modes of travel.

For the Concept Phase of this project, traffic forecasting was completed in coordination with the GDOT Office of Planning. The scope of the traffic study was agreed upon by multiple stakeholders and reviewed by GDOT. Preliminary counts found that 35,000 vehicles travel the bridge each day, along with 150 cyclists and 2,500 pedestrians.

Finally, Atlanta Fire Rescue Department will be one of the reviewers of the design plans. All intersections and roadways will be designed to meet design standards to accommodate movements by emergency vehicles.

- *Some expressed concerns for how traffic control will be managed between cars and the cyclists and pedestrians at the intersections. One person suggested that there needs to be increased law enforcement presence on 10th Street to address vehicles blocking intersections.*

Response: Mitigating potential collisions between different mode types is a primary goal of this project. To address potential conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists, the proposed project includes traffic signal heads specifically for cyclists using the cycle tracks with separate phases for pedestrian and cycle traffic. To address potential conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians/cyclists, the project proposes to modify the existing signal equipment and operations to allow signal phases that prohibit right turns on red for vehicles. Also, the left turns from 10th Street onto the southbound ramp and Williams Street may be changed to only allow left turns during a green arrow phase.

This project aims to address existing issues at each of the intersections by improving the design of the intersections to accommodate all users and by updating the traffic signals to accommodate traffic flows. The intent is that these improvements will reduce the number of vehicles blocking the intersections. If there is a need for Atlanta Police Department at the intersection, then that comment should be directed to the Atlanta Police Department's Motors Unit (404-209-5260).

- *Several people requested the bridge be modified to provide shade for pedestrians and cyclists.*

Response: The 10th Street bridge over I-75/85 is structurally sound and not expected to be replaced for many years. During the concept development phase of this project, structural engineers performed preliminary analysis of the existing bridge to determine its quality and carrying capacity and concurred that the bridge will not need to be replaced in the foreseeable future. The existing bridge, however, was not designed to carry trees or a shade providing canopy, which prevents this project from including such items.

- *Several comments were made relating specifically to the design of the cycle track and sidewalk along the bridge. These design comments addressed: 1) a request for there to be a buffer between the sidewalk and the cycle track; 2) the width of the sidewalks; 3) the design of the fencing; 4) plant and cycle track materials; 5) design of the buffer between the vehicles and the cycle track/sidewalk; 6) raised crosswalks; 7) interim tactical solutions; and 8) quality of the roadway.*

Response: The project is currently in the Concept Design phase, which is when the overall project concept is vetted and approved based on feasibility, operations, and general design features. Once the proposed project shifts to the preliminary design phase, the design team will delve into the details of the design. During this next phase, the design team will study options to visually any/or physically separate the sidewalk and the cycle track, propose fencing and landscaping designs, and further develop the buffer design to ensure it meets all applicable design standards. Sidewalks will be designed to meet the Midtown District's zoning standards, which require 10-foot wide sidewalks. One goal for the proposed project is to make 10th Street between Techwood Drive and Williams Street a gateway to Midtown and to signal to drivers exiting the interstate that context has changed to a more pedestrian environment. Many of these design elements will do just that. As the project progresses to this next phase, all of these comments will be taken into consideration.

Raised crosswalks are a common traffic calming feature for lower volume roads. Raised crosswalks are not appropriate for this project as they would impact operations by slowing vehicles and worsening traffic. The resulting traffic is beyond what GDOT considers an acceptable level of service.

The project will improve roadway conditions for vehicles. Until the project is implemented, however, issues related to potholes should be directed to Atlanta's 311 system: www.atl311.com.

A temporary cycle track is not suitable for the 10th Street bridge. In order for the cycle track to be accessible to users and to ensure an acceptable level of traffic operations, signal modifications would need to be made at each of the intersections, which can be expensive and lengthy. Further, even a temporary cycle track would require re-striping and redesign of the curbs. Rather than spending valuable budget on a temporary solution, the project team will focus its effort on designing and implementing the full project.

- *One comment was made in regards to items blocking the sidewalk on the north side of 10th Street just west of the bridge. Another comment was made in regards to the panhandlers and litter on Williams Street.*

Response: The MARTA bus shelter and utility poles on 10th Street west of Techwood Drive are outside of the project area and scope, so they will not be addressed as part of this project. We recommend reporting these issues to Atlanta's 311 (www.atl311.com). Likewise, issues related to litter should also be reported to Atlanta's 311. Panhandling on City streets, and other activities such as drinking in public and blocking sidewalks are considered illegal activities. These activities should be reported to the Atlanta Police Department or to Midtown Blue. Midtown Blue, Midtown Alliance's public safety force, develops relationships with homeless individuals residing within the Midtown District in order to connect them with relevant assistance and services. To learn more about Midtown Blue's approach to homelessness, please visit: <https://www.midtownatl.com/about/news-center/post/untangling-homelessness-in-midtown>.

- *Several comments were made about the design of the 10th and Williams intersection, related to; 1) vehicles making right hand turns into the crosswalk; 2) concerns with the proposed two phase crossing for pedestrians crossing 10th Street east of Williams Street; 3) existing signal operations*

Response: The proposed project includes establishing a pedestrian only phase for the signal at 10th Street and Williams Street to mitigate risk to pedestrians crossing the intersection, which will include "no right turn on red" for vehicles turning from Williams onto 10th Street. During the development of the concept, the project team determined that in order to avoid traffic queuing on to I-75/85 while prohibiting right turn on red, the pedestrian crossing of 10th Street east of Williams Street will need to be done in two stages. The

implementation of a two-stage crossing was proposed to balance the operational benefits of an exclusive pedestrian phase with overall vehicular demand at the intersection. Traffic signal operational details will be further evaluated and refined during the next phase of design.

The signals in Midtown are operated and maintained by the City of Atlanta and GDOT. GDOT's Regional Traffic Operations Program (RTOP) provides a traffic engineering consultant to monitor and adjust signal operations in much of Midtown including the signals within the proposed project. Any concerns regarding the current operations should be directed to Transportation@midtownatl.com.

- *Several comments were made about the design of the southbound on-ramp intersection, particularly related to 1) traffic backups; 2) an additional left turn lane from 10th Street to the southbound ramp; and 3) potential collisions between cars and pedestrians/cyclists/scooter riders.*

Response: The purpose of the proposed project is to provide better multi-modal connectivity across the 10th Street Bridge. Including the southbound Interstate 78/85 on-ramps within the project scope would have drastically increased the scope for the project in that it would extend the project approval process with GDOT and would have expanded the depth of the traffic analysis. For these reasons, including southbound on-ramp traffic congestion in this project was not practical for this project, which, again, focuses on providing multi-modal connectivity across the bridge. That said, GDOT will require that this project not degrade traffic operations and the current proposed concept will continue to provide an acceptable level of traffic flow while improving conditions for all users.

The project's traffic study suggests that a dual left-turn would be beneficial (converting one westbound through lane to a westbound left-turn lane onto the southbound on-ramp). It will be determined during the next phase of design whether or not a dual left-turn is feasible with the current ramp configuration.

The project proposes to provide protected phases for pedestrians in the crosswalk and cyclists and scooter riders in the cycle track crossing, which will mitigate the potential for vehicles to be in the crosswalk/cycle track at the same time as pedestrians/cyclists/scooter riders.

- *Several comments were made about the Techwood Drive intersection, particularly related to curbing illegal left turns onto 10th Street and potential pedestrian conflicts.*

The project team met with Georgia Tech on a few occasions while developing the concept for the proposed project, and the driveway to McCamish Pavilion was discussed at length. Georgia Tech frequently provides police for traffic control during special events at the arena. The police will allow vehicles to drive directly into the McCamish parking lot from Techwood Drive.

Southbound lefts are currently restricted at Techwood Drive to avoid conflicts with southbound ramps. Because of the close proximity of the intersections of 10th Street and Techwood Drive and 10th Street and the southbound ramps, signalization would cause unacceptable degradation to traffic operations. Left turns from Techwood Drive, however, will continue to be prohibited.

Currently, the crossing distance across Techwood Drive is about 47 feet wide. The proposed project includes narrowing the crossing distance to 33 feet to reduce the time pedestrians and cyclists are exposed to traffic. Shortening crossing distance is an effective technique for reducing collision risks for pedestrians.

The proposed project does have a few locations where the pedestrian path and the cycle track intersect. Cyclists and pedestrians will need to exercise additional caution when

crossing another facility type. These locations are near road crossings where cyclists and pedestrians are generally more alert.

- *Comments were made about providing more bike parking and providing route signage for cyclists.*

Bicycle parking and route signage will be considered during the next phase of more detailed design.

- *One comment was made about the need for better transit service along 10th Street.*

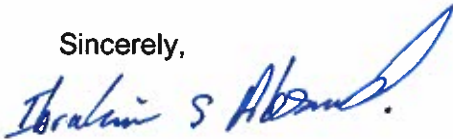
Response: The project is being designed to accommodate MARTA buses and all existing MARTA operations along this stretch of the 10th Street corridor will not be impacted by this project. The City of Atlanta and Midtown Alliance do not have control over MARTA's route and schedule planning.

- *Several people expressed strong support for the project stating that it would improve the quality of their commute. Several people also expressed desire for project construction to begin as soon as possible.*

Response: Thank you for your comments. This project is intended to improve the performance of the 10th Street Bridge for all users, particularly those on foot, bike, or scooter. The project is scheduled to begin construction in 2021. The project is partially funded by a federal grant, which allows us to move the project forward but also causes the design approval process to take longer.

Again, thank you for your comments. Should you have further questions, comments or concerns, please contact the project manager, Emily Schwimmer (Midtown Alliance), at emily@midtownatl.com or the environmental analyst, Patrick Smith, at Patrick.Smith@Kimley-Horn.com.

Sincerely,



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PDF for Project File