



April 6, 2020

Re: Responses to the Public Information Open House (PIOH) Comments for US 19 (Spring Street) Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements Project

Dear Stakeholder:

Thank you for your comments concerning the proposed US 19 (Spring Street) Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements Project. We appreciate your participation and the input that was received as a result of the February 12, 2020 Public Information Open House (PIOH) and the public comment period. 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 eleven (11) people attended the open house and eight (8) of those people provided comments at the event, including six (6) written comments and two (2) verbal comments. An additional 42 people submitted comments via email or the online survey. Of the 50 respondents who formally commented, 39 were in support of the project, two (2) were opposed, eight (8) expressed conditional support, and one (1) person did not express support or opposition.

The attendees of the open house, and those persons sending in comments within the comment period, raised questions and comments. Midtown Alliance, in collaboration with the City of Atlanta, has prepared this response letter to address all comments received so that everyone can be aware of the comments and questions raised and the responses given. Please find the comments and questions summarized below (in **bold font**), followed by the project team's response.

Question/Comment: Many people expressed support for the project and the expected safety, accessibility, and aesthetic improvements it will provide for all travel modes. Some also commended the coordination between government agencies to deliver this project.

Response: Thank you for your support of the project. Midtown Alliance projects are guided by four key principles – safety, accessibility, multi-modality and vibrancy. These guiding principles emerged from engaging Midtown residents, workers and visitors during the Midtown Transportation Plan process.

Public infrastructure projects within dense urban environments require significant cross-agency coordination and cooperation, including this one. Midtown Alliance has strong partners with the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) and the City of Atlanta, and this project is part of their efforts to provide safer, more accessible multi-modal transit options.

Question/Comment: The project timeline was described as lengthy and concerns were expressed regarding the extended design period and associated costs, including a concern about deliverability of the project.

Response: A large infrastructure project with Federal funding within public right-of-way such as this one requires significant, coordinated efforts, with various milestones and analyses that must be completed. The required phases from initial concept, to preliminary design, to construction, take time, and must follow strict guidelines and undergo thorough review processes. Extended project times understandably can be discouraging. Midtown Alliance appreciates the sense of urgency regarding the public's expectations for project delivery. In concurrence with such sentiments, Midtown Alliance and the City of Atlanta are doing everything possible to keep the project on schedule.

Question/Comment: One person expressed concerns regarding business interests superseding residential interests in Midtown Alliance projects.

Response: Midtown Alliance is committed to considering all stakeholders of the Midtown District and believes that residents are unequivocally crucial to a thriving district. The 2019 Midtown Community Survey found that residents and employees in Midtown share similar interests, which projects such as these attempt to promote. In the survey, when presented with the statement, "The function and feel of Spring and West Peachtree Streets should be improved to more effectively serve people walking, bicycling and riding e-scooters as well as motorists," 90% of respondents agreed from the combined categories of people who live in Midtown, live & work in Midtown, work in Midtown, and Midtown visitors. For more information, please see: <https://www.midtownatl.com/about/programs-and-projects/2019survey>.

Question/Comment: Concern was raised that the project does not extend far enough along the corridor.

Response: The Midtown Bicycle Master Plan proposes a bike lane on Spring Street (and West Peachtree Street) extending from Peachtree Road on the north end to 3rd Street on the south end (approximately 1.6 miles). While this project extends from Peachtree Road to 17th Street, the City's Safer Streets Initiative project (launched by Mayor Bottoms in September 2019) proposes to install bike lanes from 14th Street to 3rd Street. The portion of the corridor between 14th Street and 17th Street will require additional coordination between GDOT and the City of Atlanta due to this area being a State Route. For more information, please see other projects listed in response directly below and: <https://www.atlantaga.gov/government/departments/city-planning/action-plan-for-safer-street-surveys>.

Question/Comment: Concerns were raised that the project does not extend complete streets beyond the corridor throughout Midtown and beyond Midtown throughout the City of Atlanta.

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 complement this project, including the Spring and West Peachtree bike lane projects that are currently in design as part of the Mayor's Safer Streets Initiative. The Safer Streets Initiative projects are expected to go into construction later this year and will provide direct connections to cyclists and scooter riders traveling to destinations along the two corridors. Midtown Alliance is actively working with the City to pursue other projects that would close gaps in the existing and proposed complete streets network and allow people to travel within Midtown and beyond. These projects include extending the bike lanes on Spring and West Peachtree to meet the planned bike lanes that begin south of 14th Street, the 15th Street Extension, a bike lane connection between the 15th Street Extension and Piedmont Avenue, the 10th Street Bridge Multi-modal Connection project, and a study to improve 17th Street among others.

To view Midtown Alliance's full Transportation Plan, visit www.midtownatl.com/resource-center/transportation.

Question/Comment: Concern was expressed that the US-19 (Spring Street) project would redirect funds from Monroe Dr. Complete Street.

Response: Funding for US 19 (Spring Street) Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements Project is not being redirected from Monroe Dr. Complete Street. The funding sources for the two projects are separate.

Question/Comment: Two people expressed concern about the impact of the project if it is not complemented by additional investments in public infrastructure.

Response: Midtown benefits from being centrally located within the region and well served by four MARTA rail stations, with almost all of the Midtown core within a 6-minute walk of a MARTA station. In addition, regional bus services such as CobbLinc, the State and Road Toll Authority (SRTA) Xpress and Gwinnett County Transit stop throughout Midtown. Midtown Alliance's Transportation Plan is intended to complement and bolster use of the existing public transportation systems by emphasizing and improving pedestrian facilities and bike facilities to make it easier for people to access these public amenities.

While Midtown cannot tackle regional transportation and transit on its own, it can continue to pursue a coordinated, multi-faceted approach to improvements. Strategies include: signal timing, building out new street connections that help reduce traffic hot spots, and continuing to encourage and incentivize commute options other than driving alone, while moving forward on multiple complete street projects.

Question/Comment: Concern was expressed by some that there are too many driveways along the corridor, and it was suggested that driveways should be consolidated.

Response: Options to consolidate existing driveways will be evaluated as the design progresses.

Question/Comment: It was suggested to shift the crosswalk across Spring Street just south of the Buford Spring Connector to the island between the "off ramps" in order to help eliminate conflicts between vehicular traffic and pedestrian traffic.

Response: As the design progresses, Midtown Alliance and the design team will explore the option to relocate this crosswalk. The crosswalk may be relocated to the suggested location should no major conflicts or other concerns arise during design.

Question/Comment: Some people noted that accessing Peachtree Christian Church when traveling on Peachtree Road to Spring Street southbound can be difficult for vehicles due to design of the existing intersection and lane configuration.

Response: The existing signal at Peachtree Road and Spring Street is controlled by the GDOT's Regional Traffic Operations Program (RTOP). The design team will work with the RTOP team to explore options for signal phasing and operational tweaks to the intersection of Peachtree Road at Spring Street that may be implemented independent of this project in order to improve access in this area. Midtown Alliance will also work with Peachtree Christian Church to better understand their access and parking needs in order to explore other possible design improvements for the intersection.

Question/Comment: Some people expressed concern with existing vehicular travel speeds along Spring Street, as well as for existing vehicular traffic traveling from the Buford Spring connector onto Spring Street.

Response: It is a primary goal of the project to improve safety along the corridor for all users, including vehicles. One strategy for achieving this goal is to facilitate slower vehicle speeds. The installation of the raised buffer/median between the bike lane and the vehicular travel lanes will be a traffic calming device, encouraging vehicles to drive more slowly along the corridor. The realignment and signalization of the Buford Spring Connector ramp will require vehicles exiting the Buford Spring connector to approach a signalized stop condition, as opposed to the smooth, free-flow condition that exists today. Other potential safety measures and improvements that can slow traffic, such as installing street lights and trees for visual traffic calming and adjusting traffic signal timing along the corridor, will be evaluated during the design process.

Additionally, efforts are currently underway in the City of Atlanta to implement a default speed limit of 25 MPH on local roads, some collectors and Midtown/Downtown arterials, in an effort to reduce vehicle speeds.

Question/Comment: Concern was expressed regarding vehicular operations along the corridor with the removal of an existing travel lane.

Response: As a part of this project, a detailed traffic study of the project corridor and surrounding intersections was required by GDOT. The study analyzed existing conditions, projected future conditions without the project, as well as projected future conditions if the project is built. Based on this traffic study, it is anticipated that delay will increase along the corridor even if the subject project is not constructed. The analysis revealed no considerable additional increase in delay due to the project.

The Spring Street at 17th Street intersection exhibits the most delay within the study area, and is therefore, the controlling intersection for this corridor. In the Base Year 2021, the delay for the intersection is 42.6 seconds in the AM Peak and 49.3 seconds in the PM Peak. In the Design Year 2041, in the No-Build scenario (i.e. no changes to the laneage in the project corridor), the delay is 97.6 seconds in the AM Peak and 84.3 seconds in the PM Peak. In the Design Year 2041 with the project built, delays are anticipated to be 126.5 seconds in the AM Peak and 111.4 seconds in the PM Peak.

The assumptions in the traffic study resulted in a projected large amount of vehicular growth in the Midtown district. In order to facilitate growth and redevelopment, the City of Atlanta and Midtown Alliance have included Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies in the comprehensive traffic plan in order to limit the impacts of vehicular travel by reducing the number of vehicular trips during peak periods and encouraging transportation options. Providing quality facilities for pedestrian and cyclists, such as those proposed in this project, is a key component to the framework of TDM.

Question/Comment: Comments and questions were received about the design characteristics of the bike lane.

Response: The project proposes to install a physical buffer for protection between the bike lane and the vehicular travel lane. This physical buffer is currently designed to be a raised buffer/median for the length of the project with landscaping in the buffer where space permits.

Question/Comment: One person requested sidewalks remain open on the corridor during construction.

Response: Pedestrian accessibility and safety are priorities for Midtown Alliance and the City of Atlanta, even during construction. Across all Midtown Alliance projects, Midtown Alliance works with the contractors to ensure that pedestrian accessibility is preserved during construction. Furthermore, the City of Atlanta has a policy that accommodates sidewalk users/pedestrians during construction.

Question/Comment: Concern was raised regarding traffic delays during construction.

Response: Midtown Alliance is working in coordination with GDOT, the City of Atlanta and surrounding developers regarding lane closures and traffic delays during construction. While the construction schedule for this project will be developed closer to the finalization of the project design, it is anticipated that lane closures will not be permitted during peak hours to limit delays along the corridor.

Question/Comment: A concern was raised regarding GDOT and City of Atlanta's absence at the PIOH:

Response: Midtown Alliance is the implementation manager for this project and, thus, is the primary "face" of the project. That said, a representative from the City did attend the PIOH. The City is an active partner in this project and will review all public comments and design plans and will provide general project oversight. Likewise, GDOT will review project design plans and play an important role in permitting the project.

Again, thank you for your comments. Should you have further questions, comments or concerns please contact us at transportation@midtownatl.com.

Sincerely,



Cladie A. Washburn
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Midtown Alliance