



SANDY SPRINGS

MAYOR'S OFFICE

Russell R. McMurry
Commissioner
Georgia Department of Transportation
One Georgia Center, 600 West Peachtree NW
Atlanta, GA 30308

June 18, 2019

Dear Commissioner McMurry:

In March, the Georgia Department of Transportation provided to the public its detailed concept layout of the managed lane configuration between the North Springs MARTA station and McFarland Road, along State Route 400 (Georgia 400). We understand the intent of this project in improving mobility throughout the region and support GDOT's efforts to improve vital corridors. The impression of this project will outlast our time in office, and likely beyond. We have one opportunity to do what is best for both those traveling through and those living within these corridors.

Of the 16 miles incorporated in this project, a third of that route rests within the city limits of Sandy Springs. Of the homeowners impacted by the project, 95 percent reside within our city. While we understand avoidance of all impact is impossible, we have an obligation and duty to the citizens living within Sandy Springs to mitigate adverse impacts to the best of our ability. Following review of the concept plans and numerous discussions with GDOT and other stakeholders, we offer the following recommendations.

PITTS ROAD BRIDGE

The current plan is to replace the bridge at Pitts Road, keeping the bridge open while building the new bridge just south of the current one. This plan necessitates taking at least four homes. We propose that GDOT close the existing bridge for the six to eight months needed to rebuild. While there is an inconvenience for motorists, the alternative will keep at least four families in their homes. The alternative should also prove less costly for GDOT.

MANAGED LANES IN THE CENTER BEFORE NORTHRIDGE

The current plan places the managed lanes along the outside edge of northbound Georgia 400. We understand that a factor in making that determination follows a Fulton County Schools request intended to separate large trucks as much as possible from schools along that route. We propose bringing the managed lanes from the outside edge of northbound Georgia 400 to the middle between the Pitts Road Bridge and Northridge, running the lanes at grade under the Northridge Bridge. The managed lanes would remain in the middle of the Interstate for the rest of the project. This alternative allows the northbound managed lanes to be closest to Woodland as requested by Fulton Schools, then moves the managed lanes to the center with a smaller flyover structure from the outside edge to the middle. At



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Northridge, alongside Dunwoody Springs Elementary, the outer lane would be an exit lane for the Northridge Road exit. We believe the GDOT mitigation requirements would be comparable with either lane placement solution.

MANAGED LANES TO RUN UNDER THE NORTHRIDGE BRIDGE

In 2016, we dedicated the Northridge Interchange as the Mayor Eva Cohn Galambos Memorial Interchange, in honor of the city's founding mayor. It is a gateway to Sandy Springs coming from the north, and considerable effort and expense has gone into making that entry point an attractive and inviting intersection. The current planned flyover option changes the esthetics of not only this entryway, but the adjoining neighborhoods as well. As GDOT has heard from our residents, there are also strong concerns related to noise, which is expected to increase as a result. We propose that the managed lanes run underneath the Northridge Bridge. This option maintains and preserves current esthetics, meets the mitigation requests of Fulton Schools, and we believe will provide considerable savings to GDOT on this project.

SOUND/NOISE BARRIER CONSTRUCTION AND TIMING

As you are aware, there are numerous homes in Sandy Springs positioned along the highway. Some have sound walls. Some had, which have since come down. Others may not now, but will receive noise barriers as the project progresses. As the roadways further encroach on these homes, the volume only increases. This is a quality of life concern. We ask that all efforts be made to keep barriers in place as long as possible and that GDOT provide sound barriers as early during construction as practicable, limiting the time these homeowner are directly exposed and unprotected from the traffic and construction noise. As construction nears completion, it is our hope that GDOT will work with us to soften the construction transitions with enhanced buffer walls, improved landscaping, support for trail projects and other features, which help lessen the impacts of construction.

This is a once in a lifetime project, certainly the largest in our state since the construction of I-285. While its goal is one of mobility improvement, as with any major construction project, there are negative impacts. Our goal, and I know one you share, is to mitigate those adverse consequences to the extent possible. We feel the recommendations in this letter are feasible and possible. We are supportive of your efforts to progress positive change and appreciate your willingness to work with us to minimize unnecessary negative impacts.

Sincerely,

Russell K. Paul
Mayor
City of Sandy Springs