

Vance C. Smith, Jr., Commissioner



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

One Georgia Center, 600 West Peachtree Street, NW
Atlanta, Georgia 30308
Telephone: (404) 631-1000

July 12, 2011

Thank you for attending the public hearing open house for STP00-0001-00(420), P.I. No. 0001420, the proposed construction of a new bypass just north of the Leesburg city limits, which would run east-west between SR 3/US 19 and SR 195. In this handout package, you will find a need and purpose statement, project description, location map, environmental statement, right-of-way statement, and comment card.

As you enter the room, you will notice displays of the proposed project. Georgia Department of Transportation (Georgia DOT) representatives, who can be identified by the nametags they are wearing, are available to discuss the project and answer your questions. Please take this opportunity to discuss the project with a Georgia DOT representative. There will be no formal presentation.

A court reporter will be available for those persons who would like to make a verbal statement about the project. You may also complete a comment card and deposit it into the box provided here, or send in written comments about the project until July 22, 2011. Written comments should be sent to Mr. Glenn Bowman, P.E., State Environmental Administrator, Georgia Department of Transportation, 600 West Peachtree Street NW, 16th Floor, Atlanta, GA 30308. Comments can also be made via the web at www.dot.ga.gov. Click on **Public Outreach** from the **Information Center** dropdown menu at the top right side of the page. All comments will be made a part of the project record. We hope you will take advantage of one of these opportunities to let GDOT know your view of the proposal.

The displays and plans will be available for review for ten days after the public hearing open house at the Georgia DOT Albany Area Office located at 2060 Newton Road, Albany Georgia, 31707. A copy of all comments received will be available for public review at this same location and at the Georgia DOT, Office of Environment Services, 600 West Peachtree Street NW, 16th Floor, Atlanta, GA 30308, as soon as compilation is completed.

Again, thank you for attending this public hearing open house and for giving us your comments. If you should have any questions or need additional information, feel free to contact the project manager Douglas Fadool at (404) 308-1353 or Alexis John at (404) 631-1407 of the Office of Environmental Services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bobby K. Hilliard".

Bobby K. Hilliard, P.E.
State Program Delivery Engineer

BH/ahj

Attachments

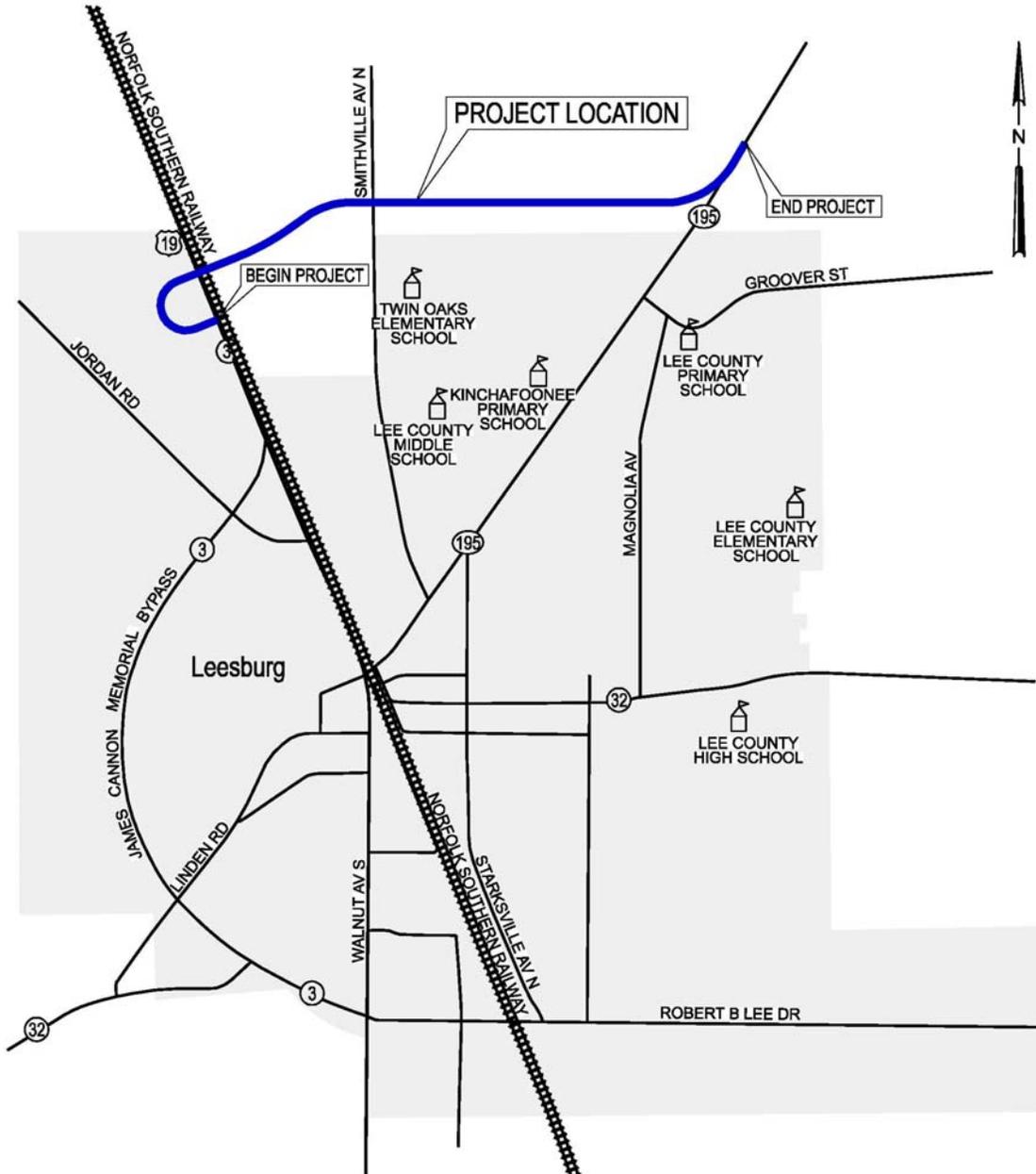
Project Description
Proposed Leesburg North Bypass from
SR 3/US 19 to SR 195
Project STP00-0001-00(420), P.I. No. 0001420, Lee County

The Leesburg North Bypass is proposed to be located just north of the Leesburg City Limits and would run east-west between SR 3/US 19 and SR 195. It is anticipated that the bypass project would improve the transportation network of Leesburg in several ways. The bypass would divert traffic from downtown Leesburg and would help alleviate some of the congestion at the US 19/SR 32/SR 195 & 4th Street intersection and railroad crossing by routing through-traffic around the City. The bypass would also improve safety by providing a grade-separated crossing of the Norfolk-Southern Railroad tracks. No grade-separated railroad crossings currently exist near Leesburg. Traffic, especially school bus traffic, would benefit from the increased safety and efficiency of the new bypass. It is proposed that the Leesburg North Bypass be designated SR 195 once a local government agreement is made; the existing SR 195 would then become a local road.

The proposed Leesburg North Bypass consists of the construction of a new two lane facility with one 12-foot through lane in each direction and 10-foot outside shoulder (6.5 feet paved and 3.5 feet grassed). Turn lanes would be added at intersections. Side roads would be improved and re-aligned as needed. The project would also include a bridge over SR 3/US19 and Norfolk-Southern railroad approximately 300 feet long and 40 feet wide. Since the project is entirely on new location, no existing right-of-way is present. It is anticipated that the proposed right-of-way will range from 110 feet to 225 feet. The project length is 1.78 miles. The proposed design speed is 55 mph with 35 mph ramp design.

Other Alternatives Considered: (1) No build; (2) connect to SR 3 Bypass with an interchange at US 19. This alternative would include the extension of the SR 3 Bypass and would include an interchange at US 19. Alternative 2 would add additional environmental impacts, construction costs for the interchange and additional cost for right-of-way; and (3) an extension of the SR 3 Bypass without an interchange at US 19, but with intersection improvements at Jordan Road. Alternative 3 would add additional construction costs, would require additional right-of-way, and would involve more environmental impacts because of the additional length.

Project Location Map
Proposed Leesburg North Bypass from
SR 3/US 19 to SR 195
Project STP00-0001-00(420), P.I. No. 0001420, Lee County



STP00-0001-00(420), PI No. 0001420, LEE COUNTY
NEED AND PURPOSE

It is anticipated that the proposed Leesburg North Bypass project would improve the connectivity of the transportation network of the Leesburg community in several ways. Existing access to the US 19/SR 3/Walnut Avenue North highway from much of north Leesburg is limited due to few road crossings over the Norfolk Southern Railroad corridor. The closest at-grade railroad crossing south of the study corridor is located in downtown Leesburg at the US 19/SR 3/SR 195 and 4th Street intersection. The closest at-grade railroad crossing north of the study area is at Lumkin Road. At the intersection of US 19/SR 3/Walnut Avenue North and Lumkin Road, US 19/SR 3/Walnut Avenue North is a four lane highway with a center grass median. No median break along US 19/SR 3/Walnut Avenue North currently exists at this intersection.

No grade-separated railroad crossing currently exists near Leesburg. The closest grade-separated railroad crossing north of Leesburg is located at SR 49/US 280 (W Lamar Street) in Americus, Georgia approximately 25 miles north of the project study area. The closest grade-separated railroad crossing south of Leesburg is at SR 3/SR 520/US 82 (Liberty Expressway) in Albany, Georgia approximately 12 miles south of the proposed project study area.

The new bypass would improve the connectivity and safety of the Leesburg transportation network by providing a grade-separated crossing of the Norfolk Southern Railroad tracks. According to Norfolk Southern, an average of four (4) trains pass through Leesburg daily at a speed of 50 miles per hour. The State Rail Plan prepared by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Intermodal Programs Division indicates that rail traffic along the tracks in Leesburg will increase in the future. Norfolk Southern also anticipates that traffic will increase along this rail line and has acquired right-of-way sufficient to accommodate a second parallel line through Leesburg. The Leesburg North Bypass project is also mentioned as an essential part of the Leesburg Hazard Mitigation Plan if a railroad disaster was to occur and emergency vehicles were required to travel east and west in the downtown Leesburg area.

The Leesburg North Bypass project would also improve the connectivity of the transportation network by providing an alternate route around the highly congested signalized US 19/SR 3/SR 195 and 4th Street intersection and at-grade railroad crossing located in downtown Leesburg. It is expected that traffic, especially heavy truck and school bus traffic, would benefit from increased safety and connectivity provided by the new Leesburg North Bypass. It is estimated that approximately 30% of the heavy truck traffic that currently passes through downtown Leesburg would be diverted onto the Leesburg North Bypass.

Several county and city community assets, most notably several schools, two baseball fields, two soccer fields, an athletic field maintenance building, a cross country running trail for the high school, and several parking lots, are currently located adjacent to the Leesburg North Bypass study corridor between US 19/SR 3/Walnut Avenue North and SR 195/Leslie Highway. This area constitutes approximately 25 percent of Leesburg. Two small family cemeteries and a county highway department maintenance facility are also located nearby along SR 195/Leslie Highway. The proposed project would improve access to a large portion of the community including these resources.

SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY
STP-00-0001-00(420), PI No. 0001420, LEE COUNTY

In compliance with the 1969 National Environmental Policy Act, the Georgia Department of Transportation has conducted an assessment of the social, economic and environmental effects for the proposed Leesburg North Bypass project. The following information provides a summary of the environmental document.

No displacements are anticipated for the proposed project. The roadway would require the acquisition of approximately 32 acres of right-of-way from farmland, undeveloped woodlots, and a few residential lots. However, owners would be compensated for these losses.

In accordance with Executive Order 11990, the proposed project was surveyed for wetland and stream involvement. 18 jurisdictional wetlands, 3 manmade ponds, and 5 jurisdictional streams were identified within the project's area of potential effect (APE). It is estimated that 1.58 acres of wetlands and 375 linear feet of streams would be impacted by the proposed project.

In accordance with Executive Order 11988, the proposed project was surveyed for floodplain involvement. The proposed project would require the placement of fill material in the floodplain associated with Kinchafoonee Creek. However, the project's effect on the floodplain is not expected to represent a significant risk to life or property; it would not have a significant impact on natural and beneficial floodplain values; it would not support incompatible floodplain development; and it would not interrupt or terminate a transportation facility which is needed for emergency vehicles or provides a communities only evacuation route. The project would also not have an adverse effect on water quality within the project corridor.

A U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Section 404 permit would be required for this project. Georgia Environmental Protection Division buffer variances would be required for impacts to some streams that run parallel to the roadway.

The proposed project would not exceed state and federal air quality standards, and it is consistent with the State Implementation Plan for the attainment of clean air quality in the state.

The original noise analysis conducted for the project indicated that future noise levels would not approach or exceed the Noise Abatement Criteria at any noise sensitive land uses along the corridor. However, a substantial increase in noise was predicted to occur at one residence. Noise abatement measures were considered but none were found to be feasible or reasonable. Because recent federal noise standards have changed, the project is being reevaluated for noise impacts, and possible noise abatement measures will be reviewed.

In compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the project has been surveyed for existing and eligible National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) properties. One (1) eligible

historic resource was found within the project's area of potential effect. The resource includes the Southwestern Railroad (Central of Georgia / Norfolk Southern Railroad). In the area of the railroad, the proposed project includes the construction of a two lane bridge measuring approximately 300 feet long by 40 feet wide over US 19 / SR 3 / Walnut Avenue North and the railroad tracks. A permanent easement within the railroads right-of-way would be required for the construction of the bridge but the effect would not be considered adverse. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources Historic Preservation Division concurred with the no adverse effect assessment on the railroad in 2010.

In compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the proposed project's right-of-way limits have been surveyed for existing and eligible NRHP archeological sites. No previously recorded NRHP listed or potentially eligible archeological sites were identified within the proposed right-of-way of the project. As a result, it was concluded that the proposed project would have no effect on archeological resources. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources Historic Preservation Division concurred with the no effect assessment in 2010.

No federally listed threatened or endangered species or state protected species were found, nor was any appropriate habitat observed within the project corridor. No critical habitat for listed species, as defined by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is designated within the area of potential effect. Therefore, it is expected that the proposed project will not effect or is not likely to adversely affect any federally listed threatened or endangered species or any state protected plant or wildlife species.

In accordance with the Farmland Protection Policy Act, the criteria of 7 CFR, Part 658 have been applied to determine project effects on farmland. Based on the assessment of these effects, no additional alternates need to be examined.

The proposed project has been field reviewed for potential sites where contaminated soil and/or water from leaking underground storage tanks may exist. A database search was also conducted for any documented hazardous materials releases, permitted generators, or handlers of hazardous materials within the area of potential effect for the project. From the hazardous materials database search and field review, it was determined that there are no hazardous material sites within the area of potential effect. If contaminants are found, avoidance alternates may be considered, or applicable laws and regulations concerning the removal of toxic or hazardous material will be coordinated with the Environmental Protection Division.

Copies of the environmental document are available at this hearing for your review or by sending your request to:

Mr. Glenn Bowman, P.E.
State Environmental Administrator
Georgia Department of Transportation
600 West Peachtree Street, NW – 16th Floor
Atlanta, Georgia 30308

Right-Of-Way Acquisition Project STP00-0001-00(420), Lee County

The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) has the responsibility, once a project is approved, of appraising, purchasing property and, if required, assisting individuals, families or businesses in relocating. When purchasing property, we desire to pay full market value for the necessary property. This value will be established by using qualified real estate appraisers who will prepare, for GDOT's use, written appraisals using actual sales data in the surrounding community.

In making an appraisal, the appraiser will contact each property owner and arrange a convenient time to make an on-site inspection of the property with him or her. After completion of the appraisal, the right-of-way appraisal staff will review and field check the findings for accuracy to ensure that all things relating to value have been considered in establishing the amount to be offered. When only a part of the property is needed, we will purchase that part plus pay for loss of value, if any, to the remaining property. In all cases, when GDOT purchases property, we will make additional payments to property owners for the cost of transferring ownership to GDOT. These costs generally include transfer taxes, deed-recording fees, mortgage pre-payment penalties and the pro-rata share of city or county taxes.

Georgia DOT is aware of the problems experienced by individuals, families, businesses, and nonprofit organizations when they are required to move. It is our commitment that no family or individual will be required to relocate until comparable decent, safe and sanitary housing is available or is provided for those occupants.

Additionally, GDOT will provide assistance to businesses and nonprofit organizations in relocating to other sites and will encourage them to remain in the community.

The information pamphlet "*What Happens When Your Property is Needed for a Transportation Facility*" is available at the greeter's table at the Public Hearing Open House (PHOH), and this booklet outlines the services offered and any payments for which you may be eligible, such as moving expenses and replacement housing benefits for owners and tenants. The brochure also outlines the eligibility requirements for receiving these payments.

Results of the field inspection by GDOT personnel have revealed that there will be 0 residences and 0 businesses that will be required to relocate.

It is important to remember that GDOT is committed to the principle that no one will be required to relocate until housing is available, or, if there is no housing available, until provisions have been made by GDOT to provide housing. It is also important to remember that all displacees will be given sufficient advance notice of GDOT's intention to purchase any property in order to allow sufficient time in which to relocate.

The GDOT District office, located in Tifton, Georgia, (229) 386-3280 will be in charge of acquiring the necessary right-of-way for this project.

Georgia Department of Transportation

Public Hearing Open House Comment Card

Project STP00-0001-00(420), Lee County, P.I. No. 0001420

July 12, 2011

Please print responses.

Name _____

Address _____

Do you support the project? *For* *Against* *Conditional* *Uncommitted*

Comments _____

How did you hear about this meeting? *Radio* *Newspaper* *Signs* *Word of Mouth*
 Other _____

Was the location of the meeting convenient for you to attend? *Yes* *No*

If no, please suggest a general location that is more convenient to your community.

Was the time of the meeting convenient for you to attend? *Yes* *No*

If no, please suggest a time frame that is more convenient for you. _____

Were your questions answered by GDOT personnel? *Yes* *No*

Do you understand the project after attending this meeting? *Yes* *No*

Please share your suggestions on improving the way GDOT conducts public meetings.

Mail To:

*Mr. Glenn Bowman, P.E., State Environmental Administrator
Georgia Department of Transportation
600 West Peachtree Street, NW – 16th Floor
Atlanta, Georgia 30308*