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December 11, 2007

Thank you for attending the public hearing open house for project NH-IM-16-1(92), NH-IM-16-1(131), NH-IM-75-2(177), and NH-16-1(104), Bibb County, P.I. Nos. 311000, 311005, 311400, 311410, the proposed I-16/I-75 interchange reconstruction project. In this handout package you will find information about this project, including a description of the project, its need and purpose and design features, a project location map, a summary of the environmental assessment (EA) document, a description of right of way acquisition procedures, and a comment form.

As you enter the room, you will notice displays of the proposed project. Department of Transportation (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 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 December 21, 2007. Written comments should be sent to Mr. Glenn Bowman, P.E., State Environmental/Location Engineer, Georgia Department of Transportation, 3993 Aviation Circle, Atlanta, Georgia 30336-1593. Comments can also be made via the web at www.dot.state.ga.us. Click on **Public Outreach** from the list of Featured Links. All comments will be made a part of the project record. We hope you will take advantage of one of these opportunities to let the Department know your view of the project proposal.

The displays and plans will be available for review for ten days after the public hearing open house at the Georgia Department of Transportation Macon Area Office located at 4499 Riverside Drive, Macon, Georgia 31210. A copy of all comments received will be available for public review at this location and the locations listed below:

GDOT Office of Environment/Location
3993 Aviation Circle
Atlanta, GA 30336-1593

Booker T Washington Community Center
391 Monroe Street
Macon, GA 31201

Again, thank you for attending this public hearing open house and for giving us your comments. Should you have any additional questions or concerns, please contact the GDOT Project Manager, Theresa Holder at (404) 656-5444 or Jennifer Mathis (404) 699-4408.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James B. Buchan".

James B. Buchan, P.E.
State Urban Design Engineer

JB/jm/gth
Attachments

PUBLIC HEARING OPEN HOUSE – DECEMBER 11, 2007

**NH-IM-16-1(92), NH-IM-16-1(131), NH-IM-75-2(177), AND NH-16-1(104),
P.I. Nos. 311000, 311005, 311400, 311410,
I-16/I-75 Interchange Reconstruction Project
Bibb County**

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Build Alternative

The preferred alternative for the I-16/I-75 Interchange Reconstruction Project consists of the widening and reconstruction of I-75 from Hardeman Avenue to Pierce Avenue and I-16 from I-75 to Walnut Creek within the City of Macon in Bibb County, Georgia. Within this corridor are four interstate/arterial route interchanges (I-16 at Spring Street, Second Street, and Coliseum Drive, and I-75 at Hardeman Avenue), and a system level interchange between I-16 and I-75. The Coliseum Drive interchange with I-16 and the Hardeman Avenue interchange with I-75 are full access, while both the Spring Street and Second Street interchanges are partial access. The existing I-16/I-75 interchange is a three leg directional interchange with both right and left ingress and egress.

The preferred alternative would improve each of the interstate highways by constructing wider shoulders, concrete barriers, and in most locations, additional lanes. Interstate-75 would be improved from just south of Pierce Avenue to the northern limit of the Hardeman Avenue Bridge. Additional lanes would be constructed on I-75 north of the interchange; however, there would be no widening on I-75 south of the interchange. Interstate-16 would be improved from I-75 to Walnut Creek, which is approximately 3,800 feet east of the Coliseum Drive interchange. Additional lanes would be provided on I-16 between I-75 and Second Street.

A Collector/Distributor (C/D) road system would be constructed parallel to I-16 through the downtown Macon area. The C/D system is integrated throughout the entire project and would remove local traffic from the interstate mainline system, which mainly serves through traffic. Modifications would be made to bridges and surface streets within the project area to accommodate the additional lanes and C/D roads along I-16 and I-75, to provide opportunities for turning movements, as well as to create additional storage for these turning movements.

I-16/I-75 Interchange

The following improvements are proposed to the I-16/I-75 interchange. Each of the four existing system level ramps would be reconstructed to meet current design criteria and to accommodate projected traffic volumes. Each system level ramp would consist of two lanes with shoulders widened to 10 feet on the outside and 6-feet on the inside. As mentioned previously, the Ramp ISE, Ramp INE, and Ramp IWS termini with I-75 have been relocated away from the interchange and shifted to the right side of the interstate (please see the project display maps for the location of the specific ramps described in this handout). The existing Ramp IWS Bridge over I-75 Northbound would be shifted slightly and reconstructed. The proposed bridge would be longer and wider as it would accommodate proposed C/D road lanes and would span both northbound and southbound lanes of I-75 in order to terminate on the right side of the interstate.

Four additional C/D ramps would be constructed to connect I-75 traffic with the I-16 C/D roads. The two existing interstate bridges over the Ocmulgee River would be replaced with a series of six bridges to accommodate the additional system level lanes and C/D roads. The existing Ramp INE Bridge would be reconstructed; this existing ramp alignment would be maintained and utilized as a connection to the eastbound I-16 C/D road. In order to maintain traffic during construction, a temporary two-lane vehicular bridge would be constructed over the river just south of the interchange bridges. The bridge would be used temporarily for maintaining traffic during construction, and then it would be converted into a pedestrian bridge as part of the Ocmulgee Heritage Trail.

I-16/Spring Street Interchange

The following improvements are proposed at the I-16/Spring Street interchange. The I-16 Eastbound and Westbound bridges over Spring Street would be reconstructed and elevated approximately 2-3 feet. The existing four-lane section of I-16 over Spring Street would be widened to six lanes with 12-foot shoulders and a 2½-foot concrete median barrier separating the eastbound and westbound lanes. Two additional bridges would be constructed over Spring Street to accommodate the proposed eastbound and westbound C/D roads (Ramp CDE-2 and Ramp CDW). The proposed two-lane C/D roads would parallel the interstate on each side. The existing ramp intersections with Spring Street would be shifted away from the widened interstate corridor, which now includes the proposed C/D roads. The existing ramp connecting Spring Street to I-16 Eastbound would be closed and demolished due to the low projected traffic volumes. The other three ramps accessing Spring Street would be lengthened and reconstructed in their shifted locations without any additional lane capacity. These ramps would, however, connect with the proposed I-16 C/D road system, instead of the mainline interstate itself. The two west-facing, multi-lane ramps would consist of two lanes and the loop ramp would consist of a single lane. In addition, the horizontal and vertical geometry of the loop ramp would be improved to meet current design standards.

I-16/Second Street Interchange

The following improvements are proposed at the I-16/Second Street interchange. The existing partial-access interchange would be entirely reconstructed and expanded to provide full access both to and from I-16 Eastbound and Westbound. Currently, there is only access from I-16 Eastbound to Second Street via a single-lane, loop ramp. Second Street would be widened from four lanes to six lanes between Walnut Street and Emery Highway. The Second Street Bridge would be reconstructed to accommodate the proposed interstate section with C/D roads. The bridge would consist of three lanes in each direction, separated by a concrete median, with a 10-foot sidewalk along the northbound lanes of the bridge. Three additional ramps would be constructed to provide additional access and the existing loop ramp would be reconstructed and improved to meet current design standards. The proposed ramps are effectively single-lane ramps; however, additional lanes would be added in the vicinity of the two signalized intersections with Second Street to allow for proper turning movements.

I-16/Coliseum Drive Interchange

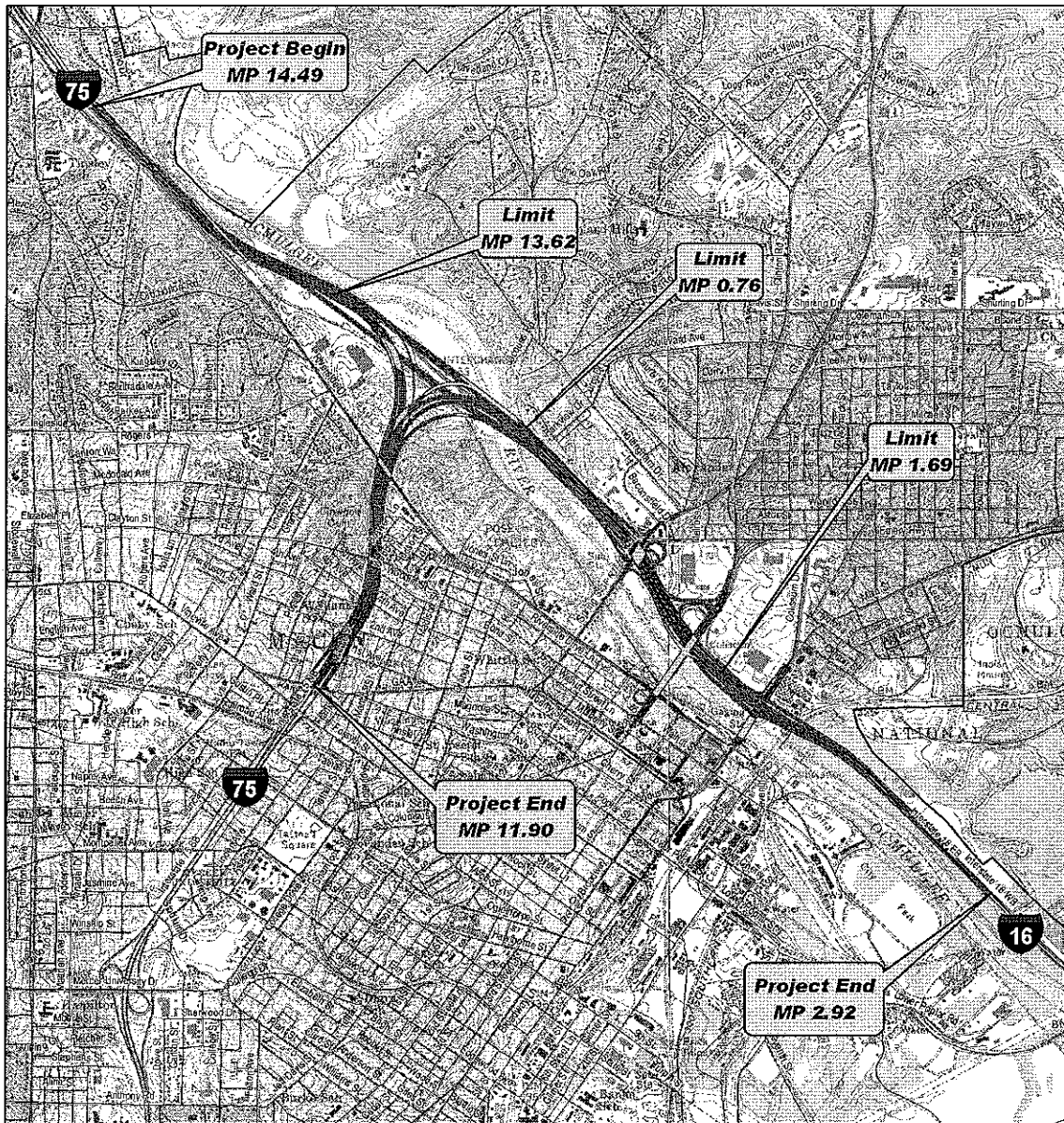
The following improvements are proposed at the I-16/Coliseum Drive interchange. Coliseum Drive would be widened from four lanes to six lanes with a raised concrete median. The median width and location would vary to accommodate the necessary turning lanes at the two signalized

intersections. The Otis Redding Bridge over the Ocmulgee River would be widened to accommodate the additional lanes and reconstructed as a pedestrian-friendly "gateway" to Macon with 10-foot sidewalks and lighting. The I-16 Bridge over Coliseum Drive would be reconstructed to accommodate widened Coliseum Drive and the proposed C/D roads along the interstate. The existing I-16 section at Coliseum Drive would remain a four-lane section, but would be improved with widened 12-foot shoulders and a concrete median barrier separating the eastbound and westbound lanes.

I-75/Hardeman Avenue Interchange

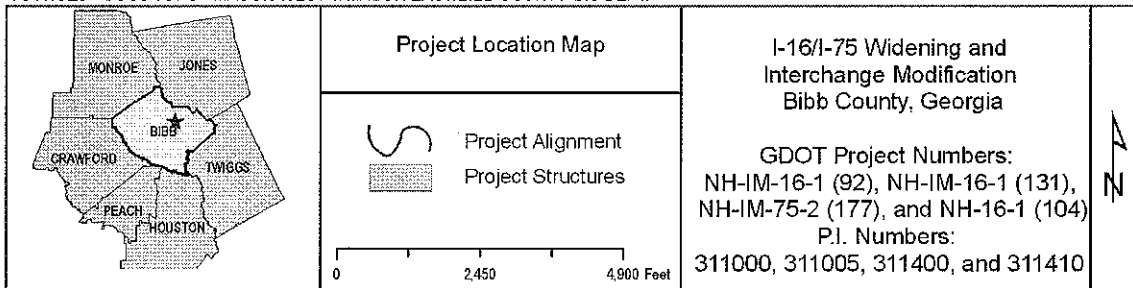
The following improvements are proposed on I-75 south of the I-16/I-75 interchange up to Hardeman Avenue. Mainline I-75 would remain a six lane, barrier-separated section between Hardeman Avenue and the I-16 interchange, however, the shoulders would be widened from eight (8) feet to twelve (12) feet as the interstate approaches the interchange. A two-lane C/D road ramp would be constructed along I-75 Southbound. This C/D road would originate on I-16 Eastbound at Coliseum Drive and would terminate on I-75 Southbound at Hardeman Avenue. The terminus for Ramp INE would be shifted approximately 3,900 feet to the south, just north of the Hardeman Avenue Bridge. Ramp INE would be constructed along I-75 Northbound between its terminus and the interchange, causing impacts to the Pleasant Hill Neighborhood. Both north-facing ramps at Hardeman Avenue would be reconstructed to meet current design criteria. The ramp from Hardeman Avenue to I-75 Northbound would split to provide a connection both to shifted Ramp INE and to I-75 Northbound. The connection to I-75 Northbound would braid over shifted Ramp INE and would require the construction of an additional bridge. In addition, the Riverside Drive Bridge, Walnut Street Bridge, and David Lucas Pedestrian Bridge over I-75 would require reconstructing.

Project Location Map



SOURCES - USGS TOPO - MACON WEST & MACON EAST/BIBB COUNTY GIS DEPT.

9-13-07



PROJECT NEED AND PURPOSE

The purpose of the proposed project is to improve the operational efficiency of the following interstate interchanges in Macon:

- Mainline I-16 at Mainline I-75
- Spring Street at I-16
- Second Street at I-16
- Coliseum Drive at I-16
- Hardeman Avenue at I-75

As a result of numerous operational improvements, the proposed project would reduce congestion, improve safety, and provide better access to and from the downtown Macon area. Improving sight distances, separating through traffic from local traffic, and improving existing interchange operations on I-16 should substantially contribute to reducing the crash rate in the project corridor.

The existing configuration of the I-16/I-75 interchange, which was constructed in 1963, includes a two-lane ramp from I-75 southbound to I-16 eastbound and provided two through lanes for traffic continuing southbound on I-75. These configurations have since been modified in order to reduce the high number of sideswipe crashes occurring at this decision point. Modifications made to improve the safety of the interchange at this point included the striping out of lanes on both the entrance to I-16 eastbound and the I-75 mainline so that only the left lane exited for I-16 and the right lane continued south on I-75. The interchange operated for many years under this condition until the 1990's when an I-75 widening project and a separate maintenance project resulted in the reclaiming of the previously striped out I-75 lane through the interchange. Both the I-75 widening project and the maintenance project were I-75 mainline capacity projects and did not address the interchange deficiencies. One of the main purposes of the current project is to correct the deficiencies of the I-16/I-75 interchange.

Operational Deficiencies

The interchanges within the project area are generally not reflective of current interstate highway design standards. The existing interstate system in Macon was constructed in the mid 1960's. With the exception of I-75 between I-16 and Hardeman Avenue, the section of freeway proposed for improvements has not received any substantial improvements (capacity or operational) since opening to traffic. Currently, the distance between the Spring Street and Second Street interchanges with I-16 is only 1,800 feet, and the distance between the Second Street and Coliseum Drive interchanges with I-16 is only 1,700 feet. The close proximity of these interchanges through downtown Macon contributes to the occurrence of crashes because large numbers of vehicles are entering and exiting the freeway within a relatively short section of roadway. Also, traffic flow and movements from downtown Macon are impacted by the partial interchanges on I-16 located at Second Street and Spring Street.

In addition to the dense spacing of these interchanges, limited turning movement storage on surface streets within the interchanges is a persistent problem that creates congestion and contributes to deficient operations on the surface streets beyond exit and entrance ramps. A project to improve operations within this corridor would need to separate traffic movements that currently cause vehicles to weave in and out of travel lanes. Due to lane

configurations and limited section lengths, the weaving movements between the I-16/I-75 interchange and the I-16/Coliseum Drive interchange are of particular concern for this project.

Also contributing to the operational deficiencies within the project corridor in the vicinity of the I-16/I-75 interchange is the inadequate sight distance for I-75 southbound traffic as the approach is made toward the I-16 split. Currently, one left lane is provided for I-16 eastbound traffic and one right lane accommodates I-75 through traffic. An additional lane begins on I-75 at the I-16 split to accommodate the southbound I-75 movement, however, the I-16 movement utilizes a single lane. The inadequate sight distance occurs as a result of the existing horizontal and vertical geometry of I-75 to the north of the interchange.

Consequently, there is little driver decision time to enter the appropriate lane to proceed on eastbound I-16 or southbound I-75. This lack of adequate decision time and sight distance result in driver confusion and erratic weaving movements on this portion of I-75, which has contributed to the historically high crash rate for this section of freeway. Attempts to eliminate this problem with improved signage have not been successful. Consequently one of the main purposes of the proposed project is to address this operational deficiency.

The density of interchanges and the weaving and other traffic movements required by motorists to enter and exit I-16 in this area creates a substantial operational problem. Improving traffic conditions in this area would lower the high crash rate within the project area.

Storm Evacuation

In 1999, Hurricane Floyd threatened the Georgia coast and evacuation of coastal areas was advised. Eastbound traffic was halted on I-16 and all lanes were used for the westbound evacuation. The I-16/I-75 interchange proved to be a major bottleneck for traffic headed away from coastal areas. The proposed project addresses existing capacity and operational conditions that contributed to congestion during the 1999 evacuation; such as, widening the ramp from I-16 eastbound to I-75 northbound from one to two lanes. The changes proposed would improve the interchange's ability to serve as an evacuation route in the future should the need arise.

SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL STUDY

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 I-16/I-75 Interchange Reconstruction Project in Bibb County Georgia. The following information gives a summary of the draft environmental assessment (EA) document.

The proposed project will physically impact thirty-three residential structures, one commercial structure, and a former Masonic Lodge. Of the thirty-three impacted residential structures, twenty-one are currently occupied by either the owner or a tenant, and twelve structures are vacant. The owners of these homes would receive the appraised fair-market value for their properties.

In accordance with Executive Order 11990 and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, the proposed project was surveyed for stream and wetland involvement. The project was found to have approximately 1,440 linear feet of stream impact and approximately 8.36 acres of wetland impacts. The Department proposes to mitigate for wetland and stream impacts resulting from this project through on-site or off-site stream restoration or the purchase of credits from a mitigation bank approved by the US Army Corps of Engineers, Savannah District.

The Georgia Department of Transportation is in need of providing wetland and stream mitigation for this project. Land for wetland mitigation, in the form of restoring degraded wetlands:

1. Must be relatively near the project (no greater than ten miles);
2. Must not be existing wetlands or swamp (potential restoration areas should show signs of being previously ditched or drained or converted to non-wetland use such as agriculture or silvaculture); and,
3. Must be easily accessible by local or state roads.

Anyone who has such property and would be willing to sell it to the state for wetland or stream restoration, should send a letter, with a map (USGS Topographic Quad Sheet, County road map, or detailed drawing) clearly showing the location of the degraded wetland or stream to the address at the bottom of this summary.

In accordance with Executive Order 11988, the proposed project was surveyed for floodplain involvement. The proposed project would have crossings of the 100-year floodplain associated with the Ocmulgee River, Walnut Creek, Vineville Branch, and Bowman Branch. However, Procedures for Coordinating Highway Encroachments on Floodplains with the Federal Emergency Management Agency would be followed. The project would not have an adverse effect on water quality within the project corridor. A US Army Corp of Engineers Section 404 permit would be required for this project.

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. This project would not cause a significant increase in the number of diesel transit buses and/or diesel trucks. The Clean Air Act requirements were met without a hotspot analysis since this project has been found not to be of air quality concern under 40 CFR 93.123(b)(1). Therefore, the project meets statutory and regulatory transportation conformity requirements without a hotspot analysis.

The construction of this project would result in a maximum 6.5-decibel increase in traffic generated noise by the design year 2032. A total of 42 houses, one church, and 26 businesses would experience noise levels that

approach or exceed the noise abatement criteria. It was determined that noise barriers would be both feasible and reasonable for all of the receptors except six residences.

In Compliance with Section 106 of the National Preservation Act of 1966, the project has been surveyed for existing and eligible National Register properties. Twelve National Register listed or eligible historic resources were found to be located within the project's area of potential environmental effect. Of these resources, it has been determined that the proposed project would have an adverse effect to one of these resources, the Pleasant Hill Historic District. It has also been concluded that the proposed project would not have an adverse effect to known archaeological resources in or eligible for inclusion in the National Register.

The proposed project has been surveyed for threatened and endangered plant and wildlife species. Potential habitat has been located for the wood stork, green pitcher plant, fringed campion, and relict trillium, which have a range that includes the project area. A survey for these species was conducted along the project corridor, and none were found.

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

A survey for sites that may contain hazardous materials, including soil and/or water contaminated by underground storage tanks (UST's) has been conducted for this project. There are known UST and other sites that may contain hazardous materials located along the corridor. There are four sites with UST's of which one also contains a suspected landfill, and one abandoned industrial site. Subsurface testing would be conducted at each of these sites to determine if contaminants are present in the soil. If contaminants are found, avoidance alternatives may be considered, or applicable laws and regulations concerning the removal of toxic or hazardous material would be coordinated with the Environmental Protection Division.

Coordination between the Department and the officials with jurisdiction over the Gateway Park and Ocmulgee Heritage Trail projects has been ongoing. It has been determined that only minor areas of right-of-way would be required without affecting the use of the sites, and that the project would not have an adverse effect on the park or trail. Therefore, in accordance with 6009(a) of SAFETEA-LU, the proposed project would have a "*de minimis*" impact on these properties and no Section 4(f) Evaluation is required.

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/Location Engineer
Georgia Department of Transportation
3993 Aviation Circle
Atlanta, Georgia 30336-1593

RIGHT-OF-WAY ACQUISITION

The Georgia Department of Transportation (Department) has the responsibility, once a project is approved, of appraising and 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 appraisers who will prepare, for Department use, written appraisals using actual sales data from 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 them. After completion of the appraisal, our Right of Way Appraisal Staff will review and field check the findings for accuracy to insure 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 any loss of value, if any, to the remaining property. In all cases, when the Department purchases property, we will make additional payments to property owners for the cost of transferring ownership to the Department. These costs generally include transfer taxes, deed-recording fees, mortgage pre-payment penalties and the pro-rata share of city or county taxes.

The Department 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 who are initial occupants, or adequate decent, safe and sanitary housing is available or provided for those who are subsequent occupants.

Additionally, the Department 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 entrance, 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.

The proposed project will physically impact thirty-three residential structures, one commercial structure, and a former Masonic Lodge. Of the thirty-three impacted residential structures, twenty-one are currently occupied by either the owner or a tenant, and twelve structures are vacant. The owners of these homes would receive the appraised fair-market value for their properties.

It is important to remember that the Department is committed to the fact 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 the Department to provide housing. It is also important to remember that all displacees will be given sufficient advance notice of the Department's intention to purchase any property in order to allow sufficient time in which to relocate.

The Georgia Department of Transportation will be in charge of acquiring the necessary right-of-way for this project.