



G R E S H A M  
S M I T H A N D  
P A R T N E R S

## Memorandum

**To:** Meeting Attendees (see page 4)

**From:** Scott Shelton - Gresham, Smith & Partners  
Jill Brown - Edwards-Pitman, Environmental, Inc.

**Meeting Date:** August 19, 2008

**Subject:** CSSFT-0008-00(314), Pickens County, PI No. 0008314  
SR 136 Safety Improvement Project

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### General Information

A meeting was held on August 19, 2008 at the GDOT Office of Environment/Location (OEL) to discuss the cultural resources and public involvement requirements for the SR 136 Safety Improvement Project.

Jody Braswell began the meeting with an introduction to the project. SR 136 within the project area is a designated bike route with the rural shoulders. The crash rates within the project area are almost double the statewide average crash rates for this type of facility. Additionally, from 2000 through 2005 there were 55 accidents that did not involve collisions with another vehicle. The main purpose and need for the project is to improve safety. The concept for the project would involve increasing the shoulder widths to match current standards but would not involve increasing capacity. The majority of the preliminary concept alignment follows the existing alignment except at one curve.

The project is currently scheduled for April 2009 right-of-way and April 2011 let to construction, but this schedule will change. Derrick Cameron needs information about the anticipated project schedule so he can update it in the GDOT system.

### Cultural Resources

On June 10, 2008, Lisa Crawford and Garrett Silliman met with the Marble Valley Historical Society (MVHS) to discuss cultural resources in the project area based upon the MVHS response to the Section 106 Notification. The purpose of this meeting had been to get information from and to partner with the MVHS. The MVHS advertised the meeting in the *Pickens County Progress*, a local newspaper. Approximately 40 persons were present including 28 members of the MVHS. As a result of the presence of individuals not involved in the historical society, the meeting discussion shifted to project design,

concept, right-of-way, and survey issues. Public attendees raised concerns about private property rights, all GDOT projects, and the purpose for the project being to help developers. The purpose of the meeting was not accomplished.

No archaeological fieldwork has been done. The specialists wanted to meet with GDOT and FHWA to discuss how to proceed before continuing the structural resource survey or beginning the archaeology survey.

The approach preferred by GDOT would be for the archaeology and history surveys to look at a wider area for the alignment. This will give a better picture of what resources are in the project area. This is also beneficial for the preliminary engineering.

There is potential for Native American involvement. Early tribal notification has been sent out.

### **Public Involvement and Notification**

GDOT is trying to get input and to involve local residents, but based upon the June 10, 2008 meeting described above in "Cultural Resources," the public is opposed to the project. There seems to be a misconception that the project would involve widening the roadway to benefit developers. The project would not add capacity, with widening limited to improving shoulders to meet current standards. GDOT will need to investigate where the private developments are prior to the public involvement efforts. Public opposition was also expressed about bicycle lanes. The corridor is a bicycle route, but the rural shoulders address this route designation without requiring separate bicycle lanes.

Some education efforts should be done before a Public Information Open House (PIOH). GDOT needs to talk to the media about what the actual project is. The media should also be informed about the number of fatalities that have occurred. Emmanuella Mythril suggested coordinating with the *Pickens County Progress* for an article rather than just providing a press release.

The press release and article would include a reference to the GDOT website. The website would be updated to provide information about the project and to include a graphic showing where accidents have occurred within the project area.

Katy Allen recommended that a stakeholders group should be formed after the media coordination, prior to a PIOH. GDOT could then meet with the core group, discuss the project Purpose and Need, the survey area, the project concept, mitigation measures, and other projects such as the Old Federal Road or New Echota. Coordination with the stakeholders would also include an explanation of how the project development process works. The stakeholders then could act as liaisons at the PIOH. Without holding the stakeholders meeting before the PIOH, the PIOH may just result in the same out come as the June 10, 2008 meeting. Eric Duff will provide a list of potential stakeholders that will include the MVHS, the Chamber of Commerce, the local government planning and transportation personnel, the Trail of Tears Association, and a local resident. Katy Allen would like to be involved in the stakeholders meetings.

GDOT District 6 would also need to be involved in the public involvement process because they are often the first point of contact for local residents.

There would likely need to be at least two stakeholders meetings. If the results of the first stakeholders meeting are favorable, then the project should move to a PIOH. If the results of the stakeholders meeting are not favorable, then information from the stakeholders meeting should be incorporated into the project and surveys, and the results taken back to the stakeholders. The stakeholders should be shown the project constraints and how the concerns were addressed.

The PIOH would help address the public concerns. Showing just a corridor at the PIOH was discussed, but the decision was that it would be OK to show a concept as a starting point. Letters should be sent to the land owners notifying them about the PIOH. The property owners within the project corridor were also previously sent notification about the project from the surveyors.

Katy Allen recommended that the PIOH include a presentation to reduce misinformation rather than following the standard informal PIOH format. The presentation should discuss the Purpose and Need for the project and the project concept (that the project would not add capacity). GDOT should consider how to communicate with those who are opposed to the project.

Garrett Silliman suggested inviting the public to comment on what is there. Getting input could be very valuable on this project. Garrett will send a copy of a questionnaire that was used on another project to Eric Duff for review and comment.

A public hearing open house (PHOH) would also be required for this project.

### **NEPA Documentation**

Katy Allen said that the appropriate level of environmental documentation would be an Environmental Assessment to be prepared for possible litigation. The project may also require a full Section 4(f) Evaluation.

Edwards-Pitman will provide Gresham Smith with a scope and cost estimate. These are to include the stakeholders meetings. A full Section 4(f) Evaluation should also be included in the cost estimate and schedule. Archaeology will survey 100 feet beyond the corridor.

**Action Items:**

Gresham, Smith and Partners

- Provide Purpose and Need information to GDOT for the press release.
- Create graphic showing accident locations on an aerial background.
- Notify property owners before surveys occur.

Edwards-Pitman Environmental

- Prepare a schedule, scope and budget to include a wider archaeology survey area and preparation of an Environmental Assessment with a Section 4(f) Evaluation.

Georgia Department of Transportation

- Prepare a press release.
- Determine if an article should be prepared with the *Pickens County Progress*.
- Identify stakeholders.
- Determine where the private development in the area is located.
- Set up a stakeholders meeting.
- Schedule a PIOH after the stakeholders meeting.
- Review the scope and budget prepared by Gresham, Smith and Partners and Edwards-Pitman to determine responsibilities for the stakeholders meetings.
- Prepare information on other GDOT projects to showcase during public involvement.

**MEETING ATTENDEES**

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