



GDOT US 441 Improvements Morgan and Oconee Counties

Oconee County Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting

Monday, March 19, 2018 5:00-6:30 PM

Oconee County Veterans Memorial Park Community Center
Conference Room

*** MINUTES ***

Committee Members

- Jerry Thomas
- Johnny Pritchett
- Buddy Murrow
- Tammy Gilland
- Abe Abouhamdan
- Bobby Griggs
- Del Finco
- Walter Lee
- Bill Douglas
- Allison McCullick
- Ted White

Project Team Members

- Chandria Brown, GDOT
- Steve Adewale, GDOT
- Bruce Anderson, Jr., GDOT
- Samuel Williams, GDOT
- David Borchardt, GDOT
- Jonathan Cox, Jacobs
- Kerrie Boyette, KCI
- Claudia Mancillas, KCI
- Robert Moses, WSP USA
- Claudia Bilotto, WSP USA
- Audra Rojek, WSP USA

Welcome and Introductions

Meeting Purpose

1. The purpose of this meeting was to present the revised alignment for the 0013613 project in the area of Bishop to the Oconee County CAC.

Presentation

2. GDOT and GDOT's consultants presented the alignment for US 441 in the vicinity of Bishop at the Oconee County CAC Meeting on Monday, March 19.

The presentation went as follows:

- Bruce Anderson introduced the GDOT and consultant staff in attendance and Claudia Bilotto provided an overview of the project to the CAC and other attendees.
- The presentation included a traffic simulation showing how traffic would use the proposed facility and an FHWA video on roundabout safety (Truck, Farm Equipment, and Emergency Vehicles)



- Kerrie Boyette then discussed the details of the project followed by a question and answer session with the CAC and other attendees.

Project Updates

3. Kerrie described the portion of the project at Bishop as a two-lane localized bypass to the east of existing US 441 beginning with a roundabout at US 441 and Astondale Road and ending with a roundabout at US 441 and SR 186 (High Shoals Road). Astondale Road would be modified to create a T intersection with the localized bypass. There would also be a two-way stop- controlled intersection of the localized bypass with Old Bishop Road (with both legs of Old Bishop Road having stop signs). In the northbound direction both roundabouts would have a bypass lane that would let through-vehicles continue on US 441 without entering the roundabouts.
4. Johnny Pritchett, CAC member and Mayor of Bishop, expressed support for the proposed alignment. He said this alignment is in the best interests of Bishop, even if it does not address all the needs that he thinks it should. He feels he can work with it.

Questions and Answers

5. The following summarizes the CAC's questions and comments during discussion of the proposed roadway concept:

Bypass

Q1: Will the bypass be two or four lanes? It is currently envisioned as two lanes.

A1: Traffic data do not support the construction of a four-lane bypass.

Q2: Can automobiles use the bypass, or just trucks?

A2: Automobiles will also be able to use the bypass.

Traffic Volumes

Q1: The traffic study was done in 2016. Traffic and truck traffic have grown since then. There is also a safari theme park planned south of Madison – just south of I-20. Please do an updated study.

A1: The traffic used in the design takes the traffic counts in 2016 and projects the traffic to the design year which is 20 years after the project is opened to traffic. The design year traffic is based on growth factors that reflect the area's historic growth rates. Traffic analysis for the bypass alignment is not finished. We have to finalize the alignment then we can finalize traffic.

Q2: What is the percentage of US 441 traffic that will continue through Bishop?

A2: The current estimate is that 50 percent will use the bypass and 50 percent will continue through town. But with Waze and other apps, drivers go with their fastest option. The bypass



is longer than the route through town, but vehicles should be able to use the bypass at a higher speed.

Q3: Old Bishop Road and US 441 are very slow on game day.

A3: The Department doesn't design highways based on game day traffic. It would be very expensive and have much greater impacts. The Department designs for the peak hour of an average day in the design year.

Q4: If 70 to 80 percent of US 441 traffic uses the bypass (instead of 50 percent), would it need to be a four-lane bypass?

A4: Four lanes total in this area – two in town, two on the bypass – should accommodate all of the traffic.

Railroad

Q1: The roundabout at Astondale is adjacent to the existing rail line. How will that work when there's a train?

A1: The rail line at this location is not in use.

Q2: GDOT should be aware that the owner of the rail line through Bishop is planning to reinstate rail service, running passenger service from Athens to Madison.

A2: Railroad coordination is a part of the Preliminary Engineering process. GDOT will reach out to the railroad owner/operator for more information.

UGA

Q1: We know that Greg McGarrity, the Athletics Director at UGA, sent a letter to Jamie Boswell, the Chairman of the GDOT Board, that stated UGA took exception to the proposed bypass, namely its potential noise impacts on the equestrian facility. The UGA facility is very important to Bishop. They come to our businesses and have a positive effect on Bishop. We thought you had contacted UGA about the alignment, but it sounds as if they were not aware.

A1: The Department has been coordinating with UGA. That coordination is ongoing. The Department sent a response letter to UGA today. The Department is committed to working with UGA to minimize impacts to their facility.

Q2: Would UGA's property be bisected by the bypass?

A2: No, the bypass would go along the west edge of their property. Their primary concerns are noise and safety.

Q3: It sounds like, from his letter, Mr. McGarrity had seen the alignment before. Why is there a preferential approach to coordinating with UGA?



A3: GDOT cannot take land from UGA, so the Department has to coordinate with them early. For other landowners, GDOT approaches them when there is a final alignment, and the impacts to their property are known.

GDOT knows that property takings are not popular; they are an unfortunate part of road building. There is not an alignment that affects no one. This project has been stalled for a long time because the previous alignments had very high impacts on properties and the environment and were not supported by the public.

Access

Q1: With the bypass, will access to the Golden Pantry be restricted?

A1: No.

Q2: Is access to the Bar-G changed?

A2: No

GDOT

Q1: Will GDOT publish their data sources and model inputs for stakeholders to review?

A1: All GDOT work and activity is public record and available.

Roundabouts

Q1: Why was this location chosen for the northern roundabout?

A1: The highest side road traffic volumes were on SR 186 (High Shoals Road), which made it the best alternative for the northern roundabout and northern end of the bypass.

Q2: Can the southern roundabout be moved farther south to the existing curve in US 441? This would make the bypass a straighter alignment.

A2: Moving the roundabout to the south would have greater impacts – especially to the properties on Astondale Road.

Q3: Will the roundabout at US 441 and SR 186 (High Shoals Road) be a single-lane or multi-lane roundabout?

A3: The roundabout is currently shown as a single lane roundabout. Final traffic analysis will determine if a multi-lane roundabout is needed.

Q4: I read in the AJC that a roundabout will not work if 90 percent of the traffic is on the main road. Is that true here?

A4: That may be true if the goal is to improve the level of service for the mainline. In this case, our goal is to slow traffic and create a downtown feel in Bishop, not maximize vehicle throughput.



Q5: On the display, what are the green shapes around the outside of the roundabouts? Do the roundabouts include bike lanes?

A6: The green shapes are grass strips separating the proposed sidewalks from the edge of the travel way. There no bike lanes, but there is a bikable shoulder.

Q6: How will drivers approaching the roundabouts be warned that they have to reduce speed?

A6: Reflective warning signs will be installed in advance of the roundabouts in accordance with GDOT guidelines. The roundabouts will also include street lighting.

Q7: Will the roundabouts be designed to accommodate longer trucks that may exist in the future?

A7: Roundabouts in Georgia are designed and built to accommodate a WB 67 vehicle, which is specified in the GDOT design guidelines. If longer trucks need to be accommodated in the future GDOT will modify the guidelines and can program projects to upgrade intersections and roundabouts.

Q8: Will GDOT provide outreach before the project opens to show people how to use a roundabout?

A8: Roundabouts are becoming more common in Georgia. There are videos available that show how to drive through roundabouts. Outreach may be provided.

Traffic Control

Q1: Can we get a signal at SR 186 (High Shoals Road)?

A1: A traffic signal was evaluated for SR 186, but the location does not meet the required criteria. Installing an unwarranted signal can cause more problems than it solves. When a traffic signal is not warranted at an intersection, alternatives like roundabouts are evaluated.

Q2: Is there any Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) treatment planned for this corridor?

A2: There is not enough traffic (or traffic signals) to need to implement an ITS solution here.

Q3: Is this corridor being considered for a smart corridor?

A3: Not at this time, but it is possible that it could be included by the time it goes to construction.



Speeds

Q1: In this project where would the posted speed limit be reduced in Bishop?

A1: Between the roundabouts. Reducing the posted speed would be one way to make it less attractive to trucks to come through town so that they will choose to take the bypass. GDOT will sign the bypass for trucks, but cannot restrict trucks on a state route. One possible option could be to take the section of US 441 between the roundabouts off of the state system. But Bishop would then have to assume maintenance on the roadway through town which may be cost prohibitive. The bypass is proposed to have a posted speed limit of 45 mph.

Noise

Q1: Is there a sound barrier proposed between the bypass and the church?

A1: A visual barrier is proposed. GDOT will discuss the possibility of aesthetic treatments to the barrier with the property owner.

Q2: Is a berm proposed between the bypass and the UGA facility?

A2: Yes, and a visual barrier also. The height of the barrier and the height and width of the berm will depend on UGA's preferences.

Q3: There are horses at the UGA facility now and there is traffic and truck traffic nearby on Astondale now. Horses adjust to changing noise levels if they are gradual. The horses seem to be doing fine now.

A3: Noted.

Property Impacts

Q1: Will any homes on the route be acquired?

A1: The current design is preliminary and may change in final design. At this point it appears there will be impacts to two homes on Old Bishop Road. At this point it is not known if it will just be property impacts or if there will be impacts to the houses.

Q2: What are the property impacts of the roundabout at Astondale?

A2: The current design is preliminary and will be developed further in final design. The currently proposed diameter of the roundabout is 150 feet to 190.

Q3: Will the trucking companies at this roundabout be impacted?

A3: The amount of impact is not known. When the survey of the existing conditions is complete more detailed design will be done and impacts will be better known.



Other

Q1: Are you widening the rest of US 441 in Oconee County? When?

A1: Yes. The overall project is to widen US 441 from the Madison Bypass in Morgan County to the Watkinsville Bypass in Oconee County and is programmed to begin construction in 2021. The Department is scheduled to begin acquiring right-of-way in late 2019. The sooner consensus is reached on the alignment at Bishop, the sooner construction can begin.

The widening of the rest of US 441 will follow the existing US 441 alignment and will shift between widening to the west and widening to the east to minimize impacts. The Bishop area is the only location where the widening is proposed to leave the existing US 441 alignment.

Q2: How much will these plans change?

A2: At this point, this is the alignment that will be presented at a Public Information Open House (PIOH) later this year. There may still be some tinkering with details. Non-engineering staff may not notice the changes. The changes may be in the range of 5 to 10 feet.

Q3: What will the rest of the US 441 project in Oconee County look like?

A3: It will be a 4-lane road, two lanes in each direction, with a raised median to provide the safety benefits of avoiding head-on collisions. R-Cuts, or Michigan Lefts, will be provided at intersections to improve safety for left turns and crossing movements from side streets.

Q4: What happened to the three-lane alignment through Bishop?

A4: A three-lane alternative through Bishop was presented a year ago at the first CAC meeting, but there was strong opposition to it. GDOT has moved to the current alignment.

Q5: What happens between now and the PIOHs?

A5: GDOT's consultants will prepare the plans and information for the open houses. The meetings will be advertised and signs announcing the meetings will be posted. The plans will be posted on line in advance of the PIOHs. People can attend the meeting and comment or comment online.

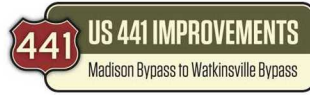
Q6: Johnny Pritchett encouraged everyone to come to the PIOHs and leave comments. Previous comments led to this alignment.

A6: Noted.

Next Meetings

0013613 and 0013617 Public Information Open Houses Dates: Late Summer 2018

Locations: To Be Determined



The foregoing is my understanding of the topics discussed. If you have any corrections or comments, please let me know by close of business on April 6, 2018.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert R. Moses". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Robert R. Moses, P.E.

Project Manager