



May 12, 2025

Re: Responses to Public Information Open House Comments for PI: 0013563, Douglas County, County Road (CR) 817/Lee Road/South Sweetwater Road – Phase I - GRTA

Dear Respondent,

Thank you for your feedback concerning the proposed project referenced above. We appreciate your participation and the questions and comments received through the project's website and the in-person open house. As the project develops, the proposed project plan may need to be revised. If there are significant changes to what was shown on the project's website and at the in-person meeting, there will be additional public outreach. If no significant changes are proposed, the project will proceed to right-of-way (ROW) acquisition and final design. Following the completion of all right-of-way acquisitions, the project design would be finalized, and the project would advance to construction.

Every comment provided during the project's comment period beginning on January 29, 2025, and ending on February 28, 2025, will be made part of the project's official record. **131** people attended the in-person open house. Of the **31** respondents who formally commented, **11** were in **support** of the project, **4** were **opposed**, **1** were **uncommitted**, and **15** expressed **conditional support**.

The Douglas County Department of Transportation has prepared a single response letter that addresses all questions and comments received during the comment period which are summarized below (in *italics*) followed by our response.

- *Comments were received supporting the project as proposed.*

Douglas County and the Georgia Department of Transportation thank you for your support of the proposed project.

- A comment was made requesting that throughout all segments of Lee Road construction, better road maintenance will occur.

Contractors are to maintain the road in accordance with the county requirements, which Douglas County enforces before and after construction. Concerns about road maintenance during construction can be directed to Douglas County.

- *A comment was received notifying the county that construction of a bridge over the railroad and highway 78 has begun.*

The construction of the bridge is outside the scope of this project. Nonetheless, we appreciate you ensuring the County is aware of this.

- *A comment was received suggesting that Beachwood Drive should be converted into a cul-de-sac at the existing South Sweetwater Road.*

The scope of this project is to widen Lee Road/South Sweetwater Road from the intersection of Lee Road and Vulcan drive to approximately 1.8 miles north at the intersection of South Sweetwater Road and Veteran's Memorial Highway. Improvements to Beechwood Drive are outside the scope of this project. However, your comment can be directed to Douglas County for consideration.

- *A comment was made to redesign the intersection at South Sweetwater Road and Lee Road as a roundabout instead of the proposed cutoff and to change South Sweetwater Road to a traffic light.*

The option of a roundabout at South Sweetwater Road and Lee Road will be studied as part of the Intersection Control Evaluation (ICE) analysis. Under the current design, there would be a new traffic signal installed at the intersection of South Sweetwater Road and Lee Road.

- *Comments were made requesting a traffic light, stop sign, turning lane, or some other traffic calming measure for the senior community, noting difficulties with entering and exiting senior development, especially in the early afternoon.*

A signal is proposed just north of the senior community at Miller Street. As a result, there would not be sufficient spacing between signals if one was placed at the senior community. Furthermore, traffic levels studied do not warrant a signal at Groovers Lake Road or Linda Drive.

- *Comments were made suggesting a crosswalk at the intersection of Linda Drive and South Sweetwater Road or near the Senior center. One of the commentors suggested that the fire department's emergency light be reconfigured with push buttons to create a crosswalk as all the necessary infrastructure is already in place. If it is not feasible, it was requested to install a crosswalk and provide orange safety flags. One of the commenters acknowledged the planned crosswalk at Miller Street but believes this will create a long detour for pedestrians wanting to cross to the library and senior center.*

The proposed project plans to permanently remove the emergency light, so adding push buttons is not feasible. However, a crosswalk is proposed at the driveway of Douglas County Fire Station 1 near the intersection of Linda Drive and South Sweetwater Road which would allow access to the Senior Center.

- *A comment was made suggesting improved lighting along Lee Road and Sweetwater Road, especially given the ongoing construction and road changes as well as poor visibility during rain.*

Standard county lighting on utility poles would be placed as needed. However, special lighting is outside the scope of the proposed project.

- *A comment was received recommending that the "prescriptive" stretch of Cooper Circle is improved with proper lane markings to designate it as a one-lane road extending from South Sweetwater Road to Cooper Street at Antioch Baptist Church.*

The scope of this project is to widen Lee Road/South Sweetwater Road from the intersection of Lee Road and Vulcan drive to approximately 1.8 miles north at the intersection of South Sweetwater Road and Veteran's Memorial Highway. Cooper Road is not within the project limits, and therefore not within the scope of this project. However, your comment can be directed to Douglas County for further consideration.

- *A comment was made requesting a turn lane at the local ACE hardware store. Additionally, desires for minimal property impacts and for the street to be moved further from the property to prevent the loss of any parking spaces were expressed.*

Under the current design, a 20-foot raised median would be placed in front of the Ace Hardware store to improve safety for vehicles and pedestrians given there would be two lanes of traffic in each direction. For urban minor arterial roadways, which Lee Road and South Sweetwater Road are classified as, it is standard design policy to implement a median. The placement of this raised median will alter the access to/from ACE Hardware to be right-in, right-out only (no left turns will be feasible). Although the median placement will alter access to and from ACE Hardware, a median would allow pedestrians to cross one direction of traffic at a time, allowing them to focus on just two lanes rather than having to anticipate traffic for the entire width of the four-lane road. Further, raised medians provide additional benefits beyond pedestrian safety such as reducing motor vehicle crashes and vehicle speeds.

The study area shown at the Public Information Open House is only conceptual and no final decisions regarding the design have been made. Where possible, the alignment and construction limits will be reduced to minimize impacts. Should there be a need for right-of-way acquisition from ACE Hardware, Georgia DOT and Douglas County staff will meet with property owners individually to discuss impacts well ahead of property acquisition. Negative impacts to properties are considered in the valuation process by independent appraisers hired by Georgia DOT in the acquisition process. Additionally, for businesses, parking loss and reconstruction alternatives are considered during the right-of-way valuation and negotiation processes. For more information on the Georgia DOT's right-of-way process, please see: <http://www.dot.ga.gov/PartnerSmart/Public/Documents/Right-of-Way/ROWBrochure-English.pdf>

- *A comment was made asking about local bus drivers' views on the project*

Coordination between Douglas County and Connect Douglas bus system has occurred to make Connect Douglas aware of the project. As proposed, the service for Bus Route 40 near Texaco Gas Station would be maintained without interruption during construction. The project also proposes pedestrian infrastructure improvements such as the addition of crosswalks and sidewalks, which would benefit users of the bus route system. Coordination between Douglas County and Connect Douglas will continue as the project progresses.

- *Comments were received conveying a preference for the previous plan*

Elements of the former plan have been incorporated into the current preferred alternative for the project to the extent practicable but with an effort to minimize impacts from right-of-way. The intention is to still meet the need and purpose of the project with the current preferred alternative while minimizing property impacts. The current proposed plan has less right-of-way impacts on properties than the previous plan.

- *A comment was made suggesting that Groovers Lake Road and Linda Drive should be aligned, with the addition of a traffic light at the intersection.*

A historic property located at the corner of South Sweetwater Road and Linda Drive makes an alignment of this nature infeasible. Furthermore, there would not be sufficient spacing between signals if one was installed at the requested location given the proposed light at the South Sweetwater Road and Miller Street intersection.

- *A comment was made raising concerns regarding the intersection of Lee Road and Veteran's Memorial Drive, suggesting that it be reworked by building a bridge over the railroad tracks on Lee Road, both west and eastbound, like the bridge over Veteran's Memorial Road in Douglasville.*

The scope of this project is to widen Lee Road/South Sweetwater Road from the intersection of Lee Road and Vulcan drive to approximately 1.8 miles north at the intersection of South Sweetwater Road and Veteran's Memorial Highway. Improvements to Veteran's Memorial Drive are outside the project limits and therefore outside the scope of the proposed project. However, you may direct this comment to Douglas County for further consideration.

- *A comment was made raising concerns about the transition from the four-lane section to a two-lane section on Skyview Drive leading to Thornton Road.*

The transition is proposed to minimize impacts to properties and a historic resource. Further, traffic reports indicate a heavy drop in traffic turning onto Skyview Drive, leading to a reduction in the amount of traffic north of the road and thus the need for a four-lane section here.

- *A question was raised about how school traffic would be able to turn onto Mark Turner Road, specifically for Lithia Elementary.*

Traffic would be routed to Miller Road, which under the proposal would become a signalized intersection. To access Mark Turner Road from Lithia Elementary School, vehicles will turn left at the proposed Miller Road signal and then turn left onto Mark Turner Road.

- *A comment was made in support of Beechwood Drive remaining open in the current plan, stating that it should not be closed off.*

The scope of this project is to widen Lee Road/South Sweetwater Road from the intersection of Lee Road and Vulcan drive to approximately 1.8 miles north at the intersection of South Sweetwater Road and Veteran's Memorial Highway. Improvements

to Beechwood Drive are outside the scope of this project, so no changes in access to this street are proposed with this project.

- *A comment was made recommending the addition of a right turn lane from South Sweetwater Road to East 78 or to direct the right turn lane to the east side of South Sweetwater Road at Watson Street.*

A northbound right-turn lane from South Sweetwater Road to East 78 was considered, however, this would displace a business and therefore is not considered a desirable option.

- *A comment was recommending a left turn light from South Sweetwater Road to West 78.*

The intersection of South Sweetwater Road and Veteran's Memorial Highway/East & West 78 currently has a left turn lane approaching the signal. The proposed project does not include improvements to this intersection, so the addition of a left turn signal to the traffic light is outside the scope of this project. However, please direct your comment to Douglas County for further consideration.

- *A comment was received from a business owner who is seeking to understand how the project would affect their business (Cornerstone Chiropractic) specifically regarding traffic flow and patient access to the business.*

The current design proposes a signal outside of Cornerstone Chiropractic at the intersection of South Sweetwater Road and Skyview Drive, which would help facilitate traffic flow in and out of the property. A right-turn lane is also proposed approaching Junior High Drive, which would allow southbound traffic to turn right into the property. The signal proposed at Skyview Drive would have a left turn lane approaching it, which would allow northbound vehicles to use the turn lane at the signal to turn left into the property. As currently designed, access to the property would not be changed.

Please note the study area shown at the Public Information Open House is only conceptual and no final decisions regarding the design have been made. Where possible, the alignment and construction limits will be reduced to minimize impacts. Should there be a need for right-of-way acquisition from Cornerstone Chiropractic, Georgia DOT and Douglas County staff will meet with property owners individually to discuss impacts well ahead of property acquisition. Negative impacts to properties are considered in the valuation process by independent appraisers hired by Georgia DOT in the acquisition process. Additionally, for businesses, parking loss and reconstruction alternatives are considered during the right-of-way valuation and negotiation processes. For more information on the Georgia DOT's right-of-way process, please see: <http://www.dot.ga.gov/PartnerSmart/Public/Documents/Right-of-Way/ROWBrochure-English.pdf>

- *A comment was made expressing support of the project, but with concern about the destruction and closure of small businesses. The commenter stated that this should only occur if the businesses are fully compensated for relocation in the future.*

Based on the current proposal, no replacements would occur. As the project development progresses, required right-of-way limits will be finalized. If right-of-way is required, a right-of-way team member will meet with the property owner to negotiate for the property to be acquired. In the event any property is required, a certified independent appraiser hired by GDOT will make a fair market value appraisal of the area to be required, including any damages to the remainder land, if applicable. The appraisal will also include values for improvements required or damages that may be applicable. If it is determined any property will be a total acquisition, then relocation assistance and benefits will be administered under the Relocation Advisory Assistance and Relocation Payment Program. For more information on the Georgia DOT's right-of-way process, please see: <http://www.dot.ga.gov/PartnerSmart/Public/Documents/Right-of-Way/ROWBrochure-English.pdf>

- *A comment was received expressing concern that when drivers on Beechwood Drive want to access Ace Hardware or the library, they cannot cross the median at ACE and cannot get onto South Sweetwater Road going south at Linda Drive.*

Under the current design, a 20-foot raised median would be placed along various sections of South Sweetwater Road, which would cause a change in access at ACE Hardware and the library to right-in, right-out (no left turns will be feasible). Although the median will cause access changes, with this being a proposed four-lane section with two lanes of traffic going in each direction, a median provides safety benefits for both pedestrians and vehicles. This median would allow pedestrians to cross one direction of traffic at a time, allowing them to focus on just two lanes rather than having to anticipate traffic for the entire width of the four-lane road. In addition, raised medians can reduce motor vehicle speeds and crashes. Further, for urban minor arterial roadways, which Lee Road and South Sweetwater Road are classified as, it is standard design policy to implement a median. Although the implementation of the median would cause changes in access to certain properties, the median was deemed necessary to ensure safety within the project corridor.

- *A comment was received expressing uncertainty over the project's ability to slow traffic on Beechwood Drive.*

The scope and goal of this project is to widen Lee Road/South Sweetwater to improve traffic flow, minimize vehicular delays, reduce crash rates, and provide pedestrian accommodations. Further improvements to Beechwood Drive are outside the project limits and therefore outside the scope of this project. Please direct your comment to Douglas County for further consideration.

- *A comment was received expressing no desire for additional commercial truck traffic.*

The project is not intended to increase or decrease truck traffic. Rather, the goal of the project is to improve traffic flow, minimize vehicular delays, reduce crash rates, and provide enhanced pedestrian accommodations. There are many major intersections in the corridor that could also benefit from improvements associated with the project.

- *A comment was received indicating that the Lee Road project is expected to be completed by the end of this year, with the latest possible completion by summer 2026. The commenter requested as part of the project that the entrance to Johnsbrooke Drive be periodically smoothed out.*

The project on Lee Road mentioned in this comment is related to a different local project that is currently under construction. The recommendation regarding the entrance of Johnsbrooke Drive is outside the limits of the project and therefore is outside the scope of the project. Please direct your comment to Douglas County for further consideration.

- *A comment was made in support of the project; however, the commenter had concern about the project's duration considering Lee Road is still incomplete, resulting in ongoing construction on top of existing construction.*

The construction of this project is planned to begin in 2029. It is anticipated that current construction for the remainder of Lee Road will be completed before this project begins construction.

- *A comment was made requesting that the project not begin until the intersection at Highway 78 is addressed. The concern is that the intersection is already a bottleneck, and just beyond it, Temple Street is also burdened with heavy traffic.*

The scope of this project is to widen Lee Road/South Sweetwater Road from the intersection of Lee Road and Vulcan drive to approximately 1.8 miles north at the intersection of South Sweetwater Road and Veteran's Memorial Highway. Improvements to the intersection of Veteran's Memorial Highway/Highway 78 itself are outside the current scope of this project. Comments regarding the intersection can be directed to Douglas County for further consideration.

- *A request was made to be included in the process of finding solutions that would ensure the project benefits future users.*

Douglas County appreciates your interest in being involved with the proposed project. Please direct your inquiry to be involved to Douglas County.

- *A comment expressed the desire for GDOT to pursue projects or funding for the highway widening on Veteran's Memorial Highway from South Sweetwater Road to Thornton Road. The commenter believes it would be logical for the Douglas County DOT to support and seek funding for projects that align with the county's future land use plan, approved in 2023, particularly concerning the Veteran's Memorial Highway corridor. A suggestion was made for commissioners to actively seek funding from both state and federal sources*

The scope of this project is to widen Lee Road/South Sweetwater Road from the intersection of Lee Road and Vulcan drive to approximately 1.8 miles north at the intersection of South Sweetwater Road and Veteran's Memorial Highway. Veteran's Memorial Highway improvements are outside the current scope of this project. Furthermore, Veteran's Memorial Highway is outside the jurisdiction of the county as it is

designated as a State Route. Comments regarding this desired road widening of Veteran's Memorial Highway can be directed to the Georgia Department of Transportation.

- *A comment was made expressing concern that people are able to access Rideshare vehicles as the entrance to Meadowview Drive off Lee Road is being blocked*

The entrance to Meadowview Drive is located outside the current limits of the proposed project, therefore, improvements are not included in the scope of this project. The project would begin at the intersection of Lee Road and Vulcan Drive and end at the intersection of South Sweetwater Road and Veteran's Memorial Highway.

- *A comment was made requesting that the shrubbery at the Deer Lick Park entrance be removed to improve safety.*

Deer Lick Park is outside the current scope of this project but does fall within another local project area. Comments regarding the shrubbery at the entrance can be directed to Douglas County for further consideration.

- *A comment was received making the project team aware of a certified "Indian corn grinding hole" located in exposed granite by Lee Road in the lower front yard of a residence.*

Thank you for providing this information. The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 requires federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic and archaeological properties and afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) a reasonable opportunity to comment on such undertakings. The Section 106 process seeks to accommodate historic preservation concerns with the needs of federal undertakings through consultation between agency officials and other parties interested in the effects of the undertaking on historic and archaeological properties. Cultural Resources identified must be determined to be "eligible" by the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). To be considered eligible, the resource must be a minimum of 50 years of age (though exceptions are made if the resource is of great significance, e.g., associated with the Civil Rights Movement). It must then be evaluated under the four National Register of Historic Places (NR) Criteria, A through D:

- A.** Association with an event that made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history
- B.** Association with a person significant in our past
- C.** Significant for its design or construction
- D.** Significant due to the information it may yield on prehistory or history

As part of the environmental efforts for the proposed project, historical and archaeological surveys are conducted, and findings are coordinated with the Georgia Department of Transportation and the SHPO. Any cultural resources determined eligible by the SHPO, as well as their impacts and required mitigation, will be captured in the forthcoming publicly available National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document.

- *A suggestion was made to provide public outreach information by mail.*

To reach a large audience and ensure participation, approximately 7,780 postcards providing general project information and details about the Public Information Open House were delivered to 12 mail routes located within an expansive area of the project corridor. It is also standard to post advertisements regarding public outreach opportunities through the local legal organ. For this project, an advertisement for the PIOH was published in the Douglas County Sentinel on the following dates: December 31, 2024; January 7, 2025; January 14, 2025; and January 21, 2025. Any future public outreach efforts for this project will implement similar distribution efforts in order to reach a large audience and ensure maximum participation.

- *A comment was made mentioning that a planner explained there are no plans for additional crosswalks due to concerns over liability risks associated with crosswalks that don't have traffic signals. The commenter highlighted that, according to Georgia law, crosswalks exist at all intersections with sidewalks, and pedestrians have the right of way at both marked and unmarked crosswalks and that there are unmarked crosswalks that run directly from one sidewalk to the other across the intersection. The commenter suggested that the intersections should be clearly marked with painted crosswalks and warning signs indicating the presence of a crosswalk as it could help minimize rear-end collisions and increase pedestrian safety. They also recommended placing orange safety flags at each crosswalk to improve visibility.*

Various crosswalks that will be striped with paint are proposed throughout the corridor, including at:

- The driveway to Douglas County Fire Station 1 near the intersection of Linda Drive and South Sweetwater Road.
 - The intersection of South Sweetwater Road and South Sweetwater Connector.
 - The intersection of South Sweetwater Road and Groovers Lake Road.
 - The entrance to Douglas County Fire Station 1 off Groovers Lake Road.
 - The intersection of South Sweetwater Road and Linda Drive.
 - The intersection of South Sweetwater Road and Miller Street.
 - The intersection of South Sweetwater Road and Honeysuckle Lane.
 - The intersection of South Sweetwater Road and Junior High Drive.
 - The intersection of South Sweetwater Road and Skyview Drive.
 - The entrances to the Youth Innovation Center and Lithia Springs Pharmacy.
 - The intersection of South Sweetwater Road and Rosehill Circle.
 - The entrance to Sweetwater Storage.
 - The intersection of South Sweetwater Road and Cooper Circle.
 - The intersection of South Sweetwater Road and Mark Turner Road.
 - The intersection of South Sweetwater Road and Cooper Street.
 - The intersection of South Sweetwater Road and Inman Street.
 - The intersection of South Sweetwater Road and Houston Street.
- Comments were made requesting a traffic light to help residents exit their complex/subdivision at Rosehill Circle safely and to address trucks passing through, which is seen as a safety hazard.

May 12, 2025

Page 10 of 10

There is not a signal proposed at the entrance of Rosehill Circle, but access to and from this neighborhood will be maintained under the current design including the addition of a left turn lane onto Rosehill Circle. A signal at this location is not warranted as a traffic light is proposed in close proximity just slightly west at the intersection of South Sweetwater Road and Skyview Drive. The new signal at the intersection of Skyview Drive would help control traffic flow along South Sweetwater Road.

Again, thank you for your feedback. Should you have further questions or comments, please call the Douglas County Department of Transportation Deputy Director, Jack Burnside, at 678-449-3972 or the GDOT environmental analyst, Rachel Staley, at 678-247-2453.

Sincerely,

[Jack Burnside](#)

Jack Burnside
Deputy Director
Department of Transportation
Douglas County

JB/NG