EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Buford Highway Multimodal Corridor Study was one of the first in a series of regional corridor planning studies conducted as part of the Atlanta Regional Commission's (ARC) Multi-Modal Corridor Planning Program. The focus of the corridor study was the 18.4 mile section of Buford Highway, extending from Sidney Marcus Boulevard in Atlanta (Fulton County) to SR 120 in Duluth (Gwinnett County). The study included identifying deficiencies within the study corridor, assessing benefits and costs of alternative strategies, and selecting a preferred alternative program of policies and projects within the financial constraints for the region.

The Buford Highway Multimodal Corridor Study was initiated in the fall of 2005 and has involved the following phases:

1. Evaluation of current corridor conditions
2. Definition of goals and objectives
3. Identification of specific corridor needs
4. Development and evaluation of alternative strategies for addressing corridor needs
5. Recommendations for long range transportation and land use changes

Background

According to regional forecasts, the population within the corridor is anticipated to grow from an existing population of 290,000 to 360,000 by 2030, a 24 percent increase. Total employment in the corridor is anticipated to grow from 304,000 jobs to 363,000 jobs by 2030, a 19 percent increase. Along with expected growth, traffic volumes are forecasted to increase along the corridor. Where most of the corridor experienced acceptable levels of daily congestion in 2005, portions of the corridor, north of I-285, are anticipated to have poor to failing levels of service (LOS) by 2030.

Overall, the Buford Highway needs assessment revealed that the corridor is not conducive for multimodal usage. The transportation infrastructure has not kept up with demand for alternate travel modes. For example, existing pedestrian facilities are inconsistent and in need of upgrade. Users of the corridor experience a variety of conflicts between different travel modes. As a result, pedestrians and transit patrons are forced to walk adjacent to high speed traffic, without a sidewalk or street lighting along most of the corridor.

Recommendations

The charge of the Multimodal Corridor Study Program was to identify long range transportation improvements to address all modes within the corridors and consider how future land use and development changes can support future improvements. The recommendations developed for the Buford Highway corridor are the result of a multimodal, multidisciplinary needs assessment, coupled with input from the public and stakeholders. Improvements for the corridor for use by motor vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users and operators have been identified as

well as supportive land use and development strategies. The recommendations address existing and future transportation needs and are aimed at supporting Livable Centers Initiatives (LCI's), town centers and transit-oriented developments (TODs); maintaining and enhancing the corridor's business vitality; and integrating transportation improvements into the community through context sensitive design.

Major transportation projects recommended for the Buford Highway corridor include:

- Improving mobility on Peachtree Industrial Boulevard to enhance regional travel;
- Enhancing cross-corridor mobility between I-85, Buford Highway, and Peachtree Industrial Boulevard to facilitate east-west travel demand. Improvements have been identified for Button Gwinnett Drive, Jimmy Carter Boulevard, and Beaver Ruin Road;
- Providing dedicated bus lanes on Buford Highway inside I-285 to facilitate existing local bus and planned Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) services;
- Ensuring a complete sidewalk network along the corridor by filling in gaps;
- Developing a multi-use trail, between Buford Highway and the existing rail line north of I-285 to provide an alternative route for pedestrian and bicycle travel.

The transportation implementation program recommendations for Buford Highway are shown in Tables ES-1, ES-2, and ES-3 for short-term, mid-term, and long-range projects, respectively. The planning level costs presented include capital costs, design and engineering, construction and estimated rights-of-way, where applicable.

Table ES-1:
Projects for TIP Implementation (2008-2013)

Roadway / Location	Modification / Improvement	Limits	Improvement Type	Total Cost
Buford Highway	Intersection modification	Jimmy Carter Boulevard	Safety	$7,000
Buford Highway	Intersection modification, turning lanes	North Druid Hills Road	Safety	$130,000
Buford Highway	Intersection modification, turning lanes	Lenox Road	Safety	$160,000
Adjacent to Buford Highway	Multi-use trail on west side of Buford Highway between Buford Highway and railroad, with spur connections to W.P. Jones and West Gwinnett trails	Oakcliff Road to SR 120	Bicycle / Pedestrian	$3,500,000
New Peachtree Road	Bicycle lanes, connecting to multi-use trail	Shallowford Road to Oakcliff Road	Bicycle	$4,200,000
Buford Highway	Increased pedestrian zones/buffers and sidewalk widths	Sidney Marcus Blvd. to Oakcliff Road (both sides), Oakcliff Road to Beaver Ruin Road (east side), Pleasant Hill Road to SR 120 (east side)	Pedestrian	$4,600,000
Buford Highway	Sidewalk on east side of Buford Highway	Beaver Ruin Road to Pleasant Hill Road	Pedestrian	$800,000

Table ES-2:
Projects for Mid-Range Implementation (2014-2020)

Roadway / Location	Modification / Improvement	Limits	Improvement Type	Total Cost
Jimmy Carter Boulevard	Widen from 4 to 6 lanes	Buford Highway to Peachtree Industrial Boulevard	Roadway Capacity	$9,200,000
Buford Highway	Grade separate intersection	Jimmy Carter Boulevard	Roadway Capacity	$12,800,000
Beaver Ruin Road, Hopkins Mill Road	Realign to improve connection	I-85 to Hopkins Mill Road	Roadway Capacity	$2,100,000
South Cemetery Street	Extension to Mitchell Road	South Cemetery Street to Mitchell Road	Roadway Capacity	$1,400,000
Buford Highway	ITS (Fiber optic communications, changeable message signs, closed circuit TV cameras, vehicle detection, and signal upgrades)	Various locations	ITS	$3,000,000
Various locations	Bicycle lanes on cross-streets to Buford Highway to connect to Buford Highway bicycle lanes and multi-use trail	Shady Valley Drive, N. Cliff Valley Way, Briarwood Road, Drew Valley Road, Dresden Road, Chamblee-Dunwoody Road, McElroy Road, Langford Road, South Berkeley Lake Road	Bicycle	$6,200,000

Table ES-3:
Projects for Long-Range Implementation (2021-2030)

Roadway / Location	Modification / Improvement	Limits	Improvement Type	Total Cost
Peachtree Industrial Boulevard	Extend 4-lane limited access highway	Holcomb Bridge Road to Sugarloaf Parkway	Roadway Capacity	$114,700,000
Peachtree Industrial Boulevard	New 2-lane service access roads parallel to Peachtree Industrial Boulevard	Holcomb Bridge Road to Sugarloaf Parkway	Roadway Capacity	$134,100,000
Beaver Ruin Road, Langford Road, Medlock Bridge Road	Realign to improve connection	I-85 to Peachtree Industrial Boulevard	Roadway Capacity	$1,600,000
Button Gwinnett Drive	Widen from 2 to 4 lanes	Pleasantdale Road to Buford Highway	Roadway Capacity	$14,300,000
Buford Highway	Intersection improvements (turning lanes)	Dresden Drive, Clairmont Road, and Briarwood Road	Roadway Operations	$576,000
Buford Highway	Convert outside lanes to dedicated busway	Sidney Marcus Boulevard to Shallowford Road	Transit	TBD
Buford Highway	BRT queue jumper lanes / bus pullouts at 5 locations	Oakcliff Road to Pleasant Hill Road	Transit	$1,000,000
Buford Highway	Transit ITS (traffic signal preemption/priority control, traveler information)	Sidney Marcus Boulevard to Pleasant Hill Road	Transit/ITS	$700,000
Buford Highway	Bicycle lanes adjacent to busway	Sidney Marcus Boulevard to Shallowford Road	Bicycle	$7,500,000

The estimated total cost of the implementation program is approximately $322,573,000 through 2030. The breakdown by time period and funding source is shown in Table ES-4. By funding category, the source of funding for the total program is estimated at 70 percent federal, one percent state, and 29 percent local.

Table ES-4:
Implementation Program Summary

	Estimated Funding Share by Source		
Time Period	**Federal**	**State**	**Local**
2008-2013	$4,557,600	$59,400	$8,780,000
2014-2020	$20,000,000	$4,400,000	$10,300,000
2021-2030	$200,860,800	$115,200	$73,500,000
Total	**$225,418,400**	**$4,574,600**	**$92,580,000**

In addition to specific transportation projects, additional multimodal transportation policies or strategies are recommended, including:

- Developing a multi-jurisdictional access management plan;
- Incorporating context sensitive design into future roadway improvements;
- Improving transit stop and transfer locations with shelters, benches, and sidewalks; and
- Developing and adopting design standards for pedestrian and bicycle facilities to provide a safer environment for pedestrian and bicycle travel.

The following land use strategies are recommended to support transportation improvements.

- Capitalize on redevelopment opportunities to create a balance between higher and moderate density mixed use developments;
- Identify regional and neighborhood activity centers for concentrated development;
- Protect and connect open space/green space within the corridor;
- Revaluate existing and zoned land use to ensure a marketable mix of uses;
- Create secondary circulation systems at activity nodes;
- Establish sidewalk and bicycle facility, access management, and corridor design standards for the corridor; and
- Establish an intergovernmental coordination committee to develop a unified development overlay district for the corridor, identify local funding priorities and mechanisms, and provide overall guidance for plan implementation.

Next Steps

Although this planning process and resulting documentation were initiated by ARC, it does not build roads, bridges, sidewalks, nor does it operate transit services. As a planning body, ARC can assist local governments with staff resources. It can also direct the recommended projects through the metropolitan planning process. It is the responsibility of ARC to develop a RTP and short range transportation implementation program, governed by federal legislation and regulation. It will be the responsibility of the local jurisdictions to advance the plan recommendations.

Ongoing plan activities include:

- Coordinating local jurisdictions, ARC, and GDOT to advance projects in future RTP updates;
- Ensuring projects are implemented in a logical sequence to maximize benefits and utilize scarce resources efficiently;
- Initiating intergovernmental coordination activities to ensure transportation projects, policies, and programs are compatible; and
- Developing a monitoring program to provide feedback to refine future improvements.