

ARC Transportation Improvement Program FY 2020-2025 and Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Amendment #7 Public Review March 16, 2023 to April 25, 2023

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is the mechanism by which federal, state and local funds are approved for all significant surface transportation projects and programs in the region. The FY 2020-2025 TIP comprises the first six years of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) for the Atlanta region. As the federally recognized Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for a 20-county region, ARC is responsible for developing and amending/updating the TIP and MTP to meet federal planning requirements and address local needs.

The purpose of amendment #7 is to:

- Implement financial and schedule changes ahead of FY 2023 closeout
- Assist GDOT with ongoing STIP rebalancing efforts
- Incorporate financial and schedule changes to the GDOT Major Mobility Investment Program (MMIP)
- Address project cost estimate and programmatic changes that are of a time sensitive nature or cannot be handled administratively.

An email was sent to ARC's interested parties distribution list indicating that the TIP/MTP Amendment was open for public review. Details regarding the amendment project list, process, and timeline were posted on ARC's website. Additionally, the request for review was advertised via newspapers and various ARC newsletters and presentations.

The original public comment period was scheduled to open on March 16, 2023 and close on April 14, 2023, with a public hearing scheduled before the Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC) meeting at ARC on April 7. Shortly after the commencement of the public comment period, the closing date was extended by eleven days to April 25 to allow for additional time to review further financial changes to the project GW-389A (a new interchange on I-85 North at McGinnis Ferry Road).

Two written comments were submitted via email during the public comment period. No verbal comments were submitted at the April 7 public hearing. A summary and response to these comments may be found on the following pages. This document, along with specific comments will be shared with ARC Transportation Coordinating and Transportation & Air Quality Committee members, as well as all appropriate regional transportation project sponsors. Additionally, this document will be shared with respondents who submitted public comment, via a link to the Amendment webpage, where this report will be posted, available at www.atlantaregional.org/amendment.

Public Comment Submittals

The following are the public comments submitted to ARC for the TIP/MTP Amendment #7 along with a response from ARC:

Public Comment #1

To: John Orr

Manager, Transportation Access and Mobility Group

Atlanta Regional Commission

229 Peachtree Street NE, Suite 100

Atlanta, GA 30303

Dear Mr. Orr,

The Transportation Committee of the Sierra Club Georgia Chapter welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Atlanta Regional Commission's Amendment 7 to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The Sierra Club is the most enduring and influential grassroots environmental organization in the United States. The Transportation Committee of the Sierra Club Georgia Chapter works to educate and engage with Georgians on a variety of transportation topics, with the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transportation while improving access for all.

We are hopeful that federal funding allocated from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) can be used responsibly to address climate change, improve safety, and expand access for historically marginalized communities. However, we are concerned with certain, apparent spending priorities so far. Specifically, we are worried that funding from this significant investment will largely be spent on highway and road capacity expansion, despite abundant literature demonstrating the lack of congestion reduction resulting from the construction of additional vehicle lanes.

This amendment proposes that \$36.8 million from the National Highway Performance Program be used to fast-track right-of-way acquisition for project AR-ML-200, and an additional \$12.8 million from the NHPP be used for preliminary engineering and design. This project will add eight total lanes to I-285 and SR 400, creating significant additional demand for vehicle miles traveled, with associated emissions and particulate pollution, at immense cost to taxpayers.

Additionally, while we applaud the inclusion of a 10-foot multi-use path on Rock Quarry Road in Henry County, this project involves widening the road from two vehicle lanes to four. This approach is unlikely to mitigate traffic congestion long-term, and will likely instead contribute to induced travel demand,

resulting in higher carbon emissions and particulate pollution at a cost of over \$20 million in federal funding and over \$10 million in local funding.

We request that ARC and GDOT focus the historic investment from IJA towards projects that will successfully reduce emissions while mitigating traffic congestion, spurring economic growth, and meeting the mobility needs of all, with special consideration for historically marginalized communities. More specifically, we propose authorizing funding from federal formula grant programs for projects DK-455 in DeKalb County, CL-349 in Clayton County, and M-AR-452 in Clayton County, instead of directing funds to AR-ML-200 and HE-161A. However, other last mile connectivity and transit projects may also be strong candidates for funding and should be considered.

We look forward to future opportunities for public comment on TIP amendments and would be happy to discuss our priorities in further detail. We can be reached at gasctransportationcommittee@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Christi Nakajima

Transportation Committee Co-Chair

Jason Lathbury

Transportation Committee Co-Chair

Sierra Club Georgia Chapter

ARC Response:

Christi and Jason, thank you for your comments.

The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), acting under direction of the State Transportation Board, Governor Brian Kemp and in partnership with the State Road & Tollway Authority and the Atlanta Regional Commission, has made the delivery of managed lanes an investment priority for the state of Georgia. Improvements outlined by the approved concept report for the Top End 285 corridor will install tolled, barrier separated express lanes with minimal access points – which will improve roadway safety and the option of a less congested travel experience. Regional providers of public transportation are allowed to operate within express lane facilities free of charge – providing similar safety and congestion benefits to transit customers as it will for motorists. Better managing the interstate system has been a key component of the Atlanta Region’s transportation planning for decades. In this regard, the Top End 285 corridor is a critical connecting segment of the managed lane system plan, which ARC continues to support. ARC is excited to partner with Henry County to deliver the Rock Quarry Road project (HE-161A) which is a key investment for the county. By installing a multiuse trail, sidewalks, medians, improved roadway geometry and additional facility capacity, safety and access will be improved along this critical corridor, which is the primary access point for Piedmont Henry Hospital.

Thank you as well for your suggestions on projects DK-455 (South River Multi-Use Trail Extension in DeKalb County), CL-349 (Tara Boulevard Pedestrian Safety Improvements in Clayton County) and M-AR-

452 (Operating assistance for MARTA Routes 197 and 198 in Clayton County). There is currently direct support for all three projects with federal funding assistance under the Transportation Alternatives Program and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program. They are summarized below:

DK-455

Federal funds were already authorized on the preliminary engineering activities for this project in FY 2021, while federal funds are programmed for construction in FY 2024. If funding is available in the future, ARC staff will consider additional funding if needed, should staff at DeKalb County apply to ARC for additional funding.

CL-349

Federal funds are already programmed for preliminary engineering activities for this project in FY 2024, while federal funds are programmed for construction in FY 2027. If funding is available in the future, ARC staff will consider additional funding if needed, should staff at Clayton County apply to ARC for additional funding.

M-AR-452

Federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funds were already programmed and authorized for the initiation of new transit service operations on this project in FY 2021, FY 2022 and FY 2023 – which exhausts the eligibility of this funding source for this particular project.

Public Comment #2

To: Mr. John Orr

Atlanta Regional Commission

Good day,

I am writing today to express my support for TIP amendment 7, specifically in relation to new funding for two Henry County projects. Those projects are the Rock Quarry Road widening and state route 42 bridge replacement. Thank you to the Atlanta Regional Commission for these additional funds.

When discussing state route 42, I would be amiss if I did not mention the need to widen the state highway between McDonough and Locust Grove. This capacity widening project is not presently on the regional transportation plan. When the opportunity arises, programming this project would be beneficial for Henry County residents.

Thank you,

Clayton Carte
Locust Grove resident

ARC Response:

Clayton, thank you for your comment. ARC is excited to support the efforts of Henry County and GDOT staff to implement mobility and safety improvements along the SR 42 and Rock Quarry Road corridors, both of which provide important north/south connectivity between important activity centers in Henry County. ARC staff will continue to coordinate with Henry County and GDOT staff to identify and fund appropriate further investments within the SR 42/US 23 corridor, per your suggestion.