

II. Planning Factors, Guiding Principles, Strengths and Assets, Core Issues, and Goals and Objectives of the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan

A. Planning Factors

Section 134 (f) of Title 23 U.S.C., and the Federal Transit Act section 8(f) (49 U.S.C. app.1607 (f)) list seven factors that must be considered as part of the transportation planning process for all metropolitan areas. At a minimum, these factors shall be explicitly considered, analyzed as appropriated, and reflected in the production of planning documents. These factors, as listed below, are considered in prioritizing projects for inclusion in the Long Range Transportation Plan.

1. Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.
2. Increase the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
3. Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight.
4. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve the quality of life.
5. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.
6. Promote efficiency of management and operation.
7. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

B. Guiding Principles

A transportation system that is effective and efficient in serving the mobility needs of an urban area should be developed and maintained in accordance with the following guiding principles:

1. Includes all modes.
2. Be safe, convenient, and efficient.
3. Serve and enhance existing land use and planned growth.
4. Sustain the quality of the environment and preserve community values.
5. Be financially feasible, and support all sectors of the area's economy.
6. Provide access and connectivity with diverse land uses and modes.
7. Be maintained through local officials and citizens participating in transportation decision-making.

C. Strengths and Assets of the Transportation System

Whitfield County has over 1,000 miles of public roads in its transportation system. The extensive truck freight shipping and worker commuting patterns in the area make continued maintenance and updating of the road system important to the area. Interstate 75 with four exits to the Dalton area enhances the area as a major commercial and industrial center of North Georgia. The bypass around Dalton provides access and connectivity to diverse land use activities along its route and contributes to the efficient movement of people and goods.

D. Transportation Issues

In the development of the September 2003 Whitfield County/City of Dalton Multimodal Transportation Study prepared for the Georgia Department of Transportation by Greenhorne & O'Mara, Inc., an Advisory Group was organized to provide information and guidance. During the first meeting of the Advisory Group, the following questions were asked and member responses follow:

What issues should be addressed in the Whitfield County Transportation Plan?

Mobility of People

- Signalization improvements for pedestrians in downtown Dalton.
- Emergency response improvements along State Route 201 west of SR3/US 41.
- Improvements in the access and connectivity of sidewalks.
- Establishment of fixed route transit service in downtown Dalton.
- Provision of Bicycle paths/routes in downtown Dalton
- Connection of hiking trails to bicycle and pedestrian paths.
- Improved connectivity between roads and arterials.

Movement of Goods

- Improvement in turning radii at intersections in downtown Dalton.
- Improved maintenance to numerous roads that have deteriorated due to a large volume of trucks.
- Truck volumes are high on all roads in the study area
- Improvements to roads that have connections with rail and truck movements such as Abutment Rd., Industrial Blvd., South Hamilton Rd., McFarland Rd., and Five Springs Rd.
- No railroad grade separation north of Waugh Street in downtown Dalton.
- Heaviest railroad tonnage is on a single track for Norfolk Southern, which traverses downtown Dalton.
- The CSX/Norfolk Southern railroad crossing impacts traffic in downtown Dalton.
- Widening is needed for bridges that cross over railroad tracks and there is a need for more railroad grade separations to improve traffic flow at heavily traveled roadways.

Other Modes of Transportation

- Airport – needs longer runway (500' extension completed during the planning process).
- Magnetic Levitation Rail.
- Multi-modal hub.

Safety

- Provide more streetlights.

What are the transportation constraints in Whitfield County?

- Mountainous terrain
- CSX/Norfolk Southern Railroad at-grade crossings
- Endangered Species/Critical habitat
- Conasauga River
- Funding limitations at the federal, state and local levels of government
- Signals that are not coordinated on main arterials
- I-75
- Historic districts
- Greenspace
- Civil War historic areas
- Wetlands
- School Buses

What are the core transportation issues in the City of Dalton and Whitfield County?

1. City of Dalton

- a. Sight distance: Waugh Street, Moice Road, Industrial Blvd., and South Dixie Highway.
- b. Geometric deficiencies: Foster Road, and South Dixie Highway.
- c. Signalization: Industrial Blvd., South Dixie Highway, Foster Road, and SR 52/Walnut Avenue.
- d. Congestion: Haig Mill Road, North Dalton Bypass, SR 71 Corridor, Holiday Drive, Walnut Avenue, Tibbs Road, and Brickyard Road at South Dixie Highway, and South Hamilton Road.
- e. Protected left turns and exclusive left turn lanes: At key intersections throughout downtown Dalton, and Glenwood Avenue to Legion Road.
- f. Access problems: Springdale Rd. at Legion Dr. to Cleveland Plant 81, Warning Rd. at Cleveland Rd. to Plant 6.
- g. Pedestrian: Need for pedestrian signalization upgrades, connectivity of the sidewalk system, and connectivity of hiking trails to bicycle and pedestrian paths.
- h. Biking: Need for bicycle routes/facilities in downtown
- i. Transit: Need for fixed route transit service in downtown.
- j. Trucking: Need for improved turning radii at intersections, paving management of roads that are subject to deterioration due to large truck traffic volumes, and improved connectivity between trucks and rail transportation.
- k. Rail: Need for railroad grade separations north of Waugh Street, reduction of tonnage on a single Norfolk Southern track traversing downtown, reduction of auto traffic delays due to railroad traffic through provision of more railroad grade separations and the widening of overhead railroad bridges.

2. Whitfield County

- a. Congestion: Intersection of SR 286 and SR 52, Mitchell Road to North Dalton Bypass, Dawnville Road, Underwood Road, Airport Road at SR 52, Beaverdale Road, and SR 201 between Tunnel Hill and Varnell.
- b. Alignment problems: Reed Road, Lafayette Road, Houston Valley Road, and the intersection of Haig Mill Road and SR 71/Cleveland Highway
- c. Lack of transportation grid system: Most of roadways empty into the Bypass and there is lack of connectivity between local roads, collector roads and arterials.
- d. Emergency response: There is a lack of emergency response in the State Route 201 corridor west of State Route 3/US 41.

E. Overall Goal of the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan

Through interaction with citizens at public meetings, the overall goal of the Long Range Plan was determined. The goal of the plan is as follows:

Develop a guide for the orderly development of a safe and efficient transportation system for the movement of people and goods that supports the land use and economic goals of the area and promotes quality of life.

F. Objectives Expressed by Citizens in Public Meetings

1. Alleviate and/or manage traffic congestion
2. Address safety in all modes of transportation
3. Address accessibility and connectivity for all modes of transportation
4. Facilitate the use of alternate modes of transportation such as bicycling, walking, and transit
5. Address transportation concerns related to the movement of goods via railroads and trucks
6. Improve air travel service.
7. Establish a funding plan for the implementation of identified improvement that are within the constraints of projected available funds
8. Address accessibility and connectivity for all modes of transportation
9. Consider land use in the recommendations for transportation improvements
10. Improve circumferential flow of all modes of transportation in Whitfield County
11. Facilitate the east-west flow of traffic within the County
12. Facilitate the north-south flow of traffic within the County
13. Support the development of the magnetic levitation (Maglev) high speed rail through the region