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October 26, 2021

Re: Responses to Open House Comments for Skidaway Rd and Norwood Ave/Ferguson Ave Intersection Improvements

Dear Property Owner,

Thank you for your comments concerning the proposed project referenced above. We appreciate your participation and all of the input that was received as a result of the Public Information Open House hosted by the Chatham County Department of Engineering on August 26, 2021. Every written comment received through physical mail, the public outreach site, or by email will be made part of the project's official record.

A total of **26** people submitted responses as a result of the open house. Of the **26** respondents, **14** were in **support** of the project, **6** were **opposed**, **2** were **uncommitted**, and **4** expressed **conditional support**.

The attendees of the open house and those persons sending in comments within the comment period raised the following questions. Chatham County has prepared one response letter that addresses all comments received so that everyone that provided comments and questions can be aware of the questions raised by others and the responses given. Please find the comments summarized below (in *italics*) followed by our response.

- 1 *"What drainage do you propose for the corner of Skidaway and Ferguson on the side of the gas station? There is a problem there where a proposed sidewalk will be. It floods in that area and erodes the road and even though it was finally fixed a couple of years ago the road has begun to dip which will create that hole again. The problem was addressed just filling in the hole. This is something that needs to be fixed before a sidewalk is put there or the sidewalk will fail."*

The proposed project includes new storm drainpipe and storm drain inlets to safely convey storm water runoff created from impervious surfaces within the project limits. This includes inlets and stormwater pipe along the roadway curb & gutter at the corner of Skidaway Rd and Ferguson Ave.

- 2 *"I like the idea of re-doing the intersection but would prefer a traffic circle over a standard four-way intersection with lights."*

A roundabout at this location would require significantly more required right of way from adjacent commercial properties as well as additional driveway closures. A detailed traffic study was completed for this intersection that evaluated intersection options. The study shows that adding the left turn lanes at the 4 intersection approaches combined with improved traffic signalization will provide significant traffic improvements within the limits of the area available.

- 3 *“Sidewalk should follow Skidaway to Isle of Hope.”*

The proposed project is intended to address current issues at the intersection of Skidaway Rd and Norwood Ave/Ferguson Ave and to provide pedestrian accommodations within the vicinity of the intersection. The County appreciates your input on improving pedestrian connectivity to Isle of Hope. We understand interest is building within the Isle of Hope community for a pedestrian connection to Sandfly. With community support, a project to provide sidewalks along Skidaway Rd to Isle of Hope could be programmed in the future.

- 4 *“Basically very good! Suggest not postponing work at the Sandfly shopping center driveway closest to Montgomery Cross Rd till the next phase. Easy to do now and if not done now will diminish the good work done at the intersection.”*

Thank you for your comment. Improvements north of the Sandfly Shopping Center along Skidaway Rd and to the intersection of Skidaway Rd and Montgomery Cross Rd were previously presented in 2015. Due to the lack of support, the scope of the project was scaled back to focus on improvements to the intersection of Skidaway Rd and Norwood Ave/Ferguson Ave and not extend past the commercial area.

- 5 a. *“Why isn't there right turns off of both sides of Skidaway? b. Can a sidewalk/Bicycle path be installed to Wormsloe or the school on Isle of Hope off of Skidaway? c. Why doesn't the project extend to Mont Crossroads?”*

a. Proposed channelized right turn lanes are included on the two acute angles to improve vehicle turning radius on these tight turns. The required right-of-way needed from the two commercial properties required for the two right turns from Skidaway was determined to be undesirable based on the turning radius available for these turns.

b. The County appreciates your input on improving pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, however, extension of sidewalk to Wormsloe or to the Isle of Hope School is outside the scope of this project. With community support, a project to provide sidewalk along Skidaway Rd to Isle of Hope could be programmed in the future.

c. Improvements north of the Sandfly Shopping Center along Skidaway Rd and to the intersection of Skidaway Rd were previously presented in 2015. Due to the lack of community support, the scope of the project was scaled back to focus on improvements to the intersection of Skidaway Rd and Norwood Ave/Ferguson Ave.

- 6 *“We don't need a huge mega intersection there. There is really an extra lane on Skidaway Rd now which could be improved and used for a left turn lane if the current lanes were adjusted a bit. Left turn arrows on Skidaway would work then, as they do on Norwood, etc. Where sidewalks and road widening are really needed is between Montgomery Crossroads and the Piggly shopping area.”*

A detailed Traffic Study was completed for this intersection that included looking at various intersection lane options. Additional left turn lanes for each

approach were recommended to provide adequate level of service (LOS) at the intersection. The existing pavement width would not provide the required 11-ft lane widths that are proposed with this intersection improvement project. Additional sidewalks to Montgomery Cross Road can be a part of a future project extending into that area.

- 7 *“The crossroads at Sandfly is more than an intersection, it is part of a historic Island community that has a unique character that will be destroyed with the planned State Template that is proposed. The intersection has minimal traffic congestions, except at peak school access periods, brought on by the building of an 800-student school on IOH. Accidents are not severe, but consist largely of low speed rear-end accidents, this could be easily managed with a traffic officer directing flow at peak periods. The community does not require sidewalks and pedestrian crossings in 4 directions at the intersection, and the size of the setbacks for such will completely erase the character of the community. This is not Buckhead, and folks are not needing sidewalks and pedestrian crossings to navigate Sandfly while bar hopping at night and shopping in the day. The high curbing and limited curb cuts will severely restrict traffic into the gas station, particularly for trucks with trailers or boats, and will destroy the village character.*

The traffic predicted for Sandfly has not occurred because the Skidaway Island traffic now uses the Truman to Diamond causeway and most of the IOH traffic uses Laroche for Island access. The acute angle of a right turn onto Skidaway from Norwood with the long radius turn and the large triangular median forces a driver to look behind the B-pillar to see oncoming traffic (much the same has resulted at Laroche/Hopecrest, while also making a left onto Hopecrest from Laroche difficult at all times, and almost impossible with a trailer). I realize that it is not possible to customize off from the State template, but the use of low profile curbing around the intersection, with no sidewalks (except along the CVS parking lot wall) at the intersection proper, would preserve the local atmosphere. The use of a painted triangle in place of the concrete median will save hundreds of car, truck, and trailer tires. A designated left turn lane with a single straight/R turn lane in each direction is not really needed, and could possibly be achieved without imposing the State template for Buckhead and destroying the village. The reasons stated for the project, are #1) the high number of rear-end accident, and #2) sidewalks. The accidents are minor, and no one has called for sidewalks at the intersection. People have requested a sidewalk from the school to Sandfly across the causeway. But as we have seen before, there is usually no compromise possible from the State standard on any new construction, Big School, Big Curbing, Big Sidewalks, Big Lights, and Big Intersection just like Downtown Atlanta. For that reason, I oppose the plan.”

A detailed Traffic Study was completed for this intersection and additional left turn lanes for each approach were recommended to provide adequate level of service (LOS) at the intersection. It is incumbent upon the County to provide safe pedestrian crossings and sidewalk ramps per the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) at the traffic signal as part of this intersection improvement project.

- 8 *“I went to the open house and was pleased with the proposal and the explanation of the plans. This is a much-needed project. The intersection of*

Skidaway/Ferguson/Norwood is currently lawless. There is NO police enforcement of the traffic laws. The number of "cut throughs" across the parking lots of the BP, Jalapenos, Newton's corner and Herb Creek landscape cannot continue. There are a number of people who "cut through" as a course of their daily drive (even without traffic at the light). Police enforcement and prosecution of violators is apparently no going to happen. I support this project."

Thank you for your comment.

- 9 *"Please do all possible to preserve every live oak in or near the project. Any thought on a roundabout? Classic case of what happens when there was no plan in place once Sandfly started growing. Please do all you can to preserve its history and beauty. Curiosity: Why was the Chatham County Tree Commission abolished?"*

This project is limited to the commercial area near the intersection. Few live oaks are located within the project area. The current project design includes protection of the several live oaks along Norwood Ave.

See answer to #2 concerning the roundabout option for this intersection.

- 10 *"My wife showed me the plan for the intersection, and I am 100% behind and its due time for that place to look good and avoid the dangerous catastrophes of people going around cars taking lefts, risking wrecks. What is projected start date? How long will it take? Also, why this instead of maybe a roundabout?"*

Thank for your comment and support of the project. The County would begin right of way acquisition in early 2022 and let the project to construction in late 2022. The construction is expected to take 18 months.

See answer to #2 concerning the roundabout option for this intersection.

- 11 *"Thank you for undertaking this project on behalf of our citizens; I am sure it is a lot of work. The Skidaway at Norwood intersection will definitely benefit from more turn lane options, and this will reduce conflict that occurs currently, caused by traffic stacking up due to a lack of turn lane options. I wanted to also take this opportunity to suggest improvement to the Skidaway at Central Ave/Montgomery Crossroad Intersection in the form of a traffic-circle or 'roundabout'. Traffic circles work efficiently to move traffic from all directions, allowing for several roads to converge. They work efficiently during busy times, and do not catch people at lights during slow times. The current situation causes a deal of stacking on Central Ave, and forces people northbound on Central to pass traffic turning onto Montgomery Crossroads on the left (inside the turn of those waiting on the light). It's a dangerous and confusing intersection, and a traffic circle would offer an opportunity to improve traffic flow, make the intersection safer for cars and pedestrians, and provide the county an opportunity to install a large, low-cost, aesthetically beautiful public space in the island center. Best of luck with both projects. Please enlist me if I can be of any help.*

Thank for your comment and support of the project. Improvements north of the Sandfly Shopping Center along Skidaway Rd and to the intersection of Skidaway Rd and Montgomery Cross Roads were previously presented in 2015. Due to the lack of support, the scope of the project was scaled back to focus on improvements to the intersection of Skidaway Rd and Norwood Ave/Ferguson Ave.

- 12 *“Great project – well worth completing. Two comments: 1) Please install street lights along the corridor from Ferguson/Skidaway to Ridgewood Ave. 2) How about a dusk to midnight flashing light warning vehicles traveling through the intersection on Skidaway towards Isle of Hope of possible pedestrian Traffic (like school zone warning lights). Send someone out, at night, to observe the foot traffic across Skidaway Road between the parking lots. I doubt people will alter their behavior and walk parallel to the road up to the cross walk and then back to the restaurant entrances – especially in the rain. My suggested solution may not be an answer, but it bears investigation to aid pedestrian safety.*”

Thank you for your comments. Lighting improvements along this corridor will be evaluated and included in this project where possible.

- 13 *“I would support this project if there were traffic calming devices in the area.”*

The posted speed limit for all 4 intersection approaches is 35 mph. Traffic calming devices are typically used to slow vehicles where a low-speed roadway is broken up by long stretches of rural conditions. The urban density surrounding the intersection of Skidaway Rd and Norwood Ave/Ferguson Ave as well as the arterial functional classification make this an unlikely location for the addition of traffic calming devices.

- 14 *“A 45-degree angle instead of a normal 90-degree angle turn makes it almost impossible to get out of Norwood Ave with my truck and trailer now. I can’t imagine how impossible it will be if you add a left hand turn lane, put in pedestrian island, and sidewalks. This plan might sever others needs coming from different directions, but the plan for Norwood Avenue is terrible.”*
- 15 *“The plan for Norwood Avenue egress needs further study. Has anyone tried to turn right with a boat, a large truck, or truck and trailer to see if this proposed plan is actually feasible? I have never been stuck behind traffic turning left off Norwood Ave. Why do we need a dedicated lane for a left turn and no ample room for those of us taking this sharp right turn going onto Skidaway Road? Not to mention the fact that it will be impossible to take a right turn on red because once 1 car fills the straight lane, there is no room to turn right.*”
- 16 *“I manage a commercial landscape company that consists of 8 trucks and 6 trailers that are double axle and 16 feet long. We primarily work in Isle of Hope, Skidaway, and Burnside Island areas. I do see the need for widening this intersection. However, the pedestrian islands will cause nothing but damage and breakdowns to commercial*

traffic as they try to maneuver these obstructions. The use of land for sidewalks (that will not be used) will be better used for the widening of the lanes. I suggest you take some time to observe the pedestrian habits at the intersection of Skidaway and Eisenhower. Pedestrians cross the road (jaywalk) 50 ft before the intersection. Hardly ever using the concrete obstructions. You cannot engineer people. They will always walk straight to where they want to go.”

- 17 *“Norwood Rd side needs a lane for right turn and straight together and leave the right lane to turn on yield. The islands in the road need to be eliminated. There are too many sidewalks proposed (we do not need sidewalks on both sides of the street). Moving traffic quickly through this intersection will only make the Montgomery Cross Roads and Skidaway Road intersection worse. Keep the curbing low and consider people with trucks and trailers. The turn from Norwood onto Skidaway is sharp. The cross walk lines were not indicated. Where they have the island in the road, it will make the walking traffic have to walk further.”*

14-17 Thank each of you for providing input to help us develop the best project for the intersection and surrounding area. A detailed Traffic Study was completed for this intersection that ran traffic simulations utilizing various intersection configurations. The addition of a left turn lane for each approach was recommended to significantly improve traffic operations at the intersection. The existing roadway is being widened as part of this project to accommodate these additional lanes. The proposed right turn radii at each corner of the intersection will be larger than the existing radii to accommodate vehicles with trailers. The County will review the proposed improvements to identify potential changes to the design that could feasibly accommodate larger design vehicles.

- 18 *“My suggestion is to allow proper construction of drainage with curb and gutter/sidewalks in the 7300 block of Skidaway Road with adequate size drainage pipes to handle drainage flow from heavy rains consistent with our changing rain patterns. Another suggestion would be to construct a drainage break water channel from the shoulder of Skidaway Road to the drainage top situated between 7337 and 7325 Skidaway to allow for drainage run from the roadway. Finally, please resurface the remaining portion of the 7300 block/corridor of Skidaway Road from 7337, 7325, 7321, 7322, 7320, 7318, 7317, 7316, and 7315 addresses and of course lighting will be necessary for pedestrian walking night traffic for this section.”*

Thank you for your support and comments. The drainage with curb and gutter/sidewalks are included in the project as you suggested within the project area which extends to 7339 Skidaway Rd. This allowed the project to proceed without impacting the residential area. Drainage improvements past the project area can be considered on a future project. Resurfacing Skidaway Rd from the project area to Montgomery Cross Road is projected to be completed concurrent with the project. Lighting along this road section is scheduled to be evaluated and designed to be constructed concurrently with this project, if possible, within existing right of way.

Again, thank each of you for your comments. As the project progresses check the website <https://engineering.chathamcountyga.gov/> for updates to the project schedule. Should you have further questions please contact me at ablake@chathamcounty.org.

Sincerely,

Allen Blake, P.E.

Allen Blake
Project Manager
Chatham County Department of Engineering

ED/NS-epei

cc: PDF for Project File