

## MEMORANDUM

To: Drew Raessler, PE  
Athens-Clarke County Transportation Director

From: Jonathan Guy, PE, AICP  
Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc.

Date: June 20, 2019

Subject: Atlanta Highway and Lexington Road Project Prioritization for TSPLOST  
Consideration

---

At the request of Athens-Clarke County, Kimley-Horn has developed the following memorandum to provide an overview of the transportation projects developed in the Connect Athens: Atlanta Highway and Lexington Road Corridor Studies and provide a recommendation regarding the prioritization of those projects for consideration in the Transportation-Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (T-SPLOST). This memo is a companion document to the Connect Athens: Atlanta Highway & Lexington Road Corridor Study Workbook. Each of the project prioritization are summarized below and follow the format of the final report.

### Atlanta Highway

#### Opportunity A: Safety, Operation, Connectivity

Atlanta Highway operates as a gateway corridor to downtown Athens and the University of Georgia to travelers from the west. It's also one of the region's major retail centers. Over time, the corridor's operations have become strained as commuters and local traffic compete for priority in this multitasking stretch of roadway. Several proposed roadway and intersection investments can help improve traffic operations, smooth conflict zones, and prioritize the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians to create a truly multimodal corridor.

#### Recommendations/Actions

**Action A1:** Construct the GDOT interchange improvement as currently designed

**Action A2:** Coordinate signal timing throughout the corridor to improve traffic flow during peak hours

**Action A3:** Reconfigure the Mitchell Bridge Road/Timothy Road intersection

**Action A4:** Analyze safety concerns at the existing Epps Bridge Parkway flyover

**Action A5:** Consolidate driveways and install median segments where appropriate to improve safety and traffic flow

**Action A6:** Improve Side street connections

**Action A7:** Improve vehicular wayfinding to key side street connections such as Commerce Boulevard

**Action A8 & A9:** Reconfigure the Epps Bridge Parkway Interchange and the Monroe Highway Intersection

**Action A10:** Construct the Heyward Allen Parkway extension and a new bridge connection with Athens Perimeter Highway

### **Opportunity B: Bicycle & Pedestrian**

Taking trips by bike or on foot has many benefits to the individual and their community. Cycling and walking improves the environment, promotes good health, saves money, eases the burden on roadways, and enhances the livability of a community. Many people choose to bike or walk for one or more of these reasons. For children, persons with disabilities, many elderly, and those who cannot afford an automobile, transit, bicycling, and walking may be their only option for many daily trips. Others may choose to take off on foot or by bicycle for recreation, to travel to work, or to run errands. Improving the bicycle and pedestrian network along corridors such as Atlanta Highway is a stated goal in numerous planning efforts and is a critical component for a more livable corridor.

### **Recommendations/Actions**

**Action B1.** Enhance pedestrian crossings at Heyward Allen Parkway, Athens West Parkway, Huntington Road, Mall Access Road, and Cleveland Road.

**Action B2.** Construct a continuous sidewalk on the southside of Atlanta Highway east of Athens Perimeter Highway.

**Action B3.** Construct a continuous sidewalk on the southside of Atlanta Highway between Athens Perimeter Highway and US 78 (Monroe Highway).

**Action B4.** Construct a trail access point and side path on the north side of Atlanta Highway connecting the planned Middle Oconee River Greenway with Mitchell Bridge Road.

**Action B5.** Complete a sidewalk connection along Mitchell Bridge Road between Atlanta Highway and Tallassee Road.

**Action B6.** In conjunction with a mall redevelopment plan, construct a multimodal side path to serve a mixed-use regional destination.

### **Opportunity C: Transit**

Atlanta Highway is a key part of the Athens transit system. Of the three routes operating on Atlanta Highway today, Route 20 travels the corridor each day and remains one of Athens Transit Service's highest ridership routes. Considerations should be given to how future operations can be more convenient and accessible to a broader range of the population. Most people agree that they would be more likely to use transit if service was fast, frequent, dependable, and easy to use. These criteria require a complete system of roads, sidewalks, and bikeways as well as a higher occurrence of transit-supportive destinations.

#### **Recommendations/Actions**

**Action C1.** Improve existing bus stops to include shelters, benches, and enhanced signage.

**Action C2.** Establish a bus transfer station inside the Loop.

**Action C3.** Increase frequency to 30-minute headways.

**Action C5.** Implement queue jumping at major intersections.

**Action C6.** Establish premium transit service along Atlanta Highway.

### **Opportunity D: Corridor Aesthetics**

The character of Athens, its neighborhoods, and places of interest are largely determined by the look and feel of its streets. This is particularly true along gateways and major commuter routes. To protect the quality of existing places and help shape the character as redevelopment occurs, Athens-Clarke County should consider guidelines and standards that inform changes to public spaces and key activity nodes along Atlanta Highway. Actions in the opportunity area will provide a consistent aesthetic to the corridor. Collectively, these actions will enhance the user experience, whether in a car, on a bicycle, or on foot, and better position the corridor to receive investment.

#### **Recommendations/Actions**

**Action D1.** Install plantings at key intersections (Cleveland Rd, Mall Access Rd, Huntington Rd) to bring greenery into the corridor and provide visual interest.

**Action D2.** Install gateway signage

**Action D3.** Install landscaping and improve lighting to help distinguish Atlanta Highway as a destination.

**Action D4.** Install landscaping, public art pieces, and other streetscaping enhancements at reconfigured intersections.

## Atlanta Highway Project Prioritization

The projects included in the Atlanta Highway corridor report have been prioritized for implementation under the T-SPLOST program at the request of Athens-Clarke County. The prioritization of the projects below is based upon a quantitative and qualitative assessment including but not limited to field observations, engineering and planning judgement, and traffic counts and analysis.

1. **Action A2:** Coordinate signal timing throughout the corridor to improve traffic flow during peak hours
2. **Action A3:** Reconfigure the Mitchell Bridge Road/Timothy Road intersection
3. **Action A4:** Analyze safety concerns at the existing Epps Bridge Parkway flyover
4. **Action A7:** Improve vehicular wayfinding to key side street connections such as Commerce Boulevard
5. **Action 11.** Extend Cleveland Road to Geoffrey Way
6. **Action B1.** Enhance pedestrian crossings at Heyward Allen Parkway, Athens West Parkway, Huntington Road, Mall Access Road, and Cleveland Road.
7. **Action A5:** Consolidate driveways and install median segments where appropriate to improve safety and traffic flow
8. **Action C5.** Implement queue jumping at major intersections.
9. **Action C1.** Improve existing bus stops to include shelters, benches, and enhanced signage.
10. **Action D2.** Install gateway signage
11. **Action B2.** Construct a continuous sidewalk on the southside of Atlanta Highway east of Athens Perimeter Highway.
12. **Action D1.** Install plantings at key intersections (Cleveland Rd, Mall Access Rd, Huntington Rd) to bring greenery into the corridor and provide visual interest.
13. **Action D3.** Install landscaping and improve lighting to help distinguish Atlanta Highway as a destination.
14. **Action A6:** Improve Side street connections
15. **Action D4.** Install landscaping, public art pieces, and other streetscaping enhancements at reconfigured intersections.
16. **Action C6.** Establish premium transit service along Atlanta Highway.
17. **Action B3.** Construct a continuous sidewalk on the southside of Atlanta Highway between Athens Perimeter Highway and US 78 (Monroe Highway).
18. **Action B4.** Construct a trail access point and side path on the north side of Atlanta Highway connecting the planned Middle Oconee River Greenway with Mitchell Bridge Road.
19. **Action C3.** Increase frequency to 30-minute headways.
20. **Action B5.** Complete a sidewalk connection along Mitchell Bridge Road between Atlanta Highway and Tallassee Road.
21. **Action C2.** Establish a bus transfer station inside the Loop.

22. **Action B6.** In conjunction with a mall redevelopment plan, construct a multimodal side path to serve a mixed-use regional destination.
23. **Action A1:** Construct the GDOT interchange improvement as currently designed\*

*\*Note: The placement of Action A1 at number 21 should not be interpreted as a low priority for the corridor. Rather the Action is being funded by GDOT and is outside the funding capabilities of the ACC T-SPLOST program.*

## Lexington Road

### Opportunity A: Safety, Operation, Connectivity

As residential, commercial, and industrial growth occurs, and more vehicles take to the road, roadway improvements are needed to minimize the effect of traffic congestion and improve safety. These roadway improvements often enhance mobility at the expense of access or vice versa. One of the unique demands in creating and sustaining a successful transportation system at the corridor level is blending access and connectivity functions with the preservation of regional mobility. For Lexington Road, it's also important to consider how the corridor contributes to the area's sense of place and economic anchors. The neighborhoods and activity centers along and near Lexington Road have varying needs and priorities. An underlying principle of Connect Athens was to create a viable plan for the safety, operations, and connectivity of the corridor without losing focus on a forward-looking approach to land use, design, and economics.

### Recommendations/Actions

- Action A1.** Construct the GDOT Interchange Improvements as currently designed with slight modifications.
- Action A2.** Improve the intersection with Gaines School Road.
- Action A3.** Lower effective travel speeds west of Gaines School Road.
- Action A4.** Coordinate traffic signals.
- Action A5.** Improve side streets.
- Action A6.** Construct the Barnett Shoals Connector as a two-lane road with bicycle and pedestrian accommodations; Install a new signal on Lexington Road.
- Action A7.** Reduce the width of travel lanes to 11 feet maximum.
- Action A8.** Create an alternate parallel route to downtown.

### **Opportunity B: Bicycle & Pedestrian**

The benefits of cycling and walking are well documented. Taking trips by bike or on foot improves the environment, promotes good health, saves money, eases the burden on roadways, and enhances the livability of a community. Many people choose to bike or walk for one or more of these reasons. For children, persons with disabilities, many elderly, and those who cannot afford an automobile, transit, bicycling, and walking may be their only option for many daily trips. Others may choose to take off on foot or by bicycle for recreation, to travel to work, or to run errands. Improving the bicycle and pedestrian network along corridors such as Lexington Road is a state goal in numerous planning efforts. This initiative is a critical component to a more livable corridor.

#### **Recommendations/Actions**

**Action B1.** Improve pedestrian crossings at the Loop Interchange, Gaines School Road, and Whit Davis Road.

**Action B2.** Construct a continuous sidewalk on the south side of Lexington Road west of Gaines School Road.

**Action B3.** Construct a continuous sidewalk on the south side of Lexington Road between Gaines School Road and Southeast Clarke Park.

**Action B4.** Construct planned greenway segments as well as sidepath on the north side of Lexington Road east of Perimeter Highway.

**Action B5.** Provide an enhanced bicycle and pedestrian crossing at the new intersection of the Barnett Shoals Connector.

**Action B6.** Construct a HAWK beacon at Southeast Clarke park.

**Action B7.** Construct a pedestrian gateway bridge near Southeast Clarke Park.

### **Opportunity C: Transit**

Lexington Road is an important part of the Athens transit system. Of the three routes operating on Lexington Road today, Route 25 travels the corridor each day and remains one of Athens Transit Service's highest ridership routes. Despite these characteristics, considerations should be given to how future operations can be more convenient and accessible to a broader range of the population. Most people agree that they would be more likely to use transit if service was fast, frequent, dependable, and easy to use. These criteria require a complete system of roads, sidewalks, and bikeways as well as a higher occurrence of transit-supportive destinations.

#### **Recommendations/Actions**

**Action C1.** Improve existing bus stops to include shelters, benches, and enhanced signage.

**Action C2.** Enhance access to the park-and-ride facility for bicyclists and pedestrians.

**Action C3.** Establish a bus transfer station at the intersection of Lexington Road and Gaines School Road.

**Action C4.** Install a new traffic signal/access to Southeast Clarke Park by tying into the HAWK beacon at Southeast Clarke Park.

**Action C5.** Implement queue jumping at major intersections, including Winterville, Gaines School, and Barnett Shoals Roads.

**Action C6.** Add transit service to the airport (when activity at the airport warrants, whether job development sites or commercial air service).

**Action C7.** Establish premium transit service along Lexington Road.

### **Opportunity D: Corridor Aesthetics**

The character of Athens, its neighborhoods, and places of interest are largely determined by the look and feel of its streets. This is particularly true along gateways and major commuter routes. To protect the quality of existing places and help shape the character as redevelopment occurs, Athens-Clarke County should consider guidelines and standards that inform changes to public spaces along Lexington Road. Actions in this opportunity area will provide a consistent aesthetic to the corridor. Collectively, these actions will enhance the user experience, whether in a car, on a bicycle, or on foot, and better position the corridor to receive investment.

### **Recommendations/Actions**

**Action D1.** Install streetlights and banners to improve safety, add color, and create a sense of place.

**Action D2.** Enhance the existing gateway to the airport with improvements to Winterville Road.

**Action D3.** Add landscaping within the right-of-way within planting strips and at key locations.

**Action D4.** Install landscaping and art pieces in highly visible locations and at key intersections to establish a gateway into downtown Athens.

**Action D5.** Build a landscaped median along the full extent of the corridor.

### **Opportunity E: Airport Access**

Despite regular passenger service ending in 2014, Ben Epps Airport remains an important benefit to east Athens and the surrounding area. The importance of the airport in the context of Connect Athens is clear, given its status as one of three Opportunity Areas for the corridor (See Opportunity Area B). Improvements to airport access need to account for the airport's use and function at a given time. Today, access improvements could focus on lower cost gateway and wayfinding improvements. Should the airport reintroduce passenger air service, introduce new industry to the site, or significantly modify landside operations, access directly from Lexington Road may become necessary. The actions that follow address the full range

## Recommendations/Actions

**Action E1.** Enhance signage at the Winterville Road entrance.

**Action E2.** Improve wayfinding to the airport.

**Action E3.** Add transit service to the airport (when activity at the airport warrants, whether job development sites or commercial air service).

**Action E4.** Create a new airport access point directly from Lexington Road.

## Lexington Road Project Prioritization

The projects included in the Lexington Road corridor report have been prioritized for implementation under the T-SPLOST program at the request of Athens-Clarke County. The prioritization of the projects below is based upon a quantitative and qualitative assessment including but not limited to field observations, engineering and planning judgement, and traffic counts and analysis.

1. **Action A4.** Coordinate traffic signals/install adaptive signal timing along the corridor.
2. **Action A2.** Improve the intersection with Gaines School Road.
3. **Action C5.** Implement queue jumping at major intersections, including Winterville, Gaines School, and Barnett Shoals Roads
4. **Action A6.** Construct the Barnett Shoals Connector as a two-lane road with bicycle and pedestrian accommodations; Install a new signal on Lexington Road.
5. **Action A5.** Improve side street laneage.
6. **Action C1.** Improve existing bus stops to include shelters, benches, and enhanced signage.
7. **Action D5.** Build a landscaped median along the full extent of the corridor.
8. **Action E1.** Enhance signage at the Winterville Road entrance.
9. **Action B1.** Improve pedestrian crossings at the Loop Interchange, Gaines School Road, and Whit Davis Road.
10. **Action B4.** Construct planned greenway segments as well as sidepath on the north side of Lexington Road east of Perimeter Highway.
11. **Action B5.** Provide an enhanced bicycle and pedestrian crossing at the new intersection of the Barnett Shoals Connector.
12. **Action E2.** Improve wayfinding to the airport.
13. **Action E4.** Create a new airport access point directly from Lexington Road.
14. **Action D1.** Install streetlights and banners to improve safety, add color, and create a sense of place.
15. **Action C3.** Establish a bus transfer station at the intersection of Lexington Road and Gaines School Road.
16. **Action B2.** Construct a continuous sidewalk on the south side of Lexington Road west of Gaines School Road.

17. **Action D4.** Install landscaping and art pieces in highly visible locations and at key intersections to establish a gateway into downtown Athens./ **Action D3.** Add landscaping within the right-of-way within planting strips and at key locations.
18. **Action B3.** Construct a continuous sidewalk on the south side of Lexington Road between Gaines School Road and Southeast Clarke Park.
19. **Action C4.** Install a new traffic signal/access to Southeast Clarke Park by tying into the HAWK beacon at Southeast Clarke Park./**Action B6.** Construct a HAWK beacon at Southeast Clarke park.
20. **Action D2.** Enhance the existing gateway to the airport with improvements to Winterville Road.
21. **Action C2.** Enhance access to the park-and-ride facility for bicyclists and pedestrians.
22. **Action A3.** Lower effective travel speeds west of Gaines School Road.
23. **Action C6.** Add transit service to the airport (when activity at the airport warrants, whether job development sites or commercial air service).
24. **Action C7.** Establish premium transit service along Lexington Road.
25. **Action A7.** Reduce the width of travel lanes to 11 feet maximum.
26. **Action A8.** Create an alternate parallel route to downtown.
27. **Action E3.** Add transit service to the airport (when activity at the airport warrants, whether job development sites or commercial air service).
28. **Action B7.** Construct a pedestrian gateway bridge near Southeast Clarke Park.
29. **Action A1.** Construct the GDOT Interchange Improvements as currently designed with slight modifications. \*\*