

Published: September 19, 2007 12:34 am

## Planes, trains, bicycles and automobiles

### County seeks input on Comprehensive Transportation Plan

By Joel Hall

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This week, Clayton County revealed its Comprehensive Transportation Plan, a 15-month study to address the mobility needs of Clayton County over the next 30 years.

The purpose of the plan is to assess transportation deficiencies throughout the county -- as they relates to safety, traffic congestion, bus service, sidewalk connectivity, land use, bicycle paths, regional airport access, zoning and economic development -- and to find cost-effective solutions.

Data collected by Clayton County Transportation and Development, the Atlanta Regional Commission, and several consulting firms will be shared with citizens in meetings at different county locations. The first session took place at the Virginia Burton Gray Recreation Center in Riverdale.

Three other meetings are scheduled for Sept. 24, at 7728 Mount Zion Blvd., in Jonesboro (Jonesboro High School); Oct. 1, at 3499 Rex Rd., in Rex (Carl Rhodenizer Recreation Center); and Oct. 2, at 1588 Lovejoy Rd., in Lovejoy (Lovejoy Middle School.)

"If you can think about it, we're going to talk about it," said Mary Huffstetler, president of MPH and Associations Inc., one of the consulting firms hired to retrieve data. "The initial data gathering ... a lot of that has been collected."

These meetings, "will bring all of the information to the public, so they can bring their needs and their concerns ... then, we can analyze the data and move towards making improvements," Huffstetler added.

During the first meeting, planning and engineering consultants shared detailed maps of the county, identifying the most congested roads, most dangerous intersections, areas with bike paths and roads with sidewalks on one side, or both sides of streets.

The intersection of Old Dixie Road and Upper Riverdale Road was identified as the county's most dangerous intersection, with more than 250 crashes over a three-year period, from the beginning of 2004 to the end of 2006.

Other intersections listed as dangerous were: Tara Boulevard at Fayetteville Road; Tara Boulevard at North Avenue; S.R. 85 at S.R. 138; Tara Boulevard at McDonough Road; Tara Boulevard at Mount Zion Road; S.R. 54 at Forest Parkway; S.R. 85 at Garden Walk Boulevard (Bald Eagle Way); Conkle Road at Mt. Zion Road, and S.R. 138 at I-675.

A large part of the traffic problems in Clayton County stem from the limited capacity of Tara Boulevard, the county's major corridor, according to David Jackson, ARC project manager for a major study of the corridor conducted from November 2005 to April 2007.

Jackson said the study suggests expanding Tara Boulevard to a consistent six lanes "from Lovejoy to the Farmer's Market" in Forest Park, to provide two lanes of non-stop traffic on each side.

"One of the major delays is the outrageous number of traffic signals," on Tara Boulevard, Jackson said. "As the southside continues to grow, the transportation demand on Tara Boulevard will increase."

Jackson said the new study "will look at the ARC's findings in more detail" and provide "additional transportation opportunities."

"We will be using that corridor study and some other studies in the past ... to make sure that everything is covered," said Keith Rohling, a project manager with the Clayton County SPLOST program. "In doing that, we need public opinion. We need to tap into that data to see what they think the problems are, as well."

The county wants, "to get their input early, so we can incorporate that into the planning part of it," he said.