



**Spalding County Freight Cluster Study
Steering Committee Meeting #2
Meeting Notes**

Date: November 20, 2019
Time: 2:45 PM – 4:00 PM
Location: Spalding County Offices, Griffin, GA

Team Attendees: William Wilson, Spalding County - County Manager
Michelle Irizarry, Spalding County - Assistant County Manager
Sam Brown, Paragon Consulting
Wade Carroll, Metro Analytics
Megha Young, Gresham Smith
Laura Beall, Eagle Eye Planning Solutions

SSC Attendees: Bill Bryant, GSATC member
Bob Stapleton, Airport Authority
Brant Keller, City of Griffin Public Works
Frank Harris, GSATC member
Glenn Polk, Spalding County Fire Dept
Kenny Smith, City of Griffin
Mark Austin, WellStar Spalding Regional Hospital
Toussaint Kirk, City of Griffin Community Development
Truman Tinsley, City of Griffin BOC

Per the agenda, the highlights of the discussion were as follows:

Introductions and Overview

- William Wilson, Spalding County Manager, called the meeting to order and thanked participants for attending. He turned the meeting over to Wade Carroll, Metro Analytics and consultant Project Manager. Each of the attendees introduced themselves.
- Mr. Carroll then reviewed the agenda and gave a brief update on the status of project milestones.

Report on Cargo Oriented Development (COD) Workshops

Highlights from the workshop included:

- Workshop attendance for both days was a mix of participants from local and regional government, industry and civic organization representatives. In total, twenty-six individuals participated over two workshops.

- In addition to the workshop attendees, individual one-on-one interviews were conducted for additional input from local industrial business leaders.
- A summary of key input by COD focus areas was provided, which were:
 - Land use and planned areas of development
 - Responsible development is a key for the study
 - Mix of industrial types (logistics and manufacturing) important for managing traffic
 - Freight system and land use synergies and disconnects
 - Maintain SR 16 Freight Mobility
 - Construction of a Norfolk Southern spur into the existing airport district or the extension of a planned runway at the new airport would be good for the County
 - Workforce development and worker access in industrial jobs
 - Better use of transit funds needed
 - Worker retention is a problem, unemployment low
 - County training programs are a necessity
 - Environmental and quality of life improvement
 - Uses need to be compatible with surrounding land uses
 - Protecting quality of life and environment needs to be a priority

Highlights of Inventory and Assessment Report

A summary of major findings from the Inventory and Assessment Report was presented and were as follows:

- With regard to land Use and development, the highlights presented were.
 - Approximately 90% of the County’s land area is currently used for “residential” or “agricultural and residential” purposes, while 2% is used for “industrial” or “manufacturing”.
 - The Center for Neighborhood Technology conducted a cluster ranking for potential cargo-oriented development areas based on several factors. Due to the presence of surrounding development, existing infrastructure, and available developable land, industrial areas closer to Green Valley rate the best for future development.
- With regard to transportation, the highlights presented were:
 - Roadway Volumes - In 2015, most roadways had daily volumes under 5,000. US 19/41 and US 19/41 Business had the highest local volumes with roughly 25,000 ADT. In 2040, the growth is projected along US 19/41 and SR 155 near Henry County.
 - Roadway Congestion - In 2015, the County had very low levels of congestion. In 2040, projected congestion along SR 155 and moderate levels of congestion along US 19/41 and within the City.
 - Safety - Most crashes were reported in and around Griffin. SR 16 corridor and US 92 at US 19/41 intersection. SR 16 and US 19/41 corridors higher numbers of commercial vehicle crashes, which includes delivery trucks.

- Truck Travel Characteristics - The roadway segment that show the highest truck percentage per total volume are as expected: 12% SR 16 – West of US 19/41, 11% SR 16 – Memorial Drive to McDonough Road and SR 16 – McDonough Road to Jackson Road.

Stakeholder Input Session: Needs Assessment

DISCUSSION: What are your thoughts on the COD Workshop results?

Major topics: Implementation; Alternative transportation modes in and around new development; Affordable Housing for workforce; Sustainable approach; Redevelop existing airport and historic mill sites with mixed use and appropriate land uses; Railroad spur and freight line to new airport Infrastructure, Employees to relocate to County rather than commute in; Quality-of-Life issue that good schools will attract new and retain existing residents.

- We have several jobs that are low skill/low wage - it is important to look at different options for transportation assistance, and availability of low-income housing also important. Otherwise, job turnover rates will remain high.
- Regarding coordination with Norfolk Southern:
 - We've tried to reach out and get that info - we do have information on rail flows from GDOT. We'll continue to try and reach out, including the discussion on rail spur.
 - We have several hundred acres of development at what will be the old airport - we would like to have the rail spur go down there. We're looking at air cargo going forward at the new airport - this is "pie in the sky," but we are considering it and provisioning for it for the future.
 - Short-line railroads may also be an option for connections to the airport.
 - Mr. Bryant volunteered to facilitate a conversation with a contact for NS Rail economic development.
 - NS has a lot of property in Henry County they've earmarked in the past for a rail yard - could potentially be competition.
 - NS said they would put in the spur, and the county would find the partners to utilize it.
- There is new industrial development near I-75 - 1600 acres in Butts County, 225 acres in Spalding County.
 - Response: The project team should identify steps that can make each of the identified industrial clusters more attractive to development.
- I appreciated the question presented at the workshop; about what other things should we consider. Considering quality of life issues, where workers live/work/play, etc. - that's a smart approach.
- I'm not sure if turning the old airport into a rail yard is the best use since it's close to community assets. I don't want freight coming into the heart of downtown Griffin. Mixed use, movie production, healthcare, would be better.
- Biggest issue is truck traffic sitting on N. Hill Street, being moved back and forth from the railyard.
- We would support moving a freight line to the new airport.
- On the east side of Griffin, there is no infrastructure to support new development - there is no water, no sewer. There needs to be a wastewater treatment plan and all the supporting pipeline and other infrastructure to support this concept. We cannot just consider roads.
 - Response: We recognize that and that will be part of the package of recommendations.

- Areas and neighborhoods have to be cleaned up before industries and their employees will move there - they won't move near slums.
- We need to make the county more appealing so that the people who work here, want to live here, and pay taxes and spend their money here.
- The perception that our education system is failing causes families to move to neighboring counties such as Pike County, and then commute here for work.

DISCUSSION: Where does truck traffic create congestion/safety issues?

Major topics: Downtown – Hill Street; Protect LCI improvements and investments; turns towards I-75/load shifts; Railroad track crossings; side street delays due to SR 16 signal priority; cut throughs near Quarry; SR 362 future volumes understated; 19/41 and GA 16 are alternate routes when I-75 stopped; 19/41 at Zebulon Road; Milner tank farm at East McIntosh at Jordan Hill; 19/41 at Sunnyside East-West connection.

- EMS community supports what the crash data is showing
- Downtown Griffin is definitely an issue - Hill Street and the truck traffic
- The county and city have set aside money for the LCI project, but GDOT needs to move it into a short-term project (the LCI project). The trucks have already torn up SR 16 and Hill Street - it is very dangerous for pedestrians, too.
- I don't see a lot of truck wrecks in Griffin. Most of the truck wrecks occur near I-75 when trucks are doing load shifts. Or sometimes, freight accidents are associated with de-railed train cars.
- The truck traffic flows onto Taylor Street. The frustration is getting across SR 16 and turning from there. With RR tracks and trains, SR 16 becomes an impenetrable north-south wall of traffic. We've wasted a lot of money on signals that prioritize SR 16. That's created overall congestion and truck congestion.
- More operations at the rock quarry will increase cut-through traffic - trucks will cut through there to bypass the traffic. (Rover Zebulon Rd, etc.)
- The presence of our rock quarry - which is located far west off of Rover Zebulon Rd - causes trucks to come down SR 362 and then they go northeast around SR 16. There's also an asphalt plant on Moreland Road.
- When I-75 is locked up, SR 16 and US 19/41 become bypasses for all traffic.
- The new commercial truck lanes may make Spalding County a bottleneck for truck traffic.
- Air freight could potentially come to Griffin, Georgia, as an alternative to more air cargo runways at Hartsfield-Jackson Airport.
- At the intersection of Zebulon Road and US 19/41, there is a new gas station that is getting more and more traffic. We call this area "Tri-County Crossroads". A RaceTrac and O'Reilly's are there now. There is water there, but not sewer.
- The Planned bypass would be a divided highway with restricted access.
- The traffic through Orchard Hill is mostly propane trucks coming from tank farms in Lamar County, and from the Griffin Lumber Company.
- On E. McIntosh Road closer to Griffin at Hill Street, there is a gasoline tank farm and they constantly put trucks along Jackson Road up to SR 155 all day long.
- Old Atlanta Road will need to be widened - there is lots of truck traffic - this is in GDOT's long-range plan.

DISCUSSION: What type of improvements should we be considering?

Major topics: New airport and a four-lane parkway; Overlay districts to direct new growth and predictable controls, like access points; Infrastructure- especially wastewater treatment.

- When the new airport is built, build a new road to it, near Kennedy Road, so truck traffic won't go into Griffin.
- The County Commission will need guidelines for development - an overlay district is needed to direct growth, in order to remain a rural community/small-town feel.
- There needs to be wastewater treatment plant on east side of county, as well as force main and interceptors. We also need to consider funding options, such as a public-private partnership.

Next Meeting (March 2020) Preview

- Report on Traffic Study
- Preliminary Recommendations
 - Land Use and Development Preliminary Recommendations
 - Universe of Potential Transportation Improvements
- Input Session: Potential Improvements

Next SSC meeting is tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, March 18, 2020 (after GSATC) and may be planned for a longer time for sufficient discussion on proposed recommendations.