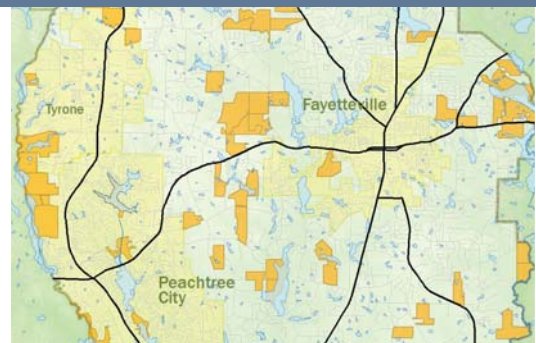
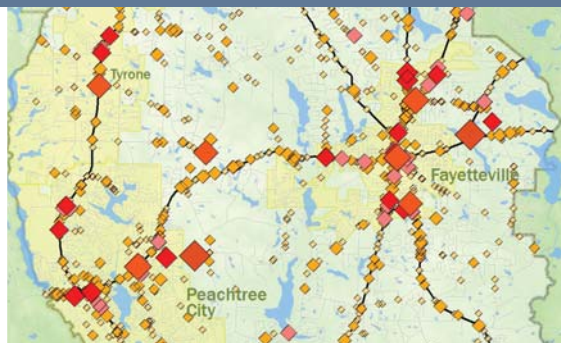
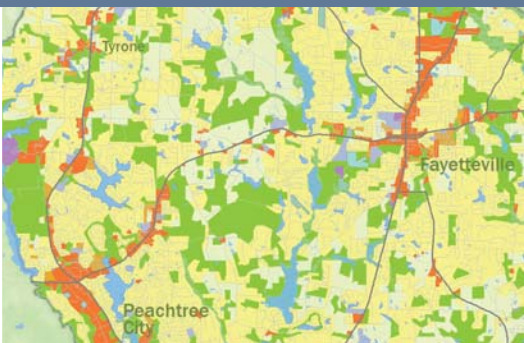




Public Outreach



3.0 Introduction

The Fayette Forward planning process included an extensive series of efforts in public involvement and outreach. The planning team held several public workshops and open houses, highlighted by a week-long design workshop in March 2009 that allowed plan stakeholders and members of the general public to observe Fayette Forward project team members at work and to share ideas that could be incorporated into the development of various transportation projects.

This chapter of the Fayette Forward chronicles the public involvement efforts and identifies the links between community input and development of the candidate project list.

3.1 Early Coordination Efforts

The first major actions of the Fayette Forward process involved the formation of guiding committees that were intended to help the project team. The Public Involvement Plan for Fayette Forward was anchored by a set of two committees (Stakeholder and Technical) that engaged general stakeholders in Fayette County transportation issues and local and regional government staff more directly involved in day-to-day transportation planning decisions. These committees helped to tie the broad interests of the Fayette County community, including (but not limited to) its different industries offering employment, its natural resource concerns, its schools, and the needs of its senior citizens. The technical committee was composed of County and municipal staff as well as representatives from the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) and neighboring counties and municipalities.

3.1.1 October 2008 Stakeholder and Technical Committee Meetings

The project team began the formal planning process with a set of meetings with the Stakeholder and Technical Committees. These meetings yielded a series of issues and topics that formed the foundation for later needs assessment work (presented and discussed in Chapter 2 of this plan).

TABLE 3.1 Milestone Public Involvement Events

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>
October 2008	Project Team Kickoff
November 2008	First Stakeholder and Technical Committee Meetings
December 2008	Public Vision Workshop
January 2009	Public survey through Fayette County website launched; to run through June 2009
March 2009	County Commission Workshop; Project Design Workshop
July 2009	Second Stakeholder and Technical Committee Meetings
August 2009	Public Open House for First Draft Project Evaluation Results
September 2009	County Commission Workshop
March 2010	Public Information Workshop
October 2010	Public Comment Period on Final Draft document

Refer to Appendix D for a detailed summary of public involvement events as well as meeting attendance sheets, stakeholder and technical committee member rosters and other public input.

Both committees generally agreed that Fayette County does not experience the same levels of traffic congestion as other parts of the Atlanta metropolitan region. This is due in part to the County's lack of an interstate highway, as points of congestion do not occur around interchanges; it is also due to the generally lower densities of development and population in Fayette County. Nonetheless the County does experience congestion at key locations, most notably the SR 54/SR 74 intersection in Peachtree City and in downtown Fayetteville. Coordination of signal timing coupled with new commercial development has also generated congestion on SR 54 west of the SR 74 intersection, and on SR 85 north and south of Fayetteville.

3.2 December 2008 Visioning Workshop

The first activity oriented to the general public was a December 2008 workshop intended to introduce the initial principles behind the Fayette Forward plan and to elicit public thoughts on what Fayette County is and should be as a place to live and work. Up until this point the primary input provided to the Fayette Forward project team had come from the stakeholder and technical committees. This allowed the project team to have an early understanding of community and technical issues, but it did not provide an opportunity for a broader public dialogue on the Fayette County community's vision for its future.

Participants in this visioning session sought to understand the role of the Fayette Forward plan and in particular how it would address the West Fayetteville Bypass project. The project, which consists of three independent phases, was already in advanced stages of development for the first of these phases at the time of Fayette Forward's initiation.



One of the most notable elements of community character that participants in the public workshop articulated was the rural landscape of Fayette County. This theme remained an important element throughout the Fayette Forward process.

3.2.1 Defining a Vision: Fayette County's Values

The following values were identified by the project team based on public comment received during the Visioning Workshop:

Adaptive reuse of historic structures. Some participants indicated that Jeff Davis Drive in Fayetteville was a positive example of the sort of community character that they appreciate in Fayette County. Other historic sites, such as the Starrs Mill in the southern county, have an iconic status and help to define the community as distinctive in the Atlanta region.

Open space and agricultural lands. Workshop participants expressed strong interest in preserving particular locations of rural landscape, pointing to these as another element of character for the county.

Relative ease of commuting. Many Fayette residents at the workshop also worked in Fayette County (or were retired and did not work), although many others commuted to other parts of the Atlanta region. These workshop participants stated that they enjoyed relatively short commute times, although they did note that some particular commute patterns or directions presented challenges to them, especially those trying to reach Interstate 75 or 85. Some even expressed a willingness to have a longer commute in order to preserve the rural character of the County.

Mobility options for the entire community. While commuting patterns were agreed to be an indispensable factor in planning for Fayette County's transportation needs, residents also pointed to a need for mobility options, especially for recreational purposes, for children and for senior citizens. Fayette County enjoys a unique attribute in Peachtree City, whose original master plan called for the addition of off-street paths designed to focus on golf cart accommodation (but able and permitted to accommodate pedestrians, bicycles and other non-motorized mechanical transport). Workshop participants expressed interest in making this type of infrastructure available to more of the county, as well as to provide a more systematic form of transportation service for the elderly communities of the county who may not be capable of or inclined to drive but who nonetheless have a need for movement between different places.

Responsible use of public money. Many participants at the Public Vision Workshop shared strong opinions regarding the on-going West Fayetteville Bypass project, a new road construction project intended to provide a travel alternative and thus traffic congestion relief to downtown Fayetteville. Part of the reason for the project's controversy is its scale relative to other public works projects in the County, especially as it relates to impacts on neighborhoods and rural areas, but opposition is also closely related to public uncertainty as to its benefit. The project team understood clearly from this that any project or policy recommendations from the Fayette Forward plan should clearly communicate their resolution of a need or problem in the County's transportation system, and that the required use of public funding employed a reasonable and prudent approach.

What project team members communicated to the public as the overall objective for the meeting was to understand a vision for the county, a series of goals that would allow that vision to be realized, and a way of articulating these to move forward in thinking about plan recommendations. The five points of discussion above were the basis for this, but discussion at the workshop also focused on how to move forward, and that the goals supporting the achievement of the public vision for Fayette's transportation system should be supported by more specific objectives to be met.

3.2.2 Goals Developed from the Visioning Workshop

From the conversation at the Public Vision Workshop, the project team developed a set of working goals to be vetted by the public, Fayette Forward leadership committees, and the County's elected officials. This included six goals: five intended to respond to the main discussion points from the Public Vision Workshop, and another to emphasize the importance of regional cooperation, especially as the Fayette Forward plan will function to identify projects for inclusion in the Atlanta Regional Commission's long-range transportation plans.



Support the County's Vision for Positive Growth. The Fayette County Comprehensive Plan sets the following goal for positive growth: "Growth and development should be consistent with the County's land use plan, which provides for the orderly, balanced and quality development of all land uses consistent with the physical and economic limitations of the County. Growth should take place in accordance with criteria and standards designed to preserve, enhance and protect an orderly mix of residential, commercial/industrial facilities, and open space without compromising existing residential development."

Transportation projects and policies should be consistent, to the extent possible, with these land use principles.

Develop Safe and Balanced Choices. Fayette County's transportation system should serve different users and travel modes, and it should do so in a way that provides safe and comfortable travel.

Develop Regional Strategies. As a part of the Atlanta region, Fayette County's transportation needs are closely tied to those of other jurisdictions. For example, many Fayette residents do not work in the County, meaning that their work-based travel takes them into other communities that also have their own needs and concerns. For example, efficient access to the Interstates is dependent on regional improvements within Clayton, Fulton, Henry and Coweta Counties. As such, Fayette should participate in regional planning efforts and coordinate local and regional transportation needs.

Maintain Fiscal Sustainability. In planning for transportation infrastructure, the cost of construction is a primary factor. However, the cost of maintenance should be considered as well, especially with regard to facilities that are the responsibility of Fayette County. The purpose of this goal is to identify projects that help the county to meet its needs for future population and employment growth and are affordable to build and maintain.

Preserve Community Character. Fayette County is a desirable place because it offers a scenic, rustic environment featuring ample open space and natural amenities. Yet it is within reasonable driving distance of the Atlanta airport and major employment centers of the region. The environment should be a defining element of the County's identity and transportation investments should be designed to preserve (or enhance) it whenever possible.

Desirable Places for All Citizens. The county is home to children, families and senior citizens. Transportation investments should seek to allow the County to continue accommodating these populations, understanding that personal mobility, in whatever form it takes, and livability are closely tied.

These goals continued to be used throughout the Fayette Forward process. Eventually, the goal emphasizing the development of regional strategies was removed from the list, as the public and elected officials alike agreed that state support would be necessary for projects with regional benefit, but that the benefits these could provide to Fayette County likely meant that the County would take supportive positions on them.



3.3 Online Survey

The Fayette Forward team conducted an online survey to extend the outreach begun at the December workshop. The survey’s 25 questions were developed to elicit input from the community on a variety of transportation and quality-of-life issues. The results of this survey, along with the December 2008 workshop, provided a direction for developing the transportation plan supported by the community and in line with its needs and vision. The survey results showed strong support for the following items:

- Preserving the rural and small town character and quality of life (a point already identified and discussed during the December 2008 workshop);
- Structuring new development in a way that preserves the rural character;
- Encouraging new industry and job creation to make jobs within closer commute of more Fayette residents; and
- Developing a complete transportation system that improves mobility but that provides non-motorized options.

Who Responded

At the close of the survey period in June 2009, nearly 500 respondents had been registered with at least partial responses. A majority of the people who responded to the survey live in Fayette County with an almost even division between those working in the County and those working in other areas. Sixty percent of the respondents lived in Peachtree City and Fayetteville with the remainder living in unincorporated Fayette County or smaller towns such as Tyrone and Woolsey. The average responding household size was 3.1 persons, a size that is slightly higher than the average for the Atlanta metropolitan area. [This indicates that the survey may have been more effective in reaching families, who may not have been able to attend a public meeting.]

Table 3.3.1 below (and continuing onto the next page) details the distribution in respondents.

Table 3.3.1 Survey Responses on Places of Residence and Employment

<i>Place of Residence</i>	<i>Number/Percentage of Respondents</i>
Fayette County	417 (91.4%)
Unincorporated Fayette County	121 (27.2%)
City of Fayetteville	65 (14.6%)
Refer to Appendix E for a tabulation of the public survey results.	



Table 3.3.1 Survey Responses on Places of Residence and Employment (continued)

<i>Place of Residence</i>	<i>Number/Percentage of Respondents</i>
City of Peachtree City	204 (45.9%)
Town of Tyrone	17 (3.8%)
Town of Woolsey	5 (1.1%)
Town of Brooks	7 (1.6%)
Outside of Fayette County	39 (8.6%)
<i>Place of Employment</i>	<i>Number/Percentage of Respondents</i>
Inside Fayette County	206 (53.1%)
Outside Fayette County	182 (46.9%)
Refer to Appendix E for a tabulation of the public survey results.	

The Quality of the Commute

While there is a small group that either telecommutes or takes some form of transit as part of their commute (vanpool, bus or train), the majority of survey respondents drive alone to work with a commute time of less than 30 minutes. This is on par with the average commute times for the Atlanta region (31.2 minutes). And while many note that they enjoy the rural character of their drive they also cited a need for improved mobility. The top issues concerning mobility include: traffic congestion at key intersections and along major corridors, safety and speed, the need for additional routing options, and alternative transportation modes that could elevate the strain on the existing infrastructure.

Table 3.3.2 Survey Responses on Commute Times and Lengths

<i>Travel Time to Work</i>	<i>Number/Percentage of Respondents</i>	<i>Length of Trip to Work</i>	<i>Number/Percentage of Respondents</i>
Less than 30 minutes	226 (55.5%)	Less than 2 miles	53 (13.3%)
30 minutes to 1 hour	118 (29.0%)	2 to 5 miles	53 (13.3%)
1 to 2 hours	29 (7.1%)	5 to 10 miles	68 (17.0%)
Longer than 2 hours	2 (0.5%)	10 to 20 miles	87 (21.8%)
Work at home/ telecommute	32 (7.9%)	Longer than 20 miles	138 (34.6%)

Fayette County has taken steps to improve overall mobility with the Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) approved by voters in November 2004 and responses from this survey helped to prioritize remaining projects. The SPLOST program was intended in part to improve connectivity, intersections, roads, bridges, and implement streetscapes; it identified over 60 potential projects focused on this scale of enhancement.

Rural Character: The Touchstone of Quality of Life in Fayette County

The survey highlighted many concerns and opportunities echoed during other public meetings regarding Fayette County’s quality of life. Most prominently, the respondents value the County’s small-town and rural character. Limited commercial development, trees and open space, and protected areas were all equally identified as an integral part of Fayette County’s character.

This is consistent with the general message that the community articulated to the Fayette Forward project team at the December 2008 visioning workshop (refer to Section 3.2). In that meeting, residents stated emphatically that they had chosen Fayette County as a place to live for particular reasons. The county appeals to them differently than the remainder of the Atlanta region, primarily because it has preserved lower densities in large areas of the county through land use and infrastructure policy, keeping Fayette from acquiring the look and feel of more rapidly growing counties in the area.

Many survey respondents expressed concern that changes to land use policies were changing the character of the County. Many of these comments were in response to zoning regulations that allowed for the perceived overdevelopment of strip malls and big box retail stores throughout the area. The scale of this new development was out of character for the area and was frequently cited in conjunction with the loss of the natural environment. Responses also showed that people place a high value on the existing cart and bike paths throughout Peachtree City and see this as an opportunity for the entire County to pursue. There are numerous citations throughout the survey that call for an increase in cart and bike paths that connect to neighborhoods, schools, and community centers.

Table 3.3.3 A Typical Drive in Fayette County: What do Survey Respondents Like?

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Number/Percentage of Respondents</i>
Drivers have attractive or pleasant views of the road	317 (72.5%)
Roads are lined with trees	296 (67.7%)
Roads are not wide	84 (19.2%)

Table 3.3.4 What Would Survey Respondents Add to Fayette County Roads?

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Number/Percentage of Respondents</i>
Sidewalks	193 (45.5%)
Bicycle lanes	191 (45.0%)
Trees	155 (36.6%)
Street lighting at intersections	111 (26.2%)
Traffic calming and speed control	51 (12.0%)
Add to the number of vehicle lanes	46 (10.8%)
Reduce the number of vehicle lanes	15 (3.5%)

Increasing employment opportunities in the County could cut down on the commute times and improve the quality of life for residents. New industries could bring in high skilled workers and increase the tax base providing more money for protecting natural areas and building a more complete cart and bike path.

A complete transportation system

Providing a transportation system that functions for all modes of travel (i.e., the pedestrian, bicyclist, golf cart, and vehicle) is important to those surveyed. Almost 85% either ride a bike or walk for leisure and even more would do so if they felt that the trails and sidewalks were safer. Rather than increase vehicular lanes or implement speed control devices, respondents overwhelming identified the addition of sidewalks, trees, bicycle lanes as ways to improve mobility throughout the area. The addition of bicycle lanes, trails, cart paths and sidewalks, could provide an alternative for many with short commutes and provide additional alternatives for school aged children.

3.4 March 2009 Design Workshop

The principal public involvement activity in the Fayette Forward planning process was the four-day design workshop held from March 9-12, 2009 at the Fayette County Commission Chambers. This workshop was carried out with the intent of addressing the concerns identified in the needs assessment and responding to community and stakeholder input with a series of candidate project concepts. These candidate projects, discussed in detail in Chapter 4 of this plan, comprised all ideas and suggestions from Fayette Forward as well as concepts presented in the County's two Livable Centers Initiatives studies, the Southern Regional Accessibility Study, the ARC Envision6 long range transportation plan, and the outstanding projects in the 2003 Fayette County Transportation Plan that had been programmed under the first Fayette County SPLOST.

The format of the workshop was intended to emphasize the transparency of the Fayette Forward planning process, with the Fayette Forward planning team hosting an open house for community members and stakeholders to ask questions and share ideas and desires. The project team made planners available for discussions with community members and urban designers available for



The March 2009 design workshop was the centerpiece of the public involvement process, allowing the public to observe designers at work, share project ideas, and generally learn more about transportation planning concerns and how they would apply to Fayette County.

producing conceptual drawings and visualizations of selected candidates as their concepts emerged. This included staff focused on multi-use trails and paths (responding to a strong preference among community members that Peachtree City’s successful and desirable trail network be made more accessible to the rest of Fayette County); staff focused on roadway design standards in the context of typical rural and natural landscapes in Fayette County; and staff specializing in different intersection design options.



In general, participation was broad and reflected a large number of Fayette County’s government agencies, non-profit organizations, neighborhood groups and citizen advocacy groups. One of these groups helped by offering a ‘mission statement’ (written out on the left) that sought to summarize the general goals and objectives of the project vision workshop into a single, concise statement. The Fayette Forward team met with individual citizens, interest groups, developers, partner agency representatives and elected officials to translate the broad range of needs and interests into potential project candidates. Citizen participation not only provided the project team with input for new project ideas, it also helped to provide insight on pre-existing project concepts (such as from the 2004 SPLOST program) and even to rethink the way the project’s approach was being communicated: citizen input helped to define a ‘mission statement’ that gave the plan a much more pronounced sense of purpose in addressing community needs and desires. The workshop was bookended by two presentations, the first discussing the outcome of the needs assessment and the directions in which it pointed the Fayette Forward project team for initial recommendations, and the second (at the end of the workshop) presenting the candidate ideas that the project team had developed through its series of intensive meetings with stakeholders and the public.



The design workshop included several meetings with County and City staff, neighborhood and special interest groups, and private citizens. Participants from the public had access to planners, engineers and designers thinking through project concepts, and the results of their efforts were presented to the public in two wrap-up meetings (one in each Fayetteville and Peachtree City).

3.5 Project Evaluation Open House

Between the March 2009 Design Workshop and early July 2009 the project team focused on reviewing and evaluating project candidates through a process defined in Chapter 5 of this plan. This included detailed technical evaluation of each candidate on the basis of metrics based on the community goals discussed and refined in the December 2008 vision workshop and March 2009 design workshop; it also included an ongoing review of previously-identified projects (such as those from the 2004 SPLOST program) that had begun construction during this time and as such would not be pending by the completion of the Fayette Forward planning process. The project team returned to meet with the technical and stakeholder committees in July and August 2009 to discuss the outcome of a first round of evaluation and to seek feedback on what needed refinement. They also presented this first assessment to the general public in an August 2009 open house.

The first round of evaluation suggested that the projects best responsive to the Fayette Forward goals were a mix of small-scale improvements related to safety and traffic operations, many of these being intersection realignments and reconfigurations. It should be pointed out that this is partly due to the number of candidate projects of this nature relative to other types of candidate project, but it also reflects that these projects represented a high value, or a high return on investment, in terms of addressing Fayette County's transportation needs. Well-received projects under the auspices of the technical evaluation criteria also included new street network additions, bridge improvements, and correction to geometric deficiencies from old roadway designs that predated the County's current residential population and subsequent demand for personal vehicle travel.

Presenters emphasized that this list of recommendations was not final, and that the next steps would involve close coordination with elected officials, staff and stakeholders to determine true feasibility and priority of important projects.



The Fayette Forward team presented the evolving set of recommendations at two workshops (in August 2009 and March 2010). The August 2009 project evaluation open house allowed the community an opportunity to see results of the technical evaluation process and understand where some of these recommendations would need to be coordinated with the County's fiscal and political realities.

3.6 Final Draft Input Series

The team proceeded from this response to first draft recommendations and worked more extensively with the Board of Commissioners and elected officials from the county's municipalities to refine them into a project list. This involved refinements to specific project details, consideration of scoping phases (discussed in more detail in Chapter 6) and removal of some projects from consideration when those projects had proven to be controversial or against the wishes of the community.

Instead of a ordered list of projects, this final project list emphasized a series of project tiers (discussed in the Executive Summary and in Chapter 6) that would form the basis for general implementation time frames. This reflected the importance of implementing projects from the 2003 Transportation Plan and 2004 SPLOST project list while funds generated from the SPLOST were eligible for expenditure: most projects in the first tier of recommendations were outstanding projects from the 2003 plan and as such represented the highest priority for the first five years of implementation.

Two key public outreach activities occurred to solicit further public opinion and give an opportunity for comment: a March 2010 public information session, at which the three project tiers were discussed and specific examples illustrated, and an October 2010 public comment period through which the entire plan was made available to the public for review through the County's website. With feedback from this plan incorporated into a final version, the plan was then submitted to the Board of Commissioner and review and adoption. Refer to Appendix B for more specific comments received from both of these activities.



