

Work Session Meeting of the Sandy Springs City Council was held on Tuesday, June 21, 2016, at 8:42 p.m., Mayor Rusty Paul presiding.

Councilmembers present: Council Member John Paulson, Council Member Ken Dishman, Council Member Gabriel Sterling, Council Member Tibby DeJulio, and Council Member Andy Bauman.

STAFF DISCUSSION ITEMS

City Management

1. **16-246** Cobb County Traffic Management Update for Sun Trust Park/The Battery Atlanta Development

Assistant City Manager Bryant Poole stated in November 2013 there was an announcement that the Atlanta Braves were relocating to Cobb County. It is about eight months from the opening of the new facility known as SunTrust Park and the DRI is known as the Battery of Atlanta. Immediately after that announcement, Cobb County went into action, as well as the City of Sandy Springs, in looking at how to manage traffic. In January 2014, Cobb County called in all the stakeholders who will be impacted to begin the coordination and discussion as it relates to transportation. City staff has met regularly with Cobb County officials and other stakeholders to discuss getting ready for the big opening event and managing the traffic. At this time, the traffic management plan that Cobb County, GDOT, and the City have been discussing will be presented. He introduced Cobb County's Interim Transportation Director, Jim Wilgus.

Cobb County Interim Transportation Director Jim Wilgus referenced a map with all the projects currently in the Cumberland area. There will be parking decks adjacent to the stadium in three locations. There will be a south parking area, which is now existing businesses. The north parking area is a parking lot that is currently being constructed. There will be east parking lots that will be on the other side of I-75. The basis of Cobb's traffic plan is to set up a ring that includes Cumberland Boulevard, Windy Ridge Parkway, and Interstate North Circle. The goal is to get the driver onto that loop from every direction and then to the parking area. There are fourteen different ways to get to that loop. From the north there is I-75 and Cobb Parkway, from the west Windy Hill and Spring Road and Cumberland Parkway, from the south there is I-75 and Cobb Parkway, and from the east there is I-285 and Interstate North. The goal is that whatever direction you are coming from you will be directed to a parking lot. If you are coming from the west or the south you will be directed to the south lot. If you are coming from the north you will be directed to the north lot. If you are coming from the east you will be directed into the east lots. That is the overall transportation plan of how the drivers will be routed. On the Interstate system and throughout the arterial system there will be many signs installed. The green overhead interstate signs will say SunTrust Park or The Battery. The exits drivers will be directed to are Windy Hill, I-75, Cumberland Boulevard, and Cobb Parkway at I-285. If you want to go to the Battery to eat lunch or visit one of the office buildings, those are the traffic exits you would use. The blue signs will be the dynamic message boards and will be able to tell drivers the best route of traffic. The signs are as far up north as Canton Highway and the signs will change every day. If it is game day it will give the driver the best route and what roads to take to get to which parking lot. On event day Cobb County is trying to push the I-285 exits out one more. In other words, if a driver is driving on I-285 in one direction, they will exit at Paces Ferry Road. If you are coming from the east the exit to take would be New Northside Drive. At these locations there would be a sign that states parking for the east lots only exit onto New Northside Drive, then another sign that says to turn right and another sign will say "go straight". The driver will then be on Interstate North. Cobb County is also asking for a dynamic message board to be placed 600 feet east of the river in order to direct people to either take Powers Ferry or go straight on Interstate North.

Council Member Gabriel Sterling asked if Mr. Wilgus is requesting the message board be on the City's surface street and not on I-285.

Cobb County Interim Transportation Director Wilgus responded yes, on Interstate North, and not on I-285.

Council Member Tibby DeJulio asked if he wants to take all the traffic off I-285 and place it on surface streets.

Cobb County Interim Transportation Director Wilgus stated that is what is being done throughout the system. On Interstate North right now, if you drive in rush hour traffic there is not a lot of traffic on that road going towards the stadium. This is similar to traffic on Spring Road. Cobb County would like to take that traffic off the interstate and get the vehicles to the parking lots quicker.

Mayor Rusty Paul asked Mr. Wilgus if he knows that 75% of the traffic is coming from Cobb County and North Fulton.

Cobb County Interim Transportation Director Wilgus stated that is not what the outcome of the heat map showed. Cobb County did a survey of the season ticket holders.

Mayor Paul stated he has seen the heat map and the traffic will be coming out of Johnson Ferry down Riverside Drive.

Cobb County Interim Transportation Director Wilgus stated that is not where Cobb County is planning on directing the traffic.

Mayor Paul stated the traffic cannot be directed to go through neighborhood streets.

Cobb County Interim Transportation Director Wilgus stated the County is not planning on running the traffic through neighborhood streets.

Mayor Paul stated there are neighborhoods that bound at New Northside Drive and residential neighborhoods in that area. The City has been trying for months to sit down with Cobb County to work these traffic issues out. The City has alternative traffic plans they would like to see in place as well. The City has not been able to get the time of day from the County to speak about these issues. The City's nightmare was that Cobb County would not speak to them about these challenges and they would create a plan that will dump traffic on the neighborhood streets. He lives in this area and cannot be told this is not a neighborhood street. The County has not returned phone calls and the City has not been able to meet with the County's top manager to discuss these things. This plan will run the traffic right through the neighborhoods and that is not happening. The County has a list, and so does the City, and both need to be discussed. The County will not run all that traffic out of Gwinnett, North Fulton, Forsyth, East Cobb, and DeKalb through our neighborhoods.

Cobb County Interim Transportation Director Wilgus stated the intent is not to run the traffic through neighborhoods. Interstate North is not a neighborhood street.

Mayor Paul stated he lives less than one mile from that area and it is a neighborhood. He asked Mr. Wilgus if he thinks that all the drivers will stay on that one street.

Cobb County Interim Transportation Director Wilgus responded that is the plan.

Council Member DeJulio stated that is a hope that all the traffic will stay on that one street.

Mayor Paul stated the City and Cobb County will have to sit down and have a long conversation about the traffic plan. This will not be worked out tonight. The City has its own list of things we would like to see Cobb County do to help mitigate some of the traffic. City staff has not been able to get any meetings with

Cobb County Leadership. There has been no meeting with the County Manager or the County Chairman. He does not like shooting the messenger, but Mr. Wilgus is the one that showed.

Cobb County Interim Transportation Director Wilgus stated he cannot speak for them.

Mayor Paul stated Mr. Wilgus needs to assist with arranging a meeting with the Cobb County leadership

Cobb County Interim Transportation Director Wilgus stated that will be his direction back from this presentation. Cobb County has been meeting with Sandy Springs.

Assistant City Manager Poole stated he has met with Mr. Wilgus. The reason why Mr. Wilgus is here this evening is because he knew Mayor and Council would have this concern. Before the City could begin to authorize anything, this concept had to be presented to Council.

Council Member DeJulio stated the City will not authorize any traffic going through the City's streets. We might have to put up with some of it, but we will do everything we can to avoid it. The City's citizens do not deserve to put up with this kind of traffic for 75 ball games each season.

Mayor Paul suspended the Work Session momentarily to announce the Special Election Results. Chris Burnett is the Council Member Elect for District 3.

Mayor Paul apologized for his tone, but not for his intent. The City should treat Mr. Wilgus with better hospitality. Mayor and Council were shocked with this presentation. The City and the County have a lot of work to do to get everyone to work together on this. The City studied the heat map and looked at the roads. The City has been working and begging Cobb Leadership to sit down with the City to try and mitigate some of these issues. The City has other ideas they think will be more effective in being able to get people in and out of the area with a lot less impact on the neighborhoods. A lot of work is to be done in order to have an acceptable plan. He suggested that staff work on getting a meeting held very soon. He asked Mr. Wilgus to finish his presentation.

Cobb County Interim Transportation Director Wilgus stated that was the bulk of his presentation. What is being looked at in Sandy Springs is three trailblazer signs and the variable message board in the New Northside area.

Assistant City Manager Poole stated for further clarification, it does not matter if there is one car or 10,000 cars. Cobb is trying to designate signs stating if one wants to park in a particular parking lot, they should exit at a particular location.

Council Member Sterling stated when traffic backs up, drivers will use Powers Ferry and travel back through the neighborhoods.

Assistant City Manager Poole stated that is everyone's concerns.

Cobb County Interim Transportation Director Wilgus stated one issue that every jurisdiction deals with is the application Waze, because it directs traffic to where we are not trying to allow traffic to go.

Mayor Paul congratulated Council Member Elect for District 3, Chris Burnett.

Council Member Elect District 3 Chris Burnett thanked everyone. He gave a special thanks to Joe Houseman and his family.

Cobb County Interim Transportation Director Wilgus stated he would like to know what message he should take back to the Cobb County Board of Commissioners and the County Manager. All engineering staff has been working together. The Cobb County Police Department will be reaching out to the Sandy

Springs Police Department only to discuss emergency response. Cobb County has been meeting with Sandy Springs Public Works for about two years now.

City Manager John McDonough stated a big unanswered question for City Council is the interchange justification report for the potential new interchange at Powers Ferry that could help relieve some of the traffic. Council would like an update on what Cobb County has done in support of that effort. He believes Sandy Springs has allocated \$450,000 for a project in Cobb County to help address some of the concerns that Council Members have raised tonight.

Cobb County Interim Transportation Director Wilgus stated from what Cobb County has seen, there are multiple different projects in the area that are being looked at. Some would be more supportive than others. When we see what comes out of that report, then Cobb County can determine what they support.

Mayor Paul stated what Cobb County decides to support will have a real impact on what the City is willing to support. It is the City's top priority to get a new interchange at Powers Ferry Road. Mr. Wilgus stated certain projects will have more support of others, but he did not say where that project is on Cobb County's priority list.

Cobb County Interim Transportation Director Wilgus stated Cobb County is waiting to see what comes out of the study. One project that has a ramp that goes directly from I-285 to Interstate North west of Northside is one that he thinks Cobb County will support.

Council Member Sterling asked which side of the river is that on.

Cobb County Interim Transportation Director Wilgus responded the Sandy Springs side of the river.

Assistant City Manager Poole stated there is also an option that would be located on the Cobb County side as well.

Council Member Sterling asked where is the study and what does it say.

Assistant City Manager Poole stated the City has entered into the contract for the consultant to begin the study. They are now beginning the study with a phased approach. The Phase I approach will include a feasibility study that complies with the Federal Highway Administration and GDOT rules. Staff did not want a full study if the project cannot meet the fundamental principles.

Council Member DeJulio asked if the study has the support of Cobb County.

Assistant City Manager Poole stated this is the City doing the study, but we are trying to get Cobb County to tell the City where they stand on this.

City Manager McDonough stated to date the City has not received a response back.

Council Member DeJulio asked why is the City spending 450,000 tax payers' dollars on something Cobb County does not seem to be interested in.

City Manager McDonough stated we are doing a phased approach, before we do a detailed study, to see what GDOT will support. GDOT and Cobb County are the key partners.

Mayor Paul stated from his understanding, the Cumberland CID is in support of the study.

Assistant City Manager Poole responded yes. Staff has already met with Cumberland CID and fundamentally they support the project.

City Manager McDonough stated the project would be an interchange at Powers Ferry and I-285.

Council Member Sterling asked Mr. Wilgus to speak to his leadership about sitting down with the City leadership to have a discussion.

2. **16-247** Update on Comprehensive Plan

Assistant City Manager Jim Tolbert gave a Comprehensive Plan (Next Ten) and Zoning Ordinance and Development Code update presentation.

Mayor Rusty Paul stated there is some concern in the community that by completing this process the community will have less input in development decisions. There are situations where the land is currently zoned and a developer comes to the City with a plan. It would be an administrative decision at that point.

Assistant City Manager Tolbert responded yes.

Mayor Paul stated the City is zoning the land in advance. Everyone will know what the zoning will be and this will be the same with what the City is doing in places currently rezoned. The applications will only come to the City Council if they are zoning modifications, rezonings, or variances. In this process there will be a lot fewer variance requests.

Assistant City Manager Tolbert stated in September the zoning consultants will have a meeting to talk about what the zones will look like and develop the form. Right now the City's Code does not have maximum height or maximum densities. Staff will recommend to Council to adopt a Code specifying that in certain zoning districts a developer can build no more than a certain number of units per acre or no more than a certain number of stories in height. The City may say that with a special use permit you can exceed that amount, but still cannot go any higher than a certain amount. These applications will still come to Council. Within the lower density, it will allow the developer to come to the City with a plan.

Mayor Paul stated there have been a lot of construction, infill housing and other things occurring in the City on a daily basis that never come before Council.

Council Member John Paulson stated what this means is the community needs to get involved and continue to be involved for the next 120 days. Once this map for the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Map is approved, the City will be trying not to change it. He spoke to a gentleman today in what he believes is a transition area. In looking at the map, it is colored different colors in the area he referred to. This map will be granular down to each property. The community needs to be involved early in the process.

Assistant City Manager Tolbert stated staff has received a first draft of the character area map. One of the debates that occurred was whether to make the zoning parcel specific or do it in particular areas. His idea is to do it in particular areas and then say generally what is wanted in an area and the policies will then guide the decisions. The City should actually be parcel specific on this, because we want to define what an area can be. The character area map will not set the zoning, but will say an area is a protected neighborhood area.

Council Member Paulson stated if only colors are used, if the color on the map crosses over the corner of a piece of property that someone wants to develop into another color, instead of the color on the map, there may be an issue. That now gives the property owner a reason to be able to say his corner lot has a particular color, so he should be able to do this. That is what he is trying to avoid.

Assistant City Manager Tolbert stated in 2016 there are much better mapping capabilities, so that should not happen.

Council Member Sterling stated the intent is to go parcel by parcel for designation.

Assistant City Manager Tolbert stated that is what is intended.

Council Member Andy Bauman stated, so there is no ambiguity, nothing is being decided this summer. Staff is continuing the process and there still is meaningful time for public comment.

Public Works

3. 16-249 Update on FY 2017 Sidewalk Program

CIP Unit Manager Marty Martin stated a couple of months ago staff presented to Council the results of the FY2016 Sidewalk Scoring exercise which allowed for inclusion of right-of-way donation statements and “bonus points” for candidate projects where the City did receive right-of-way donation statements. He gave a Sidewalk Program Update T-6000 PowerPoint presentation.

Council Member Andy Bauman asked if the design estimates are coming in at about what staff proposed.

CIP Unit Manager Martin responded yes. The next fiscal year there is \$500,000 approved in the budget to invest in the sidewalk program. He would like to get input from Council on how they would like the money to be spent. The funds can all go towards the capital program or be distributed as the projects begin with capital program, neighborhood sidewalk program, and the pedestrian access program. Council may want to consider adding those candidate projects to the list that have been identified by the neighbors since last year’s exercise. He asked if Council wants to add the second Dudley Lane project and what would they like considered for a path in executing the 2017 program.

Mayor Rusty Paul asked if the City can get more “bang for the buck” by filling in the sidewalk gaps.

CIP Unit Manager Martin stated network wise the benefit seems to be there, if you look at the numbers. The projects may not be that impactful when you finally get out in the field and assess them. Looking at the overall budget impact, when talking about 50 projects at a cost of \$50,000 each, that is a few years of sidewalk program funding. That will take away from the capital projects. He probably would not recommend completing all the gap fill programs. You would want to satisfy some of the demand on the neighborhood sidewalk program.

Council Member Gabriel Sterling asked if the gap fill program can be reviewed to find the obvious gap fill projects and then rank them all again. There are a number of sidewalks that would fit the other criteria with a smaller amount of money for which a wider network could be reached. For example, to make sure the sidewalks that go into City Springs are connected to the neighborhoods.

CIP Unit Manager Martin stated staff can quickly assess where the gaps are, because of the GIS analysis. Staff will need to do some field reconnaissance to validate that the cost is truly under \$50,000 for each project.

Council Member Bauman stated the City has had the under \$50,000 program. The City waited so long on the 2016 allocation, he would hate to wait any longer. He advocates for the savings for the Dudley Lane project. Staff may also find a real savings when it reaches the project’s construction phase. There should be at least \$100,000 of the 2017 budget allocated towards gap fill to see if staff can find low hanging fruit. All of the projects should be scored, now that the community and Council have identified another five or six projects. He hopes that Council will not wait another nine months. If for any particular project on the list the affected property owners want to sign right-of-way donations, they can do so at any time and that may impact their score. He suggests \$100,000 of the gap fill projects should be completed. He prefers the City move forward instead of waiting to proceed with the gap fill.

Council Member Sterling stated he thinks the scoring criteria should be kept the same.

Council Member Paulson stated regarding the gap fill for projects under \$50,000, he asked if the City can partner with someone like the City did with the Davis Academy.

CIP Unit Manager Martin stated gap fill projects identified thus far were identified by virtue of GIS analysis. New projects can be added to the list and scored. He thinks that a schedule should be set for right-of-way donations.

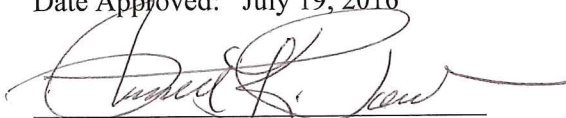
Council Member Bauman asked how many projects were scored last year and submitted right-of-way.

CIP Unit Manager Martin stated twenty-six were scored and four submitted right-of-way.

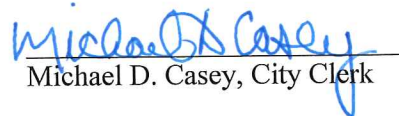
Council Member Bauman suggested keeping the scoring criteria the same, allocating \$100,000 for gap fill and that Council agree to design Dudley Lane with the savings. Staff will come back to Council after the deadline is established.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 9:44 p.m.

Date Approved: July 19, 2016



Russell K. Paul, Mayor



Michael D. Casey, City Clerk