

Work Session of the Sandy Springs City Council was held on March 17, 2026 Following PFA, Mayor Pro Tem John Paulson presiding.

Mayor Pro Tem Paulson called the meeting to order at 6:11 p.m.

I. 2026 Sandy Springs Citizens Leadership Academy Graduation

The City of Sandy Springs Citizens' Leadership Academy is a multi-week program designed to empower and educate residents and businesses within our community. With a focus on local government, civic responsibility, and community leadership, the academy offers a comprehensive and engaging curriculum tailored to foster informed and active citizenry. At the completion of the program, participants will have a deep understanding of the structure, functions, and responsibilities of local government, providing the tools and knowledge needed to actively participate in their local government and take on leadership roles within their community, fostering positive change and contributing to the overall well-being of the City.

The graduates of the third Citizens Leadership Academy class are:

Tonie Asbury
Cele Bullis
Jim Bullis
Bill Callen
Sherry Collins
Riley Cooper
Stacy Fialkow
Kate Floyd
Michael Gundy
Steven Hickey
Vivek Jha
Julius Johnson
John Jokerst
Stephen Kaplan
Brandon Lou
Justin Majors
Risa Matthew
Kim McNamara
Nicole Motahari
Leslie Mullis
Margo Parr
Frank Roberts
Janice Roberts
Pam Rosenthal
Vladimir Shklovsky
Sabina Sims
James Soggs
Michelle Sullivan
Paul Terlemezian
Andrew Trief
Krissy Williams
Chris Zorn

Mayor Pro Tem Paulson asked when the application process for the next class will start.

Eden Freeman, City Manager, said applications will be taken late summer, and the next class will begin in September.

Mayor Pro Tem Paulson said the graduates are encouraged to share with others what they learned about the City of Sandy Springs.

II. Staff Discussion Items

A. 2026-063 GDOT Innovative Interchange Concept Plans for I-285 and Roswell

Joel Seagraves, Project Engineer, Gresham Smith; Andrew Farmer, Senior Engineer, Gresham Smith; Andrew Smith, Transportation Planner, Gresham Smith presented the GDOT Innovative Interchange Concept Plans for I-285 and Roswell.

This is a scoping study, with the only current deliverable consisting of an approved concept report.

Existing Conditions

State/Federal Roadways

- Interchange is a compressed/tight urban diamond interchange (TUDI)
- I-285 is a ten-lane, median-barrier-divided interstate with lanes varying 11-ft to 12-ft
- There are barrier separated collector-distributor lanes adjacent to the travel lanes of I-285
- Roswell Rd is a four-lane, median divided principal arterial on both approaches to the interchange
- Roswell Rd lane widths vary from 10-ft to 11-ft. Border width varies from 10-ft to 16-ft and includes 4-ft to 9-ft sidewalks
- I-285 posted speed limit is variable [65 miles per hour (mph) for ramps]
- Roswell Rd speed limit is 35 mph
- Existing right-of-way along Roswell Rd varies from 60-ft to 220-ft
- The project area is comprised of mixed-use residential and commercial
- Entrance and exit ramps are two to four lanes, 12-ft in width
- Shoulders vary from 8-ft to 12-ft wide

Local Roadways

- Local roadways within the project area include Lake Placid Dr, Northwoods Dr, Allen Rd, Carpenter Dr and Cliftwood Dr
- City streets within the project limits range from two to four travel lanes of varying width (10 feet to 11 feet)
- All maintain a variable border width, from 10-ft to 16-ft including sidewalks that range from 4 to 10 feet in width
- Posted speed limits vary by alignment:
- Lake Placid Dr = 25 mph and 35 mph
- Northwoods Dr = 35 mph

- Allen Rd = 30 mph
- Carpenter Dr = 25 mph
- Cliftwood Dr = 35 mph

Environmental Resources

- Twelve (12) previously identified historic resources are located within the proposed project's area of potential effect (APE). Additional State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) coordination will be required
- One (1) previously identified archaeological survey area within the environmental survey boundary (ESB) was identified but was determined to lack significant data potential.
- One (1) public park (Allen Park) exists within the project ESB and may require 4(f) coordination if project impacts occur
- Likely only de minimis coordination – full 4(f) (programmatic or individual) is unlikely
- Noise mitigation: project will require on-going coordination with the I-285 Express Lanes project to accommodate any proposed mitigation from that project
- Ecology resource surveys will also need to be completed – but significant impacts to waters of the U.S. or protected species is unlikely given the urban nature of the project area

Alternatives Considered

- Alternative 1 – Displaced Left Turn (DLT)
- Alternative 2 – Single Point Urban Interchange (SPUI)
- Alternative 3 – Tight Urban Diamond Interchange (TUDI)
- Alternative 4 – Diverging Diamond Interchange (DDI)

Preferred Alternative

Alternative 4, DDI, is the preferred alternative. It provided the highest benefit cost and fits well within the express lane footprint.

Estimated Project Costs

- Total Project Cost = \$70-\$85 Million (includes preliminary engineering, right-of-way, utilities and construction costs)
- Right-of-way, utility and construction phases are not currently funded
- Preliminary engineering is also not funded
- Scoping is currently funded for \$1.25 Million
- The City of Sandy Springs has also helped contribute funding to complete the scoping study (\$150,000)

Potential Project Effects and Other Highlights

Design Variances/Exceptions

- Design Exceptions/Design Variances to GDOT Controlling Criteria:

- None anticipated
- Design Variances to GDOT Standard Criteria:
- A design variance will be pursued for median usage; Given the urban core context of Roswell Road, a policy-width median of 20-ft to 24-ft is not feasible
- A design variance for access control may be pursued due to driveway proximity to entrance/exit ramp terminals
- A design variance for lateral offset to obstruction may be pursued due to the proximity of utility poles, buildings, and other features of the urban corridor

Right-of-Way

- Twenty-three (23) impacted parcels
- One (1) potential displacements
- Required right-of-way (ROW), permanent easement, and various temporary easements are anticipated.
 - Existing ROW width – 60-ft to 220-ft
 - Proposed ROW width – 75-ft to 260-ft
 - Highly built-out and commercialized corridor

Utilities

- Several utilities within the project limits will be impacted:
 - Power transmission, sanitary sewer, gas, fiber, water, et al
- The utility adjustment schedule will be complex and long, and require close coordination
- This project is classified as a major project thus Public Interest Determination Policy and Procedure is recommended

Constructability

- The existing congestion and delay through the project corridor will likely be exacerbated during construction staging
- Staging will be complex, likely requiring several traffic shifts and lane closures throughout the project's construction schedule
- There are existing bus stops within the project limits (regular MARTA coordination likely)
- The utility adjustment schedule (UAS) will likely be complex and long
- Complex coordination with adjacent projects will be likely
- Partial short-term detours may be required as part of staging
- Early completion incentives are recommended in-part due to high road user costs. (~\$37, 800 per day, attachment 14 of Concept Report)
- Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) policies apply, but outfall level exclusions may be pursued due to infeasibility

Councilmember Andrew J. Chinsky said this is a busy and suboptimal intersection, and work needs to be done. There are many concerns about the impact on surrounding businesses and residents. This is one of the most pedestrian trafficked areas in Sandy Springs with many residents walking to work or the bus stop, and walkability and other plans for the area will be directly impacted, maybe not positively due to increased lanes and traffic.

Why is the gas station mentioned being displaced? Will GDOT purchase the property?

Joel Seagraves, Project Engineer, Gresham Smith, said the displaced gas station is close to the road, and any widening there will impact tanks or a truck's ability to get there and leave.

Councilmember Chinsky asked is that gas station property 7?

Gresham Smith Project Engineer Seagraves said yes.

Councilmember Chinsky asked is property 8 also a gas station?

Gresham Smith Project Engineer Seagraves said yes, with a car wash.

Councilmember Chinsky asked if that gas station is also a potential displacement.

Gresham Smith Project Engineer Seagraves said this may not be a displacement given the location of filler caps.

Councilmember Chinsky asked is the only way to access that gas station from the cul-de-sac, because access to Roswell Road is cut off?

Gresham Smith Project Engineer Seagraves said yes.

Councilmember Chinsky said if access to the gas station is cut off from the main road, and the only way to access it is from three right turns off a cul-de-sac, up a side street, you should talk to property owners. My suggestion is for more discussion with GDOT about whether a displacement.

Property 10 is Center Ice Arena and they are busy. During the holiday season, they can have about fifteen to twenty thousand people. Also, it appears from the map, their access to the main street is cut off. Will there be a potential loss to that property and parking spaces?

Gresham Smith Project Engineer Seagraves said it is possible. A full field survey is needed to determine that.

Councilmember Chinsky said my suggestion is for a lot of community engagement, particularly for these properties. How this area will be used is great for cars moving through Roswell Road, but is extremely disruptive to those small businesses, and the small businesses along property 4 and 6. Before this is finalized, discussion with the community is needed about their concerns and how this will impact them.

For the eight-foot multi-use path, was a ten or twelve-foot path considered?

Gresham Smith Project Engineer Seagraves said a ten or twelve-foot path may not fit with current GIS and aerial information. This must be determined in preliminary design when full field survey is available.

Councilmember Chinsky said a ten-foot path is the minimum recommendation for best practices for multi-use. This should be about a twelve or fourteen-foot due to the high traffic. This is challenging for encouraging walkability in the area. Also, it appears there is a sidewalk or multi-use path contemplated in the middle of the diverging diamond interchange.

Gresham Smith Project Engineer Seagraves said this is how pedestrians will cross the bridge.

Councilmember Chinsky asked will people be able to walk in the middle of Roswell Road?

Gresham Smith Project Engineer Seagraves said yes. It is about nineteen feet wide with barriers on the either side of it.

Gresham Smith Project Engineer Seagraves said this is a huge project and there should be ongoing conversation. Community engagement is important to find ways to mitigate the impact on small businesses that are core to the Sandy Springs community, and residents that walk the area daily.

Councilmember Mary Ford said there should be community outreach because of the many residential units there. My request is for this to be multilingual because the community is diverse.

Why are some areas considered historical?

Andrew Farmer, Senior Engineer, Gresham Smith, said as part of the study, we were only scoped to do desktop screening for potential environmental areas. The areas in red on the map were identified as potential historic districts, based on age and qualities of the properties, via other projects within the area, and we included them.

Councilmember Ford asked is this project intended to completely replace the bridge?

Gresham Smith Project Engineer Seagraves said yes.

Councilmember Melissa Mular said the north side of I-285 is mostly District 3 with a small portion for District 6. This is a chronically challenged traffic-wise intersection, even with improvements over the years. The project should be evaluated not only to move cars efficiently, but for pedestrian mobility and bicyclists in the future. Other diverging diamonds that GDOT has done, for instance Ashford Dunwoody and Abernathy road, function well, but the changes were not in a dense area with a lot of residences and businesses. While this study focuses on traffic, there should also be focus on residents and businesses. North of I-285 also has townhomes, condominiums, and apartment complexes. Will the vehicular flow through the intersection be improved, or will there be worsening conditions for the local neighborhoods, businesses and pedestrians?

Gresham Smith Project Engineer Seagraves asked for clarification on worsening conditions.

Councilmember Mular said this is especially for cul-de-sacs. On the southern part of the diagram, with the north access road, can a connection be made through Carpenter Drive? GDOT noted on the diagram that there are 93 condominiums. When looking at the upper and lower areas on the north side, there are 324 single family homes, townhomes, and condos. Also, there are 650 apartment units on both sides, of which 353 are market rate apartments, and 297 are senior living. In addition, there are 22 commercial properties, and if District 6 is included, the total is 25, with 12 noted on the diagram. There are also people travelling along this corridor to Allen Park, which is heavily used for basketball and soccer, and walking there. While the focus is on traffic, there is a bigger impact. The corridor is active and should continue to be so.

Gresham Smith Project Engineer Seagraves said there is about a ten or fifteen foot grade change at the north access road ending. Without field survey from field visits and GIS, it is not certain there can be a connection.

Councilmember Mular said there are about 4 businesses there, along with 17 single family homes, 93 condominiums, and the senior living facility. Comments were sent to me about residents from the senior living facility having to cross the road to get to the sidewalk on the other side, and there might be more

cars travelling due to the cul-de-sac.

Will the bridge be a part of the I-285 express lane project?

Nebyou E. Negash, District Program Manager-D7A, GDOT, said yes.

Councilmember Mular said this is a study, but are there materials that will come out of this discussion or public open house, because of the expansion of the bridge now being put in to set up for this project in the future?

GDOT District Program Manager Negash said the bridge will be a part of the express lane, however community engagement is critical. As a part of the project, public involvement is needed in the preliminary design phase. This comes from ground survey which has not been done, and impacts are not clearly indicated. The outcome of this scoping project was concept report. The final draft, prepared by the design team, will be presented to GDOT's management for approval. The request for public engagement in this phase has been considered and we will prepare for this presentation.

Councilmember Mular asked was consideration given for noise mitigation or soundwall opportunities for evaluation near Allen Road Park and the Atwater community? This has been an ongoing discussion. This community was platted and not built the last time a sound study was done in that area. Will the sound study be part of this project, or would that be part of the I-285 express lane project?

GDOT District Program Manager Negash said the project presented today is at the scoping level. This is an early concept and information on the noise barrier is not available. If it was included in the I-285 project, the City would be notified.

Councilmember Mular said it is still ongoing and a continued concern.

Have you considered the traffic increase that may happen on Cliffwood Way, as well as through the plaza, because there is a private road that goes through there? My concern is, with that cul-de-sac, will those roads have an increase in traffic, and if so, what evaluation has been done on those roads?

Gresham Smith Project Engineer Seagraves said extensive traffic modeling was done during this scoping study. The existing traffic coming out of the cul-de-sacs was pushed to Cliffwood and Carpenter resulting in a minimal increase of driver delay. This is currently a scoping level concept study and is what makes the interchange function well. If opened, they would be opened to ramps. The other option is moving the intersection, but this would take out full buildings. This is a scoping study and we do not have all the information to determine.

Councilmember Mular said your model focused on intersections. The roads I am referring to are signalized intersections. Cliffwood Way may be the first road after the plaza. There is also a private street that goes through the plaza, which is busy, and already has traffic. My concern is about a private road that is not set up to handle additional traffic, as well as Cliffwood Way, which intersects with Cliffwood Drive. There is no signalized intersection there, and not sure what this means for cars coming there if there is an increase in traffic. Not sure there is a way to study not just signalized impact, but the nearest crossroad intersections.

Gresham Smith Senior Engineer Farmer said our scope for this study was from Roswell Road, from Cliffwood, Carpenter, down to Lake Placid, to the south. including the interchange.

Councilmember Mular said those roads are in the study zone.

Gresham Smith Project Engineer Seagraves said more information about this can be provided to you.

Councilmember Mular said let us do this right. My suggestion is not to close off the cul-de-sac or, change them, or open them up. We must make progress but should not make things worse.

Gresham Smith Project Engineer Seagraves said our traffic engineer included side roads in his rerouting of traffic, but we will review the information to be certain.

Councilmember Mular said there was discussion about a MARTA Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) station in this area. Will this project impact that, or does that project impact this?

Gresham Smith Project Engineer Seagraves said we had discussions with the BRT team and there is no funding for that. It is very conceptualized and there continues to be ongoing discussions between MARTA and BRT.

Councilmember Mular asked what is the status of the questions and feedback Staff provided?

Gresham Smith Senior Engineer Farmer said we met with Staff in October 2025, and sent responses back to the City to address questions asked.

Councilmember Mular said there was a meeting in January where that same list was provided. Not sure those questions were answered.

Gresham Smith Senior Engineer Farmer said we provided a response and included a spreadsheet. With this concept, there are several answers that must be determined in preliminary design if this project ever gets to that stage.

Councilmember Mular said please confirm it is the same list. When will the public open house for this be scheduled?

Gresham Smith Senior Engineer Farmer said we hope to have the open house this year. We considered sometime in the spring but there was some push back.

Councilmember Mular said this report was to be done in April.

Gresham Smith Senior Engineer Farmer said yes for the public report, but not public involvement. This is typical for concepts and we do not need full public involvement prior to having a concept report.

Councilmember Mular said that is disappointing. It would be great to have the public's input before publishing the study.

What is the reality of any potential modifications to what is presented tonight? This is a study, but often studies are reality. Can we impact any changes to help businesses and residents as this evolves, or is what is presented going to be what happens?

Gresham Smith Project Engineer Seagraves said changes are possible but it depends on what those are.

This is an early stage scoping and fluid concept, and changes can be made within reason.

Gresham Smith Senior Engineer Farmer said there is a compromise between access for businesses and safety both for pedestrians and other road users. The concept as presented is maximizing the safety by eliminating the driveway access off SR-9. Without the signalized intersections and interchange ramps, there are 78 pedestrian conflict points along this corridor, from Lake Placid to Cliffwood Carpenter. There are about 10 proposed conflict points now and there were several mentions of pedestrian safety tonight.

Councilmember Mular said we appreciate what can be done to help residents navigate this.

Councilmember Frank Roberts said many businesses will not be there when this project is completed because of the impact. Was a service station's driveway cut off from Roswell Road, and you can only access it from Northwood?

Gresham Smith Project Engineer Seagraves said yes. That is the current configuration but it can be adjusted.

Councilmember Roberts said there is a cut in the curb there and on Lake Placid, going north and south. Is it possible to provide an access road to keep the businesses on Northwood?

Gresham Smith Project Engineer Seagraves said it is not impossible but it would be expensive. That was sketched earlier but taken out due constructability and cost associated. It would also impact more large transmission poles down Roswell Road.

Councilmember Roberts asked can GDOT fill the hole that is behind the businesses?

Gresham Smith Project Engineer Seagraves said that may be possible.

Councilmember Chinsky said there are tanks under the gas station being displaced on the east side of Roswell Road, and the one mentioned on property 8 that may be a displacement, that are expensive to clean up for redevelopment for something else besides the gas station. Will this cost be covered by the project, or property owner?

Gresham Smith Project Engineer Seagraves said Phase II of the USD and underground storage studies will disclose what needs to happen there. This cost is covered under the project.

Councilmember Chinsky said this is major impact to big pieces of land. There should be public open houses or at least individual outreach to property owners before the design is finalized. With this many cul-de-sacs, how will this impact Police and Fire response time? For example, they must go around Carpenter to get to residents in Laurel Grove. What is the plan for them to get into the cul-de-sac?

Gresham Smith Project Engineer Seagraves said technically they are cut off from driving on the road through there, but this is not a hindrance. This is a six-inch curb and any fire truck, ambulance, or emergency responder will get there if they need to.

Councilmember Chinsky said my suggestion is that this be discussed with Police and Fire as getting to these properties is a public safety issue. Please reference the City's meeting recordings for the discussion tonight, and contact us with any questions.

Councilmember Ford said there may be a design later this year with public sessions. What are the milestones for how this project will proceed?

Gresham Smith Project Engineer Seagraves said timeframe information is unavailable tonight.

Gresham Smith Senior Engineer Farmer said it may be a four to five year process to complete the design, right of way acquisition, environmental permits, and more for this project.

Councilmember Ford said this is helpful information. Does the express lane project have a start date?

Gresham Smith Senior Engineer Farmer said this information is unavailable, but it may begin this year with GDOT receiving bids.

Mayor Pro Tem Paulson said it was stated at the start of the presentation, the goal was to have an approved concept, but this may not happen. Traffic flow was discussed, but businesses are not being addressed and may not exist because of this configuration. This includes businesses south of I-285 on the west side of Roswell Road. The cost of building an access road must be balanced with the cost of causing businesses to fail. Also, this can cause GDOT a lot of money. More consideration for the impacts here is needed. Consider someone living near this intersection who wants to get to Roswell Road. This would be a torturous route based on the layout. Another example is someone going to play hockey at the ice rink. When the project is done, they will have to drive down to Lake Placid, and further west to come back to the ice rink. It will be impossible for the ice rink to survive. This is a terrible design and does not appear to be a workable plan for many businesses.

Gresham Smith Senior Engineer Farmer said it is about a half mile for each of the cul-de-sac intersections.

Mayor Pro Tem Paulson said this is the concept phase and about four or five years out. Now is the time to discuss this. If people have to go a half mile out of their way, instead of just turning in, these businesses will fail. Consider extending the cul-de-sac to Carpenter because this would save people that live there a half a mile of driving.

Gresham Smith Project Engineer Seagraves said bringing the access road to Carpenter is a reasonable request.

Mayor Pro Tem Paulson said you are presenting a traffic pattern that improves traffic flow, but please consider that this project will negatively impact many small businesses and people living in this area.

Gresham Smith Senior Engineer Farmer said we understand this. We will consider for instance additional driveways along SR-9 to access those businesses, but there must be a compromise.

Mayor Pro Tem Paulson said we request that you consider someone living there that must get to Roswell Road.

III. City Council Discussion Items

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

