

# CONNECT400

## Alternatives Analysis

### PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

Prepared for:  
Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority

Prepared by:  
AECOM/Jacobs-JJG Joint Venture  
Atlanta, GA

JUNE 2012



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# 1.0 Purpose of the Public Involvement Plan



This task involves the public and agency engagement strategies to be conducted throughout the course of the GA 400 Corridor Alternatives Analysis (AA). The public outreach for this project recognizes the diversity of the communities and acknowledges the possibility of “planning fatigue” along the corridor. MARTA will conduct meaningful engagement efforts that support the Federal Transit Administration’s (FTA) guidelines and tap into existing community structures to ensure equitable and active participation throughout the corridor.

The Project Team strives to educate and engage citizens with the aim of achieving “informed consent,” or the point at which the public understands the basis of decisions, acknowledges that the process for getting there was fair, and recognizes that their input was carefully considered in the process.

Our Team has developed this Public Involvement Plan (PIP) to outline the public outreach activities designed to meet federal guidance, objectives of MARTA and their partners, and needs of the community. The PIP delineates how the Project Team will achieve the following Public Involvement goals established by MARTA:

- Establish meaningful on-going, two-way communication with MARTA, the stakeholders, and the public to build consensus.
- Educate the public about the planning process and the role of government, stakeholders, and citizens, and provide a structure and forum for interested and affected parties to provide input and comment on major issues, problems, and alternatives.
- Ensure that the public has input into the technical analysis and study findings, including the evaluation criteria and mitigation needs.
- Inform the public of the progress of the study and of new opportunities to participate in the planning process.

The PIP identifies activities aimed at achieving “informed consent” and maximizing the input of the greatest number of participants. The major public involvement tasks associated with the AA include, but are not limited to:

- Stakeholder and agency identification, meetings, documentation
- Public involvement
- Outreach methods
- Final Public Involvement Report creation

# 2.0 Stakeholder and Agency Involvement



## 2.1 Stakeholder Interviews

It is critical for the Project Team to meet with key stakeholders in order to identify first-hand the area's opportunities and challenges. The list of stakeholders, known as the stakeholder database, that is developed will be composed of representatives from a variety of area organizations, a network of citizen and business organizations, faith- and community-based organizations, and advocacy groups. Stakeholders will be identified by MARTA through previous efforts and coordination with the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA), the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), the Regional Transit Committee (RTC), and other regional agencies.

The interviews will be scheduled over a focused period (three to four consecutive

days) allowing the efficient utilization of the team resources to uncover key issues early in the process and allow the team to incorporate them into contracted deliverables. In this focused interview period, we will meet with as many stakeholders as possible in one-on-one meetings or in small groups. The Project Team will identify up to three centralized locations for the interviews, one location per day with up to six interviews per day. The interviews will be brief and focused on specific issues that will collectively form a wealth of information and community insight.

As the project progresses, the Team will use a continuous feedback loop by distributing meeting minutes from the Project Steering Committee (PSC) to ensure stakeholders are being kept abreast of the AA progress.

**Timeframe for completion: Late 2011.**

## 2.2 Project Steering Committee

Following the aforementioned stakeholder interviews, a subset of stakeholders will be identified by MARTA to comprise the Project Steering Committee (PSC). The PSC will be comprised of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC). The PSC will guide the direction of the study and participate in key meetings and workshops throughout the process. The PSC will provide input at the following steps in the AA process:

- PSC Meeting #1 – review the overall scope and schedule of the project, define PSC roles and responsibilities, review the existing conditions and gather input on the project goals and objectives, and Purpose and Need.
- PSC Meeting #2 – review the Purpose and Need, goals and objectives, and identify potential alternatives including: technologies, transit supportive nodes, and alignments to be evaluated in the initial screening of the alternatives.
- PSC Meeting #3 – review, comment and discuss the initial screening results including technologies, station typologies, land use densities, and potential station locations.
- PSC Meeting #4 – review and provide comment on final alternatives including technologies and refinement of potential station locations.
- PSC Meeting #5 – Design Workshop (see Section 2.3).
- PSC Meeting #6 – provide comment on the final preferred alternative to be carried forward into the future project development processes leading to the selection and formal adoption of the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA).

**Timeframe for completion: On-going; beginning late 2011.**

### 2.2.1 Stakeholder Advisory Committee

The Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) will include individuals with insight into a number of areas including land use and policy. The SAC members will be utilized throughout the study to ensure the project is in-line with existing policies and desires of the municipalities, regional partners, and the community.

### 2.2.2 Technical Advisory Committee

Following development of the PIP, the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will be identified by MARTA. It will include individuals with technical skills in a number of areas including, but not limited to, environmental resources, transportation, and land use issues. Members of the TAC could include GRTA, GDOT, ARC, RTC, the Cities of Sandy Springs, Roswell, Alpharetta, Milton, and Johns Creek, and Fulton and DeKalb Counties. The TAC will be utilized throughout the study to ensure technical proficiency during the process. Seven meetings are proposed generally following the timeframe and agenda of the PSC meetings, with an additional meeting occurring during the screening and refinement of the LPA due to the technical nature of the committee.

## 2.3 Design Workshop

The Design Workshop is a multi-disciplinary, working design session where stakeholders, members of the PSC, and technical staff work together to develop design and planning solutions along the corridor. The design workshop has many benefits. First, those involved in the project develop a vested interest in the plan and take ownership in its vision. Secondly, the multi-disciplinary design team works together to produce a complete plan that addresses all aspects of the design and implementation. Finally, the collective effort organizes the input of all the players during focused meetings, thereby eliminating the need for prolonged discussions that typically delay conventional planning projects.

The design workshop will occur in parallel to the evaluation and selection of the LPA. The design workshop will focus on station areas and will be conducted at a location within the study area and over several days, allowing easy access by the stakeholders, PSC members, and other members of the public. The location will also allow team members the ability to “field-test” design concepts like development and connectivity opportunities in real time with site visits and analysis. The workshop will focus on three major events: the workshop kick-off and design session, a design open house over multiple days, and a closing presentation of workshop results.

**Timeframe for completion: To begin after selection of LPA**



# 3.0 Public Involvement



## 3.1 Public Meetings

It is important throughout the Alternatives Analysis that the public understands the basis of project decisions. It is also crucial that the public acknowledges that the process for arriving at a decision was fair and their input carefully considered. It is also critical to avoid “planning fatigue” that comes with an area such as the GA 400 Corridor, where discussion on a potential extension has occurred for some time. The public meetings will provide an opportunity for the Project Team to educate and engage the community with the aim of achieving “informed consent” on various milestones throughout the process. The items being presented at the public meetings will have been previously vetted by the client, and PSC prior to being released to the public. The public meetings should occur in well-known centralized locations, like area schools, libraries, houses of worship, and community centers. The

public meetings proposed are as follows:

- Public Meeting #1 – introduce the process, review existing conditions, and identify goals and objectives to help develop the Purpose and Need.
- Public Meeting #2 – gather input on initial alternatives (including technologies, activity centers, and alignments) to be carried into the analysis for Initial Technology and Conceptual Alternatives Assessment.
- Public Meeting #3 – present the preliminary results of the Initial Technology and Conceptual Alternatives Assessment, evaluation framework, identification of technologies, station typologies and potential station locations.
- Public Meeting #4 – participate in the design workshop open house.
- Public Meeting #5 – present the results of the final Detailed Definition of Alternatives Analysis and recommended LPA.

**Timeframe for completion: On-going; to begin early 2012.**

The Project Team will submit materials to MARTA four (4) weeks prior to selected meeting date and will also send an electronic announcement to municipalities within that timeframe. MARTA will provide any document revisions within 5 business days.

### 3.2 Open House

To encourage a more intimate two-way exchange of information, Public Meeting #4, will be an open house. The first part of the meeting will include a brief presentation on the results of the Detailed Definition Alternatives Analysis and the “starter ideas” developed during the design workshop. A majority of the meeting will be an open house format to provide the public with opportunities to ask questions of staff and review and comment on design workshop materials. The open house format may be used for other meetings as appropriate.



The multi-disciplinary aspect of a design workshop allows for a high level of productivity.

### 3.3 Environmental Justice Assurance

Special attention will be paid to ensure that all populations in the study area, including those that are historically under-represented in the transportation decision-making process, have a role in the study. The goal of the Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898 (February 11, 1994) and the U.S. Department of Transportation Order on Environmental Justice (DOT Order 5610.2) dated April 15, 1997, is to ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.

A four-tiered approach to engage minority and non-English speaking communities is designed to tap into existing community structures to ensure equitable and active participation. The approach will:

- Identify minority and non-English speaking representation for Stakeholder Advisory Committee,
- Identify and meet with local minority and non-English speaking leaders,
- Identify locations for additional outreach meetings, and
- Develop non-English speaking outreach materials.

**Timeframe for completion: On-going.**



The goal of any public participation exercise should be to get the most diverse group of participants to truly understand a study area.

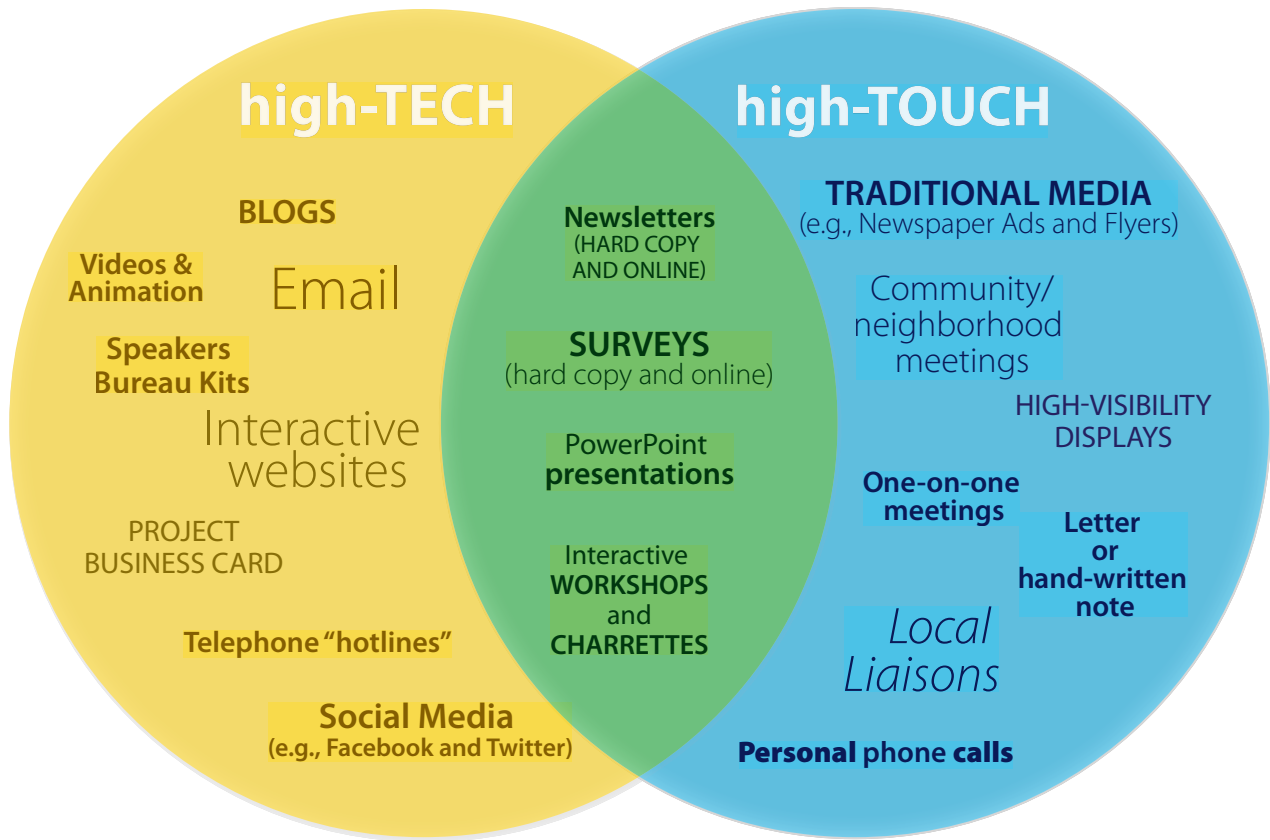
# 4.O Outreach Methods



Public outreach methods are more than just meetings, e-mail blasts, and newsletters. The outreach methods developed for the AA will use a two-pronged blended approach of “high-tech and high-touch” engagement. The variety of engagement tools will maximize public involvement and bridge the socioeconomic, age and technology gap.



FIGURE 1: HIGH-TECH AND HIGH-TOUCH METHODS FOR ENGAGEMENT



## 4.1 High-Tech

The high-tech method of public involvement uses the latest technologies to distribute a message across the broadest spectrum. This method of outreach generally works best with a younger demographic and professionals who spend much of their day using technology and want information quickly, concisely, and on their own time. The high-tech method is the fastest and most time effective to reach the largest population.

### 4.1.1 Project Website

The Project Team will develop information for the project website that will be published as part of MARTA's website and linked to other outreach efforts. The Project Team will support MARTA in the set up of the web page and MARTA will maintain the page. The website will be used to update and provide information on the following:

- Upcoming meetings;
- Contact information;
- Project progress;
- Location of proposed alignments;
- Development of proposed station area plans; and
- A forum for the public to provide input or submit inquiries regarding the project.

### 4.1.2 Project Business Card

A project business card will be created and distributed at all meetings. The business card will include a phone number for the project hotline, contact name and e-mail address, and a link to the project website and Twitter page.

### 4.1.3 Facebook

Similar to Twitter, Facebook allows for a quick distribution of information, as well as a forum for discussion. Facebook can be linked to other forms of social media as well including photos, videos, and surveys.

### 4.1.4 Surveys

Use of an online survey tool will help in garnering feedback on specific questions or issues. Surveys are a simple means of asking for community members to participate from their homes or businesses in a short amount of time. We will include up to two (2) surveys.

### 4.1.5 Project Hotline

A project hotline will be run by the Project Team. By using a hotline interested parties can call and leave a comment, feedback, or question, which can then be recorded, and responded to if necessary by the appropriate team member. It also allows the Project Team to keep a running list of comments received.

### 4.1.6 Video and Animation

The use of videos or animations is a more high-tech approach to a standard presentation. In some cases, the creation of a video will allow the message to be more “portable” when taken to numerous meetings and venues, and ensures that the message is consistent. A video is also a good format to be linked to the on-line project forums for anyone that would care to review the latest information, or has difficulties attending meetings.

## 4.2 High-Touch

The high-touch method focuses on personal contact through individual phone calls or notes, and attention on a face-to-face basis. In many cases, this method works better for those individuals that do not use the computer frequently, or may not have the means to access technology through socioeconomic, time constraints, or language barriers.

### 4.2.1 Newsletters

A series of newsletters will be developed throughout the project. The main purpose of the newsletter is to provide information regarding the status of the project and promote upcoming public meetings and other input opportunities. A contact database will be maintained as the primary distribution list for e-mailing and/or mailing newsletters. The newsletters, which will be bilingual, will also be published on the on-line project forums and include.

The newsletters will be developed for the following project milestones:

- Newsletter 1: Introduce the project, process, schedule, and goals and objects. If applicable, upcoming meetings will be announced.
- Newsletter 2: Present the preliminary screen results including technologies and station typologies. If applicable, upcoming public meetings will be announced.
- Newsletter 3: Present the LPA for the project and technical rationale behind its selection.



A blog or Twitter feed on the project website is a great way to get up to the minute information out to a large audience.



Videos help to pull the participants in and allow them to envision the potential of a project.



Posting meeting announcement in high visibility locations, such as MARTA train stations, will encourage greater participation.

#### 4.2.2 Fact Sheets

A fact sheet will be created at the project initiation and distributed and updated, if necessary, throughout the public process. The fact sheet will be distributed electronically or as a hand-out during meetings. The fact sheet will cover the purpose and context of the study, a map and description of the study area and study approach.

#### 4.2.3 Speakers Bureau

Throughout the course of the study, members of the Project Team will establish a Speakers Bureau with staff available to present project information to various interested groups within the study area, including churches, business associations, community groups, etc. All Speakers Bureau presentations and the information presented, known as the Speakers Bureau Kit, will be approved by MARTA. It is assumed that a maximum of 20 engagements will be conducted throughout the course of the project.

#### 4.2.4 Local liaisons

In addition to the SAC, a set of local liaisons will be called upon to distribute project messages to their respective groups, which may include, but not limited to:

- Home owners association (HOA) presidents, contacts at leasing offices, and neighborhood leaders
- Religious group leaders
- Key members of local chapters of organizations (e.g., Sierra Club and Green Prints)
- Parties related to business and development interests (e.g.,

Chambers of Commerce and Urban Land Institute)

- Interested professional groups (e.g., American Planning Association and American Society for Landscape Architects)

#### 4.2.5 Displays at High-Visibility Locations

The high-visibility displays are intended to provide brief project information and direct viewers to other information resources. The displays will be bilingual and designed to be understandable without being staffed. Locations may include:

- Schools and libraries
- Community activity centers
- Office buildings
- Gyms
- Billboards
- Existing transit facilities
- Major commercial centers

**Timeframe for completion: On-going**

### 4.3 Contact Database

The contact database is made up of the stakeholders, SAC, TAC, and members of the public who are interested in staying up-to-date with project information. The database will include a contact person, affiliation/employer if applicable, phone number, mailing address, and e-mail address.

**Timeframe for completion: On-going**



The Speaker Bureau can speak to interested groups using the Speakers Bureau Kit.

# 5.0 Final Public Involvement Report



At the completion of the AA, the Project Team will submit to MARTA a report documenting all public outreach activities and input received throughout the process. The report will include an executive summary, overview of the project and public involvement strategies, implementation methods, findings and recommendations gathered from public outreach efforts. The report will include an appendix of hard copies of all public outreach materials (i.e. newsletters, notices, public comments, and correspondence) and supporting materials from all meetings and hearings.



Included in the Final Public Involvement Report will be an assessment of the success of the public involvement process. Several key targets will be set, and achievement will be measured against the following goals:

- Public meetings should achieve consistently high numbers of participants.
- There should be a large number and variety of public involvement activities and opportunities.
- The participant makeup of the meetings should be diverse and reflect the demographic profile of the study area.
- Information should be released to the public in a timely fashion.
- The process of addressing public comments should be transparent.
- Meeting location selection should be based on easy and convenient accessibility, including by transit.
- Educational opportunities related to the study should be made available.
- At least three high-tech or high-touch outreach methods should go beyond what has typically been used in the study area, (i.e., social media, videos, etc...).

