



## Public Awareness Plan

Prepared by:



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## 1.0 SITUATION ANALYSIS

### 1.1 The Objective of the SRTP

As described in the Atlanta Regional Commission’s SRTP Request for Proposals (released July 29, 2009), the SRTP’s stated objective is:

*To develop an innovative and sustainable thoroughfare network and management plan that will enhance the Region’s accountability for sustaining an acceptable level of service, and prioritizing future investment for the primary arterial system of the region, through the strengthening of the link between transportation planning and traffic management and operations.*

Implicit in this objective is the essential work of the plan itself. In the months ahead, the SRTP planning team will:

- Define the evaluation criteria for what constitutes a thoroughfare;
- Classify the thoroughfare network in the 18-county non-attainment area for metro Atlanta;<sup>1</sup>
- Identify the needs in order to sustain acceptable levels of service within the thoroughfare network; and
- Define arterial management guidelines, which will provide a means by which ARC can monitor and manage the future performance of the thoroughfare network.

These sub-objectives, in effect, will make it possible for the region to prioritize strategic investment in the region’s primary arterial system based on performance goals for the network as a whole. This kind of strategic approach was previously not possible given our limited understanding of the arterial system as a whole.

### 1.2 Communications Challenges and Opportunities

In considering the SRTP stated objective, it should be noted, at least from a perceptual level, that the greatest challenge facing the SRTP are the multitude of competing issues that are vying for the attention of stakeholders. From a planning perspective, the update of the regional transportation plan, PLAN 2040, is but one example. Other competing issues involve state and local budget shortfalls and a statewide elective office cycle.

To address the issues raised by PLAN 2040, every effort will be made to integrate the SRTP public awareness into PLAN 2040 outreach efforts. Recognizing that the SRTP is a

<sup>1</sup> The 18-county nonattainment area includes: Barrow, Bartow, Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, Coweta, DeKalb, Douglass, Forsyth, Henry, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Newton, Paulding, Rockdale, Spalding, and Walton.



small subset of the larger plan, it is anticipated that this strategy will expand the number of stakeholders that will become aware of the SRTP and its principal objective as part of PLAN 2040 outreach. However, the need to obtain substantive feedback from stakeholders will require outreach above and beyond PLAN 2040 outreach efforts. It is for this reason that this Public Awareness Plan is so critically important.

An additional challenge facing the SRTP planning team is that the definition and classification of a “thoroughfare” and metro Atlanta’s “thoroughfare network” are topics that stakeholders will come to with little if any pre-conceptions. In other words, “thoroughfare” and metro Atlanta’s “thoroughfare network” are blank pages or clean slates for our audiences. This is both a plus and a minus. On the positive side, the SRTP planning team is not encumbered with preconceived notions of what a thoroughfare should be since the concept presently eludes definition. Therefore, the process of defining specific criteria for a thoroughfare, defining the network and classifying the network are tasks that should be relatively straightforward. The downside to this task is that the SRTP planning team will be starting from scratch in building regional awareness of not only the network itself, but also the concept.

### 1.3 SRTP Background

The SRTP is unique from other previous ARC studies in that it will inform the region as to how to maintain and improve mobility performance of major arterial facilities collectively, recognizing that the system as a whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Additionally, it will identify more strategic land use and multimodal choices to correspond with desired mobility performance. This plan will also be the process for updating the Regional Strategic Transportation System (RSTS), adopted by the ARC Board in May 2006 (see Figure 2.1 for a visual representation of the RSTS as adopted in May 2006 and the “Future RSTS” to be considered for adoption by the ARC Board in 2011).

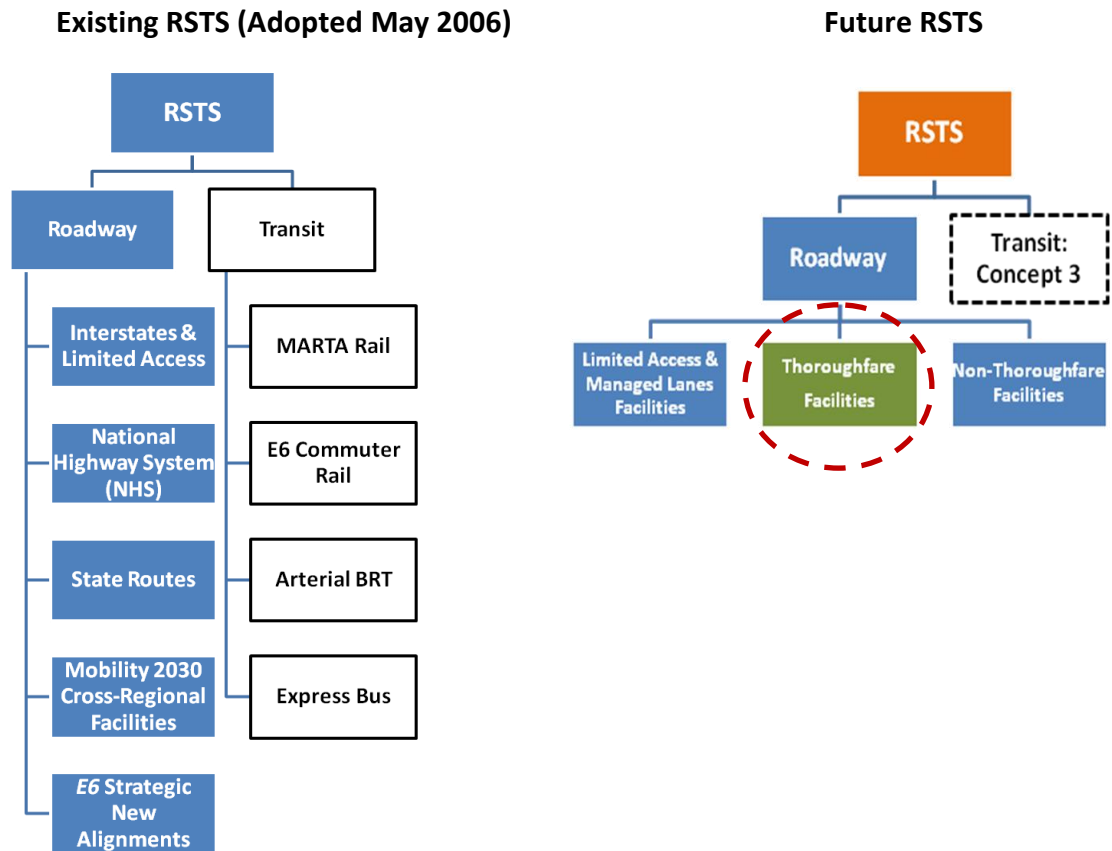
The culminating work of the plan will contribute significantly towards integrating management and operations into the regional planning process as recommended by the Congestion Management Process requirements of *SAFETEA-LU (23 C.F.R. §450.320)*. The result of the State of Georgia’s *Investing in Tomorrow’s Transportation Today Partnership (IT<sup>3</sup>)* is another motivating factor for developing the plan. The SRTP can help create a sense of ownership and accountability in preserving and maximizing thoroughfare system performance and utility among key stakeholders. This factor is crucial in keeping the Atlanta region economically competitive with the rest of the country.



ARC is the lead agency managing the study, as part of a regional partnership consisting of the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA), and the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) and other local transit operators. Other stakeholders include the counties and municipalities responsible for operating or managing these critical regional arterials.

The Strategic Regional Thoroughfare Plan is completely funded by the **American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)**, and was certified for eligibility by Governor Sonny Perdue in May, 2009.

**Figure 2.1**



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## 2.0 GOALS AND STAKEHOLDERS OF THE PUBLIC AWARENESS PLAN

### 2.1 Goals of the Public Awareness Plan

The goals of the SRTP Public Awareness Plan are to:

- Achieve the main objectives of the study.
- Introduce and provide information about the SRTP to build support among stakeholders (see 3.2).
- Raise awareness among stakeholders of the purpose, goals and benefits of the SRTP as a subset of PLAN 2040.
- Foster engagement among stakeholders in the SRTP process and, ultimately, cooperation in SRTP implementation.
- Inform the broader public indirectly through engagement of stakeholder groups.

### 2.2 Stakeholders of the Public Awareness Plan

In attempting to focus awareness activities where they can have the greatest impact, the SRTP planning team has identified five primary stakeholder groups. These groups include a practitioner stakeholder group, a business leader group, a local government leader group, a non-local government leader group and a state legislator group.

**Practitioner Stakeholder Group** – This group is comprised of the Management and Operations Subcommittee of the ARC Transportation Coordinating Committee. It will serve as the steering committee for the SRTP.

**Business Leader Group** – This group includes (but is not limited to) staff and members of the Metro Atlanta Chamber and the Regional Business Coalition. The Metro Atlanta Chamber, headed by Sam Williams, serves 4,000 member companies who employ one million workers in metropolitan Atlanta. The Regional Business Coalition, headed by Terry Lawler, is a consortium of 16 chambers of commerce in the 13-county metro Atlanta region. The Regional Business Coalition’s combined membership includes approximately 17,000 businesses.

**Local Government Leader Group** – This group includes (but is not limited to) representatives from the Metro Atlanta Mayors Association (MAMA), the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) and the third, fourth and fifth district members of the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG). At both the city and the county levels, there are a wide range of possible contacts. Each contact brings different points of view and possible constituencies. Our outreach will focus on elected office holders (county commission chairs, county commissioners, mayors and city councils), and managers and administrators as well as transportation department officials and public information officers where applicable.



**Non-Local Government Leader Group** – This group includes (but is not limited to) ARC’s Transportation Coordinating Committee, ARC’s Regional Transit Committee, the board and staff of the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority as well as representatives with the U.S. Federal Highway Administration.

**State Legislator Group** – This group includes House and Senate members for the study area (the 18-county metro Atlanta non-attainment area) as well as representatives on the House and Senate Transportation Committees.

From a social equity perspective, it should be noted that there is interest in expanding outreach beyond these identified groups to include those overlooked or marginalized audiences that might otherwise be neglected. Outreach to address social equity concerns includes outreach to ARC’s Social Equity Advisory Committee as well as outreach to social equity actors that fall within the broad sector categories listed above.



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## 3.0 MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT

### 3.1 Key Messages

Key messages should answer the basic questions that are likely to come from our primary stakeholder groups. These questions might include answers to some or all of the following:

- Why is the SRTP being done? Why is it important, what's the benefit?
- What is a thoroughfare? What characteristics define a roadway as a thoroughfare?
- Once identified, how will thoroughfares be classified? What factors will be considered in the classification scheme?
- What is the relationship between thoroughfares and the Regional Strategic Transportation System (RSTS)? Are all thoroughfares on the RSTS? What are the implications of a roadway being identified as a thoroughfare?
- What are the key phases of the project? When are the critical points where my input can help shape the plan? Where can I go to check up on the status of the SRTP?
- How does the SRTP relate to the PLAN 2040 update? How do the schedules for these efforts correlate with one another?
- How will the plan be implemented once it is complete?
- Ultimately, how will implementation help mitigate traffic and improve quality of life in metro Atlanta?

### 3.2 Issue Management

The key messages that will be developed in response to the questions as identified above will set the tone of our public engagement efforts. However, given the dynamic scope of the SRTP, other issues and/or concerns may arise that will require prompt response. For that reason, we will approach messaging with a degree of flexibility. Each exchange with a stakeholder is an opportunity to share our message with an audience. It is also an opportunity to listen and learn. Along the way, there are various reasons to develop additional messages as various circumstances arise. These include negative circumstances that might challenge the success of the overall project as well as positive instances where feedback can be utilized to improve our messages as the SRTP progresses. The goal is to connect with our stakeholders and to listen at least as much as we find ourselves speaking.



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## 4.0 OUTREACH STRATEGY

### 4.1 Types of Outreach

The types of outreach that will be utilized as part of the SRTP fall into four broad categories:

- **Face-to-Face Meetings** – These include individual and small group meetings that are organized and executive by the project team as well as board and committee meetings of various stakeholder groups.
- **General Outreach** – General outreach includes providing information about the SRTP in newsletters, e-newsletters and email updates and other communication vehicles from trusted third parties.
- **Media Outreach** – Outreach to reporters within the study area offer a possible avenue to spread the word about the SRTP through the media by leveraging local press contacts. In addition, publications like Georgia Engineer offer a chance to reach targeted stakeholders through publications they subscribe to.
- **Integration with ARC Outreach Activities** – The ARC Website, ACTION Newsletter and other ARC-related communications tools offer a chance to connect with audiences that ARC is already reaching. Plan 2040 offers a range of different types of tactical opportunities to educate audiences about the SRTP.

### 4.2 Outreach Database & Results Report

To document the outreach activities, an outreach database and results report will be created that describes specific outreach efforts to target audiences by date, as well as feedback received. This database will be provided to the client at the end of the project.

### 4.3 Timeline

The Public Awareness Plan has three distinct phases that correspond with major milestones of the SRTP. At each of these phases, outreach will be conducted to the business leader group, the local government group and the non-local government group. During this timeframe, interaction is anticipated to occur with the practitioner stakeholder group at on an even more frequent basis. The state legislator group, in contrast, will be reached only once when it is likely to garner the most engagement.

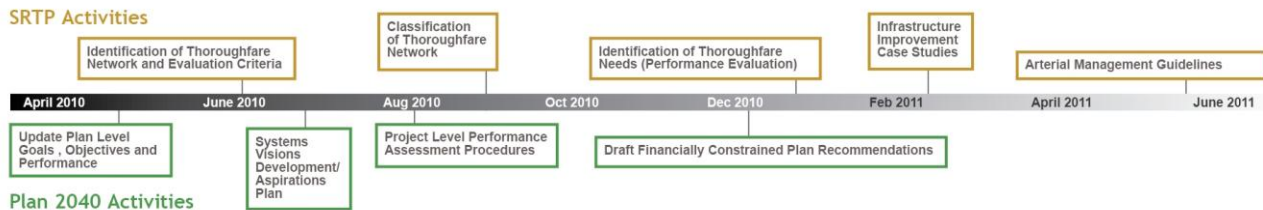
The initial phase is focused on making key audiences aware of the SRTP planning process, the criteria for defining thoroughfares and the identification of the thoroughfare network. This effort begins in May and will run through the end of August.



The second phase is focused on the classification of the network and reconnecting with audiences that are already aware of the plan and its general intent. This effort will begin in September and will run through the end of November.

The third phase is focused on generating feedback on the identified thoroughfare needs and the draft plan recommendations. This effort will begin in February and will run until the end of May.

Beyond the phases of engagement that have just been described, there will also be an effort to reach out to five geographic communities that will be the subject of the case studies that will be developed as part of this project. Once the locations of these case studies are identified, stakeholders for each case study area will be identified. Outreach to stakeholders in each area will be carried out in three distinct phases: at the beginning of the case study effort, at the mid-point and once the case study has been completed. It is estimated that case studies will begin in early 2011 and will be completed by the end of March 2011. In addition to informing stakeholders that are the subjects of each case study, these case studies will also be used to educate regional stakeholders as thoroughfare needs are considered and the draft plan is refined.



#### 4.4 Support Materials

Support materials that will be developed as a part of this plan shall include, but may not be limited to:

- SRTP Fact Sheet
- PowerPoint Presentations
- ARC Website Content
- Press Releases
- Talking Points
- Organization Newsletter Articles
- Informational Maps and Displays
- Other materials as needed

