

## **MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Mayor and City Council

**From:** Michael Smith, Public Works Director

**Date:** April 21, 2014

**Subject:** **Discussion of Chamblee Dunwoody at Spalding Intersection Improvement Project**

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### **ITEM DESCRIPTION**

Discussion of conceptual design alternatives for the Chamblee Dunwoody at Spalding Intersection Improvement Project

### **BACKGROUND**

The intersection of Chamblee Dunwoody Road and Spalding Drive was identified as a priority project in the city's Comprehensive Transportation Plan adopted in 2011 with the primary goal being to improve the safety of the intersection. A significant number of dangerous, side impact type crashes occur on a regular basis as vehicles turn left from Spalding onto Chamblee Dunwoody southbound as illustrated in the attached sketch.

The geometry of the intersection and the limited visibility to the south are contributing factors to the frequency of the accidents. In 2010, the city added a left turn arrow to provide for a protected left turn at the beginning of the green phase for Spalding Drive which reduced the accident frequency. However, serious accidents continue to occur at a rate which warrants further improvements. Also, the lack of a left turn lane will have an increasingly negative impact on the operation of the intersection in the future. Finally, the intersection has marked pedestrian crosswalks but lacks pedestrian signals.

The city has contracted with Southeastern Engineering, Inc. (SEI) to develop conceptual alternatives to improve this intersection. SEI has reviewed the existing conditions, obtained traffic counts during the peak morning and afternoon hours, and reviewed the accident history for the Spalding and Chamblee Dunwoody intersection as well as the intersections of Spalding and Dunwoody Road and Chamblee Dunwoody and Dunwoody Road.

### **Public Involvement**

The city has conducted extensive public outreach for this project. Before beginning any design work, the city met with representatives of the four neighborhoods adjacent to the intersection: Oakpointe Place, Woodland Forest, Spalding Club and Redfield. The attendees at each meeting asked what the biggest problem was with the intersection and what their concerns were with the proposed project. Safety was consistently identified as the biggest problem and concerns included vehicle speeds, overall traffic levels and the backups that

occur in the afternoon on Spalding Drive northbound. Many residents were familiar with one of the previous concepts to improve the intersection by rerouting Chamblee Dunwoody via Dunwoody Road and were opposed to this idea.

After the initial round of neighborhood meetings, three concepts were developed for the intersection. The city then contacted property owners adjacent to the intersection that could be directly impacted by any of the three alternative designs. A public meeting was advertised and held on February 25, 2014 to present the three concepts and gather additional input.

Over 40 written comments have been received as a result of the public meeting. Based on the comments there is consensus that a safety improvement is needed at the intersection but opinions varied on the three concepts presented. Many respondents expressed support for Option C but this option also received some of the strongest negative reaction.

At the request of residents in Oakpointe Place, the city's staff and consultant had an additional meeting with the neighborhood subsequent to the public meeting. Some of the residents expressed concerns with Option C and how it would affect access to the neighborhood.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

The public involvement efforts helped shape the initial concepts for the intersection. The previously developed concept of rerouting Chamblee Dunwoody Road to Dunwoody Road was eliminated from consideration due to the input received from the neighborhood meetings. A roundabout was also initially considered as recommended in the city's transportation plan but determined to not be a good fit for the layout of the existing intersection.

The three alternatives shown below have been developed as viable solutions to improve the safety of the intersection. Options B and C extend into the City of Sandy Springs and would require their support and financial participation. Both cities' staff have been in communication throughout the concept development and public involvement process.

1. Option A (revised to provide adequate visibility)- Add full left turn lane southbound on Spalding Drive, add short turn bay northbound, add bike lanes within project limits, add sidewalk northbound on Spalding, provide pedestrian signals.  
*Estimated Cost: Right of Way/Easements- \$80,000, Utility Relocation: \$40,000, Construction- \$950,000, Total- \$1,075,000*
2. Option B- Add turning lanes at intersection similar to Option A, flatten the elevations on Spalding Drive to provide adequate sight distance at Chamblee Dunwoody and also at Dunwoody Road in Sandy Springs, add bike lanes with project limits.  
*Estimated Cost: Right of Way/Easements- \$150,000, Utility Relocation: \$30,000, Construction- \$1,150,000, Total- \$1,330,000*
3. Option C- Convert Spalding to one way southbound between Chamblee Dunwoody and Dunwoody Road, convert Dunwoody Road to one way eastbound, convert Chamblee Dunwoody to one way northbound between Dunwoody Road and Spalding, add bike lanes within project limits.  
*Estimated Cost: Right of Way/Easements- \$170,000, Utility Relocation: \$5,000, Construction- \$725,000, Total- \$900,000*

While the basic concept for each of the three alternatives has not changed, the design team

has refined the concepts based on the comments and input received from the public. Most significantly, the initial version of Option A did not address the poor visibility for the southbound left turn and therefore staff could not initially support it. With some modifications, this alternative now provides adequate visibility.

### **RECOMMENDED ACTION**

All three alternatives would provide the needed safety improvements at the Chamblee Dunwoody and Spalding intersection and would be consistent with the city's transportation plan and Complete Streets Policy. Option B would result in the highest cost for Dunwoody and would require a significant investment by Sandy Springs. Although Option C is the least cost option for Dunwoody, it requires funding from Sandy Springs and would result in a major change to the traffic patterns in the area.

Staff recommends Option A based on these considerations and considering that this alternative has the least impact on adjacent property owners and existing traffic patterns. Staff requests that Council authorize the City Manager to execute a contract modification with SEI for final design and construction documents for the project.