

The Northeast Georgia Regional Commission (NEGRC) has completed its review of the following Development of Regional Impact (DRI). This report contains the NEGRC’s assessment of how the proposed project relates to the policies, programs, and projects articulated in the Regional Plan and Regional Resource Plan. Also included is an assessment of likely interjurisdictional impacts resulting from the proposed development, as well as all comments received from identified affected parties and others during the fifteen-day comment period.

The materials presented in this report are purely advisory and under no circumstances should be considered as binding or infringing upon the host jurisdiction’s right to determine for itself the appropriateness of development within its boundaries.

Transmittal of this DRI report officially completes the DRI process. The submitting local government may proceed with whatever final official actions it deems appropriate regarding the proposed project, but it is encouraged to take the materials presented in the DRI report into consideration when rendering its decision.

Project I.D.:	DRI #3936
Name of Project:	7-Eleven and Peterbilt Dealership
Name of Host Jurisdiction:	Jackson County

Background

The developer’s request for rezoning to HRC (Highway Retail Commercial District) and a special use permit for the truck stop initiated the review. Potentially affected parties were asked to submit comments on the proposal during the 15-day period of 3/17/23–4/1/23.

Proposed Development

Axis Hutton is proposing the construction of a 4,872-square-foot 7-Eleven convenience store, a 30,530-square-foot Peterbilt truck sale facility, 16 regular fueling locations, and 4 diesel semi-truck fueling locations on a 15.8-acre site in Jackson County. The parcel numbers of the proposed site are 078/009A and 065/001. The diesel pumping station area includes 9 truck parking spaces, a truck weight scale, and the convenience store. The regular fueling pump area include 59 regular parking spaces, a solid waste collection area, and an interstate sign to advertise the 7-Eleven and Peterbilt dealership. The Peterbilt portion of the site would have 116 combined parking spots which include 62 tractor parking spaces, 16 trailer parking spaces, and 38 car parking spaces. The proposed site includes 4 entrances to the site. The 7-Eleven convenience store has entrances from both Holly Springs Road and Bill Wright Road. The diesel pump station has an entrance along Holly Springs Road, and this entrance provides through-access to the Peterbilt dealership. The last entrance along Holly Springs Road provides access to the Peterbilt dealership via a driveway that runs along the western edge of the site. In total, the combined convenience store and diesel pump areas cover 3.9 acres of the site, the Peterbilt Dealership covers 5.56 acres of the site, and common areas comprise 3.24 acres of the site. 3.09 acres of the site have been set aside as an available outparcel. The site plan proposes two stormwater pond areas to manage the site’s stormwater. Currently, the site is entirely wooded. The project would be completed in one phase. If the project is approved, the project would be completed in approximately nine months.

Compatibility with Existing Plans

The site is identified as “Urban” on the county's Character Areas Map (dated 12/2/2020). The Jackson County Comprehensive Plan states that the overarching principle of the “Urban” character area is facilitating efficient growth and adequate public facilities. Residential, multi-family housing, institutional, commercial, and industrial land uses are encouraged in these areas. The proposed development is generally compatible with the Urban character area description. Commercial land use as well as the desired Highway Retail Commercial zoning designation are permissible under this character area. The development will also be serviced by sewer and water, which is required in the Urban character area. The proposed site plan does not include sidewalks, which are required in this character area. However, the area surrounding the site is primarily industrial and warehousing land uses, which does not typically receive extensive pedestrian infrastructure.

The site is also identified as “Commercial” on the county's Future Land Use Map (dated 9/10/2020). The “Commercial” land use is described in the Jackson County Comprehensive Plan as “lands dedicated to non-industrial businesses uses, including retail sales, offices, services and entertainment facilities.” The proposed site is compatible with the “Commercial” land use designation of Urban character areas, as highway retail commercial land uses are permissible in these areas. The Jackson County Comprehensive plan states that properties with frontage on Interstate 85 should “maintain trees immediately adjacent to the interstate right of way, to buffer noise emanating from the interstate highway and reduce impacts noise will have on nearby properties.” The developer should consider adding trees and vegetation along the property's east and southeastern boundaries to fulfill this purpose.

The site is identified as “Developed” on the Northeast Georgia Regional Plan's Regional Land Use Map (dated 6/7/2018). The Regional Plan recommends development that matches the region's workforce, prices in the lifecycle cost of infrastructure, creates a sense of place, builds a compact development pattern on existing infrastructure, creates diverse and affordable housing, and complements existing and planned transportation options—especially non-automobile transportation modes. The applicant states that the project can be staffed with the region's existing workforce. No information was provided in the application that would enable a determination of whether the proposal prices in the lifecycle cost of infrastructure. The proposed gas station and car dealership do little to create a sense of place or compact development. However, the surrounding area is primarily an industrial and warehousing area, so a sense of place and compact development are lower priorities. Similarly, alternative transportation access such as walking and bicycling are not as important in this area due to its industrial characteristics and location adjacent to Interstate 85. The developer states that additional transportation infrastructure will need to be built to service the site, which includes a deceleration lane and a left turn lane along Holly Springs Road. There are additional opportunities for improving site circulation and pedestrian safety within the site. The developer should ensure that there is a clear pedestrian path between the diesel pumping station and the 7-Eleven convenience store to ensure the safety of truck drivers visiting the store. Additionally, the developer should consider adding an additional entrance to the Peterbilt facility from Bill Wright Road, as this will provide another area to enter and exit the site and ease congestion at the other access points.

Potential Interjurisdictional Impacts

The applicant states that the project is unlikely to affect any of the environmental quality factors identified on the DRI Additional Form, including water supply watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, wetlands, protected mountain and river corridors, floodplains, historic resources, and other environmentally sensitive resources. The proposal should be designed to minimize disruption to the existing streams, associated

wetlands, and floodplains to avoid future erosion, flooding, and degraded water quality onsite and downstream from the site. Low impact design measures, like bioswales, rain gardens, and other green infrastructure should be incorporated into the project design. At minimum, the project should be in accordance with the latest edition of the Georgia Stormwater Management Manual (Blue Book) and meet all relevant EPD requirements.

The National Wetland Inventory (NWI) identifies zero wetland acres onsite and 81 wetland acres are located within one mile of the site. The Northeast Georgia Regional Plan's Conservation and Development Map (dated 7/19/2018) identifies zero acres of "Conservation" land onsite and 81 acres of "Conservation" land within one mile of the site. This "Conservation" land includes zero acres of Regionally Important Resource land onsite and 37 acres of RIR land within one mile of the site. No specific Regionally Important Resource sites are identified within one mile of the proposed site.

Using the ITE TripGen web-based app, the applicant anticipates that the proposed project will add approximately 76.4 additional AM peak hour and PM peak hour trips. No formal traffic study has been conducted for this proposed site. The project would be served by the Jackson County Water and Sewerage Authority water and sewer systems with an estimated daily demand of 0.003 MGD for each system. The applicant states that these demands can be covered by existing capacity. No water or sewer line extensions are anticipated. An estimated 46.6% of the site would be covered in impervious surfaces, and 2 stormwater ponds are planned to manage stormwater runoff. The applicant estimates the project would generate 100 tons of solid waste annually and that sufficient landfill capacity exists to handle this waste. According to the Northeast Georgia Regional Solid Waste Authority's Regional Solid Waste Management Plan (2021-2031), almost all municipal solid waste (MSW) generated in Jackson County is disposed of in a landfill in Banks County. The Peterbilt facility will perform truck maintenance activities which will result in the collection of hazardous waste. The facility will have a contract with a company specializing in the removal of these waste products to prevent mixture into the MSW waste stream.

The applicant estimates that the project would be worth \$17,237,400 at build-out and generate \$233,359 in annual local taxes. On a per-acre basis, the project would be worth approximately \$1,090,974 and generate approximately \$14,769 in tax revenue. Prior to approval, the County should measure the life cycle costs of the infrastructure needed to serve this project to ensure that they would not be committing to more maintenance expenses than the new tax revenue can pay for.

Comments from Affected Parties

None received