

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 #4228
Name of Project:	Hwy 124/Maddox Road
Name of Host Jurisdiction:	Jackson County

Background

DRI review was initiated following the developer’s request for rezoning the property from A-2 (Agricultural Rural Farm District) to HRC (Highway Retail Commercial). Potentially affected parties were asked to submit comments on the proposal during the 15-day period of 7/18/2024 to 8/02/2024.

Proposed Development

The applicant is proposing construction of 3,000-4,000 square feet of Highway Commercial space on a 15.58-acre site in Jackson County. The proposed development would include a convenience store, a trucking drop lot, and a baseball training facility. The trucking drop-lot would be used to store and alternate shipping trailers and is determined to fall under the “Truck Stops” development type under the DRI Thresholds. Currently, the site is primarily woodlands with two single-family, detached homes. The parcel number is 112 020, and it is located at the intersection of Highway 124 and Maddox/Tom White Road. The project would be completed in one phase and is estimated to take two years to complete.

Compatibility with Existing Plans

The site is identified as Residential on the County’s Future Land Use Map and the character area is identified as Urban on the County’s Future Character Area Map (dated 12/2/2020). The Residential land use category is described in the Jackson County Comprehensive Plan as “includes dwellings of all types. Most commonly, they consist of single family, detached dwelling units on individual lots, but the type of housing unit (e.g., stick-built versus modular or manufactured) is not differentiated according to this future land use category.” Within the Urban character areas, residential designations “may include higher density housing, including duplexes, triplexes, townhouses,

apartments, and residential condominiums.”

The proposed development is not compatible with the County’s Future Land Use or Future Character Areas designations. According to the Jackson County Comprehensive Plan, the urban character area does not include Highway Retail Commercial as a compatible zone for residential land use. The residential land use category includes single-family, medium density residential, and multi-family residential zones. There are two existing homes located on the proposed development’s site that would be displaced as a result of the development.

The site is identified as “Developing” on the Northeast Georgia Regional Plan’s Regional Land Use Map (dated 6/15/2023). The Regional Plan recommends development that:

- Enhances economic mobility and competitiveness
- Elevates public health and equity
- Supports and adds value to existing communities
- Creates housing that is diverse, adequate, equitable, and affordable
- Includes transportation choices and is well-connected with existing and planned transportation options, and
- Protects natural and historic resources.

The following table outlines the proposals alignment with these recommendations:

REGIONAL PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS	PROPOSED PROJECT’S COMPATIBILITY WITH RECOMMENDATION
Enhances economic mobility and competitiveness	The proposed development would increase economic competitiveness in the area by creating a commercial center that attracts highway traffic and creates employment opportunities.
Elevates public health and equity	The baseball training facility proposed in the plan would elevate public health for surrounding residents by creating an outlet for recreation. Although, it is unknown whether the facility would be privately- or publicly-accessible.
Supports and adds value to existing communities	Portions of the proposed development could add value to the community by providing a baseball training facility and convenience store that nearby residents can use.
Creates housing that is diverse, adequate, equitable, and affordable	Not applicable to this project type. One mobile home and one single-family, detached home would be displaced as a result of the project.
Includes transportation choices and is well-connected with existing and planned transportation options	The proposal does not include any contributions to transportation choices but is appropriately placed for heavy truck use by being located along a state route that is expected to be widened to four-lanes and is within 2 miles of an intersection with Interstate-85. The site is also adjacent to several large-scale distribution facilities that the drop-lot would likely serve as support to.
Protects natural and historic resources	The proposal does not include any elements that would contribute to the protection of natural or historic resources. There are no Regionally Important Resources located within one mile of this site. Also, there are no National Register or locally-designated historic districts or sites within one mile of the site.

Potential Interjurisdictional Impacts

Natural Resources

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. Refer to the attached site plan for any stream, floodplain, and buffer locations.

The chart below summarizes the number of acres within the site area as well as within a one-mile buffer around the site that contains 1) wetlands, 2) conservation land, 3) regionally important resources, and 4) threatened regionally important resources. Please refer to the footnotes for definitions for each of these terms.

Wetland, Conservation, and Regionally Important Resources

	Area Type	Area (Acres)	Percent of Area (%)
SITE AREA 15.6	Wetland Acres ¹	0	0.0
	“Conservation Land” ²	7.3	46.9
	Regionally Important Resource Land ³	0	0.0
	Threatened Regionally Important Resource Land ⁴	7.3	46.9
1 MILE BUFFER AROUND SITE 1723.5	Wetland Acres	31.9	1.9
	“Conservation Land”	549.8	31.9
	Regionally Important Resource Land	235.1	13.6
	Threatened Regionally Important Resource Land	545.1	31.6

The Regionally Important Resource Land located within one mile of the site is part of the Northeast Georgia Green Infrastructure Network as identified in the Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources (dated 8/7/2018). No specific Regionally Important Resource sites are identified within one mile of the proposed site.

Transportation

The local government projects 2,976 new daily trips, including 239 PM peak hour trips from the proposed development. No traffic study has been completed for the proposed development, and engineered plans will determine whether there is any need for transportation improvements to serve this project.

The site plan includes a full access driveway and deceleration lane off of SR-124 to enter the retail/convenience store area, as well as a full access lane off of Maddox Road to enter the drop lot and baseball training facility. The commercial area, drop lot and baseball training facility will all be connected internally throughout the development via shared access drives. The County and the Georgia Department of Transportation should

¹ Wetland acres are derived from the National Wetland Inventory (NWI)

² “Conservation” land is derived from the Northeast Georgia Regional Plan’s Conservation and Development Map (6/15/2023).

³ Regionally Important Resources were identified as a part of the Northeast Georgia Resource Management Plan for Regionally Important Resources (2/15/2018).

⁴ This area represents the intersection between Conservation areas (identified on the Conservation and Development Map, 6/15/2023), adopted Regionally Important Resources (RIR), and “Developed” and “Developing” Regional Land Use areas (identified on the Regional Land Use Map, 6/15/2023).

examine the potential effects to the intersection of SR-124, Maddox Road, and Tom White Road to determine if the increased truck traffic warrants additional safety improvements prior to approval, additionally noted below in comments received for this review.

Water Supply and Wastewater

For the water supply, the project would be served by the Jackson County Water and Sewerage Authority with an estimated daily demand of 0.0066 MGD. For sewer, Braselton Sewer would be the wastewater treatment provider with an estimated daily demand of 0.0066 MGD as well. The applicant states that these demands can be covered by existing capacity. No water or sewer line extensions are anticipated.

Stormwater Management

An estimated 65% of the site would be covered in impervious surfaces. The number of retention ponds planned to manage stormwater runoff have not yet been determined. No stormwater management infrastructure is indicated on the site plan.

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.

Solid Waste

The applicant estimates the project would generate 5 tons of solid waste annually and that sufficient landfill capacity exists to handle this waste. According to annual tonnage reports from the Georgia Environmental Protection Division, most municipal solid waste (MSW) generated in Jackson County is disposed of in a landfill in Banks County. The applicant states that no hazardous waste would be generated.

Lifecycle Costs and Revenues

The applicant estimates that the project would be worth \$4,000,000 at build-out and generate \$44,248 in annual local taxes. On a per-acre basis, the project would be worth approximately \$255,102 and generate approximately \$2,822 in tax revenue. Prior to approval, the County and other service providers 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 cover.

Comments from Affected Parties

Jonathan Peevy, P.E., District Traffic Engineer, Georgia Department of Transportation

- The developer will be required to submit for and acquire a GDOT commercial driveway permit if the proposed location meets our requirements and standards (ex: sight distance, turn lanes, driveway spacing, internal movements, etc.)
- They will also need to investigate the intersection with Maddox/Tom White as they will have significant impacts to that intersection.
- GDOT/Jackson County are working on the reconstruction/widening project for SR 124 through this corridor.

Alan Hood, Airport Safety Data Program Manager, Georgia Department of Transportation

The proposed construction of Highway Commercial space that includes a trucking drop-lot and a baseball training facility on a 15.58-acre tract zoned A-2 is 9.5 miles from the Barrow County Airport (WDR). It is located outside any FAA approach or departure surfaces, and airport compatible land use areas, and does not appear to impact any airport.

If any construction equipment or construction exceeds 200' AGL, an FAA Form 7460-1 must be submitted to the Federal Aviation Administration according to the FAA's Notice Criteria Tool found here (<https://oeaaa.faa.gov/oeaaa/external/gisTools/gisAction.jsp?action=showNoNoticeRequiredToolForm>). Those submissions for any associated cranes may be done online at <https://oeaaa.faa.gov>. The FAA must be in receipt of the notifications, no later than 120 days prior to construction. The FAA will evaluate the potential impacts of the project on protected airspace associated with the airports and advise the proponent if any action is necessary.

Justin Lott, P.E., District Preconstruction Engineer, Georgia Department of Transportation

- There is one long range project to widen SR 124 from Josh Pirkle Road to SR 11/US 129 (PI 0007663).
- A Braselton-Hoschton Area Mobility study has recently been finalized by the GDOT Planning Office. The results of that study will likely impact the priority and scheduling of projects in the area. Projects shown below. Link: [BHAM Study](#)
- Jackson County has expressed an interest in prioritizing the SR 60 interchange and widening SR 124 from Braselton to SR 332, through the addition of local funds, if TSplost passes.
- Recommend keeping permanent structures and underground storage tanks as far back from SR 124 on the site as possible, so impacts from a possible widening project are reduced.
- Recommend increasing left turn lane storage on the SR 124 east approach as much as possible within right of way.

Table 8-1. Recommended Projects' Cost Estimates and Prioritization for Implementation

Improvement	PE	ROW	UTL	CST	Total	Potential Sequencing
Regional Connectivity Improvements (\$ nearest million)						
Widen SR 124 from SR 211 to SR 332 (4 lanes)	\$8	\$8	\$6	\$65	\$87	Second
Widen SR 211 to from I-85 to West Winder Bypass (4-6 lanes)	\$11	\$11	\$8	\$87	\$117	Second
Construct an interchange at SR 60 and widen SR 60 from I-85 to SR 124 (4 lanes)	\$3	\$18	\$2	\$23	\$46	Third
Extend SR 60 from SR 124 to SR 53 (2 lanes)	\$3	\$8	\$2	\$23	\$36	Third
Widen SR 124 from SR 211 to Spout Springs Road (4 lanes)	\$7	\$14	\$6	\$60	\$87	Third
TOTAL					\$373	
Local Operational Improvements (\$ nearest thousand)						
Widen SR 53 from two- to four-lanes between the intersections of SR 124 and New Cut Rd.	\$1,170	\$5,474	\$908	\$9,553	\$17,105	First
Modify and upgrade the SR 53 at New Cut Road roundabout to multi-lane.	\$372	\$2,053	\$289	\$3,041	\$5,755	First
Close SR 53 at Zion Church Road	\$26	--	\$20	\$215	\$261	First
Retime/improve signal phasing at SR 53 at Davis Street	\$30	--	\$23	\$246	\$299	First
Signalize the intersection of SR 53 at Twin Lakes Boulevard	\$36	--	\$28	\$297	\$361	First
Add a dedicated right turn lane on Jackson Trail Road at the intersection with SR 53	\$55	--	\$43	\$448	\$546	First
At the intersection of SR 332 and SR 124, widen SR 124 to four lanes and add a dedicated right turn lane on SR 332 northbound	\$746	\$2,224	\$579	\$6,087	\$9,636	First
Signalize the intersection of SR 53 at Peachtree Road	\$36	--	\$28	\$297	\$361	Second
Signalize the intersection at East Jefferson Street	\$36	--	\$28	\$297	\$361	Third
Signalize the intersection of SR 53 at East Broad Street	\$61	--	\$143	\$501	\$705	Third
Improvements to SR 53 at Towne Center Parkway, Industrial Boulevard, and SR 332/Pendergrass Road	\$352	\$7,323	\$273	\$2,876	\$10,825	Third
TOTAL					\$46,215	

*Note: Improvements to SR 53 include: align Towne Center Parkway with Industrial Boulevard, Reroute SR 332/Pendergrass Road traffic to Towne Center Parkway, close SR 53 at existing Pendergrass Road, and signalize the new intersection of SR 53 at Industrial Boulevard and SR 332/Towne Center Parkway/Pendergrass Road

8.1.1 Long-Range Projects

Projects included in the ARC and GHMPO Regional Transportation Plans were analyzed to determine if they are consistent with the recommendations provided in this study. Table 8-2 shows the long-range

projects located in the study area and whether the study team recommends that they remain, be modified, or removed.

Table 8-2. Analysis of Regional Transportation Plans

PI Number	Project Description	MPO	Recommended to Remain, Be Modified, or Removed
0013086	New interchange at SR 60 at I-85	Gainesville	Remain
0007830	Widen SR 211 from SR 124 to SR 11 from 2 lanes to 4 lanes	ARC	Modify limits of the project to begin at I-85 and end at the West Winder Bypass
0014927	Widen SR 124 from E of Hamilton Mill Pkwy to Wheeler Road from 2 to 4 lanes	ARC	Modify project limits to begin at Spout Springs Road and end at Wheeler Road
0007833	Widen SR 124 from Gwinnett County Line to Jackson County Line from 2 to 4 lanes	Gainesville	Remain
0007663	Widen SR 124 from Josh Pirkle Rd to SR 11 from 2 to 4 lane	Gainesville	Modify project limits to begin at Josh Pirkle and end at SR 332
0008434	Widen SR 53 from I-85 to Tapp Wood Rd from 2 to 4 lanes	Gainesville	Modify limits to begin at New Cut Road and end at Jackson Trail Road.
0013310	Widen SR 53 from I-85 to SR 211 from 2 to 4 lanes	Gainesville	Remove