

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 #4496
Name of Project:	JP Travel Center
Name of Host Jurisdiction:	Social Circle

Background

DRI review was initiated following the developer's request for a rezone from Commercial Highway (CH) to Business District (BUS) and Heavy Industrial District (HI), a variance, a special use permit, and an annexation into the City of Social Circle from Newton County. Potentially affected parties were asked to submit comments on the proposal during the 15-day period of 6/18/2025 to 7/3/2025.

Proposed Development

William B. Jones and JPC Design and Construction LLC are proposing construction of 86,274 square feet of commercial space on an approximately 46-acre site in Social Circle. The development would include a convenience store, hotel, restaurant, travel center, tractor trailer site, Southern Tire Mart, 48 fueling stations, and 3 parcels reserved for future development. The site plan includes 408 parking spaces and 22 bus parking spaces. The site would have two entrances on State Route 11. The proposed development would occupy property in the southeast corner of the I-20/State Route 11 intersection in Social Circle. The parcel number is 0112 017 and the site is currently undeveloped. The project would be completed in one phase with an estimated completion date in December 2026.

Compatibility with Existing Plans

Compatibility with Regional Plan

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 proposal's alignment with these recommendations:

REGIONAL PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS	PROPOSED PROJECT'S COMPATIBILITY WITH RECOMMENDATION
Enhances economic mobility and competitiveness	The applicant states that the regional workforce is sufficient to meet the demand created for the proposed project.
Elevates public health and equity	The proposed new diesel fueling facility would be located near residential neighborhoods. The developer should take precautions to manage fuel spills and minimize the release of air pollutants during refueling to protect the health of nearby residents.
Supports and adds value to existing communities	The proposed commercial travel center would provide hotel, restaurant, and auto services to the community. The proposed 48 fueling stations would also add to the diesel fueling capacity of the area.
Creates housing that is diverse, adequate, equitable, and affordable	Not applicable to this project type.
Includes transportation choices and is well- connected with existing and planned transportation options	The proposed development includes two entrances on SR 11 and is intended to support interstate travel along I-20. There are no sidewalks indicated on the site plan. According to comments submitted by the Georgia Department of Transportation, the traffic study is outdated and needs to be updated (see comment section below).
Protects natural and historic resources	<p>There is a stream, and a wetland located on the proposed site. The proposal includes 35-foot buffers around these areas but does not include any further contributions to the protection of natural resources. The developer should consider incorporating permeable pavement, stormwater drain sleeves, and other water retention methods throughout the site to mitigate point source pollution and other stormwater runoff effects.</p> <p>The Brick Store is a historic resource located less than one mile from the proposed site. The proposed development would not directly impact this historic resource. However, the proposal would increase traffic volume and commercial activity, which could alter the rural and agricultural character of the area surrounding the Brick Store.</p>

Compatibility with Regional Resource Management Plan

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 (46 Acres)	Wetland Acres ¹	0	0%
	“Conservation Land” ²	25	56%
	Regionally Important Resource Land ³	0	0%
	Threatened Regionally Important Resource Land ⁴	25	56%
1 MILE BUFFER AROUND SITE (2,844 Acres)	Wetland Acres	73	2.6%
	“Conservation Land”	1,622	57%
	Regionally Important Resource Land	0.7	0%
	Threatened Regionally Important Resource Land	1,334	46.9%

The Brick Store is a Regionally Important Resource located within one mile of the proposed development. As stated, The proposed development would not directly impact this historic resource. However, the proposal would increase traffic volume and commercial activity, which could alter the rural and agricultural character of the area surrounding the Brick Store.

Potential Interjurisdictional Impacts

Natural Resources and Stormwater Management

There is a stream and wetland on the proposed site, and the site is located within the Little River Watershed Protection District. The applicant states that an estimated 42% of the site would be covered in impervious surfaces. The development would include a detention pond and 35-foot buffers around the stream and wetland area. The proposal will need to follow the requirements of the local Watershed Protection District. It should also 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 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.

Transportation

Traffic Impact Group, LLC completed a traffic impact study that projects 5,712 new daily trips, including 345 AM peak hour trips and 404 PM peak hour trips from the proposed development. The traffic study recommends requesting a waiver of GDOT access spacing guidelines for Site Driveway A (the northernmost driveway), because powerline easements and internal circulation prevent the project’s driveway from aligning with the BP driveway across SR 11. It also recommends installing a traffic signal at the SR 11/I-20 North Ramp intersection and clearing the tree line south of Site Driveway B to provide sight distance.

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).

Water Supply and Wastewater

The project would be served by the Newton County Water and Sewer Authority with an estimated daily demand of 0.033 MGD for each system. The applicant states that these demands can be covered by existing capacity. No water or sewer line extensions are anticipated.

Solid Waste

The applicant estimates the project would generate 105 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, almost all municipal solid waste (MSW) generated in Newton County is disposed of in a landfill in Newton County. The applicant states that no hazardous waste would be generated.

Lifecycle Costs and Revenues

The applicant estimates that the project would be worth \$50 million at build-out in 2026 and generate \$3 million in annual local taxes. On a per-acre basis, the project would be worth approximately \$1,086,956 and generate approximately \$65,217 in tax revenue. Prior to approval, the City 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

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

This proposed travel center in Social Circle is approximately 5.2 miles from Covington Municipal Airport (CVC). It is located outside of the FAA approach or departure surfaces, and airport compatible land use areas, and does not appear to impact the airport as long as construction or construction equipment does not exceed 100' above ground level.

If any construction equipment or construction exceeds 100' 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/oe3a/main/#/noticePrescreen>). 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.

Joya McCants, District Traffic Operations Manager, Georgia Department of Transportation

- The referenced traffic study is outdated and needs to be updated.
- Sight distance for trucks needs to be accounted for, and met, based off AASHTO guidelines.
 - Show line of sight, and it needs to be within GDOT's R/W.

Shena Applewhaite, Director, Newton County Department of Development Services

2009 Zoning Ordinance

Development Services

Newton County's position is that the subject property is not contiguous to the municipal limits of Social Circle, and is therefore not eligible for annexation into the City of Social Circle. No property adjacent to the subject property that could serve to provide contiguity to the Social Circle municipal limits has been properly annexed into the City of Social Circle.

Please see below for further comments from the County.

On 08/17/2021, The Board of Commissioners approved a request for a Conditional Use Permit with conditions to allow a convenience store with underground fuel tanks within the Little River Watershed Protections District. The footprint was substantially smaller than what is currently being proposed by Social Circle due to the sensitive environment, the Brick Store Overlay requirements and the character area.

Brick Store Overlay and Character Area.

Based on the Brick Store Overlay, the scale and proposed use of the commercial development, is not compatible with adjacent properties or other properties of the same zoning district based on the following observations:

- Other conditions of zoning on properties within the Brick Store Overlay have limited the hours of operation to prohibit a 24 hr. business
- Other conditions of zoning on properties within the Brick Store Overlay have prohibited the use of outdoor speakers.
- Other conditions of zoning required specific brick patterns to be used to create a sense of community.
- Pursuant to Sec. 470-010 of the Brick Store Overlay District an overnight full service truck stop does not appear to meet the Purpose & Intent of the overlay district. (Section shown below)

Sec. 470-010 PURPOSE AND INTENT

In order to create a more livable Brick Store area, the Overlay encourages the creation of clusters of close knit growth that keep the small town charm of Newton County. By focusing quality development within the Overlay, the Overlay sets the stage for preserving farmland and open space elsewhere in the County.

- 1. Promote the economic, cultural, educational, and general welfare of the public by fostering sustainable growth within key areas of the rural part of Newton County; preserve Newton County's rural ambiance and historic nature by avoiding the emergence and expansion of long linear, commercial strips and by blending new developments into rural areas without compromising the unique character of these areas;*
- 2. Encourage compatibility of forms, scale, massing and materials such that new structures will conform to community features and standards and thereby more closely reflect the nature of the community*

Watershed

The project is located in the protected Little River watershed which has the following restricted uses.

Sec. 420-030 USE RESTRICTIONS

- A. Underground fuel or chemical storage tanks located within permitted areas of the Alcovy River/Little River Watershed Protection District shall meet all applicable requirements set by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Division.
- B. Unless existing and legally established prior to the adoption of the Alcovy River/Little River Watershed Protection District, and notwithstanding anything contained in the Use Table (Division 505) to the contrary, the following uses shall require a Conditional Use Permit:
 1. Industries or businesses that distribute or warehouse hazardous material.
 2. Uses that provide for the sale of fuel for motor vehicles.
 3. Confined animal feeding operations.
 4. Landfills or wastewater disposal facilities of any kind (except for septic tanks approved by the Newton County Health Department).
 5. Underground or above ground fuel or chemical storage tanks.
 6. The manufacture of chemicals and allied products, dairy products, fats and oils, leather tanning, meat, fish and poultry packing, paper and allied products, petroleum and related industries, primary metal, rubber and plastics, or concrete products.
 7. Junkyards and auto wrecking facilities.
 8. Bulk storage of petroleum.
 9. Truck terminals.
 10. Railroad terminals, classification yards or intermodal freight terminals.
 11. Auto and truck sales, rental and repair shops.
 12. Auto and truck washes, primary and accessory.

Rezoning to Heavy Industrial:

Rezoning to Heavy Industrial is not compatible with parcels in the immediate vicinity. Uses immediately surrounding this parcel include a college, convenience store, commercial use (Dollar General), single-family residential and undeveloped land. Heavy industrial uses such as those proposed may not be compatible with the overall rural characteristics and intentions of the historical Brickstore Overlay.

The proposed use will cause an impact to surrounding land use based on these criteria as the property abuts other Agricultural & residential zonings that have been historically used for horse pastures and other agricultural purposes. Overnight Truck Parking will increase noise, smoke, odor, dust and vibration.

Conditions placed on the property for rezoning to CH (Case# REZ21-000007)

1. To the owner's agreement to abide by the following development standards:
 - a. There shall be a minimum of one hundred (100) feet of landscaped buffer on the developed property along the frontage of Highway 11, except for the pavement portions of driveways and curbs.
 - b. All parking areas shall be of hard surface such as pavement, concrete or pervious pavers to prevent any dust impact to neighboring properties. Compliance with Section 520-010 B requiring thirty-five (35) feet of natural and undisturbed riparian buffer for a stream or wetland area, except to the extent the buffer requirement is mitigated by act of the Army Corp of Engineers.
 - c. The underground tanks shall meet all applicable requirements set by the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, Environmental Protection Division. The tanks are to service sixteen (16) motor vehicle pumps (32 fueling positions) only.
 - d. There shall be no extended parking except for employees during their working hours. For purposes of this condition, extended parking shall be defined as a vehicle remaining in substantially the same location without moving for longer than two (2) hours, to be enforced by the property owner.
 - e. No overnight customer parking shall be allowed.
 - f. "No Overnight Parking" signs shall be erected on the property.
 - g. Hours of operation shall be from 5:00 a.m. to 12:30 a.m. for all businesses on the premises. Employees and contractors may be on the property for the purposes of cleaning and preparation, but nothing shall be open for business except during the stated hours of operation. Hours of operation can only be lengthened with agreement of the Board of Commissioners.
 - h. The buildings will be 4-sided brick with Soldier's Course bonding style around all windows and doorways. The brick color and bond style will emulate the actual Brick Store historic building. In order to assure compliance, the building rendering must be approved by Development Services prior to issuance of a building permit.
 - i. The developer shall comply with all Georgia Department of Transportation requirements including but not limited to impervious surface setbacks, deceleration lanes, allowed number and locations of entrances and exits from the subject property.
 - j. There shall be no above ground tanks.
 - k. There shall be no fueling positions suitable for tractor trailer trucks on the subject property.
 - l. There shall be no visible retention pond within the one hundred (100) feet front buffer. If necessary, underground piping or underground water retention facilities can be within the front buffer.
 - m. There shall be no public access showers or laundry facilities on the premises.

Fire Services

After reviewing this project, if electric vehicle chargers (EVs) are placed on site, clear signage and emergency shut-off will be required.

Newton County Public Works Department- Transportation

After looking at the DRI and the original traffic study and comments from GDOT, the developer will be required to address all GDOT comments concerning traffic signals and turn lanes on SR 11. Because the development is located at the interstate on a state route, this development may not cause traffic issues for Newton County to address now or in the near future.

Water & Sewer

Please see letter.

Storm Water

Please see letter.

11325 Brown Bridge Rd
Covington, GA 30016

Office Main: 770-787-1375
Office Fax: 770-786-4536



June 27, 2025

Shena Applewhaite
Director
Department of Development Services
Newton County
1113 Usher Street
Covington, GA, 30014
By email

Subject: DRI 4496 Travel Center Social Circle
Comments

Dear Shena,

The Newton County Water and Sewerage Authority appreciates the opportunity to provide you with comments on the subject DRI. As you know, NCWSA previously approved a set of utility plans for a proposed travel center on this property. Please note the following:

1. It is unclear how this project is anticipated to be constructed. The project description identifies this development as occurring as one phase with completion in December 2026. While the project description includes the Travel Center with C-Store, auto and truck fueling and parking, restaurants with drive thrus, tire center, hotel and three out-parcels, the Overall Site Plan included in the DRI identifies the Tire Center and Hotel as future development.
2. Public sewer will need to be extended through the property. The previously approved utility plans for development of the site included a 4,024 feet sewer being extended through the property.
3. Utility plans for the development must be reviewed and approved by NCWSA prior to construction. NCWSA standards will apply.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Laurie Ashmore, P.E.,
Chief Engineer
cc: Mike Hopkins, NCWSA

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Comments:

DRI4496.JPTravelCenter.SocialCircle.

June 24, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity.

Considerations regarding the JP Travel Center:

- † The Proposed Impervious and the Maximum Impervious surface area are close to being equal. Because the two (2) numbers are so close, there is no room for error or deviation of the plans.
- † There will be an increased demand for water for normal operations use such as cooking, cleaning, and bathroom facilities that may include showers. In addition, potential truck wash down areas.
 - The facility will require grease trap(s) for any cooking.
 - The facility will require backflow device(s) and metering.
 - The facility will require fire suppression and the demand for increased water.
 - The facility may require an oil-grit separator(s) for the parking areas.
- † There will be an increased demand for power. Depending on the power provider and the scope of the electric demand, and increased cost for protection devices and grid management for peak demand and outage situations.
- † The lighting demands will have to meet the local Ordinances for light pollution.
- † There will be an increase in traffic and maintenance of the road. This may also disrupt traffic flows.
- † There is always a potential for increased criminal and illegal activity.
 - Due to the location of the proposed project, response times for emergency apparatus such as police, fire, and utility will increase.
- † There will be an increase in waste for the local sanitation department and facilities.
- † There will be an increase of stormwater runoff and flows. This will require increased monitoring and maintenance.
- † There will be an increase in wastewater flows and concentrations of the development's effluent affecting the local treatment facility's capacity and treatment processes.

Thank You for the Opportunity to Comment,

WMANTLE



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NEWTON COUNTY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
1113 Usher Street, Suite 201, Covington, GA 30014
Phone: (678)625-1650

Potential Benefits to the JP Travel Center:

- † There may be an opportunity to have an EV Charging station(s) put on site due to the close proximity of Interstate 20 and public travel. This would encourage stopping and visiting.
- † With a proposed development of this size, there should be an increase in tax revenue for the county.
 - The location, size of business, and inviting surroundings offers potential to generate new visitors to the surrounding communities.
 - It could become a visual landmark providing directions through our communities rather than bypassing them.
 - Good or Bad. It could propel future growth to the area, which would increase tax revenue, new jobs, and hopefully infrastructure improvements.
- † The immediate and surrounding areas could benefit from improved infrastructure.

Thank You for the Opportunity to Comment,

WMANTLE