

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 #4754
Name of Project:	Choice Equipment Company - Airport Road
Name of Host Jurisdiction:	Jackson County

Background

DRI review was initiated following the developer's request for rezoning the property from A2 to GI (General Industrial), changing the Character Area to Urban, and changing the Future Land Use to Industrial. Potentially affected parties were asked to submit comments on the proposal during the 15-day period of 6/23/2026 to 7/8/2026.

Proposed Development

Choice Equipment Company is proposing construction of 860,600 square feet of industrial space on a 109-acre site in unincorporated Jackson County along Airport Road. The parcel number is 066 003. The proposed site includes three main buildings; two buildings are industrial buildings that are 515,840 and 256,880 square feet in size, and the third main building is labeled as a maintenance building and is 87,880 square feet in size. The site plan shows an unspecified amount of office space in the industrial buildings, as well as a 100-foot by 150-foot maintenance shed. To service the site, the proposed plan includes two entrances along Airport Road, 478 parking stalls, and 126 truck docks. The proposed site plan shows one stream on the site and includes a 75-foot undisturbed stream buffer around it. The proposed site plan also includes a 50-foot front building setback and a 150-foot side and back zoning buffer where grading is prohibited. Currently, the site is a combination of farmland and forested areas. See the attached site plan and location map for further details. The project would be completed in three phases with an estimated completion date between 2031 and 2034.

Compatibility with Existing Plans

Compatibility with Regional Plan

The western portion of the site is designated as "Developing" and the eastern portion of the site is designated as "Rural" 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 by the proposed project. The proposed development would contribute to economic mobility and competitiveness by creating approximately 232 jobs.
Elevates public health and equity	There are no apparent elements of the proposal that seek to elevate public health and equity.
Supports and adds value to existing communities	The proposed development is placed appropriately in an industrial area next to the Jackson County Airport, which would add value to the industrial node in this 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	Due to the location of the site in a rural area, alternative transportation methods to the site, including bicycling and walking, are not readily available to connect to. While the immediate area would likely not be negatively impacted by the proposed development, traffic traveling southbound from the site would likely be routed along Highway 82 and would travel through downtown Jefferson. Jackson County should be aware of how the proposed development could impact surrounding jurisdictions and communicate with them as appropriate. The site is within the public transit service area of Jackson County Transit.
Protects natural and historic resources	The proposed site is placed well in part of the parcel that is already cleared of trees and is relatively level, which would reduce the amount of environmental disturbance needed to construct the site. Regardless, intensive site work could result in increased stormwater runoff and erosion of the site. The developer should consider maintaining as much of the existing tree canopy as possible and maintain the natural topography of the site, especially near the creek. This would help reduce erosion, filter stormwater runoff, and minimize disruptions to the site’s drainage patterns.

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.

	AREA TYPE	AREA (ACRES)	PERCENT OF AREA
SITE AREA (109 Acres)	Wetland Acres ¹	2	2.1%
	“Conservation Land” ²	43	39.9%
	Regionally Important Resource Land ³	0	0.0%
	Threatened Regionally Important Resource Land ⁴	24	22.4%
1 MILE BUFFER AROUND SITE (3,331 Acres)	Wetland Acres	55	1.7%
	“Conservation Land”	1,149	34.5%
	Regionally Important Resource Land	0	0.0%
	Threatened Regionally Important Resource Land	692	20.8%

Potential Interjurisdictional Impacts

Natural Resources and Stormwater Management

There is one stream that flows across the proposed site. The applicant states that an estimated 32% of the site would be covered in impervious surfaces. The proposed site plan includes one large stormwater management area to handle site stormwater. 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 applicant states that the project is likely to affect wetlands and water supply watersheds in the area. The applicant states they do not believe the Upper Oconee will be impacted and that the site will provide required BMPs for stormwater treatment. Additionally, construction is not proposed within the proposed site’s wetlands.

Transportation

NV5 Engineers and Consultants, Inc. completed a traffic impact study that projects 2,564 new daily trips, including 246 AM peak hour trips and 252 PM peak hour trips from the proposed development. The traffic study suggests constructing a southbound left-turn lane at the north site driveway and a northbound right-turn lane at the south driveway.

Water Supply and Wastewater

The project would be served by the City of Jefferson’s water and sewer systems with an estimated daily demand of 0.015 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 767 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 Jackson County is disposed of in a landfill in Banks County. The applicant states that no hazardous waste would be generated.

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).

Energy Supply

The applicant states that the proposed project's estimated peak connected electrical load would be 29.5 Megawatts. Jackson EMC would be the project's energy supply provider.

Lifecycle Costs and Revenues

The applicant estimates that the project would be worth \$25,818,000 at build-out between 2031 and 2034 and generate \$387,270 in annual local taxes. On a per-acre basis, the project would be worth approximately \$236,900 and generate approximately \$3,550 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 cover.

Comments from Affected Parties

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

The proposed development project is less than 1 mile from the Jackson County Airport (JCA). It is located under the FAA approach or departure surfaces, but it appears it would not impact the airport if kept under 40' above the ground.

If any construction equipment or construction exceeds 40' 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.