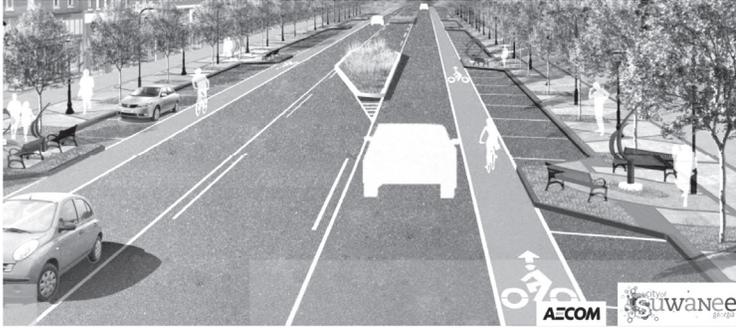


# Let's Build a Better Buford Highway



*Context Sensitive Design (CSD) is a transportation term meaning that the road is intended to serve transportation needs while also balancing its impact on the overall community. A common goal of CSD projects is to develop a facility that is harmonious with the community, and preserves aesthetics, history, and environmental resources, while integrating these innovative approaches with traditional transportation goals for safety and performance.*

Suwanee's portion of Buford Highway is a relatively nondescript, typical state road: a simple two lane road that primarily carrying local traffic through the middle of the city, it passes by parks, businesses, and homes along its way through historic Old Town Suwanee, beside Town Center and George Pierce Park.

Studies indicate that Buford Highway serves Suwanee's residents as a local, rather than a commuter road. Both north and south of the city, Buford Highway has a starkly different character: widened to four or more vehicular lanes, it serves vehicular travel reasonably well, but is daunting for pedestrians and bikers.

In 2007, the city began collecting citizen input for the Downtown Suwanee Master Plan – a comprehensive land use and transportation study of the downtown area. Participating residents and business owners expressed the sentiment that while they wanted transportation improvements to Buford Highway, they also wanted them to be provided in a sensitive manner that didn't further divide the city and didn't transform the road into yet another higher-speed thoroughfare.

Armed with this information, the city hired a team of transportation experts to evaluate different options for the road; options that prioritized a community road over a commuter road. The resulting plan suggested a new Buford Highway, based on proven Context Sensitive Design principals: a road that would transport vehicles, but also serve pedestrians and bicyclists; a road that would set the stage for on-street commerce and small-scale shopping; and a safe road that would better protect park visitors. That new, better Buford Highway is finally on its way.

Extending from McGinnis Ferry Road to George Pierce Park, Buford Highway will remain a two-lane road, but with two

distinct design themes: a rural/suburban section and a town center/urban section. The Better Buford Highway will include:

- A 10-foot wide greenway/bikeway on the east side of the roadway between McGinnis Ferry Road and Russell Street,
- A traffic-calming roundabout at Russell Street,
- 10-foot wide sidewalks, on-street parallel parking, dedicated bike lanes, street trees, benches, and pedestrian scale lighting along the majority of both sides,
- Landscaped medians and center turn lanes at various locations,
- Minimized curb cuts and travel lanes reduced in width to help moderate vehicular speeds and increase safety.

The end result will be a better road that will handle a similar volume of traffic as today, but in a safer manner. Pedestrians will be able to walk more comfortably along the road from Town Center to Old Town, and crossing Buford Highway will become much easier and safer.

This is a joint project between the city and Georgia DOT. Grant funding, largely from the Atlanta Regional Commission, will pay for about half of the \$11 million project. Construction is expected to begin in Fall of 2017 and end the first quarter of 2019. While Buford Highway is expected to remain open for the majority of construction, there will be inevitable construction delays.

Over the next few issues of *Connects*, professionals will be discussing various parts of the Better Buford Highway project. In the meantime, visit [www.suwanee.com](http://www.suwanee.com) for more information as the project progresses.