

Engaging Buford Highway's
Environmental Justice
Populations
Atlanta, Georgia

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Buford Highway

- 7-lane (90 feet wide) urban arterial with flush median
- 45 mph unenforced posted speed limit
- 24,000 vehicles average daily traffic
- Signalized intersections limited and spaced as much as a mile apart
- Sidewalks sporadic, dirt paths, maintenance iffy
- 65 MARTA bus stops and other school bus stops
- Overhead lighting sparse and no pedestrian lighting

Dirt paths



Limited intersection crossings



Left turns



Poor sight distance



Morning and afternoon school bus pick up and drop off stops



Uncoordinated transit stop locations



So what made this road unsafe?

Over the past 25 years, the residents changed!

- From middle-income to low-income
- From transportation independent to transportation dependent
- From "big city" to "rural village" street smarts
- From speaking and reading English to speaking Spanish and reading neither Spanish nor English
- From first shift workers to first and second shift workers

How did this project get started?

- DeKalb County proposed a 2-phase streetscape project for Buford Highway
- Local newspaper articles asked that pedestrian safety issues be addressed
- GDOT joined DeKalb County and expanded the project to address a comprehensive pedestrian safety project
- GDOT proposed a continuous raised median design with limited median breaks

- Local businesses expressed concerns that reducing left turn opportunities would hurt business
- DeKalb County officials reserved support of the project until GDOT addressed the business community's concerns
- GDOT established a 31-member stakeholder group to provide input
- GDOT invited PBS&J to join the effort

The stakeholders were engaged

- Stakeholders included
 - local elected officials, faith-based organizations, transit providers, government agencies, non-profit organizations, advocacy groups, and private companies
- Stakeholders were surveyed by phone and in person and these revealed concerns about
 - Existing conditions on Buford Highway
 - Recommendations to improve Buford Highway
 - Raise median pros and cons

The stakeholders were engaged



And then the Georgia legislature
passed a watered-down bill to
“send everyone home”

this changed the way we would do
public involvement

- People would not open their doors to us
- People would not come out to meetings assuming they were INS sting operations
- We had to depend on existing relationships

The business communities were engaged

- Surveys were conducted at their places of business and conducted by interpreters
 - 4 Korean
 - 4 Chinese
 - 4 Vietnamese
 - 5 Hispanic/Anglo
- Surveys revealed concerns about existing conditions on Buford Highway and raised medians

The business communities were engaged



Used school students to take flyers home to their parents



Piggy-backed on Sunday afternoon shopping patterns

- Locations were safe, convenient, and family-friendly environments
- FHWA did not require any sign-in or personal information
- Interpreters administered surveys orally
- Surveys asked these questions
 - What are the needs - more, enough, less (sidewalks, lighting, cross walks, signals, bus shelters, etc.)
 - Where do you go when you cross Buford Highway
 - What is the best way to get information to you concerning the project and future project events

Plaza Fiesta Mall

- Located in the northern end of the corridor
- Provided tables, chairs, giveaways and 8 bilingual interpreters from 4:00pm – 8:00pm on a Sunday
- Provided four set-up spaces at mall entrances
- Resulted in 345 completed surveys

Bilingual interpreters roamed Plaza Fiesta and conducted surveys



Others stopped by and completed surveys



Mercado del Pueblo

- located in the southern end of the corridor
- Plaza Fiesta provided tables, chairs, giveaways and 4 bilingual interpreters from 2:00pm – 6:00pm on a Sunday
- Mercado del Pueblo provided a set-up space in the bakery area
- Resulted in 168 completed surveys

Bilingual interpreters roamed Mercado del Pueblo and conducted surveys



The information obtained from the surveys was incorporated into a revised design and presented at two Public Information Open Houses

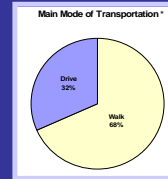
Public Information Open Houses

- Advertised through Hispanic, Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, and mainstream radio, television and newspapers
- Asian interpreters used phone trees to notify groups and individuals
- Flyers in Spanish were distributed to school students, and to every apartment complex managers, and every business along Buford Highway
- GDOT hired local ethnic vendors to prepare metal highway signs in each language

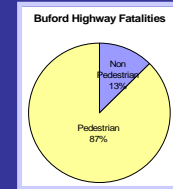
Posters in each language were displayed and described how the public's concerns had been addressed in the design

BUFORD HIGHWAY PEDESTRIAN SAFETY Shallowford Terrace to Lenox Road

The Georgia Department of Transportation spoke to Buford Highway residents, business owners, and workers about the pedestrian safety problems on Buford Highway.



* Based on surveys conducted in March and May (n=514)



Based on this input from Buford Highway residents, business owners, and workers, the Georgia Department of Transportation has come up with a plan that will help to solve the pedestrian safety problems on Buford Highway.

- **Problem:** Inadequate sidewalk
Solution: Five foot wide sidewalks are proposed along both sides of Buford Highway.
- **Problem:** Inadequate lighting
Solution: Low level lighting is proposed along both sides of Buford Highway.
- **Problem:** Long distances between crosswalks
Solution: Four new traffic signals are proposed at the intersections of Buford Highway and West Druid Hills Road, Highland North Apartments, Drew Valley Road, and Shallowford Terrace.
- **Problem:** No protection for pedestrians who choose to cross at unsignalized areas
Solution: Raised medians are proposed between Lenox Road and Clairmont Road. This will provide a refuge area for pedestrians who choose to cross at unsignalized areas. Three median refuge islands are proposed north of Clairmont Road at Plaza Fiesta near the Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, between Dresden Drive and Bragg Street, and just south of Woodside Way. This will provide alternative crossing locations other than at signalized intersections.
- **Problem:** Dangerous crossing at Latin American Association
Solution: A pedestrian bridge is proposed in the area of the Latin American Association.
- **Problem:** MARTA bus stops are poorly placed and cause mid-block crossings
Solution: GDOT will coordinate with MARTA on the placement of bus stops along Buford Highway.
- **Problem:** There is no education on how to safely cross the street.
Solution: An education campaign is planned as part of the proposed improvements.
- **Problem:** Spanish signage is needed
Solution: The use of signage in Spanish will be investigated as part of the proposed improvements.

Photos of landmarks and before-and-after simulations provided orientation

BUFORD HIGHWAY PEDESTRIAN SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

(Mejoras Peatonales de la Seguridad de la Buford Highway)

PROJECT NO. MD-2000-00040 / P.I. NO. 00040 / DEWASH COUNTY
DATE: 01/2004



Plaza Fiesta Mall was used



Soccer balls and balloons were passed out



Interpreter provided information and captured comments



Local mainstream TV attended



GDOT's PA representative spread the word



Local Spanish-language newspaper took photos



DeKalb County official attended



PEDS representative attended



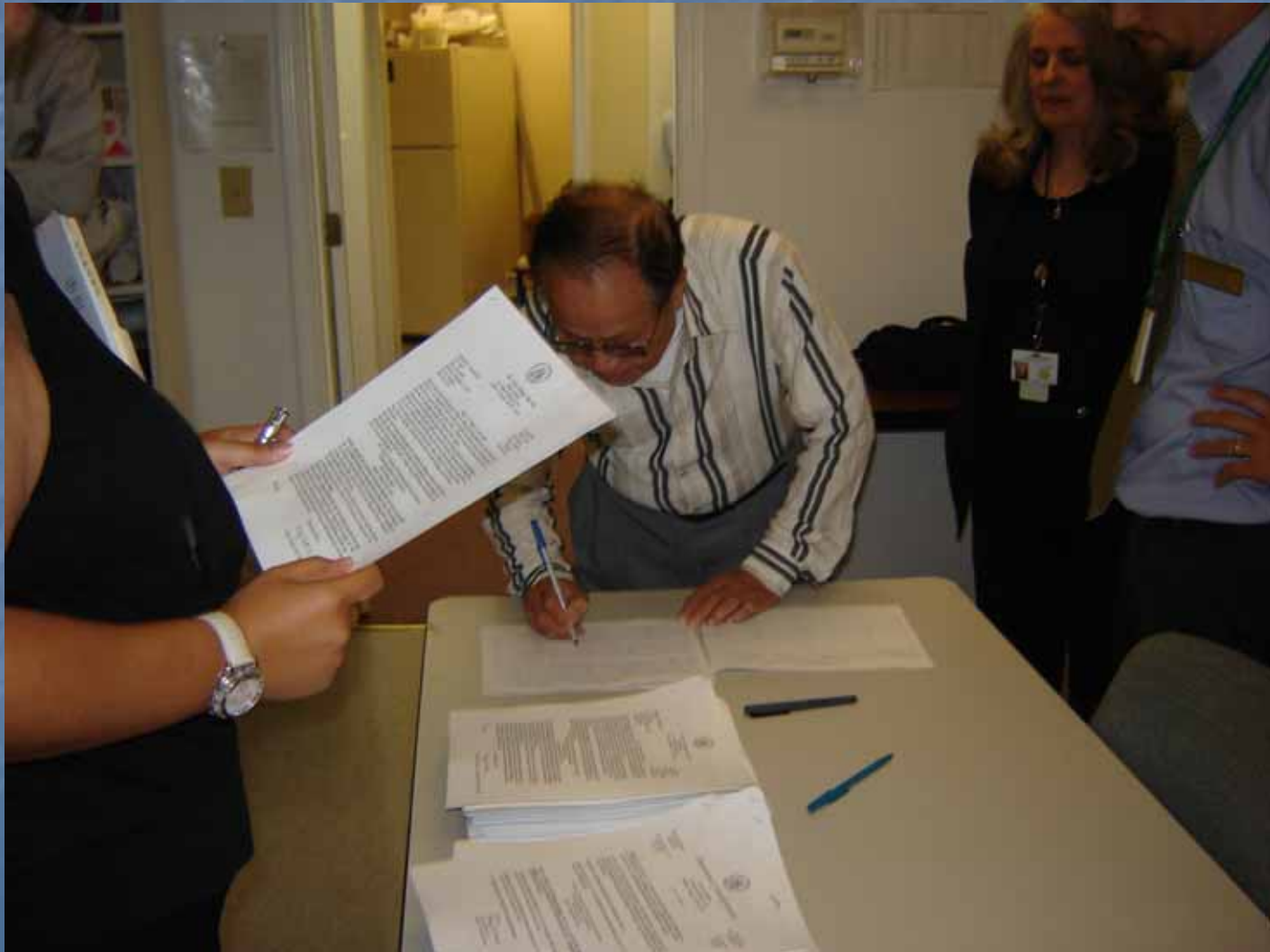
Court recorder and interpreter did their stuff



The Center for Pan Asian Community Services was used



Everyone was given a comment sheet and project information



Posters were in every language



GDOT talked with Korean TV



Participants provided written comments



Others spoke with the court recorder and interpreter



Information was used to further revise the design for Phase 2 which will be under construction in 2008

A multi-language educational component including coloring books, CDs, and tri-fold brochures is under consideration

Phase 1 was unveiled in late
January 2007



It has
continuous
sidewalks,
pedestrian
scale lighting,
more
overhead
lighting, bus
shelters, and
landscaping



Medianettes were constructed at
mid-block crossing



All in the hopes of reducing this



Thank you