

## WE NEED YOUR INPUT!

### What Is The Proposed Project?

The GDOT, in coordination with the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), proposes to replace and widen the existing I-20 bridges over the Augusta Canal and Savannah River to improve safety and operations along I-20 in this area. The existing bridges have substandard shoulder widths, and the existing decks have had failures that have resulted in temporary lane closures. The project would begin along I-20 approximately 800 feet west of the Augusta Canal bridges in Richmond County, GA, and extend east beyond the Savannah River bridges to Exit 1 (West Martintown Road) in Aiken County, SC. The reconstructed bridges and interstate would include three 12-foot travel lanes with 12-foot paved outside and inside shoulders in each direction. The entire project would be constructed within the existing right-of-way along I-20, and the new lanes would be constructed within the existing median of I-20. The total project distance is approximately 2.4 miles. Project construction is anticipated to begin in 2019 and last for 3 to 4 years.

### How will the Augusta Canal National Heritage Area (NHA) and Towpath be Impacted?

- Project construction would require temporary closures of the recreational Augusta Canal Towpath to public use in the immediate vicinity of the I-20 crossing. Up to two temporary closures of this recreational trail (for a duration of up to 8 weeks each) are anticipated. These closures would be necessary to construct new bridge piers and to demolish the existing bridges in this area.
- Project construction would also require restriction of recreational use (i.e., canoeing and kayaking) of the canal itself under the I-20 bridges during bridge demolition for public safety. This restriction would be limited to the immediate area of the I-20 bridges, and would be for a duration of up to 8 weeks.
- Any other construction activities that may restrict the recreational use of the Towpath or Canal would occur at night, when these facilities are not in use.
- During construction/demolition, debris curtains and/or netting would be used under the I-20 bridges to catch falling debris. A temporary safety canopy would also be constructed over the Towpath in the construction area to allow for safe passage of trail users under the bridges during the construction period.



### Why Do We Need Your Input?

The Augusta Canal NHA and the Towpath are protected resources under Section 4(f) of the U.S. DOT Act of 1966 (recodified in 49 U.S.C. 303 & 23 U.S.C. 138) as public recreation facilities. The proposed temporary closures of the Towpath and recreational use of the Augusta Canal in the vicinity of the I-20 bridges would be considered

a “use” under Section 4(f) (see text box). However, after factoring in the proposed minimization measures described above, the proposed project is not anticipated to adversely affect the recreational activities, features, and attributes that qualify the Augusta Canal NHA and Towpath for protection under Section 4(f). Therefore, FHWA intends to make a *de minimis* determination for impacts on these resources after receiving 1) public input on the proposed impacts and mitigation strategies and 2) concurrence on this assessment from the authorities with jurisdiction over the resources (Augusta Canal Authority and the City of Augusta). After receiving public input and these concurrences, in accordance with 23 CFR Part 774.3(b), the requirements of Section 4(f) will have been satisfied with respect to the use of the Augusta Canal NHA and the Towpath. Therefore, GDOT is seeking your input on these impacts.

### How Can You Submit Your Input?

Comments and concerns regarding impacts to the Augusta Canal NHA and Towpath and proposed mitigation measures should be sent to Mr. Sam Boring, Georgia Department of Transportation, 600 West Peachtree Street, NW – 16<sup>th</sup> Floor, Atlanta, GA 30308, or via email at [sboring@dot.ga.gov](mailto:sboring@dot.ga.gov). Questions regarding the proposed project should be directed to the GDOT Project Manager, Mr. Timothy Matthews, at the same address or via email ([TMatthews@dot.ga.gov](mailto:TMatthews@dot.ga.gov)).

### What Minimization/Mitigation Measures are Proposed?

- Daytime closures of the Towpath would be limited to the months of December - February when the Towpath is less utilized.
- Daytime restrictions in recreational use of the Augusta Canal would be limited to the months of December - March.
- Public outreach would occur prior to any daytime closure of the Augusta Canal Towpath or recreational use of the canal at the I-20 bridges to notify the public of the closure and duration.

### What is Section 4(f)?

Section 4(f) of the U.S. DOT Act of 1966 stipulates that the FHWA and other DOT agencies cannot approve the “use” of land from historic sites, publicly owned parks, recreation areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, or archaeological sites worthy of preservation in place unless there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the use of the land and the action includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the property. A “use” occurs when land is permanently incorporated into a transportation facility, when there is temporary occupancy of land that will either adversely physically change the land or temporarily or permanently interfere with protected activities on the land, or when there is constructive use of the land (proximity impacts).

However, a *de minimis* determination allows FHWA to approve the use of land from a Section 4(f) property without the need to develop and evaluate alternatives that would avoid using the property. An impact may be determined to be *de minimis* if the use of the Section 4(f) property, including incorporation of any measure(s) to minimize harm (such as any avoidance, minimization, mitigation, or enhancement measures), does not adversely affect the activities, features, or attributes that qualify the resource for protection under Section 4(f).

**PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR INPUT BY July 31, 2017.**