



PROJECT WILDCAT JUNE 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



INTRODUCTION

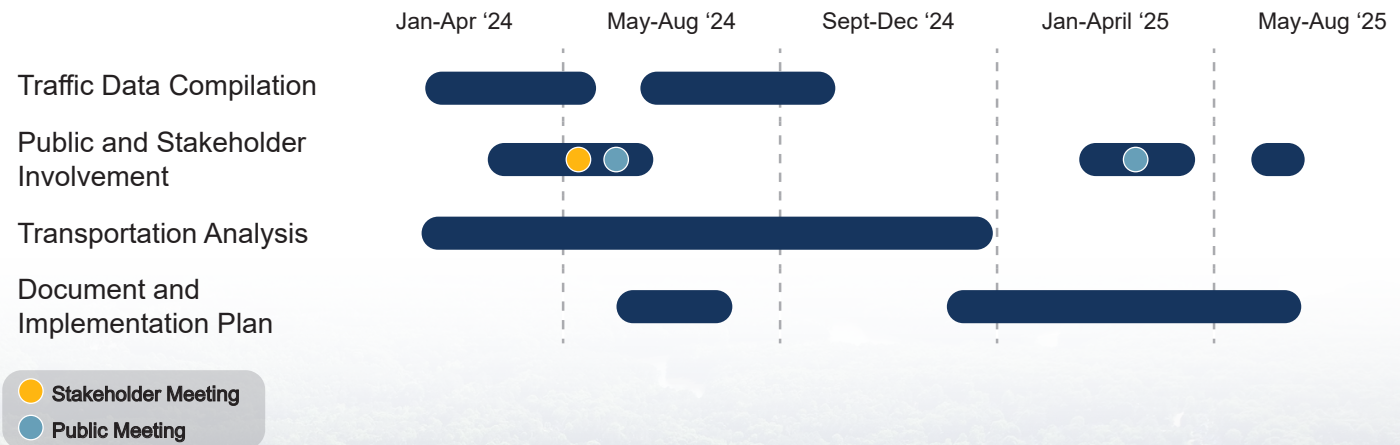
Cherokee County, the Cherokee Office of Economic Development, and the cities of Woodstock and Holly Springs, partnered to conduct a small area plan and transportation study at the I-575 and Sixes Road interchange. The study area includes the southeast corner of the interchange that is bounded in part by the Lebanon United Methodist Church Cemetery to the north, Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) property for Lake Allatoona to the south, Interstate 575 to the west, and the Georgia Northeastern Railroad to the east. This area is known from its historic roots as “Wildcat.”

The interchange area has been well-positioned for success due to its strategic location near I-575 while also providing important access for Bells Ferry Road, Holly Springs Parkway/Main Street, and East Cherokee Drive. Despite significant investments in roadway infrastructure in and around Cherokee County, the study area has remained constrained by listed considerations, which has limited its potential for growth and connection.

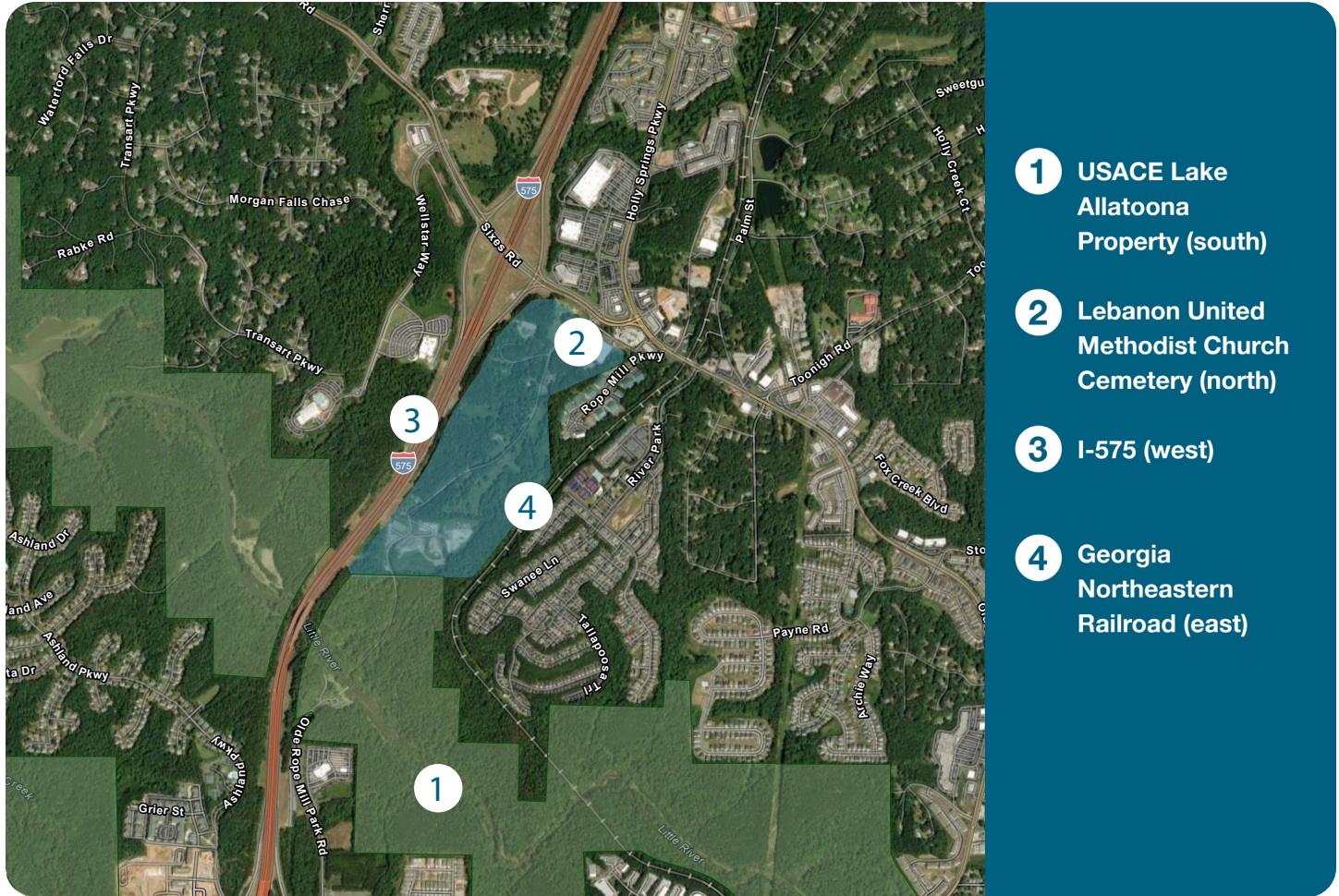
The goal of this study was to identify potential transportation network recommendations that could improve the current operation of the roadway by reducing congestion and increasing safety while also providing meaningful connectivity to support future growth and development around the interchange. This summary provides an overview of the study process and recommended strategies.

The study began in early 2024 with efforts focused on data collection and baseline transportation analysis. The first round of outreach included a request to the public for their insights on the transportation and development needs of the area, which informed recommendations. Following an extensive traffic analysis and complementary geometric engineering and environmental assessment, the draft recommendations were vetted with the public in the spring of 2025.

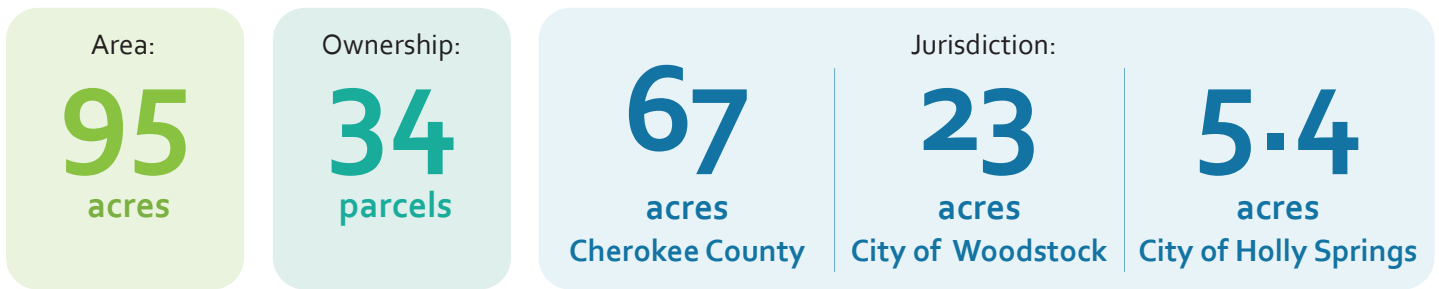
Project Schedule



STUDY AREA



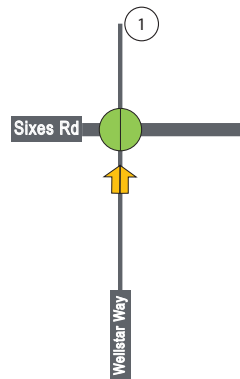
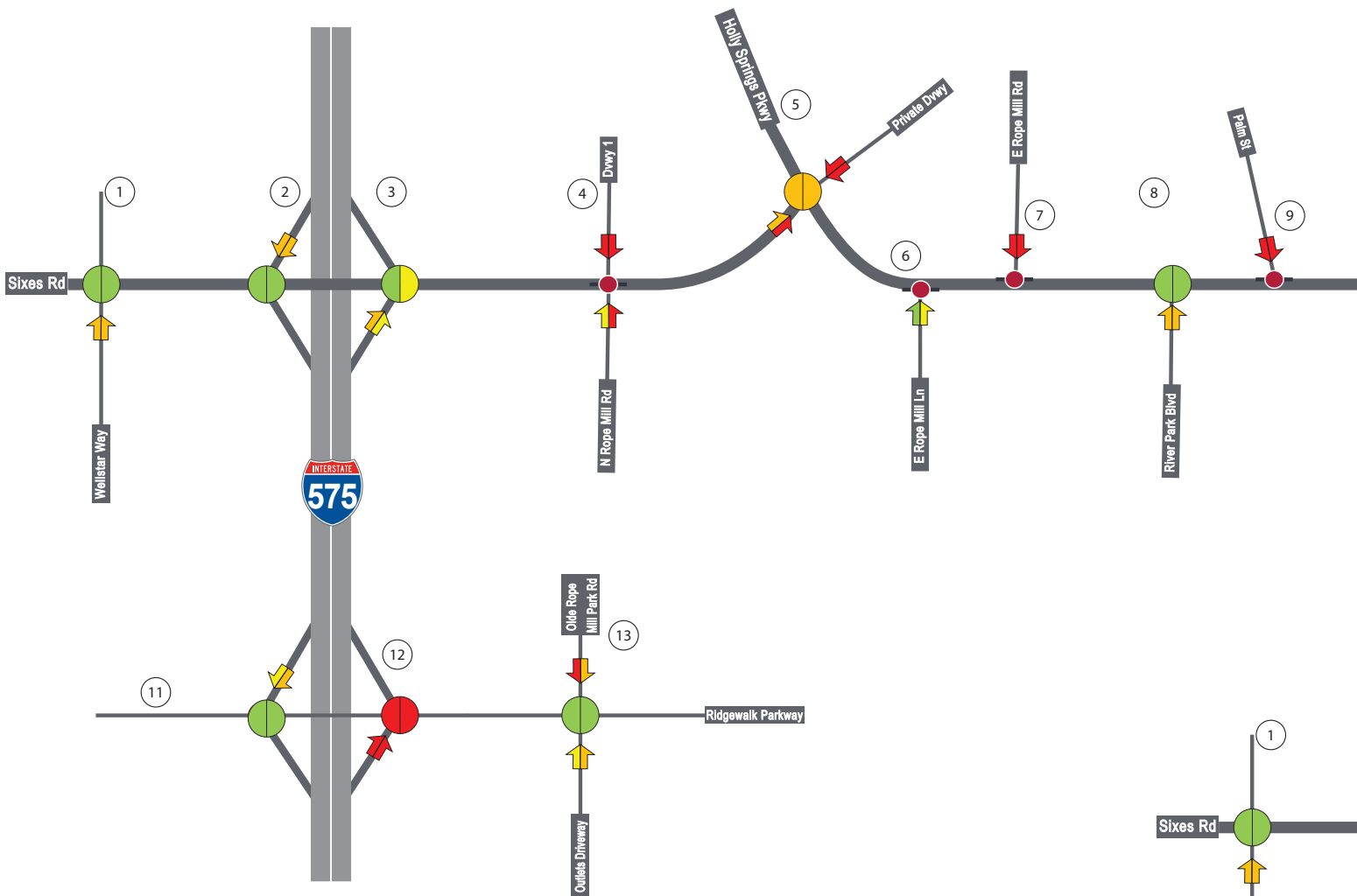
Subarea Development Stats:



The subarea is well positioned in a growing area of Cherokee County and the Region:

	Population		Jobs	
	2020	2050	2020	2050
Within 5 miles	125,000	231,000	40,000	55,000
Within 10 miles	417,000	576,000	170,000	212,000

CURRENT AND FUTURE TRAFFIC CONSIDERATIONS



Cherokee 575 Sixes Study Area

Existing (2024) Peak Hour Traffic Volumes

Existing Traffic Conditions

As it stands today, roads in the study area are congested due to unusual roadway geometry and high turning volumes. Traffic modeling shows:

- Congested conditions at the Sixes Road and Holly Springs Parkway intersection
- Failing approaches on side streets at intersections along Sixes Road and Holly Springs Parkway

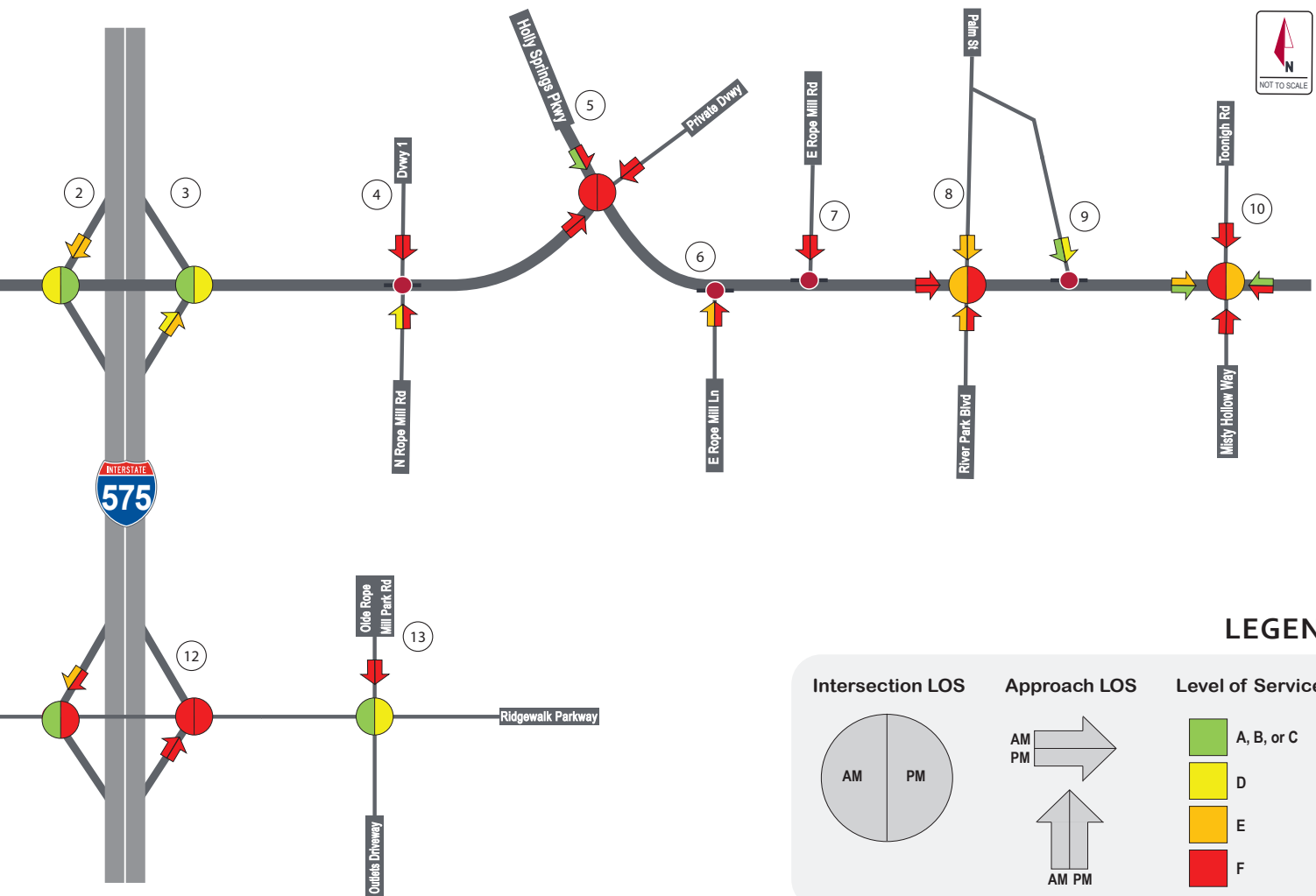
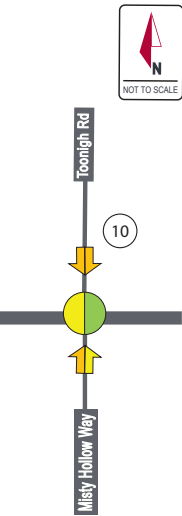
Cherokee 575 Sixes Study Area

No-Build (2044) Peak Hour Traffic Volumes

No-Build (2044) Traffic Conditions

If no new improvements are made to roads in the study area, congestion will worsen at all intersections by 2044. Traffic modeling shows:

- Extreme delays at the Sixes Road and Holly Springs Parkway intersection
- Complete breakdown of flow along Holly Springs Parkway, with multiple failing intersections in both peak hours.
- Worsening conditions at the I-575 and Sixes Road interchange



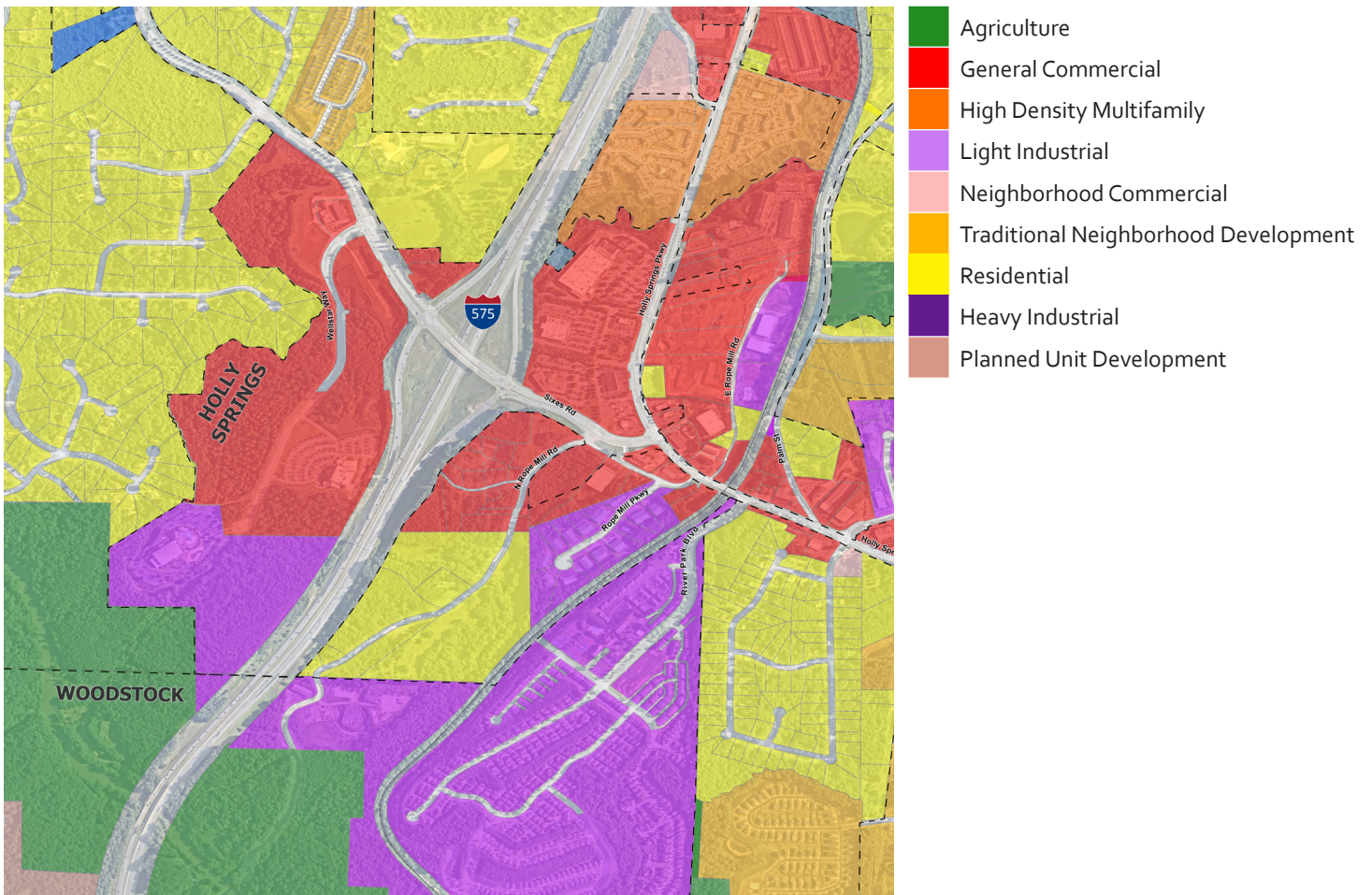
LEGEND

Intersection LOS	Approach LOS	Level of Service
		A, B, or C
		D
		E
		F

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

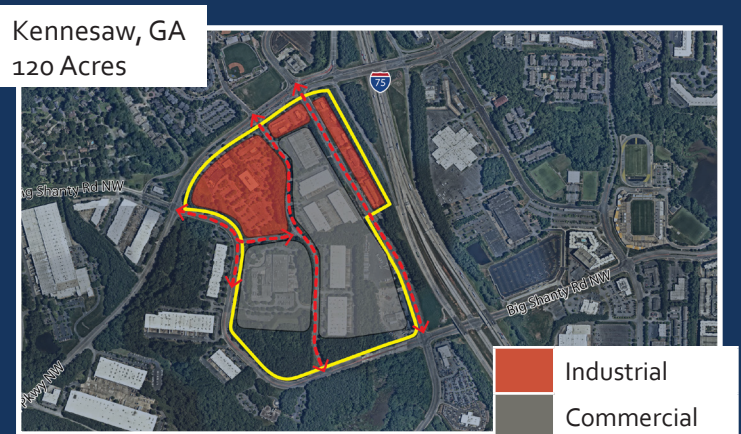
As a part of the potential development assessment, the study team inventoried the existing and future land use as well as zoning of the Wildcat and surrounding areas to inform what was currently possible. Additionally, the team explored case studies of similar properties around the southeast to compare what had been developed on similar style sites.

The eventual land use scenario shown in the map on the right was created based on two criteria: 1) how much development can physically fit on the land and 2) how much new traffic the proposed roadway network can support. The possible land use types included around the interchange area are light industrial, medical offices, and an office park, which may include a hotel and retail spaces. Additionally, development on both sides of the interstate can include thoughtful incorporation of greenspace. This land use/development scenario was used for the purposes of studying traffic in the Wildcat area, but the final development plan and uses have not been determined.



Case Studies

Case studies were selected based on their proximity to an interstate or highway, their comparable acreage to the study area off I-575, and variety of uses. These examples were utilized to identify the most suitable development scenario for the project area.





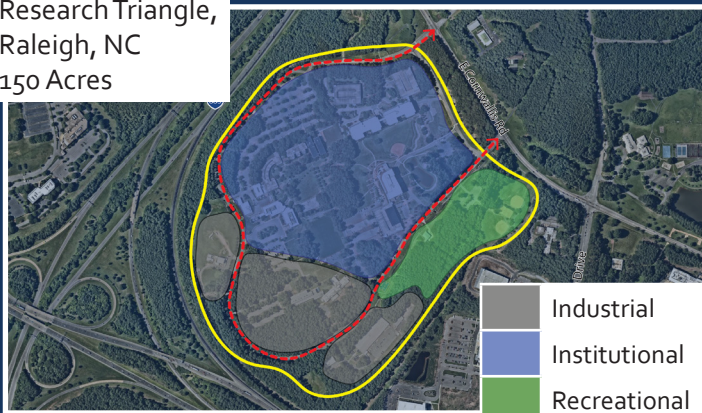
East of I-575	
Office Park	1,000,000 sqft
Retail	250,000 sqft
Hotel	100 rooms
Total	1,250,000 sqft*
West of I-575	
Medical Office Building	300,000 sqft
Light Industrial	250,000 sqft
Total	550,000 sqft

Total Density	
Office Park	1,000,000 sqft
Retail	250,000 sqft
Hotel	100 rooms
Medical Office Building	300,000 sqft
Light Industrial	250,000 sqft
Total	1,800,000 sqft*

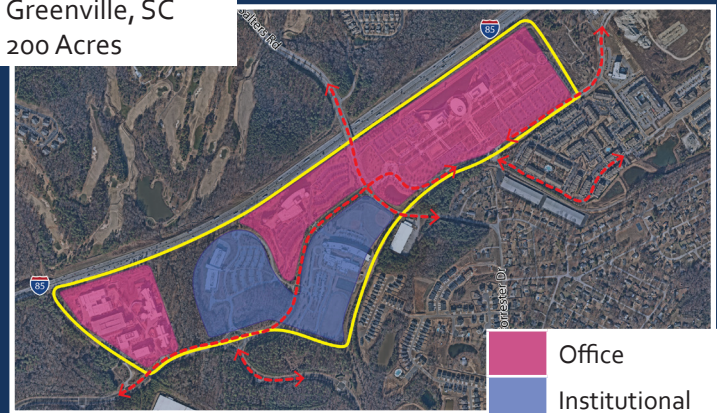
*Square footage from hotel not included

Final development plan has not been determined

Research Triangle,
Raleigh, NC
150 Acres



Greenville, SC
200 Acres

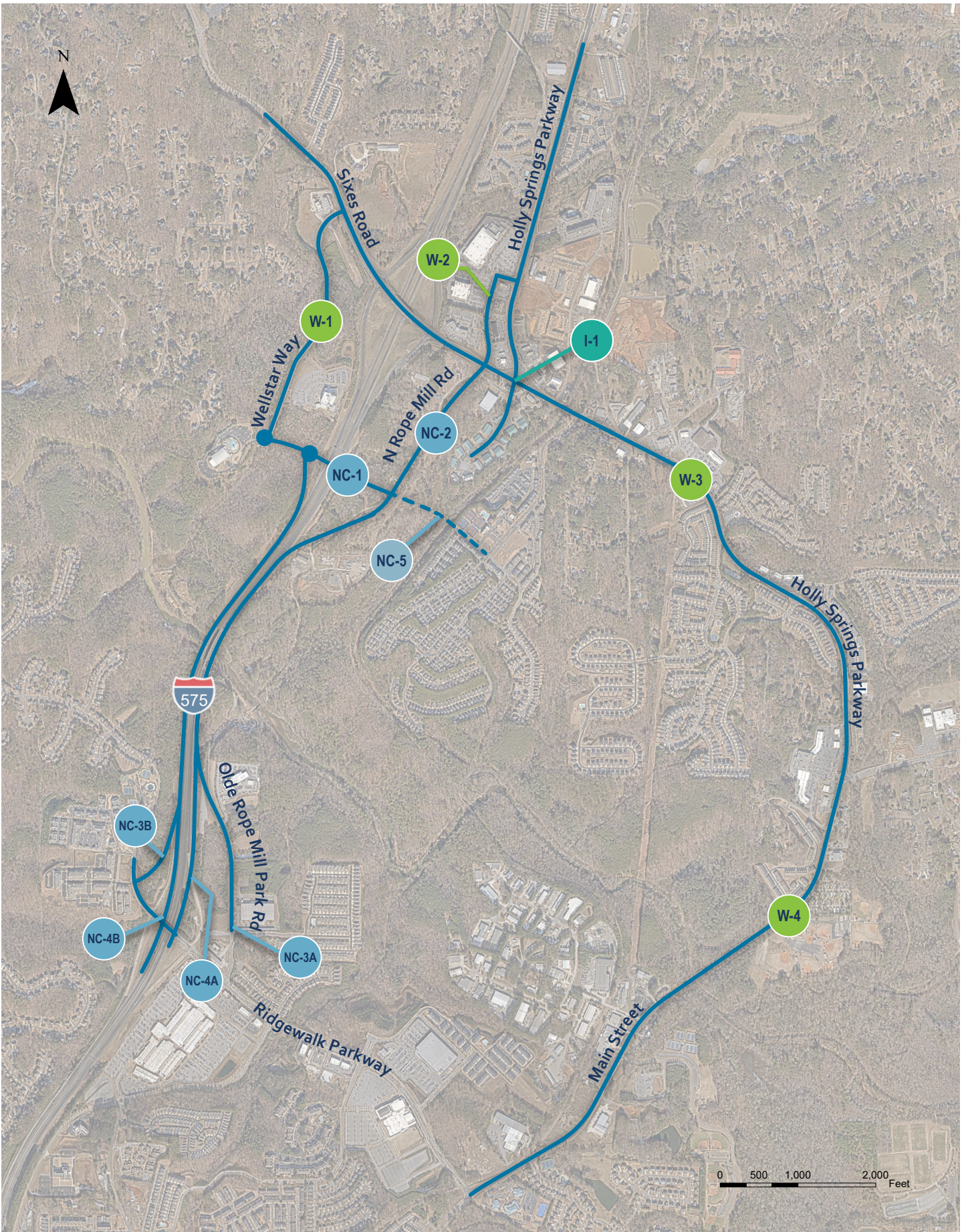


TRANSPORTATION NETWORK RECOMMENDATIONS

This plan used extensive traffic modeling to test and evaluate transportation improvements in the Sixes Road area. The below recommendations were developed to satisfy the goals of reducing congestion, supporting new interchange development, and planning for multimodal connections.

ID	Project Name	Category	Description
I-1	Holly Springs Pkwy and Sixes Rd Realignment	Intersection Improvements	Realign Holly Springs Parkway and Sixes Road to a 90-degree intersection
NC-1	I-575 Crossing – Wellstar Way Bridge	New Connection	Construct a new, 4-lane connection between Wellstar Way at the Cherokee County Aquatic Center and N Rope Mill Road, including a new bridge over I-575
W-1	Wellstar Way Improvements	Widening	Widen and reinforce Wellstar Way to be a 4-lane road
NC-2	N Rope Mill Rd Reconstruction	New Connection	Reconstruct N Rope Mill Road to be a 4-lane road with fewer curves; Realign near Sixes Road to reduce skew and curve near intersection
W-2	Commercial Drive Improvements	Widening	Widen, reinforce, and stripe the commercial drive at the Sixes Road and N Rope Mill Road intersection to be 4-lanes; includes a potential roundabout at the Home Depot driveway
W-3	Holly Springs Parkway Widening Phase I	Widening	Widen Holly Springs Parkway from Sixes Road to E Cherokee Drive from 2 lanes with a two-way left-turn lane to 4 lanes with a median and dedicated left-turn lanes where appropriate
W-4	Holly Springs Parkway/Main Street Widening Phase II	Widening	Widen Holly Springs Parkway/Main Street from E Cherokee Drive to Ridgewalk Parkway from 2 lanes with a two-way left-turn lane to 4 lanes with a median and dedicated left-turn lanes where appropriate
NC-3	Ridgewalk Parkway Arterial Access Lanes	New Connection	Construct a pair of one-way access lanes between Ridgewalk Parkway and Wellstar Way Bridge; Access lanes connect via Olde Rope Mill Rd northbound and connect to intersection west of I-575 southbound
NC-4	I-575 Slip Lanes	New Connection	Construct a pair of one-way “slip” lanes between I-575 near Ridgewalk Parkway and Wellstar Way Bridge; The slip lanes allow drivers to exit the interstate and go directly to Wellstar Way Bridge without using the interchange; The slip lanes will merge with the access lane system near Wellstar Way Bridge
NC-5*	River Park Neighborhood Connector	New Connection	Construct a two-lane new connection between N Rope Mill Road and Wellstar Way Bridge to Georgia Way

*NC-5 only to be constructed with additional neighborhood input with City of Woodstock approval





ENGINEERING AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

The design team studied GIS contours and aerial imagery to develop approximate roadway profiles to minimize impacts to environmentally sensitive resources, existing utility facilities, and surrounding residences and businesses. Alignment locations were developed based on GDOT guidance for horizontal and vertical geometries. The proposed design will enhance connectivity and improve traffic operations while accommodating anticipated future development.

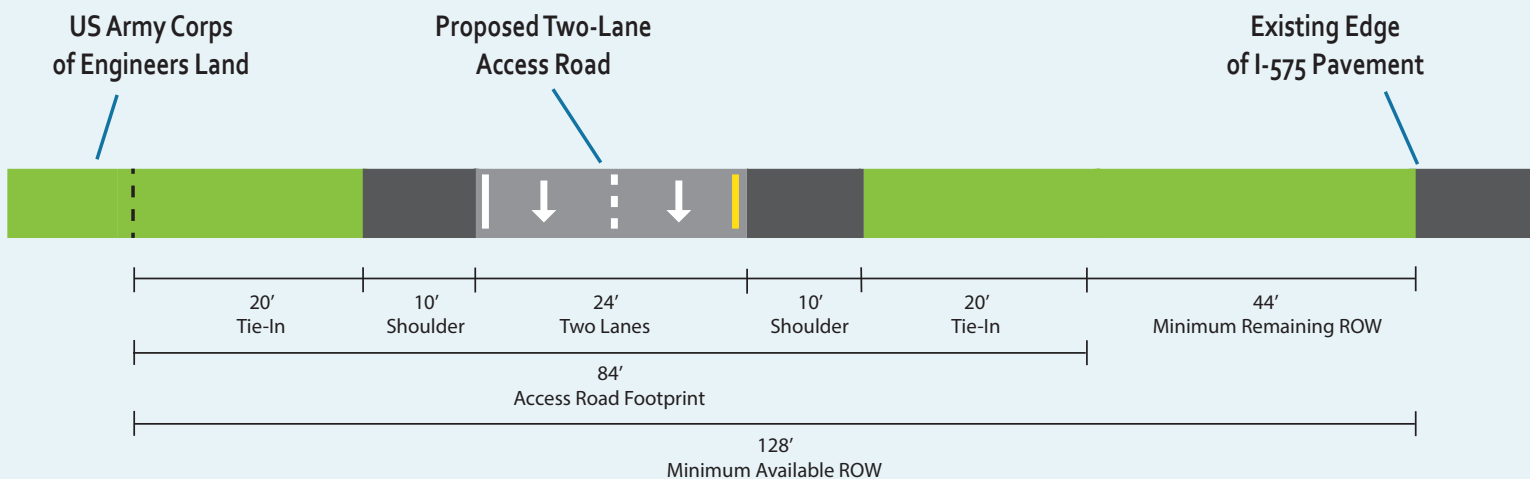
I-575 access lanes will separate local traffic from I-575. These lanes will utilize existing I-575 right-of-way and USACE easements to minimize impacts to the adjacent USACE property. Space exists to widen I-575 at a later date if traffic growth warrants it.

The proposed improvements are anticipated to be funded, designed, and constructed over a 20 year period. Ongoing coordination between Cherokee County, the City of Holly Springs, the City of Woodstock, and state and federal agencies will be needed to successfully implement this project.

Most transportation projects receiving state or federal funding are required to follow the GDOT Plan Development Process (PDP). With few exceptions, the PDP requires rigorous environmental studies to identify potential constraints across various topic areas. Our screening revealed that a number of environmental constraints exist within the study area; however, for each project proposed, none of the constraints would be expected to constitute a fatal flaw that would prevent the project from advancing, provided appropriate avoidance and minimization measures were implemented. Particular attention should be given to the federally owned Lake Allatoona property, as involvement would require close coordination with USACE under any funding scenario.

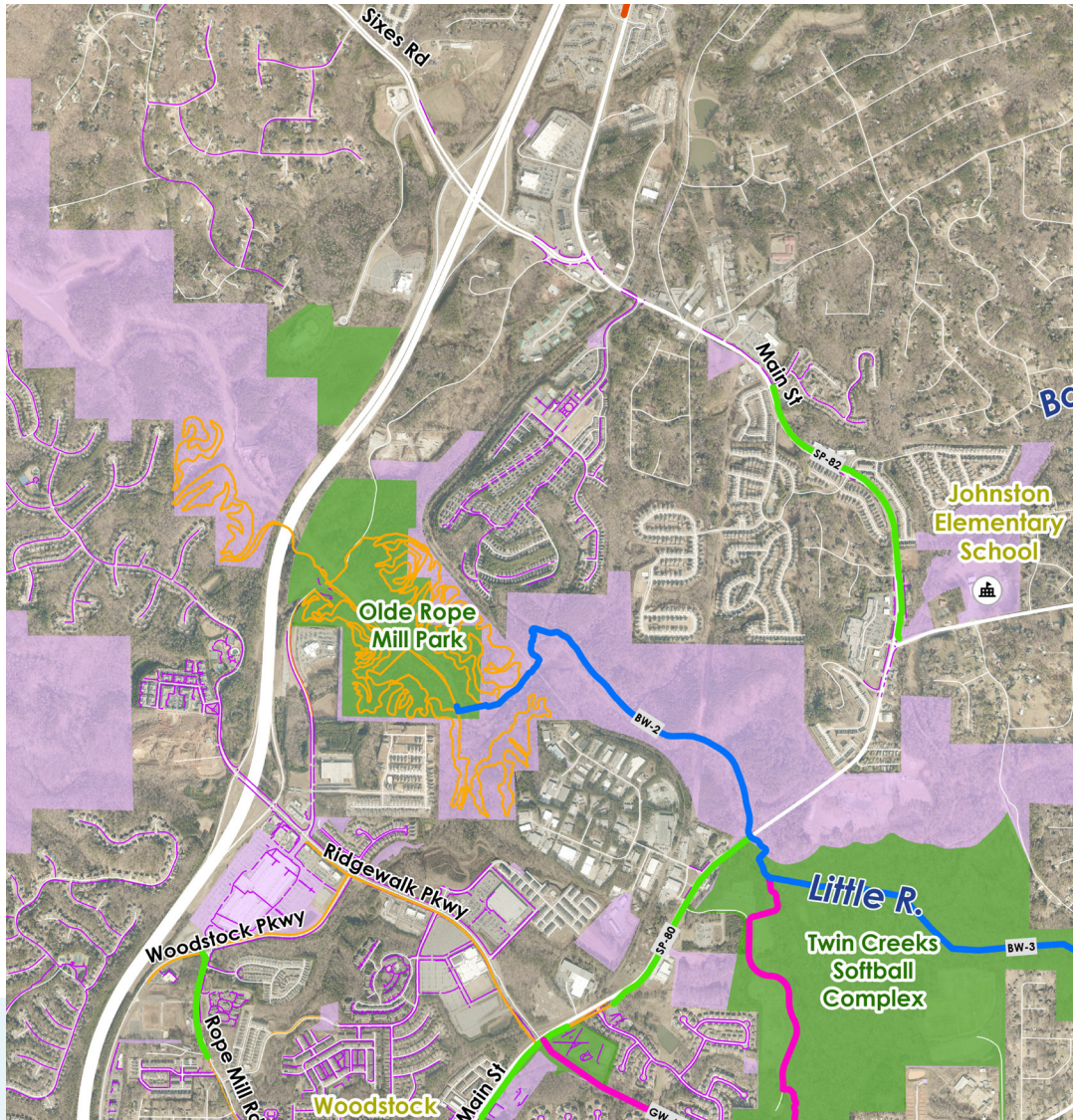
Proposed I-575 Access Lanes Cross Section

This figure shows the proposed cross section of the access lane system as it crosses Little River within the Army Corps parcel easement.

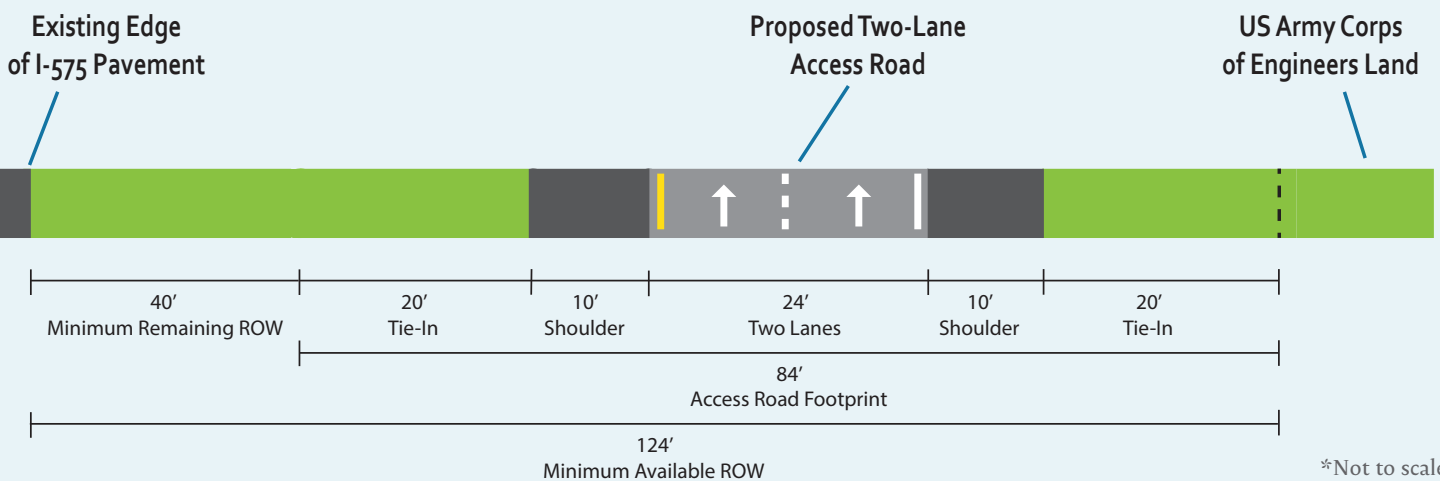


BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN RECOMMENDATIONS

This plan recommends building on the vision of the recently adopted Cherokee County Greenways and Trails Master Plan to improve multimodal mobility in the area. The following improvements are recommended:

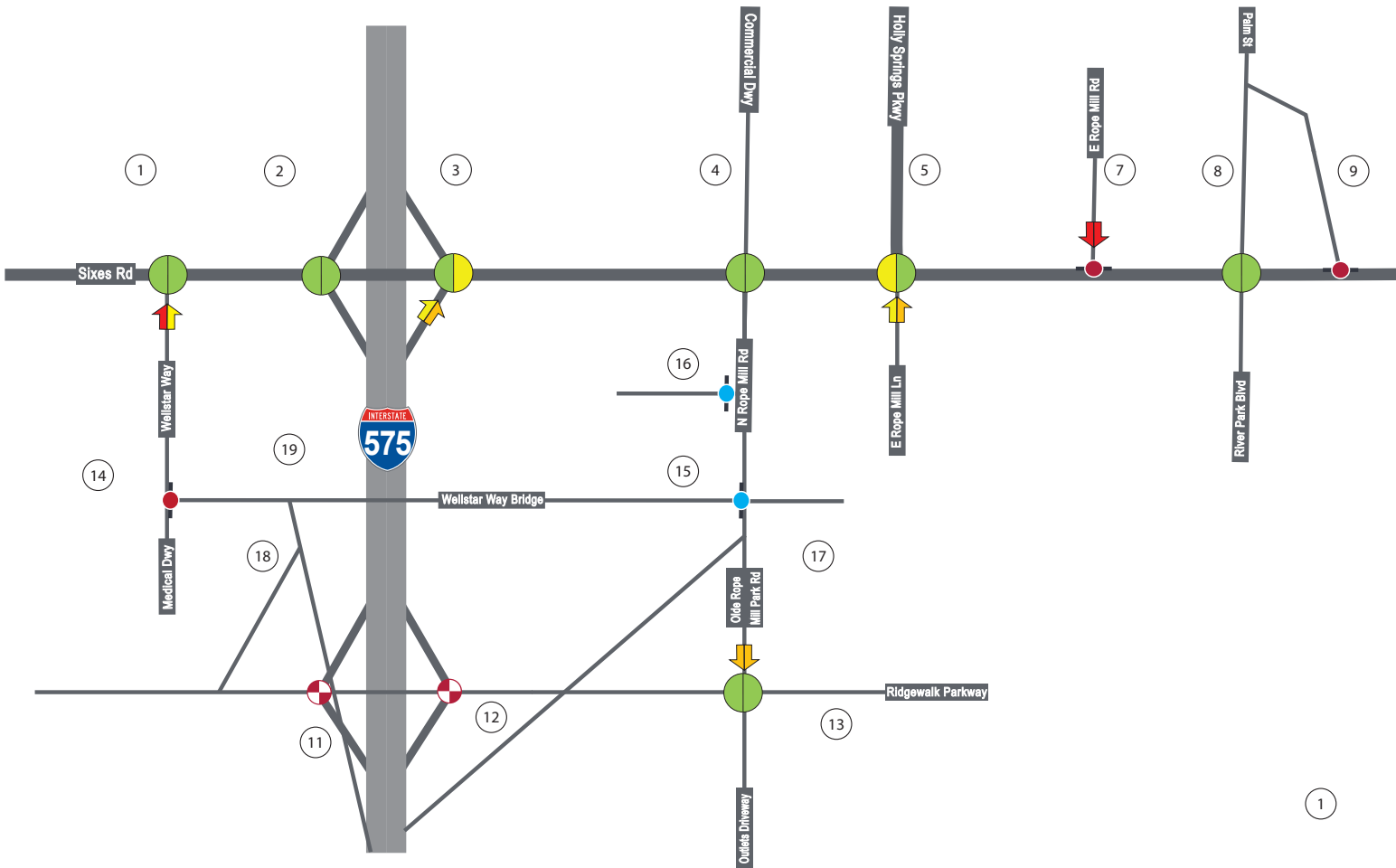


- Expand the sidepath network on Sixes Road, Holly Springs Parkway, and Main Street wherever possible.
- Construct a minimum of sidewalks along Wellstar Way, Wellstar Way Bridge, and N Rope Mill Road.
- Work with developers to deliver greenspaces as part of new developments near the interstate and complete trail connectivity.



*Not to scale

FUTURE TRAFFIC CONDITIONS

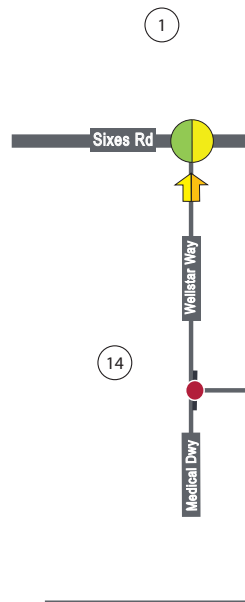


Cherokee 575 Sixes Study Area

Build Without Development (2044) Peak Hour Level of Service

Build Without Development (2044) Traffic Conditions

The recommended improvements in the study area were designed to serve background traffic growth and new traffic from anticipated developments. As a result, traffic modeling shows excellent operations and low delay at all intersections, with few approaches experiencing more substantial delay.



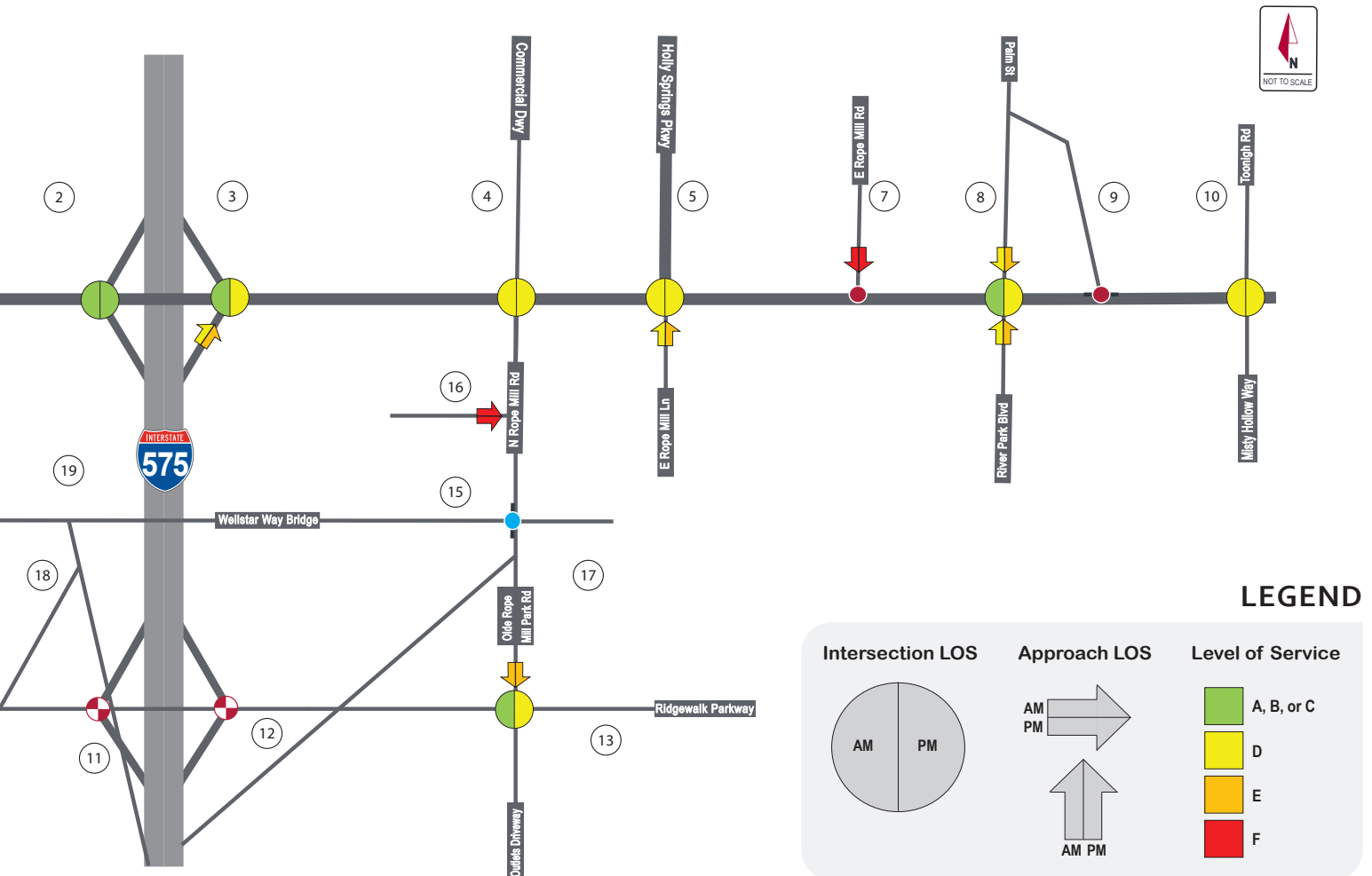
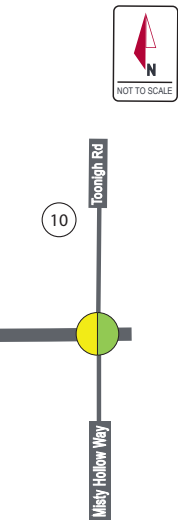
Cherokee 575 Sixes Study Area

Build With Development (2044) Peak Hour Level of Service

Build With Development (2044) Traffic Conditions

Even with large amounts of new traffic from developments, the recommended improvements maintain satisfactory traffic conditions at all study intersections. Compared to no-build conditions, traffic modeling shows:

- Reduced time spent waiting at Sixes Road and Holly Springs Parkway by over 70% during both peak hours
- Reduced delays at River Park Boulevard and Toonigh Road by nearly 60% during both peak hours.
- Improved connectivity across the interstate for drivers and pedestrians
- 10% less traffic on the interstate between Ridgewalk Parkway and Sixes Road
- 20% less delay at the I-575 and Sixes Road interchange during the evening rush hour








PROJECT COSTS AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

High-level cost estimates were developed for all recommended transportation improvements. Costs were inflated to the assumed year of expenditure of each project. Low (3%) and high (5%) inflation scenarios are presented here to reflect uncertainty in future inflationary effects.

Project ID	Abbreviated Project Name	Years to Expenditure	Cost (2025)	Total Cost (3% inflation)	Total Cost (5% inflation)
I-1	Sixes @ HSP Realignment	7	\$12,319,000	\$15,151,000	\$17,334,000
W-3	HSP Widening Phase I	10	\$33,935,000	\$45,606,000	\$55,277,000
W-4	HSP Widening Phase II	10	\$35,852,000	\$48,182,000	\$58,399,000
W-1	Wellstar Way Improvements	10	\$13,408,000	\$18,019,000	\$21,840,000
W-2	Commercial Drive Improvements	10	\$9,526,000	\$12,802,000	\$15,517,000
NC-1	I-575 Bridge Connector	12	\$30,890,000	\$44,042,000	\$55,474,000
NC-2	N Rope Mill Reconstruction	12	\$12,346,000	\$17,602,000	\$22,172,000
NC-3a	Access Lanes (east side)	20	\$25,380,000	\$45,839,000	\$67,341,000
NC-4a	Slip Lanes (east side)	20	\$18,413,000	\$33,256,000	\$48,855,000
NC-3b	Access Lanes (west side)	20	\$21,194,000	\$38,279,000	\$56,234,000
NC-4b	Slip Lanes (west side)	20	\$28,034,000	\$50,633,000	\$74,383,000
NC-5	Neighborhood Connector (optional)	20	\$20,052,000	\$36,216,000	\$53,204,000

MAJOR COST CATEGORIES:

-  Preliminary Engineering
-  Environmental Screening
-  ROW Acquisition
-  Utility Relocation
-  Construction
-  Inflation

Funding Opportunities

Cherokee County can explore funding sources at various levels to support the implementation of the recommended improvements. This may include a combination of local, state, federal, and other non-governmental or quasi-governmental opportunities:

- **Local Sources:** A TSPLOST program has the ability to raise local funds to support transportation investments. Local funds may be sufficient to fund some projects, or they can provide a local match for federal funds.
- **State Sources:** The state sometimes funds projects through state sales taxes or funds allocated through the governor’s budget.
- **Federal Sources:** The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) and the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) have programming authority over federal formula funds in the region. Cherokee can qualify for these formula funds through the Regional Transportation Plan process. Other competitive federal grant programs like BUILD and MEGA may be options for some projects.
- **Other Resources:** Public-private partnerships may be a consideration for some of the Wildcat projects, especially as they are catalytic projects for redevelopment.

ACTION PLAN

The tables below detail action items that the project partners, including Cherokee County, the cities of Holly Springs and Woodstock, and COED, can take in the short-, mid-, and long-terms to advance the goals of the Plan.

Policy Action Items	Coordination
Short-Term Actions	
Adopt Wildcat Plan Cherokee County, Holly Springs, and Woodstock should adopt the Wildcat Plan	N/A
Explore Funding Sources Explore funding sources and develop a financial plan to support the implementation of recommended improvements	Project Partners
Sign Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) Create and sign an MoA between relevant authorities; The MoA should include commitments to collaborate on project implementation and plans for periodic coordination between the groups	Project Partners
Mid-Term Actions	
Update Zoning/Development Ordinances As Needed Review current zoning and development standards and revise code as needed to support transportation improvements and new developments	Project Partners
Access Management Evaluate existing access management standards; Consider an access management overlay zone for the Sixes Road area	Project Partners
Community Improvement District (CID) Explore the creation of a CID to leverage project funding, manage, and oversee the implementation of recommended and future improvements	Project Partners, Wildcat property owners, ARC, and GDOT
Project Action Items	Coordination
Short-Term Actions	
I-1: Engineering and Funding Advance engineering and design for intersection realignment and explore short-term funding sources	Project Partners
I-1: ROW Acquisition Acquire necessary ROW on impacted parcels	Project Partners
Mid-Term Actions	
Railroad Coordination Develop plan for railroad coordination; Make early contact with railroad owner(s) regarding impacts to railroad ROW	Project Partners, Railroad
USACE Coordination Coordinate with USACE regarding all projects that would impact Little River and USACE easements	Project Partners, USACE
W-3 and W-4: Engineering and Environmental Advance preliminary engineering and environmental screening for Holly Springs Parkway widening	Project Partners
Interstate Projects: EIS Begin environmental screening process and development of EIS for interstate-related projects (NC-1, NC-3, NC-4)	Project Partners, GDOT
NC-2, W-1, and W-2: Advance Engineering Begin preliminary engineering	Project Partners
Long-Term Actions	
NC-5: Neighborhood Coordination Coordinate with River Park Neighborhood to determine if NC-5 is a desired improvement	City of Woodstock, River Park Neighborhood



Acknowledgments

Project Wildcat would like to acknowledge those who made valuable contributions to the recommendations:

- Cherokee County Board of Commissioners, County Manager, and Community Development Agency Staff
- Woodstock City Staff and Elected Officials
- Holly Springs City Staff and Elected Officials
- Cherokee Office of Economic Development
- The stakeholders, property owners and members of the public who provided feedback throughout the study

