

Working to make sure Hwy 9 widening reflects our communities' priorities

Dear Milton Neighbors:

As your State Representative, I'm actively working with the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) to address resident and city concerns about the widening of Georgia Highway 9 between the Alpharetta and Forsyth borders. You may have read, unbelievably, a former DOT right-of-way acquisition specialist was involved in a sophisticated falsification of internal documents. This led GDOT to incorrectly believe land parcels had been acquired in preparation for the widening to proceed. No right-of-way had in actuality been purchased.

Since that situation came to light, the GDOT has gained Right of Entry to 17 or 31 parcels. Without Right of Entry permission, it is illegal for the GDOT contractor to enter onto property, even for clean-up. Many of the barrels have been removed now and more clean up is on the way. Perversely, all the original grading and vegetation removal was performed without proper permission due to the fraudulent activity of the former GDOT employee.

Unfortunately for those most impacted, the project will be significantly delayed. However, this development has opened the door for more community engagement to better ensure the road widening reflects community desires and needs. I'm engaged at the highest levels in advocating for our community to balance the need for improved infrastructure, while maintaining the quality of life we enjoy.

First, I spoke with the Commissioner of the GDOT and followed up with a letter asking for a number of modifications, all supported by the City as well. Then, I personally met with the GDOT head engineer and district engineer and city of Milton Mayor Peyton Jamison and city staff to discuss changes.

The proposed changes include cleaning up the right of way and impacted properties until the project is ready to proceed; a new traffic signal at the entrance of Crooked Creek with an adequate turn lane; and redesigning the project to reduce the impact on neighborhoods adjacent to Hwy 9. We also discussed steering one side of the wide multi-purpose path somewhat away from the most impacted neighborhoods by purchasing more right of way on commercial property and with the commercial owners' support. The width of the path may vary modestly as well.

I asked for, and the city strongly supports, re-engineering the project to reduce the posted speed limit to 35 mph from Alpharetta to the Forsyth border. This last element would facilitate somewhat narrower lanes, greater landscaping, lowered noise levels, and allow for Low Speed vehicles to operate on the road (a convenience to neighborhoods abutting Hwy 9). Low Speed vehicles may appear like super golf carts or small open-air electric vehicles, but have license plates and are allowed to operate on roads with a posted speed limit of 35 mph or less. Some residents in Crabapple utilize golf carts that are allowed on roads posted 25 mph, but others drive Low Speed Vehicles as well. For reference, the speed limit in the adjoining Hwy 9 widening project in Alpharetta is engineered for 35 mph and with wide multi-purpose paths. The Forsyth portion will be completed with a posted 45 mph and 3 foot wide sidewalks.

I'm encouraged by the strong support of the City and our combined efforts in working with GDOT to make the overall project better for the community while enhancing everyone's ability to travel more safely and with less congestion.

I'll keep you, the residents of Hwy 9 corridor neighborhoods, updated as the decision-making and resulting project moves along. You have wonderful neighborhoods, and I'll do all I can to keep it that way! Thank you.

Jan Jones
State Representative
Speaker Pro Tempore
House District 47