



From the Mayor's Desk

September 2019

City steps into the future with opening of Curiosity Lab at Peachtree Corners

Every day we read of new technologies being developed that will change the way we live, the way we drive and commute. We hear of the need for cities to create infrastructure that will accommodate this world-changing technology, but we are years away from experiencing a future that has us living like the Jetsons, the cartoon show of the 1960s. Before any of us experience this futuristic world, a myriad of testing of new technologies must take place.

A few years ago, the idea of developing a test track here in our city began to take shape. As we explored the idea, we realized the economic development impact such an opportunity could present for the city. For cities to thrive, keeping the business community vibrant is paramount and leads to higher home property values, increased job opportunities and more disposable income.

To pursue this idea, the next step was selecting a site for a test track and deciding what exactly was needed that would attract new technology-related businesses to our city. Selecting Technology Park Atlanta was an easy choice as it is the hub of technology for our city. It turns out Technology Parkway which is the main road running through Tech Park, was an ideal choice. The road, which is 1.5 miles in length, offers developers of autonomous vehicle technologies a real-world environment where new technologies could function in surroundings with human-driven vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists and traffic intersections.

Testing sites for autonomous vehicle research isn't new – there are many such tracks located around the country, but all provide only a controlled environment. What was needed, was a research site where these emerging technologies could be tested in real-world conditions. Our test track is unique in that it represents the “walk” phase of a “crawl-walk-run” scenario where new technology is tested in real, live conditions.

A lot of planning went into the project, hours of study and meetings with intelligent mobility experts took place before the work began on the new test track. Then came the work to transform this city street into a true living laboratory.

Curiosity Lab includes a mobile 5G wireless environment, smart infrastructure such as DSRC roadside units, intelligent traffic signals, and traffic cameras with edge computing, all connected by a dedicated fiber-optic network linked to a network operations center where researchers can monitor track activity and compile data from all the connected devices and sensors on the track.

Those of us who drive along this new test track may not see all of the technology that makes this laboratory so technologically advanced – but what we will see is our city continuing to thrive and develop into a community that is not only a place we call home, but a tech-savvy venue for the 21st century for new businesses and jobs that will be part of our future.

The first tangible opportunity to experience just what this amazing testing track will do takes place on Tuesday, Oct. 1 at 11 a.m. when two driverless vehicles, developed and built by Local Motors, will make their debut on our tracks.

To celebrate the new Curiosity Lab at Peachtree Corners, we are inviting everyone to join us at City Hall at 11 a.m. on Oct. 1 to see and experience this amazing technology that is taking place right here in our city.

Mike Mason
Mayor