

Action Plan for *Connecting Savannah*

The *Connecting Savannah: Moving People – Making Neighborhoods* process was designed to actively engage the public in the planning of solutions to critical transportation issues. A stakeholder conference in October 2004 started the process that was followed by five working group sessions. Citizens identified the problems, identified potential solutions, and voiced opinions on a short-list of top candidate concepts.

The process identified east-west connectivity, traffic congestion and lack of alternative modes of travel as the most pressing transportation problems. Over 80 potential solutions were identified for five specific issue groups: DeRenne Avenue congestion; Bay Street traffic; lack of east-west connectivity; policies to become more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly; and opportunities for improved transit corridors. These were narrowed to 15 specific actions or concepts that were reviewed with the *Connecting Savannah* working group. From input received on the combination of policies, short-term, mid-term and long-term potentials, 12 actions are proposed. These are highlighted below along with costs and implementation steps. It is noted that all actions that might involve State and Federal funds must be included in the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). Immediate action items (next three years) must also be included in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), with the source of committed funds indicated.

Policies to Become More Pedestrian- and Bicycle Friendly and Opportunities for Improved Transit Corridors

- **Action 1: Redo subdivision and zoning regulations to meet requirements of pedestrian and bicycle policies.** The region's LRTP puts forward policies to become more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly, but specific standards are required in local regulations to ensure that the intent of these policies is implemented.
- **Action 2: Draft ordinance that supports transportation amenities program outlined in LRTP.** The LRTP outlines a transportation amenities program to protect and enhance the special quality of the region's canopied or palm-lined roadways and historic roadways. The next step is to develop specific design guidelines that reflect the program's intent.
- **Action 3: The MPO will work with the City and County to develop a specified allotment in the annual budget for pedestrian and bicycle improvements.** To ensure that progress can continue, an annual budget, either as a specified amount, or a percentage of funds available, needs to be established for pedestrian and bicycle improvements.
- **Action 4: Coordinate with upcoming Chatham Area Transit (CAT) Transit Development Plan (TDP) Update.** CAT will soon prepare an update of their TDP that identifies both short-term and long-term needs. The opportunities identified in the *Connecting Savannah* process will be considered in this plan update.
- **Action 5: Include coordination activities in Unified Planning Work Program.** Implementation of *Connecting Savannah* recommendations will require the MPO to coordinate with implementing agencies such as the City, County, and State.

DeRenne Avenue Congestion

- **DeRenne Intersection and Signal Improvements (Short-term)**
 - **Retime the signals to provide improved traffic progression.** Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) just informed the City that it would conduct such a study under its statewide re-timing contract. Work is to begin this summer
 - **Provide ambulance pre-emption on DeRenne.** Equip traffic signals on DeRenne as well as ambulances (estimated at 60) with signal pre-emption to improve emergency vehicle access to two hospitals on DeRenne
 - **Estimated Cost:** \$100,000
 - **Implementation:** TIP to include ambulance pre-emption in Year 1, funded by current SPLOST funds; action already included in LRTP as unspecified DeRenne operational improvements
 - **Implement intersection improvements on DeRenne (Montgomery to Abercorn) to improve traffic flow.** Specifically, make intersection improvements to allow for three through eastbound traffic lanes from Montgomery to Habersham or Abercorn
 - **Estimated Cost:** \$1,500,000
 - **Implementation:** TIP to include item in Year 1, funded by current SPLOST funds; action already included in LRTP as unspecified DeRenne operational improvements
- **Transportation Coordinator (Short-term)**
 - **Fund transportation coordinator position for first two-years to implement transportation demand management (TDM) measures.** The two hospitals on DeRenne have almost 9,000 employees. TDM measures such as carpooling and vanpooling can reduce the amount of traffic on DeRenne. A coordinator would work with the hospitals to provide ride matching services to encourage non-single occupancy vehicle travel
 - **Estimated Cost:** \$100,000 (\$50,000/year)
 - **Implementation:** TIP to include item in Years 1 and 2, funded by Q23 funds; action already included in LRTP as unspecified *Connecting Savannah* setaside
- **Hampstead Avenue Connector (Short-term)**
 - **Construct a new four lane divided road connection with bike lanes and sidewalks from DeRenne/Mildred to Abercorn to reduce traffic on DeRenne between Montgomery and Abercorn.** It is anticipated that traffic on the western portion of DeRenne could be reduced by as much as 20-25% per day by the provision of an improved parallel connection
 - **Estimated Cost of Improvement:** \$25,500,000
 - **Implementation:** TIP to include engineering (\$1.5 million) and purchase of right-of-way (\$7.5 million) in Year 1, funded by current SPLOST funds; action already included in LRTP as Priority 2: Mildred/Hampstead improvement. Reserve \$5 million of current SPLOST funds for construction; funding source for remaining \$11.5 million for construction

and inspection is unspecified and could be SPLOST, State or Federal funds or combination thereof

- **DeRenne Six-Lane Widening (Mid-term)**
 - **Conduct detailed study of options for a six-lane widening of DeRenne from Abercorn to Truman Parkway, with a provision in the LRTP for a six-lane improvement.** Commercial intrusion, emergency vehicle access and overall traffic congestions are issues pertaining to the eastern section of DeRenne. Conceptual engineering is needed to identify preferred concept
 - **Estimated Cost of Improvement:** \$34 million (estimate for a particular concept)
 - **Implementation:** TIP to include \$1 million for conceptual engineering in Year 1, funded by current SPLOST funds; action already included in LRTP as unspecified *Connecting Savannah* setaside; funding source for additional engineering as well as right-of-way acquisition, construction and inspections costs (\$33 million) is unspecified and could be SPLOST, State or Federal funds or combination thereof

Bay Street Traffic

- **Bay Street Signal and Intersection Improvements (Short-term)**
 - **Retime the signals to ensure most efficient operation of Bay Street traffic.** Conditions are constantly changing in the downtown area, and analysis of traffic conditions relative to signal operations would ensure that signals are timed efficiently
 - **Estimated Cost:** \$100,000
 - **Implementation:** TIP to include \$100,000 for timing study in Year 1, funded by current SPLOST funds; action already included in LRTP as unspecified traffic operations setaside
 - **Install audible pedestrian signals at every signalized intersection on Bay Street from MLK to Broad.** There is an audible signal on Bay Street in front of City Hall. Installing them at other intersections will improve overall mobility in this heavily used pedestrian corridor
 - **Estimated Cost:** \$100,000
 - **Implementation:** TIP to include \$100,000 for installation of audible pedestrian signals in Year 1, funded by current SPLOST funds; action already included in LRTP as unspecified traffic operations setaside
 - **Install left-turn lanes and median on Bay Street.** The wear and tear as well as the noise of heavy trucks starting and stopping at signals on Bay Street are a detriment to this important pedestrian corridor. Providing westbound left turn lanes at Whitaker, Abercorn and Lincoln would allow for two through traffic lanes westbound on Bay Street, increasing capacity and decreasing delay at signals. A landscaped median along Bay Street would soften the appearance of this important corridor

- **Estimated Cost:** \$1.1 million
- **Implementation:** TIP to include \$100,000 engineering study/design in Year 1 and \$1.0 million in Year 3 for construction, funded by current SPLOST funds; action already included in LRTP as unspecified *Connecting Savannah* setaside

East-West Connectivity

- **Traffic Control Center (Short-term)**
 - **Conduct concept feasibility (pre-design) for a regional traffic control center, including coordination with planned GDOT freeway management system.** The City has a traffic control center, and GDOT has plans for a regional one focusing on freeway management. Upgrading the City's existing control center to state-of-the-art to be reactive to changes in traffic conditions would ensure maximum efficiency of existing roadway capacity
 - **Estimated Cost:** \$300,000 for concept feasibility study
 - **Implementation:** TIP to include \$300,000 for concept feasibility of traffic control center in Year 1, funded by Q23 funds; action already included in LRTP as Traffic Control Center
- **Truman Parkway Extension and Second Bridge (Long-term)**
 - **Initiate planning for long-term implementation of Truman Parkway Extension and Second Bridge across Savannah River.** These projects would complete a limited-access route around Savannah, decreasing the amount of through traffic on some east-west routes. Each is anticipated to cost at least \$280 million, excluding right-of-way costs. Initial studies to identify critical environmental issues as well as opportunities for tolling could start the dialogue and planning process about options and issues
 - **Estimated Cost:** \$2 million for initial studies
 - **Implementation:** TIP to include \$1 million in both Years 2 and 3 for initial studies, funded by Q23 funds; amend LRTP to include projects in Aspirations Plan, add studies to fiscally constrained plan

The table on the following page highlights the recommended actions and the associated implementation steps proposed.

Action Plan for <i>Connecting Savannah</i> Proposals			
Group	Action	Proposed TIP	Notes
Policies to become more pedestrian-and bicycle-friendly and opportunities for improved transit corridors	Redo subdivision and zoning regulations to meet requirements of pedestrian and bicycle policies	Part of on-going MPO activities	
	Draft ordinance that supports transportation amenities program outlined in LRTP		
	The MPO will work with the City and County to develop a specified allotment in the annual budget for pedestrian and bicycle improvements		
	Coordinate with upcoming Chatham Area Transit (CAT) Transit Development Plan Update		
	Include coordination activities in Unified Planning Work Program		
DeRenne Avenue Congestion	DeRenne Traffic Signal Re-timing, Ambulance Signal Pre-emption and Intersection Improvements	\$1.6 million	
	Transportation Coordinator	\$0.1 million	Work with hospitals to encourage carpooling, vanpooling and transit usage
	Hampstead Avenue Connector	\$9.0 million	Fund \$9.0 million (SPLOST funds) for engineering and right-of-way acquisition; reserve \$5.0 million of current SPLOST for construction; remaining funds needed (\$11.5 million) are unspecified and could be SPLOST, State or Federal or combination thereof
	DeRenne Six-Lane Widening	\$1.0 million	Fund \$1.0 million (SPLOST funds) for concept engineering now so a decision can be reached, \$33 million of additional funds for engineering, right-of-way, construction and inspection could be from SPLOST, State or Federal funds or combination thereof
Bay Street Traffic	Bay Street Signal and Intersection Improvements	\$1.3 million	
East-West Connectivity	Traffic Control Center	\$0.3 million	This is concept feasibility only
	Truman Parkway Extension and Second Bridge	\$2.0 million	These are initial studies only