



CONNECTING SAVANNAH:

**Moving People – Making Neighborhoods
March 22, 2005 Working Group
Meeting Summary**

**Metropolitan Planning Organization
Savannah-Chatham County, Georgia**

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I. Working Group Process

The Connecting Savannah working group sessions are designed to actively engage citizens in a planning process to identify and develop solutions to address the most pressing transportation issues facing the metropolitan Savannah area. The Connecting Savannah team, led by the Metropolitan Planning Organization with consultant support from Wilbur Smith Associates, Lott+Barber Architects, Dovetail Consulting and McMillan Associates, has facilitated five working group sessions since the beginning of the process in August 2004.

At the February 24, 2005 working group session, consultants presented technical summaries, renderings and improvement ideas for several major east-west travel corridors including Bay Street, DeRenne Avenue and Hampstead Avenue. Citizens asked questions, offered comments and provided insights to the benefits and impacts of each improvement idea. At the end of the session, participants were asked to prioritize the following potential transportation improvement concepts:

- Overall Traffic Control Improvements
- Bay Street Intersection Improvements
- DeRenne Intersection Improvements and Signal Timing
- DeRenne Six Lane Widening
- DeRenne Cut and Cover Road
- Hampstead Avenue Improvements
- Henry/Anderson Streets Modification
- Traffic Demand Strategies in DeRenne Corridor
- Second Bridge
- Truman Parkway Extension
- Regional Freight Study



Rendering of Hampstead Avenue Improvement

II. March 22, 2005 Working Group



At the March 22, 2005 working group session, forty-four citizens discussed three additional priorities of the Connecting Savannah process:

- Pedestrian/Bicycle Policies
- Opportunities to Improve Transit
- Accessibility For All

‘Pedestrian/Bicycle Policies’ referred to many areas of need including safe conditions for cycling and walking, lighting, sidewalk and bicycle lane improvements. ‘Opportunities to Improve Transit’ referred to the identification of key transit corridors such as Abercorn Street, Veterans Parkway, and Lynes Parkway as well as funding considerations to expand the transit district and

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enhance existing bus services. ‘Accessibility for All’ represents the planning principle that transportation facilities (i.e. sidewalks, transit, roadways) must be accessible to all persons. The purpose of the March 22, 2005 working group was two-fold:

- First, to continue the citizen-driven working group process and to consider the recommended course of action to move the bicycle, pedestrian, and transit policies forward, and
- Second, to facilitate consensus on the overall list of transportation improvement priorities.



II. Summary of Presentation

Pedestrian/Bicycle

Recommendations for pedestrian, bicycle and transit improvements were reviewed to determine if the improvement options were already incorporated in existing plans such as the Long Range Transportation Plan or Transportation Improvement Plan for the Savannah area or still required a course of action. Of the list of twelve recommendations, only three pedestrian/bicycle issues were not already addressed in an existing transportation plan. The following action items were proposed for pedestrian/bicycle policies at the work session:



Action 1: Redo subdivisions and zoning regulations to meet requirements of pedestrian and bicycle policies. The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) will work with local governments to develop policy guidelines and roadway typical sections reflecting desired pedestrian and bicycle treatments that would be used to guide future developments.



Action 2: Draft Ordinance that supports transportation amenity corridor program outlined in the Long Range Transportation Plan. The MPO will draft an ordinance that will guide implementation of the transportation amenity corridor program. Phase One of the program included documentation and conservation of existing transportation amenities such as canopy roadways, scenic vistas, and community gateways. Phase Two will include landscaping and enhancement of all new and recently completed roads.

Action 3: The MPO will work with the City and County to develop specified allotments in the annual budget for pedestrian/bicycle improvements. A specific set-aside would provide a stable funding source for pedestrian and bicycle improvements.

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The MPO will work with the City and County to develop a specified funding program. The priority projects in this program should be for: projects addressing the Americans with Disabilities Act; repair of worn facilities, projects connecting transit routes, and projects connecting schools.

Transit

Several improvement options were recommended for transit including an assessment of local and regional transit needs, implementation of downtown bus circulator service, park and ride lots, and transit service to key activity centers. The following action items for transit were proposed at the work session:



Action 1: Coordinate with upcoming Transit Development Plan (TDP) update. Chatham Area Transit (CAT) will be updating its Transit Development Plan this year. The TDP considers both short and long term transit improvements. Connecting Savannah transit suggestions will be forwarded to CAT for consideration in the TDP.

Action 2: Include coordination activities in Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Include coordination activities with the TDP and the Interstate Plan in the Metropolitan Planning Organization's UPWP.

III. Discussion on Consensus Items



After the presentation, the meeting transitioned into a consensus-building discussion on improvement priorities. The results of 57 comment cards collected at the previous meeting were displayed in a series of tables according to improvement options that indicated:

- The highest number of #1, #2, #3 priority responses, other priority responses, total positive responses, and 'do not do' responses
- The highest number of #1, #2, #3 priority responses
- The highest number of total positive responses (meaning participants gave the option some kind of ranking versus no ranking at all)

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After a review of the rankings, there was an open discussion on where Connecting Savannah stood relative to all suggestions. A summary of participants' comments is listed below:

- Who coordinates across transportation agencies?
- Continue bike friendly design of paths
- Pay attention to speed limits, traffic enforcement, and public education to improve walking conditions
- Consider amenity corridor concept for DeRenne Avenue
- What is the cost/benefit analysis related to bike paths?
- How are sidewalk decisions in Savannah made?
- Consider crosswalk design and signal control



- What is the impact on 48cc motor scooters?
- Need consistent enforcement restrictions on bikes in squares
- Address hazards for visually impaired from bikes ridden and parked on sidewalks
- What is the impact of Hampstead improvement on DeRenne Avenue?
- Consider underpass intersections on DeRenne at Montgomery, White Bluff, Abercorn and Habersham
- It is important to try to reduce traffic on DeRenne (not just help it go faster)
- Focus on long term solutions
- I-516 feeds into a neighborhood – 6 lane widening of DeRenne Avenue “softens” the impact
- Be careful not to turn Henry/Anderson into a truck route ; the information packet indicated benefit as more vehicles using the route versus DeRenne Avenue or Bay Street
- Consider the ‘do-nothing’ scenario on DeRenne Avenue...vacant homes increase, homeownership decreases, zoning transitions from residential to highest/best use (i.e. commercial)...we cannot ‘do- nothing’
- Prioritize concepts by cost
- Is there any programmed funding to start any of these projects?
- Consider 37th Street instead of DeRenne Avenue
- Move Hampstead Avenue improvement option to the to the short term
- We [citizens] must make a unified decision



After a thorough discussion, the participants appeared to reach consensus that:

- The DeRenne cut-and-cover road was not viable;

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- There are issues related to the specific design of a six-lane widening of DeRenne but that there is a need to make some improvement;
- The short-term DeRenne Avenue improvements should be made before any six-lane improvement is implemented; and
- The Hampstead Avenue improvement could be implemented within a five-year time frame.

The following table lists the agreed upon improvement options and implementation time frame.

SHORT-TERM	MID-TERM	LONG-TERM
Roadway Improvements		
DeRenne Intersection Improvements and Signal Timing	Hampstead Avenue Improvement	Truman Parkway Extension
Overall Traffic Control Improvements	DeRenne Six-Lane Widening	Second Bridge
Bay Street Intersection/Signal Improvements		
Traffic Demand Strategies in DeRenne Corridor		
Regional Freight Study		
Henry/Anderson Streets Modification		
Pedestrian/Bicycle Improvements		
Redo Subdivisions and Zoning Regulations		
Draft Ordinance Supporting Amenity Corridor Program		
Develop Annual Budgets for Ped/Bike Improvements		
Transit Improvements		
Coordinate with Upcoming Transit Development Plan		
Include Coordination Activities in UPWP		

IV. Next Steps

The next major step in the Connecting Savannah process is a presentation of recommended improvement options and priorities to the Policy Committee of the Metropolitan Planning Organization. The next meeting date is scheduled for Wednesday, April 27, 2005 at 10:00 a.m. During the meeting, citizen volunteers, MPO staff and consultants will present an overview of the Connecting Savannah process, recommended transportation improvements, decisions and tasks necessary to move approved concepts into the next phases of design and engineering and/or policy development.