



## CHATHAM URBAN TRANSPORTATION STUDY

### Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Summary

Mendonsa Hearing Room  
112 East State Street

**August 19, 2004**

**5:30 p.m.**

#### **Members Present:**

Phyllis Hardeman  
Ronald Kolman  
Joe Laufenberg  
Henry Levy  
Helen McCracken, Vice Chair  
Lee Mundell, Chair  
Joyce Murlless  
Stephen Traub

#### **Representing:**

Thunderbolt  
Chatham County  
Savannah  
City of Tybee Island  
Thunderbolt  
Savannah  
Chatham County  
Chatham County

#### **Others Present:**

Al Black, P.E.  
Steve Gavigan  
Jean Iaderosa  
Teresa Scott  
Chris Simons  
Thomas L. Thomson, P.E., AICP  
Wykoda Wang  
Michael Weiner, P.E.  
Mark Wilkes, P.E., AICP

#### **Representing:**

Chatham County Engineering  
Savannah  
Chatham Area Transit  
GDOT, Jesup  
PBS&J  
Executive Director, MPC  
MPC  
City of Savannah Traffic Engineer  
MPC

### **I. Approval of Agenda**

Mr. Mundell called the meeting to order. Hearing no additions or changes, the agenda would stand approved as presented.

**II. Action Items:**

- A. Approval of June 17, 2004 CUTS Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Mr. Levy **moved** to approve the minutes of the June 17, 2004 CUTS Citizens Advisory Committee Minutes. Mr. Traub seconded the motion.

**CAC Action:** The motion to approve the minutes of the June 17, 2004 CUTS Citizens Advisory Committee meeting carried with none opposed. Voting were Ms. Hardeman, Mr. Laufenberg, Mr. Kolman, Mr. Traub, Ms. Murlless, Mr. Levy, and Ms. McCracken.

Mr. Mundell stated that he discussed with staff the fact that the CAC members need to receive reminder telephone calls in advance of the meeting and that the minutes are prepared in a timelier manner.

- B. Review of Draft 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

Mr. Wilkes stated that the LRTP serves as the guiding vision for transportation in Chatham County; therefore, it is reviewed before the Transportation Improvement Program. The LRTP is a 20 year forecast plan addressing regional goals and how transportation can best meet those goals. The plan also serves as the defining vision for the regional transportation systems and services. In addition, the LRTP is a federal requirement for urbanized areas with population greater than 50,000. The last major plan update was completed in 1999.

Mr. Wilkes noted that the projects in the TIP flow from the LRTP. A financial breakdown of the plan was displayed. For the first time, the LRTP includes a toll road, which connects Interstate 16 near Interstate 516 to State Route 21 near Interstate 95; the Johnny Mercer Flyover project has been reworked as an operational improvement. This would improve traffic flow especially for the westbound left turn. The Gwinnett Street widening was added as a City priority; now it is in the plan as a four-lane divided facility.

To questions from several CAC members, Mr. Simons further described the proposed toll road. The facility is designed to relieve State Route 21 from some of the truck traffic.

Ms. McCracken asked for clarification on the plans for Johnny Mercer Road near the Marshes.

Mr. Wilkes stated that years ago a traffic study identified a capacity deficiency for the westbound left turn. There are ways that this could be improved without constructing a fly-over.

To a question by Ms. Murlless, Mr. Simons outlined possibilities for this area.

Mr. Levy stated that the only stumbling block that Tybee has is the lack of parking, the stumbling block when coming back to town is when the traffic backs up on Wilmington Island. He **moved** that this money be put to much better use such as a way to get from Wilmington Island to Interstate 16. Ms. Murlless seconded the motion.

Mr. Wilkes stated that the Policy Committee is the decision making body. The CAC is an advisory committee to the Policy Committee. An appropriate action would be to recommend to the Policy Committee that those changes be made to the document.

Mr. Mundell stated that a more appropriate motion would be approval subject to the condition that the Policy Committee delete certain projects that the CAC finds to be no longer necessary.

**CAC Action:**       **The motion carried with none opposed.** The motion was to approve the LRTP with the recommendation that the U. S. Highway 80 widening be deleted from the plan and that the money be used for other purposes. Voting were Mr. Levy, Mr. Traub, Ms. Hardeman, Mr. Kolman, Ms. McCracken, Mr. Laufenberg, and Ms. Murlless.

Ms. McCracken **moved** to delete the Johnny Mercer flyover.

Mr. Wilkes stated that the Johnny Mercer flyover is not in the LRTP. What is in the LRTP is an operational improvement, which could range from re-striping the roadway to retiming the traffic signals. An operational improvement cannot be stretched into a flyover.

Ms. Murlless asked how the CAC could express its dislike of this particular new project.

Mr. Simons stated that it might be possible to clean this matter up with the next sales tax referendum by removing Johnny Mercer from the list of Chatham County's obligation. Sales tax money in general is being collected. The money is not being dedicated to that project, rather to a list of projects.

Mr. Levy **amended** the motion to say in the future the next sales tax proposal the project be removed from the list. Mr. Laufenberg seconded the motion.

**CAC Action:**       **The motion carried.** The motion was to remove the Johnny Mercer project from the LRTP. The motion further recommended that in the future the next sales tax proposal the project be removed from the list. Voting were Mr. Levy, Mr. Traub, Mr. Laufenberg, Ms. Hardeman, Mr. Kolman, Ms. McCracken, and Ms. Murlless

Mr. Levy **moved** that the first priority above all other things are two projects: 1) the completion of the Truman Parkway to Phase V, which is connecting it back to Abercorn Street again; and, 2) a facilitator to connect the east side of Savannah to the west side of Savannah on the north side of Savannah. These two projects take priority over every other improvement in the LRTP. That no money be spent on the LRTP until these two projects are satisfied and if the MPC staff or MPC itself can't decide where to put the facilitator on the north side that it be an

extension of the Truman Parkway across the Savannah River and then turn west to connect all the way to Interstate 95. These projects have priority over everything else on there. Mr. Laufenberg seconded the motion.

**CAC Action: The motion carried with none opposed.** The motion was that the first priority above all other things are two projects: 1) the completion of the Truman Parkway to Phase V, which is connecting it back to Abercorn Street again; and, 2) a facilitator to connect the east side of Savannah to the west side of Savannah on the north side of Savannah. These two projects take priority over every other improvement in the LRTP. That no money be spent on the LRTP until these two projects are satisfied and if the MPC staff or MPC itself can't decide where to put the facilitator on the north side that it be an extension of the Truman Parkway across the Savannah River and then turn west to connect all the way to Interstate 95. These projects have priority over everything else on there. Voting were Mr. Levy, Mr. Traub, Mr. Laufenberg, Ms. Hardeman, Mr. Kolman, Ms. McCracken, and Ms. Murlless.

Mr. Wilkes continued with a review of transit projects in the LRTP.

Ms. Iaderosa commented by stating that plans to move people quickly by bus or commuter train may be options that would be available toward the end of the planning horizon.

Mr. Wilkes stated that Phase 2 of the Amenities Plan would be to develop some design guidelines and recommendations for the new construction projects in terms of what kinds of designs standards, medians, or trees. Maps of the amenity corridors are shown in the eight page color flyer. The schedule of public meetings was reviewed.

Mr. Mundell asked where in the general scheme of things is the widening going to occur where there is a massive traffic jam, which is Abercorn Street at King George Boulevard.

Mr. Laufenberg stated that priorities are not right. The bridge by King George is a priority, and then back track to Largo and Apache. To run a freeway into a stretch of traffic lights would be disaster.

Mr. Levy **moved** that subject to the two projects, the third priority would be to relieve the traffic from the end of the Phase 5 of the Truman Parkway to Interstate 95, recommend approval of the LRTP. Mr. Kolman seconded the motion.

**CAC Action: The motion carried with none opposed.** The motion was to approve the LRTP subject to the condition that the following priorities take precedence over anything else in the LRTP: 1) the completion of the Truman Parkway to Phase V, which is connecting it back to Abercorn Street again; 2) a facilitator to connect the east side of Savannah to the west side of Savannah on the north side of Savannah; and, 3) to relieve the traffic from the end of the Phase 5 of the Truman Parkway to Interstate 95. Voting were Mr. Levy, Mr. Traub, Mr. Laufenberg, Ms. Hardeman, Mr. Kolman, Ms. McCracken, and Ms. Murlless.

C. Review of Draft FY 2005-2007 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Ms. Wang stated that the document that is before the committee today is the second draft. Changes received since May have been incorporated. The draft document is also available on the MPC website. It is possible to submit comments through the website. The TIP follows the LRTP in terms of public involvement. The meetings are listed in back of the eight page flyer that was displayed earlier in the meeting. The comment period ends September 9, 2004 but written comments would be accepted until September 13.

Ms. Murlless asked what is planned for the Houlihan Bridge.

Ms. Scott replied that GDOT has proposed replacing that bridge with a fixed span bridge.

Mr. Laufenberg asked the reason for moving the widening of White Bluff Road back.

Mr. Black stated that the initial traffic projections were too high. The need for the project was initially set up in 1996.

Ms. Murlless asked if any design studies have been done on the Whitfield Avenue widening.

Mr. Black replied that preliminary plans have been done. There will be an in-house field plan review. Because of the physical layout of the property additional lots are being purchased in order to have a wider median.

Ms. Murlless stated that it would seem that if the roads were laid out as they were at the initial public meeting that was held at the school there that would be what Mr. Levy is requesting except his question now is will any design changes be done in that format and will they be available to the public for comment prior to construction.

Mr. Black replied that there would be a public information meeting, where comments could be accepted.

Mr. Levy **moved** that this plan be approved subject to the priority of the Truman Parkway, the east-west facilitator and the relief on traffic from the end of Truman Parkway to Interstate 95. These are to be priorities over and above anything on that plan. The implementation of the roadway amenities corridor is also in this priority list. Ms. Murlless seconded the motion.

**CAC Action:**        **The motion carried with none opposed.** The motion was to approve the plan subject to the priority of the Truman Parkway, the east-west facilitator and the relief on traffic from the end of Truman Parkway to Interstate 95. These are to be priorities over and above anything on that plan. The implementation of the roadway amenities corridor is also in this priority list. Voting were Mr. Levy, Mr. Traub, Mr. Laufenberg, Ms. Hardeman, Mr. Kolman, Ms. McCracken, and Ms. Murlless.

**III. Status Reports**

A Connecting Savannah

Mr. Wilkes stated that this project would involve a major public involvement effort. Meetings have been held with neighborhood groups and other community events would be scheduled. For more information on this, CAC members were encouraged to contact Mr. Thomson, who is heading this effort.

Ms. Murlless requested that members of the CAC receive notices of public meetings by e-mail or regular mail.

**IV. Informational Reports (verbal)**

A. Georgia Department of Transportation

Ms. Scott was present to review the status of projects currently underway in the area. A report was distributed at the meeting. A public meeting on the proposed Bay Street widening project has been scheduled for 4:30 – 7:30 on Tuesday, August 24, 2004 at the Moses Jackson Community Center.

Mr. Wilkes added that staff would be presenting information on the LRTP at the same location, but later in the evening.

Ms. Scott stated that grading has started on the intersection improvements at the Wal-Mart on U. S. Highway 17 South.

B. Chatham County

Mr. Black presented an update on the One Percent Road projects that are currently underway in Chatham County. A status report was distributed.

Ms. Murlless asked for an update on Phase 4 of Truman Parkway.

Mr. Black replied that Phase 4 down to Whitfield would be sometime the summer of 2005.

C. City of Savannah

Mr. Weiner reviewed the status of projects in the City of Savannah. A status report was distributed. A consultant has been hired to develop new timing plans for streetlights in order to move traffic in a more efficient manner. As part of the improvements on Middleground Road, fiber optic cables are being laid so that new traffic signals could be synchronized.

D. Chatham Area Transit Authority

Ms. Iaderosa reported that CAT has now installed 101 shelters that are either new or replacement facilities. These shelters will accommodate two persons in wheelchairs. In addition to that CAT will be receiving an additional 100 shelters for placement at locations where there are significant number of boardings. That threshold has been lowered to 12 passengers per day and also at sites such as hospitals, residences, or nursing homes. It is now possible to request an amenity through the CAT website. The schedule book, now known as the Ride Guide will be released soon. It will be noted in the Ride Guide that five of the CAT routes will be serving the new Wal-Mart on Skidaway Road.

**VI. Adjournment**

There being no further business to come before the Citizens Advisory Committee, the August 19, 2004 meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark A. Wilkes, P.E., AICP  
Director of Transportation Planning