



## CHATHAM URBAN TRANSPORTATION STUDY

### Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Summary

Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room  
112 East State Street

April 26, 2006  
MPC Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room

5:00 p.m.  
112 East State Street

<u>Members</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Present</u>
Tony Abbott	Chatham County	X
Brant Attaway	City of Savannah	X
Phyllis Hardeman	Town of Thunderbolt	
Chandler Kinsey	City of Tybee Island	X
Joe Laufenberg	City of Savannah	X
Henry Levy	City of Tybee Island	X
Helen McCracken, Vice Chair	Town of Thunderbolt	
Chris Miller	City of Savannah	
Lee Mundell, Chair	City of Savannah	X
Clint Murphy	Chatham County	X
Russell Peterson	Chatham County	X
Andrew Rawlings	City of Bloomingdale	
David Saussy	City of Savannah	
Linda M. Smith	Port Wentworth	X
Joe Steffen	Chatham County	
Stephen Traub	City of Savannah	X
James Weaver	City of Savannah	X

Brant Attaway arrived after the meeting began. Clint Murphy left before the meeting adjourned.

<u>Others Present</u>	<u>Representing</u>
Tom Thomson, P.E., AICP	MPC
Mark Wilkes, P.E., AICP	MPO
Charles McMillan	Group Facilitator
Jane Love	MPO
Wykoda Wang	MPO (arrived after meeting began)
Barbara Settzo	MPC

## Call to Order

Chairman Lee Mundell called the April 20, 2006 Citizens Advisory Committee meeting to order. Mr. Mundell briefly stated that tonight's meeting would be a departure from the regular format with no specific action items presented for discussion. With the assistance of Mr. Charles McMillan, this meeting will be an open discussion of what CAC is and how to make this CAC function better. He then introduced Mr. Tom Thomson.

### I. Opening Remarks

Mr. Tom Thomson, Executive Director of the MPC, began by introducing Ms. Jane Love, the newest member of the MPO staff. He then went on to explain the reason for this evening's agenda. In his opening remarks he stated that he has observed that the CAC doesn't believe their work is useful or rewarding. He has also observed that the CAC hasn't been helpful to the staff or the MPO Board. He told the committee that their chairman is a voting member of the MPO Board and that their message about actions they take is getting to the MPO, but he doubts that is the real issue since so much time in each meeting is spent on issues that are important and interesting, but largely issues that neither the CAC nor the staff can resolve, i.e. the US 17 construction activity.

Mr. Thomson then spoke about the purpose of the CAC and about available options for all parties. The purpose of CAC relates to the business of Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) process. The federal government requires an MPO for urban areas with populations greater than 50,000. We must comply with federal regulations to ensure that we are eligible for federal funding. This is an important job but we don't need to have a CAC to accomplish this job. We need public involvement that 1.) is pro-active, 2.) provides information to the public, and 3.) provides opportunities for public opinions to be expressed and heard. We need a public involvement process, but it doesn't need to include a Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC).

The objective is to comply with federal regulations. More importantly, we need an effective way for the public to comment on the business of the MPO; the business being 1.) to put together a long range plan that is cost supportable (not everyone can have every project they want due to financial limits), 2.) to establish priorities, and 3.) to carry out a planning work program. There are a lot of ways to involve the public in this job.

If we have a CAC what should it be doing to provide for effective public participation in the MPO process? What is the best way to do this? Is a CAC the best way or is there another way? Mr. Thomson suggested reconsidering the size of the group. A smaller group may be more effective.

Mr. Thomson suggested that this meeting end at 6:30 PM, and then turned the meeting over to Charles McMillan to facilitate the discussion.

## II. Open Discussion

Mr. McMillan began this part of the meeting by stating three questions he believes need to be answered by the group. The questions are 1.) What is it that you do? 2.) Why do you do what you do? 3.) Is what you do appropriate?

He believes Sec. 4 of the Bylaws is too wordy. It needs to be condensed to achieve more clarity.

Mr. McMillan asked all the committee members present different questions in order to gather information about how each person came to be on the CAC, how long each has been on the CAC, who they represent by being on the CAC, what each one hopes to accomplish on the CAC, and what each one sees as the role of the CAC.

Some responses from the committee members included:

- No clear understanding of the expectations or the process for getting things done.
- CAC has no authority.
- All members of the CAC are not on the same page.
- Believes they are not being heard.
- Looks to the MPO staff to help the CAC formulate and express committee concerns.
- Nothing ever changes.
- We are ignored; treated with indifference.
- We should be advising the bodies above us and the staff.
- We should keep our requests few but keep making them.
- Nothing gets done.
- Are the concerns expressed by the CAC of any interest to the MPO or is the CAC just to rubber stamp the TIP?
- MPO staff should present issues to CAC where CAC's opinion matters.
- MPO staff should not present issues where CAC's input is not necessary.
- How do we get them to listen to us?

Mr. McMillan concluded from this interchange with the committee members that the two overriding feelings that prevail on the CAC are a sense of frustration and a lack of communication. Feedback appears to be inadequate. There appears to be a breakdown between the CAC and the PC and between the CAC and the MPO staff. Committee members have their own concerns generally limited to their individual communities. It's hard for the committee to function effectively without a cohesive mission for the larger community. Individual interests are fine, but the CAC, as a group, must have a mission to advance. How do you represent the whole?

Mr. McMillan selected Brant Attaway, Russ Peterson, and Tony Abbott to form a sub-committee for the purpose of answering the three questions he asked at the beginning of

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the session. They should draw upon the diverse interests represented by the members tonight in order to form a single answer that speaks for the group as a whole. A diverse group that isn't cohesive cannot sell its ideas to the next level.

Mr. McMillan's goal for this committee is to get a short statement of what the CAC does. He asked that a staff member meet with him and this subcommittee. Staff will coordinate with the subcommittee to find an acceptable meeting time.

Mr. Thomson requested a list of the issues that the CAC has put forward and believes were ignored. Mr. Lee Mundell will get together with other long-time members of the CAC to put this list together.

In response to a question, Mr. Thomson gave a brief history of how the MPO committees (i.e. Policy Committee, Technical Coordinating Committee, etc.) came into existence: After environmental regulations began to apply to transportation projects, the Federal government wanted assurance from local decision-makers that the federally funded projects would not be abandoned due to local problems related to environmental issues. The MPO committees exist to provide local guidance and commitment to the federally funded projects. Citizen Advisory Committees have been the standard method for public involvement for many MPOs.

Mr. McMillan requested that a draft of the results of the sub-committee work be communicated to all members before the next meeting in June, preferably by e-mail. It was noted that not everyone has e-mail access.

### **III. Adjournment**

The meeting of the Citizens Advisory Committee was adjourned at 6:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

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