



CHATHAM URBAN TRANSPORTATION STUDY

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room
112 East State Street

June 21, 2007

5:00 p.m.

Members

Tony Abbott
Brant Attaway
John Bennett
Mark Egan
Phyllis Hardeman
Jason House
Chandler Kinsey
Beth Kinstler
Jack Knops
Henry Levy
Helen McCracken
Clint Murphy, Chairman
Russell Peterson, Vice Chairman
Andrew Rawlings
Linda M. Smith
Joe Steffen
Stephen Traub
James Weaver

Representing

Chatham County
City of Savannah
City of Savannah
Chatham County
Town of Thunderbolt
City of Savannah
City of Tybee Island
City of Savannah
City of Savannah
City of Tybee Island
Town of Thunderbolt
Chatham County
Chatham County
City of Bloomingdale
Port Wentworth
Chatham County
City of Savannah
City of Savannah

Present

X

X
X
X
X
X
X
X
X
X
X
X
X
X
X
X
X
X
X

Voting Member Alternate

Walter Parker

Representing

Chandler Kinsey (Tybee Island)

X

Others Present

Jane Love
Barbara Settzo
Wykoda Wang
Mark Wilkes, P.E., AICP

Representing

MPO
MPO
MPO
MPO

X
X
X
X

Call to Order

Mr. Clint Murphy called the June 21, 2007 Citizens Advisory Committee meeting to order.

I. Approval of Agenda

It was moved and seconded to approve the agenda as presented.

CAC Action: the motion to approve the agenda as presented carried with none opposed.

II. Action Items

A. Approval of the April 19, 2007 Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

It was moved and seconded to approve the April 19, 2007 Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes.

CAC Action: the motion to approve the April 19, 2007 Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes carried with none opposed.

B. Endorsement of the SAFETEA-LU Interim Plan Revision

Ms. Wykoda Wang presented the staff report beginning with a definition of SAFETEA-LU and how it impacts on the MPO. She presented the SAFETEA-LU requirements for the Long Range Transportation (LRTP) revision. These changes focus on the process revisions and not a full plan update. Topics that the staff had to review and revise include: security, safety, environmental mitigation, system operations, congestion management process, participation plan, public transit-human service transportation plans, and financial plan. Ms. Wang highlighted the revisions that were being added to the plan for each of these topics and referred the committee members to the draft report for full explanation. Ms. Wang noted that this an administrative amendment, and as such it does not require public involvement, but the MPO has advertised a 30-day public comment and has provided time for public hearing at this meeting and at the Policy Committee meeting on June 27 2007. She recommended endorsing this revision to the Policy Committee.

Chairman Murphy then opened the meeting for any public comments from those in the audience. There being no public comments at this time, the public hearing was closed

Chairman Murphy then opened the meeting to committee discussion and action.

Mr. Levy expressed concern that these regulations increase the cost of planning and construction of all projects. Ms. Wang believes it facilitates the process. Mr. Peterson noted that these revisions are regulated and federally mandated. There is no choice. Mr.

Knops and Ms. Kinstler expressed satisfaction with the SAFETEA-LU legislation and the revisions. Mr. House asked about what specific historical sites would be impacted by projects. Ms. Wang noted that specific sites would be listed in the project plans. This is just the overall plan, not a specific project plan.

Ms. Wang pointed out to the committee that the source of some of the archeological site information is confidential, accessible only to six archeologists in the state. The MPO cannot obtain the locations for mapping.

Mr. Egan questioned the Participation Plan. Ms. Wang explained that the comments received would determine if more hearings were necessary.

Mr. Peterson asked where public transport vehicles are stored. Ms. Wang responded that CAT coordinates with CEMA and GEMA and other agencies that develop evacuation plans which require buses for evacuation. The MPO supports these agencies with information, but does not make the plan. Mr. Wilkes stated that the MPO staff has advised CAT that one of the two possible sites for the Transfer Center is in a flood zone.

It was moved and seconded to endorse the SAFETEA-LU Interim Plan Revision as presented.

CAC Action: the motion to endorse the SAFETEA-LU Interim Plan Revision as presented carried with none opposed.

C. Endorsement of FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program

Ms. Wang made the staff presentation of the FY 2008-2011 TIP document. The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a short-range programming document developed annually, covering all means of transportation. It is a 4-year listing of obligated projects, prioritizing them and considering safety issues. This program document is necessary to secure funding and move the projects along through construction.

Ms. Wang highlighted some of the highway projects that are in the FY 2008-2011 TIP. This year the staff has added more description details of each project. They also included any reference to pedestrian/bicycle improvements when such improvements are part of the road project. They also added more details in lump sum projects that will help to identify each project.

Ms. Wang presented the revisions that had been made since April. She reported that reimbursement for preliminary engineering (PE) for the Diamond Causeway project and PE for the SR 204 widening project have been authorized in FY 2007, instead of the previously expected FY 2008. For the I-16 & I-516 interchange, PE funds have been programmed for FY 2008. Mr. Abbott asked if this had already been authorized. Ms. Wang explained that he was probably thinking of another project, involving only bridge widening which has been turned over to the GDOT maintenance department because

GDOT didn't get any bids. Ms. Wang believes the GDOT maintenance department will either proceed to widen the bridges or they will tie it in with the interchange project. The SR 204 bridge replacement at Harmon Canal has been moved to FY 2008, from FY 2007.

Changes in the transit section included the listing of funding for purchasing of services for the elderly and disabled. Chairman Murphy asked what types of vehicles were purchased for this. Ms. Wang explained that this funding went to the Georgia Department of Human Resources, not to Chatham Area Transit. DHR uses the money to purchase services, not vehicles.

Ms. Wang showed that two transportation enhancement projects are listed individually in this TIP because these projects are receiving ear-marked funding. These are the Heritage Trail at First Century Park and the Truman Linear Park Trail, Phase 2.

Ms. Wang also reported that the MPO is allowing a 30-day public comment period, closing next week. There have been some comments, but they have already been incorporated into the TIP. Any additional comments will be incorporated before presenting this to the Policy Committee. She recommends the CAC endorse the TIP for approval by the Policy Committee.

Chairman Murphy opened the meeting to public comments from those in the audience. There being no public comment, the public hearing was closed.

Chairman Murphy opened the meeting to committee discussion.

Mr. Jack Knops asked how a citizen would go about getting the MPO to stress transportation options other than more road construction projects, such as transit. Ms. Wang directed him to the transit section in the TIP which outlines the transit plans. Ms. Wang also explained that the development of the LRTP is the proper time to establish policy. The TIP is specific programming for projects and designed as a short-range document. Mr. Wilkes noted that projects that are in the TIP have been in the pipeline for many years. To make policy changes, he recommends doing so with updates to the Long Range Transportation Plan.

Mr. Henry Lee moved to adopt the TIP with 3 amendments – to give first priority to the planning and construction of completion of Truman Pkwy, the Diamond Causeway and a facilitator across northern Savannah. The motion was seconded.

Ms. Wang noted that the first two projects were programmed in the TIP and the third project is outlined in the LRTP.

Chairman Murphy noted that the Truman Pkwy Phase 5 and the Diamond Causeway project are already listed as first priority projects in this TIP.

Ms. Wang confirmed again that the northern facilitator is in the LRTP, due to the amendment in 2005 to include Connecting Savannah recommendations.

When Chairman Murphy asked for clarification, Mr. Levy confirmed that he wanted all money and activity to go to the three projects he noted as priority projects before any other projects.

Ms. Helen McCracken asked if Phase 5 of the Truman was the end of the project, with no intention to connect to I-95. Mr. Wilkes confirmed that Phase 5 is the end of this project, but it could be extended at a later date as a different project.

Mr. Abbott noted that the widening of SR204 addresses the issue of traffic from the Truman Pkwy merging into SR204.

Mr. Knops commented that the CAC is not empowered to make amendments such as Mr. Levy proposes.

Mr. Peterson called the question.

CAC Action: The motion to endorse the TIP with the following recommendation – to give first priority to three projects: the planning and construction of completion of Truman Pkwy, the Diamond Causeway, and a facilitator across northern Savannah was defeated by a show of hands (4 in favor, 7 against, 1 abstention).

It was moved and seconded to endorse the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) as presented.

CAC Action: The motion to endorse the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) as presented carried with one opposed.

III. Status Reports

A. SR 204/Abercorn Extension Improvements

Ms. Love reported on the improvement alternatives presented at GDOT's Public Information Open Houses this week. The alternative currently preferred by the consultants studying the project is a limited access freeway from Truman Pkwy Phase 5 connection to US 17. The section from Truman Phase 5 to Rio Rd would also include frontage roads on each side for accessing the businesses on Abercorn. The freeway would be elevated over certain intersections, and there would be slip ramps to get on and off the frontage road. MPO staff had a set of maps available for any members interested in reviewing them. Ms. Love noted that handouts and comment forms from the Open Houses had been provided to committee members this evening, and she encouraged them to complete and return the comment forms to GDOT.

Chairman Murphy stated that comments may be made by calling, writing a letter, or going on-line.

The deadline for comments is July 3, 2007.

B. Transportation Enhancements

Mr. Wilkes reported that five projects have been submitted for the transportation enhancement program. The total request is about \$4,000,000. GDOT has an internal process for the assignment of these monies. Mr. Wilkes doesn't believe any endorsement by this committee is necessary.

It was moved and seconded to encourage GDOT to fully fund all five of the transportation enhancement projects.

CAC Action: the motion to encourage GDOT to fully fund all five of the transportation enhancement projects carried with none opposed.

C. Effingham Parkway

Mr. Wilkes presented a report on a meeting between representatives of Effingham County and Chatham County regarding alternatives for the Effingham Pkwy. The terminus for the project has been changed from SR 30 to I-95 which is a positive step. He has copies of the preliminary alternatives discussed. Chairman Murphy asked MPO staff to keep Mr. Abbott informed on this project. Mr. Wilkes explained that this project has a significant earmark and the rest of the funding would be federal and/or state funds. The MPO's TIP only shows funds for the Chatham County section of the project, not the entire project funds. Mr. Abbott would like care to be taken when using local money for improving the commute of Effingham residents when there is such fierce competition for transportation dollars. Mr. Wilkes responded that at this point there is no local money involved. Mr. Abbott expanded his comment to include our portion of state funds being used for this project.

Mr. Levy recommended making it a toll road.

D. Spur 404/US 17 Back River Bridge Replacement

Ms. Love reported that the Back River Bridge, which is structurally deficient, will be weight restricted in 2010. The current concept will be a 2-lane bridge replacement upriver of the existing structure. It would include bike 10-foot bikeable shoulders. The existing structure will be demolished. The SC DOT does not have the funding ready for their portion of costs for the 4-lane project, and a 4-lane project would require an environmental study which could also delay this project beyond 2010. Since the possible weight-restriction will be a significant problem, particularly for trucks going to and from Hutchinson Island, GDOT

decided to scale back the project from 4-lane to 2-lane in order to get it done by 2010. If SC DOT should program the necessary funds, GDOT and SCDOT would construct an additional, parallel 2-lane bridge, thereby effectively having a 4-lane crossing.

E. City of Tybee Island Mayor's letter regarding Lazaretto Creek Bridge and US 80 widening

Mr. Levy said he wanted to inform the committee on the situation with the widening project, from the beginning of Bull River Bridge on Wilmington Island to Lazaretto Bridge on Tybee Island. This road starts with 6 lanes on Wilmington Island and at the end it's 4 lanes wide, but it is 2 lanes between the two bridges with unpaved shoulders. A series of accidents has blocked the bridges which prevent EMS access or emergency evacuation. He reported that the city council has passed a resolution to give priority to 4-laning the two bridges. Improving the road is not as important to the residents of Tybee Island, he said. In addition, Mr. Levy explained that the Rails to Trails bike/ped path has no bridge across Lazaretto Creek. The city council would like a segregated and dedicated bridge for the Rails to Trails which would extend all the way into Tybee.

Ms. Love reported that the MPO staff was sharing information regarding the Mayor's letter and GDOT's response. In this communication GDOT states that they will not widen the bridges because the bridges are not deficient. Monies must first be spent on deficient bridges.

Mr. Levy stressed the safety issue involved.

GDOT has responded, and their answer is negative at this time.

Mr. Wilkes noted that another reason for not improving the existing bridge may be the current age of the bridge, which is approximately 50 years old. He believes they will probably take the bridge out and replace it completely.

Mr. Parker and Chairman Murphy both stated that GDOT will not 4-lane the bridges without 4-laning the highway.

Mr. Levy wants them to prioritize this idea like they did the Diamond Causeway.

Mr. Levy moved that this committee recommend the completion of 4-laning the Bull River Bridge and the Lazaretto Bridge with a segregated bike/pedestrian path for each bridge. The motion was seconded.

CAC Action: the motion that this committee recommend the completion of 4-laning the Bull River Bridge and the Lazaretto Bridge with a segregated bike/pedestrian path for each bridge was carried with none opposed.

IV. Agency Reports

No agency reports at this time.

V. Other Business

A. Award to MPO

Mr. Wilkes reported that the MPO was recognized by PACE with a plaque for the MPO's adoption of Context-Sensitive Design Guidelines.

B. Projects Committee formation

Chairman Murphy announced the formation of a short-term projects committee. The first project will be to identify areas throughout the community where signage or small changes can be affected. Mr. Stephen Traub will chair this committee. Chairman Murphy will be an ex-officio member. Mr. Henry Levy, Mr. John Bennett, and Ms. Helen McCracken indicated they would serve the committee. Chairman Murphy reminded them to keep in mind the mission of the CAC and to report back to the CAC.

VI. Other Public Comments

No public comments at this time.

VII. Adjournment

There being no other business to come before the Committee, the June 21, 2007 Citizens Advisory Committee was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane Love
Transportation Planner