

Call to Order

Chairman Clint Murphy called the August 16, 2007 Citizens Advisory Committee meeting to order.

I. Introduction of New Members

Chairman Murphy noted that the new members from Bloomingdale were not present.

II. Approval of Agenda

Chairman Murphy requested a change in the agenda. Item V – A (Status report on SR 204/Abercorn Extension Improvements) is being moved up to the first item of business to accommodate Mr. Crochet's travel plans. It was moved and seconded to approve this amended agenda. (Recording of this item may be found in the minutes under Status Reports – Section V-A.)

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

III. Subcommittee Report

A. Short-term Improvements Committee

Mr. Stephen Traub reported that each person had worked individually and then brought their information together. Reports were distributed. The four reports were:

- Center turn lanes on Waters Ave.
- Directional signage for Truman Pkwy. on President St.
- Bike problems on US 80 (road to Tybee)
- Bicycle transportation, in general

CAC is usually devoted to long-term projects, but these are projects that can be accomplished in the very near future. The committee presented a picture and facts about a center lane intersection on Waters Ave. which illustrates what positive improvement can be done with very little space. Center turn lanes at major intersections would improve traffic flow. The report identifies 6 intersections on Waters Ave. which should have center turn lanes incorporated with proper signage.

The sub-committee presented photos illustrating the debris along the shoulder on US 80 at Bull River. The debris and the lack of pavement width makes travel difficult for bicyclists.

Mr. Traub said that Mr. John Bennett could not be here to speak about his report on a proposed treatment for the Habersham St. bikeway, but copies of the report were provided to those present.

In the future, the sub-committee plans to propose an alternate route between Thunderbolt and Skidaway Rd. to offer relief to the Victory Dr. corridor.

Mr. Traub moved that the chairman of the CAC and the chairman of the short term sub-committee get together to decide which agency should receive these reports. The motion was seconded by Ms. Kinstler.

Mr. Traub pledges to follow-up with whatever agency receives these reports and report back to the CAC about action.

Chairman Murphy questioned whether the center lane issue could, in fact, be accommodated with no further right-of-way. He was assured that no further acquisition is necessary. The center turn lane can be accommodated by re-striping and signage. Mr. Wilkes offered standard measurements required for turn lanes as well as examples of other center turn lanes on streets other than Waters Ave.

Chairman Murphy commented that issues of signage are out of the committee's purview. It was suggested that this particular issue be referred to the county, since this sign is outside of the city limits. Chairman Murphy said he would speak to Mr. Abolt.

Chairman Murphy asked about the debris in the bikeway on the way to Tybee Island. Ms. Love noted that the pictures show that this area isn't designed for bicycles. Chairman Murphy confirmed it wasn't designed for bicycles. Mr. Levy stated that cyclists use this road anyway. Ms. Love clarified that Hwy 80, between Thunderbolt and Tybee Island is a desired bikeway in the Bikeway Plan, but is currently not designed for it.

CAC Action: the motion to have the chairman of the CAC and the chairman of the short term sub-committee get together to decide which agency should receive these reports carried with none opposed.

IV. Action Items

A. Election of Officers

Mr. Jack Knops said he has spoken with the current Chairman and Vice Chairman in advance of this meeting and asked them to stay on in their current positions. He then moved to nominate Mr. Murphy and Mr. Peterson for Chairman and Vice Chairman, respectively, of the Citizens Advisory Committee for another term. The motion was seconded.

CAC Action: the motion to nominate and Mr. Murphy and Mr. Peterson for Chairman and Vice Chairman, respectively, of the Citizens Advisory Committee carried with none opposed.

CAC Action: There being no other nominations, the proposed slate of officers was approved by acclamation.

B. Approval of the June 21, 2007 Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

It was moved and seconded to approve the June 21, 2007 Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting minutes.

CAC Action: the motion to approve the June 21, 2007 Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting minutes carried with none opposed.

C. Requested Amendment to the FY 2008-2011 TIP to include the following projects:

- **Water taxi**
- **Chatham Area Transit Job Access Reverse Commute**
- **Preliminary Engineering for Gulfstream Rd. widening**
- **Preliminary Engineering for Robert Miller Jr. Rd. widening**
- **Preliminary Engineering for widening of I-516 from Veterans Pkwy. to I-16**
- **McQueen's Island Trail – Phase 2**
- **Slip 3/Parcel 7 Riverwalk Extension**
- **Savannah MPO Transportation Study – Sector One**

Ms. Wykoda Wang presented the staff report. The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is adopted each June because the end of the fiscal year is June 30, even though the federal fiscal year ends September 30. Sometimes funds for certain projects do not get authorized by the federal government in the designated fiscal year and it becomes necessary to push them back or roll them to the next year. This is what has happened with these two transit projects and four highway projects that have been pushed back. The water taxi is really a water ferry system. This project would provide another vessel to the ferry system. The earmarked funds of \$1 million, which were originally programmed for 2007 but not authorized, need to be pushed back to FY 2008.

Chairman Murphy asked if the existing ferries were at capacity, or otherwise why is the project proposed? Ms. Wang said that Rep. Jack Kingston had obtained a congressional earmark for it. Mr. Levy said safeguards should be in place to insure that the vessels are satisfactory from the beginning.

The Chatham Area Transit Job Access Reverse Commute is a project to match transportation service with the trip needs of the low income population so that they can get to and from work.

Mr. Knops asked if we could forego the verbal report since a written report was sent to members in advance. Ms. Wang pointed out an additional project included in this

amendment since the mailing, the Sector One strategic planning study. Ms. Wang asked if anyone had any questions about any of the items included in the amendment.

There being no further discussion it was moved and seconded to endorse the amendment to the FY 2008-2011 TIP to include the projects listed above.

CAC Action: the motion to endorse the amendment to the FY 2008-2011 TIP to include the projects listed above carried with none opposed.

D. Endorsement of Recommended Transportation Enhancement Priorities

Ms. Love reported that the MPO staff recommends that the MPO Chairman write to the State Transportation Board representatives to encourage full funding of the Transportation Enhancement applications. The MPO is advocating that 50% of the funds allocated to District 1 and also 50% of the funds allocated to District 12 be awarded to the TE projects in the Chatham County area. Ms. Love shared statistics outlining project funding in the past and how it relates to our population. In the past, this area has not been receiving its fair share of this particular funding program though this distribution was improved during the last round of grants.

Chairman Murphy asked who could apply for these grants. Ms. Love and Mr. Wilkes replied that anyone could apply so long as a governmental agency sponsors the project, because local matching funds are required.

Chairman Murphy called for the question.

CAC Action: the motion to endorse the recommended Transportation Enhancement priorities carried with none opposed.

V. Status Reports

A. SR 204/Abercorn Extension Improvements

Mr. Tommy Crochet of McGee Partners reported on the progress of this project. Jen Price joined him. She is leading the public involvement component of the project. Mr. Crochet reported on the two open houses and what the next steps are for the project. They have been in regular contact with CUTS through the Technical Coordinating Committee and with the MPO staff. Also, he has presented to the Policy Committee previously and has had meetings with the key stakeholders in the corridor, specifically AASU, St. Joseph's/Candler and Hunter Army Airfield. In November 2006 there was a public information open house. In May 2007 they met with the Georgetown/Forest Cove neighborhoods and the Grove Hill subdivision. In June 2007 there was a second public information open house.

The November 2006 open house presented a wide range of alternatives. 338 total attendees participated at the two-day presentation. Substantial feedback was received. When asked if they support improvements in the corridor, 56% responded affirmative and an additional 38% responded affirmatively but with conditions. The primary goals of the project are to decrease travel delays and improve safety. Crash rates in the section between Rio Rd. and the proposed Truman Pkwy. connector are currently 50% above the state-wide averages for similar facilities. This is of great concern.

This project is divided into two sections – US 17 to Rio Rd. and Rio Rd. to Truman Pkwy. Mr. Crochet reviewed the different alternatives that were presented for each portion and the ratings of acceptability from the public.

By the June open house, they had eliminated some of the alternatives, including the viaduct option. In June they had 238 attendees at the open houses. They presented detailed plans for the short-listed alternatives and received good feedback. He referred the Committee to the handout from GDOT which includes details on the alternatives.

He outlined the alternative for the US17 to Rio Rd. section as a freeway option with a split interchange between Pine Grove Rd. and King George Blvd. This is referred to as alternative C1. The other alternatives are an interchange at King George Blvd. with access from the Grove Hill area back to King George Blvd. or in the other direction back to US 17.

From Rio Rd. to Truman Pkwy., the basic alternative is a freeway with frontage road access at four locations –Rio Rd., Middleground Rd., Mercy Blvd. and Truman Pkwy. The frontage roads are 2-3 lanes, one-way roads with U-turn provisions under the bridges. The bridges carry the freeway over the designated intersections. One alternative pushes the road widening to the north and the other pushes the road widening to the south.

Mr. Crochet presented the statistics for the various alternatives and shared some of the public comments. Some comments included: 1) encourage public transit by including transit facilities in the design; 2) widen SR 204 to the north away from Forest Cove subdivision; 3) give a higher priority to avoiding impact to Georgia residents (homeowners) over transients (apartment dwellers) (Mr. Crochet pointed out that this would not be legal); 4) re-route Truman Pkwy. Phase 5 around Vernonburg; 5) construct sound barriers, short-term lane improvements, increased traffic signals; 6) questions concerning the impact on their businesses and about re-locating if they are forced to relocate; and 7) concern about east-west connectivity.

They are in conversation with CAT regarding transit issues in this corridor. Placing rail in this corridor is not warranted by the demand and is not under consideration at this time. They are also talking about the future, i.e. 30 years from now, express bus service.

Mr. Crochet believes re-routing Truman Pkwy. Phase 5 through the marsh around Vernonburg is not feasible or logical. First of all, it will not draw as much of the network's traffic if it is re-routed. He had tested this with the traffic model. If you just build Truman

Pkwy. Phase 5 with no SR 204 improvements, you would see about 35,000 vehicles per day. If you include the improvements on SR204, the number increases to about 44,000 vehicles per day. You're pulling vehicles off the I-516/DeRenne Ave. corridor and some off the I-16 corridor. If you re-route Truman Pkwy. Phase 5 through the marsh to a Veteran's Pkwy. connection, this number drops to about 25,000 vehicles per day. You wouldn't pull enough traffic off the Rio Rd./Largo Rd. portion of SR 204 to make it work. He believes that doing the entire project as planned serves the east-west connectivity issue better than would be possible in the DeRenne Ave. corridor or the Bay St. corridor. Secondly, it is not feasible because the cost would double to re-route it, both in right-of-way costs and construction costs. Thirdly, in the currently planned alignment of Truman Parkway Phase 5, there is a mile-long crossing of the salt-water marsh at the Vernon River, and there is an approved Federal environmental document on that project. To re-route it would involve a six-mile crossing of salt-water marsh on bridge, meaning a whole new environmental study. He believes you would not be able to get an approved environmental document. When asked what the doubled cost would be, Mr. Crochet replied that the cost of re-routing would be at least \$1 billion. Currently Truman Pkwy. Phase V is estimated at \$100 million plus, and the Rio Rd. improvements where Truman ties in is approximately \$350 million for a total of \$450 million.

Based on public input and discussion with GDOT, they have selected alternative C1 for the US 17 to Rio Rd. He believes this alternative will provide the direct access to the Grove Hill area which consists of many residences and businesses. They reviewed cost, impact, overall delay, operational considerations and concluded that alternative C1 was the best selection.

For the Rio Rd. to Truman Pkwy. they have selected the freeway with frontage roads with the widening to the north alternative (L2n). This choice is \$30 million less than if they widened to the south. AASU is very supportive for the push to the north. Commercial relocations is about equal if widening to the south or to the north, but only 4 residential relocations are required if widened to the north as opposed to 26 if widened to the south.

The next steps are to complete the concept design for both portions and to finish the environmental document for both portions. They are also contracted to complete final plans, right-of-way acquisition, and bring the project up to construction stage for GDOT for the US 17 to Rio Rd. portion. Further surveys, traffic analysis, and draft environmental assessment are underway. When the environmental assessment is approved, they will bring it before the public at a public hearing. This is anticipated for summer of 2008.

Mr. Knops asked a question about additional trips attracted after the improvements, negating some of the benefit. Mr. Crochet explained that right now this corridor is congested, which forces people to use other corridors. With these improvements, the models do indicate that people will return to this corridor. Some are coming from the other east-west routes, i.e. pulling vehicles from I-16 and I-516/DeRenne, as well as more trips.

Mr. Levy asked if the consultants had considered the impact on demand for the road if gas prices rose sharply. Mr. Crochet said that there is always uncertainty when trying to plan

for the future. Ms. Love said that the models for traffic projections include assumptions for the costs of fuel, but she does not know what assumptions were used in these projections. Mr. Crochet said he does not know.

Ms. Beth Kinstler commented on the plan. She would want to know more about the people who commented at the public open houses, specifically who they are, where they live, and what they do for a living. She believes that impacts the responses. She spoke to a lot of people at the open house and received many opinions in opposition to this level of expense. She is disappointed that there is no mention of a high-occupancy vehicle lane or anything about public transportation. Ms. Kinstler does not see increased vehicle use on this corridor as a positive. Increasing a capacity on a roadway will increase the number of vehicles and we're back where we started. She also takes issue with the proposed sound barriers, believing the sound barriers used for existing Truman Pkwy. are worthless. She believes quality sound barriers for Phase V will be the first thing to be cut to save money. The argument of decreasing congestion and improving safety are terms used to win over the public. She doesn't believe high speed travel on the freeway or the frontage roads will lead to improved safety. She also feels that the average citizen does not understand the fundamentals of road improvements. She believes it has been sugar coated and whitewashed.

Mr. Henry Levy sees this plan as a plan for yesterday or today, but not for the future. Ms. Kinstler agreed.

Mr. Crochet agreed that it is today's problems of congestion that are the problem. The people he has heard from make it clear that today's conditions are unacceptable.

Mr. Levy asked about making the road a toll road. Mr. Crochet explained that issue was outside of his charge. That would require a policy decision.

Mr. Ronald Kolman, a citizen attending this meeting, said he is concerned about the impact this project will have on the tax base simply by the removal of private property and putting it into the public domain (i.e. the right-of-way). He believes this loss will be made up with a future increase in the ad valorem taxes paid by the rest of us. He stated that Chatham County has a history of "taking the cheap way out and then we suffer for it in the long haul." He has spoken and written against this plan. He believes it will be a tremendous tax loss. The money could better be spent doing the right thing now – going around the corridor and not going through.

On the issue of changing people's habits on travel, Mr. Kolman drew on his extensive traveling experience and dealing with traffic delays in other communities. He believes that Savannah doesn't lack the proper infrastructure, but rather that Savannahians lack sufficient patience.

Mr. Levy agreed with Mr. Kolman about the county taking the cheap way out. He emphasized his belief that Abercorn is an urban street and not a freeway.

Mr. Crochet commented that all comments will be included in the environmental draft document that will be put out next summer. Everyone will have a chance to see what everyone has written about the projects.

Ms. Helen McCracken asked about the Truman Pkwy., Phase V connecting to Abercorn St. She has been led to believe by her husband's conversation with Pete Liakakis that the Truman Pkwy. was not going to connect to Abercorn. Mr. Crochet confirmed that the Truman Pkwy. decision is done and that the County is presently buying up right-of-way along the proposed route.

E. SAFETEA-LU Compliance Update

Mr. Wilkes reported on progress the MPO has made in complying with new SAFETEA-LU regulations. The MPO adopted the Participation Plan in April 2007, adopted revisions to the Long Range Transportation Plan in June 2007, and, also in June, re-certified the Congestion Management System as the Congestion Management Process, since it already met the requirements of SAFETEA-LU. The tasks that remain are developing the Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan which the MPO is doing in conjunction with Chatham Area Transit and the MPO's consultants, Reynolds, Smith and Hills, and completing the Long Range Transportation Plan Financial Update, which must be done in December 2007.

VI. Agency Reports

There were no reports at this time.

VII. Other Business

Ms. Love said that Mr. Knops had sent some questions to staff after reading the minutes of all the committees, and those could be addressed now.

Mr. Knops asked if motions that the CAC makes, such as the motion in June to complete the 4-laning of the Bull River Bridge and the Lazaretto Bridge, received any action at the June Policy Committee meeting. Chairman Murphy replied that there was no action before the Policy Committee that related to this particular issue. Chairman Murphy had spoken directly to Mayor Buelterman about the issue. The Mayor wanted to know if this meant that the citizens of Tybee Island were agreeable to widening US 80. Chairman Murphy said that GDOT will not widen the bridges without widening US 80. Both Mr. Levy and Ms. Kinstler commented on the lack of responsiveness of GDOT to public requests. Ms. Kinstler believes the answer is to elect representatives who speak to these issues and who appoint those who work at GDOT.

Mr. Knops asked Mr. Wilkes why he desired, as per the TCC minutes of June 21, 2007, an update of the Travel Demand Model. Mr. Wilkes explained that this model is used in the

development of the Long Range Transportation Plan which is a normal planning activity. In asking for an update and expansion of the area covered by the model, he was referring to the need for less aggregated travel information from surrounding counties, i.e. Effingham and Bryan Counties, which would make for a better analysis of regional trips.

Mr. Knops asked about Mr. Thomson's comment at the Policy Committee, as per the June 27th minutes (page 7), where he says the second bridge to Hutchinson Island is not in the TIP and he does not recommend prioritizing it. Mr. Wilkes addressed this question on behalf of Mr. Thomson. This project, while in the vision plan, is not on the list of priority spending for the next four years, which is what the TIP covers. At this point a reasonable source of funds has not been determined for this project.

Mr. Knops and Mr. Levy would like the second bridge to be in the Long Range Plan. Mr. Wilkes said that for a project to be in Long Range Transportation Plan the MPO must "be able to demonstrate a reasonable financial capacity to build it during the time frame of the Long Range Plan," which is about a 30-year window. At the last update, we did not have this capacity. In fact the MPO put the northwest expressway in as a toll facility because it was the only way to get it in the plan. We didn't have enough money to build it without the assumed revenues coming in from tolls. The requirements for putting toll facilities in the Plan are more stringent now and the MPO may not be able to do such again.

It was moved and seconded to adjourn.

VIII. Adjournment

There being no other business to come before the Committee, the August 16, 2007 Citizens Advisory Committee was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane Love
Transportation Planner