



CHATHAM URBAN TRANSPORTATION STUDY

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room
112 East State Street

December 13, 2007

5:00 p.m.

Members

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

Representing

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

Present

X

X

X
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Others Present

Jane Love
Barbara Settzo
Wykoda Wang

Representing

MPO
for MPO
MPO

X
X
X

I. Approval of Agenda

Chairman Clint Murphy called the December 13, 2007 Citizens Advisory Committee meeting to order. New member, Charles Hutchinson from Bloomingdale, was welcomed to the Committee. No changes were proposed for the agenda.

II. Action Items

A. Approval of October 18, 2007 Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

It was moved and seconded to approve the October 18, 2007 Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes.

CAC Action: there being no opposition, the minutes stood approved.

B. Endorsement of the CUTS/MPO 2008 Meeting Schedule

Mr. Murphy reviewed the proposed schedule noting that this committee would meet on the third Thursday except in December when the meeting would be on the second Thursday to accommodate the holiday schedule.

It was moved and seconded to endorse the CUTS/MPO 2008 Meeting Schedule as presented.

CAC Action: the motion to endorse the CUTS/MPO 2008 Meeting Schedule as presented carried with none opposed.

III. Status Reports

Mr. Murphy clarified for the committee that he was, in fact, at the October Policy Committee Meeting but had arrived too late to present his CAC report as per the Policy Committee agenda. He was able to work in his comments to the Policy Committee throughout the meeting, thereby sharing the concerns raised by this committee.

A. Financial Plan Update of the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan

Ms. Wykoda Wang reported that the Financial Plan Update for the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is a requirement of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). MPO staff and their consultants have carefully selected a methodology for this update; they have not yet completed the update to the year of expenditure. She will have the detailed table and methodology ready for the February meeting. In case there is not enough expected

revenue to support all the projects, some of the projects will need to be dropped. Any proposed change in the project list of the 2030 LRTP will be publicly advertised prior to the time of consideration by CUTS/MPO committees.

This update is not the full Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) update. A full Plan update is required every five years, so a new, full LRTP update is due in 2009. The MPO will begin the full update process in 2008 and it will include a lot of public involvement. This financial update is only an update of the present LRTP that is currently in effect.

Mr. Murphy commented that this committee wants to be actively involved in the process for the full Plan update. Ms. Wang noted that they are considering outreach to every neighborhood association.

B. Skidaway Narrows Bridge Replacement Concept Meeting

Ms. Jane Love reported on the concept meeting held by GDOT in November for the Skidaway Narrows Bridge Replacement project. She showed the map GDOT had provided and explained that the proposed alignment would place the new bridge to the north of the existing bridge on Diamond Cswy. The GDOT design team proposes this alignment because no additional right of way is required, it does not interfere with the existing boat ramp, nor does it have any major impacts on wetlands. One problem with the north-side alignment would be the close proximity of the existing power transmission line to the construction equipment during construction.

The option of building to the south side of the bridge was discussed but the wetlands impact and the impact on the existing boat ramp were significant drawbacks. In the future, GDOT intends to build another parallel two-lane bridge in the alignment of the existing bridge, to provide four lanes in conjunction with the Diamond Causeway widening. At that time the issue of the power lines still would need to be addressed. The consensus of those present at the concept meeting was that the power lines should be moved to allow a northern alignment for the current project. Georgia Power will assess the cost of moving the lines. It is unknown at this time if the cost will be assumed by GDOT, or by Georgia Power, or shared. In the 1980's the power lines had been moved from the south side to the present position on the north side.

It was also noted at the concept meeting that the removal of the existing bridge was not part of this bridge replacement project, and therefore removal costs are not included in the \$17.5 million cost estimate for this project. Presumably removal of the existing bridge would be included in the future parallel bridge project. GDOT expects this current bridge project to be let in April 2008. When the project is let, there will not be a lot of noticeable activity right away. Since this is a design/build project, there will be a lot of design work going on behind the scenes once the project is let in April 2008.

Mr. Henry Levy recollected that when the original bridge was built across Skidaway Narrows, the foundation for four lanes was laid on the north side but they only built two lanes.

Mr. Murphy asked if Diamond Causeway was on the Bikeway Plan. Ms. Love responded affirmatively and noted that this project will have bike-able shoulders. At present no barrier separating cars from bicycles is planned.

Mr. Bennett noted that shoulders often do not serve cyclists well because the shoulder tends to collect debris blown aside by cars in the main travel lanes.

Mr. Murphy asked what it would take to get a protected bicycle lane on this project.

Ms. Love explained that GDOT will probably have the concept design ready in February. They intend to hold an informal public meeting after that to get feedback on the design. Otherwise, bicycle advocates could find out what criteria GDOT uses to determine the type of bikeway in a given project, and see if there is a good argument for suggesting something more protective than a shoulder for this project.

Mr. Levy moved that this committee support a barrier-separated bikeway on the new bridge and road. The motion was seconded.

Mr. Kinsey asked what kind of separation is being sought.

Mr. Levy stated a 3-foot high concrete barrier would be sufficient.

Mr. Murphy asked to whom this concern should be addressed. Should it go to the Policy Committee or to a project engineer?

Ms. Love commented that he could bring it up at the Policy Committee Meeting and also ask about GDOT's design policies. The GDOT District 5 representative attending the Policy Committee meeting next week could probably direct him to the right person.

Mr. Murphy believes that the residents need to be vocal about their support for a separate bikeway just as they were about the bridge project in order to get it done.

CAC Action: the motion to have this committee support a barrier-separated bikeway on the new bridge and road carried with none opposed.

Ms. Love commented that the Policy Committee probably cannot do anything, in a short time-frame, about GDOT's design policies, but raising the issue at the Policy Committee meeting would raise awareness for this issue.

Mr. Jack Knops was concerned that at the October meeting, where this project was voted into the TIP, the description did not include the fact that the bridge would be 65 feet high.

Ms. Love confirmed that at the time the amendment was considered, the only available information on design was that it would be "high-level." A high bridge is critical to the purpose of the project, which is to avoid the potential catastrophe of a mechanical failure in

the draw-bridge at the same time that evacuation is warranted. She noted that a 65-foot minimum clearance is required by the Coast Guard because it is on the Intracoastal Waterway.

Mr. Knops feels he was misled about this project earlier, and that this type of bridge will ruin the character of the area. He would have voted against putting the project in the TIP if he had known this back in October.

Ms. Love explained that in the past design has not been a primary concern of MPO committees, but acknowledged that now the MPO is becoming more concerned about design.

Mr. Tony Abbott commented that a fixed, high-rise bridge is the only way of achieving constant access.

C. Safe Routes to School

Ms. Love said staff is presenting this report for information since Mr. Murphy asked about Safe Routes to School (SRTS) at the October Policy Committee meeting. The concept of safe routes to school is not new, but federal funding for SRTS programs in all States, through the SAFETEA-LU, is new. GDOT is managing the allocation of SRTS funds within the state, and currently they have an interim coordinator for Georgia's SRTS program. The program is divided into two parts – infra-structure projects (sidewalks, bike lanes, crosswalks, traffic calming elements, etc.), and non-infrastructure projects (education, enforcement and encouragement activities within the community). No less than 70% of the funds are to be used for infra-structure projects. GDOT has decided that groups interested in implementing a SRTS project should enroll in GDOT's Resource Center, when it is accessible later this winter.

The Resource Center will provide assistance on the non-infrastructure elements of SRTS programs. In spring or summer, GDOT will release a call for applications for the infrastructure projects. Applicants may be individual schools, entire school districts, non-profit organizations, or local government. In Chatham County, "Safe Kids Coalition" has been involved in similar programs in the past, so they may be coordinating efforts for this funding. The City is also interested in this funding for construction of sidewalks around schools. There is \$12 million for the whole state, for the time period 2005-2009, which is not a great deal of money.

Mr. John Bennett is involved with the Safe Kids Coalition. If this program makes it safer for more children to walk or ride their bicycles to school it would also help with traffic congestion around schools. This would improve safety for all concerned.

When asked what this committee can do to support the Safe Routes to School program, Ms. Love commented that the project selection process does not include a role for the MPO, in the same way that the MPO doesn't have direct influence over Transportation Enhancement project selections, which are also managed by GDOT. She suggested

raising awareness of the program and ensuring that we have local applicants for the funds would be a positive step. Ms. Love noted that while applications have not yet been called for, those intending to apply will need to have a plan for what they will do if they receive the grant.

IV. Subcommittee Reports

A. Short Term Improvements Committee

Mr. Stephen Traub reviewed a written report that he distributed to the Committee at this meeting. Mr. Traub has corresponded with Michael Brown at City Hall several times in the past on issues of directional signage and making better use of what we already have. Mr. Traub recommends submitting two or three projects at a time so the city engineers will have an opportunity to research and investigate the problems. He asked this committee to share with him any problem areas that could use attention. Once this committee agrees to support a particular project, and once Mr. Murphy has directed it to the proper authority, then Mr. Traub will follow-up and keep this committee informed on the progress of the projects.

Mr. Traub said he had reviewed the proposed 2008 City Budget and could not find any reference to bicycles at all. Ms. Love said that the proposed widening project for LaRoche Ave. and Delesseps Ave. in the budget included a bikeway, but in her discussion with Mike Weiner of the City Traffic Engineering Dept., he said the bikeway might not be built due to trees in the right-of-way. A median is also proposed in the project. She suggested that a good question, if some width has to be sacrificed in the project, would be whether a bikeway or a median would be more desirable.

Mr. Traub believes lighting and signage improvements along President St. where Truman Pkwy. intersects are very important. This is also true for Anderson St. and the Truman Pkwy. intersections.

Mr. Traub moved that this committee approve the addition of projects #7 (directional arrows and signage on 63rd St. near Waters Ave.), #8 (center turn lanes for Paulsen St.), and #9 (Truman Pkwy. entrances) to the original six short-term improvements being pursued by sub-committee members. The motion was seconded.

Mr. Levy spoke about the yellow lines delineating the medians on E. President St. They are not visible enough. He has already submitted pictures of this problem area. He requests wider yellow lines or additional curbing. Mr. Murphy noted that this whole roadway will be redone in the future.

Mr. Traub explained Project #7 (63rd & Waters). Drivers do not know what lane to be in until they are at the intersection. He recommends that large arrows be painted on the roadway 100 yards ahead of the intersection so that people can be in the correct lane as they approach the intersection.

Project #8 (Paulsen St. between 66th St. and DeRenne Ave.): He recommends putting in center turn lanes at the six intersections along Paulsen between 66th St. & DeRenne Ave.

Project #9 (Truman Pkwy. entrance illumination) was discussed earlier.

A committee member requested clarification of Project #6 (Truman Pkwy./Victory Dr.).

Mr. Traub explained that the entire intersection is going to be revamped by GDOT. The engineers say they can't eliminate the protruding curb that forces a merge because a continuous lane would then force traffic in the right lane into the shopping center parking lot even if that wasn't the desired destination. Mr. Traub stated that this problem is being worked on but for now there is nothing that can be done.

CAC Action: the motion that this committee approve addition of projects #7 (63rd St. at Waters Ave.), #8 (Paulsen St. center turn lanes), and #9 (Truman Pkwy. entrances) to the original six short-term improvements being pursued by sub-committee members carried with none opposed.

V. Agency Reports

There were no agency reports at this time.

VI. Other Business

Mr. Jason House wanted committee members and City engineers to be aware that the City of Chicago has created a Green Alley Handbook. It includes environmentally-friendly strategies for handling rainwater drainage and reducing the heat island effect in Chicago's numerous alleys. Since Savannah has so many alleys, it may be useful to review this. He plans to share the Handbook with City staff. He referred members to the web site for further information (http://greenerbuildings.com/news_detail.cfm?NewsID=36318).

VII. Other Public Comments

There were no other public comments at this time.

VIII. Adjournment

There being no other business to come before the Committee, the December 13, 2007 Citizens Advisory Committee was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane Love
Transportation Planner