



CHATHAM URBAN TRANSPORTATION STUDY

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room
112 East State Street

April 17, 2008

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

X

X

X

X

X

X

X

X

X

X

X

X

Others Present

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

Representing

Reynolds, Smith & Hills, Inc.
MPO
for MPO
MPO
MPO

X
X
X
X
X

I. Approval of Agenda

Chairman Clint Murphy called the April 17, 2008 Citizens Advisory Committee meeting to order. Mr. Murphy apologized to the committee for missing the February Policy Committee meeting. It was moved and seconded to approve the agenda as presented.

CAC Action: the motion to approve the agenda for the April 17, 2008 Citizens Advisory Committee meeting carried with none opposed.

II. Action Items

A. Approval of February 21, 2008 Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

It was moved and seconded to approve the February 21, 2008 Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes.

CAC Action: the motion to approve the February 21, 2008 Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting minutes carried with none opposed.

B. Endorsement of CUTS/MPO Year-of-Expenditure Update for the Financial Plan of the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

Ms. Jane Love introduced Steve Cote from Reynolds, Smith & Hills who made the final presentation for the Year-of-Expenditure Update.

Mr. Steve Cote from Reynolds, Smith & Hill presented the status report. He highlighted why the Year-of-Expenditure update was necessary, the approach they took, the current status of the update, the schedule, and then questions & answers.

This update is required by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) and requires escalating the project costs and project funding for projects coming due in their projected year of expenditure. They used the current 2030 LRTP, which was adopted in 2004, and recent Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) as the framework for the cost and funding figures in the update. Where possible they used current cost estimates from Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) and other sources to keep this update as accurate as possible. All the projects were then put into one of three cost bands: 2008-2013, 2014-2020 and 2021-2030. The GDOT recommended inflation rate of 2.5% per year was applied to both costs and revenues to arrive at year-of-expenditure estimates. This process revealed a substantial shortfall – approximately \$660,000,000. The shortfall exists despite the inclusion of estimated revenues from three anticipated toll facilities. Those three projects are SR 204/Abercorn, Northwest Parkway, and Effingham Parkway.

To reconcile the plan, some projects were moved to an unfunded Vision Plan. The consultants and MPO staff met with city and county officials develop a recommendation on

which projects would be moved out. The three criteria for evaluating the projects were the priority level of the project in the current 2030 LRPT, the anticipated need, and the amount of funds already spent on the project. Two new interchange projects on interstates and the widening of I-16 from I-95 to I-516 have had their construction funds moved to the unfunded Vision Plan, but the preliminary engineering funding is still in the constrained Financial Plan. For the rest of the projects listed, all phases of development (preliminary engineering and construction) have been placed in the unfunded Vision Plan. Mr. Cote referred to the following list, summarizing which projects have been moved to the Vision Plan:

- I-16/I-95 Interchange (new)
- I-516/I-16 Interchange (new)
- I-16 Widening from I-95 to I-516
- SR-21 Widening from Northwest Pkwy. to SR 30
- SR 307/Dean Forest Rd. Interchange (new) at Veterans Pkwy.
- LaRoche Ave. (operational from Skidaway Rd. to So. City Limits)
- Delesseps Ave. (operational from Waters Ave. to Skidaway Rd.)
- SR307/Dean Forest Rd. (new roadway from US 17 to Garard St.)
- Quacco Rd. Widening from Pooler Pkwy. to I-95
- Quacco Rd./Little Neck Rd. Interchange (new) at I-95
- I-516 Widening from Veterans Pkwy. to Mildred St.
- DeRenne Ave. (operational from Mildred St. to Abercorn St.)
- SR 26/US 80 (operations at Johnny Mercer Blvd.)
- Mildred St./Hampstead Ave. Widening from I-516 to Abercorn St.
- Abercorn Interchange reconstruction at I-95

Mr. Jack Knops asked for a definition of “operations”. Mr. Cote explained this refers to safety issues, signals, turn-lanes, intersection improvements, etc.

Mr. Murphy asked what type of operational improvements were part of the Delesseps Avenue projects. The full details, including the needs, of all these projects will be re-visited in the development of the upcoming 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan.

Mr. Murphy opened the public hearing. Hearing no comments from the audience the public hearing was closed.

Committee discussion followed. Mr. Knops asked if public participation was required when changes are made to the Long Range Transportation Plan. Ms. Love responded that there have been two public comment periods - in January/February and again, now in April. The April comment period is still open. Ms. Wykoda Wang explained that notices of a public comment period went out to all committee members and to the local newspaper. For the Long Range Transportation Plan a 30-day public comment period is required. This Year-of-Expenditure Update is considered a major amendment and as such requires a 15-day public comment period. The MPO exceeded this by having a 30-day public comment period in January/February. All other programs are held up until the Year-of-Expenditure

Update is adopted. In an effort to facilitate the adoption, the second public comment period that is going on now is the required 15-day period. Ms. Wang reported that no comments have been received during this comment period. During the first comment period some comments were received. The CAC was in favor of toll facilities and public private initiatives. GDOT was not in favor of the public private initiatives but would support the toll facilities included in the current version of the update. Mr. Knops is satisfied that the public has been informed and knows that this update is going on.

Mr. Russ Peterson questioned how staff arrived at the future costs for projects. He believes the 2.5% inflation rate is too low and not realistic. Mr. Mark Wilkes noted that GDOT and Federal Highway Administration strongly recommended the 2.5% factor. Since this satisfies the requirement and because a Year-of-Expenditure Update must be adopted before the MPO can proceed with anything else, Mr. Wilkes is willing to accept that factor for now.

Mr. Peterson believes this could create a credibility problem if these projects do not come about, due to poor estimates, and citizens are adversely impacted. Mr. Mark Egan believes a realistic forecast now would be better than using a knowingly unrealistic figure which will necessitate further changes in the future thereby causing disappointment to citizens involved in the projects. Mr. Cote referred the committee to footnote 2 on page 1 for a further explanation of the 2.5% factor, which is based on the Bid Price Index for cost estimates and the Consumer Price Index for revenue estimates. Ms. Kinstler stated that she has heard these indexes criticized due to omissions of certain goods.

It was moved and seconded to endorse the CUTS/MPO Year-of-Expenditure Update for the Financial Plan of the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).

CAC Action: the motion to endorse the CUTS/MPO Year-of-Expenditure Update for the Financial Plan of the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) carried with none opposed.

C. Endorsement of Requested Amendments to the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

- **Shift right-of-way phase for Grange Road Widening Project from FY 2008 to FY 2009**
- **Shift right-of-way phase for SR 204/Abercorn Extension Improvement Project (King George Blvd. to Rio Rd.) from FY 2008 to FY 2009**
- **Shift the Skidaway Narrows Bridge Replacement Project from FY 2008 to FY 2009**

Ms. Wykoda Wang presented the three amendments, which were requested by GDOT. Grange Rd. Widening Project is being shifted because the concept report is just beginning so the right-of-way acquisition is unlikely to occur in FY 2008. Funds will be shifted to a project that is ready in FY 2008. Mr. Tony Abbott asked if the funds would be given to another Chatham County project. Mr. Murphy asked if this project would lose its money.

Ms. Wang replied that the Grange Road project would be funded for right-of-way in the next fiscal year, but she wasn't certain that GDOT would move these FY 2008 funds to another Chatham County project.

Before hearing about the next two requested amendments, Chairman Murphy asked the committee if they preferred to vote on all three in one action, or on each in separate actions. The committee decided to vote on all three amendments in one action.

Ms. Wang reported that the SR 204 project has three different right-of-way funding categories. The concept report has not yet been approved for this project so GDOT is not ready for any right-of-way acquisition. Mr. Murphy is disappointed that it has taken so long for this project to progress since property values are escalating as the project is delayed, which will drive up the right-of-way costs. Ms. Wang replied that GDOT is trying to use one environmental document for the two Abercorn projects (Rio Rd to Truman Pkwy and Rio Rd. to King George Blvd). Ms. Wang assured Mr. Murphy that this project has not been shelved. Ongoing discussions about the preferred concept for the Rio Rd. to Truman Pkwy section affect the environmental documents, and the other segment cannot proceed until the environmental documents receive federal approval.

Ms. Wang reported that the Skidaway Narrows Bridge Replacement, which is a design/build project, was delayed due to pending legislation which could have affected the awarding of design/build projects. The legislation did not pass, but by putting the project on hold pending the vote, GDOT lost time and now it will not be ready in the few months that remain in FY 2008, so GDOT is requesting shifting it to FY 2009.

Ms. Wang noted that even though this amendment is a minor amendment, the MPO advertised a 15-day public comment period to allow for public participation.

It was moved and seconded to endorse all three requested amendments to the 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program with the proviso that any money freed up by shifting these projects from FY 2008 to FY 2009 be used within Chatham County.

CAC Action: the motion to endorse all three requested amendments to the 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program with the proviso that any money freed up by shifting these projects from FY 2008 to FY 2009 be used within Chatham County carried with none opposed.

III. Status Reports

A. **Schedule for adoption of the FY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program**

Mr. Mark Wilkes reported that MPO staff is working on the work program that goes into effect July 1, 2008. They are preparing a document for presentation to the Policy Committee next week in order to expedite the execution of funding contracts with GDOT.

B. Initiation of development of the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan

Mr. Wilkes reported that MPO staff has been working with the consultant, Reynolds, Smith & Hills over the past six months to scope the update for the Long Range Transportation Plan. Funding contracts have been submitted and work on the updated plan will begin when contracts are signed by GDOT. The update process will begin with an extensive visioning process. There will be extensive public involvement throughout the entire plan update. While there is no definite starting date set yet, Mr. Wilkes anticipates mid-May for kicking off the update process. It all depends on when GDOT signs the funding contract.

.IV. Subcommittee Reports

A. Short Term Improvements Committee

There was no report at this time.

V. Agency Reports

There were no agency reports at this time.

VI. Other Business

Ms. Love reported to the committee on behalf of Mr. Stephen Traub. Mr. Traub has requested the Chairman's attention on items #2 (curb painting along President Street near Truman Pkwy. and #10 (feeder off of the Truman exit ramp into the Victory Square shopping center (Home Depot, Target, etc.). As mentioned to the committee at a previous meeting, this idea is being considered in the Congestion Management Process. There will be an update on the Congestion Management Process later in the year.

Ms. Love announced that the press conference for Coastal Commuters will be tomorrow at 11:00 AM. The website is up – coastalcommuters.org. This is the program to promote carpooling, mass transit, bicycling, and walking, which staff presented as a status report at the February meeting. Mr. Bennett said he is pleased to see programs such as Coastal Commuters which address transportation demand and not just increases in capacity. This is the sort of thing we will need to do more of in light of funding limits and the price of gas.

Mr. Murphy announced that tomorrow was "Dump the Pump" day - leave your car at home.

Mr. Murphy reported that the Savannah Bike Campaign has been launched with the goal of increasing and improving the bikeways. Mr. Wilkes confirmed that bikeways will be revisited in the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan.

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 April 17, 2008 Citizens Advisory Committee was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane Love
Transportation Planner