



## CHATHAM URBAN TRANSPORTATION STUDY

### CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room  
112 East State Street

August 21, 2008

5:00 p.m.

#### Members

Tony Abbott  
John Bennett  
Tina Bennett  
Gerald Cook  
Mark Egan  
Phyllis Hardeman  
Jason House  
Charles Hutchinson  
Chandler Kinsey  
Beth Kinstler  
Jack Knops  
Henry Levy  
Helen McCracken  
Linda M. Smith  
Joe Steffen  
Stephen Traub  
James Weaver

#### Representing

Chatham County  
City of Savannah  
Port Wentworth  
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  
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

#### Others Present

Michael Adams  
Jane Love  
Barbara Setzto  
Dwayne Simpson  
Wykoda Wang  
Randy Weitman  
Mark Wilkes, P.E., AICP

#### Representing

MPO  
MPO  
for MPO  
City of Savannah  
MPO  
Georgia Ports Authority  
MPO

X  
X  
X  
X  
X  
X  
X

Chairman Tony Abbott called the August 21, 2008 Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting to order.

**I. Approval of Agenda**

**CAC Action: the motion to approve the agenda for the August 21, 2008 Citizens Advisory Committee meeting carried with none opposed.**

**II. Introduction of New Members**

Ms. Jane Love introduced Ms. Tina Bennett as a newly appointed representative from Port Wentworth. The City of Savannah has appointed Mr. Dwayne Simpson to replace James Weaver, who resigned, and has re-appointed several other members. Since MPO staff has not received the official notification to date, including an address to which she could send Mr. Simpson's meeting package, the new appointment will begin in October. There are still some seats open. Chatham County has a total of 9 seats, 4 of which are currently open. The city of Savannah has 7 seats with at least 2 open at this time. The other municipalities have 2 seats each. Bloomingdale and Thunderbolt have filled their seats. The Pooler and Vernonburg seats are open.

**III. Action Items**

**A. Approval of June 19, 2008 Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**

It was moved and seconded to approve the June 19, 2008 Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes.

**CAC Action: the motion to approve the June 19, 2008 Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting minutes carried with none opposed.**

**B. Election of CAC officers for the term ending August 2009**

Mr. Abbott opened the floor for nominations for Chairman. Mr. Abbott was nominated, but withdrew his name from consideration due to other obligations. Mr. Henry Levy and Mr. John Bennett were nominated and accepted the nomination. Ms. Love explained that the Chairman was expected to attend the Policy Committee meetings as well. There being no other nominations the nominations were closed.

**CAC Action: voting for Chairman of the CAC was conducted by written ballot and Mr. Bennett was elected.**

Mr. Abbott opened the floor for nominations for Vice Chairman. Mr. Levy was nominated and accepted the nomination. There being no other nominations, the nominations were closed.

**CAC Action: election of the Vice Chairman of the CAC was by acclamation and Mr. Levy was elected.**

### **C. Endorsement of the amendment to the CUTS/MPO Participation Plan**

Ms. Wykoda Wang reported that now that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) have revised the participation process, MPO staff recommends revisions to the MPO participation process, in order to maintain inter-agency coordination.

The major changes are:

- There will be no distinctions between major amendments and minor amendments to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). All amendments will be treated in the same way – 15 day public comment period and response to all comments.
- GDOT instead of the MPO will be responsible for notifications of all the administrative modifications to the TIP.

The whole Appendix G to the plan, explaining the amendment process, has been replaced, to incorporate the changes above.

The staff also made some minor changes:

- Updated Measures of Effectiveness (MOE's) of the MPO's participation process (required annual MOE evaluation).
- Update media, neighborhood and public review agency contact information.

Ms. Wang sent this entire document as an e-mail attachment to the committee members. There is a 45-day public comment period. She advertised in the newspaper, television, MPC website and sent to numerous agencies. To date, there has been only one comment and that from a citizen who was angry about a spelling error in the television copy. Ms. Wang checked her copy and found no error but she is unable to view it on television herself to confirm.

Ms. Beth Kinstler received the e-mail but did not notice changes in red. This document is so long she believes the typical person will not bother to go through it. She asked if it could be summarized with the major changes highlighted. Ms. Wang acknowledged it was a large document but was surprised to hear that Ms. Kinstler's copy did not have the highlighted changes. Ms. Kinstler commented that to encourage public involvement you need to appeal to the lowest common denominator. Ms. Wang further explained that the advertisement to the public explained what this document was and noted the major changes. Those who are interested in finding out how they may participate would read it. The fact that no comments were received is an acknowledgement that people don't care that much about it.

Ms. Linda Smith commented that if it was simplified there would be more input. Ms. Wang noted that the Participation Plan is the least technical document that the MPO has.

Mr. Abbott opened the public hearing. There being no public comments, the public hearing was closed.

It was moved and seconded to endorse the amendment to the CUTS/MPO Participation Plan.

**CAC Action: the motion to endorse the amendment to the CUTS/MPO Participation Plan carried with one abstention.**

**D. Actions related to the Norfolk Southern/Georgia Ports Authority Rail Project**

Ms. Love presented the staff report on this request to amend the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). At the June meeting, the Committee had endorsed further study on the request, as the first step in the LRTP amendment process. Tonight's action would complete the second step. She explained that the project cannot be amended to the TIP unless it is amended to the 2030 LRTP. The Committee may choose to vote on amending the Plan and Program at the same time. She summarized the staff report highlighting the planning factors and how this project fulfills each factor. The factors and project impacts are as follows:

Economic vitality – positive impact: Promotes productivity by reducing rail freight travel time and delay for other modes at roadway crossings.

Safety – positive impact: Reduces conflicts between intermodal trains and other modes by eliminating numerous street crossings.

Security – neutral impact: Security is not overtly affected by the rail project.

Accessibility, Mobility & Connectivity – positive impact: Improvement in rail travel time for freight may increase the rail share of freight movement thereby reducing truck use on roadways which impacts congestion

Environment & Quality of Life – positive impact: Reduction of fuel consumption by trains and vehicles idling at crossings; air quality improved with reduced idling; less noise in for neighborhoods in the vicinity of the former intermodal route. The proposed new rail segment does not extend rail into any neighborhoods that do not currently have rail traffic.

Intermodal Connectivity – positive impact: Improves ship-train connections as well as ship-truck connections by providing more direct route for trains to intermodal facility and by reducing delay for trucks at crossings.

Efficient system management & operation – positive impact: Improves operations on both rail and roadways.

Preservation of existing system – positive impact: Provides more direct rail route which increases attractiveness of existing infrastructure and increases capacity of existing roadways by reducing delay. Any resulting mode shifts for freight from truck to rail would reduce maintenance demands of roadways.

In reply to a funding question, Ms. Love confirmed that the funds are coming from the Georgia Ports Authority's congressional earmark and from Norfolk Southern. This amendment will not affect the funding of any other project already in the Plan and

Program. Norfolk Southern currently owns all the land necessary to make this improvement.

Mr. Abbott opened the public hearing. There being no comments from the public, Mr. Abbott closed the public hearing.

It was moved and seconded to endorse the amendment to the 2030 LRTP to include the Norfolk Southern/Georgia Ports Authority rail project and to endorse the amendment to the FY 2008-2011 TIP to include the same rail project.

**CAC Action: the motion to endorse the amendment to the 2030 LRTP to include the Norfolk Southern/Georgia Ports Authority rail project and to endorse the amendment to the FY 2008-2011 TIP to include the same rail project carried with none opposed.**

**E. Endorsement of CUTS/MPO Project Prioritization for input into GDOT's Project Prioritization report to the Commissioner**

Mr. Tom Thomson began his presentation by introducing Michael Adams as the newest member to the MPO staff. He also mentioned that the MPO will be scheduling an orientation session for new committee members or existing members, if they are interested. He agreed with Ms. Kinstler that the participation plan is a lot of information to read and in the future they will strive to simplify it.

Mr. Thomson reported that the new Commissioner of Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) is re-examining everything before moving forward on anything. GDOT is in the process of doing an audit which is indicating that they are in the red. They are establishing a new way to rank and establish project priorities. This item on today's agenda is an effort to present the MPO's priority list to Commissioner Evans so we are ready if and when she finds the money. This is why staff has collected this list of construction-ready projects by 2012. It also includes commitments the Governor made to Gulfstream.

MPO staff has been consulting with the various parties to come up with the most accurate production status for the various projects. Only projects that will be construction-ready by 2012 are included. The two critical questions are "What is the current status?" and "What year will it be ready for construction?"

Small bridge and intersection projects are funded separately so these projects were removed from the original list. What remains are road widening and other major projects. A list of ten major projects that will be construction-ready by 2012 was distributed to the committee members. Mr. Thomson reviewed these ten projects and then asked each member to rank these projects in tiers (three projects can receive a "1", three can receive a "2", and four can receive a "3"). He has also asked the members of the Technical Coordinating Committee to do the same, and the results will inform the Policy Committee.

Mr. Levy moved that the Gulfstream Rd. widening and the R. B. Miller Rd. widening and the SR 307 widening from R. B. Miller Rd. be eliminated and instead the widening of Tybee Rd. from Lazaretto Creek to Bull River, including both bridges, be inserted in place of it.

Mr. Thomson noted that it was the committee's decision to act on this recommendation, but the US 80 project, based upon what is known about the project, will not be completed and ready for construction by 2012, which is the criteria for this prioritization list. The "turtle study," which is part of an environmental document, is holding things up. He recited the steps that need to be taken to forward this project. Design and right-of-way cannot even begin until the environmental requirements are met which is why this project is five or six years off.

The Chairman called for a second to Mr. Levy's motion. There being no second, the motion received no further action.

Mr. Thomson noted that these environmental requirements are federal and can only be changed through congressional legislation.

In reply to a question about bridges and intersection improvements, Mr. Thomson reported that those projects are not included in the short list because funds for them are allocated from a specialized source. GDOT staff reports that funding in that category is not sufficient to cover all those projects either, but the state's prioritization process is different for those projects.

Mr. Thomson reviewed the tables that were included in the members' packet. He explained that the current Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) was the primary source for gathering projects that are on the short list, ready for 2012.

After collecting the individual rankings from the Committee members and performing the calculation, Mr. Thomson reported the results of the ranking of ten projects. He explained the calculation process he had used to consolidate the individual rankings into a listing by tier. The results were as follows:

Ranked First Tier

Truman Pkwy. Phase V  
Skidaway Narrows Bridge Replacement

Ranked Second Tier

Gwinnett St. widening  
Ogeechee Rd. widening  
SR 307 widening from US 17 to I-16  
Whitfield Ave. widening  
Grange Rd. widening

Ranked Third Tier

SR 307 widening from R.B. Miller Rd. to SR 21

Gulfstream Rd. widening  
R.B. Miller Rd. widening

It was moved and seconded to endorse the CUTS/MPO project prioritization for input into GDOT's project prioritization report to the Commissioner.

**CAC Action: the motion to endorse the CUTS/MPO project prioritization for input into GDOT's project prioritization report to the Commissioner carried with none opposed.**

#### IV. Status Reports

##### A. Call Projects for JARC and New Freedom Funds

Ms. Wang reported to the committee that for Chatham Area Transit (CAT), as the designated recipient, to receive Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom funds for the 2006, 2007, 2008 fiscal years, a call for projects must be made. She explained the JARC funds and the New Freedom funds and reviewed the steps required for applying for these funds. It is CAT's intention to roll all three years' funds together. The six steps that must be completed by July 15, 2008 are:

- Designated recipient letter on file – (Governor's letter on file)
- Projects must be derived from a local coordinated plan (adopted last October)
- Project must be in current TIP/STIP (amended in June)
- Approved State Management/Program Management Plan (approved by FTA in July)
- Projects must be selected from a competitive selection process
- Program of Projects

The first four steps were accomplished in 2007 and early 2008. This status report explains what has been done for the last two steps: the call for projects and selection of projects. MPO staff announced a call for projects this past summer. The four proposals that were received by the deadline of the Call for Projects are:

- #2 West Chatham Route (Crossroad Business Center portion) – CAT, request for JARC funds
- #6 Cross-town Route – CAT, request for JARC funds
- Savannah Belles Ferry Service – CAT, request for JARC funds
- Coastal Center for Developmental Services (CCDS) Accessible Taxi Program – CCDS, request for New Freedom funds

The steering committee established in the Coordinated Plan met and evaluated all four proposals. This committee is made up of representatives from human services departments, transit providers, and planning agencies. The criteria for evaluation of

projects is established in the Coordinated Plan. The committee recommended granting the requested funding levels to all four proposals.

As of today, the regional Atlanta office of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has approved the application and sent it to Washington DC for final approval.

All of these projects require a local match. The Call for Projects is a large document. It was posted on the website and advertised in other media. Ms. Wang presented a description of the Program of Projects – name, description, cost, funding source – of each project.

## V. Agency Reports

Ms. Love reported that no questions had been presented in advance of this meeting. Mr. Abbott requested the name of a GDOT representative that he could contact. Ms. Love gave him District Five Programming Engineer Teresa Scott's name and contact number.

## VI. Other Business

Mr. Levy spoke on the Tybee Rd. issue. The widening of the bridges to 4 lanes is a priority to allow efficient evacuation and clearance for individual's emergencies during congestion. The widening of the road is not a priority. He has consulted with the Mayor and stated that the Mayor's first priority is that both bridges be 4-laned. His second priority is a separate bike path with a barrier on the Lazaretto Creek Bridge to allow access to the existing bike path that parallels Tybee Rd. The third priority is the same thing on the Bull River Bridge.

Mr. Levy made a motion that this committee appeal to whatever authorities necessary that the widening of the 2 bridges with barriers be speeded up as much as possible. His motion was seconded.

In response to a question about emergency vehicles, Mr. Levy noted that emergency vehicles are already on Tybee. The emergency trip is only one-way, not two-way.

Mr. Abbott requested clarification about who this motion should be directed to. Mr. Levy depends on the staff to direct this motion to the proper authority. Ms. Love replied that the function of this committee is to make recommendations to the Policy Committee.

Upon request, Mr. Abbott re-stated Mr. Levy's intention with this motion. The committee is voting on the motion to recommend to the Policy Committee that they recognize the priority of the Lazaretto Creek Bridge and the Bull River Bridge widening to four lanes with a barrier-separated path to allow walking and biking. Mr. Levy agreed to this wording.

**CAC Action: the motion to recommend to the Policy Committee that they recognize the priority of the Lazaretto Creek Bridge and the Bull River Bridge widening to four**



lanes with a barrier-separated path to allow walking and biking carried with one opposed.

**VII. Other Public Comments**

Mr. Bennett thanked the MPO staff for all the work involved in the recent Federal Highway Administration workshop on safe pedestrian design.

**VIII. Adjournment**

There being no other business to come before the Committee, the August 21, 2008 Citizens Advisory Committee was adjourned.

The next meeting will be on October 16, 2008.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane Love  
Transportation Planner