



METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

**CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING SUMMARY**

**Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room
112 East State Street**

February 19, 2009

5:00 p.m.

Members

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

Representing

Chatham County
City of Savannah
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
Chatham County
City of Savannah
Port Wentworth
Chatham County
City of Savannah

Present

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Others Present

Michael Adams
Teresa Brenner
Walt Harper
Jean Iaderosa
Jane Love
CJ McCampbel
Barbara Settzo
Patrick Shay
Tom Thomson
Wykoda Wang
Mark Wilkes, P.E., AICP

Representing

MPO
ACAT
Interested Citizen
Chatham Area Transit
MPO
First Transit/Teleride
for MPO
Chatham County
MPC
MPO
MPO

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Chairman John Bennett called the February 19, 2009 Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting to order.

I. Approval of Agenda

CAC Action: the motion to approve the agenda for the February 19, 2009 Citizens Advisory Committee meeting carried with none opposed.

II. Action Items

A. Approval of the October 16, 2008 Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

It was moved and seconded to approve the October 16, 2008 Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes.

CAC Action: the motion to approve the October 16, 2008 Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes carried with none opposed.

B. Endorsement of the amendment to the FY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program for additional planning (PL) funds

Ms. Jane Love presented the amendment to the committee. She explained that the Unified Planning Work Program is the staff work program that contains the budget and staff tasks for the year. FY 2009 is the current year. This amendment is a request to move unobligated highway planning funds from FY 2008 to FY 2009 in the amount of \$90,674.14. These are planning funds that come from Federal Highway Agency through Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). Staff recommends endorsement of this amendment.

It was moved and seconded to endorse the amendment to the FY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program for additional planning (PL) funds.

In response to a question about where this money would be used, Ms. Love responded that highway planning funds are used for a variety of staff activities listed in the work program, such as for coordination with other agencies, community outreach, development of planning documents, traffic impact analysis, and general administrative tasks, among others.

CAC Action: the motion to endorse the amendment to the FY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program for additional planning (PL) funds carried with none opposed.

C. Chatham Area Transit Paratransit Plan Update

Ms. Jean Iaderosa from Chatham Area Transit (CAT) presented a summary of the paratransit updated plan. Federal Transit Administration asked CAT to update this plan (the original plan was from 1992) and to bring the Teleride Handbook into compliance with

the Americans with Disabilities Act. Specific corrections were made and are reflected in the revised Handbook which is attached to the updated plan. Also mentioned in the updated plan are improvements that have been made, over the years, to the fixed route buses. These improvements include wheelchair lifts, automatic voice enunciation system and an LCD system which reports as the bus approaches major intersections, major stops, and major transfer points. CAT has been working with Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation to update the Teleride Handbook. The updates to the Handbook will go into effect in April. At that time CAT will be drawing back the service area of the paratransit system. Due to the growth within the County it has become impossible to serve the entire county with the paratransit system. By pulling back to $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of fixed routes, the paratransit system will be able to serve the customers in and near the transit district in a more timely and efficient manner, achieving a level of service in that area that is required by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Those customers in the non-urbanized areas will be served by a regional rural transportation service provided by Coastal Georgia Regional Development Center.

Mr. CJ McCampbel, general manager of First Transit/Teleride confirmed that, due to extensive growth in the county, the paratransit system was no longer providing quality and timely service to its customers. Working with the FTA to bring quality service back, they needed to update the paratransit plan from 1992 with an effective date of April 2009. They have added scheduling software which will aid in bringing about a seamless transition for those customers located outside of the new paratransit boundaries and who will be served by the Coastal Georgia Regional Development Center rural transportation service.

It was moved and seconded to endorse the Chatham Area Transit Paratransit Plan Update.

CAC Action: the motion to endorse the Chatham Area Transit Paratransit Plan Update carried with none opposed.

III. Discussion Item

A. **Amendments to FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program**

Mr. Tom Thomson began his presentation by recommending that any action on this item be delayed until Tuesday, February 24 at a joint meeting of the Technical Coordinating Committee and this committee.

Mr. Thomson addressed the requests for Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) amendments for FY 2009 and FY 2010. Transportation projects that the state and local agencies hope to fund with stimulus money must be in the TIP so that the money can flow to those projects. In April he will present the elements for FY 2011, 2012 and 2013, which will constitute a new FY 2010-2013 TIP.

Mr. Thomson reviewed the key points. The requirement that projects be "shovel ready" is better understood by the phrase "ready to commit", i.e. construction phases need to be ready to build, engineering phases need to be ready to plan, and right-of-way phases need

to be ready to acquire parcels. There is a time frame referred to as the 120-day clock. This clock starts when the funds are apportioned, which means published in the federal register. From that date you have 120 days to commit the projects. Fifty percent of the monies need to be obligated within the 120 days. Projects must be eligible for federal funding. Money will be distributed based on current standard formulas used in the regular surface transportation program. We also need to assume a “reasonable” level, i.e. a reasonable ratio between regular funding and stimulus funding. Don’t expect five times the regular funding from stimulus money.

Mr. Thomson is asking for a delay in action because staff has asked local government and CAT to review their projects and resubmit their “ready to commit” projects that are a priority, keeping in mind the federal and state levels of “reasonableness”. He asked for a special meeting on February 24 at 5:00 PM.

Mr. Levy stated there are four projects in Chatham County he believes are critical to saving human lives – bridge to Skidaway Island, the completion of the Truman Parkway, the Lazaretto Creek Bridge and the Bull River Bridge. He moved that these four projects be given priority over all other projects.

Mr. Thomson noted that the Truman is programmed and ready to be let soon after July 2009. It is proposed to receive stimulus funds. The Skidaway Narrows Bridge is being let in April or May 2009 as a design-build project with regular funds. The other two bridges are part of the U.S. 80 widening project out to Tybee. At this point GDOT is not willing to break those bridges out as separate projects because they are deemed “sufficient”, i.e. structurally sound. If the City of Tybee Island is concerned about blockage from accidents on the bridge, Tybee Island needs to establish a response plan. Mr. Thomson noted that this issue is a management issue not a structural issue. The rating for Lazaretto Creek bridge is just above 50 and that rating is not low enough to be a priority for the State DOT.

Mr. John Bennett asked if there was any mechanism available to this committee to emphasize to GDOT that this is a local priority. Will anything this committee does have any effect? Mr. Thomson recommended they put the issue before the full Policy Committee. He further explained that the staff has sent letters on behalf to Tybee Island to GDOT twice, and has received the answers given here today. Staff cannot support spending money on these bridges when there are other bridges in greater need, such as the Causton Bluff bridge.

Mr. Thomson offered examples of management solutions for this problem. Other localities in the nation with long narrow bridges have stationed front-end loaders at ends of the bridges, to be on hand to clear obstacles and restore traffic flow. He also offered the suggestion that Tybee Island institute a toll for those coming to Tybee Island. The toll revenue could be used to pay for new bridges after a short time.

Ms. Jane Love and Mr. Thomson noted that U.S. 80 widening, which includes the bridges, would not meet the readiness criteria for stimulus funding. Mr. Thomson added that the MPC found out that no emergency service covered one of those bridges. The MPC has corrected this.

Mr. Tony Abbott seconded Mr. Levy's motion for the purpose of discussion by the committee.

Mr. Jack Knops spoke against the motion. He has sufficient confidence in the staff to accept their findings. He commented that he made a personal, individual choice not to live on Skidaway Island or Tybee Island because of the limited access issue. He wishes no harm to the residents, but those who decide to live there bear the responsibility of their decision.

CAC Action: the motion to move the Skidway Narrows Bridge project, the Truman Parkway project, the Lazaretto Creek bridge project and the Bull River bridge project ahead of all other projects in prioritization for funding was defeated (5 opposed, 3 approved).

Mr. Bennett asked for clarification on the special Tuesday meeting. Mr. Thomson noted that the meeting will be at 5:00 PM with one agenda item – the amendments to the TIP for FY 2009 and FY 2010.

Mr. Bennett opened tonight's meeting to public comment on the proposed TIP amendments. There being no public comments, the public hearing was closed.

IV. Status Reports

A. MPO 2009 Calendar of Activities

Ms. Love reported on the various activities scheduled for this year. A chart was included in the mailing. Activities include:

- Audit of Federal Highway Planning Program
- Amendments to the FY 2008-2011 TIP for Stimulus funds
- CUTS/MPO Certification
- Project Selection for JARC and New Freedom funding under Coordinated Plan
- FY 2010-2013 TIP development
- FY 2010 Unified Planning Work Program development
- Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) development
- LRTP Phase II (Context Sensitive Concept Designs and Land Use Detail)
- SAFETEA-LU Expiration – expires September 30, 2009, but may be extended by Congress
- Preparation and hosting of AMPO 2009 National Conference in Savannah
- Regional Meetings continued from 2007 & 2008 with new meetings in May, July, September, and November

Mr. Thomson noted that this calendar is being presented to offer a view of the bigger picture of MPO activities.

B. CUTS/MPO Federal Certification Review

Mr. Mark Wilkes reported that for the last couple of months the staff has been preparing for their Federal Certification Review that occurs every four years. This includes a 2-day interview with FHWA and FTA for the purpose of certifying that the CUTS/MPO is fully compliant with all federal regulations. There will be a public meeting on March 10, 2009.

C. CUTS/MPO Long Range Transportation Plan Kick-off

Mr. Thomson invited all to come to the Policy Committee meeting next week for the formal kick-off of the "Framework Plan" designed to satisfy the requirements of FHWA, FTA and GDOT. There will be more detail of Phase II which will include focus on corridors such as Route 17, a forthcoming Transit Plan, and relationship to the unified zoning ordinance. This will be an on-going process for 1-2 years with special funding from discretionary grants. There will be many sub-committees offering opportunities for participation for those interested in long range planning. They will deal with environmental impacts of transportation, review urban areas, land use, context-sensitive design. Mr. Thomson believes it is beneficial to have the same agency's staff working with land use issues and transportation issues, though they report to different boards. Every department in the MPC is involved in the unified zoning ordinance.

Ms. Beth Kinstler asked if materials from the Southwest Sector Open House meeting would be available on the website. Mr. Thomson reviewed that meeting which dealt with city and MPC staff working with developers. A map has been produced which shows existing and future corridors, their functional levels and the anticipated build-out. During the study it was found that the roads on the map were in approved developments. Developers donated right-of-way for future widening. City has negotiated with the developers. Following the meeting, staff is working on a procedure for developers so that they will know the rules for developments. The city is looking at ways to finance roads in newly developed areas over time. State funding will not cover it all. Public transit may be addressed by park-ride lots, express bus planning, and provisions for bus stops. Unless we have a local stable funding source we cannot do much about transit in this community.

Mr. Thomson said that projects will be reviewed during the LRTP development to determine if they are still needed. They will review the capacity and the projected capacity. The trend is for less vehicle miles traveled. At the national level they are preparing for a new way to collect revenue other than the present gas tax method to sustain the highway system.

V. Other Business

Mr. Patrick Shay, member of the CAT board, reported that the CAT board has awarded a contract for transit management to Veolia Transport. They manage systems all over North America and they are a world leader in the concept of public/private partnerships. The public asset, CAT, will continue to operate in a way to qualify for federal funds and according to FTA guidelines. CAT cannot provide many requested services because of federal regulations. By creating a public/private partnership, the private side of the

partnership can act entrepreneurial and service transportation needs that CAT cannot. Veolia has its own logistical, technological, and financial resources. This is a big change and should be for the better. Public/private partnerships should give us more control and lessen our dependence on federal transit dollars.

Mr. Jason House asked if there would be an obvious distinction between the services – will there be a public bus for a certain fare and the private bus for another fare?

Mr. Shay noted that CAT will operate the same as it does now. He hopes that swipe cards will be available that can be used to take a bus, a ferry, park your car, bike rental, etc.

Mr. Mark Egan asked for clarification of public/private. Mr. Shay responded that some additional capital (equipment) could be private and be used to increase the catchment area of the public system.

Mr. Thomson asked for a motion concerning the special meeting he requested.

It was moved and seconded to join with the Technical Coordinating Committee for a special meeting on Tuesday, February 24, 2009 at 5:00 to discuss the proposed TIP amendments for FY2009 and FY 2010.

CAC Action: the motion to join with the Technical Coordinating Committee for a special meeting on Tuesday, February 24, 2009 at 5:00 to discuss the proposed TIP amendments for FY2009 and FY 2010 carried with none opposed.

VI. Other Public Comments

No public comments at this time.

VII. Adjournment

There being no other business to come before the Committee, the February 19, 2009 Citizens Advisory Committee was adjourned.

The next regular meeting will be on April 23, 2009.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane Love
Transportation Planner