



CHATHAM URBAN TRANSPORTATION STUDY

**POLICY COMMITTEE
MEETING SUMMARY**

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

August 25, 2004

10:00 A.M.

Members Present:

Russ Abolt
Michael Brown
George Fidler, P.E.
Matthew Fowler
Tim Holbrook
James Hungerpillar
Otis S. Johnson
Scott Lansing
Timothy S. Mackey
Lee Mundell
Walter Parker
Randy Weitman, PE

Representing:

Chatham County
City of Savannah
Savannah Hilton Head International Airport
GDOT – Atlanta
City of Port Wentworth
Town of Vernonburg
Mayor, City of Savannah, Chair
Chatham Area Transit
Chairman MPC
Chair, CAC
City of Tybee Island
Georgia Ports Authority

Others Present:

Leo G. Beckmann
Allan Black
Betty Carter
Marianne Heimes
Charles McMillan
Keith Melton
Teresa A. Scott
Peter Shonka, P. E.
Chris Simons
Helen L. Stone
Thomas Thomson, P.E., AICP
Tripp Tollison
Mike Weiner, P. E.
Robert Wilder
Mark Wilkes, PE, AICP
Wykoda Wang

Representing:

Georgia Ports Authority
Chatham County
GDOT – Jesup
Islands Citizens for Logical Growth
McMillan & Associates
GDOT - Atlanta
GDOT - Jesup
City of Savannah
PBS&J
Interested Citizen
MPC Executive Director
Chamber of Commerce
City of Savannah
Interested Citizen
MPC Staff
MPC Staff

Dr. Johnson called the meeting to order.

I. Approval of Agenda

Hearing no objections or corrections, Dr. Johnson stated that the agenda would stand approved as prepared.

II. Committee Reports

A. Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation

Ms. Wang stated that during the recent meeting, ACAT reviewed the same action items that appear on the Policy Committee agenda. The committee also adopted changes to the Teleride Handbook and recommended that the resolution requesting sidewalks be included in the TIP. Staff has included the resolution.

B. Citizens Advisory Committee

Mr. Mundell stated that members of the CAC viewed the recent meeting as an opportunity to express their concerns regarding transportation issues. The group reviewed the LRTP and requested that the U. S. Highway 80 widening project to Tybee Island be deleted on the basis that it is unnecessary. The Tybee representative felt that the funds could be better used in other locations. The group further recommended the following priorities: 1) completion of the Truman Parkway; 2) facilitate an east-west solution on the north side of Savannah; and, 3) adopt a continuation of Phase V of the Truman Parkway which would connect to Interstate 95.

Mayor Parker stated that the sentiment about the U. S. Highway 80 widening is probably not the feeling of the majority of island residents.

C. Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) and Transportation Staff

Mr. Wilkes stated that the TCC reviewed the draft TIP and LRTP. There was a discussion of project cost estimates, balancing and how to include projects within the required financial constraints. The draft document is financially balanced.

III. Public Comments on Action Items

Dr. Johnson asked if there was anyone present with a question on the Action Items.

No one came forward.

IV. ACTION ITEMS:

A. Approval of April 21, 2004 CUTS Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

Mr. Lansing **moved** to approve the minutes of the April 21, 2004 CUTS Policy Committee Meeting. Mr. Parker seconded the motion.

Mr. Mackey requested that neighborhood groups be notified prior to public meetings in order to have a better turn-out.

Mr. Wilkes replied that all neighborhood associations have been receiving notification of public meetings.

Policy Committee Action: **The motion carried with none opposed.** The motion was to approve the minutes of the April 21, 2004 as presented. Voting were Mr. Weitman, Mr. Abolt, Mr. Parker, Mr. Mundell, Mr. Mackey, Mr. Fidler, Mr. Lansing, Mr. Fowler, Mr. Hungerpiller, Mr. Brown, and Mr. Holbrook.

B. Review of Draft 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

Mr. Wilkes reviewed the documents that were mailed to Policy Committee members prior to the meeting. He further provided background information of the government requirement to update the plan. The document before the committee is a 25 year plan. The Travel Demand Models have also been updated.

Mr. Brown asked that further detail be provided on which parts of the victory Drive widening project has been removed from the plan.

Mr. Wilkes noted that the Victory Drive widening project from Truman Parkway to Wilmington River and then to Johnny Mercy Blvd has been in the plan for the last ten years, but is not included in the 2030 LRTP. As a constrained facility, only management improvements would be recommended to Johnny Mercer Blvd.

Mr. Thomson added that the islands Land Use Plan set a different direction for that area. Population projections and jobs have impacted the travel which contributed to the revised direction for this project.

Mr. Wilkes stated that the project on DeRenne Avenue has been removed pending results of the Connecting Savannah Study, which would be covered later in the meeting. Instead that placeholder project has been replaced with the study.

Mr. Abolt requested additional information of the process for obtaining Federal and State funds for the DeRenne Avenue project.

Mr. Thomson replied that the project would follow the established process of coming to the Policy Committee as an amendment to the LRTP. It would then be included in the TIP as a priority.

Mr. Wilkes stated that staff is planning on setting aside one percent of road construction dollars for roadway amenities. He further reviewed the public involvement process for the LRTP. The document that was mailed out is financially balanced although there are requests from GDOT to include widening of Interstate 95 from Interstate 16 to the South Carolina state line and a request from Port Wentworth and the Georgia Ports Authority to rebuild Grange Road.

Mr. Thomson stated that it must be decided how much of the SPLOST funds to include as future funding; the assumption would be to add two to three million per year. This would balance the plan with all projects remaining.

Mr. Wilkes stated that none of the projects have been removed from the plan.

Mr. Lansing asked whether the mobility options for people were going to improve or would there be any degradation under this plan. Would congestion improve or would it get worse?

Mr. Thomson replied that this area is pretty lucky to maintain the present mobility with the funding that is available.

Speaking about the issue:

Chris Simons, PBS&J, consultant on the project, showed a graph to depict what would happen if nothing were done. In the future, Interstates become a problem if nothing is done. Additional calculations appear in the report that is before the Policy Committee.

Mr. Hungerpiller asked whether the one percent for the roadway amenities has precedent with other communities.

Mr. Thomson replied that the amount was a starting point in communities with which he is familiar.

Mr. Brown stated that the community now has an amenities policy and a financial equivalent. The question might be answered by applying the policy. It might be beneficial to show what the streetscape would look like under the one percent and then go to the voters. Such an idea might help to sell the one percent sales tax.

Mr. Thomson stated that staff was hoping for consensus on the direction in which the plan was moving. It is critically important that staff knows all of the issues by September in

order to prepare a final document for approval at the September Policy Committee meeting.

Dr. Johnson polled the committee. The group indicated that staff is moving in the right direction.

C. Review of Draft FY 2005-2007 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Ms. Wang reviewed the public involvement process for the plan. Information has been placed on the MPC website and comments can now be received by e-mail. A new draft was sent out on August 11, 2004. The public review period would end in September. There is still time to submit comments on the plan and TIP. The final document would be approved at the September Policy Committee meeting.

IV. Status Report

Connecting Savannah

Ms. Linda Carpenter, Lead Consultant with Wilbur Smith Associates, provided insights into an evolving process that has a very public focus because transportation supports the economic engine of the community. In addition to listening to area residents, this process will also test recommendations to make sure that they are feasible. There is also a City and County partnership to commit to feedback on issues of concern to residents.

Mr. Thomson stated that there is some confusion about whose study this is. This study is coming from the transportation planning process. The Policy Committee sets this policy.

Ms. Carpenter added that a Kick-Off Conference has been scheduled for Monday, September 27, 2004, at the Coastal Georgia Conference Center from 5:30 P.M. until 9:00 P. M. There will be an overall presentation followed by break-out groups for small work shops.

V. Informational Reports

A. Georgia Department of Transportation

Ms. Scott reviewed the status of projects that are underway in the area. A report was distributed at the meeting.

Mr. Lansing asked the status of grant approvals by FTA and FHWA.

Mr. Fowler replied that GDOT has adopted Title VI/EEO plan in compliance with FTA on this matter. This development took place a few weeks ago. He would check on the matter for Mr. Lansing.

Mr. Wilkes asked to be copied on any documentation that is sent to Mr. Lansing.

Ms. Scott stated that she followed up on the concern that Mr. Abolt raised at the previous meeting regarding signage at the Jimmy DeLoach Parkway at its intersection with State Route 21. He was correct. There was no signage. That has been resolved. Signage is in place.

B. Chatham County

Mr. Black reviewed the One-Percent Roadway projects in the county. A report was distributed at the meeting.

There were no questions.

C. Chatham Area Transit

Mr. Lansing stated that CAT has received approval from the U. S. Coast Guard to make some modifications to the Savannah Belles ferries.

D. Savannah Airport

Mr. Fidler stated that traffic at the airport continues to grow. An additional parking level would be added to each of the parking decks to accommodate additional vehicles. There are also plans to add a new concourse and an additional runway.

E. City of Savannah

Mr. Weiner reviewed the status of road projects underway in the city of Savannah. A report was distributed at the meeting.

Mr. Brown requested additional information on the construction along White Bluff Road.

Mr. Weiner replied that construction is in the median in order to accommodate left turns. This would free up a right turn lane.

Mr. Abolt stated that he has had a complaint about the median on Chatham Parkway that serves the Shell station and Lexus dealership. There are some safety issues. He would provide a memo to Mr. Brown and Mr. Weiner to clarify this issue in hopes of getting the matter resolved.

VII. Other Business

Mr. Holbrook distributed copies of material regarding Grange Road. This road serves as a support service for heavy traffic related to the Port. It was not meant to carry such a load. Therefore upgrading and repaving is necessary. Intersection improvements and safety matters are also requested to be addressed.

Mr. Thomson stated that the City, State and MPO are working toward recognition of Grange Road as part of the National Highway System. Once that status has been secured, the project would become part of the LRTP and could move forward.

Mr. Mackey expressed thanks for the meeting last night regarding the proposed widening of Bay Street. GDOT staff, Mr. Black, Col. Bungard, and MPO staff were present to answer questions from the residents and businesses in the area. This was a positive step.

VIII. Other Public Comments

Dr. Johnson asked if there was anyone else in the audience with a comment on any transportation issue.

No one came forward.

IX. Adjournment

There being no further business, the August 25, 2004, Policy Committee meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted

Mark A. Wilkes, P. E., AICP
Director of Transportation Planning