



## CHATHAM URBAN TRANSPORTATION STUDY

### POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

**February 22, 2006**

**10:00 A.M.**

#### Voting Members

Russ Abolt  
Michael Brown  
LTC Carl Coffman  
Patric S. Graham  
Glen Jones  
William W. Hubbard  
James Hungerpillar  
Otis Johnson  
Tom Lamar  
Mike Lamb  
Pete Liakakis  
Harold Linnenkohl  
Stephen R. Lufburrow  
Doug J. Marchand  
Lee Mundell  
Carl Palmer  
Jason Buelterman  
Ana Maria Thomas  
Andy Quinney  
Representative  
Wayne Tipton  
Eric R. Winger

#### Representing

Chatham County  
City of Savannah  
Hunter Army Airfield  
Savannah Airport Commission  
City of Port Wentworth  
Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce  
Town of Vernonburg  
City of Savannah  
Chairman, ACAT  
City of Pooler  
Chairman Chatham County Commission  
GDOT  
Chairman, MPC  
Georgia Ports Authority  
Chairman, CAC  
Chatham Area Transit Authority  
City of Tybee Island  
Town of Thunderbolt  
City of Garden City  
CAT Board of Directors  
City of Bloomingdale  
Savannah Economic Development  
Authority (SEDA)

#### Present

X  
X  
X  
  
X  
  
X  
X  
X  
  
X  
X  
X  
X  
X  
  
X

#### Voting Member Alternates

George Fidler, P.E.  
Mathew Fowler  
Trip Tollison  
Randy Weitman, P.E.  
Robert Williams

#### Representing

Savannah Airport Commission  
GDOT Atlanta  
Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce  
Georgia Ports Authority  
Thunderbolt

#### Present

X  
X  
X  
X

<u>Others Present</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Present</u>
Allan Black, P.E.	Chatham County	X
Keith Melton	GDOT – Atlanta	X
Pat Farrell	County Commission	X
Tony Abbott	CUTS Citizen Advisory Committee	X
Beth Kinstler	Preserving Savannah	X
Radney Simpson	GDOT – Atlanta	X
Ardis Wood	Preserving Savannah	X
Marianne Heimes	ICLG	X
Barbara Foster	CGRDC	X
Teresa Scott	GDOT – Jesup	X
Paul Wolff	Tybee Island	X
Peter Shonka, P. E.	City of Savannah	X
Robert Wilder	Concerned Citizen	X
Ronald Kolman	Concerned Citizen	X
Diana Thibodaux	Concerned Citizen	X
Bill Merz	Skidaway Island	X
Walter Lewis	Skidaway Island	X
Billy Jones	City of Savannah	X
Mike Weiner, P. E.	City of Savannah	X
Thomas Thomson, P.E., AICP	MPC Executive Director	X
Wykoda Wang	MPO Staff	X
Mark Wilkes, P.E., AICP	MPO Staff	X

### Call to Order

Mr. Pete Liakakis called the February 22, 2006 Policy Committee Meeting to order. He stated the agenda had been revised and distributed to the members for review.

#### I. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Abolt **moved** to approve the revised agenda that has been distributed to the members. Mr. Hungerpillar **seconded** the motion.

**Policy Committee Action:** The motion to approve the revised agenda carried with none opposed.

#### II. Committee Reports (verbal)

##### A. Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation

Mr. Tom Lamar thanked Chairman Liakakis for his support of the ACAT Committee. He gave a brief report of the action items endorsed by the ACAT Committee. The ACAT Committee voted to approve sending the updates of the ACAT bylaws to all members for review so that the Committee can adopt the bylaw updates at the next ACAT Meeting. Mr. Lamar also stated the first wheelchair accessible taxi is now available in Savannah. He

further stated issues discussed by the Committee included the delays of Teleride Van delivery, advanced reservation processing, improvements to the Teleride Vans and alerting CAT to compile a comprehensive list of the bus stops that are not wheelchair accessible. Ms. Bush, agent for Teleride, agreed to take these concerns of the ACAT Committee to the CAT Board for review.

## **B. Citizens Advisory Committee**

Mr. Lee Mundell reported that the action items of the December 2005 Meeting have all been approved. He stated the CAC had several motions brought forward: 1) the sign posted on Truman Parkway has the name DeRenne spelled incorrectly - the Committee has requested that this correction be made; 2) letters have been addressed to DOT regarding bike way debris removal along US 80; and 3) the Committee has also moved to keep the US 17 widening on the fast track.

The CAC now questions its role. The new members have asked do they serve as an approval committee or a committee to initiate. At the February 2006 meeting, a motion for an orientation retreat has gone forward. There was another motion before the Policy Committee regarding the traffic retiming and road widening on SR 21 in north Chatham County. The Citizens Advisory Committee also requests that the Policy Committee set three priorities for the Transportation Improvement Program: 1) completion of Truman Parkway; 2) completion of the transportation loop on the North part of Savannah; and 3) the removal of US 80 widening to Tybee Island.

Mr. Liakakis asked if Mr. Thomson would address the concerns of the Citizens Advisory Committee.

Mr. Thomson stated at a previous meeting with Mr. Mundell, he had asked that the CAC do a self assessment and goal setting. He further explained the Citizens Advisory Committee is not a requirement under the MPO. The requirement is that citizens are involved in the planning process. The CAC role is primarily that of an advisory role but the Committee can further serve as a communicator between the Policy Board and the public about transportation issues. He then offered to help the Committee Members work through a process that will redirect their focus in a direction that will prove more valuable to the Committee.

Mr. Thomson then asked the Chairman to recognize the new members present: Mayor Buelterman from Tybee Island, Mayor Glenn Jones from Port Wentworth, Stephen Lufburrow, Chairman of the Metropolitan Planning Commission, Lieutenant Colonel Coffman, and Mr. Robert Williams representing Mayor Anna Maria Thomas from Thunderbolt.

**III. Action Items**

**A. Approval of the October 26, 2005 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes**

Mr. Abolt **moved** to approve the October 26, 2005 Policy Committee meeting minutes. Mr. Mundell **seconded** the motion.

**Policy Committee Action:** The motion to approve the October 26, 2005 Policy Committee meeting minutes carried with none opposed.

**B. Approval of 2006 Meeting Calendar**

Mr. Abolt **moved** for approval of the 2006 Meeting Calendar. Mr. Mundell **seconded** the motion.

**Policy Committee Action:** The motion to approve the 2006 Meeting Calendar carried with none opposed.

**IV. Status Reports**

**A. Local Transportation Improvement Priorities**

Mr. Wilkes gave a brief presentation on the Local Transportation Improvement Priorities. He reported the TCC has had extensive discussions on the TIP priorities. The TIP document will be moving from a three year to a four year program per the new SAFETEA-LU requirements. He also stated the GDOT budget was not yet available and that TCC staff has identified priorities for the TIP. The first three priorities he listed were: 1) The widening of SR 204 from King George Blvd to Rio Road; 2) SR 204 widening from Rio Road to Truman Parkway; and 3) construction of Phase V of Truman Parkway. Staff also felt additional priorities need to be addressed though of no particular order. These are: 1) an update of congestion management system; 2) an update of the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan; 3) Truman Parkway Interchange lighting that will be let this year; 4) State Route 307 overpass – this will be an ear marked project; 5) County Road 787/Islands Expressway bridge replacement at Wilmington River; 6) Gwinnett Street widening from Stiles Avenue to I-16; 7) Islands Expressway widening from General McIntosh to Truman Parkway; and SR 204 Spur /Diamond Causeway Widening from Ferguson Avenue to McWhorter.

**B. Task order Transportation Studies**

Mr. Thomson stated he would like to inform the MPO on the discussion held with Mr. Michael Brown as a result of the emergence of the New Hampstead Development in Southwest Chatham County. The dialogue has led staff to believe a focus study should be conducted in that area to ensure that the future transportation system is viable and that

there is appropriate linkage between developments. Land use issues will also be addressed as well as the creation of a public/private partnership for funding transportation improvements in this area of the County. MPC staff is negotiating with the consulting team of Reynolds Smith and Hills to assist with this process.

### **C. Connecting Savannah Follow Up Activities**

Mr. Thomson gave a quick overview of the status of the activities regarding the action plan that was passed in June 2005. He stated a recommendation of actions relating to the Connecting Savannah Study was brought before the Committee and the Committee voted to add items to the 2030 Long Range Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program. He then reported that MPO staff and City staff have been working together to write two request for proposals: 1) to have a detailed study on the Hampstead Avenue Connector; and 2) to view the options for the DeRenne Six Lane Widening Project. A consultant is expected to be hired by the summer of 2006 to engage in dialogue with the public to review options in order to move this process further. An ambulance pre-emption system is also in the dialogue phase with the consultant and Mr. Mike Weiner. There is a vendor proposal to implement an ambulance pre-emption in the DeRenne Corridor to allow incoming ambulances to bypass congestion and enter into the hospitals.

Mr. Thomson also stated there is some cooperation with the County Staff to do protective right-of-way buying on the section of Hampstead Connector at White Bluff and Abercorn. Details on the acquisition of the Comcast Building are being worked out along with working with the Department of Labor to relocate them and acquire that site. He continued that the early job of the new transportation staff member will be to start a ride share program focusing on the two hospitals on the DeRenne Street Corridor and that he will be assisted by Mr. Chris Morrill with the outlining of Bay Street. He then concluded that GDOT will revisit Abercorn from the end of the existing Truman to US 17 to possibly extend the Truman.

Mayor Johnson asked how he should respond to those citizens stating that they were involved in the Connecting Savannah Process but the outcome was not the decision of the group but that of the staff. Mr. Thomson responded that the written material on this process is available for review at the MPC website and anyone that would like to can audit this material and make his/her own decision. In any consensus building process the definition of consensus is that most of the people can accept the solution and some of the people don't. What you are hearing is from the minority that does not agree with the outcome, but the process was a good process. He then stated that 80% of the people involved in the process were in favor of the outcome. Mayor Johnson then asked what the process would be for the next phase of citizen involvement. Mr. Thomson replied the next phase will focus on one project at a time so the citizen process will be focused on that. The process will start with the re-examination of the assumptions that led to the recommendation of a six lane facility. The consultant will first do the traffic study and analysis that will confirm that the system models are predicting correctly. If they find that six lane widening is supported, then the next step will be to look at all the options. At this point the public will be involved in developing and reviewing the options and providing

comments. If the decision is funded, the design stage begins and the public involvement would be to make sure the design is done as it should be.

When asked to clarify what the Truman Parkway Extension to US 17 would theoretically entail, Mr. Thomson answered that the realm of possibilities would be to merge the traffic into a wider Abercorn. Ms. Scott added that Truman Parkway would stop at Holland Drive and tie into Abercorn, but what DOT would like to do is to hire a consultant to go out and do an environmental document from where Truman hits SR 204 out to US 17. The entire corridor will be covered in one environmental document. This way Abercorn is widened to four lanes in each direction out to US 17. Unless something has changed, Truman will stop at SR 204.

#### **D. Transportation Amenities Plan**

Mr. Wilkes briefly gave an updated status report on Phase II of the Transportation Amenities Program. Staff went through a selection process and selected Gladding Jackson to develop the context sensitive design guidelines. Currently, we are under contract negotiations with the consultant.

#### **E. Transportation Enhancement Application Award**

Mr. Wilkes briefly updated the Committee on the status of the Transportation Enhancement Awards. The Board in most cases has decided to award less than the requested amount. The successful projects were the Tybrisa Streetscape Improvement, Martin Luther King Blvd Streetscape Phase II, Armstrong Atlantic Bike and Pedestrian Path, and Pooler Sidewalk Extension. The total amount awarded to these projects is 1.22 million dollars. Mr. Wilkes reported as a result of the positive communication between MPO and Transportation Board members, the funding gap is closing. He stated the MPO is now receiving a higher percentage of its fair share. Mr. Thomson thanked Chairman Liakakis for his role in bringing the transportation Commissioners to town. This dialogue was positive and key to receiving the fund increases requested.

#### **F. Draft FY 2007 Unified Planning Work Program**

Mr. Wilkes stated the Draft FY2007 UPWP has been submitted to GDOT in order to meet their requirements. This draft will not be finalized until April thereby allowing the Committee to incorporate comments.

#### **G. Benton Blvd. Transportation Issues**

Mr. Thomson informed the MPO of the concerns of Representative Buddy Carter. Mr. Carter's concern was the priority of Benton Blvd and whether or not there is funding. He has also voiced concerns regarding the congestion at I-95 and SR 21 and would like to extend Benton Blvd to provide a connection between Jimmy DeLoach and SR 30 as a way to relieve the congestion. Mr. Thomson stated after considerable dialogue it was determined the most likely way to construct the road is to work with the developers and the

land owners in the area to dedicate right-of-way and to construct the road. The next meeting will be to ask the specific property owners for their cooperation to help further the project. Mr. Russ Abolt stated there is a great deal of concern from Effingham County regarding this project as well. He stated Commissioner Kicklighter suggested this project may be a candidate for a Public Private Initiative (PPI). During a conversation with Commissioner Linnenkohl, Mr. Abolt and Mr. Bungard stated this project would be their choice for the PPI.

#### **H. Port Area Transportation Issues**

Mr. Thomson stated GDOT is conducting a statewide truck only lane study and has decided to break out a Chatham County focus which would look at the linkage between the warehouses and the port. GDOT is requested to look at the area around the Port Authority. There is a Savannah component focusing on the northeast quadrant of I-16 and Interstate 95. This will be a more in depth study.

#### **I. Coastal Georgia RDC Regional Plan**

Ms. Barbara Foster, transportation manager with the Coastal Georgia RDC gave a report on the Coastal Georgia Regional Transit Plan. The purpose of the study is to develop a coordinated regional transportation system to serve both the general public and the human service agencies' transportation needs.

#### **J. Landings Presentation Regarding High Level Bridge and Diamond Causeway**

Mr. Howard Stryker, Chairman of the Landings Government of Affairs Committee, introduced other inhabitants of the Island: Mr. Walter Lewis representing the JC Lewis Family, Mr. Billy Hair, County Commissioner Pat Farrell, CAC member Tony Abbott, and Mr. Mike Sullivan who represents Mr. Jim Sanders, Director of the Skidaway Institute. Mr. Stryker stated the petition has gone before the Citizens Advisory Committee and the Committee has endorsed the petition to build the High Level Bridge and to give it the highest priority. Mr. Stryker gave a presentation and stated that he felt the lives of Landings Community residents were much more important than the construction of the Truman Parkway and the Island Expressway project. He requested that the Policy Committee give the High Level Bridge the highest priority for construction and endorse the petition.

Mr. Pat Farrell stated on behalf of the Skidaway Residents. He thanked the Committee for viewing the presentation and giving consideration to the petitioner's request.

Mr. Liakakis stated that he was in favor of the petitioner's request and felt the project should be accelerated.

Mr. Michael Brown stated he felt if this project is to be pursued, Victory Drive and Ogeechee Road should be pursued simultaneously.

Mr. Liakakis stated he would lobby Federal and State Legislature for special grants.

Mr. Mathew Fowler of GDOT interjected he had been recently requested from Commissioner Linnenkohl to look at some type of interim remedy for this situation. He reported GDOT would soon begin a study to determine what can be done in the short term to ensure access to and from the Island in the event of a natural disaster.

**V. Agency Reports (verbal)**

**A. DOT Interstate Improvement Study**

Mr. Radney Simpson briefly stated the consultant team was given the notice to proceed in late January. The study will address Chatham County Interstate needs, revisit the current plan, and validate the assumptions. If additional projects are needed, those projects will be investigated and recommended to be included in the Long Range Plan.

**B. CAT Downtown Transit Station Study**

Mr. Carl Palmer gave a brief status report on the Downtown Transit Station Study. He stated updated requirements are needed to keep current with the National Environmental Protection Act. In the process CAT is also reviewing site alternatives. Mayor Johnson questioned how soon the subject site would be available. Mr. Palmer replied there has been a change with a new service planner of the Federal Transit Administration who would like to ensure that CAT is in compliance with the requirements. This will ensure that CAT will be in position for funding when the time comes. Mayor Johnson's response was that he feared the Federal Government will relinquish their funding due to the fact it has taken over five years to obtain a site. Mr. Liakakis stated the CAT Board, and the County Commissioners are pushing for the building of the Transit Center and making it a priority.

**C. Georgia Department of Transportation**

Ms. Teresa Scott gave a brief update on the status of GDOT Chatham County Projects. Those projects were Gwinnett Street from Stiles Avenue to I-6, I-95 Southbound Welcome Center, SR-25/Ocean Highway, Whitefield Avenue Widening, SR 21 widening from Smith Avenue to SR 307, I-95 interchange at SR 204 Abercorn, Diamond Causeway, Jimmy DeLoach Parkway Interchange at US 80, and Grange Road reconstruction.

**D. Chatham County**

Mr. Al Black gave a brief status report on the One Percent Sales Tax Projects. He stated the County is reviewing the proposal on the Skidaway Road Widening and acquiring the right-of-way on Harry S. Truman from Whitefield Avenue to Abercorn. Jimmy DeLoach Parkway Phase II has been delayed because of the environmental document. Whitfield Avenue Widening project has a public open house to address the issue of the wider



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median to provide landscaping and canopy trees. The environmental document for Bay Street Widening Project has been reviewed and is expected to get approval soon.

**E. City of Savannah**

Mr. Mike Weiner gave an update on the City's Traffic Engineering Improvement Projects. He stated the consultant that the City of Savannah hired has implemented a revised traffic signal timing plan for DeRenne Avenue. He further stated the Henry Street and Anderson Street signal system is 68% complete. It is expected to be complete in the spring of 2006. A concept meeting was held in January 2006 on Gwinnett Street Widening. The consultant for LaRoche Ave Widening prepared a revised concept of the project and the City will schedule a public information meeting in the near future. He concluded traffic signaling has been installed on MLK Jr. Blvd at McDonough St for the purpose of pedestrian safety.

**F. Chatham Area Transit Authority**

Mr. Carl Palmer stated quick comments on the progress of the Transportation Development Plan. The TDP is an update on the five year blueprint for service improvement expansion with a focus on what needs to be done to meet the needs in the changing market place. There is also a new marketing plan focusing primarily on the commuter that will be hitting the airways in the next two weeks.

**G. Other**

Mr. Thomson announced the Board should review the letter that was received from the State Road and Tollway Authority that had been placed in their packets.

Mr. Jack Knops, President of the Fairway Oaks Neighborhood, stated the Connecting Savannah Process is largely correct as Mr. Thomson described it with respect to DeRenne Avenue. He felt that there has been misleading going on and the Association would like to inform the Mayor in writing using the data that Mr. Thomson has referred to. He thanked Mr. Mundell for performing a self evaluation and stated that the association believes that the citizen input in the process of transportation is not adequate in this town and would like to make this known.

Ms. Ardis Wood, Resident of the Preserving Savannah Neighborhoods, asked if the fund to do the study of the widening of DeRenne Avenue was estimated at around eighteen million dollars. Mr. Thomson responded the eighteen million dollars was the total amount that was set aside for the SPLOST for the east-west issues. The actual studies will generally run in the hundreds of thousands but not in the millions. The eighteen million is the total amount available to repair the problems. Part of it is also allocated to acquire the properties. Ms. Wood continued she also felt that this effort was misguided for the reasons that Jack Knops stated and feels that it is expensive and evasive. Her concerns were also

that the entities that run the community are not on the same page. She distributed handouts from a former meeting regarding how the city will grow.

**VI. Adjournment**

There being no other business to come before the Board, the February 22, 2006 Policy Committee meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mark Wilkes".

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