



**CHATHAM URBAN TRANSPORTATION STUDY**

**POLICY COMMITTEE  
MEETING SUMMARY**

**MPC Arthur A. Mendonsa Hearing Room  
112 E. State Street**

**August 22, 2007**

**10:00 A.M.**

**Voting Members**

**Representing**

**Present**

Russ Abolt	Chatham County	
Jason Buelterman	City of Tybee Island	x
Michael Brown	City of Savannah	
Patrick S. Graham	Savannah Airport Commission	
Glenn Jones	City of Port Wentworth	
William W. Hubbard	Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce	
James Hungerpillar	Town of Vernonburg	
Otis Johnson	City of Savannah	
McArthur Jarrett	Chairman, ACAT	x
Mike Lamb	City of Pooler	
Pete Liakakis	Chairman Chatham County Commission	x
Harold Linnenkohl	GDOT	
Stephen R. Lufburrow	Chairman, MPC	
Doug J. Marchand	Georgia Ports Authority	
Clint Murphy	Chairman, CAC	x
Carl Palmer	Chatham Area Transit Authority	x
Andy Quinney	City of Garden City	
Anna Maria Thomas	Town of Thunderbolt	
Representative	CAT Board of Directors	
Wayne Tipton	City of Bloomingdale	
LTC Daniel Whitney	Hunter Army Airfield	
Eric R. Winger	Savannah Economic Development Authority (SEDA)	

**Voting Member Alternates**

**Representing**

**Present**

Pat Monahan	Chatham County	x
Radney Simpson	GDOT – Planning	x
Trip Tollison	Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce	x
Randy Weitman, P.E.	Georgia Ports Authority	x

**Ex-officio Members**

**Representing**

**Present**

Sonny Timmerman	Hinesville MPO	x
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<u>Others Present</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Present</u>
Allan Black, P.E.	Chatham County	X
Tommy Crochet	McGee Partners	X
Beth Kinstler	Citizen/CAC	X
Jane Love	MPO	X
Nathan Mai-Lombardo	Garden City	X
Kyle Mote	GDOT – Planning	X
Jen Price	Sycamore	X
Joe Rivers	CAT	X
Bob Scanlon	City of Savannah	X
Teresa Scott	GDOT – Jesup	X
Barbara Settzo	MPO	X
Thomas Thomson, P.E., AICP	MPC Executive Director	X
Wykoda Wang	MPO	X
Mike Weiner, P.E.	City of Savannah	X
Mark Wilkes, P.E., AICP	MPO	X
Ardis Wood	Savannah citizen	X

### **Call to Order**

Chairman Pete Liakakis called the August 22, 2007 Policy Committee Meeting to order.

#### **I. Approval of Agenda**

It was moved and seconded to approve the agenda as presented.

**Policy Committee Action: the motion to approve the agenda of the August 22, 2007 Policy Committee meeting carried with none opposed.**

#### **II. Committee Reports**

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

Mr. McArthur Jarrett reported on the August 15, 2007 meeting of the Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation. All substantive actions and amendments were endorsed. The committee had a general discussion of the para-transit system highlighting the importance of this service and the greater need for services. The committee wants to remind GDOT and all others that the required and mandated accessible needs be met for all pedestrians, disabled or otherwise.

##### **B. Citizens Advisory Committee**

Mr. Clint Murphy reported on the August 16, 2007 meeting of the Citizens Advisory Committee. The CAC's newly formed ad hoc committee has investigated the following

issues: turn lanes on Waters Ave., signage for Truman Pkwy., improvements to the Habersham St. bikeway, and debris and narrow shoulders on Hwy 80 that presents problems for cyclists going to or from Tybee Island. The CAC also endorsed the action items presented before the committee.

### **C. Technical Coordinating Committee**

Mr. Mark Wilkes reported on the August 16, 2007 meeting of the Technical Coordinating Committee. The committee endorsed the action items that appear on the Policy Committee agenda for today.

### **D. Executive Director's Status Report**

Mr. Thomson reported that, as approved by the Policy Committee, he attended the recent meeting of the Hinesville Area MPO. Mr. Thomson introduced the director of the Hinesville Area MPO, Mr. Sonny Timmerman. Mr. Timmerman commented that benefits have already been realized by exchanging ideas and working together with Mr. Thomson. Mr. Thomson noted that following the Policy Committee meeting today there will be a meeting here at 11:30 to discuss regional transportation issues with representatives from other counties in the region. Mr. Thomson also mentioned that on today's agenda is a report addressing Mr. Michael Brown's question posed at the June meeting concerning highly congested corridors and the action being taken to relieve such congestion.

## **III. Action Items**

### **A. Approval of June 27, 2007 and July 11, 2007 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes**

It was moved and seconded to approve the June 27, 2007 and July 11, 2007 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes.

**Policy Committee Action: the motion to approve the June 27, 2007 and July 11, 2007 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes carried with none opposed.**

### **B. Requested Amendment to the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program to include the following projects:**

- **Water Taxi**
- **Chatham Area Transit Job Access Reverse Commute**
- **Preliminary Engineering for Gulfstream Road widening**
- **Preliminary Engineering for Robert Miller Jr. Road widening**
- **Preliminary Engineering for widening I-516 from Veterans Pkwy. to I-16**
- **McQueen's Island Trail – Phase 2**
- **Slip 3/Parcel 7 Riverwalk Extension**
- **Savannah MPO Transportation Study – Sector One**

Chairman Liakakis asked that the Water Taxi name be changed to Water Ferry since the federal government does not fund taxis but will fund ferries.

Ms. Wykoda Wang presented the amendment to the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Staff has determined that these are minor amendments, according to the amendment process described in the adopted TIP. The MPO's Public Participation Plan dictates that minor amendments be presented to all of the CUTS/MPO committees. A public hearing is not required. There are 2 transit projects and 4 highway projects that did not get authorization in FY 2007 so GDOT is requesting that these be pushed back to FY 2008.

The water ferry system funds have been rolled to FY 2008 for design and construction of a new vessel. This funding was requested by Rep. Jack Kingston and is earmarked funds (LY60). This funding is 100% federal share and will not lapse.

The Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) falls in the same category as the water ferry. It is recommended by Rep. Kingston and is 100% federally funded, i.e. earmarked. Ms. Wang explained the purpose of this project was to extend basic service to low-income populations so that they can go to and from work. Mr. Carl Palmer questioned the funding. He thought that in the past, the JARC funds still required a match. Ms. Wang explained that Section 5316 funds, used for JARC, do require a match, but the funds discussed today for JARC and the Water Ferry are earmarked funds and do not require a match.

Ms. Wang explained that the earmarked funds for these two projects are coming from the FHWA and not the FTA, which provides Section 5316 funds.

The Gulfstream Rd. widening, the Robert Miller Rd. widening, and the I-516 (Lynes Pkwy.) widening all had preliminary engineering programmed for FY 2007, but are now rolled back to FY 2008. Gulfstream Rd. and Robert Miller Rd. projects each have been granted an additional \$15,000 in state funding for FY 2008. The fourth project is the Savannah Transportation Study – Sector One. This is L230 funds, which is funding that the MPO can prioritize. The Federal portion is \$100,000 and the local portion is \$25,000. Mr. Murphy asked why I-516 was being widened why it doesn't appear as one of the most congested corridors in the handouts provided for the upcoming report on congested segments. Ms. Wang responded that the project was due to safety issues not congestion issues.

In addition to the projects that are proposed from the previous TIP, there are also two projects from Chatham County, proposed for the local section of the TIP document. These projects currently are being funded by SPLOST funds, but the County intends to pursue federal funding. McQueen's Island Trail – Phase 2 will extend the McQueen's Island Trail Phase 1, from Fort Pulaski east to Lazaretto Creek. The county has put \$80,000 in FY2008 for preliminary engineering and design and \$320,000 in FY 2010 for construction, but Ms. Wang believes the county is working with GDOT about including this trail in the US Hwy 80 widening project.

Chatham County has put \$400,000 in FY2008 for preliminary engineering on the Riverwalk Extension project and \$3.6 million for construction in FY2009. This project will include a trail to promote economic development on Hutchinson Island.

Mr. Jason Buelterman asked if the McQueen's Island Trail project includes a segregated bike lane along Hwy 80, particularly across the Lazaretto Creek. Mr. Pat Monahan believes this issue is subject to discussion with GDOT. He commented that the National Park Service has the most negotiating power on this issue, and Mr. Monahan believes that the National Park Service agrees with Tybee Island that the bike lane should be segregated.

Mr. Buelterman asked if there were any plans for a segregated bike lane on the Bull River Bridge. He would like this to be part of the GDOT long-term plan. He asked if there was anything Tybee Island could do. Mr. Monahan recommended working through the National Park Service.

Mr. Buelterman asked who he should contact to get federal alternate transportation funding in the theory that people would ride their bikes to work. Ms. Wang assumed he meant Transportation Enhancement funding (TE). He was referred to Elaine Armster at GDOT. Mr. Thomson explained the application process for Transportation Enhancements. Mr. Radney Simpson confirmed that this process occurs every other year. Ms. Wang commented that we have local funds for the required local match and the McQueen's Island Trail – Phase 2 and the Slip 3/Parcel 7 Riverwalk Extension should be eligible for transportation enhancements funds. These projects were not among the applications received by GDOT in the 2008-2009 round of TE awards. Mr. Simpson asked if these two projects would be added into the TIP with the local funding while awaiting federal funding match. Ms. Wang confirmed that they would be in the local section of the TIP and added that there is \$400,000 of local funds available for each.

Ms. Wang concluded by recommending adoption of the amendments by the Policy Committee.

It was moved and seconded to approve the amendment to the FY 2008-2011 TIP.

**Policy Committee Action: the motion to approve the amendment to the FY 2008-2011 TIP to include the following projects carried with none opposed:**

**Water Ferry**

**Chatham Area Transit Job Access Reverse Commute**

**Preliminary Engineering for Gulfstream Rd. widening**

**Preliminary Engineering for Robert Miller Jr. Rd. widening**

**Preliminary Engineering for I-516 widening from Veterans Pkwy. to I-16**

**Savannah MPO Transportation Study – Sector One**

**McQueen's Island Trail – Phase 2**

**Slip 3/Parcel 7 Riverwalk Extension**

### C. Approval of Recommended Transportation Enhancement Priorities

Ms. Jane Love explained that TE projects must qualify in one or more of twelve stated categories. She presented a listing of the twelve categories and also indicated where applications from the Chatham County area fall within this category list. Ms. Love presented a report showing the project applications from this area for District 1 and District 12. Each district has approximately \$4,000,000 to allocate. District 1 applications are Chatham County Sidewalk/Bikeway Project, Historic Butler Ave. Pedestrian Safety Project, and AASU Perimeter Bike/Ped Path – Phase 2. These projects total approximately \$2,000,000. District 12 applications are Montgomery St. and connecting streets Streetscape Improvements, and Broughton St. Streetscape Improvement, also totaling approximately \$2,000,000.

Ms. Love noted that historically Chatham County has received a disproportionately low level of TE funding, compared to proportions of district population living in the County. In the last round of awards, as her report indicates, Chatham County received a fairer share after the MPO Chairman presented this data to our State Transportation Board Representatives. Therefore, staff's recommendation is that the MPO Chairman again communicate with the congressional district representatives about fully funding the applications in Chatham County.

Mr. Buelterman asked if these funds were considered earmarks. Ms. Love responded that they are not. These funds are part of surface transportation funding that Congress has already approved through the SAFETEA-LU Act. These monies are then managed by the states. Mr. Thomson explained that federal funding for transportation is in two categories – formula and discretionary. Formula monies are sent to the states for management and allocation. The states also manage most of the discretionary funds. Transportation Enhancement funds are part of the formula funds administered on a state-wide level by GDOT. He noted that we don't need to go to Washington to get funding. If you go to Washington to press your case, our representatives may be able to get it earmarked. But it still comes out of the allocated formula funds, only now the priority has been mandated at the federal level and not the local level. Sometimes this is consistent with our local planning and sometimes it is not. He explained that earmarking does not necessarily increase our funding; it only re-distributes the existing allocated funds.

Mr. Buelterman asked who to call to try to get funding for Tybee's crosswalks on Butler. Mr. Thomson restated the staff recommendation that the MPO Chairman send a "friendly letter" to our Transportation Board members in District 1 and 12 stating our county applications and requesting that they all be approved. Any other person may contact these same people and try to sway their decision in favor of the applications. Chairman Liakakis offered the names of Roy Herrington and Raybon Anderson as the individuals on the State Transportation Board if Mr. Buetlerman wished to contact them.

It was moved and seconded to send a letter to the State Board of Transportation members for District 1 and District 12 encouraging full funding of the Chatham County transportation enhancement applications.

**Policy Committee action: the motion to send a letter to the State Board of Transportation members for District 1 and District 12 encouraging full funding of the Chatham County transportation enhancement applications carried with none opposed.**

#### **IV. Status Reports**

##### **A. SR 204/Abercorn Extension Improvements**

Mr. Tommy Crochet from McGee Partners updated the committee on what has been accomplished on the public involvement aspect of the SR 204 project and what the next steps are for the project. He has had regular meetings with the Technical Coordinating Committee and with key stakeholders (AASU, St. Joseph/Candler, and HAAF). There was a public information open house in November of 2006. In May of 2007 they met with neighborhood citizens in the immediate area. In June they held a second public information open house.

The November open house had 338 attendees. He highlighted the comments from those attending. They received 90-100 responses to the survey. Of that number 56% supported the improvements and 38% offered conditional support.

Mr. Crochet noted that the project is being handled in two sections – US 17 to Rio Rd. and Rio Rd. to Truman Pkwy..

The June open house had 238 attendees. More detailed plans were presented at this meeting. Of the responses received 52% supported the improvements and 27% offered conditional support. Mr. Crochet hypothesized that the slight decline in support of improvements occurs because those who are satisfied with the plan no longer come out for the meetings.

After the November open house, some proposed alternatives were eliminated, leaving three freeway alternatives for US 17 to Rio Rd. portion: C1 -- a split interchange between King George and Pine Grove Rd.; C3a – interchange at only King George with access to Pine Grove area back to King George Blvd.; C3b – interchange at only King George with access to Pine Grove area back to US 17.

Two freeway/frontage roads alternatives were put forward for the Rio Rd. to Truman Pkwy. portion: L2 North and L2 South. These were identical in nature, but one was with widening to the north and the other was with widening to the south.

Mr. Crochet reported some of the citizen comments and responses with the committee.

Mr. Crochet has a dialogue underway with Mr. Palmer and CAT staff regarding bus stops and routes. A bus-way is not included in the project, but McGee Partners can recommend to GDOT some short-term and longer-term improvements that are cost-effective, such as enhanced substrate for shoulders that could accommodate a bus lane in the future.

He mentioned that a recurring public question is about re-routing Truman Pkwy. Phase 5 around Vernonburg, through the marsh to the south. He does not believe it feasible to cross six miles of saltwater marsh. He estimates that a re-routing would cost \$1 billion, whereas the current cost for Phase 5 as proposed is \$1 to 1.5 million. In addition to the additional cost, a route through the marsh would face a significant hurdle for environmental approval. He also believes it would do less to help the traffic situation. The model shows that the less direct path of a marsh crossing would not attract as many trips off of Abercorn. If you just build the currently proposed Truman Pkwy. Phase 5 with no SR 204 improvements, you would see about 35,000 vehicles per day. If you include the improvements on SR204, the number increases to about 44,000 vehicles per day. You're pulling vehicles off the I-516/DeRenne Ave. corridor and some off the I-16 corridor. If instead you re-route Truman Pkwy. Phase 5 through the marsh to a Veteran's Pkwy. connection, this number drops to about 25,000 vehicles per day. You wouldn't pull enough traffic off the Rio Rd./Largo Rd. portion of SR 204 to make it work. Therefore a southern marsh crossing for Phase 5 would have lower utility than the currently proposed alignment of Phase 5 (extending west of Whitfield Ave. to Abercorn St. near Holland Rd.) and would cost much more than the proposed alignment.

In conclusion, GDOT has decided to move forward with alternative C1 for the US 17 to Rio Rd. portion and the northern widening option for the Rio Rd. to Truman Pkwy. (L2 North).

The next steps in the process include:

- Detailed designs on the US 17 to Rio Rd. project which is moving forward with engineering surveys.
- Finalizing traffic studies and beginning preparation for an environmental assessment for the entire project (both sections).
- The next public hearing will be to present the draft of the environmental assessment. This should happen sometime next summer.

## **B. SAFETEA-LU Compliance Update**

Mr. Wilkes updated the committee on the compliance of MPO Plans and programs with the new SAFETEA-LU requirements. Many of the MPO plans and processes already met the new requirements. An updated participation plan was adopted in April. In June revisions to the LRTP were adopted. Also in June, it was determined that the existing Congestion Management System (CMS) already met the revised requirements of the new Congestion Management Process (CMP) so the CMS was recertified as the CMP. Regarding the remaining tasks for compliance, notice to proceed has been given to the consultant, Reynolds, Smith & Hills to develop the coordinated public transit/human services



transportation plan. The CAT board approved their portion of the funding. By December, the staff and RS&H will develop the revised LRTP Financial Plan.

### **C. Gap Summary from Congestion Management Process**

Mr. Wilkes explained that this report is in response to Mr. Michael Brown's question about the most congested corridors and plans to relieve same. A map and table was provided to committee members today. The map highlights those segments having at least a 90-second delay. Mr. Wilkes reported that only a small handful of highly congested corridors do not have projects underway or being studied. Areas with no direct strategy are White Bluff Rd. southbound from Eisenhower Dr. to Abercorn St.; Mall Blvd. westbound from Abercorn St.; Montgomery Crossroad westbound from Sallie Mood Dr. to Waters Ave.; and Eisenhower Dr. westbound between White Bluff Rd. and Abercorn St. US 17, SR 25, DeRenne Ave./Hampstead Connector, Middleground Rd. widening are all corridors that are being actively addressed. The SR 21 corridor, and E. Victory Dr., between Skidaway Rd. and Truman Pkwy. (even though the latter is not noted on map), are also congested segments that are going to be analyzed in the MPO's Congestion Management Process update.

Chairman Liakakis used the Waters Ave. southbound between DeRenne & Stephenson project as an example of why he feels it necessary to be more progressive and emphatic in getting projects moving and completed. This project funding was approved as part of the 1985 SPLOST referendum, and 22 years later it is still being discussed.

Chairman Liakakis requested that in the future such detailed reports, which include so much valuable information, be distributed to the committee members prior to the meeting day so that members have time to review it and formulate questions they may have on specific projects. There is insufficient time at the actual meeting to review this much data.

Mr. Thomson said staff would put this item on the next agenda for discussion. An updated copy of this report will be included in the advance information packet for the October Policy Committee Meeting.

## **V. Agency Reports**

### **A. Georgia Department of Transportation**

Ms. Teresa Scott referred the committee members to the report she handed out. Gulfstream Rd. and Robert Miller Rd. widenings has been added to the status report and these projects are progressing. Sidewalks are planned for a portion of these projects. Mr. Murphy noted that bikeways should also be included. Ms. Scott said that the plans are not complete yet.

Ms. Scott reported that a 2-lane high level bridge will be constructed at Skidaway Narrows, on the north side of the existing bridge. At a later date, GDOT will widen the existing road

the construct the other 2-lane bridge. This first bridge should be ready sooner than the larger project. Chairman Liakakis questioned the 2011 construction year, but Ms. Scott felt that this date would be advanced as progress was made.

Mr. Murphy asked about out-of-date items listed, such as Item 55 (flyover at Johnny Mercer). Ms. Scott said it is a project that is holding a place but is not taking up any funds.

Mr. Murphy showed a picture taken indicating excessive debris along the side of Bull River Bridge. This is where bikers ride and it is a hazard. Ms. Scott said she would speak with the district people at GDOT.

Chairman Liakakis commented that the problem is lack of funds and staff to keep cleaning this up. It doesn't help that citizens continue to throw things on the roadways. He suggested that the City of Savannah and Chatham County could resurrect a previous anti-litter campaign with billboards and public service announcements. Ms. Scott reminded them about the Adopt-a-Highway program.

### **B. Chatham County**

Mr. Allan Black referred the members to the report distributed earlier. Progress is being made on the final construction plans of Truman Phase V. Revised concepts are awaiting approval on the Jimmy DeLoach Pkwy. and Whitfield Ave. widening. Consultant is working on the field study of Skidaway Rd. widening. Consultant is updating traffic study on White Bluff Extension. Mr. Tollison asked how Truman Pkwy. V was being funded. Mr. Black responded that it is federally funded.

Mr. Buelterman asked how a municipality could request money. Mr. Black responded that the money for the County's projects is SPLOST money.

### **C. City of Savannah**

Mr. Mike Weiner reviewed the report that he distributed. He wished to highlight the DeRenne Ave. ambulance pre-emption system. A kick-off meeting with the vendor will be held on August 28, 2007. He expects this system to be in operation by the end of the year.

Mr. Tollison asked when the RFP on the Hampstead/DeRenne project will be completed and/or released. Mr. Weiner did not know. The status of other projects is:

- Gwinnett St. Curve Reconstruction: Real Properties Dept. is working on the right-of-way acquisition necessary for the project.
- Gwinnett St. Widening: The environmental study is still under review.
- LaRoche Ave. Widening: Concept design under review.
- E. Anderson St. Curve Reconstruction: The project is under design.
- Chatham Pkwy./Chatham Center Dr.: Signal construction plans are complete.

### **D. Chatham Area Transit Authority**

Mr. Carl Palmer reported that for the Transfer Center project, CAT is currently reviewing the last generation of renderings. CAT is also entering talks on the Memorandum of Understanding with Greyhound. The environmental studies on both potential sites are progressing. The CAT board authorized staff to proceed with the Coordinated Human Services Public Transit Plan, as mentioned earlier in the SAFETEA-LU Compliance Update. The development of the Transportation Development Plan is progressing.

Mr. Murphy asked if a Park and Ride lot was feasible on Hwy. 17 at the old Sam's location with an express bus. Mr. Palmer replied that conceptually it is possible, but realistically it will depend on where congestion occurs (such as at major interchange) in relation to Sam's lot.

#### **E. Georgia Ports Authority**

Mr. Randy Weitman reported on some of the Port-related projects from Ms. Scott's list. The project management agreement has been finalized for The Brampton Rd connector. The concept report has been completed and all but signed off on. The SR 307 overpass project is coming up for preliminary field plan review next month with final plans complete by fall of 2008. Lastly, the Port Authority has put out requests for consultants for the environmental and concept design on the Jimmy DeLoach connector. The port is working with GDOT under a joint committee to keep this project moving.

#### **F. Savannah-Hilton Head International Airport**

No report at this time.

#### **G. Other agency reports**

No report at this time.

### **VI. Other Business**

Mr. Thomson reported that the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) has tentatively selected Savannah to host the conference in 2009. Approximately 500 people can be expected to attend this national conference. MPO staff is working with the Savannah Convention and Visitors Bureau to promote the Savannah location with the people at the AMPO headquarters in Washington, D.C.

### **VII. Other Public Comments**

Mrs. Beth Kinstler, Savannah citizen, member of Preserving Savannah Neighborhoods and a member of CUTS/MPO Citizens Advisory Committee spoke on the issue of a recent

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RFP for the widening of Skidaway Rd. from Victory Drive to Ferguson which engenders the taking of over 200 homes. Her question is: "Why is this even on the table when we have the Truman Parkway that follows that same route and with a little re-working could handle all of that traffic?"

She rode the bus to today's meeting and had a very pleasant experience. She believes there is no problem with the bus service in Savannah and would like to see more people on the buses and less people in their cars. She doesn't believe it is necessary to "spend millions of dollars on road widening that is gratuitous and takes people's homes."

Chairman Liakakis commented that they have been trying to encourage more people to use the bus service.

### **VIII. Adjournment**

There being no other business to come before the Committee, the August 22, 2007 Policy Committee was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

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