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<u>Others Present</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Present</u>
Steve Cote	RS&H	X
Leon Davenport	Chatham County	X
Jane Love	MPO Staff	X
Nathan Mai-Lombardo	Garden City	X
Kyle Mote	GDOT	X
Brad Saxon	GDOT - District 5	X
Teresa Scott	GDOT- District 5	X
Barbara Settzo	for MPO	X
Thomas Thomson, P.E., AICP	MPC Executive Director	X
Drew Wade	Coastal Georgia Greenway	X
Wykoda Wang	MPO Staff	X
Mike Weiner, P.E.	City of Savannah	X
Mark Wilkes, P.E., AICP	MPO Staff	X

**Call to Order**

Chairman Pete Liakakis called the December 19, 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 December 19, 2007 meeting carried with none opposed.**

**II. Committee Reports**

**A. Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation**

Ms. Jane Love reported on the December 12, 2007 meeting, in the absence of ACAT chairman, McArthur Jarrett. ACAT had endorsed the proposed meeting schedule for 2008 and went through the status reports. Mr. Jeff Felser had informed ACAT that the City Council had passed a resolution to do the necessary engineering to support a bus shelter at the corner of Bull St. and Broughton St. This will need to be coordinated with the Broughton Streetscape project.

**B. Citizens Advisory Committee**

Mr. Clint Murphy reported on the December 13, 2007 meeting of the Citizens Advisory Committee. At the request of the CAC, he has passed along to Mike Weiner three more recommendations dealing with lighting and roadway markings. The CAC is very interested in the Safe Routes to School program and wants to do whatever is necessary to support it.

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

Mr. Mark Wilkes reported on the December 13, 2007 meeting of the Technical Coordinating Committee. The committee had endorsed the proposed meeting schedule for 2008. They also had a lengthy discussion on the Financial Plan Update to the Long Range Transportation Plan. A more detailed report on this item will be presented later in today's meeting.

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

Mr. Tom Thomson reported on the following:

- At the request of Mr. Michael Brown during the October meeting, today's agenda includes an update on the status of improvements along evacuation routes.
- The first two meetings on the subject of regional transportation issues were successful and well attended. He proposes that staff representatives get together to talk specifics about coordinating planning on a regional level, and then schedule another policy-level meeting for elected officials in February 2008.
- At the October meeting of the MPO, there had been a motion to look at innovative funding alternatives. This will be a longer term project, and will most likely be a part of the Long Range Transportation Plan full update.

Ms. Love reported that GDOT has announced the Transportation Enhancement awards for District 1 and District 12. In District 1, two out of the three applications from the Chatham area were awarded: Armstrong Atlantic State University received \$200,000 for the second phase of a multi-use path and City of Tybee Island received \$125,000 for the Butler Ave pedestrian safety project. In District 12, the City of Savannah received \$500,000 for the Broughton St. Streetscape Improvements. The City's application for Montgomery St. streetscaping did not receive an award.

Mr. Thomson directed the committee's attention to a detailed map of suggested regional roadways for Jasper Port which is provided at this time for informational purposes only. Based on the proposed location of the Jasper Port, Mr. Thomson believes additional connectors, limited access roadways, and bridges will be necessary to provide adequate service and keep traffic moving. The map indicates which roadways would be GDOT responsibility, which would be SCDOT responsibility and which would be shared responsibility.

Mr. Liakakis asked about any recommendations made on updating the Houlihan Bridge in the Port Wentworth area. Mr. Wilkes noted that a major rehabilitation was done about ten years ago. Replacement is in long range.

Mr. Joe Murray Rivers would like HOV lanes and rail considered when looking at the other bridge and new roads to the other side. Also look for areas that could be used for park and ride to accommodate express buses. Mr. Thomson said they will factor this in when they do the update of the Long Range Transportation Plan.

### III. Action Items

#### A. Approval of October 24, 2007 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

It was moved and seconded to approve the October 24, 2007 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes. Mr. George Fidler noted some minor corrections in the summary of his report that he would submit for correction following the meeting. He did not feel it necessary to put them in this record.

**Policy Committee Action: the motion to approve the October 24, 2007 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes carried with none opposed.**

#### B. Approval of the CUTS/MPO 2008 Meeting Schedule

It was moved and seconded to approve the CUTS/MPO 2008 Meeting Schedule. There being no discussion, the Chairman called for the vote.

**Policy Committee Action: the motion to approve the CUTS/MPO 2008 Meeting Schedule carried with none opposed.**

### IV. Status Reports

#### A. Financial Plan Update of the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan

Mr. Steve Cote, the MPO's consultant from RS&H, presented a status report on the Financial Plan Update. This update is required by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). Long Range Transportation Plans (LRTPs) and Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) must now be in year-of-expenditure costs, both on the expenditure side and revenue side. This entails revising project cost estimates, with inflation factors targeted to the midpoints of 10-year cost bands, and also applying inflation factors to expected revenue. They are using the current 2030 LRTP and TIP project costs and funding estimates as the basis for projecting future costs and revenues. They are also reviewing the work program to see what has been actually authorized or constructed since 2004. These expenditures will be deducted from the overall projections of revenue. Each project is then assigned to a given time band in order to put a growth rate for costs on it. The three time bands are 2008-2013, 2014-2020, and 2021-2030. They are using GDOT recommended inflation rates on the project cost side and funding side. Finally they will total the adjusted project costs and compare it to the adjusted revenue. Hopefully it will balance, but there is a possibility that funding may not be sufficient to cover all of the projects in the current 2030 Plan. This would push some projects beyond 2030. If projects must be shifted out to maintain financial balance, there would a 30-day public comment period followed by consideration by the policy board.

The time frame for this is to finish the draft of the Update by December 28. If a public comment period is necessary it would occur between January 4 and February 8. It would then come before you for final adoption on February 27, 2008.

Mr. Liakakis questioned the timing for dropping projects from the 2030 LRTP. He would like to wait until the legislature meets and see if they come up with sufficient funding strategies to keep all the projects in place. A public hearing may not be necessary if additional funding comes to GDOT.

Mr. Thomson commented that this update activity is necessary to comply with SAFETEA-LU. It was supposed to be completed in December, 2007. The MPO has met the deadlines for three other SAFETEA-LU requirements this year. The penalty for not meeting this deadline is that our TIP is frozen with regard to changes. No amendments can be made until this update is approved. We need to go forward with this schedule. He believes it would be useful to the legislature to know if projects are going to be dropped out. Next year the MPO will initiate the regular full update of the LRTP, and at that time they would include any revenues from new strategies the legislature identifies. Now we need to meet this federal requirement in order to to keep current projects on track.

Mr. Radney Simpson agreed that the process needs to keep moving. He recommended that the MPO coordinate with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for their endorsement. Mr. Thomson said that Ms. Latoya Jones, at FHWA, is aware of the MPO's approach and schedule.

Mr. George Fidler asked if they were adjusting the revenue side as well as the project cost side. Mr. Cote replied in the affirmative.

## **B. Skidaway Narrows Bridge Replacement Concept Meeting**

Ms. Jane Love reported on the outcomes of the concept team meeting hosted by GDOT here in November. GDOT proposed a northern alignment since it required no additional right-of-way and did not interfere with the existing boat ramp. However, Georgia Power representatives at the concept meeting said that during construction the cranes would be too close to the power lines. They suggested a southern alignment, but that would have an effect on the boat ramp and additional impacts on the wetlands.

It was also stated at this meeting that the removal of the existing bridge is not included in the cost of this project (\$17,500,000). Presumably, it will be part of the future project to construct a parallel high-level bridge in conjunction with the Whitfield Ave. widening.

Georgia Power is going to assess the cost of moving the power lines. At this time it is unclear if GDOT or Georgia Power will assume the cost of moving the lines.

Mr. Murphy commented that members of the Citizens Advisory Committee were concerned about the visual impact of the 65-foot vertical clearance of the bridge, and also about lack of protected bike lanes on the bridge. Mr. Murphy asked what the determining factors

were in deciding whether it was a separate bike lane or a bikeable shoulder. Mr. Saxon stated that on this structure the bike lane would be part of the shoulder. Mr. Murphy replied that some members feel strongly about the need for a barrier-protected bikeway.

Ms. Diane Schleicher was also interested in knowing GDOT's criteria for determining the type of bike lanes added to roadway construction projects. When the Lazaretto Creek bridge is widened, this will be important to Tybee Island citizens. Is there an analytical criteria or do people just need to make their voices heard? Mr. Saxon commented that the policy is not to have a bike lane separated by much more than a 6" curb. Anything higher, such as a knee-wall, becomes a hazard to the motorists. Ms. Love recollected that a concern of the Citizens Advisory Committee was that a bikeable shoulder becomes a debris collection area and thereby not very useable for cyclists. Mr. Murphy added the committee's concern about maintenance responsibility for these shoulders.

Mr. Russ Abolt noted that Georgia Power plans to make a major investment on power distribution lines and he asked if Georgia Power would therefore be moving these power lines eventually, regardless of any new bridge construction.

Mr. Saxon noted that some power lines are on the right of way and some are off so it looks like costs will be shared between Georgia Power and GDOT. Mr. Abolt asked GDOT to question Georgia Power as to their existing plan for redundancy, i.e. providing a second source of power to Skidaway Island.

### **C. Safe Routes to School**

Ms. Love said staff is providing information on the federal Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program after the subject came up at the October Policy Committee meeting. The concept of Safe Routes to School is not new, but federal funding for these kind of programs in every state is new. Funding has been coming to Georgia since 2005 and will continue through 2009. It has not been spent yet but does not expire. GDOT is managing the allocation of Georgia's funding and will be establishing a resource center for assistance in activities related to education, enforcement and encouragement. Schools, districts, or government agencies who are interested in applying for infrastructure funds will need to enroll in the resource center when it is ready this winter. In the spring or summer GDOT will call for applications for infrastructure projects. Eligible projects include sidewalks, bikeways, crosswalks, and traffic calming engineering within 2-miles of schools serving the grades in the K-8 range.

Mr. Murphy asked if this would be administered like the Transportation Enhancement grants. Ms. Love explained that there are some differences. The SRTS funds will not be allocated by congressional district, as in the TE program. In the SRTS selection process, one selection committee, made up mostly of staff from various state agencies, will review all the applications and make the selections.

Mr. Liakakis asked who is coordinating locally. Ms. Love said she had heard it will probably be the Safe Kids Coalition.

#### D. Status of Road Projects on Area Evacuation Routes

Ms. Wykoda Wang explained that staff is presenting this report in response to a request by Mr. Michael Brown at the October meeting. In order to get a more comprehensive view, staff compared all the projects in the LRTP and their relationship to any evacuation route. Some projects were included in the LRTP because they were already in the “pipeline” when the LRTP was developed – that is, money had already been spent on preliminary engineering or right-of-way. The “need and purpose statements” in those project descriptions indicate whether hurricane evacuation was a factor. For the other projects that became part of the adopted LRTP, inclusion resulted from a ranking process based on certain criteria, including Safety and Security. The staff report compares all the projects. Evacuation routes are mostly east/west roadways. Ms. Wang referred committee members to the detailed report included in their materials. She proceeded to review the four projects Mr. Brown was interested in:

- President St. widening
- Islands Expressway Bridge Replacement
- Ogeechee Rd. widening
- Diamond Causeway widening

All four of these are located on hurricane evacuation routes but they vary in schedule.

**President St. widening** – GDOT does have it scheduled in the work program, but this project is likely to be locally funded through the new Tax Allocation District (TAD), which may allow it to be completed sooner.

**Islands Expressway Bridge Replacement** – Preliminary engineering is in the early stages with local funding. Two public information open houses have been held. Consultants are working on a revised concept report based on staging alternatives. The construction schedule has moved back & forth over the years due to lack of funds.

**Ogeechee Rd. widening** - It was included in 1989 SPLOST program. Some delays centered around the need to ensure environmental justice. GDOT is working on a revised draft Environmental Assessment (EA), and when this is complete, public meetings will be held. This project is using state-wide competitive funding which is not available at this time; this project is being delayed by funding and production scheduling issues.

Mr. Thomson commented that at this stage, if all goes well, the EA may be completed & approved by Fall 2008. (Approval entails completing the document, having a public hearing, responding to the public issues, and submitting the final report to FHWA.) At that point they can begin engineering. He believes engineering funds are available but construction funds are not available. But since it will take an additional three years before construction can begin, the funding problem may be solved by that time. This project is a high priority on our list.

Mr. Abolt commented that this project was moving along well until the issue of environmental justice was raised. Is the delay because of staff turnover in this department of GDOT? He's concerned that the GDOT individuals who raised this issue have left the department and now it has stalled. He believes all other parts of this project were ready to go. Environmental justice is not an area of expertise for local staff, and without any expertise from Atlanta, this project will continue to flounder. Mr. Thomson said that the turnover at GDOT had been in environmental review, not specifically environmental justice.

Mr. Otis Johnson asked what the term "environmental justice" means in the context of this project. Ms. Wang said that any project that goes through any area should not have a disproportionate, adverse effect on the area and on the people living in that area. People living in the area should have the same benefits from the project as other people who do not live in the area. This area in question has a high proportion of low-income and minority population. Environmental justice would mean that this population shares equally in benefits and has an active role in participation.

Mr. Thomson noted that when environmental justice comes into play more documentation is required. It is typically more of an issue when alternative alignments are being considered in a project. In the context of this project, there were several minority homeowners who raised concerns which caused GDOT to slow the project and it just hasn't been re-started again.

Mr. Brown recited the issue for the committee. The elevation from Sadler St. past Dawes St. and especially near the intersection of Victory Dr. and Ogeechee Rd. has a five-foot elevation. In order to avoid flooding, the elevation needs to be raised to thirteen feet. The elevation along President St. is three to eight feet. In these two cases there is no alternative but to elevate the roadway up to thirteen feet. Until we do that two major exits from the city are incapacitated in the event of a major evacuation. At the latest public hearings there were two environmental issues: 1) What would happen to Dawes St.? In the next 6-12 months the city will have acquired all of the property in question which should eliminate this issue; 2) What about the land on the north and south side of Victory between Sadler St. and Kilowatt St.? The church was concerned about losing a portion of their property. On the other side there are five property owners who objected. One has since sold. Three are willing to relocate to similar homes in the area, conducted through appropriate state process. Only one remains adamantly against this project. An alternative called for creating only rear access for a number of properties. This was not acceptable to those residents.

Mr. Brown asked for a status report on the environmental process, and the subset of the process that is Environmental Justice, for this project at each CUTS Policy Committee meeting. This would document the progress of all the parties involved. City staff could provide updates on property acquisition. Ms. Wang replied that she will need cooperation from the City staff and GDOT staff, in collecting information.

Mr. Johnson questions whether this is truly an environmental justice problem or simply the typical resistance that any project faces from residents. This project must move forward.

Mr. Abolt agreed with Mr. Johnson.

Mr. Thomson asked that GDOT staff or their project management team or consultants to make a well versed and detailed report at the next meeting. It needs to explain that this is an existing route, that the demographics trigger environmental justice concerns, and what has been done to resolve concerns. This report needs to be produced by GDOT and reviewed by FHWA. Mr. Simpson will make such a request. He asked if there will be similar status reports for the locally managed preliminary engineering projects and local environmental reports. Mr. Thomson agreed that periodic reports should be expected and suggested they work together on identifying which projects need such reports.

Mr. Murphy asked for an updated list of the status of SPLOST-funded road projects. It was noted that these projects are included in the agencies' reports given at each committee meeting, but Mr. Murphy requested a separate SPLOST-only project report. Mr. Abolt said that the county provides the status of SPLOSTS projects on their web site. The City also provides updates.

## **V. Agency Reports**

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

Mr. Saxon reported that a public hearing is expected on the Ogeechee Rd. project in Spring 2008. He directed the members to the list of projects submitted and highlighted the following:

- #11 – SR 307 Overpass – moving forward to a preliminary field plan review in January
- #39 – I-95 & SR 21 interchange – fourth lane on I-95 northbound will become a continuous exit only lane to Jimmy DeLoach Parkway north. Concept meeting is coming up in January.

### **B. Chatham County**

Mr. Leon Davenport, the new Assistant County Engineer, was introduced. He asked for questions from the members. There were no questions at this time.

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

Mr. Mike Weiner referred the members to the report handed out earlier and highlighted the following:

- Gwinnett St. Curve reconstruction – all right of way acquired; working on relocating one business. Construction anticipated in 2008.

- Gwinnett St. widening – just approved change orders to direct consultant to prepare a study for air and noise impacts, as required by changes in federal guidelines in 2006.
- E. Anderson St. curve reconstruction – just purchased the main property for this project. The City is in process of getting contract with the State to proceed.
- Chatham Pkwy. at Chatham Center Dr. – submitted order for the strain poles. They are expected by end of February with construction anticipated for March 2008
- Bay St. corridor – re-timed traffic signals to improve pedestrian safety and reduce speeding. It appears to be successful in reducing speeding. Audible pedestrian signals have been installed on all signalized intersections along Bay St. As part of a commitment made to an association for the blind, the City will be installing more audible pedestrian signals in their 5-year work program. Mr. Weiner noted that pushing the button for the pedestrian signal does not change the timing; it only activates the pedestrian walk sign and audible signal.

Mr. Brown is concerned that there is confusion among residents regarding the two Gwinnett St. improvement projects. Mr. Weiner has met with the president of neighborhood association and has explained that the curve project is a safety project and is not part of the widening project. He feels they understand this. Prior to construction the City will have a public hearing.

Mr. Liakakis thanked the City of Savannah for quick action on the Waters Avenue flood prevention project.

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

Mr. Joe Murray Rivers commented that there are many great ideas for mass transit, but he is short of equipment, manpower, and funds. His operating funds have been cut by \$1.8 million over the last few years, because we reached the threshold of 200,000 of area population. He's going into next year's budget with a \$456,000 deficit. He also will be dealing with labor union contracts which may add another \$500,000 to the deficit. There are two bills in the legislature with little or no movement in this session. He asked any members who can influence legislators to restore the funding, please do so.

CAT and the City of Savannah are in negotiation to provide transit passes for City employees. Memorial Health is already providing passes for employees. CAT is going to approach the County, Gulfstream and St. Joseph's/Candler about doing the same.

He stressed how important it is when building new roadways to look towards adding HOV lanes and to look for park & ride lots, so in the future we can ease the congestion.

Two express buses may come on line in February which would run from downtown hotels and parking areas. Also, they will be selecting the company to provide a new scheduling software system for the Teleride system.

Mr. Liakakis said the CAT Board recognizes the importance of park & ride lots and express buses. The Association of County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) is making public transportation a priority by lobbying legislators state-wide.

Mr. Johnson asked if it was time to have a regional conference on transportation. People from other counties will continue to come to Savannah, and he wants that to continue to be possible. Do we have a comprehensive public transportation plan for the region? Mr. Thomson replied that we do not, nor do we have one for Chatham County. Mr. Johnson does not believe one for only Chatham County is necessary now; it needs to be regional. Mr. Liakakis suggested expansion of the Coastal Georgia Regional Development Center's (CGRDC) plan. Mr. Thomson clarified that that plan focuses on service for rural transportation needs. Mr. Johnson believes Savannah needs to plan and act like the regional hub Savannah is. We need to plan for the impact we are experiencing from our neighboring counties. No one can plan alone; identify all those impacted by transportation issues, meet together, and plan.

Mr. Liakakis requested that Mr. Thomson put something together for a public transit dialogue, including bullet points so they can get beyond talking about the needs. Mr. Thomson will do so, coordinating with Mr. Rivers. Hinesville is working on new transit service, and they will be included in discussions. South Carolina counties have a plan similar to the CGRDC's plan, and they also would be likely participants in a regional transit discussion.

Mr. Sonny Timmerman confirmed the urban needs and the importance of linking the counties. He welcomes a comprehensive approach to addressing the transit issue. Mr. Rivers mentioned a previous mobility study done among various counties. He suggested using this as a basis for a comprehensive plan.

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

No report at this time.

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

Mr. George Fidler reported that the terminal has been expanded and the new garage completed. They have now added a third passenger screening checkpoint inside the terminal. They have begun widening the ramp from the waiting area to the concourse to accommodate the increased number of passengers.

**VI. Other Business**

There was no other business at this time.

**VII. Other Public Comments**

Dr. Drew Wade, co-chair for the Coastal Georgia Greenway steering committee, came today to hear what was going on in the Safe Routes to School program. As a physician and as a parent, and from a health perspective, he believes this is a great idea. He asks that the MPO push this program forward in every way possible. He expressed appreciation for the various agencies' work to provide bikeways.

**VIII. Adjournment**

There being no other business to come before the Committee, the December 19, 2007 Policy Committee was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

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