

<u>Others Present</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Present</u>
Sean Brandon	City of Savannah	X
Susan Broker	City of Savannah	X
Steve Cote	Reynolds, Smith & Hills	X
Leon Davenport	Chatham County	X
Enoch Dumas	Chatham Area Transit	X
Chris Henry	Urbitran Associates	X
Jean Iaderosa	Chatham Area Transit	X
Jane Love	MPO Staff	X
Nathan Mai-Lombardo	Garden City	X
Kyle Mote	GDOT	X
David Sampson	Urbitran Associates	X
Brad Saxon	GDOT-District 5	X
Teresa Scott	GDOT-Jesup	X
Barbara Settzo	for MPO	X
Radney Simpson	GDOT-Planning	X
Helen Stone	Chatham County	X
Thomas Thomson, P.E., AICP	MPC Executive Director	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 February 27, 2008 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 February 27, 2008 meeting carried with none opposed.

II. Committee Reports

A. Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation

No report at this time.

B. Citizens Advisory Committee

No report at this time.

C. Technical Coordinating Committee

Mr. Mark Wilkes reported on the February 21, 2008 meeting of the Technical Coordinating Committee. The committee's discussion centered on the Year of Expenditure financial plan update to the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan. He said Mr. Steve Cote, from Reynolds, Smith & Hill, will report on this subject in detail later at this meeting.

D. Executive Director's Status Report

Mr. Tom Thomson mentioned the changes to the agenda as presented. Two action items were removed – the Year of Expenditure (YOE) Update and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) amendments. Staff is addressing some comments from partner agencies on the YOE Update, so it is not ready for action at this meeting, but instead a status report will be provided at this meeting. The TIP amendments cannot be considered until approval of the YOE Update brings the Long Range Transportation Plan into compliance with the requirements of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU).

He asked the group to note the 2008 meeting schedule and encouraged all to mark their calendars.

Mr. Thomson reported on a trip taken to Long Beach, CA and the Port of Los Angeles to see various value-pricing toll projects and hear about the port's regional transportation fees. He was joined by representatives from Georgia Ports Authority (GPA), Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), and the State Road & Tollway Authority (SRTA). The main topic of discussion was their value-pricing grant application for the Urban Partnership Program. Mr. Thomson noted that this program is really for much larger cities than Savannah, with much greater congestion issues.

Mr. Thomson reported that the group also visited the port of Long Beach. The port of Long Beach and the Port of Los Angeles are connected. This is a very large port system – larger than all other ports put together. The Port there imposes a charge of \$15 per "twenty-foot equivalent unit" (TEU), which goes towards regional transportation improvements.

Mr. Liakakis asked about the possibility of Georgia Ports Authority charging a fee to be used for transportation improvements. Mr. Randy Weitman explained that GPA is different from Los Angeles/Long Beach because GPA is a discretionary port. If the fees were raised in excess of \$1.00 - \$2.00 per box, freight would go elsewhere. Los Angeles/Long Beach port can charge up to an additional \$200.00 fee and still not lose the business.

Mr. Thomson mentioned that they have a premium fee for the peak times of day. They have shifted 40% of the traffic to off-peak times because of this premium fee.

He also visited Orange County to see how they handle tolling. They have a 10-mile toll road in the middle of SR 91. Tolling on this road is variable. They monitor the different

sections and vary the toll according to demand. The maximum toll is \$10.00 at the peak hours on Friday afternoon. Users can save 1 ½ hours by using the toll road instead of the non-tolled roadway. The cheapest toll was in the range of \$1.70 and \$1.90.

Mr. Thomson reported on the progress of the Regional Transportation meetings. Efforts are continuing. On January 30, 2008 the staffs of the different regional entities met to develop an agenda for the policy makers. This staff group will meet again today, and then a policy meeting will be scheduled for late March or April. There are two bills running through the legislature that could require some degree of regional planning. This shows that we are a little ahead of curve on this issue.

A group of Savannah/Chatham County representatives met with Commissioner Gena Abraham. The main topic was SR 204. She also updated them on GDOT finances and prioritization of projects. GDOT expects to provide a report on their prioritization process at the end of July, 2008.

Mr. Liakakis expressed his concern that our local priorities may differ from GDOT's priorities. He is hopeful that GDOT will have sufficient staff to move projects along.

Staff attended the Downtown Intermodal Site Selection Study Joint Environment Assessment Advisory Committee meeting last week. They are considering two sites – the Greyhound site and the Louisville Rd. site.

Today staff is responding to a request for an environmental review of all our projects.

Mr. Joe Murray Rivers asked Mr. Weitman what the existing debt service is for GPA, citing an example from Maryland where the state took over the Baltimore port's debt service. This would free up financial resources for other uses. Mr. Weitman answered that it is \$20-\$25 million per year. Mr. Trip Tollison said that both GPA's debt service and the State's debt service are going to go up due to the expense of dredging.

III. Action Items

A. Approval of December 19, 2007 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

It was moved and seconded to approve the December 19, 2007 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes.

Policy Committee Action: the motion to approve the December 19, 2007 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes carried with none opposed.

IV. Status Reports

A. CUTS/MPO “Year-of-Expenditure” Update for the Financial Plan of the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan

Mr. Steve Cote, the MPO’s consultant from Reynolds, Smith & Hills, presented a status report on the Year of Expenditure (YOE) Update. This update is required by SAFETEA-LU. Long Range Transportation Plans (LRTP) must now show expected year-of-expenditure figures, for both costs and revenues. They used the current 2030 LRTP and TIP project costs and funding estimates as the basis for projecting future costs and funding. They reviewed the work program to see what has been actually authorized or constructed since 2004 to account for funds already authorized or spent. These funds were taken out of the overall projections of revenue and those project’s costs were taken out of the overall projections of costs. Each remaining project in the adopted plan was then assigned into a given time band in order to put an inflation rate on it. The three time bands are 2008-2013, 2014-2020, and 2021-2030. They used GDOT-recommended inflation rate of 2.5% per year for costs and revenues. Finally, they totaled the projected costs through 2030 in YOE dollars and compared it to the projected funding through 2030 in YOE dollars. What they found was a substantial deficit – approximately \$800,000,000. They considered alternative funding mechanisms to make up the deficit, such as toll facilities, public private partnerships (PPPs) and the proposed regional sales tax for transportation (T-SPLOST).

Comments from GDOT and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) indicate that they do not support the tolling and PPP strategies to offset the deficit in the plan.

Mr. Michael Brown questioned the idea that these agencies did not “support” alternative funding methods. He requested clarification.

Mr. Matthew Fowler explained that GDOT’s concern is with some of the assumptions that the MPO has made related to these methods. GDOT is not rejecting these methods outright. Mr. Fowler stated that GDOT does support tolling and PPP projects, but the assumptions that go into the plan need to be reasonable.

Mr. Thomson mentioned that there is disagreement on the definition of “reasonable anticipation of revenues”. A meeting is planned with GDOT to resolve this. Nevertheless, he believes there will be a short fall.

Mr. Cote shared figures with the group on anticipated revenues from tolling (\$147,000,000 to \$684,000,000) and from T-SPLOST (\$1,750,000,000). Clarification was requested on the area assumed to be covered by the T-SPLOST. MPO staff and the consultants assumed a statewide tax with 90% being returned to this region. Mr. Liakakis believes a T-SPLOST must be a statewide tax, as a regional T-SPLOST is unlikely to pass. He is hopeful that the state transportation people and the legislators will agree to a 1% sales tax on gasoline to fund GDOT. Mr. Russ Abolt believes that our neighboring counties would

steer away from a regional tax for fear that Chatham would control the bulk of the monies. He agreed that this should be a state-wide effort.

It was also asked how much of the T-SPLOST was assumed to go towards transit. Mr. Thomson noted that under the bill, transit capital is an eligible expenditure, but the transit section of the adopted 2030 LRTP is not truly long range. It mainly shows costs and revenues related to continuing current operations. Thus long range transit capital needs are not known.

Mr. Cote concluded his presentation by saying that revisions have been submitted to GDOT and FHWA and these agencies have submitted comments. They will be working with the planning partners to resolve all issues and present the YOE Update to the Policy Committee for approval at the April meeting.

Mr. Brown asked if postponing the approval until April would affect our current projects. Mr. Thomson responded that this only affects any changes or amendments we would want to make to current projects. Lettings can continue. For the most part things are OK for the next few months.

Mr. Brown would like to focus on the measure of the need and not just on the money involved. Some projects have low traffic volumes and/or low efficiency. As we look to balance the money we should also balance, or measure, the projects by level of service and age (how long they've been on the list). Mr. Thomson noted that this update is only an update to the financial component of the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan. But if it doesn't balance, requiring some projects to move to the unfunded list, then the staff must review all the projects in the plan by the criteria Mr. Brown mentioned.

Ms. Diane Schleicher requested that the status of projects be considered as one of the review criteria. Those projects which are likely to be finished in the near future should be kept on track.

Mr. Liakakis recommended that our priority projects be well documented in case we need to "sell it" in Atlanta.

Mr. Abolt doesn't want to lose funding for projects as a result of being more detailed in our analysis than other areas are. He asked for trust from GDOT to be fair.

Mr. Fowler noted that the funding gap needs to be closed. Either more revenue needs to be found or projects need to be cut. He is scheduled to talk with staff about reasonable funding sources. He doubts there will be any serious cutting of the projects that are moving forward. He doesn't believe this will affect the MPO's relationship with GDOT or the ability to get these projects funded.

Mr. Thomson explained that it is his hope to keep engineering and environmental work moving so that when construction funds become available again, the projects are ready to move back into the plan.

B. "Coastal Commuters" Program to promote Alternatives to driving alone

Ms. Jane Love reported that the MPO staff has been working with hospital representatives for the past year. Preparation included a survey of hospital employees. A primary feature of the Coastal Commuters program is a ride-matching system that will be available to the public, not just the DeRenne Ave. commuters. Another element is the Emergency Ride Home program which will be available to employees of the employers who assist with the funding of the program. In the future the MPO may be able to access some funding that would make it available to more commuters using alternative transportation.

The MPO is encouraging employers to provide preferential parking for the carpoolers, subsidize transit passes for employees, and provide bicycle racks.

Mr. Abolt asked if the hospitals could stagger their work shifts thereby altering the congestion pattern currently on DeRenne Ave. Ms. Love noted that by the nature of their business these employers have so many shifts already that their employees' commutes are spread around the clock, more so than typical employers. The MPO does not have data on exactly how much of the DeRenne Ave. peak traffic is made up of hospital employees.

Mr. Abolt would like specific information on the numbers of employees of the major employers who commute in the peak periods. Would changing the shift by even thirty minutes make a difference? He included Hunter Army Airfield as one of these employers.

Mr. Brown agreed with Mr. Abolt that it is a public perception that the peak traffic is driven by the major employers. If employers managed their work hours and shift changes would it mean that physical changes along DeRenne Ave. would not be necessary?

Ms. Susan Broker, from the City of Savannah, added that she and Ms. Love will be meeting next week with representatives from the hospitals, and will work on this.

Ms. Love stated that in the MPO staff's initial discussion with the hospitals' representatives, information on shifts was requested but the representatives stated that no single department at the hospitals has all of the shift information, making it difficult to collect. Mr. Liakakis told her to contact him if she has difficulty.

C. Chatham Area Transit Authority's Transportation Development Plan (TDP)

Mr. David Sampson and Mr. Christopher Henry, CAT's consultants from Urbitran Associates, presented the plan to the committee. The key to this project was service evaluation. They studied the needs of the community, evaluated the current service, and made recommendations for the future. There was extensive public involvement in this process. They met with government, business and non-profit representatives. They met

with neighborhood groups, regional employers, Tybee Island residents, Teleride customers, and with riders at drop-in sessions at major transit locations.

- Stakeholder input:
 - Maintenance of core downtown services is important
 - Transit District boundary is a barrier to effective regional service
 - Negative public perception; CAT not seen as mode of choice
 - Growing transportation need for evening and night workers

Mr. Liakakis asked about the negative perception. Mr. Sampson responded that many believe it is easier & more convenient to use the car and that buses are for people who can't afford a car.

- Focus group input:
 - Transit is important for growing employment centers
 - If benefit is clear, employers may be willing to contribute
 - CAT service is effective, if not always convenient
 - Mixed reaction to expansion to areas such as Pooler, Tybee Island

Mr. Henry explained the mixed comments from Tybee Island about why service is not needed. Many felt that using a car was sufficient. Most of them drive, therefore they feel transit is not necessary. On Tybee, it was clear that the residents don't see the need, but businesses do see the need.

Key findings of the customer survey included:

- Majority of riders have ridden for 5+ years
- Most customers ride 5-6 days per week
- Purpose of the trip is for work or school
- Cash is the most common fare payment method
- High transfer rate

Mr. Sampson further reviewed rider demographics – race, age, hourly wage, and riding habits.

After studying the ridership, they analyzed the current bus service. They examined each route by time, direction, ridership, cost, etc. Then they assessed what was working well and what was not working well. The results included:

- Strong core system serves well.
- Ineffective service in some outlying areas
- Expansion of service is limited by the boundaries of the Transit District
- Most desired improvement is more frequent service

With this information they offered proposed changes, route by route. He used the #14 – Abercorn route as an example. This is a strong route with no weak piece along the route.

The recommendation for this route is to enhance the route – more frequent schedule or even an express bus using the Truman Pkwy.

Mr. Sampson offered other examples of route recommendations.

His recommendations fall into two categories:

- cost neutral recommendations, using existing resources more efficiently, are offered for the first two years,
- as funds become available, recommendations are made for expanding service.

Mr. Sampson reported on three basic issues with the ADA/Teleride service. The Teleride service exceeds the ADA requirements in two areas, and this constitutes some of the existing costs. While ADA regulations require service within a $\frac{3}{4}$ mile zone around your fixed routes, Teleride operates county-wide. Longer trips with low ridership make this an expensive service to operate. Secondly, the Teleride fare is extremely low. ADA regulations permit you to charge up to twice the base fixed-route cash fare. At that rate the fare could be \$2.00, but Teleride currently charges \$1.20. Raising the fare may encourage those who are able to use fixed-route buses. Travel training would be necessary to train and educate those moving from Teleride service to fixed-route service. Thirdly, tighten up qualification and certification process. The report also recommends shortening the reservation window from two weeks to one week or less. This would lower the cancellation and no-show rate.

Mr. Abolt said that Teleride is funded by the county for service throughout the county in order to insure the federal funding. Mr. Sampson believes federal funding requires para-transit within a $\frac{3}{4}$ mile radius of fixed routes, not the whole county. Mr. Rivers said that the county funds Teleride to cover the whole county because CAT could only service the transit district. Mr. Abolt is concerned that the county is funding more than they need to.

Ms. Schleicher asked about monthly passes and if the service has any partnerships with the universities. Mr. Sampson confirmed that there is no “U-pass” in Chatham County at this time. It is a possibility.

Mr. Brown noted that cooperation with colleges has been discussed for years. Mr. Brown made a motion requesting that the MPO staff and CAT staff report on the feasibility of transit cooperation between colleges and CAT. The motion was seconded.

Policy Committee Action: the motion requesting that the MPO staff and CAT staff report on the feasibility of transit cooperation between colleges and CAT carried with none opposed.

On the subject of a transit station site, Mr. Sampson reported that they reviewed the impact of each proposed transit station site on the operating plan. Route connections, destinations, ridership, transfers, downtown looping, streamline of network, reduction of idling, general costs, and customer convenience were some of the criteria used in

evaluating the Greyhound site and the Louisville Rd. site. The Greyhound site is the preferred site.

They reviewed the fare policy, particularly the idea of a “free” transfer. Mr. Sampson presented a table with seven (7) different fare scenarios. The preferred alternative is a base fare of \$1.50 with a free transfer, weekly pass at \$16.00 and monthly pass at \$60.00. He showed how the majority of current riders benefit from this fare scenario.

Mr. Rivers expressed concern that each time the fare is raised, ridership goes down. Due to loss of funding, they are facing a short fall. He believes they can’t afford to lose anything more. He takes exception with paper transfers and noted the changes required in the fare box should there be a price change.

Mr. Sampson explained that this was just the beginning of a fare study. There are many other aspects that could be reviewed - transfers, different fare passes, capital expenses, implementation expenses, and training/education expenses. The scope of this plan does not include a comprehensive fare study.

The plan implementation includes:

- Begin with no-cost or cost-neutral changes in first year
- Work directly with employers to market transit
- Increase number of sales locations for fare media
- Implement service enhancements in coming plan years.
- Continue to evaluate services each year.

He offered a warning that if you are successful in re-training your customers to use the pass, and you make the pass easier to obtain, the system will lose revenue if you don’t increase your base fares.

Mr. Liakakis asked if this report included marketing strategies. Mr. Sampson replied that this report included general recommendations – outlets, type of materials, training programs, and outreach. They did not design any specific marketing plan. His firm does not do media placement.

D. City of Savannah DeRenne Avenue Revitalization Study

Ms. Broker reported that this project has just begun with funding approved just last week. She said that, while previous studies addressed traffic congestion on DeRenne Ave., this study will look at corridor revitalization. This will be a 9-month process that will ultimately yield reasonable alternatives. They will strictly adhere to the GDOT project development process for public involvement. They will use context-sensitive design strategies. Land use, economic development, neighborhood enhancement, commercial intrusion, commercial enhancement, and traffic capacity will all be part of this revitalization study. The project kick-off will be in April 2008 with a final project report expected in January 2009. The Citizen Office is monitoring the contract for this.

Mr. Brown would like a brief status report on this project at every CUTS meeting.

Following the 9-month Phase I, Phase II would entail finalizing alternatives, selecting a reasonable alternative, and concept development.

E. Progress of Environment Review for Transportation Projects

Ms. Wykoda Wang presented a staff report in response to a request from the Policy Committee for the environmental status of all projects in Chatham County. Staff contacted the various agencies and gathered the information in a detailed staff report sent out in the advance packet of materials.

Ms. Wang highlighted the Ogeechee Rd. widening project, which has been of particular interest at the recent MPO meetings. GDOT offered to have a tele-conference to discuss the details, if desired. The target date for completion of the environmental documentation is January 2009. The problem with the project is its proximity to the Springfield Canal, which is a historic resource. This could delay the project. She reported that FWHA is satisfied with GDOT's efforts to minimize the impacts of environmental justice issues. GDOT stated that the County and City do not need to do anything now. She provided GDOT with a local contact name should they need assistance.

Mr. Abolt is skeptical and asked for assurance that GDOT will keep this moving.

Mr. Brad Saxon commented that the draft document is going for review next week. Any questions about the document will be referred to GDOT, and GDOT will coordinate with local officials for any required answers.

Mr. Saxon does not anticipate any change in process nor does he foresee any problems with this. Mr. Brown asked if individual legislators have control over individual projects. Mr. Brown wants to get any objections or disagreements on the table, discuss them, and then decide. Decisions need to be made so that the entire project does not get stalled for lack of a decision. He believes that City Council is ultimately going to decide how to go forward.

Mr. Saxon recommended that local officials use the District office to push things that get stalled.

Mr. Fowler noted that it is big hurdle to get to FHWA and he thinks this is a sign that the project is moving forward.

Mr. Thomson offered comments on changing the culture of our process. The MPO body is more important than past use indicates. Currently, an individual legislator can get a project moving, but it is the MPO which is the decision-making forum for federal transportation expenditures in urban areas and is the agency that sets priorities. He believes the GDOT should be communicating with the MPO on project status and issues. He believes they

communicate with local governments but have bypassed the MPO's decision-making process. If it's federal funding, the MPO has a lot of regulatory authority for projects.

Mr. Thomson also noted that this report, which is excellent and a good benchmark, indicates the expected completion dates for the environmental document only, not for the entire project. He reviewed the process for the board.

Mr. Randy Weitman and Mr. Fowler confirmed that if changes are requested to the environmental document you may need to revisit the initial concept. This can extend the time necessary to get the project moving forward.

V. Agency Reports

A. Georgia Department of Transportation

Ms. Teresa Scott opened the meeting to questions based on her written report. Requests for proposals for Diamond Causeway bridge replacement at Skidaway Narrows have gone out and they hope to let it soon. There was a question about the county-acquired right-of-way on the Island side.

Ms. Scott expressed her concern about Mr. Thomson's comments regarding communication between the MPO and GDOT. Mr. Thomson explained that, while things have improved, the missing link is the copy of letters sent to local governments whenever there is a problem with any aspect of the project. When there is a letter written by the GDOT on any project in Chatham County the MPO should be copied on it. This was mentioned in a large-group meeting in Atlanta.

Mr. Brown commented on the increased level of sophistication of the system. There are certain aspects of the project where the local government takes the lead and other times where GDOT takes the lead. We need to educate our citizens as to the process for these projects. He believes citizens should not have veto power over projects. That is for the elected officials.

Ms. Scott also reported that Hwy. 80 in Bloomingdale is now open.

B. Chatham County

Mr. Leon Davenport reported that the Whitfield Ave. project had some environmental issues to address because of the expansion of the project, i.e. widening of the median. GDOT has been helpful in fast-tracking and he hopes to have the right-of-way plan approved by June 2008. On the Truman Pkwy. project, the right-of-way and demolition is expected to be completed by August 2008.

C. City of Savannah

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

- Gwinnett St. Widening – still completing the environmental studies. Expected to be submitted to GDOT in the next two weeks.
- Chatham Pkwy./Chatham Center Dr. – submitted order for the strain poles. They were expected by end of February but it has been pushed back to the end of March, so this project is delayed about one month.
- DeRenne Ave./Pre-emption System – system became operational in November 2007. The City is working with Southside Fire Department and Memorial Hospital to get the equipment installed. Memorial is currently installing the equipment. Mr. Sean Brandon confirmed this, and stated that final details are being worked out with Southside Fire Department. They should be on board in the next week or two. They will then work with out-of-county vehicles through GEMA, but the vast majority of vehicles with the equipment are Chatham County vehicles. Mr. Brown suggested an “event” to let the public know that this system is in effect along DeRenne Ave. Mr. Weiner noted that this was publicized when they did the field test. Once the ambulances start using the equipment, it may be appropriate to publicize it again.
- King George Blvd. – signal timing for Abercorn Ext. and King George Blvd. was done this past weekend. They are expecting to see some major changes along this arterial.

D. Chatham Area Transit

No additional report at this time.

E. Georgia Ports Authority

Mr. Weitman referred to the trip to California, mentioned earlier by Mr. Thomson, and noted the superior organization and superior efficiency that is present in Savannah/Chatham County compared to the Los Angeles/Long Beach community.

F. Savannah-Hilton Head International Airport

Mr. George Fidler reported that all major construction is complete. Minor new projects include construction of a new small taxiway on the airfield for small aircraft and resurfacing of Airways Ave. outbound which is now ten years old. They moved the passenger screening checkpoints and added a third screening lane to handle peak times. They completed widening the ramp to the main concourse.

VI. Other Business

Mr. Liakakis noted the great response from various agencies to the sugar refinery disaster. A list has been sent to Rep. John Barrow to incorporate into the Homeland Security Bill. If it's included in that bill, there is a possibility of reimbursement for costs of the emergency services used in that disaster. The cost is estimated at approximately \$500,000. Any reimbursed funds would go to the municipalities that were involved, principally City of Savannah.

VII. Other Public Comments

No public comments at this time.

VIII. Adjournment

There being no other business to come before the Committee, the February 27, 2008 Policy Committee was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

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