



CHATHAM URBAN TRANSPORTATION STUDY

POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

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

April 23, 2008

10:00 A.M.

Voting Members

Russ Abolt
Gena Abraham
Michael Brown
Jason Buelterman
Patrick S. Graham
William W. Hubbard
James Hungerpillar
McArthur Jarrett
Otis Johnson
Glenn Jones
Mike Lamb
Pete Liakakis
Doug J. Marchand
Clint Murphy
Andy Quinney
Representative
Joe Murray Rivers
Anna Maria Thomas
Wayne Tipton
Jon Todd
LTC Daniel Whitney
Eric R. Winger

Representing

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

Present

X

X

X
X

X

X

Voting Member Alternates

George Fidler
Matthew Fowler
Diane Schleicher

Representing

Savannah Airport Commission
GDOT
City of Tybee Island

Present

X
X
X

Ex-officio Members

Sonny Timmerman

Representing

Hinesville Area MPO

Present

X

<u>Others Present</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Present</u>
Susan Broker	City of Savannah	X
Steve Cote	Reynolds, Smith & Hills	X
Leon Davenport	Chatham County	X
Jane Love	MPO Staff	X
Nathan Mai-Lombardo	Garden City	X
Kyle Mote	GDOT-Planning	X
Teresa Scott	GDOT-Jesup	X
Barbara Settzo	for MPO	X
Radney Simpson	GDOT-Planning	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

In the absence of Chairman Pete Liakakis, Mayor Otis Johnson called the April 23, 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 April 23, 2008 meeting carried with none opposed.

II. Committee Reports

A. Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation

Mr. McArthur Jarrett reported that though the committee did not have a quorum, they did discuss the action items, including the Year-of-Expenditure Update. In a previous meeting where a quorum was present, the committee had endorsed the first two Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) amendments. Mr. Jarrett reported that there is a need to revise the handbook for para-transit. He hopes to distribute a new handbook to staff and clients by the end of May. The current Vice-Chairman of ACAT is unable to attend the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) due to health reasons. When elections take place someone will be elected or appointed to represent ACAT at the TCC.

B. Citizens Advisory Committee

Mr. Clint Murphy reported that the committee endorsed all action items with the stipulation on the TIP amendments that any monies shifted out of FY 2008 to FY 2009 be kept in Chatham County.

C. Technical Coordinating Committee

Mr. Tom Thomson reported that the committee endorsed all action items, including the Unified Planning Work Program. They also discussed the GDOT revisions to the amendment approval process. This item will come before the Policy Committee at a later date as the MPO incorporates these changes into the MPO's Participation Plan that includes the amendment process. The MPO will be working with GDOT to resolve some differences that have arisen.

D. Executive Director's Status Report

Mr. Thomson reported that last Friday, on "Dump the Pump" day, the Coastal Commuters program had a kick-off press conference. The website is up at www.coastalcommuters.org. He thanked Ms. Love for her efforts on this project.

III. Action Items

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

It was moved and seconded to approve the February 27, 2008 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes.

Policy Committee Action: the motion to approve the February 27, 2008 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes carried with none opposed.

B. CUTS/MPO "Year-of-Expenditure" Update for the Financial Plan of the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan

Mr. Thomson asked the Policy Committee to adopt the Year-of-Expenditure Update for the Financial Plan of the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan in order to bring the MPO into full compliance with the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). This report required a great deal of coordination with various agencies but the delay had no negative consequences as the MPO was able to continue with projects that were in the adopted Transportation Improvement Program, although changes in the TIP are not allowed until the LRTP Financial Plan Update is approved. The focus of the presentation by Mr. Steve Cote of Reynolds, Smith & Hills will be on the projects that had to be removed from the 2030 Long Range Plan and put into the Vision Plan because revenues and costs did not balance. Mr. Thomson noted that staff will be reviewing Priority I projects very closely in the next month. He would like this board to present a clear and consistent message to GDOT concerning these projects as GDOT reviews their financing priorities.

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 (LRTPs) must now show year-of-expenditure figures, for both costs and revenues. They used the current 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program project costs and funding estimates as the basis for projecting future costs and funding. They also reviewed the work program to see what had 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 costs were taken out of the overall projections of costs. Each project was then assigned 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 the GDOT recommended inflation rate of 2.5% per year for costs and revenues. Finally, they totaled the project costs in the year of expenditure and compared it to the funding for each year of expenditure. What they found was a substantial deficit – approximately \$660,000,000. This balance incorporates the strategy to construct three roadway projects with tolled lanes – SR 204/Abercorn from Rio Rd. to Truman Pkwy. Phase V, the Northwest Parkway, and Effingham Parkway.

To reconcile the shortfall, MPO staff, RS&H staff, city staff, and county staff met to determine recommendations for moving some of the LRTP projects into an unfunded Vision Plan. Three criteria for moving a project to the Vision Plan were: 1) priority level in the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan; 2) need; and 3) previous expenditure of funds towards the project. The result was as follows:

Priority I projects moved to the Vision Plan:

- I-16/I-95 new interchange
- I-16/I-516 new interchange

(Construction funds only were moved to the Vision Plan. Study funds and preliminary engineering [PE] maintained in the constrained YOE plan.)

Priority II projects moved to the Vision Plan:

- I-16 widening from I-95 to I-516 (construction funds only; PE funds in the constrained plan)
- I-516 widening from Veterans Pkwy. to Mildred St.
- DeRenne Ave. operations from Mildred St. to Abercorn St.
- SR 26/US 80 operations at Johnny Mercer Blvd.
- Mildred St./Hampstead Ave. widening from I-516 to Abercorn St.
- Abercorn St. at I-95 interchange reconstruction

Priority III projects moved to the Vision Plan:

- SR 21 widening from Northwest Pkwy. to SR 30/I-95
- SR 307/Dean Forest Rd. at Veterans Pkwy. new interchange
- LaRoche Ave. operations from Skidaway Rd. to city limits
- Delesseps Ave. operations from Waters Ave. to Skidaway Rd.

- SR 307/ Dean Forest Rd., new roadway from US 17 to Garard St.
- Quacco Rd. widening from Pooler Pkwy. to I-95
- Quacco Rd./Little Neck Rd. new interchange at I-95

Mr. Cote showed a map of current projects in the adopted Long Range Transportation Plan and a second map showing the remaining projects after the Vision Plan projects were removed.

Mr. Cote recommended that the Policy Committee approve this update. He noted that all the projects will be reviewed as part of the upcoming development of the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan. Projects, costs, and priorities will all be reviewed. Mr. Thomson noted that he expects much better funding information from GDOT during the development of the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan.

Mr. Johnson opened the meeting to the public for comment. There being no comments, it was moved and seconded to close the public hearing.

Policy Committee Action: the motion to closes the public hearing carried with none opposed.

It was moved and seconded to adopt the CUTS/MPO Year-of-Expenditure Update for Financial Plan of the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan.

Mr. Michael Brown asked if environmental documents or engineering could significantly delay or expedite any given project. He was concerned that a project that is progressing on environmental and public involvement will sit behind some other project just because that one has had some money spent on it, even if the latter is not as ready. He said he was concerned about the Mildred St. and DeRenne Ave. projects being in the unfunded lists, while the City progresses with Project DeRenne.

Mr. Thomson explained that SPLOST funding is in place for the DeRenne corridor. Mr. Thomson concluded that if projects are ready to go to contract he believes money will be found.

Mr. Russ Abolt pledged that all will be done to advocate for any project that is ready to go. He recommended preparing the project and then going to Atlanta as a united MPO to get the money for it.

Mr. Brown wants assurance that we are moving forward on regional projects with regional agreements. Effingham Parkway is an example. Even though they are anxious to move on the roadway development, other regional transit options should be discussed. A core program of regional projects should be developed and agreed upon, and until that happens he is hesitant to have any such project on our list of Priority I projects in our Long Range Transportation Plan.

Mr. Thomson reported that the MPO is developing a draft concept for future presentation to this committee for a Regional MPO – “CORE MPO” (Coastal Region MPO). At the present time there are a number of regional activities going on through GDOT, the Regional Development Council, and local MPOs. The Regional Development Council is working on a rural transportation service and a regional vanpool program. The MPO’s Coastal Commuters program is designed to be regionally managed in the future. They are also following up with the regional meetings that have already occurred by preparing a list of all the regional projects that are under consideration. GDOT is doing a Long Range Transportation Plan for Effingham County which our MPO is involved in.

Mr. Brown is concerned that regional plans and actions keep getting pushed out into the future. Now is the time to set up milestones for required action.

Policy Committee Action: the motion to adopt the CUTS/MPO Year-of-Expenditure Update for Financial Plan of the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan carried with none opposed.

At this point in the meeting, Chairman Pete Liakakis joined the meeting and assumed the chairman duties from Mayor Johnson.

C. Requested Amendments to the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

- **Shift of Right-of-Way phase for Grange Road widening project from FY 2008 to FY 2009**
- **Shift of Right-of-Way phase SR 204/Abercorn Extension improvement project (King George Blvd. to Rio Rd.) from FY 2008 to FY 2009**
- **Shift the Skidaway Narrows Bridge Replacement project from FY 2008 to FY 2009**

Ms. Wykoda Wang presented three amendments requested by GDOT. The first two were requested in November 2007 and the third in March 2008, but these could not be adopted until the Year-of-Expenditure Update was complete and adopted. Now that the Year-of-Expenditure Update has been adopted, action can proceed on these amendments to the Transportation Improvement Program.

The Grange Road widening project is only in the concept development stage so it is not ready for right-of-way acquisition in FY 2008. Therefore, the request is to shift right-of-way acquisition to FY 2009.

The SR 204/Abercorn Extension improvement project (King George Blvd to Rio Rd) has a concept design, but the design has not yet been approved. Therefore right-of-way acquisition will not take place in FY 2008.

The Skidaway Narrows Bridge Replacement project was put on hold because of two bills pending in the legislature which could have affected the procurement process for

design/build projects. Since this project is a design/build project, work ceased until these bills were voted upon. The bills did not pass, but the delay is the reason for shifting this project from FY 2008 to FY 2009.

Mr. Thomson noted that the original plan was to award a design/build contract in June 2008 which is in FY 2008. The bills in the legislature could have been beneficial to this project, but they did not pass. Now they are currently scheduled to award the contract in October 2008 which is in FY 2009. The design team will then go to work. It is anticipated that construction will be approved in November 2009. Visible construction will not be seen until then. This project has been delayed 4 months (from June 2008 to November 2008).

Mr. Liakakis asked that GDOT push this project due to the large number of citizens at risk in the event of an emergency evacuation of Skidaway Island. Mr. Matthew Fowler, from GDOT, confirmed that they are committed to moving this project forward.

Mr. Clint Murphy said that he understands that bikeways will be included in the bridge project and he supports that provision. However, he requested that sidewalks be considered as part of the design of this project. Mr. Fowler will take the idea back to the designers. Mr. Fowler anticipates very wide shoulders on this bridge.

Ms. Wang explained that there was a 15-day public comment period for these amendments. The Citizens Advisory Committee expressed concern that funds moved from FY 2008 to FY 2009 would be lost to Chatham County. Ms. Wang asked GDOT about this and was told that the funds that were removed from FY 2008 would go to projects within the congressional district. In FY 2009, when we are ready to go forward with these projects, funds will be available to us.

It was moved and seconded to approve the three amendments to the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program to shift funding from FY 2008 to FY 2009.

Policy Committee Action: the motion to approve the three amendments to the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program to shift funding from FY 2008 to FY 2009 carried with none opposed.

D. Adoption of FY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program

Mr. Mark Wilkes presented a report to the committee asking that the Policy Committee approve the FY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program today in order to give GDOT more time to process and have contracts in place by July 1.

Mr. Abolt felt it was not appropriate for staff to present this document at such short notice and expect the committee to vote on it without sufficient time for review. Mr. Wilkes offered to go through the document page by page or call a special meeting within the month to address this document.

Mr. Abolt requested a special meeting. Mr. Thomson recommended the meeting be held within the next two weeks so that GDOT had the necessary time to review and have this in place by July 1.

It was moved and seconded to have a special meeting on May 7, 2008 at 10:00 a.m. for the purpose of discussing and adopting the FY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program.

Policy Committee Action: the motion to have a special meeting on May 7, 2008 at 10:00 AM for the purpose of discussing and adopting the FY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program carried with none opposed.

Mr. Brown requested that the chart at the back of the plan be enlarged for readability.

IV. Status Reports

A. Initiation of development of the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan

Mr. Wilkes reported that contracts for the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan are with GDOT. Upon receipt of signed contracts, work will begin on the update.

V. Agency Reports

A. Georgia Department of Transportation

Ms. Teresa Scott highlighted certain projects contained in her written report.

#5 – Whitfield Ave –a preliminary field plan review is scheduled for 5/14/08

#9 – Ogeechee Rd – submitted draft environmental document; received comments; now working on changes to the environmental document

#15 – Diamond Causeway/Skidaway Narrows –concept approved; draft CE is moving forward

#32 – Jimmy Deloach Pkwy (I-16 to US 80) – concept approved

#35 – Lighting at interchange of I-16 & I-95 – GDOT has sent agreements to City of Pooler. Mr. Abolt and Mr. Brown confirmed that Chatham County and City of Savannah have signed and returned their agreements. Ms. Scott stated that the funding from Pooler is holding up the signing of the agreement, and the lack of a signed agreement is holding up the project. Mr. Liakakis offered to contact the Mayor of Pooler.

Ms. Diane Schleicher expressed appreciation on behalf of the City of Tybee Island for GDOT's timely resurfacing of US 80 prior to the Tour of Georgia cycling event. She asked for the status of the widening of SR26/US80 between Bull River and Lazaretto Creek. Ms. Scott reported that the "turtle study" is still underway with anticipated completion of that study being later this summer. Ms. Schleicher also asked about making the bridges more

pedestrian & bicycle friendly. Ms. Scott offered the official response that there will be bike-able shoulders.

Mr. Murphy asked why bridge widening projects do not include separate, safe bike routes. Mr. Murphy and others believe the community is well situated to be an active bicycling community. Ms. Scott confirmed that there will not be a physical barrier separating the bicyclists from the motorist because it has been deemed unsafe for motorists.

Mr. Murphy raised the question, "Why doesn't this community have a bike-able route from downtown Savannah to Tybee Island?" Local officials and residents support it, but we can't seem to make it happen. Ms. Scott noted that GDOT doesn't build bike trails with roadways. They can make provisions for the bicycles, but if something separate is desired, the best way to approach it is through a Transportation Enhancement award.

Mr. Brown commented that now is the time to review roadway designs with bicycle use in mind. Mr. Thomson will ask MPO staff to come back to this committee with a report on GDOT procedures and policies and technical information regarding bicycle routes.

Ms. Schleicher spoke with Amy Goodwin and understood from that conversation that if a community had an adopted plan that designated certain sections of roadway as a bikeway, then if any work was done in that area, bicycle use had to be considered. Ms. Scott agreed. GDOT's response is 10-foot bike-able shoulders.

Mr. Jon Todd would like GDOT to re-examine the design of a bike-able shoulder. The 2-foot rumble strip takes away valuable bikeway within the shoulder. Ms. Scott replied that 2-foot rumble strips were standard. She will relay these concerns.

Mr. Joe Murray Rivers suggested that HOV lanes are becoming more and more important.

Mr. Brown believes more education on bike routes is needed. Bikeways on all roads are not necessary, but selected routes that would allow sufficient north/south, east/west and Tybee Island connectivity would be very desirable.

Mr. Thomson suggested that what is necessary is an ordinance at all levels that would require it to happen. At present a true bicycle and pedestrian component is missing from the Long Range Transportation Plan.

In response to Mr. Murphy's comment about GDOT's inability to act on local requests for bike facilities because of state-wide policy, Mr. Fowler stated GDOT's sidewalk and bike lane policies. The sidewalk policy is: "If we are building a road or widening a road and it has curb and gutter, as typically found in an urban area, our policy is that sidewalks are included in that." The bike lane policy is: "If a local, state or regionally adopted bike plan identifies that route for bike lanes, then we consider that when designing the project and typically the bikes are accommodate by a stand-alone lane (4-5 ft wide). If there is not enough room for that lane, then we try to make our outside lane 14 feet wide instead of the typical 12 feet." The policy does not address how to handle bike facilities separate from

roadways because the state constitution forbids monies collected from the state gas tax fund to be spent on anything other than roads or bridges. This has been interpreted to mean that a bikeway as part of the pavement is allowed to be included as part of a GDOT roadway project, but a separate bike facility beyond the pavement is not. You can build a separate bike facility with federal funds and a local match. This does not involve state funds. Ms. Scott confirmed that this is what the federal Transportation Enhancement funds are used for.

B. Chatham County

Mr. Leon Davenport referred the written report handed out earlier.

- Right-of-way acquisition and demolition continues on the Truman Pkwy. Phase V project.
- Jimmy Deloach interchange project has an approved concept report.
- A preliminary field plan report will be submitted in May for Whitfield Ave. widening. Right-of-way should be approved this fiscal year.

C. City of Savannah

i. Traffic Engineering

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

- East Anderson St. curve reconstruction – finalizing right-of-way acquisition.
- Gwinnett St. Widening – air and noise studies completed and submitted to GDOT for review. Will be scheduling a public information meeting. Environmental is nearly complete.
- Chatham Pkwy./Chatham Center Dr. – signals should be operational in the middle of May
- Windsor Rd./Largo Dr. – evaluated seven consulting firms and will be submitting a recommendation to the city for contract approval
- Chatham Pkwy./Southern Blvd. – evaluated seven consulting firms and will be submitting recommendation to the city for contract approval.

Mr. Murphy commented that the safety improvements along the bicycle lane on Habersham between DeRenne and Stephenson are great, but the pavement is very bumpy. Mr. Brown asked Mr. Weiner to work with Mr. Scanlon on improving this in some stretches. Re-paving the whole is too expensive. Mr. Murphy said he raised this issue in an effort to improve the paving in the future sections.

ii. Project DeRenne

Ms. Susan Broker reported that they hope to have the initial traffic analysis report in June or July. They are working on the establishment of their Project Advisory Committee, holding elections in seven different neighborhoods. The Steering Committee is

established with first meetings scheduled for May 13 and May 14. A traffic analysis report should be available by the June Policy Committee meeting. Also, they are working to gather information for land use and zoning as well as a market analysis for the commercial portion of that corridor.

D. Chatham Area Transit

Mr. Rivers presented the following updates on Chatham Area Transit issues:

- Downtown Transit Center -- It is in the review process and still needs to go to FTA for review. Once they approve it, then CAT can negotiate with Greyhound on the site. If successful, they may break ground in the next year.
- Congressman Barrow co-sponsored legislation – a technical correction bill. This has passed in the Senate and House and should restore some funding to CAT.
- He thanked the Mayor and City Manager for participating in the swipe card program by buying 100 swipe cards for city employees beginning in June. CAT is approaching St. Joseph's/Candler Hospital and Chatham County to participate in this program.
- The design on the fourth ferry has gone out.
- Between now and June meeting of the CAT Board, CAT is looking at the feasibility of some route improvements.
- The DOT buses are now operating downtown between the hotels and parking garages.
- HOV lanes should be included in any planning for new roadways.
- Fare increases for CAT are possible, but he is hopeful that CAT will be able to keep all services in place.

E. Georgia Ports Authority

No report at this time.

F. Savannah-Hilton Head International Airport

No report at this time.

VI. Other Business

Mr. Brown asked if there was any report on a transit analysis between the city and SCAD. Mr. Thomson will follow up on this with Sean Brandon.

VII. Other Public Comments

Ms. Jane Love, speaking as a resident of Savannah who uses a bicycle for transportation, offered the following comment: She has heard frequently the explanation of why GDOT

can't use positive barriers to protect cyclists and the answer is always related to concern for the safety of the traveling public. She asked that cyclists be considered as part of the "traveling public."

VIII. Adjournment

There being no other business to come before the Committee, the April 23, 2008 Policy Committee was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

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