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<b><u>Others Present</u></b>	<b><u>Representing</u></b>	<b><u>Present</u></b>
Susan Broker	City of Savannah	X
Bob Coffey	GIMTCA/SITCC	X
Leon Davenport	Chatham County	X
Jane Love	MPO Staff	X
Nathan Mai-Lombardo	Garden City	X
Kyle Mote	GDOT	X
Walter Parker	City of Tybee Island	X
Brad Saxon	GDOT	X
Teresa Scott	GDOT-Jesup	X
Barbara Settzo	for MPO	X
Radney Simpson	GDOT-Planning	X
Dan Smith	Tybee Island City Council	X
Thomas Thomson, P.E., AICP	MPC Executive Director	X
Wykoda Wang	MPO Staff	X
Stephen Warner	Norfolk Southern Corp.	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 June 25, 2008 Policy Committee Meeting to order.

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

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

**Policy Committee Action: the motion to approve the revised agenda for the June 25, 2008 meeting carried with none opposed.**

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

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

Ms. Jane Love reported that the committee endorsed all action items at their last meeting. The updated Teleride Handbook should be ready for committee review by their next meeting.

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

Ms. Love reported that the committee endorsed all action items at their last meeting.

### C. Technical Coordinating Committee

Mr. Mark Wilkes reported that the committee endorsed all action items at their last meeting.

### D. Executive Director's Status Report

Mr. Tom Thomson shared some informational items with the committee.

- Tomorrow MPO staff are joining Jasper County and SCDOT staff to tour the area of the future Jasper Port.
- Mr. Thomson attended the Hinesville area MPO meeting. One of their initiatives is a gateway sector plan at the intersection of I-95 and US 84. It consists of 15,000 – 20,000 acres that includes a mix of uses (residential, educational, industrial parks, shopping developments, etc.) Mr. Sonny Timmerman added that they are looking into linking the area back to Savannah via mass transit. Mr. Thomson noted that 51,000 jobs are anticipated in this area in the next twenty years. A Hinesville Transit System is also underway.
- Mr. Thomson attended the Transportation Research Board (TRB) Summer Conference in Baltimore, MD. There was considerable discussion there about the reauthorization of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). It is agreed that there is a \$220 - \$340 billion annual need for nationwide infra-structure. The dollar range depends on the amount of private investment in the infra-structure. There are many questions and not much agreement on how to deal with the short-term funding shortfall. The trust fund may be \$1 billion in the hole for the next year.
- Also at TRB, Mr. Thomson attended a session on Global Freight Movement and noted that the port of Savannah was mentioned as a major player in this field. Another major issue is climate change. Many communities are working towards significant reductions in carbon emissions by 2050. We will need to incorporate this issue into our transportation plans in the near future.
- Mr. Thomson attended the Georgia Engineering Conference where GDOT Commissioner Gena Abraham spoke. The transportation board has set priorities for future action and it now includes commuter rail, specifically from Atlanta to just north of Griffin, GA. They are still sorting out the financial condition of the department. Construction funding for next year is \$700,000,000 for the state. Currently the 4% gas sales tax which is \$176,000,000 per year goes to the general fund, plus an additional \$115,000,000 goes to pay the debt service for bonds. Commissioner Abraham and the Governor are planning to ask the legislature to forgive the loan and move the gas sales tax monies from the general fund to transportation needs. The challenge will be to balance resources between new capacity projects and maintenance projects, locally and state-wide.

Mr. Chris Morrell asked about privatization. The role of privatization is being considered. The range of funding costs varies based on the extent of privatization.

Mr. Rivers asked that transit be included in all transportation planning. He noted that the current roadways leading to the new industrial developments are not transit-friendly. Mr. Thomson mentioned that transit-oriented standards are being incorporated in the code so that new developments must deal with transit needs. Mr. Rivers reminded all of the necessity for acquiring right-of-way for light rail or commuter rail so we can build a true transit plan.

### **III. Action Items**

#### **A. Approval of previous Policy Committee Meeting Minutes**

It was moved and seconded to approve the April 23, 2008 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes.

**Policy Committee Action: the motion to approve the April 23, 2008 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes carried with none opposed.**

It was moved and seconded to approve the May 7, 2008 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes.

**Policy Committee Action: the motion to approve the May 7, 2008 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes carried with none opposed.**

#### **B. Requested amendment to the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan for the Georgia Ports/Norfolk Southern project**

Mr. Stephen Warner from Norfolk Southern presented this request. This project comes forward as part of the \$5,000,000 grant that Georgia Ports Authority received from SAFETEA-LU. Mr. Warner listed the criteria for projects to use this funding. He showed the current rail loop for inbound intermodal trains which goes through the Dillard rail yard and on into several residential neighborhoods, which involves numerous road crossings. The solution is to build the other side of the "we" . This improvement would re-route the intermodal trains and avoid those residential neighborhoods and crossings. This is a \$7,000,000 project. Georgia Ports Authority has offered \$1,500,000 of it's SAFETEA-LU grant monies for the project. In addition to improved safety and reduced traffic delay and pollution, this project would enhance the port's efficiency and ensure more reliable inbound and outbound service.

Mr. Warner explained that this "we" construction does not eliminate the use of the current rail loop, but it significantly reduces the rail traffic on it by re-routing the longer intermodal trains to the new route. He listed all the street crossings currently affected that would be improved by this re-routing. Garden City, Savannah, Port Wentworth and portions of unincorporated Chatham County would all see major benefits. It is estimated the new route will save an average of seven hours per day of blocked roadways. Funding for this is a public/private partnership and does not affect funding on any other projects in the Long

Range Transportation Plan. The public funding portion is from SAFETEA-LU grant and the balance is from Norfolk Southern.

Mr. Russ Abolt asked what was being done to improve crossings in the area. Mr. Warner said that this project does not include that issue. That would be a different project.

Ms. Love reminded the Committee of the process for amending the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan. The first step of a two-step process is to authorize staff to proceed with further study of this project. In August the Policy Committee will vote on amending the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan and a Transportation Improvement Program amendment, as well.

It was moved and seconded to authorize staff to proceed with the process to amend the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan to include the Georgia Ports/Norfolk Southern project.

**Policy Committee Action: the motion to authorize staff to proceed with the process to amend the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan to include the Georgia Ports/Norfolk Southern project carried with none opposed.**

Mr. Liakakis asked that the crossings be inspected and repaired, especially at Gulfstream Rd. and in Garden City. He asked that Mr. Warner forward these concerns to the proper department. Mr. Warner will contact Joel Harrell in Atlanta on this issue.

Mr. Warner anticipates completion of the “wye” construction and operation by Oct/Nov 2009.

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

- **Action on TIP Amendment for Transit Section**
- **Action on TIP Amendment for Hutchinson Island Projects**
- **Action on TIP Amendment for additional planning (L230) funds (PI 0008964)**

Ms. Wykoda Wang reported on three amendments that were requested in May, one from the Chatham Area Transit, one from the Georgia International and Maritime Trade Center Authority and one from the MPO.

Transit Section Amendment: Mr. Joe Murray Rivers reported that this amendment is necessary in order for Chatham Area Transit to receive funds that are about to lapse. He asks approval in order to bring all the funds forward into this year’s TIP. The four funding categories affected are capital improvements, operational, job access/reverse commute, and the New Freedom program for transportation for the disabled community.

Hutchinson Island Projects Amendment: Mr. Bob Coffey, from the Georgia International Maritime Trade Center Authority (GIMTCA) presented the plan for the earmarked funds.

This project is the Riverwalk Extension - Waterferry Intermodal Facility. This project is part of the master plan for the Hutchinson Island river front. This facility includes parking, passenger waiting area, and water ferry stop. In addition, SPLOST funds are also authorized for use in the entire project. These funds should become available in 2011 or 2012.

Mr. Coffey reported that they are actively working to persuade CSX to waive the deed restriction so that planning for a large convention center headquarters hotel on Parcel 7 may proceed.

Ms. Wang noted that funds will be going through Chatham Area Transit for this project.

Additional planning funds amendment: Ms. Wang reported that this amendment is to fund MPO's strategic planning study. An amount of \$125,000 would be added to the TIP in FY 2009 for this study.

Ms. Wang noted that all three amendments were treated as major amendments and went through a 15-day public comment period. Ms. Wang reported that a minority of members of the Citizens Advisory Committee are against the Hutchinson Island project in protest of the principle of earmarked funds. Three of the eleven in attendance were against the project.

Mr. Liakakis opened the public hearing inviting public comment on these amendments. There being no public comments, the public hearing was closed.

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

**Policy Committee Action: the motion to approve the three amendments to the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program carried with none opposed. Mr. Rivers abstained.**

**D. Amendment to the FY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program for additional planning (L230) funds and revised Commuter Program activities**

Mr. Mark Wilkes reviewed two proposed revisions to the FY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program. The first change is to incorporate an additional \$125,000 of urban attributable funds toward transportation planning. These are the same funds that were just amended into the TIP.

The second change is to modify the description of activities under the Commuter Program. MPO staff plans to register the Coastal Commuters program name and logo in order to protect the program's identity.

It was moved and seconded to approve the amendment to the FY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program to include additional planning (L230) funds and to include revised text for the commuter program activities.

**Policy Committee Action: the motion to approve the amendment to the FY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program to include additional planning (L230) funds and to include revised text for the commuter program activities carried with none opposed.**

#### IV. Status Reports

##### A. Review of CUTS/MPO Project Prioritization for input into GDOT's Project Prioritization report to the Commissioner

Mr. Thomson presented this review to the committee. He referred the members to the written report and reviewed the tables. The purpose is to provide the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) with a list of priority projects and funding, and also to present to GDOT a united front, i.e. a consensus among the MPO members on the priority of projects. "Money comes to projects." Mr. Thomson believes that if the project is ready, it will get funded. Staff reviewed all the projects to determine when each project will be construction-ready and if there is money allocated in the program for the project. The period under review extends to 2012.

Mr. Thomson focused on Tables 1 through 4. The other tables relate to a time period beyond 2012.

- Table 1 contains projects that are approved and underway.
- Table 2 contains TIP priority and non-priority projects that are expected to be construction ready by FY 2012. He reviewed the specifics for all the projects in Table 2.
- Table 3 contains priority projects for economic development that came into the program from the state level. The Jimmy DeLoach Connector project needs to be added to this table.
- Table 4 contains projects that are the next step. This is the list of projects we would like to do once those in Tables 1, 2 and 3 are fulfilled.

Mr. Trip Tollison believes this task of ranking our projects in Chatham County is very important. Commissioner Abraham has said they'll be inquiring about community priorities. He interprets the Commissioner's charge as a charge to rank the projects one by one. Mr. Thomson said MPO staff has grouped the projects and ranked the groups. Mr. Tollison wants to take this committee's findings to the county and city. Mr. Thomson said that it is the Policy Committee's job to do this prioritization. This committee represents the cross-section of the county and city. Mr. Abolt commented that the county has already been involved in this. He disagrees with Mr. Tollison and believes that this body is the proper place to make this decision.

Mr. Morrell asked how often this would be updated. Mr. Thomson noted that staff has been updating the TIP annually, until this year. The TIP actually is a 4-year document. For

the past three years this board has reaffirmed the priority list that staff is working off of here.

Mr. Thomson suggested that if the board wants a detailed discussion on this list that a special meeting should be called before August. The final version will need to be approved at the August meeting.

Mr. Thomson prefers grouping the projects and not itemizing one by one. One by one ranking can be awkward because the MPO does not control all of the funding categories; the grouping method is more flexible. It's also easier to come to a consensus on groupings. Mr. Abolt urged the prioritization to be done by grouping.

Mr. Liakakis wants to know immediately when anything comes up that causes delays on any of our priority projects.

Mr. Thomson noted that in August, the prioritization tables are going to look very similar to the tables presented today. He is proposing that the board endorse this format.

Mr. Morrell recommended that board members review these tables. If they have any concerns they should communicate with Mr. Thomson or Mr. Liakakis. Mr. Thomson and Mr. Liakakis will decide if a special meeting is necessary to discuss this prioritization list.

## **B. Bicycle Policies and Design Guidelines**

Ms. Love presented this information in response to statements at the last meeting that it is time to look at bicycle policies and design. The full report was included in the meeting packet. Staff points out the difference between GDOT's policy for accommodating bicycles on roadways and the broader policies recommended by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and by the South Carolina Department of Transportation Commission. On design guidance, the state and local agencies refer to AASHTO's recommendations. Design involves a number of aspects that are too numerous to mention. For her report she included information on bike lane width and criteria for rumble strips since these are common concerns.

## **C. Proposed Lazaretto Creek Bridge Bikeway Cross-section & examples of alternatives**

Ms. Love presented this information in response to questions raised about the bikeway on this bridge at the previous meetings. She showed a cross-section of GDOT's proposed design which includes ten-foot bikeable shoulders. Past discussion has been about the possibility of adding a barrier to separate the bicycle traffic from automobile traffic. GDOT staff has said the barrier would be dangerous for motorists. Her report explained that GDOT staff is referring to their policy for horizontal clearance, which recommends a 10-foot clearance for roadways of this speed. An alternative that would satisfy this policy and provided a barrier would be a design that includes a ten-foot shoulder with a barrier at the outside, beyond which would be a minimum 5-foot bikeway with another barrier forming the edge of the bridge. One photograph in the report showed such a design. Another



photograph showed the bikeway on the outside of the bridge and below the grade of the roadway. A third photograph showed a stand-alone bikeway. To implement the first alternative on each side of the roadway would add more than 10 feet to the width of the currently proposed bridge. GDOT staff has said that the alternative of a stand-alone bikeway bridge would need some other funding source since the Department interprets the State constitution to mean that they cannot use revenue from motor fuel taxes on off-road paths and bridges. The federal Transportation Enhancement funds or Safe Routes for Schools funds are possible sources for a stand-alone bikeway.

#### **D. Chatham County Interstate Needs Analysis**

Mr. Matthew Fowler, from GDOT, made the presentation of this GDOT study of the interstate roadways to determine any needed improvements, prioritize the projects, and develop cost estimates for the projects. This needs analysis should be viewed as a “wish list” and can be used in conjunction with the development of the next Long Range Transportation Plan. It does not include any funding sources.

In the planning level twenty seven analysis areas were identified. From this, twelve were selected and prioritized and taken to the conceptual engineering level. There were four rounds of stakeholder/public outreach meetings. Mr. Fowler listed the criteria used for selecting the analysis areas. The needed improvements were grouped into widening projects and interchange projects. Mr. Fowler reviewed each project, itemizing the projected costs and showed renderings of the area “as is” and after recommended improvements. He explained that his costs include preliminary engineering, right-of-way and construction.

Costs for the widening projects -	\$307,250,000.00
Costs for interchange projects -	\$332,000,000.00
Total Cost estimated at	\$639,250,000.00

The next step is to finalize the report, post it on the GDOT website, and provide the final report to this board.

Regarding the recommended improvements for the interchange at I-95 and SR 204, Mr. Thomson voiced MPO staff’s suggestion to achieve the limited access functionality east of I-95 by constructing frontage roads at the Gateway Blvd. intersection instead of the at-grade intersection shown in GDOT’s diagram. Mr. Fowler said they will look at that alternative in the final report.

Mr. Jon Todd said there is a need for better signage on I-516, west of the I-17 interchange, to give east-bound motorists earlier warning that the exit for I-16 is coming up. Mr. Fowler said he would forward the suggestion to operations division.

**V. Member presentation – Tybee Island Transportation Issues**

Mr. Jason Buelterman, Mayor of Tybee Island, spoke to the board about three Tybee Island transportation issues that affect island residents and visitors.

Tybee Rd. (Lazaretto Bridge & Bull River Bridge): Mayor Buelterman requested that replacement of these bridges be moved up on the priority list regardless of where the widening of Tybee Rd. is placed on the priority list. This road and these bridges represent the only route on and off the island. This is significant because of the potential for hurricane and storm surge activity. He highlighted historical hurricane activity in the area. Although most hurricanes have bypassed the Georgia coast in the last half-century, there were decades prior in which this coast appeared to be the target of many hurricanes. Besides evacuation needs, this is the only route for medical emergency services. There is no way to turn around on the bridges when faced with an accident or traffic congestion.

Bicycle lanes: Mayor Buelterman requested segregated bike lanes on the bridges along one side to hook up to "Rails to Trails". This would require only five extra feet of roadway width. There are bikers riding along Tybee Rd. and across the bridges all the time which is very dangerous.

Crosswalks: He requested of GDOT that crosswalks be put in the area as you come onto the Island. There is a growing business district in this area and they would like one or two crosswalks there so that people can cross safely. GDOT has not approved this request citing inadequate advance time to warn motorists of an upcoming crosswalk. In the fall the City of Tybee Island is going to put numerous crosswalks along Butler Ave. Mayor Buelterman does not see any difference in the nature of the two business districts.

**VI. Agency Reports**

**A. Georgia Department of Transportation**

Ms. Teresa Scott reported that all projects were moving along. A public hearing is expected in the fall on the Ogeechee Rd. widening project. The delay of the Skidaway Narrows bridge project is because they are getting the environmental document prepared. It is moving forward.

Mr. Brad Saxon wished to clarify that bridge sufficiency ratings take into account the fact that a bridge is the only access route, as in the case of the Lazaretto Creek Bridge and Bull River Bridge. This means that the Lazaretto Creek Bridge, with a rating of 51, is not as structurally deficient as one might think.

## **B. Chatham County**

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

Whitfield Avenue widening - right-of-way funding will be certified this month.  
Truman Pkwy Phase V– most demolition is complete. It will be ready for construction this year but the TIP funds it in 2010.

In response to Mr. Todd's question about debris on shoulders hindering bicyclists, Mr. Abolt said that debris along county roads and bridges is taken care of by the ongoing county maintenance plan. The continuous debris on the roads is due to high use, not from neglect.

## **C. City of Savannah**

### **i. Traffic Engineering**

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

- Gwinnett St. Widening – public open house was held last month.
- Chatham Parkway/Chatham Center Dr. – signals were operational on May 21, 2008.
- Chatham Parkway/Southern Blvd. – design phase with the consultant has just begun.
- Middleground Rd. – traffic signals just became operational.

### **ii. Project DeRenne**

Ms. Susan Broker reported that the traffic count analysis will be completed in early July. Travel surveys and market analysis of the corridor are on-going. They met with MedStar regarding the ambulance pre-emption devices. They reported saving 5-6 minutes per run. August 12, 2008 is the first public workshop for Project DeRenne. She noted that GDOT is on board with this committee and Project DeRenne.

## **D. Chatham Area Transit**

Mr. Rivers announced a public hearing tomorrow evening on the environmental document for the proposed Transit Center. Following the public hearing the document will be submitted to FTA for final approval.

Mr. Rivers reported a monthly increase in ridership for the downtown DOT service. Two new streetcars should be online in August.

**E. Georgia Ports Authority**

No report at this time.

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

Mr. George Fidler reported that a major taxiway extension is under construction. An extension of crosswind runway is under design. Airways Ave. will be resurfaced in August. Passenger numbers continue to increase. The new parking structure is doing well. Additional signage was installed.

**VII. Other Business**

No other business at this time.

**VIII. Other Public Comments**

No public comments at this time.

**IX. Adjournment**

There being no other business to come before the Committee, the June 25, 2008 Policy Committee was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

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