



CHATHAM URBAN TRANSPORTATION STUDY

**POLICY COMMITTEE
MEETING SUMMARY**

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

August 27, 2008

10:00 A.M.

Voting Members

Representing

Present

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

Voting Member Alternates

Representing

Present

Matthew Fowler	GDOT	X
Diane Schleicher	City of Tybee Island	X
Trip Tollison	Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce	X
Randy Weitman	Georgia Ports Authority	X

Ex-officio Members

Representing

Present

Sonny Timmerman	Hinesville Area MPO	
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<u>Others Present</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Present</u>
Michael Adams	MPO Staff	X
Susan Broker	City of Savannah	X
Leon Davenport, P.E.	Chatham County	X
Jane Love	MPO Staff	X
Nathan Mai-Lombardo	Garden City	X
Kyle Mote	GDOT	X
Brad Saxon	GDOT - Jesup	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
Pamela Trowbridge, E.I.T.	Chatham County	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 August 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 for the August 27, 2008 meeting carried with none opposed.

II. Committee Reports

A. Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation

Mr. McArthur Jarrett, Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation (ACAT) reported that at the August meeting ACAT endorsed the three action items: 1) amendment to the Chatham Urban Transportation Study/Metropolitan Planning Organization (CUTS/MPO) Participation Plan, 2) amendment to the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan and the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program to include the rail project, and 3) the CUTS/MPO prioritization list for input into GDOT's prioritization report to the Commissioner. Mr. Jarrett also reported that ACAT held their annual election where he was re-elected as Chairperson and Ms. Teresa Brenner was elected as Vice-Chairperson. The Teleride Customer Handbook is nearing completion and should be distributed to consumers by the end of August or beginning of September. The

handbook will be placed in Chatham Area Transit (CAT) ticket areas, and other formats will be available as well.

B. Citizens Advisory Committee

Mr. John Bennett, Chairman of the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) reported that the CAC held annual elections at which time he was elected the new Chairperson and Mr. Henry Levy was elected Vice-Chairperson. The committee endorsed the amendment to the Participation Plan and the amendment to include the Norfolk Southern project in the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan and the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Program. Mr. Thompson had led the committee through an exercise in prioritizing projects to be included in a report to GDOT. Also at their meeting, the CAC passed a motion, advanced by Mr. Levy, to recommend that the Policy Committee take every opportunity to advance the concept of 4-lane bridges with barrier-separated bikeways along US 80 at Bull River and Lazaretto Creek.

C. Technical Coordinating Committee

Mr. Mark Wilkes reported that the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) endorsed revisions to the Participation Plan and endorsed the amendment to the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan and the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program to include the Norfolk Southern rail project. The TCC also reviewed and prioritized the short list of projects ready for construction by 2012 to be included in a report to GDOT.

D. Executive Director's Status Report

Mr. Tom Thomson introduced the newest member to the MPO staff, Mr. Michael Adams. Mr. Adams will focus his attention on traffic impact analyses studies and working with CAT on transit planning and projects.

Mr. Thomson highlighted upcoming important dates included in a handout to the members. GDOT Commissioner Gena Evans and Georgia Regional Transportation Authority Executive Director Dick Anderson will be in Savannah for a listening session on September 23, 2008 from 4:00-7:00 PM at Coastal Georgia Center. And, on November 6, 2008 there will be a Transportation Summit in Atlanta.

Mr. Thomson focused on a paragraph on page 4 in a memo from the Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG). "The State Auditor identified a preliminary FY08 \$1.2 billion deficit at the department, along with serious accounting deficiencies." GDOT staff recently reported reducing this deficit to between \$100 million - \$500 million. Since this is last year's budget, the agency expects to make up the deficit from FY09 funds. This will shrink the FY09 program. Mr. Thomson pointed out this memo includes the Governor's directive to propose cuts in general fund programs. This may directly affect transit.

Over the last year we've heard a lot about GDOT being short \$8 billion in a 4-year period. This over-commitment made by GDOT is not included in the above statement.

On the national front, the Bush administration has put forward their proposal for the next surface transportation act. Action on it is questionable since Bush will not be President much longer, but there is one item of particular interest. This proposal recommends replacing MPOs with Metropolitan Transportation Boards, but only in population centers of 500,000 or more. MPOs would be eliminated altogether in smaller population centers. Mr. Thomson expects this proposal to be resisted by the many areas, (particularly in GA, FL & TX) that currently have MPOs but would not qualify for the new board under the population criteria. He expects the 500,000 minimum to drop to 250,000 or 300,000 before this is settled.

The MPO has received a request from Mayor Buelterman of Tybee Island to separate the Bull River and Lazaretto Creek bridge replacements from the US 80 widening project. This will be discussed later in the agenda.

Chairman Liakakis encouraged people to attend the September 23, 2008 meeting for the State's listening session. Mr. Russ Abolt asked Mr. Thomson to coordinate government agency participation at this meeting in order to effectively bring issues before the Commissioner.

III. Action Items

A. Approval of June 25, 2008 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

It was moved and seconded to approve the June 25, 2008 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes.

Policy Committee Action: the motion to approve the June 25, 2008 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes carried with none opposed.

B. Approval of amendment to CUTS/MPO Participation Plan

Ms. Wykoda Wang explained to the committee that this amendment became necessary when the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) implemented a revised amendment process for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Ms. Wang noted that the entire Appendix G was replaced to reflect the revisions. She highlighted the following major changes:

1. There will be no distinctions between major amendments and minor amendments. All amendments will be treated in the same way – 15 day comment period and response to all comments.

2. GDOT instead of the MPO will be responsible for notifications of all the administrative modifications.

In addition, the MPO staff also made some minor revisions:

1. Updated Measures of Effectiveness (MOEs) of the MPO's participation process.
2. Updated media, neighborhood and public review agency contact information.

During the 45-day public comment period, which ends today, she received three comments so far.

1. An angry citizen complained about a spelling error in the televised advertisement. Ms. Wang has checked all the copy she sent and found no error. Since the woman did not leave a telephone number, Ms. Wang was not able to contact her.
2. A member of the Citizens Advisory Committee felt the document (82 pages) is so lengthy and dry that the general public will not bother with it which is why there have not been any substantive comments about it. Ms. Wang stated that they made an effort to simplify this document using plain language and illustrative photos, but she has not found a way to address the length of the document.
3. The third comment is from the Savannah Tree Foundation. They have requested that a definition of Context Sensitive Design be included in the Appendix in the Transportation Planning Glossary. Ms. Wang confirmed that this would be done.

Chairman Liakakis opened the public hearing portion of the meeting for comments on this revised plan. There being no comment at this time, the public hearing was closed.

Mr. Abolt asked how such a participation process as was just described would be handled if the Bush administration proposal to dissolve MPOs becomes effective. Mr. Thomson did not know the actual answer but suggested that for our community it would likely be referred to the MPC.

It was moved and seconded to approve the amendment to the CUTS/MPO Participation Plan.

Policy Committee Action: the motion to approve the amendment to the CUTS/MPO Participation Plan carried with none opposed.

C. Actions related to the proposed Norfolk Southern/Georgia Ports Authority Rail Project

Ms. Jane Love reminded the committee that at the CUTS/MPO June meeting staff was authorized to proceed with the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) amendment process to include the proposed rail project. She drew the committee's attention to the

portion of the staff report that explains how the rail project would have positive impacts relating to the planning factors in the Plan. Therefore, at this time, staff recommends amending the 2030 LRTP to include the project and also amending the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to include the project so that construction may begin. No right-of-way acquisition is necessary since the entire project is on Norfolk Southern property.

Ms. Wang added that today is the final day of the 15-day public comment period for this amendment.

Chairman Liakakis opened the public hearing. There being no comments, the public hearing was closed.

Ms. Diane Schleicher made a motion to amend the LRTP to include the Bull River Bridge and Lazaretto Creek Bridge as separate projects from the U.S. 80 widening.

Mr. Thomson explained that, according to Roberts Rule, this motion was out of order. The proposal currently under discussion has gone through the proper amendment process. Mr. Thomson noted that the bridge projects are already consistent with the LRTP because they were part of the widening which is in the Plan. He believes that the Mayor would really like to have them moved into the short-term plan, i.e. the TIP. While that would be a valid motion, this is not the time for it.

Mr. Thomson also said that bridges are rated by structural deficiency. Currently neither of these bridges is classified as "deficient," which means it will be difficult to convince the State to make them a priority. Also, to put these bridges into this TIP, other projects would need to be removed. A good time to discuss this would be during development of the next TIP.

Mr. Matthew Fowler confirmed that GDOT anticipates developing new STIP for the period beginning with FY 2010 (i.e. developing the document next spring). Mr. Thomson noted that waiting for the new TIP would probably provide them more information on GDOT funding resources, but it wouldn't hurt to put it in the pipeline now in the form of an amendment to the current TIP.

Ms. Schleicher spoke to the safety issues of the current 2-lane bridges and how 4-lane bridges would improve the safety level. Mr. Thomson stated that one way to accelerate the project would be to make it a toll road. This would expedite the funding. Mr. Thomson is expecting less government funding in the future.

Chairman Liakakis commented that funding is the problem across the board. Heavy lobbying from all the Georgia elected officials as a combined force could put pressure on the federal government for transportation dollars.

Ms. Schleicher withdrew her motion.

It was moved and seconded to approve the amendment to the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan and the amendment to the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program to include the Norfolk Southern/Georgia Ports Authority rail project.

Policy Committee Action: the motion to approve the amendment to the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan and the amendment to the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program to include the Norfolk Southern/Georgia Ports Authority rail project carried with none opposed.

D. Approval of CUTS/MPO Project Prioritization for Input into GDOT's Project Prioritization report to the Commissioner

Mr. Thomson reviewed the history of the MPO's effort to select and re-affirm the area's priority projects to be included in a report to GDOT Commissioner Gena Evans. These priorities include only projects that will be ready for construction by 2012. This list does not include transit projects, which is a separate funding category. However, the transit priorities from the TIP would be re-iterated in the communication to GDOT. Also, he decided not to include bridge and intersection projects since their funding is allocated from different sources, and through a different benefit/cost ratio comparison, and he is comfortable with that methodology. The Skidaway Narrows bridge is an exception. He also had engaged the Technical Coordinating Committee and Citizens Advisory Committee in a ranking process. Mr. Thomson displayed the ranking results and said that the technical committee and the citizens' committee ranked the projects very similarly. This priority list is consistent with the current TIP.

The focus is on ten (10) projects, divided into three groups, totaling \$247,896,523:

Group 1 – total cost: \$181,833,193

- Skidaway Narrows Bridge Replacement
- Truman Pkwy., Phase V
- SR 26/US 80/Ogeechee Rd. widening

Group 2 – total cost: \$40,110,090

- Whitfield Ave. widening
- SR 307/Dean Forest Rd. (US17 to I-16) widening
- Gwinnett St. widening

The widening of Dean Forest Rd. may be funded from SPLOST instead of federal funds. Garden City is making improvements which will include a portion of Dean Forest Rd., so the county is looking into other options, including SPLOST. It is still a priority, although the use of SPLOST funds could free up some federal funds for other projects.

Group 3 – total cost: \$25,953,240.00

- Grange Rd. widening
- Gulfstream Rd. widening

- Robert B. Miller Rd. widening
- SR 307/Dean Forest Rd. (R. B. Miller to SR 21)

It is possible that the Gulfstream Rd. and Robert B. Miller Rd. widening projects will be changed to intersection improvements. GDOT says the Governor's commitment is only \$5 million, which is not enough for widening. The Gulfstream project is of special interest to the Governor. Chairman Liakakis reported that originally the State wanted the County to pay a majority, but since it was of special interest to the Governor because of present and future Gulfstream expansion the State agreed to pay for it and that it should not affect other county/city projects. Mr. Brad Saxon reported that the \$5 million commitment was made by former Commissioner Linnenkohl. The Governor is aware that due to present fiscal constraints GDOT representatives have met numerous times with Gulfstream over this issue. Gulfstream has agreed to the intersection improvements but is still not happy with the commitment level.

Mr. Thomson concluded his report by noting that the two tables contain every project that will be construction-ready by 2012. Mr. Thomson has been told by the chief engineer at GDOT that there will only be \$500 million available state-wide for construction next year (FY 2009). The best we can do is to tell them we are ready and that we have priorities.

It was moved and seconded to approve the CUTS/MPO Project Prioritization Report for input into GDOT's Project Prioritization report to the Commissioner.

Policy Committee Action: the motion to approve the CUTS/MPO Project Prioritization Report for input into GDOT's Project Prioritization report to the Commissioner carried with none opposed.

IV. Status Reports

A. Call for projects for JARC and New Freedom funds

Ms. Wang presented the staff report. Staff called for projects as part of a process to ensure that the transit funds for our area are properly applied for and received. Currently the #2 and #6 bus lines, as well as the water ferry, are funded by the federal Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) funds. These funds are needed to continue service. The JARC program is designed to provide transportation services to help low-income populations and welfare recipients get to work, and the New Freedom funds are designed to provide transportation services to the disabled communities to facilitate their job-related travel.

To ensure we receive these funds, we must have a competitive project selection process. Staff offered to help CAT, as the designated recipient, complete the application process. There are six steps in the process:

1. Designated recipient letter on file
2. Projects must be derived from a local coordinated plan

3. Projects must be in the current TIP/STIP
4. Approved State Management/Program Management Plan
5. Projects must be selected from a competitive selection process
6. Program of projects

Last year steps 1-4 were accomplished. This year the remaining steps were completed. The MPO advertised and notified various agencies requesting proposed projects for consideration. Any agency other than CAT would be considered a sub-recipient. Four projects were submitted as follows:

- #2 West Chatham route (Crossroad Business Center portion) – CAT, request for JARC funds.
- #6 Cross-town route – CAT, request for JARC funds.
- Savannah Belles Ferry Service – CAT, request for JARC funds.
- Coastal Center for Developmental Services (CCDS) Accessible Taxi Program - CCDS, request for New Freedom funds

The Stakeholder Resource Group ranked and evaluated all four proposals against criteria established in the Coordinated Plan and made the recommendation to grant the requested funding to all four proposals. Ms. Wang noted that members of the Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation (ACAT) questioned who evaluated these projects and who was included in the call for projects. Ms. Wang explained what agencies were involved in the process.

Ms. Wang presented to the committee a sample of the Program for Projects. All this funding requires a local match which is coming from Chatham Area Transit. Ms. Wang commented that CAT has submitted the applications and they have been reviewed by FTA.

Mr. Jarrett expressed concern on behalf of ACAT that not everyone interested was included in this call for projects. He would like to review the list of those contacted with the idea of ensuring that all are included in the future. Ms. Wang responded by explaining how the Stakeholder Resource Group was developed. They also advertised and involved the ACAT and CAC. As time was of the essence they used the Resource Group List they have on hand. She pointed out that certain advocacy groups are not eligible for these funds because they do not have the capability to provide transportation services; only specific government agencies are eligible. She recommended that an advocacy group, such as Mr. Jarrett was suggesting, join together with an eligible agency to obtain in the project funds.

Mr. Rivers explained that this time the process was rushed so that three years of funds were not lost by the looming deadline. In the future JARC and New Freedom funding will be applied for in a timely basis, and ACAT and others will be advised of any future funding opportunities.

V. Agency Reports

A. Georgia Department of Transportation

Ms. Teresa Scott referred members to the written report and asked for questions. She reported that on Projects #1 & #2 (Gulfstream Rd. and Robert B. Miller Rd.) they are negotiating contracts. Plans are complete for the reconstruction of the Welcome Center (#7) and have been turned over to the firm that will let the project. It is not being let by GDOT and is now out of GDOT's hands. Ogeechee Rd. (#8) should have a public hearing this fall. The Diamond Causeway Bridge Replacement (#13) is anticipated for letting to contract in FY 2009. The project to install barriers/guard rails in various locations along I-16 and I-516 will be let this month.

B. Chatham County

Mr. Leon Davenport referred to the written report handed out earlier and highlighted the following;

Truman Pkwy. – almost all parcels are acquired. Most demolition is complete.
Whitfield Ave. – right-of-way plans are approved; still have a few funding questions with GDOT.

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 – ready for construction
- Gwinnett St. Widening – ready for construction.
- Traffic signal at Chatham Pkwy. – construction anticipated end of 2008
- Abercorn St. & Arts Dr. – traffic signal went operational 7/15/08
- Audible Push Buttons – 4 signalized intersections were upgraded

Mr. Brown requested that the “Gwinnett St. Widening” project be called “Gwinnett St. Curve Elimination,” which more correctly describes the nature of the project and avoids confusion with other projects.

ii. Project DeRenne

Ms. Susan Broker reported that the City had conducted their first public meeting for Project DeRenne, and she was very pleased with the attendance. The next public meeting will be October 21. She anticipates reporting in January 2009 on potential alternatives for the DeRenne corridor.

Mr. Brown commented on the diversity and high level of participation at the recent public meeting. It is his hope that this project can be used as a format for future projects similar to Project DeRenne.

Ms. Broker commented on the positive participation from hospitals and public schools and Hunter Army Airfield.

D. Chatham Area Transit

Mr. Rivers reported that progress has been made with Greyhound for the site acquisition. If progress continues, there could be ground breaking by the end of this year.

The new customer Ride Guide is due out on October 15, 2008.

Mr. Rivers also reported continued difficulties with state funds. Whatever grants CAT has received, the state match has not been adequate.

E. Georgia Ports Authority

No report at this time.

F. Savannah-Hilton Head International Airport

No report at this time.

VI. Other Business

Ms. Schleicher asked for endorsement from the MPO to have staff research the possibility of the replacement of the bridges to Tybee Island being separated from the larger US 80 widening project with the intent of expediting the bridge replacements.

It was so moved and seconded.

PC Committee Action: the motion to ask the MPO staff to research the possibility of the replacement of the bridges to Tybee Island being separated from the larger US 80 widening project with the intent of expediting the bridge replacements carried with none opposed.

Ms. Schleicher reported that the developing commercial corridor along US 80 near First Street on Tybee Island's north end has requested some type of pedestrian safety measures. In dialog with GDOT they have requested either a crosswalk or flashing light or signage or traffic signal, or any combination in order to safely accommodate pedestrian and bicycle crossing of US 80. The businesses in the area have prepared and signed a petition and Ms. Schleicher presented it to the Policy Committee for inclusion in the

meeting record. The cover letter of the petition reads as follows and the signature pages are on file (attached):

“The attached petitions and signatures represent the businesses and employees in the business area on Highway 80/First Street on Tybee Island’s north end. This area is part of the “Arts, Eats, Ecotourism Area” in the City of Tybee Island’s Master Plan document. The Master Plan specifically notes that efforts should be made to enhance both pedestrian and bicycle utility specifically to support business development. The restaurants, small shops, and galleries occupy sites on both sides of Highway 80. Even good enforcement of the 35 mile an hour speed limit leaves many pedestrian unwilling to risk crossing in all the traffic, which is nearly non-stop on busy days. Without at least a marked cross-walk with a safety island in the middle of the street, tragic loss of life looks like an inevitability.

These petitions were only circulated among the businesses in the area so the numbers are small compared to the overall island population, but nearly every business is represented here.

Thank you for your prompt action to alleviate these safety concerns.”

City of Tybee Island is requesting someone from GDOT to come down and make suggestions on appropriate pedestrian safety measures for the location.

VII. Other Public Comments

No public comments at this time.

VIII. Adjournment

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

Respectfully submitted,

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