
<u>Others Present</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Present</u>
Michael Adams	MPO Staff	X
Susan Broker	City of Savannah	X
Rob Hume	Kimley-Horn & Associates	X
Jane Love	MPO Staff	X
Nathan Mai-Lombardo	Garden City	X
Teresa Scott	GDOT-Jesup	X
Barbara Settzo	for MPO	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
Tara Witcher	Business Report & Journal	X

Call to Order

Chairman Pete Liakakis called the October 22, 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 October 22, 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 October meeting ACAT endorsed the amendment to the FY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program. Revisions to the Teleride Handbook to include suggestions from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) were approved. Status reports were heard including an update on the Regional Meetings. The committee had an open discussion with city staffers on the subject of accessible taxis and the proposed city ordinance relating to taxis. Agency reports from First Transit and Chatham Area Transit (CAT) were also presented to the committee.

B. Citizens Advisory Committee

Mr. John Bennett, Chairman of the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) reported that the committee endorsed the amendment to the FY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program. The meeting was brief, but there was some discussion about the practical impact of what was occurring at the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), and what effect that was having on things on the ground here.

C. Technical Coordinating Committee

Mr. Mark Wilkes reported that the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) endorsed the amendment to the FY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program.

D. Executive Director's Status Report

Mr. Liakakis noted that Mr. Thomson would be combining his Executive Director's Status Report with agenda items IV-A Update on Regional Meetings and item IV-B Legislative Program.

Mr. Tom Thomson reported on the Texas trip which he attended with representatives of GDOT, State Road & Toll Authority (SRTA), Atlanta Regional Commission, Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA), representatives from the Atlanta Chamber, and Governor Perdue. The purpose was to learn what Texas was doing in regard to public/private initiatives and toll roads. They met with Texas DOT, different investment companies, the North Texas Toll Authority and the Trinity Transit System. In Texas all new roads are being built as toll roads, either through public/private initiatives or as one of the Toll Authority roadways. This trip was very useful for the Atlanta representatives because GDOT has applied for the federal Urban Partnership program funds, and may get some money to convert high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes to high-occupancy toll (HOT) lanes in Atlanta. Follow-up included a meeting with the Governor to discuss the trip. It is clear that Atlanta is the focus and other areas need to do all they can to bring attention to their needs. The port was discussed but only in its relation to Atlanta.

He sent a copy of a memo to everyone that he sent to the coordinators of *Get Georgia Moving* program about regional mobility authorities. This is different from the idea that was developed about five years ago. This is modeled on Texas which allows local governments to come together to form a regional mobility authority, which is basically a toll authority, and to enter into public/private partnerships or build toll roads in their area.

Mr. Thomson and others met with Lieutenant Governor Casey Cagle when he was in Savannah. Mr. Cagle has pledged to work with *Get Georgia Moving* to produce a transportation solution in the next legislative session. He mentioned the channel deepening project and gave examples of how congestion affects the job market. He supports a state-wide transportation plan and talked about strategies available such as public/private initiatives and toll roads. He also spoke about the need to address GDOT organization problems and look at transit and other options. Mr. Thomson believes Mr. Cagle is raising the profile of transportation issues.

He passed out a copy of county legislative priorities and noted Item #3 - Monitor development of new transportation infra-structure, funding policies, and advocate for inclusion in support of public transportation – as one of the Chatham County legislative program items. He doesn't know what the city's legislative priorities are at this point.

Mr. Thomson also mentioned that he has attended a couple of GDOT Board meetings in the past months. They talked about balancing the 2009 budget by matching federal money with borrowed money, deferring payback of advance construction funding to the general fund, etc. which allows the 2009 budget to have a \$1 billion letting program. The Board also passed the 2010 budget which is less than the 2009 budget by \$87 million. They have a construction program of \$1 billion in the current budget proposal. The local road aid program is about \$200 million. The whole budget is about \$2.3 billion; a lot of that will be borrowed money. They did not discuss how they were going to balance the 2010 budget. They are getting pressure not to reduce state aid to local governments. The alternative is to lay off about 600 people. They did not get into the details at the time.

Another discussion they had related to the Project Prioritization. The GDOT Board has told Commissioner Gena Evans that they want a big say in project selection. An option is that 50% of the money would be used for board-selected projects and 50% would be used for priority system-selected projects. The Commissioner explained that the available money is divided by the 13 congressional districts and then split between maintenance and capacity-building. Her point was that, if another division step, such as the 50-50 split proposed by the Board, is added to the process, then the resulting allocations would be so negligible that they are not even enough to do an urban interchange.

Mr. Thomson noted that the Commissioner said that in the prioritization they intend to deduct the monies spent thus far and then divide the remainder by 13 for the congressional district balancing. Mr. Thomson believes that methodology is unfair to us. They should allocate what has been already spent by each district; take what's left and allocate so that the total spent in each district is the same. For instance, a lot may have already been spent in Atlanta, yet they would still get some of the remainder even if they've spent their whole share already. Mr. Thomson plans to e-mail the Commissioner on this point.

In November the Commissioner will return to the State Board with more specific recommendations.

Mr. Thomson drew attention to a letter from Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to GDOT indicating that FHWA would not approve anymore funding authorizations for projects until GDOT balances their State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) and all the individual MPO Transportation Improvement Plans (TIP). Mr. Thomson has spoken with the chief engineer and his staff is working on it and will be in contact with the MPO soon. Mr. Thomson is anticipating that fewer projects listed in the 4-year TIP will be funded than are funded now. When asked to elaborate, Mr. Thomson explained that of the 6 or so projects in the MPO's TIP that were programmed for construction, some may be dropped from GDOT's work program because of less funding. If the legislature acts the picture could improve. They will not withdraw funding that was approved and is there, but our expectations for top priority projects could be effected. The state recognizes that they can't shut down the preliminary engineering and right-of-way funding completely and keep the process going for future construction years. Truman Parkway could be a question mark as to when it will get done.

The state has a number of studies underway – Project Prioritization Study, Investing in Tomorrow's Transportation Today (IT-3 Study), and State Road and Toll Authority's Northwest Tollway Study. Mr. Thomson plans to invite the project managers and consulting firms to speak to the Policy Committee in December. The Project Prioritization Study is important because it prescribes how the Commissioner plans to select projects for funding. Chatham County/Savannah will be competing with other urban areas, excluding Atlanta, for funding. They are trying to get the DOT Board to approve business rules. Of interest to us would be the idea of using SPLOST funds to "buy the priority" i.e. if you can locally fund 40% of the project the project will get points that move it up the priority list. Mr. Thomson has reminded GDOT not to overlook the federal rules governing MPOs concerning local prioritization process. Equity and balance is still a question. Mr. Thomson does not believe congressional boundaries are the way to manage equity in the transportation program.

Mr. Thomson and MPO staff attended the IT-3 listening session held in Savannah. The outcome will be a strategic document using projects as examples of the strategic process. At the last board meeting it was noted that Georgia is near the bottom of the list of states in terms of investment in transportation. Georgia is way below the national level. They are examining state resources and opportunities for enhancing those resources. We need to watch how they collect and distribute resources so that it is fair. For the first time the established goals and objectives are being tied to investment, i.e. projects will be selected that meet the goals and objectives.

For December Mr. Thomson has invited the State Road and Toll Authority (SRTA) to present to the Policy Committee. They have been working with the port and the MPO on their value pricing study on the Northwest Tollway. Their concept is ready to present to the public. This project would bridge SR 21 and create a commuter route that could connect with the Effingham Parkway to create a longer commuter route, thus providing more capacity for truck movement on the portion of SR 21 at grade and address congestion at SR 21 & I-95. The Governor is very involved on some of these decisions and is a member of the SRTA board.

The *Get Georgia Moving* coalition has met many times. They supported last year's bill that almost passed and still support it with minor changes: the role of GDOT would be as the receiver of funds with local governments contracting with GDOT, and that the funds would be kept in separate accounts. They support the regional solution as opposed to the statewide solution. Mr. Thomson does not believe a regional tax solution will solve the transportation problem, as it would be difficult for multiple counties to put a 1% sales tax referendum on the ballot and pass it. Secondly, the process for selecting projects ignores the MPO process and should be improved. Thirdly, Mr. Thomson sees merit in combining a T-SPLOST with a regional mobility authority. A local agency is better situated for implementing and overseeing local transportation interests especially when the income stream is generated by local voters and not by a state-wide action. As an example, Chatham & Effingham Counties could create a regional mobility authority and with such authority they could do toll projects. The legislature could say that the regional mobility

authority could implement the T-SPLOST. If only Chatham wants the tax, then the money would be spent in Chatham by the regional mobility authority, but Effingham would still be a member of the regional mobility authority and the authority could do a toll road. The regional mobility authority idea would allow a lot of local decision making, flexibility and local oversight of the monies.

The Coastal Georgia Regional Development Center is working towards converting from a regional council to a regional commission. They are trying to adopt the regional comprehensive plan and trying to put in place the regional commission. He may be returning to this committee to discuss how our partnership with this group is evolving.

Mr. Thomson said he had been asked at another meeting if the “regional transportation meetings” would resume. He anticipates a meeting of the group in early 2009 with a focus on legislation and regional organization and coordination.

Mr. Abolt suggested we are better served on legislative issues to stay connected through our representation on various statewide boards, such as Association of County Commissions in Georgia (ACCG) and Georgia Municipal Association (GMA). The problem is so severe at this time that local MPOs and regional entities will not be paid any attention or be very effective.

Mr. Liakakis expressed concern about a possible reorganization of the appointment methods for the State Transportation Board, with members being appointed by the Governor. Such a method could result in a loss of influence and representation for us.

III. Action Items

A. Approval of August 27, 2008 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

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

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

B. Approval of amendment to the FY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program for Additional Section 5303 Transit Planning Funds

Mr. Mark Wilkes reported that the requested action is to approve an amendment to move unobligated FTA Section 5303 funds from FY07 and FY08 to this year’s work program. It is proposed to use the funds for general transit/paratransit planning and the Long Range Plan. They are currently coordinating with CAT to develop a work program for these tasks.

It was moved and seconded to approve the amendment to the FY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program for additional Section 5303 Transit Planning Funds.

Policy Committee Action: the motion to approve the amendment to the FY 2009 Unified Planning Work Program for additional Section 5303 Transit Planning Funds carried with none opposed.

IV. Status Reports

A. Update on Regional Meetings

This item was combined with Mr. Thomson's Executive Director's Report.

B. Legislative Program

This item was combined with Mr. Thomson's Executive Director's Report.

V. Agency Reports

A. Georgia Department of Transportation

Ms. Teresa Scott referred the committee members to the written report and then highlighted the following projects:

#4 – Whitfield Ave. – some right-of-way funds have been authorized so they are beginning the right-of-way phase.

#8 – Ogeechee Rd. – The GDOT Office of Environment and Location has received more comments from FHWA; they are addressing those comments so they can move forward with a public hearing. Mr. Liakakis asked Ms. Scott to take his complaint about extensive length of time spent on environmental concerns to “the powers that be”. Ms. Scott anticipates the public hearing may be in January. Mr. Liakakis wants to know the process and the specific reasons for the delay. Ms. Scott commented that the environmental justice issues, which is part of the total environmental process, took the most time. She agreed with the committee that environmental justice issues have now been settled. Mr. Michael Brown noted that the focus is on the north side alignment which would impact four or five properties. When asked for a definition of environmental justice, Ms. Scott replied that a thorough examination was required whenever the taking of property and subsequent relocation of low-income residents was involved, to ensure that this group bore no disproportionate levels of costs or benefits from the project. That was the main issue in this area.

#11 – SR 307 overpass – moving forward with right-of-way and final plans.

#13 – Bridge Replacement over Skidaway Narrows – still working on the environmental document; anticipating a letting in April 2009. The work being done in the area now is county work.

#17 – Truman Parkway – the county has acquired all the property with the possible exception of one. Certification is expected next month.

#32 – I-16/I-95 interchange lighting – Pooler has the agreement and has decided the agreement will be between Pooler and GDOT. Pooler will then do inter-governmental agreements with Savannah and Chatham County. Ms. Scott believes it is a money issue with Pooler. As of today, there is no signed agreement. Mr. Liakakis will attend a Pooler city council meeting to ask about this. Ms. Scott noted the issue is energy costs and that she understood that the City of Savannah agreed to pay 25% and Chatham County agreed to pay 25% of the energy bill. There was a question as to the amount of the expected energy costs for this interchange.

#37 – U.S. 80 @ Truman Parkway – intersection improvement; preparing for the preliminary field plan review

#44 – Effingham Parkway – they are finalizing the concept report for a final concept meeting.

Mr. Trip Tollison reported that he was told six weeks ago that the federal funding for the Welcome Center (project #7) had been reallocated, in effect killing this project. Ms. Scott was unaware of this and would check on it. She knew it was authorized, but GDOT was not letting it. Mr. Liakakis commented that a new welcome center facility was a big advantage for us.

Mr. George Fidler asked about projects #1 & #2, Gulfstream Rd. and Robert Miller Rd. Ms. Scott noted that a temporary signal would be installed until intersection improvements were completed and then a permanent signal would be installed.

Ms. Wanda Doyle asked about the widening of Lazaretto Creek Bridge and Bull River Bridge to include a bike path. They have sent a letter and have yet to receive any written response. She asked Ms. Scott to address it now and/or ask for a written response. Tybee Island also put in a written request to GDOT for crosswalks at a particular point on U.S. 80 and has received a written denial of this request stating insufficient need. Tybee Island disagrees, and would like help to develop any alternative solutions. Ms. Scott explained that Lazaretto Creek Bridge will not be widened on its own. It is not structurally deficient. It was going to be widened along with the roadway but the roadway is long range and not yet funded, so she does not know when it will be done. GDOT does not build independent structures for bike lanes. The concept for the bridge that would be part of the road widening does include bike-able shoulders. It is not GDOT's policy to have separate bike path structures. To vary from policy would require a decision to come from

well above Ms. Scott's department. Ms. Scott will check into the status of alternative solutions to the crosswalks Tybee Island had requested.

Mr. Thomson asked for any correspondence about the Effingham Parkway, noting that there had been a recent meeting cancelation. Ms. Scott assured him that she would forward any information she had about future meetings.

B. Chatham County

No report at this time.

C. City of Savannah

i. Traffic Engineering

Mr. Mike Weiner reported that GDOT has completed the widening of Middleground Rd. He also report on the Gwinnett St. widening project. They approved a contract amendment to modify the concept report to integrate the downtown expansion proposal to include sidewalks, pedestrian amenities (landscaping and lighting) and on-street parking. It will be a fast-track project so as to make the funding deadline in 2009.

ii. Project DeRenne

Ms. Susan Broker commented that even in these times of constrained finances, Project DeRenne will continue moving forward, driven by the local funding associated with this project. The goal of Phase I was to do traffic analysis and public input. The second workshop was well attended. Mr. Rob Hume, the project consultant from Kimley-Horn Associates, reported on the traffic analysis. His presentation included the following project overview:

- Detailed traffic analysis & public outreach
- Development and refinement of alternatives
- Preliminary design
- Final design
- Construction

Phase I is approaching conclusion. Mr. Hume gave a quick overview of the traffic analysis. Based on traffic count data from February 2008 at peak AM and PM hours, nearly half the volume turns off of or onto DeRenne Ave. at White Bluff Rd. and/or Abercorn St. He showed the congestion levels of all the major intersections along DeRenne Ave. The bulk of the congestion is on the west end of the project area. Using the 2030 travel demand predictions, there is a continued degradation at these intersections. There is a direct correlation between volume at any intersection and the number of accidents (most accidents being rear-end accidents). Mr. Hume pointed out that it is difficult to predict the effects of the economy and fuel prices on travel demand 20 years out.

The other component of Phase I was public outreach. The goal was to neutralize public animosity toward DeRenne Ave improvements. They formed a steering committee, project advisory committee (neighborhood-based), stakeholders committee (major stakeholders), and held workshops with the general public. Mr. Hume presented survey results. It was summarized into six guiding principles:

- Neighborhood preservation
- Local land use
- Beatification & Streetscape
- Modal accommodation
- Transportation & Safety
- Economic Development

Phase II is development of alternatives. The public understands the public need for transportation in this corridor, but they also have a lot of vision for how they want it to look. Transportation planning and land use planning will be worked together.

Mr. Abolt asked how Mr. Hume used information from Connect Savannah. Mr. Hume acknowledged they conducted new traffic counts since then and that they used model data from Connect Savannah. There was a little difference in the counts due to signal re-timing that occurred as a recommendation from Connecting Savannah. The re-timing has relieved some of the congestion along DeRenne Ave., but not surprisingly has increased delay for the north-south crossings.

Mr. Abolt asked that his recommendations for Project DeRenne be sensitive to phased implementation.

Mr. Hume noted that the 2030 demand model assumes that the Truman Parkway is complete. In response to a question about the number of vehicles coming off of I-516 and going all the way to the Truman Parkway, he said a count can be statistically extracted from the existing data. It is not as accurate as a physical count of license plates at the two ends, but it can be done.

Regarding the concept of a Hampstead connector, Ms. Broker said the City is starting with a clean slate. Kimley-Horn's proposed alternatives may or may not include a Hampstead connector.

Ms. Broker reported that businesses along the DeRenne corridor have formed a business association and are starting to work together in a cohesive way.

Ms. Broker gave an update on the ambulance pre-emption program. She reported that 14 local ambulances are using the system. Med-Star reported that 5-6 minutes has been shaved off its travel time down DeRenne Ave. to Memorial Hospital. She has had discussions with interested parties from Effingham County. Their point of congestion is the intersection of SR 21 and I-95. They are interested in being a part of this and they are working together toward that end. Last year there was a discussion with the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) about grant funding to provide the pre-emption

devices in the ambulances. She met with the GEMA last week along with representatives from four counties. They all were supportive and appear willing to pool resources, including GEMA. She reported that 80% of Effingham's calls come into DeRenne Ave.

Mr. Thomson referred back to Mr. Abolt's question about Connect Savannah. Mr. Thomson noted that the purpose of Connect Savannah was to identify solutions to the problem of east/west connectivity. There were twelve possible actions coming from Connect Savannah. Signal re-timing, ambulance pre-emption, and a ride-share program were three of six different proposals for the DeRenne corridor and these have been accomplished. Economic development opportunities in this corridor are critical. The nature of the area has changed over the years.

D. Chatham Area Transit

Mr. Rivers reported that a public hearing will be held on the plan to take Teleride back to the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile minimum requirement established by the FTA. This should be in effect by the end of the year.

There are still some old grants without state match. So far they have not been successful in obtaining additional funds from the state.

They are almost ready to begin an appraisal on the Greyhound property for the proposed transit center.

CAT is researching a new type of fare box for the buses. A fare increase will not be considered until the fare box question is settled.

Mr. Rivers said he would like to see pre-emption devices on the Abercorn buses similar to the pre-emption devices for ambulances on DeRenne Ave.

Mr. Rivers invited everyone to view and take a ride on the "green" diesel hybrid bus that CAT has in town today and tomorrow for demonstration. They have an option commitment for 11 hybrid buses.

CAT ridership for September 2008 is up 10% over September 2007.

E. Georgia Ports Authority

No report at this time.

F. Savannah-Hilton Head International Airport

Mr. George Fidler reported that the terminal and parking garage are adequate. Airways Avenue outbound has been recently resurfaced. Gulfstream and the Air National Guard continue to grow. In general aviation, they are about out of hangar space so next year

they'll be extending north of the terminal for general aviation use. Next year they will undertake a formal master plan update.

VI. Other Business

Due to the holiday season in December, the Policy Committee meeting will be a week early, on December 17, 2008 at 10:00 AM.

VII. Other Public Comments

No public comments at this time.

VIII. Adjournment

There being no other business to come before the Committee, the October 22, 2008 Policy Committee was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

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