



| <u>Others Present</u>      | <u>Representing</u>                                       | <u>Present</u> |
|----------------------------|---|----------------|
| James Aberson              | Chatham County ADA  | X              |
| Michael Adams              | MPO Staff   | X              |
| Dick Anderson              | GA Regional Transportation Authority                      | X              |
| Teresa Brenner             | Advisory Committee on Accessible<br>Transportation (ACAT) | X              |
| Jason Crane                | GDOT-Planning   | X              |
| Leon Davenport             | Chatham County  | X              |
| Matthew Hicks              | Assn. County Commissioners GA (ACCG)                      | X              |
| Jean Iaderosa              | Chatham Area Transit (CAT)                                | X              |
| Tim Kassa                  | GDOT-Planning   | X              |
| Todd Long                  | GA Regional Transportation Authority                      | X              |
| Jane Love                  | MPO Staff   | X              |
| Nathan Mai-Lombardo        | Garden City   | X              |
| C.J. McCampbel             | CAT-Teleride  | X              |
| Kyle Mote                  | GDOT-Planning   | X              |
| Brad Saxon                 | GDOT-Jesup  | 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              |

### **Call to Order**

Chairman Pete Liakakis called the December 17, 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 December 17, 2008 meeting carried with none opposed.**

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

##### **A. Executive Director's Status Report**

Mr. Tom Thomson commented that today's meeting is designed to bring the Policy Committee up to date on important activities of the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) and offer advance insights on legislation for 2009.

Mr. Thomson reported that there is now a state-wide association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations. They have met and selected officers which include Mark Wilkes as Vice Chair.

He brought attention to the handout on the city and county stimulus package submittals. The city proposal is still in draft form. Mr. Thomson believes that GDOT has \$3.3 billion of projects that they are submitting to the federal agencies. GDOT has coordinated with other state agencies in compiling their list of projects that are ready to let for construction within 180 days. There is no guarantee of stimulus funding for anything on the list. Mr. Thomson noted the copy of his letter to GDOT listing our projects that are ready to go by 2012; the top two are the Truman Parkway Phase V and the Skidaway Narrows Bridge replacement. He expects to receive GDOT's list shortly.

Mr. Thomson received a letter concerning a new formula for 2010 planning funds. This new formula will bring a little more money to us.

He has also received from GDOT the list of requested amendments to the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). This will come before the committee in February for action. The requests stem from GDOT's efforts to balance the 2009 budget after reductions from 2009 to fund 2008. This new list does include Skidaway Narrows Bridge and some right-of-way on SR 204 as major projects, but a large number of projects moved out. The Diamond Causeway project was not in the 2009 program and probably will not be in the 2010 program. Mr. Thomson believes this project will be a very good candidate in the stimulus package.

### **III. Action Items**

#### **A. Approval of October 22, 2008 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes**

It was moved and seconded to approve the October 22, 2008 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes.

**Policy Committee Action: the motion to approve the October 22, 2008 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes carried with none opposed.**

#### **B. Approval of the CUTS/MPO 2009 Meeting Schedule**

Ms. Jane Love presented the draft for the 2009 meeting schedule, which was included in the meeting package, and pointed out that due to calendar issues and religious holidays some of the meetings will be held one week later than usual.

It was moved and seconded to approve the CUTS/MPO 2009 meeting schedule as presented.

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**Policy Committee Action: the motion to approve the CUTS/MPO 2009 meeting schedule as presented carried with none opposed.**

#### **IV. Status Reports**

##### **A. GDOT Project Prioritization**

Mr. Jason Crane, from GDOT's Office of Planning gave a presentation about GDOT's Project Prioritization. His presentation included a statement of purpose, review of project objectives, measures of performance, program categories, method for scoring projects, feedback from MPO's, and concluded with future steps for this process.

Mr. Crane stated the six performance measures (preservation, safety, congestion, access & mobility, connectivity, and economic growth) and then showed a sample chart of how transportation projects would be grouped into programs and rated against these performance measures. He noted that roadway safety, transit, intermodal and demand management projects were not included in this prioritization because there is already a selection process in place for these project types. In reviewing projects, different weights are proposed for rural areas, non-Atlanta MPO areas, and Atlanta MPO. The prioritization process will result in projects being assigned to four tiers, based on whether the project is scored high or low on benefit/cost ratio and on the performance measures. In response to a question, Mr. Crane noted that in addition to project scores, GDOT would also be considering the projects within each congressional district in order to keep things balanced. When asked if the Atlanta projects are scored higher than non-Atlanta projects Mr. Crane responded that the Atlanta projects and non-Atlanta projects are not compared to each other.

Mr. Russ Abolt asked how this process coordinates with the budget concerns, particularly regarding those projects that are committed to but not funded. He wanted to know how we remind them of projects that are committed to but not funded? Mr. Crane responded that there are other considerations, like the issues raised by Mr. Abolt, which will be evaluated, such as cost/benefit, project readiness, funding (shortfall or overmatch, local funding portion), time line, and environmental issues.

Mr. Crane reviewed the feedback received from MPO's state-wide and GDOT's response to the various comments. Mr. Crane cited a great deal of comment concerning the issue of project readiness and funding. All he can say at this time is that a project is "safe" when it has been let for construction. If a project has not yet been let for construction it will be put through the process and scored with the others.

His presentation concluded with a statement of the next steps. These next steps include: completion of software prototype allowing for automated viewing; sending project recommendations to MPO's in January in time for completion of TIP updates in June 2009; and approval of "business rules" for how prioritization will actually be used and when projects will enter the prioritization system.

Ms. Diane Schleicher raised the issue of Lazaretto Creek and Bull River bridges. She asked what needed to be done to get the TIP amended so that four-laning these bridges can be prioritized? The main concern is the volume these bridges will experience in a hurricane evacuation scenario.

Mr. Thomson commented that this issue will be addressed as they update the TIP. Right now the bridges are not choke points during an evacuation. He assured her that the MPO will work with Tybee Island on this, but funding is already difficult for the bridges that are priorities due to sufficiency ratings.

Mr. Joe Murray Rivers asked about transit projects in this process. He would like more information on funding and distribution. Mr. Crane responded that MARTA has been charged with developing a framework for evaluating transit issues state-wide. Mr. Rivers believes this should be GDOT's responsibility, not MARTA's. Mr. Crane explained that GDOT would be involved.

Mr. Trip Tollison asked if all this prioritization and funding would need to be re-done once the legislature meets in January. Mr. Crane conceded that things could change in terms of state-wide goals, but in terms of actual projects he believes this process will be just one of the tools to decide which projects get pulled forward first for funding.

Mr. Thomson commented that our MPO supported GDOT's prioritization process. There is benefit to standardizing how projects are selected. How the MPO's priorities line up against the funding and how the funding is distributed between Atlanta, non-Atlanta urban areas, and rural areas are the vital questions for the MPO.

Can each MPO adjust criteria to be in line with its local decision-makers' priorities? Will this be a flexible component? Mr. Crane responded that for now probably not, but in the future it could be more flexible. He will take this comment back to his group for consideration.

All the MPOs have projects in the pipeline in some level of development. How will GDOT deal with projects that do not score well but are construction-ready and are a priority of the local MPO? Mr. Crane responded that GDOT is not taking away local planning authority. Projects that end up in Tier IV may still be good projects. Mr. Abolt does not want any state prioritization process to control any projects that could be covered by the proposed stimulus package. Mr. Thomson commented that we should request that stimulus projects not count towards congressional balancing of the standard allocation process.

Mr. Thomson asked Mr. Crane what the plan is for interacting with the MPO before completing this project. Mr. Crane replied that they are awaiting Board approval of the business rules. It will be up to the Board to set the future direction. Mr. Thomson recommends that this not go to the Board before GDOT has presented the draft rules to the MPOs. The MPOs are partners with GDOT and as such they should be consulted

before it goes to the Board for a final decision. Mr. Thomson would also like to see the results of this new process as it is used with our projects.

Mr. Tollison asked how, for instance, a new economic development project that needs the State's help with road access would be treated once this prioritization process is in place. Is there flexibility for new projects to be moved forward? Mr. Crane commented that he was not sure how it would work now or in the future, but he would like to think that such considerations could always be reviewed. Mr. Matthew Fowler assured the committee that these issues have been raised and discussed by those in higher positions than those at this meeting, and they will be addressed.

### **B. Georgia's Investment in Tomorrow's Transportation Today (IT3) Initiative**

Mr. Dick Anderson, Executive Director for Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA), presented to the committee. He offered an overview of this study which is a look at transportation from the long-term economic approach. A group had gathered information from trips to Texas and Spain, which offered insights into public/private partnerships. His group meets with the State Transportation Board on a bi-weekly basis. His presentation today includes the recommendations he will make to the State Transportation Board. At this time, these are just recommendations which are currently under review.

Highlights of his summary presentation included the finding that over the last twenty years Georgia has undermanaged and underinvested in its assets. The lack of improvement to these assets has contributed to performance gaps on the transportation system and put Georgia's future quality of life and economic growth at risk. These program recommendations anticipate significant investments in three major areas: people movement in Metro-Atlanta, people movement in medium-sized cities and rural areas, and movement of freight.

Mr. Anderson shared statistical information with the committee including Georgia's transportation investment relative to gross domestic product (GDP) and Georgia's transportation investment compared to other states. A transportation investment of 1.5% of GDP is seen as healthy; however, Georgia's investment has been below 1.5% since the early 1980s.

Mr. Anderson reviewed four primary goals and six primary objectives to improve Georgia's transportation network performance. The goals are: 1) support Georgia's economic growth and competitiveness; 2) ensure safety and security; 3) maximize the value of Georgia's transportation assets; 4) minimize the impact of transportation on the environment. His statistics indicated that an investment of \$91-\$148B (2008 dollars) would yield \$520-\$590B (2008 dollars) in economic benefit plus 320,000 new jobs.

Mr. Anderson then presented data supporting investment in the Metro-Atlanta area which would result in an Atlanta region that is more livable and economically competitive.

Capturing the full benefit requires not just capacity increases but also demand management and coordination of development locations. For the rest of the state, analysis focused on the possible benefits from three strategies: Accomplishing the regional transportation plans in medium-sized cities; completion of GRIP roads (Governor's Road Improvement Program); and building of high speed rail. If building out the regional transportation plans, 30-50% of the benefit would come for coordination with development patterns. The benefits of the GRIP roads are unclear, as there is no obvious link between GRIP and GDP, job, or population growth. High speed rail would primarily benefit Atlanta, Savannah, and Macon. He also summarized data for freight mobility noting that an investment of \$19-\$38B could drive \$57-\$88B in economic benefit. He also presented data showing limited access facilities as powerful drivers of economic growth in rural areas. In conclusion, if we prioritize our current resources, Georgia can cover up to 2/3 of potential investments. Mr. Anderson went over a chart of options for additional transportation resources, such as new taxes, direct user fees, indirect user fees, redirection of existing funds, and private equity, private debt, and public bonds.

Mr. Abolt asked if, given the current situation of fluctuating gas prices, the new legislature would seriously consider raising the gasoline tax. Mr. Anderson is hopeful that the legislature will consider all of these options and propose a package that includes many of these "levers", including those we are very familiar with (gas tax, SPLOST) as well as some new ones (pay-by-the-mile). He also acknowledged that there is a need for immediate funding, for interim funding, and for long-term funding.

Mr. Eric Winger asked if they examined the funding techniques in Spain. Mr. Anderson replied that there are a lot of similarities, but one big difference is that they can get certain projects deemed as strategic and then the federal government pumps money into those specific projects. They budget more for transportation than we do. They use private investment and tolling, as well as fuel tax.

Ms. Schleicher asked if there could be a trigger price point for a gas tax increase to kick in, when the gas price is low. Mr. Todd Long explained that there is a gas price/gas tax relationship but it adjusts only twice a year – July 1 and January 1.

Mr. Rivers asked if private industry was being considered for transit development. Mr. Anderson replied that specifics have not been determined at this time, though it is possible. Mr. Rivers and his board are interested in the European model. He still has grant money that does not have state matches.

Mr. Anderson explained that MARTA was asked to take the lead in developing a prioritization process for transit similar to the prioritization process that GDOT developed for road projects. MARTA will not be making the decisions, just laying out the mechanics of a process. Mr. Anderson also confirmed that at this time there is no integrated prioritization process for roads and transit, combined. Now they are trying to put the two together to fulfill the strategic objectives that his group has outlined.

Mr. John Bennett questioned some of the study's statements that perpetuate the idea of living further and further from employment centers and still expecting (and offering) relatively short commutes, such as measuring livability by the number of people that can reach jobs in 30 minutes by car. He believes this measure is incompatible with the coming era.

Mr. Thomson noted that the Savannah/Chatham comprehensive plan encourages development and re-development for multi-use purposes, including residential units, in and around the city center of Savannah. In the future more residents will live closer to center city.

Mr. Anderson said that outside of metro-Atlanta, existing plans were used as the cost basis for his project. For Atlanta, they assumed some jobs and residences would be in the various existing and planned activity centers. The Governor has said that we cannot guarantee that people will get to places by road in a certain time. Mr. Anderson noted that it is incumbent upon the people to make choices to help themselves, through choice of home location and mode.

Mr. Anderson expects the GDOT Board to adopt this as the state's strategic plan and then send it to the legislature.

### **C. Get Georgia Moving Coalition**

Mr. Matthew Hicks, for the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG), presented to the committee. "Get Georgia Moving" is a coalition of over 100 organizations from a wide variety of fields working together to encourage the legislature to increase resources for transportation throughout the state.

He gave an overview of what to expect. The lack of funds in the current GDOT budget, preserving the 2010 budget, governance issues within GDOT, and the roles of the different transportation agencies will all be subjects of discussion. They are changing the focus to an outcome-based approach to transportation, i.e. what outcomes can be expected from investments. He is encouraged to see that all levels of state leadership are now engaged in transportation issues. The next challenge will be getting all the different government groups to come to consensus. Increasing the fuel tax is an issue that doesn't have much traction, but it is clear that the fuel tax is not a sustainable funding source for transportation needs. Other long-term revenue options need to be considered. The Get Georgia Moving Coalition is a group that is looking short-term, i.e. what can be done in 2009 – 2012.

Mr. Hicks reviewed the status of the current proposed legislation for a one penny sales tax. At this time they are proposing one plan for Metro-Atlanta and another for outside of Metro-Atlanta. They are also encouraging a regional approach outside of Atlanta. This is now more flexible than the suggestion last year regarding regional sales tax. All funds would stay within the region in which they were collected.



Mr. Abolt asked about the mechanics of voting and implementing a multi-county, regional approach. Mr. Hicks responded that it is still under discussion. This is why they are encouraging creation of a region and working as a single unit. Creating a region for this purpose is voluntary. Mr. Abolt's concern is the unequal population distribution within a proposed region.

Mr. Thomson reminded the committee of what he has mentioned before: the Regional Mobility Authority approach.

Mr. Hicks encouraged committee members to contact him with any concerns and suggestions. This is just a proposal at this time. No legislation has been filed at this time.

#### **D. Update on Local Safe Routes to School Infrastructure Application**

Ms. Jane Love presented to the committee. GDOT's call for infrastructure projects was released in October and the deadline for application was December 12. The Board of Education chose four projects to be included in their application – Garden City Elementary, Georgetown Elementary, Largo-Tibet Elementary, and White Bluff Elementary – consisting mostly of sidewalk projects and related facilities (pedestrian bridges, crosswalks, ramps, etc). The total request was for nearly \$402,000.00 which is under the limit of \$500,000 per application. Garden City submitted a separate application for a project at Gould Elementary, consisting of sidewalk improvements totaling nearly \$500,000. Ms. Love presented a map showing the locations of the project schools. GDOT will announce the awards in March 2009. There will be another call for applications, and agencies should be identifying candidate projects now for future applications.

Ms. Schleicher noted that City of Tybee submitted an application for bicycle lanes near St. Michael's school. She will send a copy to Ms. Love.

#### **V. Other Business**

Mr. McArthur Jarrett, chairman of the Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation, asked the Policy Committee to support the Coastal Georgia Regional Development Center's (RDC's) new rural, demand-response transit service which could provide transit service to all citizens in the outlying Chatham County communities not currently served by Chatham Area Transit (CAT). The service could also cover the rural areas of nine other counties in the coastal region. The Chatham County Commission will be voting on whether to financially support this service at their December 19<sup>th</sup> meeting. He requested this committee's endorsement, either verbal or written, for this program to the County Commission. Mr. Jarrett made clear to the committee that this RDC service is for ALL citizens, not only the disabled or elderly. Those who are eligible for Teleride could use the RDC service as an alternative, but the RDC service is not exclusively for Teleride riders.

Mr. Liakakis explained to the committee that the RDC's proposed service could compensate for CAT's recent action to pull back paratransit service to within ¼ mile of

fixed route service. CAT is doing that in order to comply with federal regulations to maintain the quality of service in the ¾ mile areas, and thereby remain eligible for federal funding.

Mr. Rivers clarified that the proposed RDC service may come into our county but not cross the fixed routes, as that would be redundancy in federally supported transit services. It will allow citizens to travel inter-county and will allow for demand-response service for any citizen. It is not limited by user qualifications, as is CAT's paratransit service. With a separate agreement between RDC and CAT (and with FTA's approval), the RDC service may cross CAT's lines and deliver those passengers with disabilities directly to their destination. It is intended to be a seamless transition from CAT service to RDC service. This RDC service is partially funded by the state and federal funding through the FTA.

Mr. Abolt noted that the Chatham County's cost to participate in the RDC program would be \$30,000 for the first year, compared to \$100,000 for an alternative; therefore, he is agreeable to trying it for a year.

Mr. Rivers sees no disadvantage to the citizens of Chatham County and he supports the new service plan.

Mr. Jarrett wants this committee's support to clarify that this RDC service is for all citizens, not just those who use paratransit.

Mr. Liakakis clarified that, under this service, only the paratransit riders can be delivered or picked up within the CAT service area. Mr. Rivers clarified that all other citizens coming in from rural areas can be delivered to other rural areas or to a transfer point to CAT. Also CAT could deliver residents of the CAT district to CAT's outer service points to be picked up by the rural service for delivery to rural destinations.

It was moved and seconded that the Policy Committee endorse Chatham County's support of the RDC coordinated, rural transportation system.

**PC Action: the motion that the Policy Committee endorse Chatham County's support of the RDC coordinated, rural transportation system carried with none opposed.**

## **VI. Other Public Comments**

No public comments at this time.

## **VII. Adjournment**

There being no other business to come before the Committee, the December 17, 2008 Policy Committee was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

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