
<u>Ex-officio Members</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Present</u>
Sonny Timmerman	Hinesville Area MPO	X

<u>Others Present</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Present</u>
Michael Adams	MPO Staff	X
Steve Cote	Reynolds, Smith & Hills	X
Leon Davenport	Chatham County	X
Beverly Davis	Reynolds, Smith, & Hills	X
Habte Kassa	GDOT	X
Jane Love	MPO Staff	X
Kyle Mote	GDOT	X
Mary Sallach	State Road & Toll Authority	X
Brad Saxon	GDOT-Jesup	X
Teresa Scott	GDOT-Jesup	X
Barbara Settzo	for MPO	X
Radney Simpson	GDOT	X
Thomas Thomson, P.E., AICP	MPC Executive Director	X
Wykoda Wang	MPO Staff	X
Mike Weiner	City of Savannah	X
Mark Wilkes, P.E., AICP	MPO Staff	X

Call to Order

Chairman Pete Liakakis called the June 24, 2009 CORE Board Meeting to order.

I. Approval of Agenda

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

CORE Board Action: the motion to approve the agenda for the June 24, 2009 meeting carried with none opposed.

II. Committee Reports

A. Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation

Mr. McArthur Jarrett reported that ACAT endorsed the action items that included the FY 2010 Unified Planning Work Program and the MPO priorities for development of the FY 2010-2013 Transportation Improvement Program, as well as other related issues. There were regular status reports from Teleride and Chatham Area Transit. There was some public participation on issues pertaining to paratransit.

B. Citizens Advisory Committee

Ms. Jane Love reported on behalf of Mr. John Bennett, Chair of the Citizens Advisory Committee. The committee endorsed the railway tie-in amendment and the Interstate 3 amendment to illustrative list of the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan, but opposed the amendment concerning changes to projects in the SR 204 corridor. They endorsed the transit center amendment and rail tie-in amendment to the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program.

C. Technical Coordinating Committee

Mr. Mark Wilkes reported that the committee reviewed an agenda consistent with today's agenda and endorsed all action items.

D. Executive Director's Report

Mr. Thomson reviewed items from the last meeting that staff was asked to follow-up on. There had been concern at the last meeting about the State's proposed rumble strip project for District Five with regard to the impacts on bicyclists. At this time none of the proposed rumble strip locations are in Chatham County.

Staff followed up with Mr. Mike Weiner of the city regarding the audible signals. He had stated that they found the equipment needed repair. Repairs were performed.

Also, in response to suggestion for rails and trails corridors, Mr. Thomson wants the board to know that this will be part scope of the work for the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan. It will be addressed in the second phase of the Plan development.

Mr. Thomson announced that Vance Smith has been named the new Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT).

Mr. Thomson reported that GDOT has let a couple of projects from the stimulus list. There has been no public announcement yet.

Mr. Thomson reported on a meeting with Effingham County officials regarding the Effingham County Parkway. It was agreed that staff of both counties will meet to discuss goals of both counties.

Regarding the development of the new Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for fiscal years 2010-2013, staff is reviewing the latest funding snapshot from GDOT .

He noted that the state of Georgia met the June deadline for committing 50% of the stimulus funding. Because of this, we are now eligible for redistribution funds from states that did not meet the deadline.

Mr. Thomson spoke of the idea of amending some projects to the Transportation Improvement Program to fill any gap in the event a proposed stimulus project was deemed ineligible. However, this item is not on the final agenda; the MPO has been asked to contribute some of its stimulus money to a state-wide rail plan. This could be about \$250,000. Mr. Thomson said he is not asking for any action on this item at this time. Mr. Patrick Shay spoke in favor of this idea. Mr. Thomson is going to inquire about the Georgia Ports Authority paying this contribution. Mr. George Fidler commented that the airport has been asked to contribute to this state-wide rail plan.

Mr. Liakakis reported on action at the recent meeting of the Association of County Commissions of Georgia. To address transportation funding issues, the group proposes a \$0.04/gallon gas tax with \$0.03 going to transportation. They are also looking into more funding sources for GDOT. The state of Georgia has the second lowest gas tax in the nation. County Commissioners have been encouraged to meet with their state house and state senate members to push these priorities.

III. Action Items

A. Approval of April 30, 2009 CORE MPO Board Meeting Minutes

It was moved and seconded to approve the April 30, 2009 CORE MPO Board Meeting Minutes.

CORE MPO Board Action: the motion to approve the April 30, 2009 CORE Board Meeting Minutes carried with none opposed.

B. Adoption of the FY 2010 Unified Planning Work Program

Ms. Jane Love presented the this document that describes the staff planning activities and budget for the upcoming fiscal year. Comments from federal agencies have been incorporated in the document as well as minor adjustments in the highway planning and transit planning apportionments. Ms. Love highlighted the changes. She recommended adoption today so that the the MPO can continue the transportation planning process in FY 2010 which begins on July 1.

It was moved and seconded to adopt the FY 2010 Unified Planning Work Program.

CORE MPO Board Action: the motion to adopt the FY 2010 Unified Planning Work Program carried with none opposed.

C. Approval of amendments to the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

- 1. New rail tie-in to the Georgia Ports Authority Mason Intermodal Container Transfer Facility**
- 2. Amendments to PI 522870, PI 0002922, PI 0008840 and PI 0009314 all relating to SR 204**

3. Addition of Interstate 3 to the illustrative projects listing

Ms. Love reported on the rail tie-in by displaying a map showing the proposed tracks. This amendment is requested by the Georgia Ports Authority and is mostly on the Port's property. Funds for this project consist of a combination of the remaining Georgia Ports Authority earmark from the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) and Georgia Ports Authority funds. The total of \$6.1 million would be new funds in the 2030 LRTP, which would maintain the financial balance and not affect funding of other projects in the Plan. The project would improve freight efficiency, and, because of the SR 307/railroad overpass project, it will not create additional delays for motorists, bicyclists, or pedestrians. Staff recommends amending the rail project into the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan. If the MPO approves this amendment to the LRTP, then an amendment to the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program for this project will be considered later in today's meeting.

Mr. Michael Adams presented the proposed project description changes. GDOT requested a description change of two projects – 522870 and 0002922 (widening from King George Blvd to Rio Rd. and widening from Rio Rd to Truman Pkwy V). When researching these two, staff became aware of additional project identification numbers – 0009314 and 0008840 (general corridor study and advanced ROW in conjunction with 522870). Staff proposes to clarify the projects in the corridor by proposing the following descriptions:

- 522870 – modified to an interchange project at King George Blvd and SR 204
- 0008840 – advanced ROW for the interchange project
- 0009314 – corridor study from west of I-95 to north of Wilshire Blvd.
- 0002922 – grade improvements from west of Forest River Bridge to north of Wilshire Blvd.

Mr. Thomson explained that this allows GDOT to put in a new interchange at King George Blvd which will encompass Grove Point Rd thereby improving the most congested portion of the SR 204 corridor.

Mr. Jon Todd asked if this included the interchange improvements at I-95 & SR 204. Mr. Fowler noted those planned improvements were on a much smaller scale than what is planned for King George interchange and are not included.

Ms. Love reported on the proposed amendment to include in the Plan's illustrative listing an "Interstate 3" running between Savannah and Knoxville, related to a feasibility study that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) will be undertaking. SAFETEA-LU included an earmark for the study. There is no certainty that an interstate will be built. She reported that the Citizens Advisory Committee recommended revising the wording of the LRTP amendment to allow future rail possibilities as a modal option for the corridor. Of course, the FHWA study will still analyze the feasibility of a highway, not rail, in accordance with the legislation, but the MPO may choose to include wording in the LRTP amendment for the rail option, to allow more modal flexibility in the LRTP.

Mr. Liakakis opened the meeting to public comments on these amendments. There being no comments from the public, the public hearing was closed.

It was moved and seconded to approve the three amendments to the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan with the specification that the Savannah-Knoxville corridor is not limited to becoming a highway, but includes possibility for other modes of transportation.

CORE MPO Board action: the motion to approve the three amendments to the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan with the specification that the Savannah-Knoxville corridor is not limited to becoming a highway, but includes possibility for other modes of transportation carried with none opposed.

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

- 1. Addition of CAT Transit Center project**
- 2. Addition of new rail tie-in to the GPA Mason Intermodal Container Transfer Facility**

Ms. Wykoda Wang stated that Chatham Area Transit (CAT) has requested inclusion of the Transit Center to the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program. CAT is pursuing an earmark and funds through Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER, the competitive discretionary grant in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act [ARRA]). Staff recommends amending the TIP to include this project. This funding is for the construction of the transit center.

Regarding the proposed amendment for the rail tie-in, Ms. Love reported that since the LRTP amendment passed earlier in this meeting, this proposed amendment to the FY 2008-2011 would program the \$6.1 million in project funding for FY 2010 in the TIP.

Mr. Liakakis opened the public hearing for comments on the two amendments to the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program. There being no public comments, the public hearing was closed.

Regarding the amendment for the transit center, Mr. McArthur Jarrett asked about the initial funding for the transit center project. Ms. Wang reported that there have been several grants expended for study, including site selection for the transit center. CAT has local funds for right-of-way purchase, but now they need \$10,000,000 for construction. All previous studies have been paid for grants and local match. Mr. Shay noted that the local funding has come mostly from Chatham County by its willingness to contribute land that counts as a match for the federal funding allocated through grants. Now CAT is in the process of acquiring the Greyhound site, but now need to seek additional funding for construction. It is not possible to estimate a completion until the funding has been committed.

Related to stimulus funds, Ms. Diane Schleicher asked if the SR 204 projects mentioned under the LRTP amendment item would be funded by ARRA monies from the GDOT

portion or the MPO portion. Mr. Thomson explained that today's action on those projects did not assign priority or address funding. Ms. Schleicher asked for assurance that the SR 204 projects were not being funded by the same GDOT monies that she was told were not available for the Tybee Island bridges. Mr. Thomson noted that today's action regarding the SR 204 projects was only to modify descriptions associated with the project numbers in the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan. That action was not related to any stimulus money. Regarding the present action item, CAT is applying for TIGER stimulus funds, which is a different type of stimulus funding than what comes to GDOT or the MPO.

It was moved and seconded to approve the two amendments to the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program to include the CAT Transit Center and the new rail tie-in to the GPA Mason Intermodal Container Transfer Facility.

CORE MPO Board Action: the motion to approve the two amendments to the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program to include the CAT Transit Center and the new rail tie-in at to the GPA Mason Intermodal Container Transfer Facility carried with none opposed.

IV. Status Reports

A. Development of the CORE Connections 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan

Mr. Steve Coté, from Reynolds, Smith & Hills presented a status report. He outlined the two phases of the update. Phase 1 is the Framework Plan. It is 4-5 month project with adoption expected in September 2009. It will meet all SAFETEA-LU requirements. Phase II, the Mobility Plan, is a more detailed plan. Completion of the Mobility Plan is expected in December 2011. Mr. Coté went on to highlight the major elements, the use of the travel demand model provided by GDOT, outreach efforts (stakeholder and public meetings in June & July), and responses from the stakeholder meetings and public meetings that included issues, needs & goals. He concluded his presentation with the next steps in this update process. They will complete the needs assessment, work through the funding projections, and complete the July meetings with stakeholders and public. At that point they will have more of the plan in place and will need input on needs and priorities. In early August they will draft a financially constrained plan.

Ms. Schleicher asked for clarification of differences between "Context Sensitive Design" and "Complete Streets." Mr. Coté responded that "Complete Streets" addresses roadway design that accommodates all users, while "Context Sensitive Design" deals with the roadway as related to its environment, i.e. land use. Ms. Love stated that "Complete Streets" can be viewed as a stricter policy, prescribing accommodation of all modes and types of users in every case. Context Sensitive Design may yield a variety of results depending on the characteristics of the area in which the project is located. It was concluded the terms are very similar but not synonymous.

B. State Road & Toll Authority Value Pricing Study for Savannah Northwest Tollway

Ms. Mary Sallach made the presentation outlining the findings of the study of the Northwest Tollway. Her presentation included study objectives, alternatives analysis, traffic & financial analysis, and summary. Several alternatives were considered – a northern alignment, at grade in SR 21 alignment, and elevated in SR 21 alignment. They tested scenarios of different access points, trucks or cars only, mixed flow, etc.

Mr. Liakakis noted that the pictures of the elevated highway in Tampa show how attractive such an alternative can be now. It no longer needs to look like the massive elevated highways in such high volume areas as New York City and Miami. He asked that these pictures be sent to the committee members and other elected officials so all can see how attractive this elevated alternative can be.

Ms. Sallach explained that a potential elevated alignment would connect to I-516 and provide an interchange at I-95 with midpoint access at Gulf Stream. Less right-of-way is required for this type of project which leads to fewer environmental issues. She compared features, costs, and revenues for the three different alternatives. The elevated alignment provides a choice for the user – free and slower speed of travel on the at-grade roads or tolled and faster speed of travel on lanes above.

Ms. Sallach noted that the cost figures she is reporting today would need to be updated if and when this project is moved forward.

This financial analysis looks at toll revenue financing, but does not consider other funding options such as federal, state or local funding, stimulus funding, State Transportation Infrastructure Bank, Garvey bonds, toll credits, public partnerships, or public/private partnerships. There are innovative funding options that could be used to help fund this project.

In summary, Ms. Sallach noted that the northern alignment focuses on the near-term traffic needs but not the long term and regional traffic needs. It is the least expensive option and can fund itself, but does not provide the overall regional traffic relief needed. The full at-grade alignment addresses truck and auto traffic needs but there would be more environmental impact and right-of-way acquisition. This alignment provides only half the relief of the elevated alignment. The elevated alignment addresses short-term and long-term needs for the local and regional users and provides connectivity to I-95, I-516 and a future Effingham parkway, meets needs of truck and auto traffic, is cost comparable to the at-grade alignment, and provides the most choice for the users. She noted there may be a combination or compromise alternative that could provide the most regional benefit.

The next step would be to undertake more detailed studies (traffic, financial & engineering) and to continue with public education and outreach efforts regarding tolling in the Savannah region.

Mr. Thomson comments included:

- The SR 21 study to which the MPO allocated some of its ARRA funds can accomplish some of the next steps.
- This analysis today does not take into account the effects of connecting to the Effingham Parkway which could add traffic and therefore raise revenues.
- MPO staff is talking to the Port about how this project may relate to the Jimmy DeLoach last mile project. If this was in place does their project need to be as large (4-lane, limited access into the port)?
- An important consideration is the impact of the project on surrounding land use. The elevated alignment could leave the at-grade relationships the same as they are now, or better. An at-grade alignment would not.
- Mass transit could ride for free on the toll road.

Mr. Russ Abolt asked for a definition of toll credits. Ms. Sallach explained how State dollars used to construct a facility similar to the Georgia 400 can be counted in applying for toll credits. Then the credits can be used against the 80/20 relationship for federal funding that the GDOT has. So if GDOT has a project that normally would be 80% federal and 20% state, they can make it 100% federal project using the flexibility of toll credits.

Mr. Charles Odimgbe asked if the 3% escalation of toll rates was an industry standard and Ms. Sallach replied in the affirmative. Mr. Odimgbe would want to be assured that transit would have access to toll credits.

Ms. Sallach stated that the traffic and revenue study and engineering analysis would be the next step, but no funding source for such a study has been identified. The amount needed would be approximately \$200,000 - \$300,000. Mr. Thomson said the MPO's ARRA-funded study could cover the traffic and revenue study or the design. He believes it is also possible that the Port could contribute funding to this next step.

In response to a question about grouping several potential toll projects in one study, Mr. Thomson recommended that each tolling project stand on its own, as one could tie up the others if grouped.

Mr. Shay is concerned about the revenue shortfall in capital and operating costs. There is no extra money around to fund any shortfalls in this project. Ms. Sallach commented that it would be very difficult to provide more certainty about any shortfall since the numbers are very preliminary at this time. The traffic & revenue study will be more specific about the percentage of cost covered by revenue.

Mr. Thomson recommends spending a little money now to bring visionary projects forward so that when funding for projects is available once again there will be good projects ready for funding.

Mr. Fidler asked if this project is intended to be a tollway for the purpose of covering construction costs only, or is it intended to be a tollway for construction and operating costs (i.e. forever and ever). Mr. Thomson said that a regional toll authorities could deal

with local issues and impacts and that the tolls from one highway can be used to leverage the construction of the next road.

C. Ambulance pre-emption

Mr. Mike Weiner reported that the city is working with neighboring communities to take advantage of the pre-emption on DeRenne Ave. Southside Fire Department is ready to sign an agreement with the city. Hopefully, others will follow.

V. Agency Reports

A. Georgia Department of Transportation

Ms. Teresa Scott presented her update by highlighting projects of interest.

#14 – Diamond Causeway – proposed for July letting

#28 –SR/Ocean Hwy – in the June letting

#24 – US 80 widening - 70% refers to being 70% complete on environmental issues; preliminary plans are 65% complete. The notes say “No Activity” because construction is in long range. At this time GDOT’s priority is to work on what is funded by ARRA or what is due in the next few fiscal years.

#31 – I-16 & I-95 Interchange lighting - Pooler has decided to enter into agreement with GDOT alone and then pursue individual agreements with Savannah and the County.

Mr. Sonny Timmerman reported that ARRA money has been awarded to start up a transit system for Fort Stewart in Hinesville.

B. Chatham County

Mr. Leon Davenport reported that Bay St. widening project is coming up for preliminary field plan review next month. The intersection improvement at State Park Rd on Diamond Causeway is substantially complete and the signals are operational.

C. City of Savannah **i. Traffic Engineering**

Mr. Mike Weiner reported the revised concept report for the Gwinnett St. widening was submitted to the district and the district has submitted it to the Atlanta office for final approval. President St. roadway improvement project had two open houses in June.

Mr. Abolt thanked Mr. Weiner and the city for taking action to improve the Victory Dr/Truman Pkwy turning movements near the Home Depot. Mr. Weiner said the City continues to work with GDOT.

Mr. Thomson reported that the list of projects the city submitted for stimulus funding have all been approved as eligible and they will move forward.

ii. Project DeRenne

Mr. Weiner reported that the City Council approved moving to the next phase which is the preliminary design phase (looking for alternatives for that corridor). They will be submitting a request to the county for the 1% funding for the next phase.

Mr. Jarrett thanked Mr. Weiner for prompt repair of the audible signal equipment at the corner of Oglethorpe and Drayton. He asked what the resolution was concerning the volume of the audio signal at that corner. He reminded the committee of the number of citizens who rely on that signal and further noted that at present the volume is not loud enough. Mr. Jarrett is prepared to speak with residents living in the area about this issue of volume.

Mr. Weiner reported that he had found a mechanical difficulty with that equipment and they corrected it. He also spoke with the association and they had no other issues. Mr. Weiner thought that the volume issue was resolved. Mr. Jarrett requested volume at a level at least half of that on Bay Street. Mr. Weiner stated that it modifies according to background noise, within limits. Mr. Jarrett requested that the volume be set at its peak volume.

D. Chatham Area Transit

Mr. Odimgbe reported they have completed installation of new fare boxes and so far they are operating well. New fares go into effect on June 28th. Construction on new buses is about to begin.

E. Georgia Ports Authority

No report at this time.

F. Savannah-Hilton Head International Airport

Mr. Fidler reported that the right-turn lane off of the I-95 northbound exit is complete. He also reported that the airport has run out of land for private general aviation development so they have extended taxiway A to open up some of the property to build more taxiways and facilities so private owners can build more hangars. Currently there are 4 sections of taxiway under construction. Finally, the airport received a stimulus grant to make improvements to runway safety areas. This construction is currently underway.

VI. Other Business

Mr. Liakakis asked what it will take to move the US 80 to Tybee project up to a higher level so it can get into the GDOT program. Mr. Thomson commented that perhaps GDOT could do a safety study in light of the rash of recent accidents. He also noted the speed limit could be reduced and also recommended safety officials be trained on how to handle

traffic accidents during peak hours. Mr. Thomson has written numerous letters and met with various officials on this issue. To advance the project he recommends two things:

- Come forth with a political consensus. The reason the project has not moved forward is that GDOT has gotten mixed signals from the City of Tybee whether or not to proceed with this widening project.
- Agree to look at US 80 as a potential toll road or at least entertain a broader range of funding opportunities other than waiting in line for federal monies.

Ms. Schleicher believes the city council is willing to support tolling. She noted that the bridge rating of Lazaretto Creek Bridge is well below 50 but more of the accidents are occurring around Bull River Bridge.

Mr. Abolt mentioned creation of shoulders or widening of existing shoulders at choke points along the roadway, using the roadway improvements near Fort Pulaski as an example. He does not support the idea of immediate forced removal of vehicles following an accident.

Mr. Liakakis recommended that the City of Tybee have a public hearing and then present a unified front, if there is consensus. Ms. Schleicher noted that the City of Tybee needs the county's political support and help since this road is outside of the City of Tybee jurisdiction.

VII. Other Public Comments

No public comments at this time.

VIII. Adjournment

There being no other business to come before the Committee, the June 24, 2009 CORE MPO Board Meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

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