



METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

**CORE MPO BOARD
SPECIAL MEETING SUMMARY**

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

August 3, 2009

3:00 PM

Voting Members

Representing

Present

Russ Abolt	Chatham County	X
LTC Jose Aguilar	Hunter Army Airfield	X
John Bennett	Chairman, CAC	X
Michael Brown	City of Savannah	X
Jason Buelterman	City of Tybee Island	X
Patrick S. Graham	Savannah Airport Commission	
William W. Hubbard	Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce	
James Hungerpiller	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	
Pete Liakakis	Chairman Chatham County Commission	X
Doug J. Marchand	Georgia Ports Authority	
Charles Odimgbe	Chatham Area Transit	
Andy Quinney	City of Garden City	
Gerald Ross	GDOT	
Patrick Shay	CAT Board of Directors	
Anna Maria Thomas	Town of Thunderbolt	
Wayne Tipton	City of Bloomingdale	
Jon Todd	Chairman, MPC	X
Eric R. Winger	Savannah Economic Development Authority (SEDA)	X

Voting Member Alternates

Representing

Present

George Fidler	Savannah Airport Commission	X
Matthew Fowler	GDOT	X

Ex-officio Members

Representing

Present

Sonny Timmerman	Hinesville Area MPO	X
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<u>Others Present</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Present</u>
Michael Adams	MPO Staff	X
Steve Cote	Reynolds, Smith & Hills	X
Eric Curl	Savannah Morning News	X
Beverly Davis	Reynolds, Smith, & Hills	X
Jane Love	MPO Staff	X
Nathan Mai-Lombardo	Garden City	X
Kyle Mote	GDOT	X
Pamela Oglesby	West Savannah Neighborhood	X
Bill Saxman	Savannah Tree Foundation	X
Brad Saxon	GDOT-Jesup	X
Teresa Scott	GDOT-Jesup	X
Barbara Setzto	for MPO	X
Radney Simpson	GDOT	X
Thomas Thomson, P.E., AICP	MPC Executive Director	X
Dale Thorpe	Savannah Tree Foundation	X
Beth Thulin	Chatham Area Transit	X
Wykoda Wang	MPO Staff	X
Randy Weitman	GA Ports Authority	X
Mark Wilkes, P.E., AICP	MPO Staff	X

Call to Order

Chairman Pete Liakakis called the August 3, 2009 CORE Board Special 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 August 3, 2009 meeting carried with none opposed.

II. Presentation: Development of the CORE Connections 2035 Framework Plan

Mr. Tom Thomson offered a few introductory remarks. This meeting is designed to give the board members a first look at the cost feasible Long Range Transportation Plan. This is only one component of the plan and not the entire picture. Today's focus is on the capacity projects. Mr. Thomson noted that the public comment period begins on August 12, 2009. He pointed out to the board that the new plan has one billion dollars less than the current plan. In addition to a schedule, the board members also reviewed lists of projects which represent MPO staff's first attempt to balance projects with available funding. There are three time bands for projects. Project costs noted are inflated to a mid-point of each band since staff is required to show projected costs, not current costs.

Mr. Thomson explained that there is also a Vision Plan. The Vision Plan includes projects that fell out of the current plan back in April 2008 when the plan was updated and any other projects that are unfunded now as they develop the 2035 plan.

The final chart is a listing of projects funded by ARRA monies for 2009 and 2010.

Mr. Steve Cote from Reynolds, Smith & Hills narrated the slide presentation of the CORE Connections 2035 Framework Plan. He began with a review from his June presentation. Phase I is the Framework Plan which should be adopted in September 2009. Phase II is the Mobility Plan which is a major, in-depth study expected to take 18 months to complete. This will include a transit vision plan and an in-depth look at bicycle and pedestrian elements.

At this time the process has moved to the prioritization of needs, developing of recommendations and financial balancing stage. Two rounds of public meetings were conducted in June and July. Mr. Cote reviewed the comments and stated goals gathered from these meetings. There will be further public meetings or hearings on August 20th , August 26th , and a final Board meeting with a hearing on September 17, 2009.

At one public meeting they used “CORE Bucks” and eight categories to help in determining priorities. Each participant was given ten “CORE bucks” to “invest” in one or more of the eight categories. The results, in order of participants’ spending level, were:

- 1. Implement complete streets.....\$67
- 2. More construction/improvement of sidewalks, bike lanes & greenways\$60
- 3. Improve transit service.....\$46
- 4. Safety improvements\$23
- 5. Construct new roadways\$19
- 6. Maintenance\$15
- 7. Traffic operation.....\$12
- 8. Widening of current roads.....\$ 8

Mr. Cote went into detail on the financial component of this Framework Plan. Maintenance funding and transit funding are in different “pots”. The estimated funding source monies are as follows:

Federal & State	\$1,270,750,000
SPLOST	\$ 174,192,149
Tolls	\$ 82,673,344 (est. new toll revenue)
TOTAL	\$1,527,615,493

Additional Funding	
Maintenance	\$ 103,000,000 (based on history)
CAT	\$ 512,488,551

These numbers are inflated to year of expenditure to accommodate expenditures through 2035. Some monies are set aside for small operational projects and some monies are set

aside for non-motorized projects. When these two “set-asides” are subtracted from the total noted above, approximately \$1.4 billion will be left for all other highway projects.

Mr. Cote showed a bar graph comparison between of the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan and the proposed 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan. This shows that revenues have remained about the same but costs have increased dramatically. The cost bands used for the new plan are 2010-2015, 2016-2025, and 2026-2035. The pie-chart he displayed showed 5% for maintenance, 24% for transit and 71% for all other projects. He continued to breakdown the cost percentages by different categories.

The next steps are to begin the 30-day comment period on August 12th. Public meetings or hearings will be held on August 20th in conjunction with the Citizens Advisory Committee meeting and on August 26th at the next regular CORE MPO Board meeting. Adoption of the Plan is targeted for a special meeting of the CORE MPO Board on September 17, 2009.

Mr. Thomson emphasized that the entire package includes 25% for transit and set-asides for maintenance, non-motorized, and traffic operation and safety projects. These “pots” are being put aside so that these projects do not get lost among the bigger projects. This list of projects in the spreadsheet is being put forward to begin a dialog.

Mr. Pete Liakakis wants to ensure that all members have copies of this information and asked how today’s public hearing was advertised. Mr. Thomson explained that this meeting was advertised by notice in the paper and on the website. However, the main purpose was to present the plan to the board. The public will have additional opportunity to comment during the upcoming comment period, and an advertising plan is in place for this period beginning on August 12th. Mr. Liakakis recommended display ads and PSA’s on local radio stations to notify the public. Mr. Thomson added that there would be a presence on the city TV channel and county TV channel.

III. Review of proposed highway project list & vision plan list

Mr. Liakakis opened the public hearing portion of the meeting. There being no public comments, the public hearing was closed. Board discussion followed.

In response to Mr. Russ Abolt’s question, Mr. Matthew Fowler confirmed that the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) understands that some projects will need to be cut due to flat revenues and increased costs. Mr. Liakakis is concerned about money getting stuck on projects that drag out. He sees a need to continue working with the State to complete some of these older projects that are currently being held up.

Mr. Jason Buelterman introduced the issue of the Tybee Rd construction project. He is very concerned that the project has fallen off the cost-feasible list. Flooding at high tide, 40-year old bridges, and increased visitor growth are all valid reasons for moving this project forward.

Mr. Thomson noted that this project is one of the more difficult projects to address. These lists are based on future demand. To do the entire Tybee Rd project is a lot of money. He

recommends dividing this project up into phases – starting with the preliminary engineering for two bridges and the lowest, flood-prone locations.

Mr. Abolt and Mr. Thomson would like to see some unity among the board members before September 17th. Mr. Thomson asked that any issues come forth now so there is time to resolve them before September 17th. He asked board members to encourage their staffs to review the details. Mr. Thomson noted that some projects have been scaled back from large to small projects. If any member sees a project on the Vision Plan whose project concept can be defined well enough to find funding, they could move it to a different category. Mr. Thomson pointed out that staff limited the number of interstate projects included in this list, focusing on interstate projects that benefit Chatham County the most. MPO staff believes that if the State is concerned about interstates that are not a local priority, then the State should find additional funding to do the interstate projects they want, not expect the MPO to use its urban area funds. Mr. Fowler stated that the funding presently projected is the total amount. There is no extra money forthcoming for a GDOT priority project that is not a local priority.

Mr. Liakakis requested that MPO staff contact all the municipalities and discuss the project list with each of them, so that they are ready by September 17th. He also requested that Mr. Thomson send a letter to all of the eight legislators asking them to support and work toward a state-wide 1% transportation tax as opposed to a regional 1% transportation tax.

Mr. Thomson reported that the federal authorization of transportation funds, to replace the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), seems to be in a delay mode in Congress. When that does come forward, 18-24 months from now, it could resolve some of our issues. This is why we need a fully developed vision plan so we are ready when things improve. The MPO will be putting in a major effort to develop a meaningful long range transit plan, as part of Phase II, the Mobility Plan.

Mr. Liakakis encouraged all the board members to contact the legislators on this issue.

Mr. Buelterman asked what procedural steps are needed to get the Tybee Rd project on the list. Mr. Thomson replied that this is the Board that he needs to persuade and he needs to do this by September 17th when they will vote to adopt the plan. It is a good idea to suggest something in particular to take out in order to free up money for the project you want. Mr. Otis Johnson said board members need an understanding of any proposed projects' cost so that they can tell which or how many other projects need to come out to make room financially. It's hard to recognize what costs would be because of how inflation is applied.

Mr. Abolt asked Mr. Thomson to meet with Tybee officials to determine costs of the Tybee project and what would need to be pulled off the list in order to add Tybee onto the list. Mr. Thomson suggested a proposal of that sort should be putting in preliminary engineering (PE) funding for the bridges. The full project from Tybee Island to Bull River would cost \$160,000,000 - \$170,000,000, when inflated to an approximate year. It may be easier to

“trade”, say, \$10,000,000 for bridges than the entire \$160,000,000. Mr. Buelterman pointed out that this is all federal property and asked if that made a difference in funding possibilities.

Mr. Liakakis would like to see the one cent from the gas tax that currently goes to the State’s general fund moved to the transportation needs. He intends to speak to the legislators.

Mr. Thomson plans to bring this list back for review at the August 26th meeting. He requested all issues be brought forth by that time.

Mr. Michael Brown suggested segmenting some projects as opposed to describing the entire project as one entity. The proper wording in the project description is essential, as evidenced by reference to East or West DeRenne Ave.

Mr. Thomson noted that making street improvements aesthetically pleasing and in context with the neighborhood is a policy, not a project. Cross-section design for some corridors would be part of Phase II. The policy is part of any project. Mr. Brown wants it stated how the policy gets implemented.

Mr. John Bennett pointed out that the priorities determined by the public using the “CORE bucks” exercise have been flipped to the opposite priority in this project list. Mr. Thomson responded that what the board is viewing today is only part of the entire plan. The next step of the plan, which will be developed over the next 18 months following September 17th, will include all the detail in the project descriptions. Those details will address the priorities developed with the “CORE bucks” exercise. It is also important to note that you can’t put transit in your long range plan if you do not have operating funds to operate what it is you say you want. The State of Georgia doesn’t provide operating funds. The long range transit vision plan is to identify local funding sources to support a larger transit plan. Another issue is that the amount set aside for non-motorized projects must be matched by local government. He is hopeful that the state will begin matching non-motorized projects.. The goal is to put forth a plan with complete details and hand it off to those, such as GDOT, who are responsible for implementing the plan.

Mr. Abolt mentioned that a SPLOST vote will come up in the next couple of years. He would like to have a plan with enough flexibility in it to accommodate changes.

Mr. Liakakis introduced new board member, LTC Jose Aguilar from Hunter Army Airfield.

Mr. Johnson asked if staff would be presenting a project list with and without the Tybee Rd project. He wants to see a definite proposal; it’s too loose for him to consider today. Mr. Thomson responded that staff will not be coming back with a proposed trade out of \$160,000,000. They may recommend a short-term strategy that would possibly add engineering for the bridges in the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan, and probably only if one or two of the bridges could be included without losing any other projects that are clearly supported. As for the details, they are drafting a report now. Mr. Thomson reaffirmed that the CORE board makes the final decision of what is in the list and what is not. Staff will bring certain proposals to the table for discussion, but the CORE board will decide.

Mr. Eric Winger asked for clarification on toll revenues mentioned in the initial presentation. Mr. Thomson responded that the anticipated toll money is not related to Tybee Rd, but is related to SR 204 and I-16. In regard to Tybee, Mr. Thomson and the Mr. Buelterman spoke about setting a toll at a rate that would pay for road, but the mayor was not comfortable with that idea. Mr. Thomson noted that the State Tollway Authority has spoken to the Tybee officials about the possibilities of tolling.

Mr. Johnson expressed his support for giving Mayor Buelterman options he can work with and present to his citizens.

Mr. Brown asked if this plan included the outlying municipalities paying dues. Mr. Thomson replied that at this time it does not. He noted that the city of Savannah and the County have been burdened with providing the local matching funds for projects.

Mr. Liakakis would like a list of projects by municipality and then what municipalities do not participate. This list could be used as a tool for getting them to come to the table.

Mr. Thomson notified the board that they have begun working on the next Transportation Improvement Program for the next four years. The budget for the current period 2008-2011 averaged about \$80 million in federal funds per year for Chatham County. The budget they are looking at for 2010- 2013 averages just over \$30 million in federal funds per year. This will severely affect our upcoming projects.

IV. Schedule for Completion of the Framework Plan

Mr. Thomson noted that the next meeting of the CORE MPO Board will be August 26th when they will re-visit this plan. The plan will be ready for adoption at a special meeting on September 17th.

V. Adjournment

There being no other business to come before the Committee, the August 3, 2009 CORE Board Special Meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

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