



METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

CORE MPO BOARD MEETING SUMMARY

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

October 23, 2009

9:00 AM

Voting Members

Russ Abolt
LTC Jose Aguilar
John Bennett
Michael Brown
Jason Buelterman
Shedrick Coleman
Patrick S. Graham
William W. Hubbard
James Hungerpiller
McArthur Jarrett
Otis Johnson
Glenn Jones
Mike Lamb
Pete Liakakis
Doug J. Marchand
Charles Odimgbe
Andy Quinney
Gerald Ross
Patrick Shay
Anna Maria Thomas
Wayne Tipton
Eric R. Winger

Representing

Chatham County
Hunter Army Airfield
Chairman, CAC
City of Savannah
City of Tybee Island
Chairman, MPC
Savannah Airport Commission
Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce
Town of Vernonburg
Chairman, ACAT
City of Savannah
City of Port Wentworth
City of Pooler
Chairman Chatham County Commission
Georgia Ports Authority
Chatham Area Transit
City of Garden City
GDOT
CAT Board of Directors
Town of Thunderbolt
City of Bloomingdale
Savannah Economic Development
Authority (SEDA)

Present

x

x

x

x

x

x

x

Voting Member Alternates

George Fidler
Brian Johnson

Representing

Savannah Airport Commission
City of Garden City

Present

x

x

Ex-officio Members

Sonny Timmerman

Representing

Hinesville Area MPO

Present

x

<u>Others Present</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Present</u>
Michael Adams	MPO Staff	X
Carolyn Bowden	SSU Student	X
Sean Brandon	City of Savannah	X
Leon Davenport	Chatham County	X
Dennis Hutton	MPC	X
Jane Love	MPO Staff	X
Pamela Oglesby	West Savannah resident	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
Mark Wilkes, P.E., AICP	MPO Staff	X
Louis Wilson	Citizens Advisory Committee	X

Call to Order

Chairman Pete Liakakis called the October 23, 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 October 23, 2009 meeting carried with none opposed.

II. Committee Reports

A. Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation

Mr. McArthur Jarrett reported that the ACAT committee did not have a quorum at the meeting this past Monday so there was no official business.

B. Citizens Advisory Committee

Ms. Jane Love reported that the committee heard the presentation of the FY 2010-2013 Transportation Improvement Program. They passed the following two motions:

- That the following four projects be given top priority: Skidaway Narrows bridge; extension of Truman Parkway south to I-95; extension of Truman Parkway north to Hutchinson Island and I-95; and 4-laning Bull River and Lazaretto Creek bridges.
- That the MPO support local efforts to re-evaluate the design for the W. Bay Street project.

C. Technical Coordinating Committee

Mr. Mark Wilkes reported that the Technical Coordinating Committee endorsed the FY 2010-2013 Transportation Improvement Program.

D. Executive Director's Report

Mr. Tom Thomson noted that today's meeting was rescheduled to avoid a conflict with a special meeting of the Coastal Regional Commission, at which the Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs was speaking.

Staff is reviewing next year's meeting schedule for the CORE MPO board. The Garrison Commander from Hunter Army Airfield is unable to make the current meeting date, so staff is looking into alternate meeting dates. A survey has been distributed today, and will be sent to all board members, to determine everyone's schedule. Some possible alternate dates and times would be:

- same as the currently schedule (4th Wed at 10:00 AM)
- the same day (4th Wed) at 1:30 PM
- the same day (4th Wed) at 3:00 PM
- the following Wednesday (1st Wed of a different month) at 10:00 AM.

Mr. Liakakis spoke of the importance of having the Garrison Commander present at the CORE MPO board meetings.

Mr. George Fidler noted that the Airport Board meets on the 3rd Wednesday of each month so he can never attend any CORE board meeting if ever scheduled for the 3rd Wednesday.

Mr. Thomson had e-mailed an invitation to all CORE Board members for the opening reception for the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations on October 28th. He asked for all to RSVP. The staff is working two conferences next week – the Georgia Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations and the National Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations.

He noted that a letter about GDOT's organizational changes was distributed to committee members. The changes are in line with the State Senate Bill 200 that passed.

Mr. Thomson reported that the Jimmy DeLoach Parkway "last-mile" project has been submitted for a TIGER grant, but GDOT has also put this project forth as a possible P3 project (private/public partnership). P3 projects must be approved by the legislature. They would know before then whether it got a TIGER grant.

He reported that Ms. LaToya Jones, from Federal Highway Administration, had told him that the corrective action noted in the certification process will be lifted because the MPO has met the schedule for the Long Range Transportation Plan update. He expects a written letter communicating the same shortly.

On September 30, the state had \$316 million rescinded from its transportation program. There is work underway to reverse this. The impact of this reduction on local projects is unknown at this time.

III. Action Items

A. **Approval of the August 26, 2009 CORE MPO Board Meeting Minutes and the September 17, 2009 CORE MPO Board Special Meeting Minutes**

It was moved and seconded to accept the minutes of the August 26, 2009 CORE MPO Board Meeting and the minutes of the September 17, 2009 CORE MPO Board Special Meeting.

CORE Board Action: the motion to accept the minutes of the August 26, 2009 CORE MPO Board Meeting and the minutes of the September 17, 2009 CORE MPO Board Special Meeting carried with none opposed.

B. **Adoption of the FY 2010-2013 Transportation Improvement Program**

Ms. Wykoda Wang presented the draft of the FY 2010-2013 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for approval by this committee. The TIP is a 4-year short-term program of multi-modal projects that are consistent with the Long Range Transportation Plan. Ms. Wang divided her presentation into four sections:

- highway projects
- transit projects
- rail projects
- local projects

Highway projects

Ms. Wang presented a listing of all highway projects, by category, included in the proposed TIP. The project categories were:

- Projects in the current TIP and carried over to the proposed TIP
 - She pointed out that two transit projects are listed in the highway section because funds for them are ear-marked from Federal Highway Administration. These two are grants and need to be applied for as soon as possible. CAT needs to do this.
 - Ms. Wang and Mr. Thomson offered clarification on the King George Blvd project which is being redesigned as an interchange project. This portion of the entire corridor project is being broken out in an effort to fast-track this portion to improve the traffic congestion.
- Projects that are funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) in the current TIP and carried over to the proposed TIP
 - The city of Savannah is removing some projects from this category so those funds will be re-directed to the remaining city projects in this category.

- Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant projects are also included in this category.
- Projects that do not show in the proposed TIP because they have been authorized
 - Skidaway Narrows Bridge project has been let
 - Ms. Wang confirmed that when funds are authorized, the project is removed from the TIP. It means the project is moving along.
- Projects that do not show in the proposed TIP because of delays or because they don't have federal funding in the four-year time-frame of the TIP:
 - SR 307 widening project has been moved to the local section by Chatham County
 - Diamond Causeway widening has been removed because it has been replaced by the Skidaway Narrows bridge project.
 - Skidaway Road improvement projects moved out to reassess the need and purpose for such improvement. It has also been moved out of the LRTP. Mr. Thomson believes this may become a series of lump sum projects and therefore funded under a different category.

Mr. Thomson noted that the description of the Tybee bridge project needs to be amended to describe it as an evaluation of new bridges that would include bicycle and pedestrian improvements.

- Projects that were ARRA-funded which do not show in the proposed TIP
 - City of Savannah requested removal of three projects because the city cannot meet the requirements in time for ARRA funding. These projects will need to be funded with other funds. The city would like to re-direct the ARRA funds for these three projects to other city projects in this category.
- Projects that are newly added to the proposed TIP which do not appear in the current TIP
 - Setting aside some funding here for some small lump-sum non-motorized projects that are being identified in the Total Mobility Plan
 - Mr. Thomson explained that the allocation for the State Rail Plan is to ensure that we have a seat at the table for this development
 - Mr. Thomson spoke of the benefit of a regional traffic control center and coordinating efforts with CEMA

Mr. George Fidler commented that the airport has set aside a corridor for a future rail spur between the airport and the industrial park to the north. Mr. Michael Brown asked about a set aside for a similar connector between the airport and downtown. No funds are allocated for either. Mr. Thomson noted that both of these can be addressed in the transit plan. Ms. Wang commented that all projects in the TIP must have funds associated with the project.

Transit Projects

Ms. Wang reviewed a listing of transit projects divided among the following categories:

- Regular formula funded projects – referred committee to page 90 in the draft document

- Stimulus funded projects
 - ARRA funded projects
 - TIGER grant projects
- Other transit projects in current and proposed TIP
 - These are ear-marked funds for improvements (extension of Riverwalk slip 3, parcel 7, and water ferry intermodal facilities) that have not yet been authorized.

Rail Projects

There are two rail projects carried over from the current TIP to the proposed TIP because funds have not yet been authorized.

Local Projects

As Ms. Wang mentioned earlier, the SR 307 widening project is now going to be funded with SPLOST funds so it is being moved to the local section in the proposed TIP.

Ms. Wang explained the public participation process. She outlined the schedule for public presentations and public comments. Comments received thus far are included in this draft on pages 21-24. The comment period was from September 16 – October 15. Comments received from the recent Citizens Advisory Committee meeting are being included now.

Mr. Brown asked about the bridge replacement at Haney's Creek on Montgomery Cross Rd. This project has been moved out to 2011 in the draft TIP. He noted that this bridge needs replacement now. Flooding of the surrounding neighborhood is a very real possibility because of the inadequate existing bridge opening. This was supposed to be replaced at the time that the Truman Parkway was built. The second project is at SR 204 and Harmon Canal which was supposed to be done in connection with the improvements to Middleground Rd. This bridge project is not in the draft TIP. These bridge replacements are now critical projects because of the direct connection these bridges have to the project improvements already made. He believes that these two bridge replacements are commitments that should have been fulfilled at the time of the original road improvements.

Ms. Wang noted that GDOT controls the funds for these projects. Highway widening and bridge improvements come from different funding categories, both of which are controlled by GDOT.

Mr. Brown noted that the pumping stations that needed to be built have been built, but now the bridges have not been updated to match the previous improvements.

Mr. Thomson explained that the MPO is not privy to a lot of the GDOT process for funding projects. He outlined two possible courses of action at today's meeting: 1) adopt the TIP, research the projects, and possibly do an amendment later; or 2) delay adoption until answers obtained about why the bridges have been delayed.

Ms. Wang asked for assistance from the GDOT staff to clarify the status of these two projects.

Mr. Brown noted that these were previous obligations that must be fulfilled. These bridge projects were corollaries to the Abercorn improvements and construction of Truman Parkway. We should not be moving on to other projects until these are done.

Mr. Brown also commented that Skidaway Rd and Whitfield Ave projects need to be reviewed as to their necessity. Would other improvements on Skidaway be appropriate? Mr. Liakakis spoke to the widening of Whitfield Ave. Mr. Patrick Shay thought that the widening of Whitfield Ave was connected to Truman Parkway Phase V. He suggested that if we re-study the Whitfield Ave project we should re-study the greater project, i.e. Truman Parkway Phase V.

Mr. Liakakis suggested either adopting this draft TIP subject to a re-examination by staff or not adopting it today and see what can be changed around before adopting it at a future meeting.

Mr. Thomson noted that both the Skidaway Rd. and Whitfield Avenue projects are in the right-of-way phase. Delaying them is a money issue not a production issue. Staff will investigate and report back to the MPO board.

Mr. Liakakis opened the public hearing.

Mrs. Pamela Howard Oglesby, representing Greater West Savannah neighborhoods of West Savannah and Hudson Hill, noted that these two neighborhoods have a lot in common. Safety issues exist on West Bay St. such as 10-foot wide lanes while today's standard is 12 feet. She believes West Bay St. improvements are just as important as any other project. Now that Sustainable Fellwood is underway, hundreds of people are coming back to West Savannah. West Bay St. is just as dangerous as it was before. Crossing West Bay St. is a serious safety issue. Also, if this project were to be done it would assist the city with their revitalization project for the neighborhood. This portion of West Bay St. is an evacuation route for weather or accident events. Garden City, Port Wentworth and the Georgia Ports Authority all contribute to traffic on West Bay St. She is concerned about waiting too long while the project is re-studied. She would prefer to see the project go forward as it is currently designed and at the same time work some of the sensitive issues into the main design.

Mr. Liakakis asked for clarification on whether she was in favor of proceeding with the plan already designed or in favor of waiting for a modified design to be developed. Ms. Oglesby would prefer to move ahead with the current plan, but is hopeful that some of the suggestions of the Traffic Calming Committee could be easily incorporated. The current plan contains some safety features.

Mr. Shay asked where we are in the process to get more funding to execute the plan that is already developed. Can we speed it up?

Mr. Thomson replied that the environmental document has been approved, the design is around 60% completed, and the right-of-way funding is the next stage of the process. At this time, \$2 million has been identified out of stimulus funding for this project. He is working with the county staff and GDOT to put together remaining stimulus funding, left over as result of low bids on other projects, to try to put together the whole right-of-way package. That would give a year to figure out where to get the construction funding. He believes there is room for looking at what can be done to make it safer without changing the right-of-way plan, but to start over would not be an efficient option at this point.

Mr. Shay commented that although it functions as a city street and divides a neighborhood into two sections, West Bay St. is a state road and will be improved by the state with federal highway dollars. He would like to see the board support these efforts and convince GDOT of the priority here.

Mr. Louis Wilson sits on the Traffic Calming Committee and has recently been appointed to the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). He reported that the CAC passed a motion asking that the plan for West Bay St. be re-visited, incorporating features suggested by the consultant hired by the city to present traffic calming solutions for West Bay St. He is concerned that the current plan for West Bay St. would actually encourage higher speeds along the road. The consultant made suggestions that would reduce the speed in the area, thereby making it a safer place. He advocates making West Bay St. more inviting for pedestrians and bicyclists. He asked this board to adopt the resolution to have GDOT re-visit this plan to incorporate some of the safety features advocated by the consultant.

Mr. Liakakis stated a concern that project cost would increase and the project would be delayed.

Mr. Sean Brandon, Director of Mobility and Parking Services for Savannah, emphasized that all discussions and ideas set forth for both Paradise Park and West Savannah were conceptual. He stressed that no price tags were attached to them; they were sets of ideas that the neighborhood residents came up with themselves. Everything that has been talked about has no cost identified yet. They haven't even talked with the county about anything yet. Sitting down with the county and state to discuss some of the recommendations is the next step. Mr. Brandon believes that the two positions on the West Bay St. project are not mutually exclusive. He supports moving forward with approving the TIP as it stands with the caveat that some of the suggestions from this recent discussion with the consultant be considered at a later date.

Mr. Liakakis closed the public hearing.

Mr. Brown moved that the draft TIP for FY 2010-2013 be approved with the following provisos:

- Re-examine the two bridge replacement projects and have staff report back about how these projects can be accomplished with GDOT.
- Re-visit the Whitfield Ave. and Skidaway Rd widening projects to determine the need for such projects.

- MPO and city staffs work together on road designs to accommodate pedestrian safety and neighborhood-oriented design
- Incorporate regional trip reduction initiatives as a part of improvements on SR 21 and other roadways in and out of the county.

The motion was seconded.

Mr. MacArthur Jarrett asked if this discussion included Chatham Area Transit (CAT) projects and issues. Is it appropriate for him to ask questions on projects in general or just these neighborhood projects mentioned?

He asked if the transit projects listed are being funded by federal grants or are they part of CAT's general budget amounts. He has requested a full budget for CAT as it relates to para-transit and has not received it. He is concerned about CAT's approach to para-transit issues. He is not clear on how the funding cycle operates. What amounts stated today are separate from the MPO's decision making process and allocation of dollars as opposed to the regular budget of CAT?

Mr. Odimgbe clarified that the only part of Ms. Wang's presentation that speaks to para-transit is the New Freedom funding. On the budget issue, Mr. Odimgbe noted that the budget is a public document. CAT's budget is part of the Chatham County budget and CAT has oversight of its portion. He is using New Freedom funds for Teleride concerns.

Mr. Jarrett noted that there are two distinct amounts – operating budget monies and grant monies. He asked why paratransit needs a grant when paratransit is a part of CAT's general budget. Mr. Odimgbe reported that the operating budget line item for paratransit is \$1.7 million. Grant funding available to transit is partially used for new buses. An additional 25 buses have been applied for in the TIGER grant. Mr. Odimgbe will get the budget information to Mr. Jarrett. Mr. Jarrett believes that paratransit needs are lowest on the totem pole of projects. Mr. Odimgbe believes paratransit needs are just as important as CAT transit needs. He is talking with county staff now about this very thing and invited Mr. Jarrett to participate in these discussions with the county. Mr. Jarrett asked about the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Coastal Regional Commission (CRC) and what CAT's role in it is. Mr. Odimgbe noted that the CRC has expanded service in our area to augment the existing paratransit service.

CORE MPO Board Action: The motion to approve the FY 2010-2013 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) with the following provisos carried with none opposed:

- **Re-examine the two bridge replacement projects and have staff report back about how these projects can be accomplished with GDOT.**
- **Re-visit the Whitfield Avenue and Skidaway Rd widening projects to determine the need for such projects.**
- **MPO and city staffs work together on road designs to accommodate pedestrian safety and neighborhood-oriented design**
- **Incorporate regional trip reduction initiatives as a part of improvements on SR 21 and other roadways in and out of the county.**

IV. Agency Reports

A. Georgia Department of Transportation

Ms. Teresa Scott referred to the following projects from her list:

- Diamond Causeway bridge over Skidaway Narrows (#1) – this was let to contract last Friday; United Contractors out of SC is the low bidder; their design group is LPA Group out of Atlanta. It has not yet been awarded, but should be by the end of the month.
- Gulfstream Rd. and Robert B. Miller Rd. projects (# 7 & # 8) – reduced from widening to interchange projects due to funding; concept plan is approved.
- Jimmy DeLoach Pkwy Ext (#31) – concept meeting scheduled for November 19, 2009 at GDOT district office with video conference with the Atlanta office
- SR 204 from CR803/Fort Argyle Rd to Old River Rd (#37) – had a Public Information Open House on October 20, 2009 for this safety project.

Mr. Jarrett asked about the project that relates to Holland Dr. & Abercorn. Is it still part of the project list? Ms. Scott replied that it is included in the Truman Pkwy Phase V. It is still active. The right-of-way is complete and just needs a little environmental work cleaned up.

Mr. Jarrett asked about the Whitfield Ave. project, specifically the status of the right-of-way process in this area. Ms. Scott replied that the county is in the process of buying all the right-of-way. At this time they are about half way through the purchase of right-of-way.

Ms. Scott noted that the Skidaway Rd project is city-sponsored. She noted that nothing has been decided for certain, though the city may be considering reducing the project to a series of intersection projects.

Mr. Eric Winger asked about the Gulfstream Rd. and Robert B. Miller Rd. Are they in the normal mix of projects with no special attention? Ms. Scott explained that these road widenings were a commitment made by the Governor but no money came along with the commitment. GDOT was left to find the money, and at this time there isn't enough for widening projects, so they have been scaled back to intersection improvements (i.e. turning lanes and signals). She is not aware of any special status assigned to these two projects. Gulfstream is aware of everything that is going on in regard to these projects. Mr. Liakakis will call the Governor to follow up with this commitment tied to Gulfstream's expansion. Ms. Scott confirmed that the Governor's office is fully informed and aware of the status. Mr. Winger wants to be certain that we don't overpromise in the future when seeking further economic development projects. Mr. Thomson noted that this project went from state funding (as per the Governor) to federal funding which can impact other projects that the MPO has in the pipeline.

Mr. Brown asked for the status of Ogeechee Rd project (#14). Ms. Scott replied that the environmental activities are 90% completed. They are still validating the concept because it is old. There is no public hearing date set at this time. Mr. Thomson asked that work not

be delayed just because it's not in the TIP. This project has been previously obligated and funded for early phases. It won't be put into the TIP until the environmental process is completed. Progress on this project should be at least at the normal pace. He asked this to be completed as soon as possible.

B. Liberty County Projects

Mr. Sonny Timmerman reported that they have received authorization from the Department of Defense to start on a 3-county (Liberty, Long & Bryan) transportation effort. This should be winding up in the summer of 2010. There may be suggestions that come out of this process that may affect Chatham County. He will keep the CORE MPO informed. Mr. Timmerman also noted that the 2010 Census may affect some MPO boundaries.

C. Chatham County

No report at this time.

D. City of Savannah

No report at this time from Traffic Engineering.

Mr. Sean Brandon reported for Project DeRenne. The consulting team was in Savannah this week and met with the steering committee. The design charrette will be November 2 – 6, 2009. This is the most critical point in this whole process. This is where drawings will come forth that will lead to concepts that will then lead to completed design.

E. Chatham Area Transit Authority

No report at this time.

F. Georgia Ports Authority

No report at this time.

G. Savannah-Hilton Head International Airport

Mr. George Fidler reported that air traffic is not dropping as fast as it was. This is good news. They have run out of land to develop and there is still demand for property on the airfield. A taxiway is under construction that will cross the current Gulfstream Rd. Through-traffic on Gulfstream Rd. will be re-routed around the east and north airport property lines. The north property line shares with the industrial park's south property line. Planning is underway and they are coordinating with GDOT.

He has asked the MPO to add the new perimeter road into the new TIP. It is funded by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) so it doesn't affect other community projects.

V. Other Business

No other business at this time.

VI. Other Public Comments

No further public comments at this time.

VII. Adjournment

There being no further business the October 23, 2009 CORE Board meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

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