



METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

**CORE MPO BOARD
MEETING SUMMARY**

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

December 16, 2009

10:00 AM

Voting Members

Russ Abolt
LTC Jose Aguilar
John Bennett
Michael Brown
Jason Buelterman
Shedrick Coleman
Patrick S. Graham
Tennyson Holder
William W. Hubbard
James Hungerpiller
McArthur Jarrett
Otis Johnson
Glenn Jones
Mike Lamb
Pete Liakakis
Doug J. Marchand
Charles Odimgbe
Patrick Shay
Vance Smith
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
City of Garden City
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
CAT Board of Directors
GDOT
Town of Thunderbolt
City of Bloomingdale
Savannah Economic Development
Authority (SEDA)

Present

x
x
x

x

x

x
x
x

Voting Member Alternates

Brian Johnson
Diane Schleicher
Hugh "Trip" Tollison
Cindy VanDyke

Representing

City of Garden City
City of Tybee Island
Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce
GDOT

Present

x
x
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
Susan Broker	City of Savannah	X
Jason Crane	GDOT	X
Leon Davenport	Chatham County	X
LaToya Jones	FHWA	X
Tim Kassa	GDOT	X
Jane Love	MPO Staff	X
Sean Martin	FSGMO	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
Mark Wilkes, P.E., AICP	MPO Staff	X

Call to Order

Prior to the official call to order, MPC staff member, Julie Yawn conducted an introductory training session on the new “e-agenda” meeting software which will now be used for the CORE Board meetings. Following this training Chairman Pete Liakakis called the December 16, 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 December 16, 2009 meeting carried with none opposed.

II. Committee Reports

A. Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation

Mr. McArthur Jarrett reported that the Advisory Committee for Accessible Transportation endorsed the meeting schedule for 2010 and received a status report on Project DeRenne. There had been no report from First Transit/Teleride and CAT had e-mailed their report. There was a lot of public participation concerning issues of public transportation.

B. Citizens Advisory Committee

Mr. John Bennett reported that the Citizens Advisory Committee endorsed the meeting schedule for 2010 and received a status report on Proejct DeRenne. The committee wants to stay updated and involved in the progress of this project.

C. Technical Coordinating Committee

Mr. Mark Wilkes reported that the Technical Coordinating Committee endorsed the meeting schedule for 2010 and discussed the Project DeRenne status report.

D. Executive Director's Report

Mr. Tom Thomson reported that the staff is tracking the progress of stimulus funded projects, and by January 1st or shortly thereafter, all the money allocated will be obligated in keeping with the March 1, 2010 deadline.

Mr. Liakakis announced that the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) approved \$128 million for the Truman Parkway Phase V. Funding was released from other projects that were not "shovel-ready". Additional funding came from state and federal fuel taxes. He reported that funds were released for the Whitfield Avenue project, and the Skidaway Narrows Bridge project is on track. He expressed appreciation to GDOT, our legislators and our local staffs.

Mr. Thomson noted that the CORE Board was perfectly clear and consistent in its message about the Truman Parkway Phase V. GDOT had no doubt that this was the top priority project.

III. Action Items

A. Approval of the October 23, 2009 CORE MPO Board Meeting Minutes

It was moved and seconded to accept the minutes of the October 23, 2009 CORE MPO Board Meeting.

CORE Board Action: the motion to accept the minutes of the October 23, 2009 CORE MPO Board Meeting carried with none opposed.

B. Approval of the 2010 CORE MPO Meeting Schedule

Ms. Jane Love reported that at the Technical Coordinating Committee staff learned that the proposed 3:00 p.m. meeting times for the MPO Board would present some difficulty for the GDOT MPO representative and the supporting department staff who attend. She invited the board to discuss alternative meeting times here today. Discussion followed. LTC Aguilar reported that he was able to change his schedule so that the 10:00 AM meeting was now acceptable to him.

It was moved and seconded to hold the CORE Board meetings at 10:00 AM and approve the entire schedule as amended.

CORE Board Action: the motion to hold the CORE Board meetings at 10:00 AM and approve the entire schedule as amended carried with none opposed.

IV. Other Business

There was no other business at this time.

Mr. Liakakis thanked Mr. Thomson and his staff for all the hard work they do for the CORE Board. Mr. Russ Abolt thanked the MPO staff, city staff and county staff for all their efforts that prepared us to receive the funding for these recent projects.

V. Status Reports

A. CORE Board 2009 Federal Certification Review Findings

Ms. LaToya Jones reported that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) jointly reviewed the CORE MPO, as per federal regulations. This review was conducted on March 10 and 11, 2009 and the final report was issued April 30, 2009. The report noted eight (8) strengths and made eleven (11) recommendations. Ms. Jones highlighted three of the strengths (process for the DeRenne Ave. signal pre-emption project, details in the analysis of environmental justice areas in the county, and the implementation of e-agenda as a means of streamlining the meeting process) and also noted three recommendations (evaluate effectiveness of public participation, update the bikeway plan, and update the website with the latest policies and plans). Lastly, the MPO was issued a corrective action to update the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan. The adoption of the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan had been two to three months late. The corrective action was lifted on October 8, 2009, after the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan was prepared and submitted on time on September 17, 2009. The MPO is now fully certified for the next four years. The next certification review will be in 2013.

B. Project DeRenne Update

Ms. Susan Broker introduced the consultants from Kimley Horn & Associates, Rob Hume and Melinda Dyk, who presented the final report from the design charrette. Ms. Broker noted that there are two components – transportation issues and land use issues. At this time the group will be working to formulate a recommendation for the city council based on the outcomes of the charrette.

Mr. Rob Hume explained that Project DeRenne is a 5-phase project. They are currently in Phase 2. He gave a report of how the charrette was structured and how citizens and designers participated.

The outcomes were in two primary areas – roadway (east of Abercorn, and west of Abercorn) and land use (4 primary focus areas).

From I-516 to Abercorn St., what is notable is that I-516 carries 54,000 vehicles on any given day. By the time you get to Abercorn St., the number of vehicles on DeRenne Ave. has dropped to 31,000. A concentrated number of vehicles use DeRenne Ave. to get to points south. The study also tracked the average delay at the nine (9) intersections on DeRenne Ave. DeRenne Ave. is being used for two purposes – to travel on DeRenne Ave. and to get to points south.

Two concepts were developed:

- Intersection treatment option – creates additional east-bound land which terminates as a right-turn-only lane at White Bluff Rd; creates pedestrian refuge islands
- Boulevard option – transforms the current Hampstead Ave. into “Poplar Place Boulevard,” which provides continuous travel (without turn delays) between I-516 and southern portion of White Bluff Rd. Hunter Army Airfield access would be directly onto this new roadway. This new roadway would be designed to look similar to Victory Dr. or Oglethorpe Ave, with sidewalks, planted buffers, and planted median. It is a boulevard and not a highway bypass. The study notes that delays would be reduced by 67% at White Bluff Rd.

Mr. Hume commented that Savannah Tech is supportive of the Boulevard option plan at this time, though there are many details yet to be worked out.

Poplar Place and University neighborhoods would be protected and could become stronger, primarily residential neighborhoods. Mr. Hume noted that the army base would lose approximately 3 acres in order to construct the boulevard option. Hunter Army Airfield representatives have been involved in the meetings, are aware of the proposal. Discussion continues, and again, many details would need to be worked out. The Montgomery St. base entrance would remain in its present location; the roadway access would be realigned.

In response to Mr. Shay’s question about funding, Mr. Hume explained that this project has not been budgeted. It is strictly a transportation/land use study at this time. This is a master plan to be implemented over time. Mr. Thomson noted that funding will be a combination from many sources – city, state, and federal funds.

LTC Aguilar commented that the army is committed to working with the city for a solution for DeRenne Ave. Funding and timing for this project need to be clarified for the public. The three primary challenges for the army base are traffic flow, land swap, and protection.

Mr. Hume confirmed that this is only Phase 2 of a 5-phase project. Due to the high sensitivity in the neighborhoods and with the stakeholders, they are working very hard to keep this process totally transparent, hence there is a great deal of publicity in these early stages.

Mr. Hume spoke about the property along DeRenne Ave. between White Bluff Rd. and Abercorn St. and offered a new land use concept for this area. It would be along the lines

of what is called a “lifestyle center” now. This development would be driven by private investment, not public.

Mr. Hume displayed the ideas for the portion of DeRenne Ave. east of Abercorn St. The idea is to re-purpose the continuous center turn lane into a median to create a boulevard look, re-manage the right of way to enhance the pedestrian zone, and insert a bike lane along DeRenne Drive. The impact of a median would be minimal to commercial businesses, because currently there are hardly any destinations requiring mid-block left-hand turns in this segment of the corridor. Any left turn bays would be positioned to serve multiple commercial businesses.

Mr. Hume spoke about land use concepts for the South Garden neighborhood.

Mr. Shay asked how transit was incorporated in this plan. Mr. Hume explained that currently DeRenne Ave. does not have demand for east/west travel. Streetcar use has been discussed; it could possibly run in the median of Montgomery St., median of the new boulevard, through the lifestyle center and back to downtown on Waters Ave. Park-and-ride facilities would be very possible where I-516 travelers could transfer to another mode in an area with pedestrian-friendly activities and diversions. Mr. Odimgbe commented that changes in land use might make transit in the corridor more desirable, even though there is no transit presence along DeRenne Ave. now.

C. Four-County Assessment of Military Regional Growth Impacts

Mr. Sonny Timmerman reported that this study, covering a 4-county area, began over a year ago and is funded by the Department of Defense. The study area includes Bryan, Liberty, Long, and Tattnall counties along with Fort Stewart. He introduced Mr. Sean Martin who reported on the Growth Management Partnership. The goal is to understand the existing service issues and future issues that come with an expansion of Ft. Stewart. These four counties should see a population increase of 60,000 in the next twenty years, which in some cases is double or triple the current population.

He reported the impact of the loss of the 5th brigade to this area. The government is continuing the construction that was begun on base.

The Partnership is working with the stakeholders and community to identify issues and establish goals to insure services to those on and off the base. Transportation, education, health services, infrastructure, and quality of life are just a few of the areas they are studying.

Mr. Timmerman commented that the 2010 census may change the boundaries of the CORE MPO to include some of Bryan and/or Liberty in the process.

Mr. Liakakis asked if Ft. Stewart and/or Hunter Army Airfield were prepared to handle the arrival of a new brigade. Mr. Timmerman confirmed that construction is going forward at

Ft. Stewart. He is not worried about the military being able to provide services and housing on base. His concern is for the communities surrounding the base.

VI. Agency Reports

A. MPO Information

No further report at this time.

B. Georgia Department of Transportation

Ms. Teresa Scott reported that in addition to Truman Parkway Phase 5, the intersection improvement at I-95 and SR 204 is also scheduled for letting next month. Mr. Thomson asked about the lighting project at I-95 & I-16. Ms. Scott believes plans are finalized but it is a funding issue now.

C. Liberty County Projects

No report at this time.

D. Chatham County

Mr. Shay requested that focus be put on the Skidaway Rd, corridor improvements, particularly sidewalks and curbs which would be useful for those who do not drive cars. Mr. Leon Davenport reported that the county has broken the project up into workable portions. They are currently working with the consultant on improvements in this corridor between Montgomery Cross Rd. and Ferguson Ave. Mr. Davenport said the County's portion includes improvements for pedestrians as well as automobile drivers. The city is working on other sections.

E. City of Savannah

Mr. Mike Weiner reported the status of city projects:

- Chatham Pkwy./Southern Blvd. – traffic signal is operational as of November 12.
- Jimmy DeLoach Pkwy. at Benton Blvd. – expect to award contract for a signal and hope to have it operational by February 2010.
- W. Gwinnett St. widening – GDOT approved the revised concept report.

He also reported on the traffic stimulus projects. Revisions were submitted on December 10th. The project is scheduled to be let by GDOT in February 2010.

F. Chatham Area Transit

Mr. Odingbe reported that CAT has begun transitioning Teleride employees into CAT. He is expecting 10 additional vehicles in the next few days to help with Teleride service.

Eleven hybrid buses are coming in January and another nine by the end of 2010 for the fixed route service.

He also reported his staff has searched and reviewed all possible grants. At this time he believes there are no other outstanding grants.

Mr. Shay offered his thanks on behalf of CAT to Congressmen Kingston and Barrow for an allocation of \$2.5 million in the recent omnibus bill which will be used for the intermodal facility.

Mr. Liakakis commented that this same bill included possible grants that we could apply for in the future.

Mr. Shay advocated forward movement on all the earmark projects or we will be hard pressed to get any further grant funding for this project or any project.

G. Georgia Ports Authority

No report at this time.

H. Savannah-Hilton Head International Airport

No report at this time.

VII. Other Public Comments

No public comments at this time.

VIII. Announcements

Next meeting will be February 24, 2010 at 10:00 AM

IX. Adjournment

There being no further business the December 16, 2009 CORE Board meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

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