



METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

**CORE MPO BOARD
MEETING SUMMARY**

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

August 22, 2012

10:00 AM

Voting Members

Russ Abolt
Jason Buelterman
Mark Egan
Curtis Foltz
Keith Golden
Patrick S. Graham
Tennyson Holder
William W. Hubbard
James Hungerpiller
Edna Jackson
McArthur Jarrett
Glenn Jones
LTC Edward Kovaleski
Mike Lamb
Pete Liakakis
J. Adam Ragsdale
Chad Reese
Patrick Shay
Rochelle Small-Toney
Anna Maria Thomas
Wayne Tipton
Steven Weathers

Representing

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

Present

x

x

x
x

x
x

Voting Member Alternates

Wanda Doyle
George Fidler
Brian Johnson
Tom McQueen
Ramond Robinson

Representing

City of Tybee Island
Savannah Airport Commission
City of Garden City
GDOT
Chatham Area Transit

Present

x
x
x
x
x

Regional Coordination Guest

Sonny Timmerman

Representing

Liberty County

Present

x

<u>Others Present</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Present</u>
Michael Adams	MPO Staff	X
Kirsten Berry	HNTB	X
Toby Carr	GDOT	X
Leon Davenport	Chatham County	X
Jessica Hagan	MPO Staff	X
Jane Love	MPO Staff	X
David Moyer	GDOT	X
Sarah Rayfield	CAT	X
Brad Saxon	GDOT	X
Diane Schleicher	City of Tybee Island	X
Barbara Settzo	for MPO	X
Thomas Thomson, P.E., AICP	MPC Executive Director	X
Wykoda Wang	MPO Staff	X
Alan Ware	GDOT	X
Mike Weiner	City of Savannah	X
Mark Wilkes	MPO Staff	X
Michelle Wright	GDOT	X
Julie Yawn	MPC Staff	X

Call to Order

Chairman Pete Liakakis called the meeting to order.

I. Approval of Agenda

It was moved and seconded to approve the agenda.

CORE Board Action: the motion to approve the agenda for the August 22, 2012 meeting carried with none opposed.

II. Committee Reports

A. Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation

Ms. Wykoda Wang reported that the committee endorsed the proposed amendments to the FY 2013-2016 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

B. Citizens Advisory Committee

Mr. Mark Egan reported that the action items were endorsed by the committee.

C. Technical Coordinating Committee

Mr. Mark Wilkes reported that the committee reviewed and endorsed the highway and transit updates to the FY2013-2016 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

D. Executive Director's Report

Mr. Tom Thomson introduced Mr. Ramond Robinson from Chatham Area Transit. He then introduced Mr. Toby Carr, the new GDOT Planning Director.

Mr. Carr noted that his job is to communicate and implement the Governor's vision for transportation in the state of Georgia, and this includes working with statewide MPO's, the legislators, and transportation stakeholders around the state.

III. Action Items

A. Approval of the June 27, 2012 CORE MPO Board Meeting Minutes

It was moved and seconded to accept the minutes of the June 27, 2012 CORE MPO Board Meeting.

CORE Board Action: the motion to approve the minutes of the June 27, 2012 CORE MPO Board Meeting carried with none opposed.

B. Approval of the FY 2013-2016 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Highway Program Updates and Transit Amendments

Ms. Wang presented the staff report. It was agreed that Ms. Wang would combine the presentations of both the highway updates report and the transit amendment report.

GDOT has requested two highway project revisions to the TIP. The first project is for the southbound I-95 Welcome Center which needs additional funds to bring the plans up to date. The second project is the Brampton Road Connector project. Funds need to be programmed for GDOT oversight of the project. Additionally, GDOT provided project identification numbers for three projects.

Regarding the transit amendments, at the time that the TIP was approved, only partial transit funding apportionment was released for Sections 5307, 5316 and 5317 programs and included in the TIP. Now the full transit apportionment has been released. This amendment is to replace the partial funding amounts with the full funding amounts. Changes are also necessary in the Section 5309 program so that CAT may access the competitive grant funding that was just awarded.

Mr. Egan asked why the welcome center project was delayed to the point of needing to be updated. Mr. Brad Saxon replied that the decision of GDOT was to close the welcome center and demolish it during construction of the new center, but industry and trade did not want to do that, so there were coordination issues. Also, in 2008, GDOT was prioritizing projects.

Mr. Thomson read the following statement into the record prior to the opening of the public hearing for the proposed TIP amendment:

“The CORE MPO is responsible for transportation planning within the Chatham County area. The MPO insures federal spending on transportation for urbanized area of over 50,000 people occurs through a comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing process involving the public and a wide range of agencies and policy makers. The Transportation Improvement Program is the MPO’s short-range planning document and is a staged, multi-year listing of surface transportation projects proposed for federal, state, and local funding within the metropolitan area. All transportation projects must appear in an approved Long Range Transportation Plan and in the Transportation Improvement Program before they can receive federal funds for implementation.”

Mr. Liakakis opened the public hearing. There being no comments from the public, the public hearing was closed.

It was moved and seconded to approve the FY 2013-2016 Transportation Improvement Program Highway Program Updates.

CORE Board Action: the motion to approve the FY 2013-2016 Transportation Improvement Program Highway Program Updates carried with none opposed.

It was moved and seconded to approve the FY 2013-2016 Transportation Improvement Program Transit Amendments.

CORE Board Action: the motion to approve the FY 2013-2016 Transportation Improvement Program Transit Amendments carried with none opposed.

IV. Other Business

A. Discussion of overhead, digital traffic alert sign for US 80 towards Tybee Island

Mr. Thomson reported that a request has been made for an information sign near Quarterman Dr. at US 80 for the purpose of managing traffic, particularly in case of accident. Ms. Wanda Doyle confirmed that the Tybee Island City Council discussed if the installation of a traffic alert sign near Quarterman Dr. would help manage traffic congestion, by improving traveler decision-making. She is bringing this request to the CORE MPO Board for consideration.

Mr. Thomson reported that MPO staff and GDOT have discussed this, and it is not as simple as it looks. An IT monitor and sign requires considerable infrastructure, none of which is currently in place. This idea is in a long range plan. There is a short-term alternative where the police could pull out a mobile digital sign that could carry a message about congestion.

Mr. Russ Abolt supported this idea and recommended Bryans Wood Rd. as the point where eastbound traffic would be advised and re-directed in case of congestion.

Mr. Thomson proposed that Tybee Island implement the short term solution, in cooperation with Metro and Tybee police. The IT component could be included in the long range planning for that corridor. Ms. Doyle will take this back to the Tybee Island City Council and police chief and ask that they coordinate with the County.

V. Status Reports

A. 2010 Census Savannah Urbanized Area

Ms. Wang presented the staff report. The 2010 census Savannah Urbanized Area will have an impact on the current MPO boundaries and planning funding. The new census would have Richmond Hill in Bryan County and a little of Effingham County included in our current MPO boundary. The staff is still working on determining definite boundaries. The MPO is to include urbanized areas plus any area that is expected to be urbanized within the next twenty years. This analysis is underway by the MPO staff. Once this is determined changes in the MPO membership could be made and a Memorandum of Understanding with GDOT will be issued.

Ms. Wang explained that part of Hunter Army Airfield, part of the airport, part of Bloomingdale and Pooler, and part of the Crossroads business center are not included. The MPO has sent a letter questioning this decision.

When asked about funding decrease or increase, Mr. Thomson responded that the distribution plan from the federal level to the states is complicated. The formula used by the state to the local MPO is also changing and is complicated. At this time he doesn't know the amount involved. Also, the split of urban funds (L230) has changed from 65/35 between urban areas and other areas to a 50/50 split. Staff is still researching the details.

Mr. Thomson noted that the local level does not participate in establishing the formula for distribution but the MPO staff does audit the formula for accuracy so that we get the amount indicated by the formula.

The Savannah urbanized area has actually grown since 2000. The issue being discussed with the federal government is the string of non-urbanized patches that runs through the middle of the urbanized area. To be an MPO you need an urbanized area of 50,000 people or more.

This surface transportation act is only a 2-year act which relies on revenues 10 years into the future to pay for it. This presents a problem about how to pay for it.

Mr. Thomson would prefer to have MPO boundaries determined by the labor-shed area, i.e. the area that is a one-hour drive from Savannah in every direction. He doesn't believe

this is the time to do this, but it could be in the future and needs to be accommodated in the long range planning.

B. Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21)

Ms. Jane Love presented the staff report. The written report sent to committee members highlighted the important points of the legislation. This legislation replaces SAFETEA-LU. She noted that much remains the same and the Highway Trust Fund is now solvent, though it will not be in 2015. There are no earmarks in the bill. This bill also consolidates some programs and redefines others, on the highway side as well as transit.

Ms. Love also reviewed the highlights in the metropolitan planning section and in environmental streamlining. Categorical exclusion option has been expanded which should shorten the environmental approval process for some projects. The federal government also encourages the use of planning products in the environmental process during project delivery, with the idea of reducing re-work.

When asked how this new bill would affect our project schedule, Ms. Love said that the environmental streamlining should help on some projects that aren't already in the environmental process, but other than that it will not have much effect on any current projects.

Mr. Thomson commented that the projects in the pipeline should be good to go. If the categorical exclusion speeds up the process it could mean a project needs right-of-way and construction money sooner, and that funding may not be available at that time.

C. GDOT Intermodal Presentation: High speed rail study

Mr. Michael Adams introduced Mr. Alan Ware from the Intermodal Division of GDOT. Mr. Ware explained that in 2008-09 they received federal stimulus funds to perform feasibility studies on three corridors, running through Atlanta, that could be high speed, high performance rail corridors: Louisville-Atlanta; Atlanta-Birmingham; and Atlanta-Savannah-Jacksonville. The feasibility of a Charlotte-Atlanta-Macon corridor has already been studied, and the Charlotte-Atlanta portion is moving into a Tier I Environmental Impact Statement. Today's report is on the feasibility of a corridor that passes through Savannah and on to Jacksonville.

Ms. Kirsten Berry presented the results of the feasibility study. This study is of the three proposed corridors passing through Atlanta. A preferred alternative has not been selected, and costs estimates are at the planning level, not detailed. This study looked at two representative alignments and three technologies for the corridors. Shared use and dedicated use alignments were considered for the Atlanta-Jacksonville corridor. Stations were proposed, which included Savannah. They did revenue and ridership projections. The study also includes an estimate for capital costs and for operating & maintenance costs.

The Atlanta-Savannah-Jacksonville corridor scored a 1.5 on their feasibility scale which indicates it is feasible. The next step is environmental studies for the corridor. She referred committee members to the electronic copy of the report that was sent to committee members.

Mr. Liakakis asked if high speed rail was “defunct” as announced by the Governor, due to the failure of the referendum on the Transportation Investment Act tax. Mr. Ware will be talking with Mr. Carr to determine if anything will move forward. Mr. Thomson confirmed high speed rail is only a future idea at this time because of costs. But, Savannah is in a good spot. He believes we should concentrate our planning efforts on suitable sites for a high speed rail station. He will have staff focus on the land-use component for rail lines and stations in the long range plan.

When asked about using old rail lines, Mr. Ware said that might be done where possible, but that CSX has restrictions on using the rail lines for passengers. That would need to be addressed. Mr. Ware also mentioned that there is a coastal corridor under consideration, as well as the Atlanta -Savannah - Jacksonville but it runs through North and South Carolina and was not in his purview to study. The outcome of the Tier I environmental studies will be a deciding factor for future development.

VI. Agency Reports

A. Georgia Department of Transportation

Mr. Brad Saxon reported that the initial concept meeting for the DeRenne projects took place earlier this month.

Work has begun on intersection improvements at Crossgate Rd. & SR 21. Work is ongoing on I-95 for an auxiliary lane between Jimmy DeLoach Pkwy. and SR 21 exits. A new signal was turned on at SR26/US 80 at I-95 southbound ramp.

Ms. Jackson asked for an update on project #9 – Ogeechee Rd. Mr. Saxon explained that at this time it is outside of the current TIP. Mr. Thomson explained that previous delays put the construction outside of the TIP window. This doesn't mean it's not a priority. They are now watching this project closely and it will probably be ready for construction in the next TIP.

B. Liberty County Projects

Mr. Sonny Timmerman reported that they are focusing on project deliveries and priorities. The failure to pass the T-splst has an effect on what they can do.

C. Chatham County

Mr. Leon Davenport reported on the Bay St. widening project. It's been on hold for historical review. He hopes to have right-of-way acquisition underway by October 2012 or as late as December. Dean Forest Rd. widening project is underway from I-16 to US 17.

D. City of Savannah

Mr. Mike Weiner reported that installation of a signal at MLK Blvd. and Hall St. will be underway shortly and should be completed by next month. Concept meeting for the three phases of DeRenne Ave. took place earlier this month. They are having the value engineering study in Atlanta in September. The other project is a pedestrian safety project on DeLesseps Ave. The city has approved a project framework agreement with GDOT for this project. He reported that the improvement project on Victory Dr. at the Truman Pkwy. has just been awarded.

E. Chatham Area Transit

Mr. Ramond Robinson reported that ridership decreased in June on the fixed route side, relative to last June, but increased on the Teleride side. The development of the Transit Development Plan is underway.

F. Georgia Ports Authority

No report at this time.

G. Savannah-Hilton Head International Airport

Mr. George Fidler reported on the expansions at the airport. This includes extending one taxiway, adding another taxiway, and relocating Gulfstream Rd. Median cut on Airways Ave. at the entrance to the new Gulfstream facility is completed. Temporary traffic signals will be up starting tomorrow. They met with GDOT about I-95 NB Ramp at Airways Ave.

VII. Other Public Comments

No public comments at this time.

VIII. Announcements

The next meeting will be October 31, 2012

IX. Non-agenda items

X. Adjournment

There being no further business the August 22, 2012 CORE Board meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

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