



METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

**CORE MPO BOARD  
MEETING SUMMARY**

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

**February 27, 2013**

**10:00 AM**

**Voting Members**

James Aberson  
Russ Abolt  
Jason Buelterman  
Stephanie Cutter  
Mark Egan  
Curtis Foltz  
Keith Golden  
Patrick S. Graham  
Tennyson Holder  
William W. Hubbard  
James Hungerpillar  
Edna Jackson  
Glenn Jones  
LTC Edward Kovaleski  
Mike Lamb  
Pete Liakakis  
J. Adam Ragsdale  
Chad Reese  
Al Scott  
Anna Maria Thomas  
Wayne Tipton  
Trip Tollison

**Representing**

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

**Present**

x  
x  
  
x  
x  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
x  
x  
x  
x

**Voting Member Alternates**

George Fidler  
Brian Johnson  
Tom McQueen  
Diane Schleicher  
Linton Smith

**Representing**

Savannah Airport Commission  
City of Garden City  
GDOT  
City of Tybee Island  
Town of Thunderbolt

**Present**

x  
x  
x  
x  
x

**Regional Coordination Guest**

Sonny Timmerman

**Representing**

Liberty County

**Present**

x

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<u>Others Present</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Present</u>
Michael Adams	MPO Staff	X
Jim Brody	Chatham County	X
Leon Davenport	Chatham County	X
Pat Farrell	Chatham County Commission	X
Jessica Hagan	MPO Staff	X
Jane Love	MPO Staff	X
Karen Jenkins	Savannah Tree Foundation	X
Brad Saxon	GDOT	X
Barbara Settzo	for MPO	X
Thomas Thomson, P.E., AICP	MPC Executive Director	X
Wykoda Wang	MPO Staff	X
Mike Weiner	City of Savannah	X
Mark Wilkes	MPO Staff	X
Julie Yawn	MPC Staff	X
Maggie Yoder	GDOT – District 5	X

**Call to Order**

Chairman Al Scott 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 February 27, 2013 meeting carried with none opposed.**

**II. Committee Reports**

**A. Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation**

Mr. James Aberson reported that the committee recommended approval of all action items. Also, Mr. Aberson reported that he had been elected Chair to replace McArthur Jarrett and Etta Jane Robbins Williams was elected Vice Chair.

**B. Citizens Advisory Committee**

Mr. Mark Egan reported that the committee endorsed all the action items.

**C. Technical Coordinating Committee**

Mr. Mark Wilkes reported that the committee reviewed and endorsed all the action items.

#### **D. Executive Director's Report**

Mr. Tom Thomson noted that former MPO Chairman Pete Liakakis is currently representing the CAT Board. The next few days will be busy as the staff is involved with interviews for the recertification process that is done every four years. This process assures that the MPO is following all the rules. Approval will ensure access to federal funding for projects.

In the near future, there will be discussion of the reapportionment of the MPO to recognize the growth of the urbanized area into parts of Effingham and Bryan Counties. Meetings with officials have begun in order to gather input about their role in the MPO.

In response to Mr. Scott's request for a brief background concerning the expansion of the MPO, Mr. Thomson offered definitions of "MPO" and "urbanized area". He then discussed the concept of "proportional membership" on this board and on advisory committees. He shared research about other MPO structures around the country of similar size. There is time to deal with this. He believes a serious workshop about this will probably be scheduled around June. When asked what would happen if a county or municipality did not want to join, Mr. Thomson replied that the MPO would still plan for the defined MPO area, but those stakeholders choosing not to join would not have a voice or vote on the board.

#### **III. Action Items**

##### **A. Approval of the December 19, 2012 CORE MPO Board Meeting Minutes**

It was moved and seconded to accept the minutes of the December 19, 2012 CORE MPO Board Meeting.

**CORE Board Action: the motion to accept the minutes of the December 19, 2012 CORE MPO Board Meeting carried with none opposed.**

##### **B. Approval of the FY2013-2016 TIP Amendments**

Ms. Wykoda Wang presented the staff report recommending approval of four amendments to the current TIP. She began with a reminder that a public hearing on this item would follow her presentation. Ms. Wang offered the definition and brief explanation of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), noting that certain changes in a project require an amendment and that project changes must maintain the fiscal balance of the TIP. Of the four amendments presented today, two are requested by the City of Savannah, one is requested by the MPO staff, and one is requested by GDOT. She noted that the amendments do not adversely affect the TIP financial balance.

The first amendment she reviewed was a change to the project concept for the Gwinnett St. improvements from I-16 to Stiles Ave. The revised concept is due to FHWA

questioning the need for 4-lane widening because of the changes in the proposed arena location. The proposed revised project concept includes two 11-foot lanes, one in each direction, with a 4-foot wide dedicated bicycle lane in each direction. The shoulder will be 12 feet wide, with 30-inch curb and gutter, 2-foot grass strip and 5-foot sidewalk on each side. The proposed bridge over the Springfield Canal will be lengthened from 120 feet to 220 feet to accommodate expansion of the canal. Because of these changes the project schedule and the project cost have changed. They request that the TIP reflect a schedule delay of one year and a cost reduction. Right-of-way will be pushed to FY 2015 with a reduced cost because of no widening, and construction will be pushed to FY 2016.

The second amendment concerns Delesseps Ave. road and sidewalk improvements. The request is for increased funding for preliminary engineering in FY 2013 from \$300,000 to \$450,000. The City of Savannah will provide the local match.

The third amendment concerns the I-16 Ramp Removal. The request is to move the scoping phase and the project oversight from FY 2014 to FY 2015. Project costs will not change.

The final amendment is for the R.B. Miller Rd. Intersection Improvements. The request is to move the utility and construction phases from FY 2014 to FY 2013 in the TIP. GDOT has begun the right-of-way and they feel the utility phase and construction phase will be ready to go in FY 2013. Funding will remain unchanged except that the funding code will change from L240 funds to M001 funds.

A 15-day public comment period is required and this public comment period ended yesterday. Staff did receive some comments from the Savannah Tree Foundation. They requested canopy preservation and replanting of the lost trees. There were several specific comments regarding Gwinnett St., DeLesseps Ave., and I-16 ramp removal and all related to tree canopy preservation and replanting. Ms. Wang has forwarded the comments to Mike Weiner of the City of Savannah and to Ellen Harris, the MPC project manager for the I-16 Ramp Removal. She encouraged the Savannah Tree Foundation to work with the project management teams to ensure that these suggestions are incorporated, as these specific comments are beyond the scope of the TIP.

Ms. Wang will forward the suggestions from the Savannah Tree Foundation to Mayor Jackson. It was confirmed that traffic signals with push buttons will run along Delesseps Ave. from Waters Ave. to Skidaway Rd.

Mr. Scott opened the public hearing. Hearing no comments, the public hearing was closed.

It was moved and seconded to approve the amendments to the FY 2013-2016 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

**CORE Board Action: the motion to approve the amendments to the FY 2013-2016 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) carried with none opposed.**

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**C. Approval of the Amendment to the FY 2013 UPWP**

Mr. Mark Wilkes presented the staff report beginning with the definition of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) as the annual planning budget for the CORE MPO staff. This amendment is required to add the text of a freight study to task 4.13 Strategic Planning Studies. This is the result of discussions with the Hinesville MPO and GDOT to coordinate efforts regarding freight planning.

It was moved and seconded to approve the amendment to the FY 2013 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

**CORE Board Action: the motion to approve the amendment to the FY 2013 Unified Planning Work Program carried with none opposed.**

**D. Approval of the resolution of support for the SR 204 Corridor Study**

Mr. Michael Adams presented a resolution of support for the SR 204 Corridor Study prepared by staff. This resolution supports continuation of this study to the next phase. This item of business was postponed from the December meeting to allow time to answer questions brought forth by the County Engineering Department.

Mr. Abolt suggested that this issue be handled between the staff and GDOT and not with a formal resolution. His concern is that this is too formal an approach to take with GDOT and could be polarizing.

When asked for the purpose of the resolution, Mr. Thomson responded that he and Mr. Abolt don't have the same opinion about this action. Mr. Thomson believes the resolution is necessary because this project, while being reviewed by GDOT, does not appear to have their support. He added that GDOT's view is that it is too costly, too big, not realistic, and not the kind of construction they do in Georgia. If the MPO asks them for permission to continue, he suspects they will say they are not in favor of the project and will not support it. The CORE MPO is the body that makes local decisions about the planning agenda and it's this board's decision about what moves forward. GDOT has been a partner in this from the beginning and has reviewed the products. Mr. Thomson believes that staff has answered the questions from Chatham County engineers. Two years have been spent on this study with no county representative at the table. He recommends the motion pass so that we may continue and get GDOT better engaged in the process.

When asked by Mr. Ragsdale, Mr. Thomson confirmed that he believes this project would be "dead on arrival" at GDOT when it came to funding for construction. Then we would need to fund the local match with local funds.

Mr. Scott felt that resolutions from the city and from the county would be more effective. Mr. Thomson believes the MPO resolution does in fact carry a lot of weight.

Ms. Stephanie Cutter asked if there was funding for staff to gather more information in the hopes of winning GDOT over in supporting this project. Mr. Thomson noted that staff will be gathering more information in the next phase. Such information will include digging down deeper on parts of the concept, (i.e. interchanges), economic impact analysis of the project, economic benefit study, land use study, even more public participation, and a more detailed finance plan. Mr. Thomson believes that dialog on all these fronts needs to go on in a professional manner with all parties around the table.

Ms. Cutter recommended that more work be done now to come to a consensus before presenting a resolution.

Ms. Jackson questioned the extent of the efforts to get all parties around the table. Mr. Thomson felt that they had support. To continue the dialog now, we need more funding to do the studies mentioned above.

Mr. Tom McQueen of GDOT commented that his questions from December are still on the table. He has not received a final report. He wants to know how the decisions were made.

Mr. Thomson said that the final report is in house and under final clerical review.

Mr. Ragsdale moved and it was seconded to table the resolution. Ms. Jackson said she came today prepared to support the resolution, but now that she hears that GDOT is not comfortable with it, she is not prepared to vote for the resolution.

Mr. Egan asked for clarification of Mr. Abolt's concern about damaging the relationship between this board and GDOT. Mr. Abolt values the relationship with GDOT, and he is concerned that a formal resolution will elicit a less than positive response. He does not want GDOT to react in a knee-jerk fashion. He does not believe a resolution is the way to go; he sees it as drawing a line in the sand.

Mr. Thomson commented that if the board is not comfortable with what has been said today, he is in favor of tabling until answers can be provided to concerns raised here. He pleaded for active participation from the jurisdictions and stakeholders involved. Staff will re-engage people at the table, but people need to come and they need to read what is submitted.

At this point, he recommended that staff withdraw this item and table it indefinitely until answers are provided.

Ms. Jackson believes this is too important to let it go on indefinitely. She wants a date certain motion. Mr. Thomson noted that he will need time to do the necessary contractual agreements to satisfy concerns.

Mr. Scott noted that we need a final report before a resolution is adopted. He also would like to see the city and the county each adopt a resolution in support of this project. Then this body could adopt a resolution.

Mr. Egan encouraged all parties to attend these meetings. There is not as much participation as there should be.

Mr. Scott determined that no motion was necessary and the motion to table was withdrawn. At this time no action was taken on this issue.

**IV. Other Business**

No other business at this time.

**V. Status Reports**

No status reports at this time.

**VI. Agency Reports**

**A. GDOT**

Mr. Brad Saxon reported on the following:

- #1 – Back River bridge replacement - construction funding has been authorized so it will be let shortly
- #2 – King George Blvd. grade separation – right-of-way activities are ongoing
- #7 - Gulfstream Rd./ RB Miller Rd. project – June 2013 was the original delivery date and they are on schedule; right-of-way activities are on going
- # 13 & 14 – Jimmy DeLoach Pkwy. Extension – preliminary field plan review since the last CORE MPO board meeting; working with county to secure project framework agreements
- #18 – SR 204 Veterans Pkwy. to Rio Rd. – preliminary field plan review scheduled for March 13, 2013
- #41 – Safe Routes to Schools project – final field plan review next week. Several locations around the county.

When asked about #17 and #21 (US 80 projects near Tybee Island), Mr. Saxon reported that #17 is the scoping for the implementation project from the recent bridges study. #21 is the original 4-lane widening project which is on the GDOT books but is not moving. It could be removed, and they will work with MPO staff to clean it up.

Mr. Saxon reported the #9 (Ogeechee Rd. at Victory Dr.) preliminary engineering is underway. Survey crews have been out and the project is being worked on. The revised hydraulic study is going to take several months but they are on schedule per the current TIP.

**B. Liberty County**

Mr. Sonny Timmerman reported continued cooperation between the Hinesville MPO and this CORE MPO. He confirmed the cooperative freight study mentioned earlier by Mr. Wilkes. They are modifying their urban transit routes to meet the public needs. They are beginning their Long Range Transportation Plan update.

### **C. Chatham County**

Mr. Leon Davenport reported that the Jimmy DeLoach Pkwy. projects are moving forward. Re-evaluation of phase II will be followed by right-of-way authorization. Bay St. widening project has a verbal approval. Right-of-way has been on hold awaiting the re-evaluation of historical content in the corridor. The Dean Forest Rd. project is on schedule (from SR 17 to I-16). A signal proposed at SR 307 and US 17 should be operational within the next 30-40 days.

### **D. City of Savannah**

Mr. Mike Weiner reported that a public information meeting for Project DeRenne is scheduled for March 23, 2013. They just had a construction meeting for the Tatumville noise barrier. This noise barrier project should be completed in August 2013. Gwinnett St. – approval of concept meeting was in early February. They have hired a consultant for three intersection improvements which includes the entrance to Savannah State, right lane construction on Waters Ave. at Montgomery Cross Rd., and on MLK Blvd. at Oglethorpe Ave.

Mr. Thomson referred members to Google Maps to view the construction of Truman Pkwy. Phase Five. He also noted that the illustration of the Tatumville wall shows an attractive project.

Mr. Abolt asked about Victory Dr. at Whole Foods. Mr. Weiner indicated it is on schedule and will be done before Whole Foods opens.

### **E. Chatham Area Transit**

Mr. Chad Reese reported the transit center is under construction and is about three months ahead of schedule. The operations center improvements continue on track. CAT is moving forward on a pilot program for intelligent transportation system which includes onboard computers, wifi, etc. This will change how CAT currently does business. CAT is also working with MPO staff on the streetcar study. Mr. Thomson commented that the MPO has set aside some planning money for it and CAT will provide the local match. Scoping is still necessary. The problem is that the federal government has not set any budget for it.

Mr. Reese reported they are in the middle of updating their five year strategic plan. Bryan County has shown more interest than the local Chatham County communities. Demographics and employment centers are changing and CAT will need to adjust to meet



these changes. Today's average transit user is younger, more educated, less transit dependent than in the past. Stakeholders and the general public need to be involved in the process that addresses these changes.

Ms. Jackson recommended that CAT come to the Chatham Municipal Association meeting to encourage stakeholder participation before CAT's resources are directed elsewhere. She encouraged Mr. Reese to contact Mr. Mike Lamb to get on a future meeting agenda.

#### **F. Georgia Ports Authority**

No report at this time.

#### **G. Savannah-Hilton Head International Airport**

Mr. George Fidler reported that airfield expansion is nearing completion. Gulfstream is about half way through their expansion. One building is done and they are working with them in permitting the next building. The airport is in the process of updating their master plan. They may have something ready for review in mid-summer.

#### **VII. Other Public Comments**

No public comments at this time.

#### **VIII. Announcements**

Mr. Thomson added some items to his previous Executive Director's Report. They are laying the foundation for a comprehensive freight study, as suggested by GDOT. He is coordinating with the Hinesville MPO so that the studies will link together.

They are getting closer to issuing an RFP for the I-16 Exit Ramp Removal. They are now looking for additional funding to study the economic impact of removing the ramp and restoring the old neighborhood.

MPO staff has had conversations with FHWA and GDOT concerning a Park & Ride Study.

Ms. Jackson commented that the city gets a lot of complaints about the noise during the night when the trains come through. What can we do to revisit whatever agreement was made with the railroad? Mr. Thomson replied that this is not an issue for the MPO and he also explained that it may be a rule that the train needs to blow its horn when there is no gated crossing.

Ms. Diane Schleicher reported that City of Tybee Island has just completed the historic Butler Ave. pedestrian safety project and she thanked staff and the CORE MPO board for supporting the project. She also thanked those at GDOT for their coordination.

She also thanked the County for pledging to provide 1/3 of the cost of the traffic warning sign. Tybee Island will now coordinate with GDOT for another 1/3.

**IX. Non-agenda items**

**X. Adjournment**

There being no further business the February 27, 2012 CORE Board meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

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