

**COASTAL REGION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
DECEMBER 2022 MPO MEETINGS**

Agenda Item: Amendments to the 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan

Presenter: Wykoda Wang, MPO Staff

Summary: The CORE MPO's current 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) was adopted by the CORE MPO Board in August 2019. The MTP can be amended as project scopes change or new needs are identified.

According to the CORE MPO's Participation Plan, any proposed changes to the MTP can be sorted into three categories.

- Administrative Modification – 1) Making a minor revision (as defined in GDOT's STIP Amendment Process) to a project that is already in the MTP's financially constrained plan; OR 2) Adding, deleting, or modifying a project in the MTP's vision (illustrative) plan, provided that any added projects come from an adopted study accepted by the CORE MPO.
- One Step Amendment – 1) The request is more than a minor revision (i.e. not eligible as an administrative modification); AND 2) The request **would not** affect the funding or timing of other projects in the MTP's financially constrained plan or TIP.
- Two Step Amendment – 1) The request is more than a minor revision (i.e. not eligible as an administrative modification); AND 2) The request **would** affect the funding or timing of other projects in the MTP's financially constrained plan (and TIP in many cases).

The key to any MTP amendment is to make sure that the MTP is financially balanced in the impacted cost band after the amendment, impacting both the total project costs and the expected revenues. The MTP amendment process for the proposed project change varies (either two-step or one-step), so it's important to determine what kind of amendment is being pursued.

GDOT Request

In May 2022, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) requested amendments be made to CORE MPO's FY 2021 – 2024 TIP for a new project. Information on the project is listed below.

Project ID	Description	Phase Code	Program Year	Total Amount	Federal Amount	State Amount	Other Amount	Fund Code
0019219	SR 404 SPUR @ TALMADGE MEMORIAL BRIDGE	CST	2024	\$175,000,000.00	\$140,000,000.00	\$35,000,000.00	\$0.00	Y001
		PE	2023	\$15,000,000.00	\$12,000,000.00	\$3,000,000.00	\$0.00	Y001

CORE MPO Action for August 2022 – Authorize Further Study (1st step)

The TIP is a sub-set of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and includes the highest priority projects from the MTP. Both the MTP and the TIP must be financially constrained. The requested project is not included in the 2045 MTP, so it must be amended into the plan before any TIP amendments can be made.

The MPO staff requested revenues and descriptive details for this project from GDOT before the August meetings but did not get a written definite answer, so staff made the decision to conduct the 2-step amendment process, assuming inclusion of this new project into the financially balanced 2045 MTP will impact other projects already in the plan.

On August 24, 2022, the GDOT staff attending the CORE MPO Board meeting indicated that the project is being considered a maintenance project for the moment. It involves replacement of the cables and the cable stays, investigating roadway barriers, as well as having a crew going out on the bridge over the next two weeks including some lane closures next week. There are possible additional items that may come up. The GDOT Planning Office has not been provided additional information as the project is managed by the GDOT Office of Program Delivery.

The CORE MPO Board authorized the MPO staff to collect more information from GDOT on this project and conduct a financial balance analysis for the 2045 MTP. The decision on whether to accommodate the project into the 2045 MTP and the FY 2021 – 2024 TIP will be made at a later meeting after the staff present the findings.

Analysis and Findings

In October, GDOT provided the written information on the concerned project as follows.

- The GDOT's State Transportation Board approved this project in May 2022. This project is needed per the points below:
 - a. GDOT is collecting existing data for the Talmadge Memorial Bridge.
 - b. Ground control survey and mobile lidar scanning and mapping of the existing bridge features are required for the major maintenance project.
 - c. Talmadge Bridge is a 30 plus year old structure which requires stay replacement of grouted stays at the cable locations.

- d. The project will investigate replacement of the existing cables as part of the planned maintenance of the cable stayed bridge.
- e. Talmadge Bridge requires bearing and joint maintenance as part of routine maintenance.
- f. GDOT is investigating additional safety improvements related to the existing roadway barriers.

During the October stakeholder interview with the Georgia Ports Authority (GPA) as part of the CORE MPO’s Regional Freight Transportation Plan update, GPA indicated that the vertical clearance of the Memorial Bridge is not enough to accommodate the ever-larger vessels calling on the Savannah Port even after the Savannah harbor deepening project is completed. Some improvements need to be made to the bridge with specific details to be determined.

In November, GDOT sent in the updated cost estimate and schedule as follows.

Project ID	Phase Code	Program Year	Fund Code	Total Amount	Federal Amount	State Amount	Other Amount
0019219	CST	2025	Y001	\$175,000,000	\$140,000,000	\$35,000,000	\$0
	PE	2023	Y001	\$14,000,000	\$11,200,000	\$2,800,000	\$0

Regarding the 2045 MTP fiscal constraint, since the project has a target to have the preliminary engineering phase programmed in FY 2023 and the construction phase programmed in FY 2025, its inclusion will impact Cost Band One of 2045 MTP (2020 – 2027). Instead of removing other projects/project phases already included in Cost Band One to accommodate this new project, the GDOT’s Planning team and CORE MPO staff coordinated and decided that the revenue assumptions of the 2045 MTP should be updated. The new transportation legislation - Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Pub. L. 117-58, also known as the “Bipartisan Infrastructure Law” (BIL)) – provided additional revenues to each state and the state of Georgia also has additional funds to provide the required match money. These should be considered additional revenues beyond what was available during the 2045 MTP financial plan development process. **In short, inclusion of the Memorial Bridge project into the 2045 MTP Cost Band One will be covered by additional revenues made available by the federal and state governments and will not impact other projects in this cost band.**

CORE MPO Action for December 2022 – Approve 2045 MTP Amendments (2nd step)

Based on the analysis above, staff suggest that the CORE MPO approve the proposed 2045 MTP amendments to add the Memorial Bridge Project (PI# 0019219, PE and CST phases) to Cost Band One, making it eligible for inclusion in the FY 2021 – 2024 TIP and the subsequent TIP so that GDOT can start the project development.

Public Involvement

Public participation procedures for MTP amendments include public advertisement, a public hearing, a 15-day comment period, and response to all comments, either individually or in summary form. CORE MPO advertised for the comment period (November 28, 2022 –

December 12, 2022) and the public hearing (December 14, 2022) on the Sunday, November 27, 2022 Savannah Morning News. Information about the comment period and the public hearing was also posted on the MPO web site and provided to the media contacts, neighborhood associations, and consultation agencies in the MPO contact database. Any comments received will be reported to the CORE MPO Board and advisory committees in December.

Recommendation: For endorsement and approval of amendments to the CORE MPO's 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan to include the Memorial Bridge project.

Appendix

- Appendix A: Excerpt of CORE MPO Participation Plan Regarding MTP Amendment
- Appendix B: Public Notice on Proposed 2045 MTP Amendments

Appendix A: Excerpt of CORE MPO Participation Plan Regarding MTP Amendment

Participation for Changes to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

While the MPO updates the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) on a regular schedule, there will be many instances during the cycle when either administrative changes or amendments are required. Generally administrative changes are minor changes which do not alter the original project intent or require financial rebalancing of the plan, while amendments are changes that do have those types of impacts on the plan.

Because the TIP focuses on an immediate four-year time frame, it includes the more active phases of projects, and therefore requests for changes tend to focus on the TIP. However, the longer range MTP is the guiding document. As one can infer from the descriptions of the MTP and the TIP above, the TIP is a subset of projects (or certain phases of projects) listed within the MTP's financially constrained plan. In order to qualify for federal funds, new projects must be consistent with the MTP before they are eligible for inclusion in the TIP. Changes to projects that are already in the TIP (and thus also in the MTP) are documented in an addendum to the MTP.

Any person requesting project revisions, additions, or deletions to the CORE MPO TIP or MTP should send to CORE MPO staff written details of the request, including:

- Project description or changes in existing descriptions;
- Project location and termini or changes in existing location and termini;
- Costs of each phase of the project (new projects) or changes in existing costs;
- Expected authorization year of each phase or changes in those (if the request involves the immediate four-year TIP window);
- Funding sources or changes in funding sources (if the request involves the immediate four-year TIP window);
- Reason for change.

CORE MPO staff may request additional information if needed. Once all of the necessary information is received, MPO staff will use the information to determine whether the request is a TIP administrative modification (according to the description in GDOT's STIP amendment process in Appendix K), a TIP amendment that does not entail an MTP amendment, a TIP amendment that does entail an MTP amendment, or alternatively an MTP amendment that does not affect the TIP.

The guidelines below are used to distinguish between administrative modification and amendments. While most TIP amendments can be accomplished in one MPO meeting cycle (a one-step process), note that MTP amendments require MPO Board action at two separate meetings. TIP amendments which also necessitate an MTP amendment, will therefore require at least two meeting cycles in order to accomplish the necessary MTP amendment prior to action on the TIP amendment. The range of processes described below is intended to allow adequate review of requests, while recognizing that flexibility based on the context of the request will improve efficiency at multiple levels of government.

Procedures for Changes to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) or Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)

Administrative Modification

The following types of requests are considered administrative modifications to the TIP or MTP, as long as the requested change does not require public review and comment.

- Making a *minor* revision (as defined in Appendix K: GDOT’s STIP Amendment Process) to a project that is already in the MTP’s financially constrained plan;
- Adding, deleting, or modifying a project in the MTP’s vision (illustrative) plan, provided that any added projects come from an adopted study accepted by the CORE MPO.

When the CORE MPO staff determines that the request is an administrative modification, the process consists of the following steps:

- 1) Transmittal of Confirmation: MPO staff transmits a confirmation to GDOT.
- 2) MPO staff posts the updated portion of the document(s) on the MPO web site.
- 3) GDOT sends a monthly list of notifications about administrative modifications to all involved parties, with change summaries sent on a monthly basis to the FHWA and FTA.

Projects that use zero federal funding, and that are not expected to need federal funding in the future, are not required to be included in the CORE MPO MTP or TIP. If a requester nevertheless would like to have these projects listed, then they can be included in an addendum to the MTP, with CORE MPO Board notification. Such projects can be listed in the TIP through an administrative modification.

CORE MPO reserves the right to re-start the change process as an amendment, in cases where it is found that the modification is controversial.

One-step Amendment

The following situations are considered one-step amendments.

- The request is more than a minor revision (i.e. not eligible as an administrative modification); AND
- The request *would not* affect the funding or timing of other projects in the MTP’s financially constrained plan or TIP.

The process consists of the following steps:

- 1) CORE MPO Board Meeting: At a CORE MPO Board meeting occurring no less than 21 days after receipt of the request, the recommendations of the MPO staff and the appropriate CORE MPO advisory committees will be provided to the CORE MPO Board. A public hearing will be held at that MPO Board meeting, unless held at an earlier date or time. The CORE MPO Board will decide at the conclusion of the hearing whether to reject the proposal, approve the proposal, or approve the proposal with modifications.
- 2) In instances where the project costs or other details differ from those listed in the adopted MTP, the updated project information will be noted in an addendum to the MTP.

Public participation procedures for one-step amendments include public advertisement, a public hearing, a 15-day comment period, and response to all comments, either individually or in summary form. Information about the comment period and public hearing also are posted on MPO web site and provided to the media contacts, neighborhood associations, and consultation agencies in the MPO contact database.

Two-step Amendment

The following situations are considered two-step amendments. The second step of the process may include a TIP amendment as well, in many cases:

- The request is more than a minor revision (i.e. not eligible as an administrative modification); OR
- The request *would* affect the funding or timing of other projects in the MTP's financially constrained plan (and TIP in many cases).

The process consists of the following steps:

- 1) First CORE MPO Board meeting: The CORE MPO staff and the appropriate advisory committees will recommend to the MPO Board whether additional review of the amendment to the MTP is warranted. The CORE MPO Board will then decide either to reject the proposal or authorize further review of the proposal.
- 2) Second CORE MPO Board meeting: If further review is authorized by the CORE MPO Board in the step above, the MPO staff will obtain and review additional information and present its findings and recommendation to the appropriate CORE MPO advisory committees. The recommendations of the MPO staff and the committees will then be provided to the CORE MPO Board. A public hearing will be held at that CORE MPO Board meeting, unless held at an earlier date or time. The CORE MPO Board will decide at the conclusion of the hearing whether to reject the amendment to the MTP, approve it, or approve it with modifications. If the proposal also affects the TIP, then the CORE MPO Board may consider the TIP amendment at this same meeting or at a later meeting.

Public participation procedures for two-step amendments include public advertisement, a public hearing, a 15-day comment period, and response to all comments, either individually or in summary form. Information about the comment period and public hearing also are posted on MPO web site and provided to the media contacts, neighborhood associations, and consultation agencies in the MPO contact database.

TIP Amendment Only

If a project or study that is already consistent with the CORE MPO MTP, as determined by the Executive Director, requires a change that does not qualify as an administrative modification, as defined above, then a TIP amendment can be considered without the need for an MTP amendment. The TIP amendment process requires public advertisement, a 15-day comment period and response to all comments, either individually or in a summary form. There is no requirement for a public hearing. The amendment follows the usual MPO Committee process for action.

The use of federal funds requires completion of the environmental process in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Right-of-way negotiations may not take place until successful completion of the NEPA process. Final location and design of an amended project would be a function of the NEPA process. In Georgia, the Department of Transportation oversees the public participation in the environmental process. The MPO facilitates the participation process by providing early and continuous planning level input and by assisting GDOT in disseminating public meeting notices and project information.

Appendix B: Public Notice on Proposed 2045 MTP Amendments

December 2022

Public Notice for 2045 MTP Amendments

The Coastal Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (CORE MPO), the transportation planning agency for the Savannah urbanized area, is requesting the public to review and provide comments on a draft report titled: Amendments to 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). The report includes proposed updates to the 2045 MTP. Copies of the draft MTP amendment report will be available for review at the Live Oak public libraries, the Chatham County - Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC) office, the MPC website at <https://www.thempc.org/Core>, and other public review agencies. Any changes to the MTP amendment report will be posted on the website.

The comment period starts on November 28, 2022 and written comments on the draft MTP Amendments will be accepted until the close of business on **Monday, December 12, 2022**. Please send your comments to Wykoda Wang, Metropolitan Planning Commission, 110 E. State Street, Savannah, GA 31401, or via email at wangw@thempc.org.

CORE MPO will host one (1) hybrid public meeting to answer questions and accept comments on the proposed MTP Amendments in conjunction with the December 2022 CORE MPO Board meeting. The public can attend the meeting in person or virtually via Go-To-Webinar. The meeting time, location and link are listed below.

CORE MPO Board Meeting
Wednesday, December 14, 2022
10:00 a.m.
Metropolitan Planning Commission
110 E. State Street, Savannah GA 31401

The virtual meeting will be conducted with Go-To-Webinar, so advanced registration is required. Please register at <https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/5610947901550605327>. After registration, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

For a complete list of public review agencies, additional information regarding the draft MTP amendments, and information regarding the virtual public meeting, please call (912) 651-1466.

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MPC and CORE MPO are committed to enforcing the provisions of the Civil Rights Act, Title VI, and all the related requirements mentioned above. CORE MPO is also committed to taking positive and realistic affirmative steps to ensure the protection of rights and opportunities for all persons affected by its plans and programs.