

Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

Minutes February 13th, 2025, at 10:00am

February 13, 2025 CORE MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

Voting Members	Representing	Present
Kirra Fields	City of Savannah	Х
Damon Rice	Chatham County	Х
Ambria Berksteiner	Chatham Area Transit	
Grace Tushak	Go Georgia	
Asia Hernton	Bike/Ped Coordinator MPC	Х
Shannon Ginn	Living Independence for Everyone (LIFE), Inc.	Х
Caila Brown	Bike Walk Savannah	Х
Representative	Coastal Regional Commission	
Representative	Savannah-Chatham County Public School System	
Alden Strandburg	Effingham County	Х
Representative	City of Rincon	
Representative	Tide to Town	
Devin Frails	Healthy Savannah	Х
Rita Greenbush	Interested Citizen	Х
Non-Voting		
Connor Booth	GDOT	
Jim Hemphill	East Coast Greenway	Х
Representative	Georgia Hi-Lo	
Representative	Savannah State University	
Representative	Georgia Southern University	
Representative	Savannah College of Art and Design	
Forrest Howard	Savannah Wheelman	Х
Representative	City of Bloomingdale	
Representative	City of Garden City	
Aaron Higgins	City of Pooler	Х
Representative	City of Port Wentworth	
Representative	Town of Thunderbolt	
Brian West	City of Tybee Island	
Representative	City of Richmond Hill	
Representative	Bryan County	

Others	Representing	
Pam Everett	MPC	Х
Kieron Coffield	CORE MPO	X
Wykoda Wang	CORE MPO	X
Sadie Esch-Laurent	CORE MPO/MPC	Х
Anna McQuarrie	CORE MPO	Х
Robert Pirie	Member of Public	Х
Akela Wright	Member of Public	Х
Harold Taylor	City of Savannah Vision Zero Coordinator	Х
Ashley Goodrich	Member of Public	X

Roll Call

I. Approval of Agenda

Ms. Rita Greenbush, Interested Citizen, motioned to approve the Agenda, seconded by Mr. Damon Rice, Chatham County. The motion passed with none opposed.

II. Action Items

1. Approval of the December 10th, 2024, CORE MPO BPAC meeting minutes

Ms. Rita Greenbush motioned to approve the December 10th, 2024, CORE MPO BPAC meeting minutes, seconded by Mr. Shannon Ginn, LIFE. The motion passed with none opposed.

2. FY 2026 UPWP Adoption

Ms. Wykoda Wang gave the presentation on the FY 2026 UPWP.

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is the CORE MPO's staff budget. It documents how much money we have to do our work and how much money is assigned to each task. The preliminary draft of the UPWP was presented to the CORE MPO Board and advisory committees in December 2024 for review and feedback. CORE MPO then sent the Preliminary Draft to FHWA, FTA, and GDOT for review and comment. The Revised Draft FY 2026 UPWP attached to the agenda has incorporated all comments received from FHWA, GDOT, as well as the CORE MPO members and the general public. It is being presented to the CORE MPO Board and advisory committees for final review and approval in February 2025. CORE MPO Staff have highlighted all the changes since December in red throughout the document. The summary is listed below.

Recent updates to the UPWP:

- Roster
 - o We are still finalizing the advisory committee members.
 - o Staff might update Bylaws later in the year, depending on the membership participation.
 - Development Schedule for FY 2027-2030 TIP added per comments from FHWA and GDOT.
 - Highlights are listed below.

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- Assuming we receive the revenue projections from GDOT at the beginning of calendar year 2026
- \circ $\,$ Conduct Call for Projects in the fall between August and December of 2025 $\,$
 - Possible funding sources:
 - Y230 Funds
 - Transportation Alternatives (Y301) Funds
 - Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) Funds If available
 - CORE MPO Staff to develop the scoring criteria
- o TIP Prioritization February 2026
- o Public Review of and Comment on Draft TIP May June 2026
- o TIP Adoption June 2026

- Comments and responses have been included in Appendix C. Highlights are listed below.
 - FHWA and GDOT comments regarding the TIP Development Schedule addressed.
 - o City of Savannah's comment on Bay Street Mirco Simulation Modeling
 - CORE MPO has to be the responsible party who administers the RFP, due to the Discretionary PL funds regulations.
 - Effingham County requested an unfunded study for Old River Road. CORE MPO Staff received this request after we already sent the preliminary draft UPWP to FHWA/FTA/GDOT, so we cannot include this study in the UPWP.
 - We do have an Old River Road Improvement project in our 2050 MTP, so this study might not be necessary.
 - If the study is still needed, we can amend it into the UPWP after two rounds of discussion.
 - o CAT's Remix software to do their route scheduling
 - CAT had an RFP process, so we updated the language in the Transit section added "such as" before Remix, to show that it is illustrative, rather than committing to purchasing specific software.

Due to the administration change, we continue to receive updates from the federal government. We are supposed to receive updated USDOT guidance on February 18th.

The budgets for the tasks and sub-tasks have not changed. The budget items related to BPAC include:

- Task One Administration, both Highway and Transit
 - BPAC will continue to have meetings
- Task Three Data Collection and Analysis
 - Continue to collect the bicycle and pedestrian data
- Task Four Systems Planning and Operations
 - o Aim to adopt the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan this year
 - Continue to monitor the Bicycle/Pedestrian improvements needs
 - o Management of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Study
 - o Any data related to bicycle and pedestrian improvements will be collected as well.

Non-Motorized Transportation Activities can also be documented under the Short Range Planning, under Transit Tasks. For example, managing the Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Study can be documented there, or can be documented under Task 6, Increasing Safe and Accessible Transportation Options. CORE MPO staff will coordinate with CAT on the Transit portion of the TIP development process, which is related to BPAC as we want to develop bicycle/pedestrian facilities and transit connections.

CORE MPO staff is asking the BPAC to endorse the adoption of the FY 2026 UPWP with the condition that the language may need to be edited per updated federal directives.

Mr. Shannon Ginn asked if all the CORE MPO's projects have been stopped because of the federal directives.

Ms. Wykoda Wang answered we have Potential Impacts from the Federal Funding Freeze later in our agenda and she will report on the impacts.

Ms. Rita Greenbush motioned to endorse the FY 2026 UPWP Adoption, seconded by Mr. Damon Rice. The motion passed with none opposed.

III. Status Reports

3. CORE MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Study

Ms. Asia Hernton gave the presentation on the Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Study. This study aims to document and create a mapped inventory of bicycle lanes, sidewalks, and crosswalks throughout the CORE MPO area. The study will also provide an analysis of gaps and opportunities within the local non-motorized transportation infrastructure system. More information and detail can be found in the RFP on the CORE MPO's website.

The RFP was released on January 21st, 2025. We have received several questions and they have been answered in an Addendum posted to the CORE MPO's website on February 10th. The deadline to submit

proposals is February 21st. The proposed project timeline (Start – End) is April 24th, 2025, to March 31st, 2027. The RFP Review team will look over the proposals and hope to select a consultant by April 14th.

Chairperson Caila Brown asked if there were any submissions yet.

Ms. Asia Hernton answered we have not received any submissions, just questions from possible proposers. Ms. Wykoda Wang believes we may have at least two interested parties.

4. Non-Motorized Transportation Plan Update

Ms. Asia Hernton gave the presentation on the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan Updates. The CORE MPO's Non-Motorized Transportation Plan is the bicycle and pedestrian plan for the Savannah region. Included in this plan are bicycle and pedestrian projects, community goals and objectives, and community information regarding non-motorized transportation. The project was paused to accommodate the development of other projects. The plan development has restarted and it will be completed and adopted in June 2025.

The next step in this process is to score and rank the projects. Staff has been working on the scoring methodology to rank the projects. Because the original scoring framework must be updated, all projects from previous and updated versions of the plan must be rescored. This means scoring around 500 projects. CORE MPO staff and the Steering Committee aim to find the simplest and most effective way to score a high number of projects. Staff aims to complete the scoring of the projects by the end of March and then finalize the content of the plan from April to June.

The Steering Committee has been re-activated and will have future meetings regarding this project. The next step is to set a meeting in which the scoring method will be finalized, and then we can move on to scoring projects. Staff is aiming to hold a Steering Committee meeting by the end of February.

The Non-Motorized Transportation Plan will be adopted before the completion of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Study. When the facility study is completed, those results will inform future updates of the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan.

Staff aims to create a simple yet usable scoring methodology, one that can accurately rank projects while also being able to score hundreds of projects in a reasonable timeframe. Below is a list of considerations for scoring and ranking the projects.

- Create a similar scoring methodology to the 2050 MTP equity scoring method
- Use of map data and descriptive data in scoring
- Include American Community Survey data
- Poverty data
- Zero-Car Households data
- Existing Public Transit
- Existing Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure
- Consider Safety and Crash Data
- Give higher scores to projects with protected facilities

For anyone already on the Steering Committee or anyone who would like to join, lookout for an invite or e-mail to set a new meeting by the end of this month so we can move forward in completing and adopting this plan.

Mr. Damon Rice asked if the Steering Committee considered scoring on places that would have projects or infrastructure from near future projects.

Ms. Asia Hernton stated she doesn't believe so, but we can add that to the ranking considerations for projects that are being planned or in the process of being implemented.

Mr. Shannon Ginn asked if the 500 projects are new projects, or new and old projects. And all 500 still need to be ranked?

Ms. Asia Hernton stated the 500 projects include new and old projects. These are all projects we want to include in the NMTP. Some of the older projects that we identified were from 2014, so we are moving them into the updated NMTP. Since we are moving those older projects into the NMTP, we have to rescore all the older projects, in addition to scoring the new projects we found.

Mr. Shannon Ginn asked if Ms. Asia Hernton knows how long all these projects are going to take.

Ms. Asia Hernton stated we will discuss that at the Steering Committee meeting, because once the projects are in the NMTP, they still have a few steps to go before they get to an implementation phase. The first step to being implemented is to be included in the NMTP.

Chairperson Caila Brown stated we will reach out to everyone about scheduling the Steering Committee meeting.

5. PROTECT Grant Updates

Ms. Anna McQuarrie gave the presentation on the PROTECT Grant Updates. We had intended to apply for the Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient and Cost saving Transportation or PROTECT grant to create a Resilience Improvement Plan. However, we were notified on the 11th that this grant opportunity was taken down from grants.gov for review by the Federal Highway Administration, along with several other grants.

If anyone provided a letter of support, thank you so much, especially to the Georgia Hi Lo Trail and East Coast Greenway Alliance. This grant application was to create a Resiliency Improvement Plan which would include bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. CORE MPO staff will send an email out letting everyone know we have put this on hold.

Chairperson Caila Brown stated that she would send Bike Walk Savannah's letter of support shortly.

Ms. McQuarrie stated there is additional information on the agenda, if anyone is interested, about planning grants and the Resiliency Improvement Plan. We are holding on to those letters of support in case the grant opportunity does reopen. For now we're just putting it on hold.

6. Potential Impacts from Federal Funding Freeze

Ms. Wykoda Wang gave the presentation on the Potential Impacts from the Federal Funding Freeze. CORE MPO staff has tried our best to put together some tables to show which projects might be impacted. Potentially, all of our projects may be impacted, but the projects related to equity, environmental justice, resilience and climate change may be at the highest risk of impacts.

For the current FY 2024-2027 TIP, all projects highlighted in yellow have funding related to Carbon Reduction Program, PROTECT, or Resiliency related funding. These funds might be impacted by changes in federal funding priorities:

- Chevis Road Improvement Project
- Garrad Avenue Improvement Project
- SR 404 SPUR/US 17 from NE of Savannah Habor to Back River
- SR 26/US 80 @ Lazaretto Creek
- Truman Linear Park Trail Phase II B
- NEVI Charging Station I-16 from Gwinnett Street to Chatham Pkwy

Projects such as Bull River, Lazaretto Creek, and Project DeRenne may be impacted by the federal funding freeze. Projects that are using Y800 or PROTECT funds may be at higher risk of losing funds, including Truman Linear Park Trail, which received Carbon Reduction Program funds.

Staff is uncertain of what changes will occur, and do not know which funds may be delayed or canceled. The Georgia Ports Authority's Ocean Terminal project will likely not be impacted because the project will use local funds.

Right now the federal disbursement funds have been stopped, so we might have the ROW funds authorized, but we probably cannot do the reimbursements.

<u>Federal Grant Funded Projects</u> – These might be stopped or delayed as electric vehicles and pedestrian safety are no longer priorities for the federal government.

- I-16 Ramp Removal Project
 - Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Program Grant
- Volterra Electrification of American Ports (VEAP)
 - Reduction of Truck Emissions at Port Facilities
- Port of Savannah Renewable Fuel Project
 - o Reduction of Truck Emissions at Port Facilities
 - 37th Street Safety Improvement and Supplemental Planning
 - Safe Streets and Roads for All Program

<u>Highway Projects Under Construction</u> – These projects may also be impacted. If GDOT has the funds already in their bank account, then the funding might be safer. If not, GDOT will still need to be reimbursed by the federal government and the projects might get delayed.

- SR 404 SPUR @ Talmadge Memorial Bridge
- I-16 from I-95 to I-516
- SR 25 @ Savannah River in Port Wentworth
- CR 787 /Islands Expressway @ Wilmington River Bascule Bridge
- Widening and Reconstruction to construct 4 lane on US 801/516 (Brampton Rd Conn) Beg at SR 21/SR 25 & ext S of SR 21
- Widening and reconstruction on US 80/SR 26 (Ogeechee Road) beginning from I-516/SR 421 extending to Victory Drive (CS 188); includes construction of a bridge and approaches over CSX Railroad
- 2 Lane Roadway on Effingham Parkway beginning at SR 30 and extending to Blue Jay Rd. Construction of 6 Bridges and Approaches

CAT has several ongoing projects. CAT's operation is not just funded by bus fares and local transit taxes. Unfortunately, CAT is subsidized by federal funding as well. They are mostly supported by Sections 5307 funds and 5339 funds. CAT's fixed route, paratransit, ferry boat program, and electric bus projects fall under categories that are being de-prioritized by the federal government. Additionally, equity, environmental justice, and DEI are now de-prioritized by the current administration. We will follow up with CAT to see if they have any more specifics or information. This would include the CAT transit projects in the TIP, or anything else related to transit funding.

CORE MPO is also at risk of losing funding. For example, while we can process reimbursements, we are not sure if we will get paid.

Currently, we are in FY 2025, so CORE MPO staff have already signed the contracts with GDOT for the PL funds, Section 5303 funds, and Y410 funds. We are processing the reimbursements, but we don't know whether the reimbursement will be processed on their end. In our contracts, we have the language indicating whether we can get paid depends on if GDOT has received their funds from FHWA and FTA.

For the FY 2026 UPWP, we are still waiting for the February 18th directives from the federal government. We might have to edit the language in the document, and hopefully the funding will not be impacted, but it is uncertain at this point.

For the three studies we are doing, US 80 Phase II, Urban Flood Modeling Phase II, and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Study, we are not sure how those funds will be impacted as they are Discretionary PL Funds. Right now it seems FHWA and FTA are not allowed to comment on anything. If any agencies in our CORE MPO area experience impacts from the federal funding freeze, please let us know.

Ms. Rita Greenbush asked if the State of Georgia would fund any of these for Savannah.

Ms. Wykoda Wang stated for the FY 2025 UPWP, the planning funds pay for the CORE MPO staff. If FHWA has already obligated those funds to GDOT, and if the funds are already in GDOT's bank account, then we should be safer. Since most of the programs we manage are reimbursed, we have to come up with the money up front and then we send a reimbursement request to GDOT, then GDOT sends the request to FHWA/FTA to get the funding obligation, then FHWA/FTA reimburses GDOT, GDOT reimburses the CORE MPO, and finally CORE MPO reimburses the consultants. She is not sure if Georgia or GDOT has all the money to keep that process going.

Ms. Asia Hernton stated CORE MPO will send an email to the BPAC members for an article that summarizes all of the changes over the last few weeks, as it was not attached to the agenda.

IV. Agency Reports

7. Chatham County Project Status Update Report

Mr. Damon Rice gave the presentation for Chatham County's Project Status Updates. Chatham County will have more projects in the summer being constructed. The sidewalk and shared use path on Quacco Road will start sometime this spring. The US 80 Project along Whitmarsh Island Drive to Johnny Mercer Boulevard has started and will start construction in a few weeks. Garrard Avenue is still in its study phase. The Green Island

Road project, SR 17, and SR 25 projects are moving along. We had our last President Street Railroad Crossing Project public information open house.

Ms. Asia Hernton asked if Chatham County had an update on the Safe Streets for All Safety Action Plan.

Mr. Damon Rice stated the Safe Streets for All Safety Action Plan has been finalized. Ms. Deana Brooks will put together the final report when she gets everything from the designer. All the studies, different intersections, and areas where the designers looked at have been finished. The final report from Deana should be coming in the near future..

8. City of Savannah Project Status Update Report

Report attached to agenda.

9. Chatham Area Transit Status Report Updates

Report attached to agenda.

10. LIFE Inc. - Living Independence for Everyone Updates

Mr. Shannon Ginn stated as far as the federal funding freezes is concerned, LIFE is running as normal and Mr. Neil Ligon will let us know if anything changes. For LIFE's NiCIP program, they had a meeting with Wendy from CAT to get all the data and information needed. LIFE and CAT are developing a survey to improve their training in the near future. The nursing home transition might be impacted, as LIFE uses the Money Follows a Person Program, which someone has to be on Medicaid or Medicare, but they do not know as of yet.

11. Bike Walk Savannah Updates

Chairperson Caila Brown stated Bike Walk Savannah could possibly be affected as they receive their funding from a grant through the Governor's Office of Highway Safety, which is a federal reimbursement grant, so we will see. In the meantime, Bike Walk Savannah has most the events for the rest of the year on our Facebook page and on our website soon. That includes our monthly cycle socials, our Wednesday walks, and all of our education classes. If anybody on the call or listening afterwards wants updates or would like Bike Walk Savannah to provide an education class to their agency or municipality, we're happy to do so. We do have post certification classes and can also give credits for other agencies.

Ms. Wykoda Wang stated since we are updating the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan, CORE MPO staff would like to join one of Bike Walk Savannah's events. Maybe we can cooperate to do the public outreach for the NMTP.

Chairperson Caila Brown stated Bike Walk Savannah has a few potential meetings, and we could convene some elected officials and staff members from around the CORE MPO area to talk through this. Bike Walk Savannah is doing bike and pedestrian traffic counts in April and May. If there are any locations anybody would like to add, please let her know. She has talked with Chatham County about adding a count on Ferguson Ave to document increased pedestrian activity people have been seeing in the area. Previously, they did bike and pedestrian counts in the spring and fall, but the numbers have evened out. Now they do counts in the spring and in the fall, and they do targeted audits and reports on specific areas.

12. CRC - Coastal Regional Commission Updates

- 13. SCCPSS Savannah Chatham County Public School System Updates
- 14. Effingham County Updates

Ms. Adlen Strandburg stated she heard a lot of great updates that Effingham County has planned for bicycle and pedestrian paths and park upgrades. As for the Georgia Hi Lo Trail, they are in the same boat as everyone else with all the federal grants that Georgia Hi Lo recently applied for, in a holding pattern. They are looking for more state and local funding opportunities to keep the trail funded.

15. Tide to Town Updates

Mr. Devin Frails stated for Tide to Town, they are still meeting with Ms. Laura Ballock and Ms. Denise Grabowski, who give updates as often as possible.

16. Healthy Savannah Updates

Mr. Devon Frails stated for Healthy Savannah, they encourage everybody to come out to our Healthy Walks for Savannah every Tuesday at 7:30 at various locations around Savannah. They just had a walk at Mother Matilda Beasley last week and will be at Daffin Park this Tuesday. Everyone is invited to come.

17. Georgia Bikes Updates

Chairperson Caila Brown stated for Georgia Bikes/Go Georgia; they are working on the Rural Non-Motorized Transportation Plan across Georgia. They have started the process for the Urban Active Transportation Plan, pending funding opportunities. They also listed a position for a Bicycle and Pedestrian Planner to join the Go Georgia team. More information is available on their website and social media pages. There's also some legislative policy that potentially is coming through the Georgia House and Senate regarding 'Stop as Yield legislation' and they will keep everybody in the loop as we move forward on the policy change.

Updates from Other Agencies/Organizations

Mr. Forrest Dean stated for Savannah Wheelmen/SCAD, these are competitive oriented cycling organizations. As far as SCAD goes, they are gearing up for their road competition. Same for the Savannah Wheelmen, they are out competing and training.

Mr. Damon Rice asked if there is a competition season for competitive biking.

Mr. Forrest Dean, SCAD/Savannah Wheelmen, answered that SCAD has four different racing disciplines, track cycling, mountain biking, cycle cross, and road cycling, which is the most traditional form of cycling discipline. The road cycling starts in the spring and goes into the summer, but there are races all year round. Everyone is welcome to come and join, and plenty of group rides leave from bike shops around town.

Chairperson Caila Brown stated the Coastal Bicycle Touring Club does an 'Intro to Long Distances or Road Cycling' riding group, which might be a good idea for new folks. They host rides every Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday mornings, and generally go at slower pace. Saturdays are the Intro to Road Cycling.

Mr. Jim Hemphill, East Coast Greenway, stated there are no major updates for the East Coast Greenway. They have a video about the Bike Ride Across Georgia's Dream Team's ride from Key West to Maine.

East Coast Greenway - BRAG Dream Team to celebrate 30th anniversary with East Coast Greenway Youth Bike Tour

Mayor Pro Tem Aaron Higgins, Pooler, stated for Pooler they have several projects that are finally in the bidding process. They successfully integrated the projects into all the plans, including the Pine Barren intersection, as Pine Barren is the designated Bicycle Highway. They are going to build a 10 ft wide multimodal path, instead of a traditional sidewalk, to help pedestrians and bicyclists get off the shoulder of the road. The eventual goal will be to have that multimodal path all through Pine Barren as it goes through Pooler. The first step is putting out to bid soon, expecting to break ground this fall. Patchwork multimodal paths will appear in Pooler, but the goal is to eventually connect them all, with connection to the Georgia Hi Lo Trail also.

Chairperson Caila Brown stated that Bike Walk Savannah will also be doing routes for surrounding neighborhoods to downtown for St. Patrick's Day.

Ms. Wykoda Wang stated the voting member from Effingham County and the non-voting member from the Georgia Hi Lo Trail is the same person, Ms. Alden Strandburg. We need to resolve this, as we cannot do both. Maybe the Georgia Hi Lo Trail can nominate another representative?

Chairperson Caila Brown stated we will discuss that with Ms. Alden Strandburg and Effingham County to figure out that representation.

Ms. Wykoda Wang asked for clarity on Tide to Town and the City of Savannah representatives. Mr. Harold Taylor is not the Tide to Town representative, and we are still missing a Tide to Town Representative.

Chairperson Caila Brown clarified that Mr. Harold Taylor is the Vision Zero Representative. They will discuss this with the City of Savannah. If there are any other representatives missing from municipalities or agencies,

we can loop in the current representative and the municipality to figure out who should actually be the representative.

Mr. Harold Taylor, City of Savannah Vision Zero, stated he will definitely reach out and get that squared away.

Chairperson Caila Brown stated that a follow-up Doodle Poll will be sent out to determine when we can meet for the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan Steering Committee meeting.

V. Other Business

VI. Other Public Comments (limit to 3 minutes)

VII. Notices

18. GA FLAP Call for Projects Alert FY 27-29

Notice attached to the agenda.

19. GDOT Project Status Update Report

Report attached to the agenda.

20. Savannah Hilton Head International Airport Status Update Report

Report attached to the agenda.

21. City of Port Wentworth Status Update Report

Report attached to the agenda.

22. LATS-SCDOT Project Status Update Report

Report attached to the agenda.

23. Next BPAC meeting April 15 at 10:00am

VIII. Adjournment

There being no further business, the February 13th, 2025, BPAC meeting was adjourned.

The Chatham County- Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission provides meeting summary minutes which are adopted by the respective board. Verbatim transcripts of minutes are the responsibility of the interested party.