



CORE MPO Citizens Advisory Committee

Minutes
April 19, 2023 at 5:30 pm

April 19, 2023 Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting (CAC)

Voting Members	Representing	Present
Anthony (Tony) Abbott	Chatham County	X
Dr. Daniel Brantley	Chatham County	X
Vacant	Chatham County	
Kevin Glover	Savannah	X
Armand Turner	Savannah	X
A'riel Johnson	Savannah	X
Vacant	Pooler	
Vacant	Garden City	
Brett Bennett	Effingham County	
Vacant	Port Wentworth	
Vacant	Richmond Hill	
Bill Grainger	Bloomington	
Robert Milie	Thunderbolt	
Vacant	Tybee Island	
Vacant	Vernonburg	
Others	Representing	Present
Wykoda Wang	CORE MPO	X
Asia Hernton	CORE MPO	X
Faye DiMassimo	Chatham Area Transit	X
Sally Helm	CORE MPO / MPC	X
Ambria Berksteiner	Chatham Area Transit	X
Denise Grabowski	Symbiosis	X

I. Approval of Agenda

Dr. Daniel Brantley motioned to approve the agenda; seconded by Ms. A'riel Johnson. The motion passed with none opposed.

II. Action Items

[1. Approval of the February 16, 2023 CAC Meeting minutes](#)

Ms. Ariel Johnson motioned to approve the February 16, 2023 CAC Meeting minutes; seconded by Mr. Kevin Glover. The motion passed with none opposed.

[2. FY 2023 UPWP Amendment](#)

Ms. Wykoda Wang stated that the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is the staff work program and includes the planning studies in the program for informational purposes. CAT received the SMART grant and would like to start the planning activity before the end of the fiscal year 2023 and continue into FY 2024, which is why both the FY 2023 UPWP and FY 2024 UPWP require amendments.

Ms. Wang explained that there is a transit section in the UPWP and that is where the study or planning activity will be listed. CAT received about \$1.2 million for the Strengthening Mobility and Revolutionizing Transportation (SMART) grant funds. It is 100% Federally funded, so no local match is required. CAT will use the funds to find the methodology on how to implement the micro-transit project. It's not the actual implementation; it is to find out how to do the implementation. If it's a capital project or an operating project, it would need to be included in the TIP. If it's a planning study, it needs to be included in the UPWP. Ms. Wang showed the highlighted language in the FY 2023 UPWP's transit planning section and asked for endorsement of the amendment.

Dr. Brantley motioned to endorse the FY 2023 UPWP Amendment; seconded by Ms. Ariel Johnson. The motion passed with none opposed.

[3. FY 2024 UPWP Amendment](#)

Ms. Wykoda Wang stated that this amendment was related to the SMART grant for fiscal year 2024. She clarified that the FY 2023 UPWP was developed by her predecessor whereas she developed the FY 2024 UPWP, therefore, the format is a little bit different. Ms. Wang noted that the information included in the FY 2024 UPWP transit section is slightly separated. She added language indicating that CAT will start the planning process in fiscal year 2023 and continue into FY 2024 with the SMART grant funding. Also listed is separate financial information for transit projects. She stated that this project is included in the updated financial table, which also lists the AOPP- and ARP-funded projects.

Mr. Anthony Abbott motioned to endorse the FY 2024 UPWP Amendment; seconded by Mr. Kevin Glover. The motion passed with none opposed.

[4. April 2023 Updates to FY 2021 - 2024 TIP](#)

Ms. Wykoda Wang stated that CORE MPO received TIP update requests from both GDOT and CAT. Two of the project updates proposed by GDOT will be amendments, while others will be administrative modifications, but she will process them all together. CAT's amendments are to do with the addition of two new projects. Ms. Wang then went over the details of the updates.

- The first GDOT amendment request is for the Talmadge Bridge project. This project is currently set to start construction in FY 2025 which is outside of the 2021 – 2024 TIP. The request to move the construction phase to FY 2024 is adding a project phase to the TIP, thus requiring an amendment. The cost estimate for the construction phase is about \$175 Million.
- The request for the US 17/Back River Bridge project would be considered an administrative modification since it's just a change in funding source for the construction phase from Y001 to Y800. The cost estimate remains unchanged at about \$2 million.
- The other GDOT amendment request is for the Lazaretto Creek Bridge Replacement - the right of way (ROW) phase will shift from FY 2023 to FY 2024, and the construction (CST) phase will shift from FY 2023 to long range (out of the current TIP). The cost estimates for both phases remain unchanged, but the CST funding source will be updated from HB 170 (state funds) to Y800/State.
- CAT received some newly awarded funds and would like to add those to the TIP.
 - One is the earmark funds that will be used for Bells Ferry construction. The federal portion (earmark funds) is \$1.8 million. GDOT and CAT are working together to get the state portion of \$3 million. The local portion is \$3.15 million. Ms. Wang explained that TIP amendments don't generally get processed until the funds are received. Her understanding is this TIP amendment is based on the assumption that the state funding is certainly available, but just hasn't been received yet. If there are any changes later, another amendment can be brought before the MPO Board and advisory committees, but this amendment comes with the assumption that the state funding will be available.
- The other is the earmark funds for the Paratransit maintenance facilities. The federal portion (earmark funds) that CAT got is about \$2.25 million, and CAT will come up with a local match of about \$6.2 million. Besides the

updates listed above, Ms. Wang noted that she had added the GDOT PI numbers to the new projects that were processed in the December 2022 TIP amendments.

Regarding the Lazaretto Creek Bridge Replacement project, a CAC member asked if the bridge would be widened to four lanes. Ms. Wykoda Wang stated it would not be widened to four lanes but will include bike and pedestrian accommodations and space for emergency vehicles. Dr. Brantley asked why the project is accommodating more uses. Ms. Wykoda Wang stated that the bridge is functionally obsolete because it was built in the 1960s, so the replacement is meant to address the age of the bridge and not the traffic of the road itself. The road can currently accommodate daily traffic according to the traffic count data. Emergency lanes will be added so emergency vehicles can pass through, even in traffic.

Dr. Brantley asked about the cost of the local match for the Paratransit maintenance facilities. Ms. Faye DiMassimo said the total project cost was over \$8 million. When the earmark funding was applied for, the earmarks are typically within the \$1-2 million range. The balance would need to come out of local funds. Mr. Abbott asked, what does the facility do? Ms. DiMassimo said there are fixed route services and the CAT Mobility service, with the latter using the smaller buses to serve the seniors and disabled residents. Those are different kinds of vehicles. Currently there are 6 electric vehicles and large buses. We are getting 10 para transit vehicles as well. Currently we have to service all of those in one maintenance facility. We have outgrown the facility. We are working with the City of Savannah for a potential site and donation of the property that would be needed for the facility to be housed on.

Dr. Daniel Brantley motioned to endorse the updates to the FY 2021-2024 TIP; seconded by Ms. Ariel Johnson. The motion passed with none opposed.

[5. FY 2024 - 2027 TIP Development and Project Prioritization](#)

Ms. Wykoda Wang stated that since there is only one year left in the current TIP, it is time for the MPO to adopt a new TIP before fiscal year 2024 ends. GDOT sent the MPO the revenue projections and the proposed projects list for FY 2024 – 2027, which was discussed at the GDOT/CORE MPO/local sponsors coordination meeting last week. The development process for the new TIP has already started. According to the Participation Plan, there needs to be at least one public meeting to establish the TIP priorities. The public meeting will be held in conjunction with the CORE MPO Board meeting. The TCC needs to review all of the information since the committee is charged with the prioritization of the project proposals and financial balancing for MPO-controlled funds. Other advisory committees will provide input as well.

Ms. Wang stated for TIP prioritization, the CAC can endorse a priority list or methodology. She is proposing that there will just be a set of rules regarding prioritization so that there can be some flexibility.

- The TIP is a subset of the MTP. All MTP projects have already gone through a two-screening prioritization process. The Cost Band One projects correspond with what the TIP includes. Thus, the Cost Band One projects will be considered TIP priorities.
- Some of the projects programmed in the TIP would apply for the MPO-controlled funds - Y230, Y301 or HIP funds. There is a ranking system for each of these funding sources. For Y230 and Y301 funds, the last round of Call for Projects and project prioritization was done last year. The rankings will be used as the basis to allocate available funds, but specific allocations will be dependent on other factors such as projects' development status and financial balances.
- There will be another "pot of money" that will be available called the Carbon Reduction Program and which the guidelines are still under development and won't be available until September. CORE MPO will conduct a Call for Projects for the program funds in later 2023 through a competitive process. The projects to be awarded these funds will be considered TIP priorities and will be amended into FY 2024 – 2027 TIP.
- The TIP includes maintenance and operational improvement projects in the lump sum category which correspond to the Maintenance and Operational Improvement set asides in the MTP. Normally GDOT identifies those projects as the needs arise. The State Transportation Board approves those lists, so their authority should be respected.
- The multimodal TIP includes some bike/ped/trail projects from the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan which has a prioritization process. The priority bicycle, sidewalk or trail projects for TIP consideration are those that are consistent with the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan, have a dedicated local sponsor with local match funding commitment, and have gone through the Call for Projects process.
- The TIP includes transit improvements as well. CAT sets transit priorities based on their evaluation of the transit service needs, state of good repair, and transit asset management as documented in the Master Transit Plan,

Transit Development Plan, and the Transit Asset Management Plan. CAT has identified the transit priorities for the TIP.

Mr. Kevin Glover motioned to endorse the FY 2024-2027 TIP Development and Project Prioritization; seconded by Mr. Anthony Abbott. The motion passed with none opposed.

III. Status Reports

[6. 2050 MTP Update](#)

Ms. Wykoda Wang stated since the last meeting, staff had been focusing on the socio-economic data development. Staff are still working on the 2050 SE data, and recently submitted revised data to GDOT and got additional comments yesterday. The next step is to address all the comments and have the 2050 SE data finalized.

The other part for the 2050 MTP Update is some of the contributing plans are moving along, including the Freight Plan, Non-Motorized Transportation Plan, the City of Pooler's US 80 Corridor Study, CAT's Master Transit Plan and Transit Development Plan, and Chatham County's several new studies. There are status updates on those later.

Dr. Brantley asked if there was a solution to the shortage of MPO staff or help coming anytime soon? Ms. Wang said there possibly was someone coming in June to help with the Urban Flooding Model Study. CORE MPO staff are still planning to meet the deadlines for the current projects. The second round of public meetings will be scheduled for 2050 MTP in July/August. Information from concurrent plans, such as the Freight Plan Update and the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan, will be added to the MTP.

[7. CORE MPO Regional Freight Plan Update](#)

Ms. Wykoda Wang stated that the development of the Regional Freight Transportation Plan is on schedule, and she is very satisfied with the deliverables of the consultants.

CORE MPO hosted a virtual/in-person public meeting on March 6th, where at least 20 people attended and asked a lot of good questions. The meeting recording is posted on the CORE MPO website.

We have finished Tasks 1-5 for the freight needs assessments and all of the deliverables are online. The consultants are currently working on the freight related recommendations in land use, infrastructure improvements, and policy recommendations. There is going to be a big public meeting held in June in conjunction with the EDFAC committee meeting, so the members will see the recommendations at that meeting. We encourage everyone to attend. She believes the steering committee will have a preview of what those recommendations are. The technical memos will likely be finalized in July.

[8. Urban Flooding Model Study Update](#)

Ms. Wykoda Wang said Caitlin from the MPC Historic Preservation Department will temporarily step in as the project manager. The consultant is coming tomorrow to the TCC meeting to give a presentation. We invite everyone to come in person or virtually to participate in the presentation.

[9. Update on CAT Master Transit Plan](#)

Ms. Faye DiMassimo introduced herself as the CEO of the Chatham Area Transit Authority (CAT). She stated that the Master Transit Plan has been underway for nearly a year, and it is an essential component of the overall transportation planning for this region. The Master Transit Plan will provide necessary technical analysis and policy foundation to advance the connection between the transit infrastructure and the economic activity, getting people to all the places that they need or want to go. She then introduced Denise Grabowski to present.

Ms. Denise Grabowski stated the Master Transit Plan is a very exciting initiative for Chatham Area Transit and for our community. CAT has worked diligently to reach out to diverse stakeholders, including our youth, because CAT wants to make sure that they're talking not only to the leaders of today, but also the leaders of tomorrow.

Within Chatham Connects, there are three transit studies: Transit Service Plan (COA and TDP), Master Transit Plan and the ZEB Plan. The Master Transit Plan is going to be the focus of today's presentation. There are going to be a series of community engagements in May. These pop-up sessions will be where CAT can talk more with members of the community about the Master Transit Plan. There will also be an open house for community leaders to address any questions.

The first thing CAT looked at was what the current state of the system is. COVID had had a significant impact on all of us and certainly had major impacts on CAT. Ridership dropped to 50% and is still working on a rebound to pre-

pandemic levels. There is a driver shortage, but CAT is working very hard to hire more drivers. There are 8 core routes that carry about 80% of riders for CAT. Keeping record of this allows CAT to look at their system and identify ways to improve and ask questions like “How can we provide more efficient and effective service for those areas?”. CAT knows there are some challenges they have to address and knows some small investments can make a big difference.

CAT held a number of focus groups meetings at the beginning of the year where they heard over and over again was the condition of some of the stops really impacted their impression. Thus, CAT realizes the importance of not only providing comfort on the bus or any CAT vehicle, but also while you are waiting, and improvements can be as little as \$15,000 and can start to make a big difference.

With the growth of areas outside the transit district, CAT is looking to provide transportation to reach areas such as the new Hyundai plant.

CAT has 6 project goals grouped into 3 categories: transit service, capital investments, and policies and programs. “Fix it first” is one thing heard constantly from focus groups so there is development of a steering committee to bring back the robust level to CAT. For on demand service, micro transit is one of the things CAT wants to implement. People are cautious to use services like Uber and Lyft because drivers are strangers and not certified, whereas CAT drivers will be CAT employees, in marked cars, in a CAT uniform, and in most cases, you will be riding with someone else. This might take you door to door or take you to a fixed route or a combination. Many people aren’t aware that DOT and the Ferry are part of the CAT System, so we want to ensure we are sharing the good news of what CAT is doing. Some of the medium-term strategies are continuing to expand bus service. With the job center there are opportunities to be able to meet those needs through strategies like bus rapid transit, expanding micro transit, etc.

Mr. Armand Turner asked, do you have the demographics of who use the DOT services? Is it more so visitors or residents trying to commute to and from work? Ms. Grabowski said it appears to be both. The perception is that it is primarily visitors, but there are several local commuters using it to get to work. Now that DOT has been expanded to Victory Drive and other neighborhoods, that has increased access to residents even more. Not only does the DOT provide the service for visitors and residents, it helps take cars off the street.

Mr. Turner asked what were some of the questions you were asking in your focus groups? Ms. Grabowski said we talked a lot about Micro transit during those focus groups. When we met with the students, they expressed a desire to have that service available to them. Technology was talked about as well. A lot of people said they do not use Uber or Lyft because they do not like being alone in a car with a stranger. They said they would be much more likely to use a service like this.

Dr. Brantley said you mentioned that you would be taking cars off the street, but you will be replacing the cars with these minibuses, that is just replacing the cars with minibuses. Ms. DiMassimo said the micro transit vehicles look similar to what the current CAT Mobility vehicles look like. They are 10-15 passenger vehicles. They can carry multiple passengers. That offers an alternative to getting into your car to go somewhere and it allows more people to ride in one vehicle, therefore lessening the number of vehicles on the road.

Dr. Brantley said the survey was not accessible. Most people are not comfortable taking them. Ms. DiMassimo said the CAT team divided up, rode the buses and completed the surveys with the riders on the buses, at their stops and shelters. We tried to make it as comfortable and accessible as possible. We understand a survey is not everyone’s comfort place. We also offer places where you can submit comments on the website and at in-person meetings.

Dr Brantley said there are bus stops that have water leaking through the canopy when it rains. Are these going to be fixed with this funding you received? Ms. DiMassimo said the leaking not only impacted the riders, but the signage was also damaged from the leakage as well. All of that has been fixed.

[10. CORE MPO Planning Area Boundary Update](#)

Ms. Asia Hernton gave the CORE MPO Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) Boundary update. She explained that the proposed MPA boundary is based off the 2020 census data, which revised the Savannah Urban Area, including more areas surrounding Savannah. Part of the MPA boundary revision is based on areas that are expected to be urbanized in the next 20 years.

For the process, CORE MPO staff met with the Working Group and decided where the boundary should lie. Then the MPO staff met with Effingham and Bryan County staff and officials for their opinions. And we will be presenting the boundary to the MPO Board and advisory committees.

The rules for the MPA boundary expansion are based on current and future population density, impervious surfaces, and simple boundaries. The 2020 Census data is used to determine areas that have a population of 500 people per

square mile, so the analysis showed dense areas in Bryan and Effingham Counties. CORE MPO wanted to pay attention to job centers since these have a huge impact on transportation and future development. Roadways and simple boundaries (county line, rivers, etc.) were used to define the boundary lines.

Some highlights: there is major expansion into Bryan and Effingham. All of Rincon and Pembroke are included as well as portions of Springfield and Guyton. Fort Stewart will not be included and will serve as a border. SR 119 is going to be the northern border for the boundary expanding into Effingham County, so some portions of Guyton and Springfield won't be included. A larger portion of the population in Effingham and Bryan will be included into the MPO planning area, making the MPA population almost 400,000 people.

Mr. Anthony Abbott asked if the portions of Bryan County that are included are the northern portion, west of Ft. Stewart? Ms. Wang said there is a community, Buckhead, that is in Bryan County since they are not annexed into Richmond Hill. There are gains from the northern and southern portions of Bryan County. Mr. Abbott said the growth in the Coastal portion of Bryan County is obvious. Due to the Hyundai Plant, I think we will see a rapid increase in population in north Bryan County. From Pembroke to I-16 and beyond. There is a sewer treatment plant that will be finished soon, and it serves a large population as well. Ms. Wilson said we have expanded the boundaries as much as we can based on the criteria. We have met with the city and county managers in those jurisdictions. We have calculated for much of the new growth, which is why we went as far into Bryan County as we did.

[11. Non-Motorized Transportation Plan Update](#)

Ms. Asia Hernton stated staff and Ms. Caila Brown have plotted out a proposed regional bike network. The goal of the network is to connect all three counties in the CORE MPO area with continuous bike ways. They are specifically long-distance networks that can act as a foundation for smaller networks to branch off from. This would connect some major existing and planned bikeways such as Tide to Town and East Coast Greenway. Staff will receive input from the Steering Committee meetings in the future and decide what bike network they should go with.

CORE MPO staff has also been analyzing bike lane designs that can be adapted in the Savannah area. They have been trying to examine what type of buffers create a safe distance between the cyclists and driver and what kind of physical barrier works best in the area. They have also been looking into multi-use paths as an alternative to having separate sidewalks and cycle lanes.

The next step is going to be exploring the signage and sidewalks. The other piece of the plan is the Sidewalk and Crosswalks for walking infrastructure, so staff will be searching for signage that makes intersection crossing safer.

IV. Agency Reports

The Agency Reports are attached to the agenda under Notices.

V. Other Business

No Other Business

VI. Other Public Comments (limit to 3 minutes)

No Public Comments

VII. Notices

[12. US 80 Corridor Study Status Update](#)

Report attached to agenda.

[13. GDOT Project Status Update Report](#)

Report attached to agenda.

[14. Chatham County Project Status Update Report](#)

Report attached to agenda.

[15. City of Savannah Project Status Update Report](#)

Report attached to agenda.

[16. Savannah Hilton Head International Airport Project Status Update Report](#)

Report attached to agenda.

[17. LATS-SCDOT Project Status Update Report](#)

Report attached to agenda.

[18. Chatham Area Transit Project Status Update Report](#)

Report attached to agenda.

[19. Next CORE MPO CAC Committee Meeting June 22, 2023 at 5:30pm](#)

Report attached to agenda.

[20. TIP Funding Tracking Report](#)

Report attached to agenda.

VII. Adjournment.

There being no further business, the April 19, 2023 CAC 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.