



CHATHAM URBAN TRANSPORTATION STUDY

TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEETING SUMMARY

MPC Jerry Surrency Conference Room
110 East State Street

December 7, 2006

3:00 P.M.

Voting Members

Russ Abolt
Allan R. Black, P.E.
Robert H. Bonner Jr.
Michael Brown
Al Bungard, P.E.
Robbie Byrd
Phillip Claxton
Scott Conner
Anne de la Sierra
Patrick S. Graham
Bill Hendricks
Brian Leighton
Doug J. Marchand
Keith Melton
Carl Palmer
Russ Peterson
Tricia Reynolds
Diane Schleicher
Teresa Scott
Peter Shonka, P. E.
Bob Thomson
Thomas L. Thomson, P.E., AICP
Hugh "Trip" Tollison
Mike Weiner, P.E.
Mark Wilkes, P.E., AICP

Representing

Chatham County
Chatham County Engineering
LDH Corporation
City of Savannah
Chatham County Engineering
City of Pooler
City of Port Wentworth
CSX Transportation
Fort Steward/Hunter Army Airfield
Savannah Airport Commission
Norfolk Southern Railroad Industry
CUTS Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation
Georgia Ports Authority
GDOT - Atlanta
Chatham Area Transit Authority
CUTS Citizens Advisory Committee
Coastal Georgia RDC
City of Tybee Island
GDOT - Jesup
City of Savannah Engineering
Thunderbolt
Executive Director MPC, Chair
Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce
City of Savannah Engineering
MPO

Present

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Voting Member Alternates

George Fidler
Randy Weitman

Representing

Savannah Airport Commission
Georgia Ports Authority

x
x

Others Present

Chris Henry
Sei Kpeyei
Jane Love
Sam Panah
Barbara Settzo
Wykoda Wang

Representing

Urbitran Association x
GDOT-Atlanta x
MPO x
GDOT x
MPO x
MPO x

I. Approval of Agenda

The December 7, 2006 meeting of the Technical Coordinating Committee was called to order by Mr. Tom Thomson followed immediately by brief self-introductions of those attending. Mr. Thomson recognized Mr. Keith Melton, who announced that he would be leaving his post at GDOT and moving to the FTA southeast region.

The agenda was approved subject to moving item III-C (CAT Transportation Development Plan) to the beginning of Status Reports and adding item III-D (Review of MPO Conference).

II. Action Items

A. Approval of the October 19, 2006 CUTS TCC Meeting Minutes

Mr. Thomson called for the approval of the October 19, 2006 minutes. There being no corrections, it was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of the October 19, 2006 Technical Coordinating Committee as written.

TCC Action: the motion to approve the minutes of the October 19, 2006 Technical Coordinating Committee as written carried with none opposed.

B. Endorsement of the CUTS 2007 Meeting Calendar

Mr. Thomson presented the proposed calendar for 2007 for endorsement by the committee.

TCC Action: without any objection, the CUTS 2007 Meeting Calendar was endorsed.

C. Endorsement of the FY 2007 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Budget Amendment to fund a Transportation Coordinator function

Ms. Jane Love presented a report. The MPO had requested a \$25,000 Section 5303 grant for implementing the Connecting Savannah action item encouraging carpooling of hospital employees. MPO staff learned in November that the funds had been granted. The \$25,000 is the unmatched amount. Because the federal and local shares are 80% and 20% respectively, the total funds available after adding the local match are \$31,250. The budget table in the UPWP has been amended to reflect the additional funds available. Mr. Thomson commented that at this point, this program could be seen as a pilot program.

Once administratively established, he foresees it being administered by another agency, possibly CAT, since it is not the domain of the MPC to administer programs. The carpooling effort could also be encouraged through employers countywide.

It was moved and seconded to endorse the FY 2007 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Budget Amendment to fund a Transportation Coordinator function.

TCC Action: the motion to endorse the FY 2007 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Budget Amendment to fund a Transportation Coordinator function carried with none opposed.

III. Status Reports

This part of the meeting began with Agenda Item III-C, as had been agreed under Approval of Agenda.

C. Chatham Area Transit (CAT) Transportation Development Plan (TDP)

Mr. Carl Palmer explained that CAT has been working on the TDP. The focus of the plan is to analyze what CAT is doing now, what CAT needs to do in the next five years, what are the untapped markets for CAT, and what is on the horizon for CAT. This is the first of several updates to the committee as they work on this plan. The plan is scheduled to be completed by April 2007.

Mr. Palmer introduced Mr. Chris Henry, a consultant to CAT from Urbitran Associates. Mr. Henry's presentation of study methodology and work to date included an outline of the TDP which includes nine categories: Public Involvement, Service Analysis, Market Research, Paratransit Evaluation, Fare Policy, Technology Review, Service Expansion, Downtown Transit Station, and Financial Plan. Mr. Henry proceeded to share some key findings and demographics collected from on-board customer surveys, stakeholder interviews, and focus groups.

He also presented some bus route diagnostics. This included a snap-shot of the Abercorn Route 14 which is very active, and the Montgomery Route 20, serving Skidaway Island, which is not well utilized. With this information now in hand, the next step will be to develop recommendations for service and operating/financial planning.

According to Mr. Palmer, current budget figures are \$13.4 million in operating budget and an additional \$10-12 million in the capital budget.

Mr. Brian Leighton recommended that Mr. Henry attend a city-sponsored meeting of the Savannah Chatham Council on Disability Issues (SCCODI), held every 4th Monday at the MPC building. This group could be one of the focus groups in the TDP development, because there are some disabled people who use CAT buses, not just Teleride. SCCODI membership includes great diversity in types of disabilities.

Mr. Leighton also asked if Mr. Henry's research turned up any differences in service during day time hours versus night time hours. Mr. Henry commented that the general response from riders was a request for more frequent scheduling, at any time and all the time. Mr. Leighton felt the bus drivers on evening shifts displayed more rudeness. Mr. Palmer encouraged him, or anyone, to call him with any complaints of this nature.

Mr. Thomson asked about the average operating cost per bus per hour. That information was not readily available. Mr. Thomson recommended to Mr. Palmer that as the TDP progresses, and he is ready to present to the Policy Committee, he should notify the MPO staff two months in advance. Mr. Thomson recommended that more concrete examples and the impact of certain changes be prepared for presentation to the Policy Committee. They agreed to put the CAT TDP presentation on the February 28, 2007 agenda for the Policy Committee.

A. Environmental streamlining for transportation projects

Mr. Thomson presented a status report. At the August 23, 2006 meeting of the Policy Committee, Chairman Liakakis expressed concerns over the long period of time it took to complete the environmental study for the Ogeechee Rd widening project and would like to see faster completion of environmental studies of transportation projects. Mr. Thomson sees this complex issue in two parts. The first part deals with legislation passed in the 1960s which began the process that now exists and instituted various governmental agencies who are involved in completing environmental studies. Since then, this has grown into a huge process, which GDOT is very involved in. Mr. Thomson's goal is to convince the Chairman that the MPO is not going to steer the "mega-ship" that is the NEPA process.

The second part is where local agencies can be more involved in moving things along. If the MPO can report the status, project by project, on a regular basis, this may satisfy the Chairman. Teresa Scott, from GDOT District Five, will assist with updating the completion percentage of the various projects.

Mr. George Fidler agreed with Mr. Thomson. He believes it will help if the environmental issues of any project were examined at the front end of project and not in the middle. Mr. Keith Melton suggested getting stakeholder involvement on any project earlier, too. Involve the stakeholders before getting into the design process. It will take the MPO time to establish a plan for stakeholder involvement. Ms. Wykoda Wang reminded the committee of the key phrases mentioned in a memo in the meeting packet dealing with this issue: early public involvement, continuous public involvement, and streamlining the process.

Mr. Thomson would like a current status of the projects completed by the Policy Committee meeting.

Mr. Melton asked if there was any expiration on the environmental studies. Mr. Randy Weitman indicated that after 6 months, you must re-visit the process and confirm that data is current and prevailing conditions have not changed.

Mr. Mike Weiner questioned the 14% completion figure on the environmental approval for the SR26/Ogeechee Rd. Widening from Lynes Pkwy to Victory Dr, shown on the handout

for this status report. He believes they are very close to scheduling a public hearing on this project. This indicates to Mr. Thomson that the environmental study on this project must be closer to 70% complete. Mr. Weiner agreed.

B. Context Sensitive Design Draft Manual

Mr. Mark Wilkes reported that a draft manual has been received from the consultants at the firm of Glatting Jackson. He highlighted the general points included in the manual. The early portion of the manual contains good general information. After page 23 the information becomes more specific. Mr. Wilkes explained to the committee how the manual is structured and brought attention to Chapter 8. This chapter brings together the function of the road project in question and the context of the area where the road will be. The manual recommends specific design features for review. Mr. Wilkes reported that this draft manual is only being presented to the Policy Committee next week. They are not asking the Policy Committee to approve it at this time.

Mr. Melton believes that context sensitive design is all about public involvement, along the lines of the public involvement in the Connecting Savannah project. What is your public involvement strategy? This takes a lot of time and planning on the part of the MPO. For big projects in excess of \$25 million he believes the MPO should strongly consider a public involvement process similar to that used in Connecting Savannah. Context Sensitive Design (CSD) boils down to stakeholder group formation and how well they are managed. He believes the MPO did a good job of stakeholder involvement in Connecting Savannah through their consultant, who managed it. He believes this is the level of interaction required to get to the alternative development stage for major projects.

Mr. Thomson thinks it may need to be divided into different levels of projects. Some area projects may require a more intensive level of public involvement than other projects, i.e. residential areas versus commercial areas.

Ms. Diane Schleicher, Tybee Island City Manager, reported to the committee the progress on the continuing communications between Tybee Island and GDOT regarding the issues centering on Butler Ave. Re-installing a median on Butler Ave. of an undetermined width was discussed. (At this point, Mr. Wilkes displayed a historical photograph of Butler Avenue with Victory Drive median.) Also mentioned was the idea that Tybee Island could change the functional classification of Butler Ave. and take over responsibility for that portion of Butler Ave. (aka Route 80). Ms. Schleicher mentioned that GDOT is prepared to re-pave and re-stripe Butler Ave. and would agree to a three-lane road with bike lanes and parking, the middle lane being a dual left-turn lane. Committee members felt that GDOT's idea was a decent compromise.

She wants to present proposals to city council but finds it is hard to counsel them. Mr. Melton recommended that if the budget allowed, there be a round of public involvement managed by a professional firm with established expertise, such as Glatting Jackson, paid for by the city. This would be best for all parties and provide more objectivity. If this is not possible, have good drawings and visuals to present at a public involvement session of your own. Mr. Wilkes will e-mail the old Butler Ave. photo to Ms. Schleicher. Ms. Schleicher

would like to have this resolved before next winter when GDOT will be ready to re-pave and re-line.

D. MPO Conference Update

Mr. Wilkes reported that the conference was very successful. He showed a series of slides to the committee which highlighted the various presenters. There were 63 registrants, plus sponsors and additional MPO staff bringing the total number of participants to approximately

80. One of the positive outcomes of the conference was that the MPO Association planning group decided to hold regular tele-conferences to keep planning initiatives alive.

Mr. Thomson learned from the Atlanta visitors at the conference about the \$8 billion dollar short fall in GDOT funding for this coming year. Ms. Scott confirmed that the \$8 billion is necessary just to keep projects where they are. Long term, the shortfall gets larger. It is likely that the TIP process this spring will be affected by this. There are proposals out there to cover the financial situation. The Georgians for Better Transportation are proposing a state-wide sales tax and/or a rollback of the gasoline tax. They are talking about this to legislators and transportation people. Key state legislators have been briefed on this problem. Another proposal comes from the Georgia Association of Chambers to allow counties to put a referendum on the ballot, county by county, for a transportation sales tax. Mr. Melton referred committee members to the GBT website for further information. It is believed by some committee members that the shortfall was caused by increased project costs and inadequate project estimates. GDOT is working to implement a better system for estimating project costs.

IV. Agency Reports

A. Federal Highway Administration

No report at this time.

B. Federal Transit Administration

No report at this time.

C. Georgia Department of Transportation

Ms. Teresa Scott referred committee members to the written report and asked for questions. She was not sure if the left-turn lane at Wal-mart on Rt. 17 was completed yet.

The survey has just begun on the Victory Dr/Truman Pkwy project. The rough drawing is ready, but the concept report and the environmental study still need to be completed. The completion of this operational improvement is at least a year away.

D. Chatham County

Mr. Al Black referred members to the written report. He reported that right-of-way and construction plans for the Truman Pkwy Phase 5 are progressing. It could be ready for construction in FY 2008 or FY 2009, but construction will need to be programmed. Mr. Thomson is concerned that there has not been a revised cost estimate on this project.

Ms. Schleicher asked who to contact if they are dissatisfied with a highway contractor, who has done a bad job of striping. It was determined that GDOT, not the county, was in charge of the project in question. Ms. Scott referred her to Brad Saxon or Will Murphy at GDOT.

Ms. Schleicher also asked what agency would handle illegal, pseudo-regulatory signs posted on unincorporated county property. Was it county jurisdiction or GDOT? She will contact Mr. Black, from Chatham County, to discuss this matter further.

Mr. Thomson reported that he has heard dissatisfaction with the current plan for widening of Bay Street, i.e. it is not "pedestrian friendly" enough. The state will be having a public hearing on January 18 when this can be voiced and addressed. Committee members agreed that Bay St. is a major arterial and will have sidewalks on both sides, crosswalks, and a median. Mr. Thomson believes all of this should be sufficient for a major automobile roadway such as Bay St. Mr. Thomson will assume responsibility for talking with the appropriate city officials about this.

E. City of Savannah

Mr. Mike Weiner distributed a written status report which included the following:

Henry St. & Anderson St. Signal system – Basically this project is complete. The contractor received a punch list. They are having problems with the tie-in of the fiber optics and getting it operational. The consultant for timing has not been able to come down for testing because the fiber optics still are not connected and operational. The City is working with GDOT. Once it is complete and we have connectivity, then the timing issue can be resolved.

Gwinnett Curve Reconstruction – Right-of-way acquisition is underway.

Gwinnett St. Widening – Consultant is working on the environmental study which should be finished in January. Also, consultant is coordinating roadway concept plans being developed for the City Complex on the north side of Gwinnett St.

LaRoche Ave. Widening – Consultant submitted a revised concept which is being evaluated by the Department. The project runs from east of Skidaway Rd. to the south city limits.

E Anderson St. Curve Reconstruction – Department held a public information meeting last November 15 at the Golden Age Center next to Shuman Middle School. The Department will perform additional studies to address citizens concerns, and a subsequent meeting will be scheduled in February or March of 2007.

DeRenne Ave./Hampstead Connector – Consultants submitted additional requested information related to experience with projects of a similar nature to DeRenne Ave. This information is presently being evaluated by the review team.

Mr. Thomson reported on a private citizen's request for improved signage going eastbound on Oglethorpe, crossing MLK Blvd, and right where the lane ends. The request is for more advance warning that the right lane ends. Mr. Weiner will pass this on to GDOT since that end of Oglethorpe is in their jurisdiction.

Mr. Thomson also mentioned that coming off the southbound Truman onto DeRenne Ave. there is not a light for those turning right. There are two left turn arrows. There should be a green ball, a green right arrow, or a red ball. As it is, there is no direction for those turning right.

F. Chatham Area Transit Authority

Nothing additional to report.

G. Georgia Ports Authority

Mr. Randy Weitman reported that a notice will go out in January for their stakeholders and policy meeting on the Chatham Intermodel Freight Study.

They have submitted a revised concept on the SR 307 overpass and are writing up the environment study for the second time.

They are working on district approval for their Brampton Road project.

The preliminary environmental study is done on the DeLoach connector. Mr. Thomson suggests that a meeting of all interested parties on this project be convened so that there is a coming together of the minds.

Mr. Thomson asked what the port's plans were for spending the \$5 million earmark that they have on hand. Mr. Weitman confirmed the amount and reported that \$1 million was for the concept design of the Jimmy DeLoach connector. Mr. Thomson recommended reserving \$1 million for the concept report of I-95 and SR 21.

Mr. Thomson mentioned the challenge of connecting the northwest toll road to the Effingham Pkwy which should help everyone. Mr. Melton asked, if the tollway were connected to Effingham Pkwy north of I-95 and if there were a tollbooth north of I-95 and if it were the only one, would it negatively affect the port? Mr. Weitman confirmed that it would not. This could accelerate the project, help with the connectivity issue, and work with the long range plan.

H. Savannah-Hilton Head International Airport

Mr. George Fidler reported that the new road the state is funding connecting Gulfstream's new facility and Dean Forest Rd is moving through the process. The City of Savannah is involved because the City owns the property.

The terminal expansion is on schedule for completion in the spring, and new parking garage is on schedule for completion in the summer.

The new traffic signals at I-95 are behind schedule, waiting on poles. It was scheduled for completion this November.

I. CUTS Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation

Mr. Brian Leighton reported that the committee endorsed everything on its agenda.

J. CUTS Citizens Advisory Committee

No report at this time.

V. Other Business

There was no other business at this time.

VI. Adjournment

There being no other business, the Technical Coordinating Committee adjourned the December 7, 2006 meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

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