



CHATHAM URBAN TRANSPORTATION STUDY

**TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE
MEETING SUMMARY**

**MPC Jerry Surrency Conference Room
110 East State Street**

August 16, 2007

3:00 P.M.

Voting Members

Representing

Present

Russ Abolt	Chatham County	
Allan R. Black, P.E.	Chatham County Engineering	x
Robert H. Bonner Jr.	LDH Corporation	
Daniel Bostek	Norfolk Southern Railroad Industry	
Michael Brown	City of Savannah	
Al Bungard, P.E.	Chatham County Engineering	
Robbie Byrd	City of Pooler	
Phillip Claxton	City of Port Wentworth	
Scott Conner	CSX Transportation	
Anne de la Sierra	Fort Steward/Hunter Army Airfield	
Glenn Durrence	GDOT – District 5	
Patrick S. Graham	Savannah Airport Commission	
Brian Leighton	CUTS Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation	
Doug J. Marchand	Georgia Ports Authority	
Kyle Mote	GDOT – Atlanta	x
Carl Palmer	Chatham Area Transit Authority	
Russ Peterson	CUTS Citizens Advisory Committee	
Tricia Reynolds	Coastal Georgia RDC	
Diane Schleicher	City of Tybee Island	
Peter Shonka, P. E.	City of Savannah Engineering	
Bob Thomson	Thunderbolt	
Thomas L. Thomson, P.E., AICP	Executive Director MPC, Chair	
Hugh "Trip" Tollison	Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce	
Mike Weiner, P.E.	City of Savannah Engineering	x
Mark Wilkes, P.E., AICP	MPO	x

Voting Member Alternates

Representing

Sean Brandon	City of Savannah	x
George Fidler	Savannah Airport Commission	x
Jean Iaderosa	CAT	x
Teresa Scott	GDOT – District 5	x

Others Present

Susan Broker
Marcela Coll
Paul Condit
Tommy Crochet
Jane Love
Ryan Mickens
Jen Price
Wykoda Wang
Albert Welch

Representing

City of Savannah X
GDOT/Urban Design X
GDOT/OEL X
McGee Partners X
MPO X
GDOT/Urban Design X
Sycamore X
MPO X
GDOT/Urban Design X

Call to Order

The August 16, 2007 meeting of the Technical Coordinating Committee was called to order by Mr. Mark Wilkes, acting as Chairman in Mr. Tom Thomson's absence.

I. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was accepted with no changes requested.

II. Action Items

A. Approval of the June 21, 2007 Meeting Minutes

Mr. Wilkes called for the approval of the June 21, 2007 minutes. Mr. George Fidler noted that he had arrived late to that meeting and requested that his attendance be noted in the minutes. It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes, as corrected, of the June 21, 2007 Technical Coordinating Committee.

TCC Action: the motion to approve the minutes, as corrected, of the June 21, 2007 Technical Coordinating Committee carried with none opposed.

B. Requested Amendment to the FY 2008-2011 TIP to include the following projects:

- a. Water Taxi
- b. Chatham Area Transit Job Access Reverse Commute
- c. Preliminary Engineering for Gulfstream Road widening
- d. Preliminary Engineering for Robert Miller Jr. Road widening
- e. Preliminary Engineering for widening I-516 from Veterans Pkwy. to I-16
- f. McQueen's Island Trail – Phase 2
- g. Slip 3/Parcel 7 Riverwalk Extension
- h. Savannah MPO Transportation Study – Sector One

Ms. Wykoda Wang presented the amendments to the FY 2008-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Funding was rolled back to FY 2008 for the water taxi. Ms. Laderosa stated that "taxi" is incorrect in this instance. The project is a water "ferry" and should be so noted since it reflects that type of service provided. Ms. Wang indicated these funds were for a new vessel and believed these funds to be earmarked. In the FY 2007-2009 TIP the funds were federal/state/local share of 80%-10%-10%, but this amendment request is shown as 100% federal funds. A committee member doubted that this was ever a 100% federal share project. The amount in question is \$100,000.00. Mr. Wilkes asked that this issue be clarified before the Policy Committee meets next week.

Ms. Wang noted there are earmarked funds for the Chatham Area Transit Job Access Reverse Commute project. As in the FY 2007-2009 TIP, there is an earmark of \$1 million for the project. However in this request it indicates that it is LY60 funds and 100% federal share. The FY 2007-2009 TIP shows it as 80%-10%-10% federal/state/local share. They are moving it back to FY2008 because the funds have not been authorized. Mr. Wilkes asked GDOT representatives to clarify the funding shares.

Ms. Wang listed the three road widening projects – Gulfstream Rd. widening, Robert Miller Jr. Rd. widening, and I-516 widening. I-516 preliminary engineering (PE) funding is being pushed back to FY2008 and Ms. Wang had no question on this project. She did have concerns about the other projects. She was told in FY 2007 that the Gulfstream Rd. and Robert Miller, Jr. Rd. widening projects were funded with L240 funds –\$100,000 for PE. Now the PE has increased by \$15,000 for each. Mr. Mote noticed that as well but could not explain why. Additional funding has been added under the same PI number. He acknowledged that the PE funding had been amended to the FY2007-2009 TIP but didn't get authorized, so it needs to be put in FY 2008-2011 TIP. Mr. Wilkes was confident that the increase of \$15,000 does not change it from being a minor amendment. Mr. Mote noted that the \$100,000 is still the same fund code, but the \$15,000 new money is another fund code. Ms. Scott confirmed that the \$100,000 is still L240 funding, and the \$15,000 is 6046 funds.

Ms. Wang described the two county projects – the McQueen's Island Trail Phase 2 and the Slip 3/Parcel 7 Riverwalk Extension – which are being proposed to be added to the local section of the TIP. She has requested more detailed information from the county on the Riverwalk Extension project but has not yet received it. The McQueen's Island Trail Phase 2 will be a one-mile trail. The county indicated that they included funding in the 5-year capital improvement program, but the county staff is trying to coordinate with GDOT staff to see if this can be included in the widening project. A GDOT representative noted that the National Park Service had indicated an interest in continuing this trail to Tybee Island. It has been discussed with GDOT's design shop about extending the trail. The issue is the crossing of the Lazaretto Creek. For the trail to cross the creek, Coast Guard approval would be required because the creek is a navigable waterway. The proposal is to have a 10-foot shoulder on the Lazaretto Creek Bridge which bikes could use. The mayor of Tybee Island has asked about putting a barrier to separate it from auto traffic, for joint ped/bike use.

Mr. Wilkes noted that it is being proposed as an amendment to the local section of TIP based on its local funding with the understanding that the county is pursuing federal funding.

A Committee member asked what proposed action is requested for the Riverwalk Extension project. Ms. Wang commented that no further information was available on this project. Ms. Jane Love clarified that the county wanted it also added to the local section of the FY2008-2011 TIP.

Mr. Wilkes explained that another minor amendment included in this is for Savannah MPO Transportation Study – Sector One. In the FY 2007 TIP there was \$125,000 of L230 funds for this study. They are now proposing pushing it to FY 2008 TIP.

Mr. Fidler asked for clarification of the CAT Job Access Reverse Commute project. Ms. Laderosa stated that this project relates to funding for the ferry service and the #6 cross town bus route which serve many employers of low-income workers, and also a portion of the #2 bus route going to the Crossroads area and the airport.

It was moved and seconded to endorse the amendment to the FY 2008-2011 TIP to include the eight projects listed above with the caveat that additional information requested be provided prior to the Policy Committee meeting next week.

TCC action: the motion to endorse the amendment to the FY 2008-2011 TIP to include the eight projects listed above with the caveat that additional information requested be provided prior to the Policy Committee meeting next week carried with none opposed.

C. Endorsement of Recommended Transportation Enhancement Priorities

Ms. Love reported that there was a revision from the report sent out in the advance packet; AASU had applied for Transportation Enhancement (TE) funds from District 12, but they really are in District 1. The GDOT TE Coordinator is aware of the error and has corrected it.

Ms. Love's presentation included a listing of the twelve eligible categories for transportation enhancement projects. The ones in red indicate which categories apply to our applications. She reported that, according to the profile of Georgia's administration of the program on the National TE Clearinghouse web site, approval is more likely if the local sponsor provides more than a 20% match. In our case, two of the projects provide in excess of 20% match – the City of Tybee Island's Butler Ave. project and City of Savannah's Broughton St. project. The total awarded in each district is approximately \$4 million. The requested funds for projects from the Chatham County area are about 50% in each district. Her report further showed that in years past the Chatham area had not been receiving our proportionate share, compared to population proportion, until the last round when MPO staff recommended the MPO chairman speak to the State Transportation Board representatives. The last round shows the funding gap was considerably smaller. Therefore, the staff is recommending that the MPO chairman communicate with the State Transportation Board representative once again to encourage full funding of the Chatham area applications.

It was moved and second to accept the staff recommendation that the MPO chairman advocate on behalf of the Transportation Enhancement Priorities.

TCC action: the motion to accept the staff recommendation that the MPO chairman advocate on behalf of the Transportation Enhancement Priorities was carried with none opposed.

III. Status Reports

A. SR 204/Abercorn Extension Improvements

Mr. Tommy Crochet, of McGee Partners, presented an updated report on this project. Jen Price from Sycamore distributed handouts. In his presentation he highlighted the handout materials. He recapped comments received at the two public information open houses and what the next steps will be. He will be giving this presentation, in full, at the Citizens Advisory Meeting today at 5:00 p.m. He will also be speaking to the Policy Committee next week.

They have spoken with neighborhood groups and key stakeholders such as AASU, Hunter Army Airfield and St. Joseph's/Candler. The two open houses were in November 2006 and June 2007. The November 2006 open house had 338 attendees and presented a wide range of alternatives. Some basic comments indicated strong and/or conditional support of the project, with the desired outcomes of the project to be decreased traffic delays and increased safety.

In June the open house had about 100 less attendees. At this meeting more details of a short list of alternatives were presented. At this time they had explained to the public why certain alternatives were eliminated.

For US 17 to Rio Rd. alternative C1 is basically interchanges at King George Blvd. and at Grove Hill. C3a and C3b puts the interchange at King George only with variations on access to and from the Grove Hill area.

For Rio Rd. to Truman Pkwy, the currently preferred alternatives by McGee Partners are the freeway frontage road options, with one alternative showing widening of the road to the north (L2n) and the other alternative showing widening of to the south (L2s).

At the public meetings in June, the highest percentage of the commenters preferred alternative C1 (56%) for US 17 to Rio and alternative L2n for Rio to Truman (46%). Mr. Crochet believes that the decreased attendance at the second open house resulted from the fact that many of those satisfied with proposals at the November meetings did not feel it necessary to attend the second meeting. Those who were not too happy at the first open house were at the second. Some of the people will not support this type of improvement at all.

Public comments of note included:

- Encourage public transportation
- Include transit facilities in the design
- Why not rail transit through this corridor? (Mr. Crochet said the demand was not there.)

- Forest Cove residents questioned the route and buyouts of property. (Mr. Crochet did not fully understand this concern, since the route takes very little from Forest Cove.)
- Give preference to residents (homeowners) versus transients (apartment dwellers). (Mr. Crochet noted that this would be illegal.)
- Re-route Truman Pkwy. to connect directly with Veterans Pkwy. or US 17.
- Requested sound barriers. (Mr. Crochet said that this will be part of the project.)
- Requested short-term turn lane improvements at King George Blvd. Mr. Crochet reported that the folks did not realize that the existing "extra pavement" is designed for emergency purposes and not designed to withstand heavy traffic.
- More traffic signals along King George Blvd.
- Concern over impact to businesses and their ability to relocate
- Requested consideration of the bigger picture of east-west connectivity.

Mr. Crochet had talked to Carl Palmer about designated bus lanes, express bus, and/or HOV lanes. He recommended to CAT to push back to GDOT to insure that the shoulders on the freeway portions are wide enough and strong enough to use the shoulders in the future for bus service. There is a precedent for this (in Atlanta on Georgia SR 400). As for rail, the density is no where close to warranting such an improvement. Even express bus is not warranted yet, but could be 30-40 years from now. A committee member is concerned in using the shoulders for this future growth, when the shoulders are for disabled vehicles and ambulances. Mr. Crochet recommended questioning GDOT on other possibilities for this. Mr. Crochet mentioned the possibility of using the inside shoulder which will be ten feet wide, or a center reversible bus lane. He believes CAT needs to approach GDOT with specific recommendations.

The next steps moving forward include preparing one environmental document for both portions of the project. The alternative selected in consultation with GDOT and the public for US 17 to Rio Rd. is the C1 alternative, the split interchange between King George Blvd. and Pine Grove Blvd. It's a little more expensive but it provides more access to the Grove Hill area, and it's locally preferred. For the Rio Rd. to Truman Pkwy. portion they have selected alternative L2, the freeway frontage road with widening to the north. Widening to the north requires only 4 residential relocations and is 5-10% less costly.

Field run surveys are underway. They are finalizing the traffic studies. Laneage work is still necessary. They are preparing the concept report with the expectation of a concept team meeting later this fall. They expect preparation of a draft of the environmental assessment early in 2008, with a public hearing on the environmental document in the summer of 2008.

Mr. Crochet commented that the currently preferred freeway/frontage concept will make it very difficult for transit riders to cross the street if the bus stops remain in the same places as they are today. This is an issue that will need to be addressed. Bus routes may need to change or we may need to consider pedestrian bridges.

Mr. Crochet addressed the recurring public comment, "Why don't you re-route Phase 5 of the Truman Pkwy. through the marsh to the south of the corridor?" It is his opinion that the cost would be at least double the current cost estimate for Truman Parkway Phase 5 and that it would be highly unlikely that the project would ever receive an approved

environmental document. He had run a travel demand model and it showed that this different route would pull less traffic. If you just build Truman Pkwy. Phase 5 with no SR 204 improvements, you would see about 35,000 vehicles per day. If you include the improvements on SR204, the number increases to about 44,000 vehicles per day. You're pulling vehicles off the I-516/DeRenne Ave. corridor and some off the I-16 corridor. If you re-route Truman Pkwy. Phase 5 through the marsh to a Veteran's Pkwy. connection, this number drops to about 25,000 vehicles per day. You wouldn't pull enough traffic off the Rio Rd./Largo Rd. portion of SR 204 to make it work. He believes that doing the entire project as planned serves the east-west connectivity issue better than would be possible in the DeRenne Ave. corridor or the Bay St. corridor.

Mr. Crochet suggested, as part of coordinating with CAT, that CAT send a letter to urban design requesting certain considerations, and maybe go to Atlanta to meet and discuss the potential options.

Mr. Crochet mentioned that the 2030 model did not include ramps from Truman Parkway Phase 4 terminus to Whitfield Ave. on the west side. This greatly effects his projections. He asks that this be corrected.

Mr. Wilkes suggested that Mr. Crochet, when presenting this to the CAC, focus on the importance of the Truman Pkwy. route taking people where they want to go. Taking people around is not going to work if it doesn't take them where they want and need to go.

B. SAFETEA-LU Compliance Update

Mr. Wilkes reported on SAFETEA-LU compliance tasks that have been completed and those that remain. The Participation Plan and the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) revisions have been adopted, and the former Congestion Management System (CMS) has been re-designated as the new Congestion Management Process (CMP), since it already met all of the SAFETEA-LU requirements. Coming up is the development of a Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan and the LRTP Financial Plan Update.

IV. Agency Reports

A. CUTS Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation

Ms. Love reported that the ACAT endorsed the amendment to the FY2008-2011 TIP but they continue to voice concern about sidewalks and curb cuts for the Gulfstream Rd. and Robert Miller Jr. Rd. widening projects. Ms. Teresa Scott confirmed that sidewalks are planned for segment on Gulfstream Rd. near the entrance and the bus stop, but not all the way around. She doesn't believe sidewalks and curb cuts are part of the Robert Miller Jr. Rd. widening.

B. CUTS Citizens Advisory Committee

No report at this time.

C. Federal Highway Administration

No report at this time.

D. Federal Transit Administration

No report at this time.

E. Georgia Department of Transportation

Ms. Scott referred committee members to the written report and highlighted the following projects:

Project #12 – Ogeechee Rd. - impact analysis and environmental assessment bonding were nearing completion but then the regulations changed and office priorities got switched around. GDOT will refocus their efforts to get this out the door in the next couple of weeks. Staff can tell the Policy Committee that it is nearly completed and will be done in the next couple of weeks.

Question about the alternative on the east end, near Victory Dr., and how it's tied in. Is the concept still the same? Are you removing the culvert? The culvert must be replaced.

Project #22 – Diamond Causeway – the 4-lane widening hinges on the construction of Whitfield Avenue. Mr. Butch Welch reported that they have recommended to the commissioner that they make a separate bridge project. Mr. Welch submitted a revised concept report to his office of pre-construction last week for signature. He expects the signed revised concept report shortly. This bridge project will have an independent PI number and project number so they can begin. They will build a 2-lane high level bridge with ten foot shoulders north of the existing bridge. In this project the existing bridge will be removed. Once the original Diamond Causeway project gets let they will build a new parallel structure south of the high level structure in the general area of today's existing bridge. He has no idea what funding years are programmed at this time. Preliminary plans will begin as soon as he gets the signed revised concept report. This will be a GDOT project but they would consider doing the alignment in-house with or without a consultant. Due to the high level of public interest, they are considering a public meeting to advise the public.

Project # 26 – US 80/Bull River & Lazaretto Creek - Regarding right-of-way, the plan is to transfer state-owned Bird Island to the National Park Service/ Fort Pulaski in exchange for right-of-way from Fort Pulaski to widen along their property. This is a slow process but it is moving in the right direction. Historical and archeological reviews are holding up the environmental document. Mr. Welch stated that word-of-mouth says the terrapins cross the US 80 to lay their eggs up around where the old railroad bed is. GDOT needs some factual data to back up this assertion. Ms. Iaderosa offered the contact information of an expert on this issue. Mr. Welch said the location points for turtle crossings and deaths, from the Global Positioning System (GPS), show slight concentration near the Bull River Bridge, but also quite scattered. He would like an independent study to show what is really going on with the turtle behavior – are the turtles needing to reach a hatchery, or are crossings for

something else? Mr. Condit added that the construction of wildlife crossings can potentially contaminate oyster beds in the area by changing the tidal flows.

Mr. Mike Weiner asked about Project #35 – I-516 Lighting @ Bay St. Interchange. The City tried to refurbish, but when the crane got up there, it was discovered that the fixtures are rusty. This needs to be addressed soon, but the lighting project had been lumped together with the West Bay St. improvement project. This had previously seemed logical; however, now the two projects should be separated so that they could move forward on the critical lighting project. Mr. Welch said a change order for lighting design on Bay St. was approved last week and they will proceed. The lighting project will have a simple environmental document for categorical exclusion, and not need to wait for the larger environmental study in the West Bay project.

Mr. Wilkes asked about Project #36 – SR 307/Dean Forest Rd. Ms. Scott reported that all the agreements have been delivered. Other than that she doesn't know of further progress.

Project #42 – I-95 & SR 21 – The maintenance crews have been working. It is their intention to lengthen the exit lane on I-95 to SR 21. Ms. Scott expects this to turn around quickly.

Project #41 – SR26/US 80 at CR1148/Truman Pkwy. - working on preliminary plans. It is moving along.

F. Chatham County

Mr. Al Black referred members to the written report. He reviewed the report and asked for questions. There were no questions at this time.

G. City of Savannah

Mr. Weiner distributed a written status report and highlighted the DeRenne Ave. Ambulance Pre-emption System. The kick-off meeting with the vendor is the end of this month.

Ms. Scott asked if there was any decision on the bridge on the Gwinnett St. project. Mr. Weiner reported there was no decision on the bridge. Ms. Scott would investigate further.

H. Chatham Area Transit Authority

Ms. Jean Iaderosa reported that the CAT board approved the funds to work with the MPC on hiring a consultant to do a coordinated plan on how Sections 5310, 5316 and 5317 funds are dispersed. This must be done to comply with federal regulations. She also reported that the CAT board has let First Transit go which means that Mr. Palmer, as Executive Director, will be replaced by an interim director.

The question was asked if the process for a Long Range Transit Plan for the MPO has begun. Mr. Wilkes commented that this has been a struggle. The money has been budgeted in this fiscal year. Notice to proceed may be by October 1. They are making an

effort to incorporate long range transit plans within the Long Range Transportation Plan. This is reflected in the work plan budget.

Ms. Iaderosa also reported on a new shuttle service in downtown Savannah using a smaller vehicle targeted to hotels in the downtown area to connect with the ferry service.

I. Georgia Ports Authority

No report at this time.

J. Savannah-Hilton Head International Airport

Since Mr. Fidler had to leave early, he indicated that he would send a status report of the airport projects to Mr. Wilkes.

K. Other

No other agency reports at this time.

V. Other Business

No other business at this time.

VI. Other Public Comments

No other public comments at this time.

VII. Adjournment

There being no other business, the Technical Coordinating Committee adjourned the August 16, 2007 meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

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