



CHATHAM URBAN TRANSPORTATION STUDY

**TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE
MEETING SUMMARY**

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

February 21, 2008

3:00 P.M.

Voting Members

Representing

Present

Russ Abolt	Chatham County	
Brannyn Allen	City of Tybee Island	
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	
Leon Davenport	Chatham County Engineering	x
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
Russ Peterson	CUTS Citizens Advisory Committee	
Tricia Reynolds	Coastal Georgia RDC	
Joe Murray Rivers	Chatham Area Transit Authority	
Peter Shonka, P. E.	City of Savannah Engineering	
Bob Thomson	Town of 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 Traffic Engineering	
Mark Wilkes, P.E., AICP	MPO	x

Voting Member Alternates

Representing

Sean Brandon	City of Savannah	x
George Fidler	Savannah Airport Commission	x
Stephen Henry	City of Savannah Traffic Engineering	x
Jean Iaderosa	Chatham Area Transit Authority	x
Brad Saxon	GDOT – District 5	x

Others Present

Steve Cote
Latoya Jones
Jane Love
Barbara Settzo
Jon Todd
Wykoda Wang

Representing

RS&H X
FHWA X
MPO X
for MPO X
MPC Chairman X
MPO X

Call to Order

Acting as Chairman in the absence of Chairman Tom Thomson, Mr. Mark Wilkes called the meeting of the Technical Coordinating Committee to order.

I. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Wilkes noted that the agenda today was different from the preliminary agenda mailed out . The Year-of-Expenditure (YOE) Update for the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) was moved from Action Items to Status Reports. Since the Year-of-Expenditure item is not being voted on at this time, the TIP amendments cannot be considered today, because changes to the TIP will not be allowed until the LRTP is compliant with the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) which requires the YOE update. There being no other comments, Mr. Wilkes declared the agenda approved.

II. Action Items

A. Approval of the December 13, 2007 Technical Coordinating Committee Meeting Minutes

It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of the December 13, 2007 Technical Coordinating Committee meeting.

TCC Action: the motion to approve the minutes of the December 13, 2007 Technical Coordinating Committee meeting carried with none opposed.

III. Status Reports

A. CUTS/MPO “Year-of-Expenditure” Update for Financial Plan of the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

Mr. Steve Cote from Reynolds, Smith & Hills presented background on this update and the current status of the update. This year-of-expenditure (YOE) update is required by SAFETEA-LU. All project costs and revenue forecasts will be revisited in the future as part of the regular Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) update. This will begin in the spring

and go through 2009. This YOE must update estimations for both funding sources and project costs. Costs for projects built or authorized since the Plan adoption in 2004 have been deducted. This update uses the inflation rate approved by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). The update was submitted to GDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the MPO is now working through the comments received from these agencies.

Mr. Wilkes noted that the total cost estimate for projects included in the plan is \$2,422,000,000, and the estimated financial resources, through traditional funding, is \$1,654,000,000. This creates an initial short-fall of \$767,000,000. In an attempt to address this short-fall the MPO proposed that new limited-access facilities and new lanes added to such existing facilities be treated as managed lanes, or in other words, have a cost associated with use which would help cover the cost of building the projects. The update assumed a \$1.00 toll. By doing this the plan is roughly in balance.

Mr. Wilkes read from a letter that GDOT sent to the MPO which included several requested changes in the draft update:

- GDOT does not want tolls on any of the interstates. They believe traditional funding sources will be sufficient for the interstate projects.
- GDOT requests that the Department not be cited as a source for the recommended Public-Private Partnership projects.
- GDOT questioned the magnitude of toll revenues and the construction costs of the Chatham County portion of the Effingham Pkwy. as stated in the update. Mr. Wilkes asked GDOT if there were any estimates available for the cost of the Chatham County portion of the project. Neither Mr. Saxon nor Mr. Mote had that information. They will follow up and get these figures for Mr. Wilkes. All parties agree that the figure of \$2,000,000 in the update is too low and that it will be changed.
- Mr. Wilkes confirmed that the MPO will be including the sector studies in this update, as requested by GDOT.

Mr. Wilkes asked the GDOT representatives for more specifics on the traditional funds GDOT will use for interstate highway projects. Mr. Wilkes asked for current cost estimates on what it would take to implement additional lanes.

Mr. Wilkes then read from a similar letter from FHWA highlighting agency comments on the draft update. The main comment was that for Public Private Partnership (PPP) projects to be included in the draft update those projects needed the support of GDOT. Ms. Latoya Jones will e-mail the guidance that was issued from FHWA on May 21, 2007. She read from the Georgia state regulations where it states that to enter into a PPP it must have GDOT support.

Mr. Wilkes explained that the proposed PPP projects were derived from a larger list of potential PPP projects presented by GDOT staff at the September 2007 GDOT meeting on Jekyll Island and assumed that the presentation of the list of potential PPP projects to our board members indicated a certain level of support by GDOT. The MPO included only four projects as PPPs from that initial list of 9 or 10. Mr. Mote asked why those particular four were included. Mr. Wilkes explained that they had eliminated from the list those projects

which were already well along in the traditional process, or that were high enough priority to be assigned the traditional funding.

Mr. Mote asked if the SR 204 project was a viaduct project or an ordinary widening project. The update presents it as a viaduct, but GDOT has the plan listed as just a widening, not a viaduct. He's concerned that the MPO and GDOT are not identifying the project in the same way. Mr. Wilkes said the 8-lane widening of SR 204 had really been a place holder at the time of plan adoption. This YOE update assumes a viaduct from Rio Rd. to the end of the Truman Pkwy., Phase 5. Also the MPO has assumed an even higher cost for the viaduct than originally estimated by the consultants at Figg.

Mr. Wilkes asked Ms. Jones for clarification on reasonableness of PPP. Ms. Jones explained that GDOT needs to support any PPP, and getting this support will require input from stakeholders and delay the approval of the update further, thus delaying any amendments to the current Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). She recommended postponing the PPP funding strategy for discussion during the regular, whole-plan update. She realizes this may result in pulling out a lot of projects, as happened in Atlanta. Mr. Wilkes is concerned the MPO will be cutting about 25% of the projects and this would involve cutting projects that are currently underway. Mr. Wilkes asked if the potential statewide sales tax for transportation funding (T-SPLOST), which would be allowed by a constitutional amendment under consideration now, could be listed as a source of funding in the financial plan update. He thinks the MPO could estimate the amount of the statewide revenue that would return to this region, based on the history of the local SPLOST. Mr. Mote reminded the group that in August or September GDOT is going to have a revised prioritization where every project is going to be re-examined. Every project will be put into an equation and prioritized as per the equation result. When the LRTP update comes up, the MPO may find some of the projects could come back on line due to the re-prioritization. Mr. Wilkes asked if the TCC felt this proposed source of revenue (statewide T-SPLOST) was viable enough for MPO to use it in this YOE update. Ms. Jones and Mr. Mote agreed that it had possibilities and they would discuss it with their supervisors. Mr. Wilkes said the only thing left is to cut projects and that will trigger a public comment period, thus delaying approval. Mr. Mote noted that, to have this YOE update ready for the April meeting of the Policy Committee, this plan would have to be ready by mid-March. Mr. Mote and Ms. Jones agreed to be available to work with the MPO to expedite this review.

B. "Coastal Commuters" Programs to promote alternatives to driving alone

Ms. Jane Love presented the status report. This initiative was a recommendation from Connecting Savannah Action Plan to address congestion on DeRenne Ave. MPO staff, with cooperation from Memorial Health and St. Joseph's/Candler, is starting the promotion of carpooling, mass transit, bicycling, and walking for commute trips. The ride-matching system will be available to the public, not just to hospital employees. The Emergency Ride Home component will only be available to employees of those employers who fund it since planning funds cannot be used for reimbursing taxi companies. As part of the Coastal Commuters program, the MPC staff will encourage employers to offer preferential parking for carpoolers, bicycle racks, and transit passes as a pre-tax payroll deduction.

Mr. Sean Brandon recommended that the MPO use an already established “logo focus group” as a resource for developing the Coastal Commuters logo. Ms. Love reported that she investigated using SCAD students’ “Agency Five” for logo development. They came up with “Green Rabbit” but the attorneys found that the name is a nationally registered trademark. So the MPO will use “Coastal Commuters,” which came out of a brainstorm group made up of MPC and MPO staff.

Ms. Jones suggested that Surface Transportation Program (STP) dollars could be used for funding these kinds of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) activities in the attainment areas, which do not receive Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) funds. She said that Warner Robbins and Columbus were doing it and that Warner Robbins was having good results. She will find out more about it and report to MPO staff.

C. Chatham Area Transit Authority’s Transportation Development Plan

Ms. Jean Iaderosa presented the report from Chatham Area Transit on their Transportation Development Plan (TDP). CAT and their consultant, Urbitran Associates, have completed their 5-year plan known as the Transportation Development Plan. This includes a complete analysis of current operations and recommendations for future service. There was extensive public involvement, including stakeholders, Savannah neighborhood associations, regional employers, Tybee Island neighbors association, Teleride customers, on-board customer surveys, and public drop-in sessions at major transit stops.

Ms. Iaderosa explained that the Transit District is smaller than Chatham County. The seven independent municipalities opted out of participation several years ago. While maintaining the strong core downtown service is important, the Transit District boundary is a barrier to effective regional service. Ironically, focus groups stressed the importance of transit availability to growing employment centers, but these growing employment centers are in west Chatham County, which is not in the Transit District. Many employers would like to see service hours extended to meet the needs of 2nd and 3rd shift workers. She stated that employers may be willing to contribute towards the cost if the benefit is great enough. Focus groups also revealed mixed reaction to expansion into areas such as Pooler or Tybee Island. Service for these areas is not CAT’s decision, but each municipality’s decision.

Ms. Iaderosa reviewed statistics and demographics included in the TDP. This included information on race/ethnicity, age, hourly wage, riding habits, preferred method of fare payment, and rider destinations. While cash is the preferred method of payment, CAT does sell half-price tokens for seniors and the disabled, and weekly and monthly swipe cards which allows for unlimited use. These are only available for public purchase at the CAT office or on Bull St. at the old County Courthouse. CAT is acting on the TDP recommendation to increase venues for selling these swipe cards.

The service analysis was very comprehensive. Counts were taken of ridership by time, by directions, and at bus stops. Customer surveys, route diagnostics, and on-site field work were also conducted. Service standards were identified.

The analysis shows that CAT has a strong core system serving major employers and medical facilities, but CAT does need to look into expanding service to meet the growth in Chatham County. This expansion is limited to the boundaries of the Transit District. It was also noted that the most desired improvement would be more frequent service.

One of the strongest CAT routes is #14 –Abercorn. It is recommended to increase frequency to every 15 minutes during weekday peak periods. Generally, it is recommended to enhance routes that are performing well now. Express service from Oglethorpe Mall to downtown via Truman Pkwy. was also recommended. Due to budget constraints, CAT does not have the funding to introduce a new service. Combining of routes was another recommendation to increase productivity without increasing costs. Routes #13 and #20 have very low ridership. They must provide service since they are part of the Transit District, but perhaps there are other options for providing transit service in that area. The #13 and #20 are the only two routes that were recommended for elimination.

CAT provides Teleride, a para-transit service, through a contractor. This is for persons with disabilities throughout Chatham County. The ADA requires that they serve the Transit District, but CAT is currently offering the service county-wide, thus exceeding requirements. The current fare is \$1.20, but the cost of each trip is \$20.00. The consultant noted that the system is “maxed out” but is running as efficiently as possible. The consultant recommends reducing the reservation window from two weeks to one week. Ms. Iaderosa noted that Chatham County has approved the expenditure for a new computerized scheduling system which will provide customers with an instant trip confirmation.

Market research findings revealed that employers without parking constraints do not view transit as a necessity, nor do they encourage employee use. Also, understanding of employees’ transit use may be limited. Increasing transit mode share requires policy actions. Other mobility options need to be included in the overall plan.

The consultant had also looked at the locational options for the downtown transit station. Two sites are under consideration: Greyhound site and Louisville Rd. site. Various downtown locations are still very popular destinations. Creating a transit station will not eliminate buses from the downtown area, but it will eliminate the idling of buses on the downtown loop.

The consultant studied various fare options. Currently the base fare is \$1.00. It costs an additional \$1.00 for each transfer. Ms. Iaderosa presented a table with various fare alternatives. The recommended alternative has a base fare of \$1.50 with a free transfer, the weekly pass would increase from \$12.00 to \$16.00, and the monthly pass would increase from \$48.00 to \$60.00. It is projected that these changes would reduce ridership by 3.9% but nevertheless increase revenue by 2.4%. These changes would not be made before seeking public input and a vote by the CAT board.

The next steps include a public meeting next Tuesday at 6:00 PM in the old County Courthouse and then another presentation to the Policy Committee next Wednesday. CAT is looking to begin with recommendations that are no-cost or cost-neutral for the first year. CAT is also planning to work directly with employers to market transit and hopes to increase sales locations for fare media. They will continue to evaluate services each year.

Ms. Love asked for confirmation of her understanding that the express route from Oglethorpe Mall to downtown is not an immediate improvement. Ms. Laderosa confirmed that such an express bus is not possible financially unless something came off the system. It is not likely at this time.

Mr. Sean Brandon asked if there were any conversations with the employers in west Chatham to pay for service to their specific locations. Ms. Laderosa commented that CAT is always open to such a thing. One of the recommendations is to increase service on the #2 which goes to Crossroads businesses. Currently there is morning and afternoon service, but there is a span of about 5 hours, mid-day, when there is no service.

Ms. Wykoda Wang asked why fare suggestion #3 on the chart is not also a viable alternative. Ms. Laderosa confirmed that it could definitely be considered. These are only recommendations at this time. A question was also raised about fare suggestion #2. The problem with option #2 is the significant increase in the weekly and monthly passes.

IV. Agency Reports

A. CUTS Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation

Ms. Love reported on behalf of the Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation. At the time of their meeting the Year-of Expenditure Update (YOE) was still on the agenda as an Action Item. They endorsed the YOE subject to resolution of the issues raised by GDOT. The amendments to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) were also on their agenda as an Action Item. They endorsed this subject to the approval of the YOE. Teleride had given a report and CAT had presented their Transportation Development Plan.

B. CUTS Citizens Advisory Committee

No report at this time.

C. Federal Highway Administration

Ms. Latoya Jones announced that the Safety Engineering office of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) will be presenting a free, 2-day workshop on pedestrian safety, due to the fact that Georgia, having a high number of pedestrian fatalities, has been named a pedestrian safety focus state. Savannah is #2 in the state for pedestrian fatalities. FHWA will provide materials and instructors at no cost. The MPO will need to publicize this to the appropriate parties. The workshop is structured in two parts – Part I will be in-class instruction and Part II will be a field trip to a selected high fatality location. FHWA would like this workshop to be scheduled by summer. Mr. Wilkes would like a copy of the report and data that indicated that Savannah was second in the state. Ms. Jones requested that MPO staff help identify a classroom site, which should be located within walking distance of the field trip site for logistical reasons.

D. Federal Transit Administration

No report at this time.

E. Georgia Department of Transportation

Mr. Brad Saxon referred committee members to the written report and highlighted the following projects:

- Projects 1 & 2 (Gulfstream Rd. & Robert B. Miller Rd.) are moving forward.
- Project 7 (reconstruction of Welcome Center on I-95) is waiting on Industry and Trade. They are working out an alternative location while the Welcome Center is closed for renovation.
- Project 10 (SR204/Abercorn Ext. @ Harmon Canal) had the field review last week and is moving along.

F. Chatham County

Mr. Leon Davenport referred to the report distributed to the group. He highlighted the following:

- Truman Pkwy. Phase V – certify right of way just after the end of this fiscal year.
- Jimmy Deloach Pkwy. – interchange project at Hwy. 80. Possibly tie it up into one big project with Jimmy Deloach Pkwy. extension between Hwy. 80 and I-16.

G. City of Savannah

Mr. Stephen Henry distributed a written status report and highlighted the following:

- Gwinnett St. Curve Reconstruction – Real Properties Department continues to coordinate the relocation of a business from the acquired property. Waiting on GDOT contract.
- Gwinnett St. Widening – Ecological and archeological special studies have been completed and approved by GDOT. Once all the special studies are approved, the Categorical Exclusion (CE) document will be completed and submitted to GDOT for review, comment and eventual approval.
- E. Anderson St. Curve Reconstruction – Consultant is revising construction plans based on comments submitted by operating departments. Real Properties Department finalized the acquisition of the main property for this project. Waiting on GDOT contract.
- Chatham Pkwy./Chatham Center Dr. – Traffic signal strain poles have been ordered and delivery had been pushed back until the end of March 2008. An on-site meeting was conducted with the city signal contractor, J. Moore Electric, to discuss the project. Construction expected to begin in mid-March.

H. Chatham Area Transit Authority

Ms. Jean Iaderosa commented that she had nothing in addition to her presentation on the TDP.

I. Georgia Ports Authority

No report at this time.

J. Savannah-Hilton Head International Airport

Mr. George Fidler submitted a written report which was read for the record as follows:

- Widening of the ramp inside the concourse is complete.
- The passenger screening checkpoint has been relocated and a third passenger screening lane has been added.
- Several road and parking lot resurfacing projects are planned for this year.
- A new taxiway to benefit small general aviation aircraft will be added this year.

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 February 21, 2008 meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

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