



## CORE MPO Board

Minutes  
April 26, 2023 at 10:00 am

### April 26, 2023 CORE MPO BOARD MEETING

<b>Voting Members</b>	<b>Representing</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>On-Line</b>
Pamela Oglesby	Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation	X	
Les Fussell	City of Richmond Hill	X	
Tim Callanan	Effingham County Commission	X	
Nick Palumbo	City of Savannah	X	
Dwayne Stephens	Metropolitan Planning Commission	X	
Scott Robider	City of Garden City		
Jim Aiello	Savannah Airport Commission	X	
Deidrick Cody	Chatham Area Transit Board of Directors	X	
Shawn Gillen	City of Tybee Island	X	
Beth E. Goette	Town of Thunderbolt		
James Hungerpillar	Town of Vernonberg		
Faye DiMassimo	Chatham Area Transit Authority	X	
Tom Hutcherson	City of Pooler	X	
Mayor Van Johnson	City of Savannah		
Vivian Canizares	Georgia Department of Transportation	X	
Jamie McCurry	Georgia Ports Authority		X
Armand Turner	Citizens Advisory Committee		
Gary Norton	City of Port Wentworth		
Charles Ackridge	City of Bloomingdale		
Chester Ellis	Chatham County Commission (Chairman)	X	
Dr. Estella Shabazz	City of Savannah	X	
Michael Kaigler	Chatham County	X	
Pamela Bernard	Economic Development & Freight Advisory Committee	X	
Tanya Milton	Chatham County	X	
<b>Voting Alternates</b>	<b>Representing</b>		
<b>Others</b>	<b>Representing</b>		
Joseph Shearouse	City of Savannah	X	
Katie Proctor	GDOT		X
W. Ron Nelson	Georgia DOT	X	
Amanda Vandegrift	InfraStrategies	X	
Joshua Schank	InfraStrategies	X	
Joseph Longo	FHWA		X
Deanna Brooks	Chatham County	X	
Wykoda Wang	CORE MPO	X	
Asia Hernton	CORE MPO	X	
Warren Durrer	MPC	X	

Ambria Berksteiner	Chatham Area Transit	X	
Denise Grabowski	Symbiosity	X	
Audra Miller	Member of Public		X
Jeff Ricketson	Liberty County Consolidated Planning Commission/HAMPO		X
Mario Clowers	GDOT		X

## I. Approval of Agenda

Mr. Les Fussell motioned to approve the agenda; seconded by Mr. Nick Palumbo. The motion passed with none opposed.

## II. Committee Reports (verbal)

**ACAT** – Ms. Asia Hernton said the ACAT committee met this month and endorsed all action items.

**CAC** - Ms. Wykoda Wang said the CAC committee met and endorsed all action items.

**TCC** – Mr. Les Fussell said the TCC committee met and endorsed all action items.

**EDFAC** – Ms. Pamela Bernard said the committee did not meet this month.

The motion was made by Mr. Les Fussell and seconded by Mr. Nick Palumbo to accept all committee reports. The motion passed unanimously.

## III. Action Items

### 1. [Approval of the February 22, 2023 CORE MPO BOARD Meeting minutes](#)

Ms. Tanya Milton motioned to approve the February 22, 2023 CORE MPO Board meeting minutes; seconded by Mr. Tom Hutcherson. The motion passed with none opposed.

### 2. [FY 2023 UPWP Amendment](#)

Ms. Wykoda Wang stated that the Unified Planning Work Program 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 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.

Chairman Ellis said to Mr. Cody, the Director of the Chatham Area Transit Board that we would like you to have your board require bi-monthly reports on the SMART-grant-funded planning activities and get that to the MPO staff. We are amending this to include something that CAT will be doing. Staff need to be able to track the funding to help with accountability for all funding. Ms. Wang said this can be included in the regular reporting that CAT does bi-monthly already.

Mr. Les Fussell motioned to approve the FY 2023 UPWP Amendment; seconded by Ms. Tanya Milton. The motion passed with none opposed.

### 3. [FY 2024 UPWP Amendment](#)

Ms. Wang stated that this amendment was related to the SMART grant in 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. She 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 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.

Ms. Pamela Bernard motioned to approve the FY 2024 UPWP Amendment; seconded by Mr. Les Fussell. 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 FY 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. The total project cost is around \$9 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.

Mr. Shawn Gillen asked what year the construction phase is in [for the](#) Lazaretto Creek Bridge Replacement project. Ms. Wang said it is in the next TIP. The project is in the proposed project list in the FY 2025/2026 years.

Chairman Ellis called for a motion to open the floor to a public meeting. Mr. Les Fussell motioned to open it for a public hearing; seconded by Mr. Deidrick Cody. The motion passed with none opposed.

There were no public comments.

Chairman called for a motion to close the public hearing. Mr. Michael Kaigler motioned to close the public hearing; seconded by Mr. Nick Palumbo. The motion passed with none opposed.

Mr. Ron Nelson, GDOT, the Talmadge Bridge project (PI#0019219) will replace the cables. Specialized techniques will be used. We are focusing directly on the replacement of the cables. As an incidental benefit, we are moving towards raising the span over the shipping channel. We are anticipating raising around 20 feet from the current elevation. We are moving through procurement. We are attempting to procure a designer of record, construction manager, general contractor, and another procurement for an independent cost estimator. This is associated with the current calendar year, and we are looking to have the designer of record on board somewhere in the August 2023 time frame. Letting is December 2023. Once we have a contract with CMCG, we will be in construction and move through final design and start the construction activities soon thereafter. Mr. Jamie McCurry of GPA said this is a very innovative project. The cables need to be replaced in a way that gets critical additional air draft clearance for the larger ships. We are excited to see the effort on this project and looking forward to a successful project.

Mr. Kaigler, County Manager, asked in raising the deck, do you plan to do that with minimal interruption to traffic? Mr. Nelson said yes. Ms. Bernard asked if this means the bridge will not need to be replaced later. Mr. Nelson said he was not able to answer that at this time. We are just performing maintenance on this bridge. Mr. McCurry said getting an additional 21 feet of envelope clearance allows for the biggest ships that are currently considered for the east coast to go under the bridge. If the project as described is completed, the cable replacement allows for 21 feet higher space in which the ships pass, which would set Savannah up for the largest ships that could be called for in the foreseeable future. The question of whether there would ever need to be a new bridge or tunnel or some other crossing, is still a real question, but this takes a significant amount of time and is more expensive. Simply replacing the cables as they are is drastically less expensive than embarking at this stage on a total bridge replacement.

A motion was made by Mr. Les Fussell and seconded by Mr. Nick Palumbo to open a public hearing for the Talmage Bridge project.

There were no public comments.

Ms. Wilson said one of the questions staff has received is what is the final height going to be once the bridge is finally complete? Mr. Nelson said the number being used is to raise it 20 feet in elevation. The current clearance at high tide is 185 feet. We are looking at for this project, a 205-ft plateau. GDOT is handling all procurement on this project. To another question regarding if other ships will still be able to travel through while work is being done on the bridge, Mr. Nelson said yes, there will be no stop to traffic in the waterway itself. Ms. Bernard asked what the estimated cost for the project is. Mr. Nelson said the funding that has been appropriated is \$175 million. The cost is yet to be determined. Ms. Wang asked if more land will be required with the raising of the bridge. Mr. Nelson said we are currently moving through analysis. The ROW impact is yet to be fully determined.

A motion was made by Mr. Michael Kaigler and seconded by Ms. Tanya Milton to close the public hearing for the Talmage Bridge project.

Chairman Ellis asked if the Ferry project was facing issues with those funds lapsing since the deadline was June. Ms. Wang said those are new Earmark funds, and they will not be facing any lapsing issues now. Chairman Ellis asked Ms. DiMassimo where they are in the process with this project. Ms. DiMassimo said there are two ferrys currently in construction. We expect to take delivery of those within the next 16 months. We have these Earmark funds, matching funds from the State and funds of ours that will allow us to do the third ferry. Currently, three of the four existing ferrys need to be replaced. As soon as the state funding is formalized and we get that contract, it is our intention to get this into procurement as well. We will have three ferrys in production in very short order.

Chairman Ellis said ACCG is coming this weekend and there were questions about the transportation to and from Downtown Savannah/Hutchinson Island. Ms. DiMassimo said the marine services are just an incredibly vulnerable part of our operations right now. There will be two ferrys operational soon. There is what we call a bus bridge - a bus service ready to go in the event that the ferry service is impacted in such a way that it is either overwhelmed by demand or something happens with one of the ferrys. We are running the bus back and forth to make sure that we can connect people to Hutchison Island. We expect to have two ferrys Thursday morning. We will provide another update to you on the email you saw. Chairman Ellis said make sure and copy Visit Savannah. They are the ones that have been inquiring about this.

Ms. Wang said staff requests that the Board approve the proposed TIP amendments.

Mr. Deidrick Cody motioned to approve the April 2023 updates to the FY 2021-2024 TIP amendments; seconded by Ms. Faye DiMassimo. 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. 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.

Ms. Wang stated for TIP prioritization, the MPO 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.

Ms. Tanya Milton asked about the status on Project DeRenne. Ms. Wang said a financial balance worksheet was created for the Y230 and Y301 funds and sent to the local sponsors asking for report back on funding needs for their projects. Chatham County completed theirs and sent the information back. There was no response from the City of Savannah. In August and September of last year we conducted a Call for Projects, and the City applied for \$1.2 million. They did not specify in what year or for what phase they needed this funding. Chairman Ellis called out for the City of Savannah to get the information to the MPO staff, so they are able to help with the project. Mr. Nick Palumbo said as of our latest update, the federal environmental standards and requirements had changed in mid process, and we were unable to get clearance and permitting from federal DOT. We testified in front of the federal permitting council to ask for some relief from their Executive Director, however, they have yet to get back to us. We will personally follow up with our team and our transportation engineers to get you a thorough update. Mr. Joseph Shearouse said the project DeRenne process is within the environmental justice phase of the NEPA process. That phase was delayed a little with the change in the federal administration. The requirements changed mid-stream which has delayed our Record of Decision which is the document we need from the Federal Highway Administration to move forward into ROW acquisition. Unfortunately, we do not have a substantive update at this period. It is the same as two months ago when the Board met last. We are still waiting on a Record of Decision from the Federal Highway Administration for the environmental justice phase of the NEPA process. Ms. Milton said the situation is that emergency service coming down I-516 cannot get to the hospitals. This has been an ongoing issue. Who knows how many lives have been lost because they cannot get through the traffic. No one can move with the traffic like it is.

Mr. Palumbo said on behalf of the City of Savannah, I am speaking as myself and not as the City. This is a comprehensive and difficult decision about where to prioritize these funds. The only thing I will add is that the city has pledged millions of dollars through successive SPLOST initiatives from the general fund from our capital budget. If we are to pursue this at the local level, it is imperative that we understand that a city our size has no ability to pursue a transportation initiative to this degree on its own. I do ask that if we are going to pursue it through a local pathway, we prioritize the boulevard concept and begin at the City itself where residents will see this relief. We continue to grow and expand with auto driven development that makes our roads more congested. If we are concerned about traffic and alleviating emergency services, I encourage us to prioritize transit-oriented development from here, today, and tomorrow for the time being so that we can get these resources through.

Chairman Ellis told each jurisdiction to look at the project lists and make sure we are coordinating these projects together. This will help when we gather at these public hearings and questions are asked, we are all in one accord.

Mr. Les Fussell motioned to approve the approach for establishing the TIP priorities and the proposed priority list; seconded by Ms. Faye DiMassimo. The motion passed with none opposed.

#### **IV. Other Business**

#### **V. 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. 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.

##### 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 6<sup>th</sup>, 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 and the public will see the recommendations at that meeting. She believes the Steering Committee will have a preview of what those recommendations are.

##### 8. Urban Flooding Model Study Update

Ms. Wykoda Wang asked for Caitlin Chamberlain to come forward and present the Update.

Ms. Caitlin Chamberlain introduced herself as the Senior Historic Preservation Planner and Interim Project Manager for the Urban Flooding Model Study and presented the status update.

- Stakeholder and Steering committee members have been identified by both UGA and CORE MPO staff to assist in the development of the flood model.
- A website has been developed.
- Project Managers participate in monthly meetings.
- For Task One, UGA has submitted the Project Management Plan.
- For Task Two, stormwater infrastructure data was collected and QAQC'd.
- Stormwater data has been organized and migrated into ESRI GIS format.
- 2019 Georgia Lidar-delivered DEM was acquired.
- USACE South Atlantic Coastal Study ADCIRC storm surge and inputs acquired.
- Conducted ADCIRC storm surge simulation.
- CORE MPO received and shared Critical Infrastructure data for each county in the MPO planning area. This data will help develop vulnerability map analysis.
- The Steering Committee meeting was held in conjunction with the TCC meeting last week, and the consultant gave a presentation.
- The study is expected to be completed this August.

The consultant gave a presentation at the TCC meeting. That presentation is attached to this agenda.

Chairman Ellis asked for a summary of what was discussed. Ms. Chamberlain said they discussed the goals of developing the project prioritization tool, getting new infrastructure to improve reliability and resiliency. They covered their objectives, discussed the stormwater management model application process and where they are in that process. Ms. Wilson said one of the things they discussed was where they are in the vulnerability assessment. There was a good conversation regarding some of the areas where there is more vulnerability than others. They

discussed development and development patterns and how that impacts stormwater management as well as the road infrastructure. There was some discussion about sea level rise and those effects.

Chairman Ellis asked are we including the people at Tybee, City of Savannah, and Fort Pulaski when we are looking at stormwater surge? Ms. Wilson said yes, we are making sure they are part of this process. We are looking at all the areas in the surrounding MPO area.

Mr. Fussell said this study is not complete. He met with the engineers and presenters after the TCC meeting. There are some elements missing such as Richmond Hill stormwater and where we are today without water. This was not included in the study. We are working with Effingham as well; Effingham's data was not represented in the presentation. It was a good presentation that highlighted drainage pipes that are no longer adequate to move water off the flood plain. A lot of that is because of hard surfaces/development. What was the most interesting was the vulnerability based on that perfect storm of rainfall, hurricane storm surge and elevation of roads and the amount of water and what will be accessible. That was highlighted for emergency response - how do we navigate using the highest road to get to a certain point should there be an emergency.

Chairman Ellis asked about the new development on the northern side of Bryan County, the Hyundai Plant, how is that going to affect this? Is that included in this study? Ms. Wilson said right now, the way the RFP went out, it only included the current CORE MPO boundary. As we look at expanding the MPO planning area boundary, we will go further out and that will capture that area and more.

Mr. Tim Callanan said Effingham County is conducting its own Stormwater Master Plan which we hope to be wrapping up towards the end of the summer. If the boundary were to change, we will have our models in place and will be able to share as we get them finalized.

#### [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. Ms. DiMassimo then introduced the newest CAT staff member, Ambria Berksteiner, who is a scheduler analyst.

Ms. DiMassimo 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 the 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 we have to address and knows some small investments can make a big difference.

CAT held a number of focus group meetings at the beginning of the year where we heard over and over again was the condition of some of the stops really impacted on 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.

We had 11 professional operators (new drivers) start this week, 4 fixed route drivers and the remainder para transit drivers. The para transit drivers do not require a CDL which will also be true for the micro transit service expansion. We are looking at offering our own CDL training and different approaches to recruitment. We have an open recruitment every Friday here at CAT. We have a 12–15-month internship (part of the SMART grant) for a senior engineering technology major at Savannah State. This person will be a 15-20 hour per week intern on that project.

We are looking at several different ways and opportunities to get funds to meet all of the needs in the community. We are very excited about the funding that is available. We are trying to make sure we are a good partner to the businesses, funding partners as well as the community and that we are providing a product worthy of the funding we are asking for. We have an open house scheduled on May 16<sup>th</sup>, another presentation to this board in June, and adoption of the plan by our board in June as well.

Ms. Tanya Milton said the application for a para transit rider is very extensive. Can that be reviewed or restructured? What a para transit rider has to go through to get certified to get mobility is a lot. Ms. DiMassimo asked if she could get with Ms. Milton later to look at the details. It is an extensive process, but it is also a process that follows federal requirements. She will check and make sure that we are not doing anything that makes it overly burdensome but are merely being compliant.

Mr. Nick Palumbo asked what is your favorite improvement looking ahead to CAT, if you could pick one? This is nothing short of revolutionary as you are rebuilding. Ms. DiMassimo said she thinks micro transit is a game changer. If you look at transit historically, it has been fixed route systems. Customization and personal service is growing and micro transit as a tool enables us to do that. It reaches deeper into the community in a reliable way. It goes to areas that the fixed routes do not reach.

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

Mr. Tom Hutchinson said the project is on schedule and within budget. The project is currently in the draft alternative analysis. That will be completed in June with the final report submitted in September. The budget was \$285,000. The invoice to date is \$164,000. The project estimate is they are 57.8% completed. The team is coordinating with CAT to integrate their studies with the CAT's recent studies.

Ms. Pamela Bernard asked if there was any information on the public open house. Mr. Hutchinson said no.

#### [11. 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 served as a boarder. SR 119 is going to be the border for the boundary expanding into Effingham County, so some portions of Guyton and



Springfield won't be included. There will be a large growth for the CORE MPO in Effingham and Bryan, making the total of almost 400,000 people within the MPA boundary.

Mr. Nick Palumbo asked if there are any other grant opportunities to an MPO if it reaches over 400,000 in population. Ms. Wykoda Wang said no. There are two criteria, one is 50,000 in population (smaller MPO) and the other is 200,000 (TMA MPO). There are larger benefits after a population of 1 million.

Mr. Tom Hutcheson asked what the process would be to move forward with the expansion of the boundary? Ms. Wang said it is a requirement. After every census, the planning boundary must be reevaluated. It must include the major Savannah urban boundary plus the area expected to be urbanized. The next step would be to update the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Once the MPO Board approves the MOU, it will be sent to each jurisdiction for signature. The Bylaws will then be updated. That will include the restructuring of this board - voting restructuring to add a seat for Effingham County and Bryan County, the combining of the CAC and ACAT committees, etc. Those things will be presented to you in June. For this meeting, we are looking for support for the new boundary. Once the signatures are obtained from each jurisdiction, the package (MPO boundary, MOU, Bylaws, fee structure) will be sent to the governor for final approval. Once the governor signs off, the MPO will operate under the new Bylaws, voting structure, and MOU. Ms. Melanie Wilson said for today's meeting, we need to see if you concur with the new boundary so that we can move forward. Because of the boundary update, multiple things will change -the structure of the board with regards to number of seats, etc. Ms. Wang said when staff develops the 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan, GDOT will provide the revenues within this new boundary.

Chairman Ellis asked, can we table this? I am not satisfied with what we are trying to do here, especially when we are talking about changing Bylaws and changing representation on this board. You don't have enough information because I don't have enough information and I have more information than you have. I would like for us to table this until we can get some definite here and understand what we are doing. I don't think we know the effects of what we are doing. The first time I saw this was yesterday. I am not ready for this.

Ms. Wang said we did give a presentation in February. Chairman Ellis said I know you gave that, but I also know there are bylaws and other things that are federal and local guidelines. We must meet this. I am not prepared to let you go to the first step because I do not know what the consequences of the first step are.

Ms. Wilson said all we are asking is to have an established boundary so that we can have conversations with the people that are impacted. The bylaws are not going to change with this step, and we need to be able to move forward to the second step.

Ms. Pamela Bernard said there was a working group that included all the jurisdictions to make the determination about what made sense for the boundaries. Everyone was included.

Chairman Ellis said I hear what you are saying, but I am not comfortable moving forward with this. I do not have enough information and I have more information than most of you sitting here. Can I get you to agree to table this until I get more information before we put this out there?

Mr. Les Fussell said I am hesitant to table just the proposed boundary. I represent Bryan County. We must have this to move forward. There must be a starting point. When I sit down with the county engineer and the county commissioners, they may have some changes where they say, this area is not going to grow, and we want to exclude it. That is a lot of conversation. The longer we delay this, the further out it is before we can make our changes for the MPO and the impact for the TCC and other committees. I envision the number of representatives will increase at some point once everything is done. I know that bylaws must be changed. Luckily, I have been involved in this. If I sit down with the Bryan County commissioners and say, well we really don't know because we have put it on hold, I can't have that conversation.

Chairman Ellis said can't you have the conversation of what the old map looks like, what the new map looks like, and what we are proposing to do? I see no problem putting this off until we get everyone's buy in before we do something that we may regret down the line. You can disagree with me, I for one will not be supporting this until I can get the questions that I have answered. Yesterday was the first time I saw this. It is too much for me to grasp at one time for me to go ahead and say, yes, let's do that.

Ms. Wilson said candidly we shared all this information with both Effingham County and Bryan County regarding what the current and future boundaries are. Instead of having these conversations with others to move forward with the other things that we must do, then we should amend the schedule and push it back two months if that is what you are proposing. It is difficult to have those conversations without having a boundary to have a conversation about.

Ms. Bernard said I just want to point out, this is just a status update at this point. This is not an action item. If we continue and make sure we share all the information with everyone and get you the information that you want, all questions are answered, we need to keep moving with the working group so that we can put that information together.

Chairman Ellis said that is not what I am asking you to do. I am not asking to stop the process; I am asking to get everything taken care of before we move forward, before we approve anything. To me, when you are taking steps to amend the bylaws, you are talking about stepping forward and I do not think we need to undo anything we have done. This is very important: I have in sight as to what is coming and how it will affect us. I think there are board members here who need to know that same kind of stuff. I never want to be the only one who knows stuff. I am not telling you to stop meeting with people or stop talking about how boundaries fit. Suppose you go to have a conversation about the old and new boundaries, and Effingham and Bryan Countys say they want to make adjustments. You can carry out your work, but I am not comfortable with voting on any of this.

Ms. Wilson said this is just a request for concurrence of the boundaries. Nothing is set in stone until everything is submitted and everything is done. We need to have something in regard to having a guide.

Chairman Ellis said I am saying to this board, we give you the authority to go forward to have the conversations about these boarders and get input. There are more people than just the ones you have talked to that need to have input in this before we move forward.

Mr. Hutcheson said if this move is not mandated, I would like to see the advantages and disadvantages of doing it.

Ms. Wilson said we can provide that but as indicated, we have to make adjustments to our boundary. It is the law. We have to adjust it every ten years. It is population based and it does impact with regard to the funding that we get.

Chairman Ellis asked how many of you sitting here on this board know the law? How many of you have seen or read the law? We need to get all of the information before you say or do this.

Ms. Bernard asked, "Do you want a report from the working group, do more people want to come to the working group, or do we need to have a workshop? What are you looking for?"

Chairman Ellis asked how do you disseminate the information? Ms. Bernard said I am not sure what you are referring to as the "information". Maybe if we have some written questions that we could answer.

Chairman Ellis asked, what did you present to Bryan County and Effingham County? Ms. Wilson said we presented to Bryan County the same presentation that we just presented to you. They had the opportunity to ask questions, and they had the opportunity to tell us if they felt like there needed to be any adjustments or tweaks made based on what we presented. We are not asking you to say these boundaries are concrete, we have to have something as a guide to speak with others about. The other thing to remember is there are thresholds with regards to how far we can expand based on the rules that are in place regarding boundary expansion. There are multiple things to be done. We just need to know are you ok with this proposed boundary that is there. It can be changed, but for right now we need to be able to engage in conversations with people that are in these proposed boundaries. You are not approving of anything; this is a guide that we are using.

Mr. Hutcheson said Ms. Bernard mentioned the concept of having a workshop. I know everyone's time is valuable, but to the chairman's point, this is a profound change in the boundaries and potentially the direction of this organization. I do not know if that is something we could organize specifically just for this topic.

Ms. Wang said we can do a workshop. We can do the workshop in May.

Ms. Wilson said we can do the workshop in May. We would like to have this done before the next meeting. We can make sure, if you want to know what the federal guidelines are, we will be glad to send that to you regarding what we must do. Do you want to have an in-person or a virtual meeting?

Chairman Ellis said the governor has already answered that, if we as board members are having a meeting, it is not to be virtual. That is how we are operating. Whatever we do, in the final analysis we will have to submit to the governor's office, that is the state, we have to go by the state guidelines. You do not have that knowledge in front of you. I am saying to us, let's have the workshop in person, cover all those areas so that when we do this thing, we get it right the first time and not do this over. That means the stakeholders here, Chatham County, Bryan County and Effingham County, let's make sure we have the conversation with all those entities.

Ms. Tanya Milton asked, are we just dealing with confirming these boundaries that you have established and present it to us? Ms. Wang said we want concurrence of the boundary so that we can explore the MOU and bylaws based on this boundary.

Ms. Milton asked, can we go ahead and approve these boundaries and continue with the workshop? Ms. Wang said the chairman does not want to do that.

Ms. Milton asked then what are we going to do between now and May? Chairman Ellis said, work on getting all of the stakeholders in the same place about the changes that we are going to make in these boundaries. Ms. Milton said I thought that is what we were going to do once we set the boundaries. Chairman Ellis said we can do it the other way around.

Ms. Wang said we will schedule a workshop, invite everyone, and focus on this in May. During that workshop we will present this boundary and maybe some of the possible changes that come with it and have a discussion so we can finalize the boundary, MOU, and bylaws. Then we can put them together in June for adoption. Is that the path? Chairman Ellis said you are on my page.

## [12. 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.

## **VI. Information Reports (verbal)**

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

Ms. Katie Proctor gave the GDOT Status Report.

#### Preconstruction

- SR 25 @ Savannah River in Port Wentworth – Final plan submission
- SR 25 @ Middle River in Port Wentworth – Final plan Submission
- SR 204 From SR 21 to Rio Road – Proceed for preliminary design in March and kick off will be this week.
- I-16 @ Chatham Parkway – Remains in Let, Holding for June 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- US 17 @ Back River - Concept awaiting approval.
- US 17 FM NE of Savannah Harbor Pkwy to Back Road – Concept awaiting approval.
- US 80 @ Bull River – Awaiting Environment Studies in September, Authorize Right of Way, then Process the PCRF
- US 80 @ Lazaretto Creek – Awaiting Environmental Study
- Ogeechee Road Widening from I-516 to Victory drive – Scheduled to Re-Let
- SR 30 @ Hodgenville Road – Concept Approval

#### Construction projects

- Island Express Way @ Wilmington River – 64% Complete
- SR 21 @ SR 30 Intersection Improvement and turning Lane – 89% Complete
- I-16 from I-95 to I-516 – 58% Complete
- I-16 @ SR 307 DDI – 76% Complete
- Widening and Reconstruction to construct 4 lanes on US 80/I-516 (Brampton Rd Conn) Beg at SR 21/SR 25 & ext. S of SR 21 – 23% Complete
- Cable Barrier Upgrade on I-95/SR 405 Beginning at Pooler Parkway (CS565) and Extending to Jimmy Deloach Parkway (CS 2223) – Expected to finish Summer 2023

- 2 Lane Roadway on Effingham Parkway beginning at SR 30 and extending to Blue Jay Rd. Construction of 6 Bridges and Approaches – 18% Complete
- I-16 W to I-95 S bridge- completed March 2023
- I-16 E to I-95 N – Expected to open in the second quarter.

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

Ms. Deanna Brooks gave the Chatham County Project Status Update Report.

- SR 25 Corridor Study- underway for soliciting consultant qualifications and under review.
- SR 204 Access Study- underway for soliciting consultant qualifications and under review.
- President St at Truman RR Study- underway for soliciting consultant qualifications and under review.
- Quacco Rd Widening Project - clearing contract out for bid.
- Johnny Mercer at Lyman Hall Traffic Signal Project – out for bid.
- Islands Expressway at Oatland Island Project- resubmitted for bid.

Ms. Wang asked who was on the steering committee for the three studies Chatham County is doing? Ms. Bernard said it was going to be herself, Alan Blake, and Deanna Brooks. There might be someone from purchasing that will help as well.

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

Mr. Joseph Shearouse presented the City of Savannah Project Status Update report.

- DeLesseps Ave. Widening from Waters Ave. to Skidaway Road – Dry utility relocations are almost complete. Underground work should commence in the next few weeks.
- I-516 @ DeRenne Ave – ROW cost estimation and additional Environmental Justice outreach are being prepared by the consultant for submittal to GDOT and FHWA.
- Truman Linear Park Tail Phase 2B – The Property acquisition phase is complete.

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

Report attached to the agenda.

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

Report attached to the agenda.

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

Ms. Faye DiMassimo gave the CAT's project status report.

- (2) Ferry Purchase Construction - Contract awarded.
- Paratransit Vehicles (M230) - Purchase order for 10 EV buses issued. Expected delivery time is April 2023. Requested a quote on 10 Para-transit Vans.
- (3) Diesel Bus Replacement (Z230) - In-process. Bus order placed in December 2021 for (3) 35 ft. buses. The estimated completion date is June 2023.
- Intelligent Transportation System (ITS)-Clever Devices (5339/Z230/M301) - Hardware installed on ferry vessels in September; the final phase completion date postponed until maintenance on the ferries are completed.
- Ferry Boat Maintenance Facility & Ferry Dock (5307h) - Completion of remaining appraisals and review appraisals and submission to FTA. Awaiting FTA release of funds.
- Electric Bus Replacement (Z230) and LoNo (5339c) - Grants for four EV buses. Currently determining matching funds for each grant before issuing for Board approval.
- Transit Development Plan & Comprehensive Operations Analysis - Funds awarded and executed in May 2022. Ongoing effort coordinated with the Master Transit Plan. Focused on near - term recommendations for the three CAT services – CAT buses, Belles Ferry, and CAT Mobility (ADA paratransit service).
- Areas of Persistent Poverty (AOPP) Grant - Funds awarded in FTA's AoPP Program on June 23rd, 2022; Study advancing in FY 2023 with integration in planning and analysis study efforts. The study will conclude the potential to connect emerging job centers and areas with high levels of racial inequity or persistent poverty.
- American Rescue Plan (ARP) Route Restoration Analysis - Funds awarded in July 2022 at 100% Federal match. Expected completion at end of FY 2023. The project will allow CAT to provide accessibility to under-

served communities with service across jurisdictions. Performed in conjunction with other planning and analysis efforts.

- Master Transit Plan and Implementation Strategy update (attached) - Anticipated completion summer 2023. Market Analysis, State of the System, outreach and focus groups.

Chairman Ellis asked what is the status of the charging stations? Ms. DiMassimo said we have a mobile charging station and electric charging stations at CAT. We are working with Georgia Power and other partners on the potential for development outside of CAT but for CAT use. This will be particularly critical with this type of micro transit fleet we are developing. We saw a grant opportunity to help with this plan.

#### [19. TIP Funding Tracking Report](#)

Report attached to agenda.

#### **VII. Other Public Comments (limit to 3 minutes)**

No public comments

#### **VIII. Notices**

There being no further business, the April 26, 2023 CORE MPO Board 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.