



TRAVELERS

QUARTERLY

Augusta Regional Transportation Study
Newsletter

Winter **2018**



The FAST Act Transition

The Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) was signed into law in 2015 by President Barrack Obama. Its focus as described by the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration is a "long-term surface transportation authorization" providing funds (over \$305 billion) for fiscal years 2016 through 2020. On the heels of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) enacted in 2012 which provided the goal of a more "streamlined, performance-based, and multimodal," the FAST Act is designed to add-on the progress made by MAP-21.

It was reported that the FAST Act builds on the changes made by MAP-21 as it:

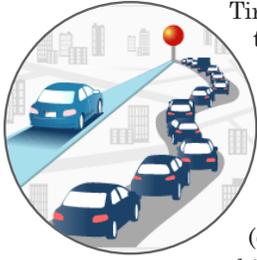
- Improves mobility on America's highways
- Creates jobs and supports economic growth
- Accelerates project delivery and promotes innovation

Public involvement continues to be imperative to the planning process. MAP-21 made modifications to the metropolitan and statewide transportation process by incorporating "performance goals, measures, and targets to better identify needed transportation improvements and project selection." The FAST Act provides support and enhancements to these and maintains the long-range Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and short-term Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). In addition, requirements were made to include facilities that support intercity transportation, including intercity buses. Finally, projects are being considered within the planning process that improve resiliency and reliability of the transportation system, stormwater mitigation, and the enhancement of travel and tourism.

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Tired of Congestion?



Tired of congested highways as you travel about the ARTS planning area? ARTS is taking your angst seriously and doing something about it. In 2018 ARTS engaged Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB) as a consultant to update the ARTS Congestion Management Process (CMP). VHB does this by identifying which roadways experience the most congestion, at what times, and what can be done to reduce it.

Gone are the days where ARTS staff drove vehicles along roadways to gather data. In 2018 CMPs can be developed remotely. Two 'cloud' based datasets allow this to happen: National Performance Management Research Data Set (NPMRDS) and HERE Technologies dataset, a global mapping and location platform company.

NPMRDS provides travel time data (in 5 minute increments) for freight and passenger vehicles traveling on the National Highway System (NHS). HERE data quantifies real-time travel times, traffic patterns and trip origins and destinations for freight and passenger vehicles traveling on major roadways in the US.



As trip times change so do congestion levels. Both datasets graphically display travel times, congested road segments and levels in a user friendly format. Results from analyses using these new data sources will be presented in the ARTS 2019 CMP report (expected in March 2019).

Cycle Time

It surely is an exciting time for bicyclists in Augusta! Recent efforts in the city of Augusta to construct and enhance bike infrastructure have been going strong as several organizations push for alternative connectivity.



The most recent project to be completed this year has been the extension of the Riverwalk from 11th Street to the 13th Street Bridge. With the construction of the new cyber security complex propelling the multi-use path, it is imperative to see future bicycle infrastructure tie into the greater proposed network. It includes the North Augusta

Greenway via 13th Street and the Augusta Canal Historic Trail, which currently terminates on the west side of 13th Street. With just under a mile to go, the Canal Authority is working to pave this last stretch of trail connecting Hawk's Gully to the Riverwalk. According to Dayton Sherrouse, Executive Director of the

Canal Authority, this particular stretch will go out for bid in December 2018. When asked about how this fits into the larger picture for the regional bike connectivity, he explains that completing the canal bike trail is a crucial component, especially considering the multi-use path connecting Evans Towne Center in Columbia County to the Canal Headgates and Locks. And with the development of Riverside Village in North Augusta, the potential to seamlessly connect three cities via the Canal Trail is incredibly exciting. He hopes to eventually make more seamless connections across the river to tie into the Greenway and to perpetuate bike infrastructure into existing Augusta neighborhoods and beyond.



Ideally, efforts to prioritize safer, easier bike access to and from Augusta University, the Medical District, Downtown, and the Augusta Canal should be made. When speaking to John Ussery, Assistant Director for the Traffic Engineering Division, future plans include just that. Looking at current Transportation Investment Act (TIA) projects related to bike lanes and multimodal infrastructure, quite a few come to mind. He explains that 5th Street Bridge, Telfair Street, and 12th Street are all on the retrofit roster for construction beginning in 2020. The 5th Street Bridge will be converted to a pedestrian-only connection between Georgia and South Carolina at the east terminus of the Riverwalk. Telfair Street and 12th Street will be retrofitted with bike lanes.

[Continued on Page 2]



It is unclear if any proposed bike lanes will be protected. Working with Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), other projects include the 13th Street Bridge retrofit and a potential tunnel to seamlessly connect the Riverwalk and Canal Trails without crossing the street.

Ussery addressed the medical campus regarding a joint GDOT effort to incorporate a multi-modal access path from Central Ave to Calhoun Expy. When asked about connecting Augusta University to the Medical District and Downtown, he said that it is definitely something Traffic Engineering is looking into.

Regarding future plans for extending the Riverwalk along the eastbound stretch of the levee, Christa Jordan, Landscape Architect with the Recreation and Parks Department, is hopeful. She explained the parks department has its own masterplan for what needs to happen within the parks, so incorporating multi-use and bicycle paths are a given. However, connectivity to and from green spaces is heavily dependent on vehicular access.

Utilizing features like the levee to build bike infrastructure in order to connect downtown with Phinizy Swamp and the New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam Park are great ways to build momentum and encourage multi-modal transportation throughout the rest of Augusta-Richmond County.

As a major advocate for complete streets and overall bicycle-friendly environments, Jordan would ideally love to see a bike masterplan for Augusta that clearly maps out strategic, best transportation planning practices in the future. The challenge there lies in how different approaches to connectivity respond to a broad range of contexts regarding densities in the built environment and the safety precautions needed to destigmatize urban cycling as a whole. It is no small task, but Jordan notes that with a great amount of education and interdepartmental government cooperation with the community, complete streets have the potential to become the standard in Augusta.

Greenway Extension



The City of North Augusta recently completed a project to extend the North Augusta Greenway. This extension increased the total length of the Greenway to 8.5 miles. The extension takes the Greenway under Bergen Road and connects it to the neighborhoods along Bergen Road.



The pedestrian underpass will allow many North Augusta residents to access the popular recreation trail safely, without having to cross Bergen Road.

Buena Vista Bike Lanes



The South Carolina Department of Transportation recently completed a road resurfacing project along Buena Vista Avenue and Atomic Road in North Augusta. The resurfacing project includes bike lanes along Buena Vista and Atomic Road. These lanes will provide valuable bike access to the eastern portion of North Augusta. Users can now connect from the Greenway to Martintown Road via bike lanes. This will provide a much safer route for bikers through this corridor.

Robinson Avenue Update

The recently completed Band 1 project was designed to improve safety and reduce congestion along Robinson Avenue through the City Center of Grovetown in accordance with the Transportation Investment Act (TIA) Program and the Grovetown Comprehensive Plan and Grovetown Urban Redevelopment Plan. The approximately 1.8-mile project included new sidewalks, bicycle lanes, two travel lanes and a grassed median. A realigned and newly constructed intersection at Katherine Street/Johns Street included a new traffic signal. The addition of a traffic signal provided better turning movements through a very busy area of the city and provided a safer access to Grovetown Elementary School.



The new traffic signal at Robinson Avenue (Katherine and Johns Street)

The project had an initial \$8.0 million budget to include design, utility relocation, right-of-way acquisition and construction costs. This project was 100% funded by the Transportation Investment Act of 2010.

Additional streetscape improvements, funded by the City of Grovetown, are anticipated along the Robinson Avenue corridor including street lighting, pedestrian seating and landscaping.

APT Maintenance Facility Update

In the fall of 2017, the city of Augusta approved funding for a new transit facility office which will be located at 2844 Regency Boulevard, a site which resides along the southbound side of Deans Bridge Road just opposite Richmond Hill Road. The new transit facility will function as an operations and maintenance facility. The site is approximately ½ mile southwest of the existing Transfer Station located at the northeast corner of Deans Bridge Road and Gordon Highway.

The purpose of the Augusta Public Transit (APT) operations and maintenance facility is to allow for improved operational efficiency of the current fleet. In addition, the new facility will allow APT to expand operations to meet current ridership needs and enhance public transportation in the region. The



facility will have five (5) maintenance bays, a chassis wash, and bus wash located within a full service lane. The facility will be designed to easily retrofit and accommodate Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) vehicles should APT choose this vehicle configuration in the future. The administration portion of the facility will provide offices and work stations to meet current as well as future staffing needs. Other features of the new facility will include a driver breakroom with lockers, a dispatch and mobility center to support APT's paratransit needs, and several training rooms to accommodate multiple department training. The facility will also be supported with a standby generator to fully operate the facility when emergencies arise.

APT's current vehicle maintenance facility is beyond its useful life to repair or rehabilitate, in a practical and cost effective manner. The funding source of this project will come from 80% of Federal funding and 20% from Special Local Sales Tax (SPLOST) VII. Construction of the new office and vehicle maintenance facility for APT is ongoing and is expected to be completed in March or April of 2019.

Travel Training

On November 15, 2018, ARTS provided a travel training session for a group of residents from the Augusta community at the Augusta Public Transit (APT) bus station. Participating residents are members the American Association of Real Possibilities (AARP), an organization which focuses on improving the quality of life for communities. There were 15 residents who participated in the travel training session.

The purpose was to help educate residents unfamiliar with the city's transit system about bus service operations. ARTS staff was able to answer questions about the APT transit system and provide information about the services provided for riders.

All of the volunteers felt that the travel training exercise helped change their perception of the city's public transit system through the bus tour. Many volunteers were open to assisting ARTS and APT in evaluating the quality of transit services, believing it would be for the best interest of the public and the local government to improve the public transit system in the future.



Welcome Aboard!



Doug Duncan is a 5th generation Augustan. He earned a bachelor's degree in business from Augusta College and Executive Scholar designation from Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management. He is currently employed as Vice President of MAU Workforce Solutions, an Augusta, GA based human resources, recruiting and staffing firm. In 2015 he was elected Commissioner of District 1 in Columbia County, Georgia. In July 2018, he was elected Chairman of the Columbia County Commission and assumes the Chair in January 2019. He's been married over 30 years to Jean Hopkins Duncan. They have three children and one grandchild.



Joel Duke has over twenty years of experience in county, municipal, and regional planning. Since September 2018, he has served as the Planning Director for Aiken County. In that role, he is responsible for administration of the county comprehensive plan, land management regulations, building and related codes, transportation planning, and floodplain management.

Joel holds a Master of Public Administration from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and an undergraduate degree in Political Science from Jacksonville State University. He is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) and the American Planning Association (APA).

Hart "Doc" Clark became the building and planning director for Edgefield County in June of 2016. Before that he was the chief building inspector for 2 years and 5 months. Before he went into building inspection, he worked as the assistant director of public works for the City of Edgefield for 7 years and 10 months. Now that there is a full-time planner on board, his job responsibilities as building official and department head are focused on budgeting, management, and supervisory duties.



Kevin Singletary has recently joined the Edgefield County Building & Planning team and is the first Planner to be hired by Edgefield County. Kevin will play a major role in future development of Edgefield County, as new tasks are taken on such as the preparation of the County's first professionally contracted Comprehensive Plan, updating ordinances, and the zoning of large portions of the County that have historically been un-zoned. Kevin is a graduate of the College of Charleston with a B.A. in Urban Studies with a concentration in Planning and Administration. Before coming to work at Edgefield Kevin was a Project Coordinator at a Commercial Scale Solar Engineer, Procurement, and, Construction firm in Charleston.

Columbia County Roads Status

- 1. Hereford Farm Rd widening** – The project is in the concept portion of the Preliminary Engineering (PE) phase. The total cost of the project is estimated to exceed \$50,000,000 and a Value Engineering study was initiated by Columbia County and GDOT. The final report is available and changes to the project will be based on an updated traffic study. Concept report approval is now targeted for first quarter of 2019.
- 2. Stevens Creek Rd widening** – The project is in the PE phase with an approved concept report. The Preliminary Field Plan Review (PFPR) is scheduled for November 2018. The project is tracking towards a Right of Way (ROW) authorization date in August 2019.
- 3. Hardy McManus Rd widening** – The project is in the PE phase with an approved concept report. The PFPR is scheduled for December 2018. The project is tracking towards a ROW authorization date in September 2019.
- 4. Euchee Creek Greenway, Phase 1** – The 0.75-mile extension of the Greenway from Wrightsboro Road to Canterbury Farms subdivision is scheduled for a November 2018 let.

Counting All Riders



This fall, the Augusta Planning and Development Department (APDD) is working with Augusta Public Transit (APT) to help evaluate the quality of their public transit bus service. The City of Augusta's public transit system is an important transportation service in the community, which is why APT has made its goal to improve the service quality of its transit system in order to provide the residents of the Augusta community with better public transportation. In order to assist APT in evaluating the quality of its transit system, APDD staff will collect data through ridership surveys. The purpose of the surveys is to measure the usability, service quality, and overall ridership of public transit. The surveys will ultimately help APT staff prioritize solutions to improve service delivery. By the end of December, APT and APDD hope to have the final surveys compiled and a final report completed.

For inquiries and future article submissions, please contact the following:

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Augusta Regional Transportation Study

Upcoming MPO Meetings

Please call **(706) 821-1796** to verify the time and location.

Technical Coordinating Committee

Meets quarterly. February 13, 2019, 10:30 AM, 535 Telfair Street,
Augusta GA 30901, 3rd Floor Room 391

SC ARTS Subcommittee

Meets quarterly, January 31, 2019, 4:00 PM, 1930 University Pkwy,
Aiken, SC 29801, Sandlapper Room

Citizens Advisory Committee

February 13, 2019, 9:30 AM 535 Telfair Street, Augusta GA 30901,
3rd Floor Room 391

Policy Committee

March 7, 2019, 11:00 AM, 535 Telfair Street, Augusta GA 30901,
1st Floor Linda Beazley Room

Augusta Public Transit Citizen Advisory Committee

Meets monthly on the 4th Thursday, 4:00 PM, 1535 Fenwick Street,
Augusta, GA 30904

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