

**AUGUSTA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION STUDY
POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING
ROOM 803, MUNICIPAL BUILDING, AUGUSTA, GEORGIA
THURSDAY, MARCH 7, 2013, 11:00 A.M.**

Voting Members present:

Fred Cavanaugh, Mayor of Aiken
Skip Grkovic (representing Lark Jones, Mayor,
North Augusta)
C. H. Williams, Mayor of Burnetown
Thomas McQueen (representing Keith Golden,
GA DOT Commissioner)
Stephen Strohming (representing Ronnie
Young, Chairman, Aiken County Council)

Voting Members absent:

George James, Mayor of Grovetown
Henry Taylor, SC – 2nd Congressional District
Commissioner, ½ vote
Charles Dalton, SC – 3rd District Highway
Commissioner, ½ vote
Robert Buchwitz, Chairman Hephzibah
Commission
Ron Price (representing –Colonel Robert A.
Barker – Fort Gordon)
Patricia Cole, Mayor of Blythe
Deke Copenhaver, Mayor of Augusta, **Chairman**
Ron Cross, Chairman, Columbia Co. Commission,
Vice- Chairman
Dana Lutrell, LSCOG - BFE
Augusta Public Transit

Augusta Planning & Dev. Department

Paul DeCamp
Lynn Russell
Juriah Lewis

City of Augusta

David Griffith

City of Aiken

Larry Morris

FHWA

Ann-Marie Day, GA
Yolanda Morris, SC
Andrew Bruner, Intern

Aiken County

Gerald Jefferson

GA DOT

Andrew Heath
Reuben Woods
Vonda Everett
Cissy McNure

South Carolina DOT

Mike Sullivan
Kenny Larimore
Brad Reynolds

- 1. Consider approval of the minutes of the Policy Committee held on December 6, 2012**

The minutes were not sent out with the agenda so this item will be postponed until the next meeting of the Policy Committee.

- 2. Presentation from Ann-Marie Day with Federal Highway Administration on the ARTS Certification Review held in July 2012.**

Mrs. Day presented this item. Every four years, there is a join Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Certification of the transportation planning

process in each area with population over 200,000 referred to as Transportation Management Areas (TMA). The purpose of the review is to help ensure that the Federal regulations are being implemented and to review the process on the basis of a detailed look at technical and administrative elements. The scope of the review is comprehensive and covers the transportation planning process for the entire MPO area and all of the agencies involved.

During a review, federal agency staff members document and report on an MPO's *strengths*, make *recommendations* for areas needing improvement, and issue corrective actions for areas not meeting requirements. We also offer any needed training as well as offer best practices. FHWA/FTA staff conducted a review of the metropolitan transportation planning process for the Augusta MPO on July 25 – 26, 2012. Prior to that, Augusta MPO last review was conducted on July 30 – 31, 2008, with no corrective actions.

The Review Team noted various strengths and made recommendations for improvement in the TMA's planning process. Notable strengths are areas where the MPO has done particularly well and is meeting or exceeding the "State of the practice." Recommendations are made to improve or strengthen the planning process.

Notable Strengths

- Coordination with member jurisdictions
- Tracking and highlighting completed and ongoing planning studies
- Goals are consistent in the UPWP and LRTP
- Education and outreach on Air Quality in the region
- Strategies to mitigate congestion in the region
- Having a Freight Plan in place
- Public outreach and Participation
- Performance goals and measures in the participation plan
- Technology to advance and promote transit
- Completion of the Augusta Transit Development Plan

2012 Recommendations

- To have a more uniform project prioritization process
- Usage of the FHWA INVEST Tool to help prioritize and select transportation projects in the region
- Developing performance measures during the next LRTP update
- To list/identify SPLOST in the local revenue list
- Implementing online meetings
- Reevaluate congestions management strategies
- Monitor and demonstrate the effectiveness on an implemented congestion mitigation strategy
- Establish an operations sub-committee to look at and evaluate corridor conditions
- Develop a sidewalk inventory and examine sidewalk deficiencies
- Devote time and resources to safety education

The Federal Review Team did not identify any corrective actions during this review. Since the review the COOP has been finalized.

Mr. Grkovic stated South Carolina has adopted its own ranking criteria for projects. In the Aiken County portion of ARTS, the list of criteria has been slightly tweaked for livability and

sustainability, among other things. FHWA is happy with the tool SC is using for ranking criteria. The tool noted in the recommendations is in addition to what is currently being used.

Mr. Lewis stated he is working on a grant with the City's IT Department to purchase software to help identify sidewalks and where to place future bus shelters

Mrs. Day stated she is new to the Augusta MPO and so far with the documents she has reviewed, Augusta is open and willing to work with FHWA and is always looking to improve the transportation planning process.

Mr. McQueen stated the Augusta MPO staff is used to show what leadership looks like. You are being noticed in Atlanta.

3. Consider approval of an amendment to the FY 2013 Unified Planning Work Program by adding \$100,000 (\$80,000 federal / \$20,000 local match) to Work Element 2.13 Special Transportation Studies. These funds will finance an update of the work plan for the Congestion Management Process

Ms. Russell presented this item. We are requesting to amend the current UPWP by adding \$100,000 to Work Element 2.13. This money is left over from the last PL contract. We are requesting adding these funds to use for the update of the Congestion Management Process.

Mr. Grkovic moved to approve this amendment to the ARTS UPWP. Mayor Williams seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

4. Recommend approval of the Final FY 2014 Unified Planning Work Program

Mr. DeCamp presented this item. The UPWP is the program of activities and projects of related transportation planning for the program year to begin July 1, 2013. The draft summary was submitted and approved at the December meeting. Since that time we have received comments and suggestions from Federal and State partners, specifically FHWA, FTA, GA and SC DOTs, have updated narrative sections and made some minor changes to the overall budget. None of the comments affect the work elements. The summary attached to the agenda reflects no changes from the draft.

Mr. Grkovic moved to approve this amendment to the ARTS UPWP. Mr. Strohminger seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

5. Recommend approval of amendments to the ARTS FY 2013- 2016 Transportation Improvement Program as follows:

- **PI# 220680 - Fifteenth Street Widening Project - Add two phases of Preliminary Engineering to FY 2013 in the amount of \$500,000 and \$60,000**

Ms. Russell presented this first amendment request. Georgia DOT has requested amending the FY 2013 - 2016 Transportation Improvement Program by adding two new phases of preliminary engineering to FY 2013 for the Fifteenth Street widening project. The funds are M230 funds in the amount of \$560,000.

- **North Augusta Park-and-Ride Facility – Add \$600,000 to the construction phase**

Mr. Jefferson presented the second amendment request. The project scope prepared by URS is more detailed than originally proposed, thereby necessitating an increase in construction funds. This amendment will bring the total to \$1.2 million for construction.

For information purposes: SC DOT now requires that twenty percent (20%) of all guideshare funds be used for resurfacing projects. There are some flexibility and limitations. The next TIP will show these funds.

The following administrative modifications were made to the FY 2013- 2016 Transportation Improvement Program: right-of-way for the East Buena Vista and Atomic Road corridor improvements is being moved from 2012 to FY 2013; on the Hitchcock Parkway widening project, preliminary the engineering phase will be moved to 2013 and the right of way phase will be moved to FY 2014. The US 25 / Walnut Lane project will have an additional \$100,000 for utilities.

- **Substituting Transportation Investment Act (TIA) funds in place of Federal funds on several projects in Columbia and Richmond counties**

Mr. DeCamp presented this item. A handout was included in the agenda. As a result of the passage of the TSPLOST in our region, several of the projects that are in Richmond and Columbia Counties that are in the TIP are now either fully or partially funded with the transportation sales tax. A one page handout at the back of the agenda package summarizes these projects by program year. If you look specifically at the column labeled “other” the funds listed represent TIA funds that are replacing, in most cases, federal funding for each of the projects. There are two projects that are being moved into the TIP from Long Range - Riverwatch Parkway median work in Richmond County and, in Columbia County, the right-of-way funding for the Flowing Wells Road widening project. Once the committees approve these amendments, the individual project sheets in the TIP will be amended.

Mayor Williams moved to approve these three amendments to the FY 2013-16 ARTS TIP. Mr. Grkovic seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

6. **Recommend approval of an amendment to the ARTS Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan by substituting striped bike lanes and sidewalks in place of a multi-use trail on both sides of Fifteenth Street, Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. and Deans Bridge Road from Government Street to Gordon Highway.**

Mr. DeCamp presented this item. This amendment is in response to public comments received from the Augusta Sustainable planning project, which is ongoing, and affects the neighborhoods around the 15th Street and Deans Bridge Road corridors. This change is proposed with the condition that GA DOT accepts the design change. We are hopeful GA DOT will approve this design change, but it is not guaranteed. The recommendation is to approve this amendment subject to GA DOT agreeing to the design change.

Mr. Grkovic stated this was an issue that was discussed at length in North Augusta regarding their plan. The issue really is forsaking pedestrian amenities to add four feet to vehicular travel lanes to provide for bike lanes. The multi use path is generally separated from the travel way by a strip generally wider than the sidewalk. This proposal will have the sidewalk abutting the curb on major arterials which carry high volumes of traffic. For the comfort and safety of the pedestrians, the livability issues seem to go away. The solution found in North Augusta was to provide both a four foot bike lane even if it required narrowing travel lanes and still provide the landscaping strip and sidewalks. Take another look and don't sacrifice pedestrian safety and character for the sake of bike lanes.

Mr. DeCamp pointed out that making these corridors safe for all pedestrian and vehicular traffic is a key goal of the project. The lane widths have been reduced to eleven feet and there may be more of a buffer between the curb and sidewalk.

Mayor Cavanaugh moved to approve this amendment to the ARTS Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. Mr. Strohminger seconded. The motion was approved by majority vote with Mr. McQueen abstaining.

7. Consider Approval of Updated ARTS Area Boundaries

Mr. DeCamp presented this item. A map included in the agenda shows the proposed change to the study area boundary. As a result of the 2010 Census, there have been shifts in the population growth in the urbanized area, thereby making it necessary to change the ARTS study area boundary. As proposed, all of Richmond County remains in the study area. In Columbia County, the study area boundary line would shift to the northwest to align with Clarks Hill Road, Scotts Ferry Road and the Appling-Harlem Road (SR 47). Columbia County officials concur with these changes to the study area boundary. On the South Carolina side, action has been taken in prior meetings. New Ellenton and a portion of Montmorenci were added to the study area and a couple of sparsely developed areas around Edgefield were removed.

Mr. Cavanaugh asked if it is possible to provide a better map that shows the names of the major roads in the UBA.

Mr. Strohminger moved to adopt the revised study area boundary for the Georgia portion of the ARTS. Mayor Williams seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

8. Update on the Georgia Transportation Investment Act of 2010 (TSPLOST)

Mr. DeCamp presented this item. GA DOT personnel held a meeting with the region's elected officials in Thomson on February 7th. Taxes are being collected and GA DOT indicated the funds will be available the first or second week of March. GA DOT is negotiating with the Shaw Group to serve as the overall project manager. One notable point that came out of the meeting was local governments will be able to shift projects from one band (or phase) to another. There will be a process established for reviewing and approving the changes. The elected officials from our region present at that meeting formed an advisory group that will aid with project implementation.

The regional advisory group held a meeting yesterday, Wednesday March 6, 2013. At that meeting the advisory group approved a proposal by Augusta to shift projects from one band to another based on project readiness. GDOT officials reported that the agency was not negotiating with AECOM to serve as the overall project manager. The CSRA Regional Commission is coordinating the advisory group and overall process in this region.

9. Status of Projects

(a) Georgia Highways

Mrs. Everett presented the status of Georgia highway projects. There are five projects currently scheduled to be let within the next three months - SR 28 resurfacing from Broad to 12th Street; signing along I-20 @ 22 locations between Newton and Richmond Counties; SR 232 (Columbia Road) widening project; William Few Parkway widening project and resurfacing of I-520 from SR 56 to CSX RR south of CR 475 (Laney-Walker Blvd.).

- **PI# 250620** - Flowing Wells Road - turn lanes are working well at this time.
- **PI# 250470** - Old Petersburg / Old Evans Road - TIA - 283 parcels / 269 acquired, five have options pending and three condemnations are pending. FFPR was scheduled for 2/27-28/13
- **PI# 250610** - Windsor Spring Road - TIA - RW acquisition is in progress. 230 total parcels, 22 acquired and 44 options pending
- **PI# 250615** - Windsor Spring Road @ Spirit Creek - same as **PI# 250610**
- **PI# 0006431** - SR 56/ Mike Padgett Highway widening project - 147 parcels; 128 acquired; 10 options pending; 4 condemnations pending; let date moved to 6/2013

(b) SC Highways

Mr. Brad Reynolds presented this item.

SC 302 (Silver Bluff Rd.) Corridor Improvements:

- Environmental Document being finalized
- Working on Municipal Agreement and will be presented to Aiken City Council for approval
- Right of way acquisition scheduled to take approximately 12 months to begin in May 2013 and construction is scheduled to begin at earliest in the summer of 2014

SC 125 (East Buena Vista/Atomic Rd. Project):

- Environmental document is complete.
- Right of way acquisition scheduled to take approximately 12 months and is anticipated to begin in early summer of 2013 and construction is scheduled to begin in the summer of 2014

US 25/Walnut Lane Intersection Improvement:

- Construction Underway
- Currently Working on Utility Relocations and Drainage

Park and Ride:

- Completing special provision for the project because it has several specialty items.
- Drafting Financial Participation Agreement and Municipal Agreement for the City of North Augusta's review
- Let date is currently scheduled to be July 2013.

Hitchcock Parkway:

- Public Information Meeting for this project was conducted on November 8, 2012.
- Comments have been summarized and presented to ARTS Subcommittee
- December 5th meeting was conducted with the City of Aiken to discuss the project funding, comments from Public Information Meeting and reducing the typical section to minimize impact.
- On January 5th the SCDOT met with Consultant, CECS, to incorporate comments from the Public Information Meeting and implement strategies to reduce the project's footprint.
- Second Public Information Meeting will be scheduled in approximately 3 months (estimated to be in May 2013)

SC 126 Widening:

- Scoping meeting for project held in February 2012
- Surveys have been completed for the project.
- Design meeting was held to discuss preliminary alignment and to prepare for public information meeting.

(c) Augusta Public Transit

Mr. Lewis presented this item. APT is in the process of moving the administration offices and maintenance shop to a new location on Highway 56. The property will be shared with the Richmond County School Board transportation department. Staff met with FTA in Atlanta last week to discuss changing the scope of projects and transit funds available. FTA has authorized combining three grants that were scheduled to lapse, to fund this project. Wendell Architects was selected to design a new building. It will be more financially feasible to build a new building than to renovate the building currently on the property.

The Augusta Commission voted 9-1 to terminate the operating contract with Mobility. They have a long list of deviancies. A meeting is scheduled next week to prepare a new RFP for the operation of the transit department. Several companies have shown an interest.

(d) Aiken County Transit

Mrs. Luttrell was unable to attend and sent an email with the following update. LSCOG staff members just returned from the annual TASC meeting. Once again, Juriah Lewis was able to join us at the conference to represent the MPO and we want to thank him for his attendance and support of this event. The new Map-21 transportation authorization that is now in effect provides dictates some changes in Section 5310 funding for seniors and persons with disabilities and we will be working with Juriah, FTA and the two state DOTs to get that funding stream in place for the new fiscal year for residents of the urbanized portion of Aiken County.

LSCOG has been supplied ridership numbers from the operation contractor of the Best Friend Express fixed route system, Aiken Area Council on Aging, for the last full quarter in 2012. There

was an increase of 31% of passengers over this same quarter last year - 8,095. 853 passengers transferred to Augusta Public Transit and 385 passengers transferred from Augusta to the North Augusta, SC route.

10. Status of Special Studies

(a) City of Aiken and Aiken County Special Studies

Mr. Jefferson presented this item. The Dougherty Road corridor study consulting contract was awarded to the firm URS out of Columbia. The second of three public input meetings was held last week. This was a drop-in session and approximately 40 people attended the meeting. The study should wrap up in May 2013. The third and final public meeting is scheduled to be held in April. The final recommendations will be presented at this meeting.

Aiken County selected DRMP out of Columbia to conduct the SC 19 Corridor Study. Contract negotiations are underway. The budget is \$140,000 and the proposed schedule will be 12 months. Some of the elements to be examined along the corridor are safety, aesthetics, intersection improvements, access management, potential redevelopment around the Exit 18 interchange, and preserving open and green space. Hitchcock Parkway is another study being conducted. Public information meetings have been held. The majority of people are in agreement something needs to be done, but not sure what.

(b) ITS Master Plan

Mr. DeCamp presented this item. The current Regional Intelligent Transportation Management Plan dates back to 2002. ARTS has contracted with URS to update this plan. A kick-off meeting was held on February 6th. As a follow-up, yesterday and today the consultant is holding small group meetings with local and state traffic engineers, transit agencies, first responders and safety personnel to find out what the needs and issues are with traffic congestion, incident management and problems associated with growth and development along and near particular corridors in the region. The next opportunity for additional involvement will be on Tuesday, March 19th. A half-day workshop will be held at the North Augusta Community Center on East Buena Vista Avenue from 10:30am until 3pm to give stakeholders and others an opportunity to dig into more detail of the issues related to the ITS plan. We encourage you to attend and will find it a worthwhile experience. There will be additional opportunities for involvement in the coming months.

11. Update on Air Quality Initiatives:

(a) Aiken County

Mr. Jefferson presented this item. The Park and Ride project is anticipated to be let in July 2013. A flyer was sent out a few weeks ago on the Spring Conservation and Recycling Day held on March 6th. A lawn mower exchange was held along with conservation, composting and recycling classes. There were 18 gas-powered lawnmowers and three trimmers turned in. Fourteen electric Black and Decker lawnmowers were purchased with the trade-in of a gas powered one and 22 were purchased outright. Ninety-three (93) rain barrels and 35 compost bins were sold at reduced prices. The City of Aiken, Aiken County and Savannah River Nuclear Solutions collaborated on this event and are planning on another event either late summer or early spring next year.

(b) Richmond County

Mr. DeCamp presented this item. The Air Quality Alliance website has been down for a period of time and we are working on having it restored in the near future.

At the Federal level, US EPA, the Administrator Jackson has resigned and a new Administrator will be appointed soon. We will be tracking this to see what it will mean in terms of schedule and impact on the air quality regulatory initiatives at the Federal level.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "GAPatty". The signature is stylized and cursive.

George A. Patty
Project Director