



ARTS Newsletter

Fall 2012

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This newsletter is part of an ongoing effort of the Augusta Regional Transportation Study (ARTS) to share information about transportation issues and activities with the citizens of the metropolitan area.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Adopted



On September 6th, the ARTS Policy Committee adopted the recently completed update of the Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. Prepared by Alta Greenways, Inc., the plan is designed to improve the region's bicycle and pedestrian environment, increase bicycle and pedestrian travel, reduce traffic congestion and vehicle emissions and improve the quality of life. Among other things, the plan sets region-wide goals and benchmarks for improving biking and walking, investigates safety issues, future demand and potential benefits of increasing bicycle and pedestrian use, recommends programs, policies and partner organizations to help support and grow walking and biking and presents the region-wide plan for a comprehensive bicycling and walking transportation network. To view the plan go to the following webpage -

<http://www.augustaga.gov/index.aspx?NID=1573>.

To find out how you can become involved in implementing the plan, contact the ARTS staff at <http://www.augustaga.gov/Directory.aspx?DID=80> or call (706) 821-1796.

Road Widening Contract Awarded

On October 5th the Georgia Department of Transportation awarded a contract to Reeves Construction Company for the widening and reconstruction of a section of Wrightsboro Road in Augusta. The \$18.6 million project will widen and reconstruct Wrightsboro from Jimmie Dyess Parkway to the I-520 interchange. The existing two-lane section will be widened to four travel lanes with a 20 foot-wide raised median, sidewalks, urban drainage system, bike lanes and street lights. High-mast street lights will be installed at the I-520 interchange. As part of the project, a portion of Barton Chapel Road will be shifted to intersect Wrightsboro Road opposite Augusta West Parkway. The project is designed to relieve traffic congestion, improve connectivity, enhance facilities for drivers, pedestrians and bike riders and accommodate an expected increase in traffic in coming years. The project is to be completed by April 30, 2015.

FREQUENTLY CALLED NUMBERS:

GDOT Area Office—
Augusta (706) 855-3466

GDOT District 2 —
Tennille
(478)-552-4601

Augusta Engineering Department (706) 796-5040

Augusta Traffic Engineering Division (706) 821-1841

Columbia County Road Construction Department (706) 447-7600

Columbia County Traffic Engineering Department (706) 868-4223

Augusta Public Transit
(706) 821-1721

Transportation Referendum Approved



On July 31, 2012, a majority of voters approved a 1% sales tax to fund transportation projects in the 13-county CSRA. The CSRA was one of three regions in Georgia that approved the referendum.

An estimated \$631 million, or 75% of the total estimated proceeds, will finance eighty-four (84) projects in the region. Fifty (50) projects are in Richmond County and another eight (8) in Columbia County, including several major road widening projects in the ARTS area. Other types of projects funded include bridge repair and restoration, traffic signal modernization, intersection improvements, road resurfacing and operating assistance for Augusta Public Transit.

The remaining 25% of the estimated sales tax revenue will be distributed on a formula basis to local governments within the region. These funds can be used on transportation projects chosen by each local government. An added benefit is that local governments in the CSRA must only provide a 10% match for transportation projects funded under Georgia’s Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant program (LMIG).

Collection of the sales tax begins on January 1, 2013 and proceeds will begin to flow to cities and counties in the region in March 2013. The tax will be imposed until collections match the total estimated revenue, or at the end of 10 years, whichever comes first. The Georgia Department of Transportation is establishing the procedures for managing the program and coordinating with local governments to ensure timely completion of the projects.

For additional information, go to the following Georgia Department of Transportation webpage -

<http://www.dot.state.ga.us/localgovernment/fundingprograms/transreferendum/Pages/default.aspx> or contact Mr. Christian Lentz at the CSRA Regional Commission at (706) 210-2000 or clentz@csrarc.ga.gov

Tips to Save Gas and Reduce Air Pollution

- ~Walk, bike, take a bus or carpool when possible*
- ~ Combine errands into one trip*
- ~ Avoid revving or idling engine over 30 seconds*

Federal Transportation Bill Passed

On July 6, 2012, the President signed Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), reauthorizing surface transportation programs through fiscal year 2014. MAP-21 authorizes \$82 billion in Federal funding for fiscal years 2013 and 2014 for road, bridge, bicycling and walking projects. The new law also authorizes \$10.6 billion in FY 2013 and \$10.7 billion in FY 2014 for public transportation.

MAP-21 creates a streamlined, performance-based and multimodal program to address the challenges facing the U.S. transportation system. These challenges include improving safety, maintaining infrastructure condition, reducing traffic congestion, improving efficiency of the system and freight movement, protecting the environment and reducing delays in projects delivery.

MAP-21 builds on and refines many of the highway, transit, bike and pedestrian programs and policies established in 1991. MAP-21 restructures core highway formula grant programs and eliminates most current discretionary programs, though many of the eligible activities remain covered by the other programs. It creates two new formula programs, one of which - Transportation Alternatives (TA) - encompasses most activities funded under the Transportation Enhancements, Recreation Trails and Safe Routes to School programs.

On the transit side, MAP-21 gives the Federal Transit Administration significant new authority to strengthen the safety of public transportation systems. The act also puts new emphasis on restoring and replacing the aging public transportation infrastructure by establishing a new needs-based formula program and new asset management requirements. In addition, it establishes performance-based planning requirements that align Federal funding with key goals and tracks progress towards these goals. Finally, MAP-21 improves the efficiency of administering grant programs by consolidating several transit programs and streamlining the “New Starts” program.

Sources: FHWA and FTA MAP-21 Summaries



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SPECIAL STUDIES

In November, Aiken City Council adopted the **Northside Transportation Study**. The purpose of the study is to address projected congestion along portions of the corridor and improve mobility options, safety, public transit service and access to destinations within and outside the study area. The study recommends land use changes and major interventions at three catalyst sites. The next step is implementation of the study's recommendations.

The **Dougherty Road Corridor Study** kicked off in September. In November the study team held a planning workshop for elected officials, community leaders, business owners, property owners, and the general public. Two more public meetings will be held over the next few months. The study is anticipated to be completed in May 2013.

The Aiken County Planning & Development Department is preparing to negotiate a contract with a consultant for the **SC 19 (Edgefield Highway) Corridor Study**. The study area will stretch from Hampton Avenue in the Aiken city limits to the Edgefield County line. The study is anticipated to be completed in 12 months.

SURFACE ROADS

In September, SCDOT held a final Public Information Meeting for the proposed **SC 19 (Silver Bluff Road) Corridor Improvements Project**. R-O-W acquisition is scheduled to take approximately 12 months beginning in fall 2012, and construction is scheduled to begin in fall 2013.

In October, SCDOT held a Public Information Meeting for the proposed **SC 125 (E Buena Vista Avenue / Atomic Road) Corridor Improvements Project**. The purpose of the meeting was to present the proposed design of the project, which extends from near Georgia Avenue to near Old Edgefield Road, and to solicit input from area residents. SCDOT was also on hand to gather information from persons on historic and cultural resources in the community.

Aiken County News

AIR QUALITY

The conceptual design for the proposed **Park & Ride Facility**, to be located off Exit 5 at the intersection of I-20 and U.S. Highway 25, has been approved, and SCDOT staff and the City of North Augusta officials have reviewed the preliminary plans for the project. A subsequent meeting was held with the City and local industries to present the design and discuss the remaining steps in the project schedule.

Comments Invited on Road Project

SCDOT is seeking public comments on the proposed **SC 118 (Hitchcock Parkway) Widening Project**.

In November, SCDOT held the first Public Information Meeting on the project. The widening would upgrade the existing two-lane road to a four-lane parkway from Silver Bluff Road to US 1 (Jefferson Davis Highway), a distance of approximately 4.8 miles. Construction is anticipated to begin in the summer of 2015. Comments about the project may be submitted to:

Mr. Kevin Gantt, P.E., Program Manager
SCDOT
P.O. Box 191
Columbia, SC 29202-0191
Phone: 803-737-5808
Fax: 803-737-1510
Email: ganttkl@scdot.org

Transition

It is with much regret that we announce the resignation of Transportation Planner Marya Moultrie from the staff of the Augusta Planning and Development Department. We are grateful for the many contributions Marya has made to ARTS over the last 3½ years and will miss her. Fortunately, Marya has taken a job at the CSRA Regional Commission, so we expect to see her on occasion. Please join us in wishing Marya the best of luck!



Augusta Planning and Development Department
525 Telfair Street
Augusta, GA 30901

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UPCOMING ARTS MEETINGS

Policy Committee Meeting
December 6, 2012, 11:00 AM

TCC and CAC Meeting
February 13, 2013, 10:30 AM

ARTS committee meetings are held on the 8th Floor of the Municipal Building at 530 Greene Street, Augusta, GA. Please call (706)821-1796 to verify time and place.

Augusta Regional Transportation Study Contacts

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<http://www.augustaga.gov/index.aspx?nid=680>