
MINUTES
DARTS POLICY COMMITTEE
Central Square Government Complex, Room 380, 3rd floor
Albany, Georgia 31701
September 18, 2014

PRESENT: Rick Muggridge, Chairman, Lee County Commissioner
Dorothy Hubbard, Mayor, City of Albany
Tom Berry, Albany City Manager
Richard Crowdis, Dougherty County Administrator
Ron Rabun, Lee County Administrator
Bob Alexander, Leesburg City Manager
Jim Quinn, Mayor of Leesburg
Joe Sheffield, GDOT District Engineer
Radney Simpson, for (GDOT Commissioner Keith Golden)
Jeff Sinyard, Dougherty County Commission

OTHERS

PRESENT: Brent Thomas, GDOT
Bruce Maples, Director Engineering, City of Albany
William Eastin, GDOT Office of Planning, Transportation Planner, Atlanta
Shane Pridgen, GDOT, District 4
Jeremy Brown, Dougherty County Engineering
Ed Rynders, State Representative
Paul Forgey, Director Planning & Development Services, City of Albany
Jennifer Newton, Transportation Planner
Gloria Thompson, Administrative Assistant

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Muggridge called the meeting to order at 10:08 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES (June 19, 2014)

There being no corrections or change, a motion was made by Mr. Sinyard to approve the June 19, 2014 minutes. Ms. Hubbard seconded the motion, and the minutes were unanimously approved.

TOPIC I – Vice-Chair Election

Chairman Muggridge opened the floor for nominations. Mr. Sinyard nominated Ms. Hubbard, seconded by Mr. Quinlan. There being no other nominations, the nominations closed and Ms. Hubbard was unanimously approved as Vice-Chair.

TOPIC II – Draft 2015-2018 TIP

Ms. Newton stated the draft TIP (on file) was reviewed in detail at the last meeting and has been out for public review and comment and the only changes are: page 3 (Albany Project Cost Detail) – PI# 0000473 and 0000475 moved from Project Date: 2016 to 2017 due to STIP being budgeted. She noted TCC recommended approval.

Ms. Newton answered in the affirmative to a question by Mr. Rabun if it was 3 items, two being 0000473. There being no further discussion, Mr. Sinyard made a motion to approve the TIP. Mr. Rabun seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

TOPIC III – Draft 2014 LRTP Review

Ms. Newton introduced the URS consultants: Jim Brown, James Lawson and Mary Huffstetler and noted they will review the draft with the Committee. She pointed out the executive summary (on file) is the handout, and the full draft is online for public viewing as well.

Mr. Brown presented the draft 2040 LRTP overview and noted by making a Long Range Transportation Plan every five years, it gives the guide and blueprint to bring the TIP forward on a more frequent basis to move projects along. Points of interest discussed included: summary of stakeholder/public engagement - noting there have been very productive workshops, with the last two scheduled today; a survey went out to various organizations with a very positive response; preliminary recommendations: bike/ped – good to encourage for new developments and link to roadway improvements where applicable and put in new sidewalks that helps access to public transit; freight – truck activity in Albany area and coordinate with GDOT and railroad companies to maintain the road crossings and designate appropriate transportation facilities to trucks; transit – development plan inventory and evaluate service and look at demands and needs; will be added after completion as an amendment to LRTP; other transportation considerations - aviation (SW GA Regional Airport); maintain and improve access to port of Savannah; travel demand management; technical analysis – flex times for businesses or share riding for safety enhancements and streetscaping; financial element ; fiscally constrained project list; roads and bridges – projects come from prior planning projects that have been around a while from local jurisdictions as well as GDOT and stakeholders looking at project needs. The preliminary recommendations: prioritization process and subsequent ranking used to determine which projects can likely be funded through 2040; projects within identified funding will form the “Fiscally Constrained LRTP”; and unfunded projects will form the “Aspirations LRTP”. He pointed out there are 28 projects on the constrained list and 19 on the aspirations. The next steps are: project discussion; DARTS December 2014 meeting date; comment period (September 18-October 20, 2014); revise draft LRTP report; final LRTP document (late November); and Policy Committee approval by December 3, 2014.

In response to a question by Chairman Muggridge on the financial element concerning Dougherty County, Mr. Brown responded it is a calculation error on the table (fiscal year 2031-2035) and will be corrected. A discussion followed.

TOPIC V – Discussion

Ms. Newton stated the last LRTP was approved on December 3, 2013 and the meeting this year falls on December 4th; the meeting date should be moved earlier because the LRTP cannot expire. She noted this was brought before the TCC and it was recommended to move the meetings to December 3 at the same time and place, Lee County library – The Bindery.

A discussion followed and Ms. Newton stated a consensus is needed to move the date.

Chairman Muggridge called for any objections to changing the meeting to Wednesday, December 3, 2014. There being none, the consensus was to change the meeting date from Thursday, December 4 to Wednesday, December 3, 2014.

A discussion followed concerning SR 133 review, with it being noted by Mr. Sinyard most everyone in room that dealt with SPLOST knows that being 10 or 11 on the priority list is probably appropriate now, but the marine base do not use it as once, most through Tifton. SR 133 is dangerous and takes a long time and is crowded as an AG road. He noted he would like to see it moved up the list, but everything on the list is fairly significant. Mr. Sinyard said his question to DOT would be dollar amounts - is it realistic to move \$44 million up on the priority list with the state of the economy as far as budgeting with DOT.

A discussion followed with it being noted by Mr. Simpson that due to more transportation needs than available federal/state/local funding, there is always a funding challenge on the federal and state level, but it is important to remember that priorities are important, if something happens in a local area, such as a military movement or whatever, a project that is in the financially constrained plan, priority #28 can move up to be priority #1. He stated as federal and state priorities become available they will and can migrate into the TIP. Mr. Simpson noted it will be a challenge to find \$48 + million for project #28 in the Draft 2040 LRTP, but if it is important to the region and it is able to meet state and local transportation goals in the region, the MPO CAC/TCC and PC members can for options to try and allow for the SR 133 project to migrate from the LRTP into the MPO's TIP.

A discussion followed concerning Nottingham and Ledo Road, with it being noted that is a very difficult and unsafe corridor in the community. Mr. Simpson stated that projects in the Draft 2040 LRTP are in a “snapshot” formation, where we are about to take a picture in the LRTP update process. Currently, the MPO is working with consultants, if it is the pleasure of the CAC/TCC and PC members to project priorities evaluations can be rearranged before the MPO reaches a final agreement in December.

Ms. Newton stated an item discussed by TCC, priority #15 (SR 234 & SR 520 BU FM Colquitt Avenue N to Tift Avenue) Slaphey widening 4 to 6 lanes, discussion was the need for it was not as much as predicted and something that perhaps could be moved to aspirations list. She noted the cost projected is not accurately projected.

Chairman Muggridge asked if a motion is needed. Ms. Newton replied in the negative and stated a consensus that the Committee agrees to move it to the aspirations list. Chairman Muggridge called for any opposition. There being none, priority #15 was moved to the aspirations list.

Ms. Newton stated another project #37 (SR 234 and Westover Boulevard- add WBR and SBL turn lanes) add westbound right turn and southbound left turn lanes. As the development of WalMart and McDonalds continue, there are already problems with turning.

Mr. Maples stated new development are problems to have, but we are glad to have development. He noted in peak hours the traffic is backed up and they would like to be proactive and look at this and anticipate future development.

A discussion followed concerning priority. Chairman Rynders asked Mr. Sheffield if Quick Response Funds could be used for this project, with Mr. Sheffield noted the requirements to qualify for the fund could not be met because of the concrete utility pole and the cost of moving it. It was noted that Georgia Power should be contacted concerning the concrete pole and possibility of moving it.

Mr. Sinyard asked how to get pole moved and start the project, with Mr. Sheffield responding the right of way is there and the problem is the pole.

A discussion followed concerning local funds, with Mr. Crowdis noting SPLOST funds are already committed and may depend on future funds. Mr. Sinyard asked Mr. Maples to contact Jake Smith, GA Power rep, for the latest cost and see what their participation level might be.

Ms. Hubbard introduced Tom Berry, Albany City Manager, and asked for his comments. Mr. Berry stated he and Mr. Maples were discussing this issue and will look into it.

Ms. Newton stated she needs a consensus from the Committee where to move it on the list, noting TCC recommended moving it to Tier 1. A discussion followed and Mr. Simpson recommended to get it into the Financially Constrained List, with Mr. Maples stating it could be moved to priority #15. There being no further discussion it was moved to #15 by unanimous consent.

Ms. Newton stated Clark Avenue is on the Aspirations List with the need for the bridge; it is currently #39 (Clark Avenue ext fm Jefferson @ W Society to Clarke @ Maple). She noted TCC recommended keeping it on the Aspirations List.

Mr. Simpson noted whenever a project is in the TIP, part of the preliminary engineering process involves securing an environmental document that shows wetlands history and notes the purpose and need for the project. He pointed out even if the project is in the aspirations plan, inclusion in the aspiration plan means that there is a need to secure an environment document for the Clark Avenue based on current federal thresholds and criteria to justify the expenditure of federal and state funds. Mr. Simpson remarked it would not be smooth sailing to secure an environmental document based on conversations that have taken place.

A discussion followed concerning getting from the west end of Clark to Broad Avenue. Mr. Maples stated during the '94 flood east west connectivity was cut off, but now the Clark Avenue Bridge is being elevated to higher than the 500 year flood and should be completed the first of 2015. He noted the railroads run a lot less, an occasional small train, there are not as many as there use to be and are not as long.

Mr. Sinyard stated with the flood and Clark Avenue Bridge not in play as they were, do not see problem with taking Clark off the Aspirations List; noting the big challenge will be extending the bypass at some point.

In response to Mr. Sinyard's comments, Ms. Hubbard asked at what point would the public be made aware of this, as there were a lot of concerns last time about the Clark Avenue. She noted she would want public input on this.

Ms. Hufstetler stated the regular involvement process and the draft is out now; there will be a newspaper public notice with a couple of changes made noted in the hardcopy and reports will be in the libraries. She noted if there is a special point about a particular project with possible backlash and the Committee wanted to do something that is not required, that would be this Committee's decision.

A discussion followed concerning making the public aware of changes with Ms. Hubbard noting Clark Avenue was a major concern previously. Mr. Crowdis stated the cost was \$90 million in the current long range plan.

Ms. Hufstetler stated she conducted the stakeholders interviews with EMS, in depth, concerning Broad Avenue blocking the movement of emergency vehicles and the answer was no; there was a public survey with 365 responses, railroad questions, a safety question, but no one is out there screaming to keep it because there is no need.

Mr. Crowdis stated the EMS director puts that to bed.

Chairman Muggridge asked if it is a consensus of the Policy Committee to remove #39 completely. There being no objections, it was removed.

Ms. Newton reminded the Committee that there are two more meetings scheduled today.

Mr. Alexander stated something could be substituted aspirations wise, Slappey Boulevard, US 19 from Stuart Avenue up to Cedric Street.

Mr. Simpson stated if there is a capacity need, there is where federal funding is approved.

Chairman Muggridge asked if there is a consensus to adding Slappey Boulevard to the Aspirations List. A discussion followed. There being no objections, it was added to the Aspirations List.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no new business, old business or further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 11:08 a.m.