

Summary Minutes of
MACORTS Technical Coordinating Committee
A-CC Planning Department Auditorium
Wednesday, January 27, 2016
10:00 a.m.

Members Present: Sherry McDuffie - ACC Planning Department
Butch McDuffie - Athens Transit System
Cherie Varnum – ACC Planning Department
Darius Malone - GDOT Planning Office
Kyle Mote – GDOT Planning Office
Kim Coley - GDOT District 1
Steve Decker - ACC Traffic Engineering
BR White - Oconee County Planning Department
Emil Beshara - Oconee County Public Works
David Clark - ACC Transportation & Public Works
Don Walter- UGA Transit
Pamela Thompson - ADDA

Others Present: Janet Burns-GDOT District 1
Brandon Kirby - GDOT District 1
Lee Becker - Oconee citizen
Russ Paige - Oconee citizen

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. White called the meeting to order at 10:03 am.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT OPPORTUNITY

Mr. Russ Page offered his comments regarding the US 441 South Widening project. He explained that having MACORTS out of loop due to the change in the funding source was not a desirable outcome. He noted that attendees from the public meetings commented as such. He made clear that citizens preferred dealing with the more local entity, MACORTS, rather than GDOT. He related information about a meeting that GDOT had on Dec. 22 – at that meeting, a sounding board group was created. GDOT reps explained that the sounding board group was formed as a go-between for residents of Oconee County and GDOT providing 2-way communication. There have been 2 subsequent meetings organized by citizens of Oconee County to which the members of the sounding board were invited. No one from the sounding board attended the first meeting. At the second meeting, 1 member of the sounding board attended, but that person made it clear that communication was to be 1-way, and that person told the group that they were not authorized to speak to the citizens at the meeting about the project. Mr. Page encouraged MACORTS to stay involved with the project.

III. APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 28, 2015 MEETING MINUTES

Mr. McDuffie made a motion to approve the October 28, 2015 meeting minutes. Mr. Walter seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

IV. REVIEW OF FINAL DRAFT AMENDMENTS TO 2040 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN & FY 2015-2018 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM AND ASSOCIATED PUBLIC COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATION TO POLICY COMMITTEE – US 441 SOUTH WIDENING & 4 BRIDGES ALONG SR 10 LOOP

Ms. McDuffie stated these proposed amendments included removal of the US 441 South Widening project out of the LRTP since it was scheduled to receive state funding. This would allow funding for 3 proposed bridge replacement projects along SR 10 Loop in the LRTP. All phases of the bridges at SR8/US29 and North Oconee River would be included. Only Preliminary Engineering & Right-of-way phases of the bridges at the Middle Oconee River would be included. She also stated the necessary changes would be reflected in the TIP as well.

Ms. McDuffie explained that staff took the amendments out for public review and comment from November 30 – Dec 14, 2015. The public comment summary and copies of the original public comment were sent to members.

There was some discussion about the motion for the proposed bridges and deletion of the US 441 S Widening project. Mr. Clark recommended having 2 separate motions for the addition of the bridge projects and the deletion of the 441S project.

Mr. Mote made a motion to recommend approval of the final draft amendment to the 2040 LRTP and 15-18 TIP to reflect the deletion of the US 441 South Widening project. Mr. McDuffie seconded the motion.

Mr. McDuffie suggested that Mr. Beshara address some of the public concerns about the project. There was some discussion about the meetings that have been held by GDOT and by local citizens in reference to the US 441 S project. Mr. Beshara stated that the revised task order that he has seen does reflect that work on the project is to “start from scratch”. He also stated GDOT is supposed to provide the concept report to the consultants. Ms. Thompson suggested MACORTS staff contact GDOT officials to let them know even though it is removed from our list we strongly encourage open communication between them and the people impacted by the project and ask that they provide MACORTS staff a courtesy copy of the information they release to the citizens throughout project. The committee agreed.

Mr. Clark made a motion to recommend approval of the final draft amendments to the 2040 LRTP and 15-18 TIP to reflect the addition of the bridge replacement projects on SR 10 Loop at SR 8 / US 29 (all phases),

North Oconee River (all phases), and Middle Oconee (PE/ROW). Mr. Beshara seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

V. REVIEW OF DRAFT AMENDMENT TO MACORTS PARTICIPATION PLAN TO ADD REQUIRED FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION LANGUAGE AND RECOMMENDATION TO POLICY COMMITTEE

Ms. McDuffie stated the GDOT Office of Intermodal Programs informed the MPO staff that the Participation Plan needs specific language required by the Federal Transit Administration. She noted the highlighted area of the draft sent out in the mail-out is the only change to the Participation Plan.

Ms. McDuffie explained that any change to the Participation Plan requires a 45-day public comment period. She stated that staff sent out a proposed timeline showing the public comment period from February 22 – April 6, 2016 with one public meeting in Athens on March 21, 2016 from 4 - 6 pm. Ms. McDuffie noted the document and any public comment received would come back to TCC on April 27 and Policy Committee on May 11, 2016.

Mr. McDuffie recommended approval to take the Draft Amended MACORTS Participation Plan to the public for review and comment. Mr. Mote seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

VI. REVIEW & DISCUSSION OF DRAFT AMENDMENT TO THE 2040 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN TO ADD SR 316 AT OCONEE CONNECTOR INTERCHANGE PROJECT AND RECOMMENDATION TO POLICY COMMITTEE

Ms. McDuffie stated the Oconee County representatives requested that staff prepare a draft project sheet for an interchange project at SR 316 at Oconee Connector. She noted that the project cost estimate is \$18 million. Ms. McDuffie explained in order to add this project to the Long Range Transportation Plan, \$18 million will have to be removed from the Plan to keep the Plan fiscally balanced.

Ms. McDuffie stated this would require a 15-day public comment period. A proposed timeline for public involvement was sent to members.

Mr. Beshara stated in the past this has been part of a corridor improvement to address several interchanges along SR 316. He emphasized that the proposed interchange is the highest transportation priority for Oconee County and should be separated from all of the other interchanges on Hwy. 316 within the MACORTS area.

Mr. Mote stated that GDOT had PI #'s for each of the interchanges. He noted that the PI# for this project would be 0013769. If the amendment were to be approved by MACORTS, GDOT would need the following: a letter stating where the project is being added and funded to the LRTP, updated cost estimates, identification of the sponsor of the project, and project justification statement including traffic safety data and a map of the project area.

Mr. Beshara clarified this project would create a grade separated interchange at the intersection of SR 316 and the Oconee Connector. He stated that GDOT purchased enough ROW for an interchange at SR 316 during its original construction; therefore, no additional ROW should be needed. Mr. Beshara also noted there is an engineer's concept drawing that has been around since the 1990's showing the interchange as it was contemplated when they identified the land they needed for ROW.

Mr. White stated there will need to be projects removed in the LRTP in order to add this project. Mr. Beshara recommended the removal of R-32: Union Hill Church Road Improvements and a reduction in the funding for R-30: Mars Hill Road Widening - Phase III, which are both in 2020-2024 timeframe. He suggested leaving the balance of funding in PE and ROW for the Mars Hill Road Widening – Phase III.

Mr. Beshara recommended approval to take the proposed amendment to add the SR 316 at Oconee Connector Interchange project and delete R-32 Union Church Rd and reduce the funding for R-30 Mars Hill Road Widening - Phase III to the public for review and comment. Mr. Clark seconded that motion. The vote was unanimous.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

- **RECONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED MACORTS REQUEST TO REALLOCATE PRELIMINARY ENGINEERING FUNDS FROM JIMMIE DANIEL / JIMMY DANIELL ROAD WIDENING PROJECT TO OTHER PROJECT(S) AND RECOMMENDATION TO POLICY COMMITTEE**

Ms. McDuffie stated this involves asking GDOT to assign the \$1.3 million in PE funding in FY 16 that was assigned to the Jimmie Daniel Rd Widening into another project in the FY 16 timeframe. She also noted this request has been on the agenda for a few months. She explained that if approved by GDOT, the TIP would need to be amended to show the shifting of funds at a later date. There was some discussion. Mr. Mote stated these funds were no longer available.

- **UPDATE ON MACORTS REQUEST TO ACCELERATE THE SCHEDULE FOR THE SR 10 LOOP AT LEXINGTON ROAD INTERCHANGE PROJECT AND MACORTS REQUEST TO REALLOCATE FUNDS FROM MITCHELL BRIDGE ROAD WIDENING TO SR 10 LOOP AT ATLANTA HIGHWAY INTERCHANGE PROJECT**

Ms. McDuffie stated the letter given to members reflects that GDOT is taking the request into consideration and it will be under advisement during GDOT'S annual balancing process. There was some discussion. Mr. Mote stated that, with the additional HB 170 funding

to be programmed, GDOT does not anticipate having a new STIP until next spring. Mr. Mote clarified that Mitchell Bridge had been deleted at the request of the MPO. There was some discussion about congressional balancing.

Mr. Clark asked Mr. Mote if the intersection of Mitchell Bridge was included in the Federal review of the logical termini for the Atlanta Highway project. The original concept stopped just short of Mitchell Bridge. There was some discussion. Mr. Clark suggested that it would make sense to use the funds from the Mitchell Bridge project for the Atlanta Highway / Mitchell Bridge Road intersection since the Federal review leaves GDOT responsible for resolving the logical termini issue with the Atlanta Highway Widening project. Mr. Clark stated they would stay in the loop about this project because they do not want to lose the money.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. McDuffie stated there is a new Transportation bill that is called the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act and additional information is available. There was some discussion about the new federal legislation and state level legislation and associated funding.

Oconee County Public Works

Mr. Beshara stated Phase I of Mars Hill Rd construction is ongoing. He also stated the start of the demolition of the bridge Barber Creek had begun. The Oconee County Board of Commissioners voted to build an extension of Parkway Blvd. (behind Kohl's) from Epps Bridge to Oconee Connector and is in the process of identifying funding for the project.

Athens-Clarke County Transportation & Public Works Department

Mr. Clark stated the roundabout at Tallassee Road and Whitehead Road is open, and he had received good feedback. The College Station Road Bridge project is a little behind schedule but will hopefully be open to traffic by August 15th. He also stated the county just let a project to extend bike lanes on College Station Road from Riverbend over to Barnett Shoal. The Mitchell Bridge Road widening project has been delayed slightly due to the weather.

Athens Transit System

Mr. McDuffie stated the first half of the fiscal year went very well and ridership has been steady. He also stated Transit has applied for a \$7.5 million grant to purchase 10 hybrid electric buses through the "Go Transit" program by SRTA. The Transit Options Feasibility Study is still in progress. There will be two public meetings at the Multi-Modal Center to be held on February 9 and March 1.

University of Georgia Campus Transit System

Mr. Walter stated they have consultants performing a traffic study evaluating three areas: East Campus Loop, Carlton/Lumpkin Street near the new Science building and Lumpkin Street near the Tate Center. He stated they are also

applying for a grant through the “Go Transit” program by SRTA to purchase 19 hybrid electric buses.

Georgia Department of Transportation - District One

Kim stated Janet Burns, a visitor from her office, works in the Preconstruction Division and is cross training with various departments.

Athens Downtown Development Authority

Ms. Thompson stated she is on the Board of Directors of GA Downtown Association who represents all the main street and downtown authorities. This year they will be having their annual conference in Athens on March 8-11. On Tuesday, March 8th, there will be Complete Streets training at the Foundry Inn. This conference is open to the public and is \$145 for the full day.

IX. ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 10:47 am. The next meeting is scheduled for Feb. 24, 2016. Mr. White reminded everyone that the Policy Committee meetings will be held in Danielsville for the 2016 calendar year. Their next meeting is scheduled for February 10, 2016.