



## Meeting Minutes

Lowcountry Area Transportation Study (LATS)  
Policy Committee Meeting Friday, March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023, 9:30 a.m.  
**Meeting Location: In-Person TCL New River Campus Conference Room**

### AGENDA

#### **Policy Committee Members Present:**

Glenn Stanford, Hilton Head Island  
Lisa Sulka, Town of Bluffton  
Brook Plank-Buccola, Town of Port Royal  
Joe Passiment, Beaufort County  
Harry Williams, City of Hardeeville  
Mike McFee, City of Beaufort  
Charles Mitchell, LRTA

#### **Technical Committee Members Present:**

Lisa Wagner, Jasper County  
Carrie Gorsuch, City of Beaufort  
Eric Claussen, Beaufort County  
Mary Lou Franzoni, LRTA  
Kraig Gordon, Beaufort CTC

#### **SCDOT Staff Present:**

Craig Winn  
Travis Cooper  
Meghan Groves  
Lyle Lee  
Erin Porter

#### **Others Present:**

Barbara Childs, LRTA  
Anna Maria Tabernik, Beaufort County Council  
Jared Fralix, Beaufort County  
Abraham Champagne, WSP  
Stephen Murray, City of Beaufort  
Marilyn Arseneau, Jasper County Resident  
Curt Freese, City of Beaufort  
David Kimball, LB/W Advocates  
David H Baker, LB/W Advocates  
Art Handman, LRTA  
Bryan McIlwee, HHI  
Jim Neal, Mattern & Craig  
John Kemp, Jasper County Council

#### **LCOG Staff Present:**

Stephanie Rossi, Planning Director

#### 1. Call to Order.

- a. Pledge of Allegiance
- b. Invocation
- c. Introduction of Members, Guests and Staff
- d. Designees: Brook Plank-Buccola for Joe DeVito, Town of Port Royal
- e. Action on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, Meeting Minutes
  - Glen Stanford moved to approve the meeting minutes, Mike McFee seconded, the motion passed unanimously.



## 2. Project Updates.

### a. SCDOT Project Updates—Craig Winn, SCDOT

#### ACTION: Information

- Craig Winn provided an update on the I-95 improvements from Stateline to MM8. SCDOT hosted a Design field review on February 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> in Hardeeville with the design team and the SCDOT representatives. Preliminary plans have been submitted including updates to plans for Exit 5 which include ramp improvements and ramp signals. Exit 3 plans came in on March 31<sup>st</sup> and are being reviewed. The draft environmental document came in on March 10<sup>th</sup> and has been returned to the consultant to make updates. It is estimated the document will be submitted to FHWA on April 17<sup>th</sup>. Preliminary Right of way plans are the next major milestone and set for Mid-June. The preliminary permit will come at approximately the same time frame. Environmental approval is expected in June or July.
- Craig provided an update on US 17. There have been no major changes since the previous update. The project team is still monitoring settlement on the southbound expansion. They are doing some work on the northbound side as they are able. The project is on schedule for completion September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Project remains on schedule.

### b. Beaufort County Engineering Update— Eric Claussen, Beaufort County

#### ACTION: Information

- The US 278 study (AECOM) is wrapping up and will likely be available for review by the June LATS meeting.
- It was determined by the LATS technical Committee that there have been several changes since the SC 170 Study (AECOM) was completed in 2019 and that it would be useful to have the study updated to reflect the development taking place along the corridor. Beaufort County will take on scoping and funding an update to the initial study. Mayor Williams asked for clarification on the SC 170 Study update and the timetable. Eric stated that the County initiated the update, and it will be based on the initial study completed in 2019. They will incorporate new traffic counts and development that has occurred since the study was completed. The County is still waiting for a scope and fee from AECOM and will begin work soon after. Joe Passiment asked what the geographic extent of the study would cover. Eric clarified that it would expand from initial study scope to include the Del Webb intersection and end at SC 462. He also noted that LATS has programmed a study on SC 170 for 2025 to include all remaining sections of SC 170 into an access management study. Mr. Passiment referred to a letter from Secretary Hall regarding Sea Grass Station. The letter stated that a signal warrant study was conducted, and the intersection does not meet signal warrants at this time. Policy Committee members expressed concern over the safety at the intersection and the need for a signal. SCDOT staff stated that the signal warrants must be met to install the signal. The update to the SC 170 can take a broader look at the intersection beyond a signal warrant study.
- Eric Claussen stated that the Reimagine Ribaut Road which includes Ribaut Road from Boundary Street to the Bell Bridge focuses on the complete streets concept and they are doing the planning and traffic engineering. The public meeting is on April 20<sup>th</sup> from 5-7pm at TCL in Beaufort.



- Eric updated the Committee on the progress on SC 170 near term improvements from US 278 to SC 462. They are getting close to going to bid. The County is working through some final issues with SCDOT in relation to the US 278 SCDOT resurfacing element of the project.
  - The County is also doing some safety improvements looking at near, medium and long-term solutions at: Ribaut Road and Lady's Island Drive, Cat Island and Meridian Road. Kimley Horn is contracted to complete the analysis. They are looking for low-cost safety improvements that could be installed by the fall.
  - US 278 traffic improvements utilizing an adaptive signal system is being implemented on Hilton Head and the County intends to extend that to SC 170. The County is working with SCDOT to move that initiative forward. Glen Stanford asked what the timing was on the adaptive signal project off island. Eric stated the island will likely wrap up in June and the County is still working through some issues and will likely be ready to start. They will have to do an initial assessment to determine needs for detection which may take a 4-6 weeks.
  - Beaufort County is managing the LATS Regional ITS Plan. They have reached out to Kimley-Horn to develop the scope of their work.
  - The County will be doing a corridor study on US 21 from Garden Corner to MCAS looking at safety and access management improvements.
- c. Palmetto Breeze Update—Mary Lou Franzoni, Palmetto Breeze  
ACTION: Information
- Mary Lou stated the Breeze Trolley will be starting on Hilton Head Island tomorrow April 1<sup>st</sup>. It will remain fare free and on the same routes as last year.
  - Palmetto Breeze is asking for more local match because grant funds have increased along with overall cost increases.
  - The Hilton Head Island Airport study will be presented on Hilton Head Island on April 10<sup>th</sup>.
  - Palmetto Breeze has is looking for a Beaufort County and a Colleton County resident to be Board members.
- d. Corridor Study Update—Stephanie Rossi, LCOG  
ACTION: Information
- Stephanie stated the LATS Technical Committee met on March 6<sup>th</sup>. The Committee endorsed the approval of the FY 2024 – FY 2025 UPWP. The Committee also discussed the intersection of SC 170 and Sea Grass station as noted earlier in the meeting.
  - Eric Claussen will serve as chair of the Technical Committee.
  - The scoring team for the SC315/SC 46 Corridor study unanimously selected a consulting firm. The summary of the selection process and negotiations have been sent to SCDOT for approval. LCOG staff is awaiting the Notice to Process dot the next step in procurement process.
- e. Advisory Comments—Policy Committee members  
ACTION: Information
- Should a transportation committee be signing off on new developments? There are lot of concerns on public safety (Mayor Sulka and Mayor Williams).



- Eric Claussen shared that Beaufort County is working with a consultant to create a list of approved engineering firms for conducting traffic impact studies. The County is aiming to have a short list of firms that would be the preferred firms to do studies for new developments. Ideally these firms would be knowledgeable of the area. County staff is about to bring it to County Council for consideration. Local municipalities could adopt the same set of procedures.
- Mayor Sulka asked Beaufort County to include this in future project updates.
- Lyle Lee from SCDOT noted that SCDOT is developing the Regional Mobility Program and in the process of testing it out in some pilot locations across the state. It will take transportation priorities into consideration with safety and other concerns as well as land use. SCDOT staff will be going around the MPOs in the future to present the program.
- Mr. Passiment noted that access management will be a priority in the region. He noted that there may be a need for another access point to SC 321.
- Mayor Sulka noted we should be thinking beyond traffic lights and secondary roads and may need to start thinking about under and overpasses.
- Jared added even beyond the 5-10 year access management issues we should be looking beyond that to other large picture issues such as Lowcountry aesthetic concept for the region and another exit off of I-95 to Argent.
- Mayor Murray noted that just transportation projects alone will not solve the issues and the region needs a wholistic approach for development and design standards. Mayor Sulka noted SoLoCo will be the place to take that on.

### 3. New Business.

- a. Amendment to the 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan: Approve the addition of the 2022 SCDOT System Performance Report and Targets into Appendix A—Stephanie Rossi, LCOG/Erin Porter SCDOT  
ACTION: Approve Amendment
  - Charles Mitchell moved to approve, and Joe Passiment seconded, the motion passed unanimously.
  - Mayor Sulka requested additional data specific to the region. The information will be emailed out separately.
- b. Amendment to the 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan: Add I-95 Improvements from GA Stateline to US 278 to the Fiscally Constrained Project List—Stephanie Rossi, LCOG  
ACTION: Approve Amendment
  - Glen Stanford moved to approve, and Charles Mitchell seconded, the motion passed unanimously.
- c. Amendment to the FY 2021 – FY 2027 Transportation Improvement Program: Add Non-Guidelshare funding to the I-95 Improvements from GA Stateline to US—Stephanie Rossi, LCOG  
ACTION: Approve Amendment
  - Mike McFee moved to approve, and Harry Williams seconded, the motion passed unanimously.
- d. Adoption of the FY 2024 and FY 2025 Unified Plan and Work Program —Stephanie Rossi, LCOG



ACTION: Approve Unified Planning Work Program for FY 2024 and FY 2025

- Harry Williams moved to approve, and Glen Stanford seconded, the motion passed unanimously.

e. 2020 Census Urban Area— Stephanie Rossi, LCOG/ Lyle Lee, SCDOT

ACTION: Information

- Stephanie Rossi shared that there is a new urban area within the LATS boundary. The new urban area consists of The Town of Port Royal, the City of Beaufort and portions of unincorporated Beaufort County. The three entities must decide whether to remain a LATS member or to form a new separate MPO. SCDOT needs to have a decision package by August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023. This will allow SCDOT to bring this to the Commission in September and meet the October 1<sup>st</sup> Federal Highways due date. The package will need to include letters of support/agreement on a new MPO or to remain with LATS in addition to the study area boundary. The full contents of the package is yet to be determined.
- The LATS study area boundary currently incorporates both urban areas.
- Mayor Sulka noted during the creation of LATS the study area boundary was expanded to include Northern Beaufort County because it was anticipated to grow already being an urban cluster.
- Lyle Lee stated there is a finite amount of money for the MPOs and COGs. SCDOT is in the process of ramping up the Guideshare to 238 million and is halfway there. The money will not change with a new MPO although it could change how the 238 million is distributed. The secretary has stated she is committed to maintaining a minimum funding amount. The distribution formula beyond the minimum has not been determined.
- 75% of the new urban area must have consensus. All three parties would need to be in agreement.
- Mayor Murray asked how the current funding was distributed. Lyle stated the formula was based on population. Stephanie will distribute the funding table via email. Currently the formula is based on population. Both population and Vehicle Miles Traveled have been discussed as options to determine the new formula.
- Mayor Sulka inquired what would happen if a new MPO was formed and they had projects funded through LATS in their area. The new MPO would need to have a TIP and LRTP by 2026. In the interim there could likely be some temporary measures set in place to separate the TIP and LRTP projects.
- Jared stated an MPO is designed to be a regional organization and was originally created with expanded boundaries to better encompass the full region.
- Mayor Murray favored regionalism but did ask about the current equity in the project list.
- Mike McFee noted not wanting to interrupt the flow of the federal dollars to the region. Much of the funding has been directed at the US 17 widening and the LATS has only recently been able to accumulate dollars.
- Mayor William's stated he supported staying a merged MPO to continue a regional dialogue.
- Committee members asked if later down the road there would still be an opportunity to create a new MPO? SCDOT and staff were unsure but did see examples of MPOs merging at a time that was not related to the census timing.



- Mayor Sulka stated that if another meeting needs to take place before the August deadline that can happen.
- Lyle Lee offered that SCDOT could meet again if there are any questions.
- Glen Stanford stated that clearly Port Royal and Beaufort are part of what we view as the region. Unless there is a significant financial deficit in staying together, he urges the new urban area to remain in LATS.
- Mayor Murray stated he defaults towards remaining with LATS but just had two questions regarding regional project equity and funding.

4. Other Business.

- a. Correction to the FY 2021-FY 2027 TIP: Intersection Improvement US 278 and Argent Blvd, increase FY 2024 non guideshare funds from \$2,000,000 to \$2,500,000.  
ACTION: Information
- b. Correction to the FY 2021-FY 2027 TIP: US 278 Corridor Improvements, Construction and Right of Way non-guideshare funding shifts from FY 2024 to FY 2025 and increase in Right of Way.  
ACTION: Information

5. Public Comment.

- David Kimball of Sun City state to include considerations for bicycles particularly on SC 170 especially as the connection between northern and southern Beaufort County.
- Marilyn Arseneau of Riverton Point resident stated concerns for the one access point to the community. Many residents will not make a left turn because it to unsafe so the number counts would not be high enough for a signal. Something has to be done on Argent Boulevard to SC 170. The area is growing quickly.

6. Next Meeting.

a. **Friday June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023**

7. Adjourn.

- Glen Stanford moved to approve the meeting minutes, Mayor Williams seconded, the motion passed unanimously.