

Lowcountry Area Transportation Study (LATS)
Policy Committee Meeting
Friday, October 19, 2018
10:00 a.m.
TCL New River Campus, Classroom 231

AGENDA

Policy Committee Members Present:

Chairman Lisa Sulka, Mayor, Town of Bluffton
David Bennett, Mayor, Town of Hilton Head Island
Barbara Clark, Jasper County Council
Samuel E. Murray, Mayor, Town of Port Royal
Richard Hamilton, LRTA Board Chair

Policy Committee Members Absent:

Paul Sommerville, Beaufort County
Mike McFee, Council and Mayor *pro term*, City of Beaufort
Harry Williams, Mayor, City of Hardeeville
Sam Glover, SCDOT Commission
Rep. Bill Herbkersman, Jasper County Leg. Delegation
Chairman

Technical Committee Members:

Mary Lou Franzoni, LRTA Executive Director
Lisa Wagner, Planning Director, Jasper County
Colin Kinton, Chair, Beaufort County
Katie Woodruff, Planner, City of Hardeeville
Kevin Icard, Planner, Town of Bluffton
Shawn Colin, Planner, Town of Hilton Head
Anne Cyran, Planner Town of Hilton Head
Kraig Gordon, Chair, Beaufort County CTC
Neil Parson, City of Hardeeville
Aron Williams, City of Hardeeville
Van Willis, Town of Port Royal

Technical Committee Members Absent:

Lauren Kelly, Planner, City of Beaufort
Linda Bridges, Planning Director, Town of Port Royal

LCOG Staff Present:

Ginnie Kozak, Planning Director
Christian Dammel, Planning Assistant
Meredith Burns, Planning Assistant

SCDOT Staff Present:

Craig Winn, SCDOT
Megan Groves, Program Management
Jennifer Necker, SCDOT
David Gray, SCDOT
Wade Luther, SCDOT
Jim Frierson, SCDOT Office of Public Transportation
Betsy McCall, Design Manager

Designees:

Stephen Murray, designee for Mike McFee, City of Beaufort
Carolyn Kassel, designee for Harry Williams, City of Hardeeville

Others Present:

York Glover, Designee for Paul Sommerville
Patrick Tyndall, AECOM
Kim Likins, HHI Town Council
Charlie Stone, BCEDC
Rick Hamilton, LRTA
Jeff Wheatly, LRTA
Rhett Lott, City of Hardeeville
Charles Cousins Town of Hilton Head Island
Tom Keveany, Beaufort County
Mark Wilkes, Coastal Region MPO Savannah
Joe Crowley, Lowcountry Inside Track
Joe Fragale, Greater Island Council
Susan Zellman, LRT
John McCann, Town of Hilton Head
Tom Lennox, Town of Hilton Head
Chip Burger, AECOM
David Spisso, Mayor Pro Tem, City of Hardeeville

1. Call to Order.
 - a. Pledge of Allegiance
 - b. Invocation
 - c. Introduction of Members, Guests and Staff
 - d. Designees
 - e. Action on July 13, 2018 and September 7, 2018 Meeting Minutes (Draft minutes attached.)

Meeting minutes from July 13 and Sept. 7 were unanimously approved.

2. Old Business.
 - a. SCDOT US 278 and US 17 Project Update
ACTION: Information

Craig Winn provided a brief update on the US 278 project. The US 278 report can be found [here](#). A full Notice to Proceed was issued on Sept. 17. Survey work is about 75% complete, including 95% complete property research and 95% complete survey of existing storm water pipes. The seismic evaluation of existing structures is about 30% complete. The preliminary traffic counts are 15% complete and the Environmental/NEPA documentation is about 5% complete. The public comment period ended Oct. 12. SCDOT received a total of 102 comments and is now working on assessing the public input. About 203 people attended a public meeting about the project on Sept. 27 and SCDOT has been updating the [project's website](#) to keep the public involved.

- b. Beaufort County Project Update—Colin Kinton
ACTION: Information

Colin Kinton said the county submitted 95% of the plans for the 278/Jenkins Island project to SCDOT about three weeks ago. This week, they completed the field review with SCDOT and are finalizing bid documents. Mr. Kinton said they expect to go out to bid by the end of this year, award the contract in early 2019 and start construction in the first quarter of 2019.

Mr. Kinton also provided an update on the 278 Signal System Initiative. The re-timing of the first seven traffic signals on HHI is still underway. The re-timing of the traffic signals on the mainland and the greater Bluffton area is complete.

Mr. Kinton explained the status of several other projects. The Adaptive Traffic Signal System on 278 is on track to be completed by mid-November. The contract for the three Mast Arm Signal Rebuilds in the City of Beaufort was awarded and mobilization is anticipated within the next four weeks. The county is also reviewing preliminary designs for the WK Alston Connector Road, which will connect to Cross Creek Shopping Center in conjunction with SCDOT's US 21/SC 170 Safety Project. Mr. Kinton said the design for the connector road should be finalized within the next six months.

Mayor Sulka asked when the complete report for the Signal System Initiative would be available. Mr. Kinton said he did not know when they would have the final report for the traffic signals on HHI, but the 278 portion is complete with the exception of the Adaptive Traffic Signal System that is currently underway.

c. Palmetto Breeze Update—Mary Lou Franzoni

ACTION: Information

Mary Lou Franzoni said her staff is currently evaluating successes and needed improvements of the HHI Seasonal Trolley Service, which ended its season on Oct. 14. Trolley service might resume March 14 with a possible shift to later service times, she said. Ms. Franzoni said her staff noticed ridership was low from 9 a.m. to noon compared to evening service times, especially the Tuesday night service that coincided with local fireworks. Palmetto Breeze should receive a third trolley within the next month and they are working on permits for a 1,700-square foot modular building that will provide more office space, Ms. Franzoni said.

David Bennett said he thought ridership was strong and he was pleased with the trolley service overall. He suggested compiling a list of potential improvements that could be implemented next season, including stronger marketing and making the trolley ride more of an experience. Tom Lennox agreed, reiterating the high ridership during the Tuesday night service. Ms. Franzoni said her staff is also assessing ways to better utilize social media to promote the service.

3. New Business.

a. Planning New Public Transit Services

i. Presentation of Results of Consultant Planning Project

ACTION: Information

Chip Burger of AECOM presented findings and recommendations from the New Public Transit Services report. Find the full presentation [here](#).

ii. Discussion of New Public Transit Services in the LATS area

ACTION: Information

Mayor Sulka asked if the recommendations for transit on HHI were targeted more toward tourists or workers. Mr. Burger said mostly tourists, but the recommended services could expand over time to reach more people and places.

Mayor Bennett asked about the possibility of Chatham County or the City of Savannah contributing money for an inter-state route. Mr. Burger said that is a possibility and that he had already had meetings with Chatham County Transit and that organization is very positive about such services.

York Glover asked about using Palmetto Breeze's trolley service to offset lost parking spaces at Hunting Island State Park. Ms. Franzoni said Palmetto Breeze has a contract ready to provide trolley service to the park on the weekends, but the demand was not there this past summer. She said they are ready to provide the service next year too if it is needed.

Mayor Sulka asked how rural service and the challenge of bringing workers into the area ties into the transit study. Mr. Burger said pointed out FTA Section 5311 – Rural Area is among the proposed funding sources because some of the operations would go through rural areas. He said Palmetto Breeze works to bring workers into HHI and Bluffton from rural areas. Members discussed the potential to expand the route proposed in Mr. Burger's report over time as communities west of Bluffton continue to develop and house more workers.

Mayor Bennett asked about a previously discussed idea of creating a park and ride lot in Bluffton through an arrangement with Walmart. Ms. Franzoni said she has not yet approached the company because of a lack of interest and the undecided status of the route the lot would serve. However, she said she is open to developing

a park and ride at Walmart, as well as one on Burnt Church Road, and companies have been agreeable to these arrangements in the past. Ms. Franzoni said she would welcome letters of support from city/town councils.

Mr. Lennox said he was surprised at the affordability of fares. Ms. Franzoni pointed out the rates for the rural services are more expensive, but some employers are now covering transit fares for their employees in an effort to retain qualified workers.

- b. Draft LATS Letter of Support for US 278 Project Application by Beaufort County to SC Transportation Infrastructure Bank (attached)
ACTION. Approve/not approve above letter.

The letter was unanimously approved.

4. Other Business

- a. Beaufort County Referendum Update—Rob McFee
ACTION: Information

Tom Keaveny said county staff have been working to educate the public about the 1% sales tax referendum on the Nov. 6 ballot through meetings and an informational [brochure](#). Within the next two weeks, the consulting firm hired by the county to reach voters will be ramping up radio, television and newspaper advertisements. Keaveny reminded the committee the county can only spread information about referendum. Any advocacy would have to be taken on by businesses and residents.

- b. Jasper Ocean Terminal Update—Sen. Tom Davis
ACTION: Information

Ginnie Kozak said Sen. Tom Davis' office did not have an update about the port to share with the committee. Ms. Kozak referred to a Georgia Ports Authority (GPA) [press release, sent to everyone on the Policy Committee distribution list](#), describing the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project; it was conspicuously silent about the Jasper Ocean Terminal. GPA leaders have also [recently discussed](#) raising the Talmadge Memorial Bridge, casting further doubt about building a port in Jasper County in the near future. Barbara Clark said the Jasper County Council recently voted to file a lawsuit against the South Carolina Ports Authority. Carolyn Kassel, who was there on behalf of Harry Williams, said the City of Hardeeville is putting together a resolution to support Jasper County's lawsuit and they are encouraging all seven counties in the Southern Carolina Regional Development Alliance to join. Mayor Sulka said they could draft a letter of support to present to the LATS Policy Committee to be discussed at the next meeting.

5. Public Comment Period.

Joe Fragale of Sun City thanked committee members for publically supporting the proposed 1% sales tax referendum on the Nov. 6 ballot. He said there should be an upcoming editorial about the proposed sales tax in the *Island Packet*.

Stephen Murray said he attended a recent Southern Carolina Regional Development Alliance meeting where port officials discussed their justification for expanding existing ports instead of investing in a new one. Mr. Murray said he personally thinks a new port will eventually be needed. In the meantime, there is an opportunity to advocate for infrastructure improvements that leverage present opportunities that also position the area to accommodate a new port in the future. Mr. Murray said he thinks the region is owed infrastructure improvements and an adversarial relationship with South Carolina Ports Authority might make advocating for those projects more difficult.

SCDOT representatives said a recent [SCDOT Commission meeting](#) included decisions about targeting rural interstate improvements after the fuel tax credit sunsets. This would specifically apply to the widening of Interstate 95 in the LATS area.

6. Next Meeting. Friday, December 7, 2018.

7. ADJOURN.

DRAFT