

Lowcountry Area Transportation Study (LATS)

Policy Committee Workshop

Friday, January 13, 2017

10:00 a.m.

TCL New River Campus, Conference Room

Policy Committee Members Present:

Chairman Lisa Sulka, Mayor Town of Bluffton
Vice Chair Paul Sommerville, Beaufort County
Council Chair
Barbara Clark, Jasper County Council
David Bennett, Mayor, Town of Hilton Head
Island
Robby Robbins, SCDOT Commission
Sen. Tom Davis, Beaufort County Leg.
Delegation

Harry Williams, Mayor, City of Hardeeville

Policy Committee Designees Present:

Michael McFee, City of Beaufort Council, for
Mayor

Policy Committee Members Absent:

David Blauch, Chairman LRTA Board
Sam Glover, Commissioner SCDOT
Clifton Parker, Commissioner SCDOT
Rep. Bill Herbkersman, Jasper County Leg.
Delegation Chairman
Samuel E. Murray, Mayor Town of Port Royal

Technical Committee Members:

Colin Kinton, Chair, Beaufort County
Shea Farrar, Town of Hilton Head Island
Katie Woodruff, City of Hardeeville
Mary Lou Franzoni, LRTA Executive Director
Kevin Icard, Town of Bluffton
Lisa Wagner, Jasper County

Kraig Gordon, Chair, Beaufort County CTC

Technical Committee Members Absent:

Lauren Kelly, City of Beaufort
Linda Bridges, Town of Port Royal

LCOG Staff Present:

Sabrena Graham, Executive Director
Ginnie Kozak, Planning Director
Lawrence Holdsworth, Regional Planner

SCDOT Staff Present:

Ron Patton, Deputy Secretary
Mark Pleasant, Planning Director
Brent Rewis, Regional Production Group
Manager
Michael Pitts, Program Management
Kenny Larimore, Area Planning Engineer

Others Present:

David Spisso, Mayor Pro Tem, City of
Hardeeville
Mark Wilkes, Interim Executive Director Coastal
Region MPO
John Carrol, Councilman, City of Hardeeville
Frank Turano, Engineer, Alliance Consulting
John Gage, Moffatt and Nichol Consultants
Tom Lennox, Councilman, Town of Hilton Head
Island
Carolyn Kasser, Council, City of Hardeeville
Jason Ball, Ball Maritime Consultants

1. Call to Order.
 - a. Pledge of Allegiance
 - b. Invocation
 - c. Introduction of Members, Guests and Staff
 - d. Designees
 - e. Action on January 8, 2016 Meeting Minutes Deferred until next meeting.

2. Workshop: Jasper County Ocean Terminal and LATS Planning

a. Port Development Update. Moffatt and Nichol Consultants

John Gage, consultant with Moffatt and Nichol, explained that the justification for the Jasper Ocean Terminal (JOT) comes from projections demonstrating that the port of Charleston and the Port of Savannah will reach capacity for container volume by the year 2030. Another justification includes existing limitations on the size of ships that can be served by the ports, with bridges too low to accommodate the next generation of large container ships. Mr. Gage explained the current trajectory of the Environmental Impact Statement to be completed in 6 years. Some of the infrastructure requirements detailed by Mr. Gage include necessary rail connections for CSX and Norfolk Southern, with challenges presented in crossing bodies of water and the Savannah Wildlife Refuge. Mr. Gage explained a structure of Federal law and oversight that influences the permitting of the project, including the River and Harbors Act. Mr. Gage offered a near-term timeline including a public scoping meeting on January 31st, an interagency coordination meeting on February 1st, and public comment period before the delivery of a scoping report on April 28th. Part of a scoping process might identify how best to coordinate needed studies between area MPO's and make sure that GA and SC traffic modeling align to give an accurate projection of traffic impacts from the JOT development. Ginnie Kozak offered that the Lowcountry Model did take GA traffic forecasts into account when calculating traffic demand.

Senator Tom Davis informed the group that Governor Haley had begun appropriations for funding over 5 years to defray costs of necessary infrastructure, and hopes that GA agencies will commit to similar action. Senator Davis asked if the scoping included the need to adjust the area designated for dredge spoils. Mr. Gage replied that this will be considered in Section 408, where impacts to other Federal projects, in this case the Army Corps of Engineers, will be evaluated.

Senator Davis recommended that the statement of need for the construction of the JOT include that the bridge height restriction at the ports in Savannah and Charleston would not accommodate the new generation of container ships. Mr. Gage confirmed.

Colin Kinton asked whether I-95 was being considered for future capacity improvements, given the connection from US 17. Mr. Gage said that more transportation infrastructure would be included in the April scoping document. Senator Davis said the recently approved recurring funds for transportation statewide provide additional resources for I-95 concerns. Mark Pleasant said that the SCDOT is working on an update to the State transportation plan which would incorporate the port development in the ranking for future road improvements. Mr. Kinton asked where I-95 fell in the current ranking. Mr. Pleasant replied that I-95 was not in the list for improvements, but that would be updated. Mr. Kinton said that I-95 was getting close to I-26 in levels of congestion. Ron Patton offered that I-95 traditionally hasn't emerged as a priority due to factors such as density or 24-hour volume, and that more rural segments are relatively low volume when compared to other interstates statewide.

i. SCDOT US 17 Project Update. SCDOT

Craig Winn explained that right of way plans were being finalized, and negotiation of construction funding with GA for the Back River Bridge is underway. The road will be resurfaced before the widening begins, with construction scheduled for April or May of this year.

ii. Transportation Planning Structure and Alternatives. SCDOT

Ms. Kozak proposed that Mark Pleasant offer some guidance on how the LATS can best work with SCDOT specifically on the planning and development of infrastructure supporting the JOT. Ron Patton suggested that communication around traffic modeling and future land use projections would be an important function for MPO's. Mark Pleasant suggested that working groups could be formed to assess impacts of major infrastructure projects, such as is now being done for the new inland port planned for Dillon.

iii. LATS Role and Responsibilities. May include but not be limited to:

1. Regional Leadership. Coordination of the agencies and organizations involved in planning.

NOTE: Per the recent USDOT MPO senior staff roundtable in Atlanta, this level of involvement is currently considered a priority.

2. LATS-related Activities Only. Ensuring implementation of the LATS Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).

3. Other.

LATS Policy Committee

ACTION. Recommend Role.

Lisa Sulka summarized the options available for identifying the appropriate role for the LATS between one of more active engagement versus maintaining and monitoring the existing LRTP. Ms. Sulka pointed out the need for guidance for local governments who are impacted by evolving conditions of the road network, particularly around I-95. Ms. Sulka indicated that the Policy Committee had previously resolved to meet quarterly due to funding constraints resulting from the US 17 project, but monthly meetings could be an option. Senator Davis recommended that both he and representative Herbkersman and members of the SCDOT Commission be granted full voting rights on the committee as opposed to the current an ex-officio designation. Ms. Sulka said that would be considered at the next meeting along with a commitment for regular attendance at meetings so that a quorum could be established. Sen. Davis said that he was committing himself to attending and that he would also talk to Rep. Herbkersman; Commissioner Robbins said that he would attend the meetings unless he had a commitment with his legal practice, in which case he would appoint a designee.

The consensus among the Policy Committee members was to take an active role and to meet more frequently and regularly. As a result, the members determined that the next meeting should be on Friday, February 17, at 10 a.m. at TCL New River.

b. Future US 278 corridor-level improvements in the Hilton Head Island bridges area. SCDOT presentation and a request for funding by LATS for corridor planning and environmental work from SCDOT and Beaufort County.

ACTION. Approve/not approve above request.

Craig Winn provided an overview of the proposed Beaufort County and SCDOT initiative to consolidate various improvements to the US 278 corridor, including the replacement of the eastbound span of the

Mackay Bridge, widening of US 278 from Jenkins Island to Blue Heron Road, and intersection improvements at Pickney Island. To begin the work, a Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Document is needed, for a total cost of \$3,000,000. \$1,000,000 would be contributed by SCDOT, as part of the Mackay Bridge replacement, with the LATS MPO providing the remaining \$2,000,000. Senator Davis asked if LATS had \$2,000,000 to spend, to which Mr. Winn replied that LATS would receive an advance in guideshare funding to accommodate the project. Mr. Rewis noted that Beaufort County would be responsible for reimbursing LATS for the funding if the construction did not move forward.

Mr. Sommerville noted that they would need to understand the sequence of funding for the construction on US 278, and suggested that public relations work might be needed on the project. David Bennet suggested that action is needed on the corridor continuing to I-95, considering the potential development of the Hilton Head National property, and the impact the corridor's traffic performance has on the Island's workforce. Ms. Sulka indicated that there might be some confusion over funding and the financial position of the MPO. Mr. Winn said that considering the widening of 278 would take place approximately four years in the future, it will be easier to find funding for it with a complete environmental and engineering assessment, since preference is given by the State Infrastructure Bank and other funding bodies to "shovel ready" projects. Mark Pleasant added that the work on US 17 was being funded with an advance on guideshare and that this additional contribution of \$2,000,000 by LATS would not alter the US 17 widening's time horizon of 2023, at which time LATS would have guideshare available. Rather, the commitment of \$2,000,000 would only reduce the amount of guideshare available at the completion of the US 17 project.

Mr. Davis asked for an estimate of the local share of the US 278 corridor project. Mr. Kinton said that with an estimated total project cost of \$200,000,000, Beaufort County would be responsible for 80% or \$160,000,000 dollars.

Ms. Sulka wondered what might happen if project costs increase on US-17. Mr. Rewis answered that they would have a better understanding of that within the year.

Mr. Rewis offered that there is a draft agreement between Beaufort County and LATS, pending approval at the Beaufort County Council Meeting in February, which describes the conditions of reimbursement between the County and the MPO if construction on US 278 does not move forward. Ms. Sulka asked the Policy Committee for a motion to approve LATS funding of the engineering and environmental study for US 278 pending the agreement with Beaufort County. The motion was approved.

iv. Adjournment.