

FLATS POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING
November 10, 2008
APPROVED MINUTES

Voting Members Present:

Senator Hugh Leatherman
Councilman Billy D. Williams
Councilman Morris Anderson
Representative Kris Crawford
Mayor Ashby Gregg
Sherwin Welch

Non-Voting Members Present:

William Hoge
Janice Baroody
Peter M. Knoller

Study Team Members Present:

Chris Gossett, SCDOT
Phil Goff, PDCOG
Derrell Rice, SCDOT
Kevin Sheppard, SCDOT
David Burgess, SCDOT
Michael Bethea, SCDOT
Shane Belcher, FHWA

Staff Present:

Scott Park
Debi Matthews
Renee Proctor

Senator Leatherman called the meeting to order.

The first item on the agenda was to approve the minutes from the July 1, 2008 meeting. Councilman Williams made a motion and Councilman Anderson made 2nd motion to approve. Carried unanimously.

The second item on the agenda was an update from the County Transportation Committee by it's Chairman, Sherwin Welch:

- The CTC is trying to use the small amount of money they have received to help the municipalities and the county and work closely with DOT to try to keep up the roads and streets we have. Senator Leatherman added that this committee does a great job using the money that they get. He has seen the results around the county and it appears that it is being spread all around the county and not in any one particular place.

The third item on the agenda was an update from the Pee Dee Council of Governments by Phil Goff:

- Mr. Goff supplied each member with 4 maps in their long range planning program. One of their primary policy goals is to have regional connectivity. To make sure that as many of our communities in the six counties that the PDCOG serves has 4 lane highway access to the Interstates and between each other.

Approximately \$7.9 million is available to the Pee Dee Region from Federal and State funds each year for road widening for the entire 6 counties of the Pee Dee Region. Until approximately year 2022, about \$2.5 million of that is used for paying the debt service on

bonds that the state of SC issued about 8 years ago to accelerate some of these road projects. Therefore, we have a little over \$5 million to widen the roads in the Pee Dee. With road widening costing between \$2-\$4 million per mile, depending on which route, that doesn't give the Pee Dee outside the FLATS area much money to work with. However, the 3 routes mentioned on map 1 in green are programmed for widening. They should be able to complete all of those routes in the next 5-7 years.

Senator Leatherman urged the PDCOG to pursue with DOT to see if they could use the \$5 million to debt service bonds, which would generate about \$55 million.

Mr. Goff said he thought most of the bonding authority the State had for highways he thinks was used up in the original bond. However, there are some upcoming meetings between the MPO's, DOT and the COG's and they will certainly raise that issue with them.

Sherwin Welch asked if the COG has prioritized the roads in the order that they think they should be done.

Mr. Goff indicated that beyond the 3 routes they have allocated money to, they have not. There is a great deal of public interest in the Highway 9 project in Chesterfield County. It is a missing link between I-95 and most of the Pee Dee to the Pageland and Charlotte area, so it has a lot of public support. US301 and US52 also have some public support.

Mr. Welch said he understands the need for 4-lanes, but when we think of prioritizing, we need to focus on the upkeep of the roads we already have to keep from having to rebuild.

Mr. Goff called their attention to the last map indicating green routes of existing 4-lane highways that carry a lot of traffic such as US Highway 52 South outside of the FLATS area, US 76/501 going towards the beach and a couple of other routes. Turn lanes and shoulder work is needed on these and this is apart of their long range plan.

Senator Leatherman said he met with the Secretary of DOT two weeks ago regarding I-73. It has been designated as one of the top priorities in the nation. They have about \$80-\$90 million available. The Environmental Impact Studies have been done certainly on the Southern lake and possibly on the northern lake and they plan to start buying right-of-ways. They have put out a Request For Proposal for a private sector to come in and build and own that highway. They had some interest out of Australia and Spain. The private sector would build and maintain the road for the next twenty years, so DOT is looking and searching for a way to get I-73 built. They recognize the importance of it.

The fourth item on the agenda was an SCDOT update by Chris Gossett:

- A list of the projects under the sales tax program in priority:
 - The Pine Needles project was broken up into two phases. Phase I, which was the substructure and the prestress beams of the two spans over I-95, is currently complete. Phase 2 is currently under construction with some clearing being done by Weaver Construction. This project is scheduled to

be completed in the summer of 2010. Senator Leatherman asked if they would keep traffic flowing over I-95 during construction. Mr. Gossett concurred they would with possibly a couple of night closings.

- The next project is Highway 378 which is the widening to 5-lanes of 18.2 miles between US52 and SC41. Estimated at \$139 million. They are currently in the design phase. DOT is designing this in house. They have begun the process of the environmental studies, hiring an on-call consultant in conjunction with the DOT environmental staff. The project will be broken up into 5 sections. Section 1 and 2 will be let as a single contract. Are expecting right-of-way in the fall of '09 and construction in the winter of 2010. Will be a 2 year construction. Towards the end of that construction, phase 3 and 4 will be LET to contract and towards the end of that construction, phase 5 will be LET. There will 5-7 years of construction on 378.
- US76 from 95 to main street in Timmons ville. They currently have STV/Ralph Whitehead under contract doing the environmental and design for widening 4 miles. The field, aerial and underground utility surveys have been completed and they are going through the environmental and alternative analysis now. We should have something on that in the next few months. They anticipate going to start right-of-way acquisition in fall of '09 and construction in the spring/summer of 2012.
- TV Road from Wilson Road to just beyond I-95, Blanchard. Last week he finished negotiations with Earth Tech for their fee. They will be doing the environmental and design services for this, which is 3.8 miles of widening. Looking at right-of-way acquisition in the fall of 2010. This will be a 2 year process. The beginning of this road is heavily residential. Construction in the fall of 2012. Looking at 2 years for construction.
- SC51: The entire project is 23.6 miles from Florence to SC41. This is approximately \$150 million project. We are going to break this project up into 4 sections. We have just started programming and getting some schedule for the section from Florence to Pamplico. We will concentrate on that section first. Preliminary Engineering out to fall of 2012 and right-of-way starting summer of 2010 through fall of 2012 and then construction after that.
- Extension of 301 By-Pass. Widening of Alligator from US76 to US52. About 7.5 miles and \$73-\$74 million project. We have not started this project. The way the sales tax project program is set up, we cannot start the next project on the priority until the previous project is completely paid for and we know exactly where that money is coming from. With the current program, we think we can get through SC51 and then the money will be gone. Therefore, we will not start this project until we get some contracts LET on 378 and some of these others. Once we see what those prices look like then we'll project out and if we think we have money to start this, we'll start some preliminary engineering.

Senator Leatherman stated that he serves on the State Infrastructure Bank Board and he is not bashful to go back to Columbia and ask for additional money. So, he'll keep an eye on that and see what they can do to help.

Mr. Gossett continued with a FLATS project, the 301 By-Pass. This project is completed and looking at getting all of those cost in. We have approximately \$900,000 left to roll back into the FLATS budget that can be applied to the next project in the STIP. That next project is S. Cashua and I'll have a presentation on that to the Study Team at the next meeting.

Sherwin Welch voiced his concern on the length of time to complete the Pine Needles project due to the many calls he is receiving from area residents.

Representative Crawford had a question in regards to the financing of one cent sales tax projects. We were going to have to fill with sales tax revenue up to a point where the State Infrastructure Bank would match and then the Senator was very successful in getting the exception for Pine Needles so we could begin right away. Two questions:

- a) Where did that forward fill stand, have we completely matched the Pine Needles project and are we on to matching other projects.
- b) Has anyone done a calculation locally? I know the statewide amount of state tax revenues are significantly off. Is that true locally and if so, what does that mean to our time schedule.

Senator Leatherman stated that the last he heard the state was ahead. If he remembers correctly, we are to either stay on for 7 years or until we reach \$150 million. He asked Mr. Hoge if he had any information on this.

Mr. Hoge advised not on that question, but he spoke with Richard Starks about a week ago and he has been looking very closely at the sales tax from a local perspective and that the month of August compared to the previous August was down a small amount. He was concerned that the downward trend might continue. My understanding is that September of this year was either the same or very slightly above September of last year, so as of right now, the sales tax numbers here are staying pretty level.

Representative Crawford asked if we had collected all of the money for the Pine Needles project.

Senator Leatherman would venture to say yes. He continued to add that many residents ask why their project is where it is on the schedule. This is what everyone voted on. The order of the projects were listed on the ballot as they are prioritized.

Councilman Anderson asked why work was done on Pine Needles and then a long timeframe when nothing was done?

Mr. Gossett stated they were trying to get the design for the rest of the project and getting a contract executed. It has been executed now. The contractor, Weaver Construction,

just had the pre-construction meeting with all of the right-of-way and local construction folks a few weeks ago and immediately after that they started clearing. It is a local contractor so he should start picking up speed pretty quick.

The first item of old business is Enhancement Project updates by Scott Park:

- The City has been granted an extension on the Lucas Street Intersection Gateway project to take care of some Brownfield issues. The extension is for March of '09.
- The owners of Red Doe Plantation have responded to the technical review, but SCODT is still waiting some more details.
- The Irby Street Gateway is still in technical review.

The federal government is currently reviewing the enhancement program.

The first item of new business is TIP amendments:

- For information purposes, one correction due to the final federal funding bill. Almost \$35,000 has been added to Section 5307 and almost \$174,000 has been reapportioned from other rural areas. This is the New Freedom Program Section 5317. This is money from the State that has not been used.

Senator Leatherman asked more information on the \$174,000 to see if they would want to pursue money from other areas that are not using their money. Would this mean that we and other areas share the money?

Scott concurred that the Senator was correct. This is money over and above what we are scheduled to get. We have also amended the debt service line in the TIP to concur with the STIP. This amount went down.

Sherwin Welch asked where the money comes from for PDRTA.

Janice Baroody advised that Section 5307 funds are federal funds. PDRTA is a direct recipient for them.

- The next item regarding the TIP requires action. This is a new program called New Freedom also going to PDRTA in the amount of \$76,000 specifically for the FLATS urban area.

Senator Leatherman asked what the money would be used for.

Janice Baroody advised that the \$174,000 is being used for an additional vehicle for the Florence transit system and the \$76,000 is for enhancements that go beyond what the APA requires. The New Freedom is a new program authorized under SAFTEA-LU, but they have just released the funding competitive grant that we applied for.

Representative Crawford asked Ms. Baroody if she could tell them what type of things go on beyond ADA requirements.

Ms. Baroody stated that they would expand their hours. They offer a Complementary Care Transit Service. If you cannot ride a city bus due to a disability, we will send a van for you. They are only required to offer this service during peak service hours, so if we offer that service beyond those required hours, that would be a part of the New Freedom. In the urbanized area it was capital to purchase another ADA accessible vehicle and for some automated fair boxes for people who did not have the ability to get to our office to purchase tokens. We will now be able to sell those tokens directly from the vehicle to the client.

Councilman Anderson made a motion to approve the New Freedom Program. Sherwin Welch 2nd the motion. Carried unanimously.

The second item of new business was amendments to add additional members to the FLATS By-Laws:

- Add Highway Commissioner District 5 to Policy Committee voting members. A portion of the FLATS area is in her district.

Representative Crawford asked what percentage was in her district.

Mr. Park said he did not have a definite percentage, but would probably be around 10%. If an enhancement project was in the area that fell into her district, she would be made aware of it.

Senator Leatherman asked that we carry this over and take a look at it later.

- Add Darlington County Planning Director to Study Team Member since the FLATS boundary includes part of Darlington County.

Senator Leatherman asked what percentage was in Darlington County.

Mr. Park advised that it was approximately 10%.

Representative Crawford could not recall receiving a copy of the By-Laws and would like to carry over the two mentioned in addition to the remaining two after staff gets the members another copy of the By-Laws.

Mr. Park advised he would send a map and highlight their areas.

The final item of new business was the RFQ recommendation and presentation by Scott Park:

- At the July 1st meeting, the policy committee gave staff the approval to submit the RFQ for our Long Range Transportation Plan. We had 3 submittals and the selection committee reviewed all and ranked them, a copy of which is in your packets. Kimley-Horn was chosen by the committee. We are asking today for the committee's approval to negotiate a contract amount with Kimley-Horn.

Mr. Hoge advised the committee that we have \$50,000 in the planning budget that can be reimbursed by FLATS if we do this project. This group would look at our current transportation system and future transportation upgrades and prioritize that based on current funding and for any potential additional funding that can be done. They will look at access management and put together all of these pieces into a Long Range Plan. A consultant would look at new roads or new locations where DOT's principal focus is looking at widening existing roads.

Senator Leatherman asked if DOT could do this and if this money could be used for anything else.

Mr. Hoge advised that DOT could do some of these in modeling, but a consultant would bring a wider spectrum of modeling and understanding and concentration in the process. This money is regular FLATS money and potentially could be used. Right now with our FLATS money as it is we have no resources this year. Next year we have a small amount. We think this is a great way to do things so that as we start gathering funds, we put them in the right places for the right amount of money and spend the money early in the process where we can get the most value for the buck. We are required through the laws to have a Long Range Plan out through at least 2030.

Senator Leatherman asked again if DOT could do this for us.

Mr. Hoge said after watching it in another location there are some significant advantages in getting another set of eyes on it and we could control the time and scope. The consultant handles local stakeholder meetings and the expertise they bring in putting all of this information together is well worth the small amount of money. The other thing we plan to get done with this is to get input for the Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element required as we continue through the comprehensive plan process. The money would have to be paid up front and then we'd be reimbursed through FLATS. \$50,000 is the maximum amount that it can be. It is a one time thing. We will be negotiating the contract price with them. We've gone through the Request For Qualification process and we are here today to ask you to approve the firm, Kimley Horn, for us to negotiate a contract with. We would bring back the best negotiated number to you for the approval of the final contract.

Representative Crawford made the motion to allow staff to go forward with the negotiation with the understanding to come back to them before the money is disbursed. Motion was 2nd. Carried unanimously.

Mr. Hoge concurred that the money could not be spent without their approval. [The Policy Committee later received additional information on the contract and the planning funds available to pay for the contract. The Policy Committee then approved the LRTP contract]

Shane Belcher, FHWA, advised committee that FLATS is required to update their Long Rang Plan every five years. Every other MPO uses a consultant to update their plan.

There is a lot of detailed information that has to go into the plan besides highway projects. The plan has to be multi-modal, it must include transit and bicycle/pedestrian trails, a large level of public involvement and several other things. If you do not have a Long Range Plan, you do not have projects. Therefore they would not fund any projects. SCDOT can do a plan, but he has yet to see that take place.

Mr. Hoge advised committee that Kimley-Horn was at the meeting with a short presentation if committee would like to see.

Senator Leatherman said they'd rather see the number we're talking about before a presentation.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.