

**FLORENCE AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY (FLATS)
POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 12, 2014
APPROVED**

Voting Members Present:

Senator Hugh Leatherman
Mayor Ashby Gregg
Mr. Sherwin Welch
Mayor Stephen Wukela
Commissioner Mike Wooten
Councilman James Schofield
Councilman Waymon Mumford

Non-Voting Members Present:

Chuck MacNeil
Jay Graham
Rusty Smith
Dennis Townsend
Drew Griffin
Drew Chaplin

Staff Present:

Debi Matthews
Renee Proctor

Study Team Members Present:

Michelle Shepherd, SCDOT
Kevin Sheppard, SCDOT
Michael Bethea, SCDOT
Phillip Lookadoo

Guest Speakers:

Lionel Brown

Senator Leatherman called the meeting to order.

Ms. Matthews presented the agenda items to the committee.

The first item of business was to approve the minutes from the August 26, 2013 meeting. Mayor Wukela made a motion to approve and Mr. Welch seconded. Vote carried unanimously.

The second item of business was the election of Chairman and Vice Chairman. Senator Leatherman vacated the Chair. Senator Leatherman turned it over to Mayor Wukela. Sherwin Welch made a motion to keep the same officers as last year. Commissioner Wooten seconded the motion. Vote carried unanimously. Mayor Wukela finalized the voting process and turned the Chair back over to Senator Leatherman.

The third item of business presented was the FY2015 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The FLATS MPO receives federal funds from the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration annually to develop transportation

plans and programs. The UPWP outlines the transportation related planning activities and identifies a program of work elements for the FLATS MPO staff. These funds are used for staff hours and consulting assistance. The total allocation for FY2015 is \$299,172. 80% is federally funded (\$250,588) and 20% local match requirement is funded by Florence County (\$48,584). The 10-day public comment period for the FY2015 UPWP was held from May 20th through May 30th with no comments being received. Mayor Wukela made a motion to approve and Councilman Schofield seconded. Vote carried unanimously.

The fourth item of business was the FY2014-2019 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Financial Sheet Amendments. The funding amounts for the first section of the financial sheet (Guideshare Projects). The S. Cashua project is to be allocated \$4,300,000 for ROW in FY2014 and \$7,400,000 for Construction in FY2015. The FLATS annual guideshare allocations are anticipated to be \$2,487,000 for FY2014 and \$3,107,000 for FY2015-2019. The FLATS MPO has a carryover available of \$4,432,000 to begin FY2014. SCDOT advancements are added in FY2014 and FY2015 to make these fiscal years balance. It is anticipated that the FLATS MPO will have approximately \$977,000 in FY2017 to allocate towards another project.

Senator Leatherman wanted to know if guideshare funds had increased because of the rescinding of the 20%. Ms. Matthews stated that our annual allocation has increased from \$2.4M to \$3.1M because the formula has been changed. Most of the MPO's are getting more money but the COGS are getting less. Commissioner Wooten concurred that because of the change in the formula, the COG's got hurt but the MPO's did much better.

Senator Leatherman thanked Commissioner Wooten for getting the 20% resurfacing and intersection improvement allocation rescinded. It took him a while because the previous Chairman did not want to put the issue on the agenda. Now there is a new Chairman.

The second section of the TIP financial sheet was presented (Transportation Alternatives Program). This is the new statewide competitive grant program that is now part of the new MAP-21 transportation bill. The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) approved the Francis Marion University Highway SC 327 project for the FY2013 grant. This project has been added to this section as required.

The third section of the TIP financial sheet presented was the Capital Sales Tax Projects. A total of \$271,675,000 is being allocated for the construction of these projects in FY2014:

- US 378 Project - \$112,278,000;
- US 76 Project - \$23,706,000;
- TV Road Project - \$23,706,000;
- Pamlico Hwy. Project - \$111,985,000;
- US 301 Bypass or Alligator Rd. Project - \$23,436,000 allocated for right-of-way in FY2014 and \$45,490,000 allocated for construction in FY2018.

The fourth section presented was Federal Transit Administration. This section lists the amount of FY2014 funds applied for by the Public Transportation Agencies within the FLATS area:

- Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority (PDRTA) has applied for
 - \$210,000 for Capital and \$905,000 for Operations through the FTA 5307 Program;
- Florence County Senior Citizens Association has applied for
 - \$23,000 for Operations through the FTA 5310 Program;
- Florence County Disabilities and Special Needs Board has applied for
 - \$46,000 for Capital through the FTA 5310 Program;
- Darlington County Council on Aging has applied for
 - \$48,000 for Capital through the FTA 5310 Program.

Senator Leatherman asked what the procedure of the funding to PDRTA was. Ms. Matthews advised she was not sure and asked Mr. MacNeil to answer the question. Mr. MacNeil stated that the \$210,000 and \$905,000 was the amount they have applied for in federal funds. The application process took place a couple of months ago. The amount they are allocated will be awarded to them in the federal fiscal year, beginning in October, 2014.

The fifth section presented was the Projects Exempt from Guideshare. The SCDOT has provided projects within the FLATS and Pee Dee area that funding has been allocated towards through the National Highway Performance Program and the Surface Transportation Program for fiscal years 2014 through 2019. The 10-day public comment period for the TIP was held from May 20th through May 30th with no comments being received. Mayor Wukela Made a motion to approve and Councilman Mumford seconded. Vote carried unanimously.

The fifth item of business was Transportation Alternatives program (TAP) Application. The funds from this program are not allocated to the FLATS MPO. This is a statewide competitive grant. The specifics of the project are as follows:

- To provide pedestrian access to Lucy T. Davis and Moore Middle School for children living in the Vintage Place, Meadows, Quail Pointe and Kenswood Subdivisions off of Hoffmeyer Rd.;
- The application includes letters of support from the City of Florence and the SCDOT District 5 Engineering Administrator;
- The SCDOT will be the Administrator for the project;
- The total cost of the project is \$193,314.00;
- The applicant is requesting \$154,651.00 from the TAP Grant;
- Florence School District One will be responsible for the local match of \$38,663.00;
- The SCDOT Enhancement Department has done a preliminary review of the application and concurs that it does meet the requirements for a TAP project.

Ms. Matthews asked for a motion for the Policy Committee to forward this application to the SCDOT for consideration for the FY2014 grant and include this project in the FLATS TIP if approved. Ms. Matthews stated that Superintendent Brown with Florence School District One was there and also Mr. Ervin with Ervin Engineering if there were any questions.

Mr. Welch stated that District One is going to everybody for money. He thought that everything was supposed to be in the plans for a project before you ever started but feels the school district is always coming back looking for money for more work that should have been in the plan to start with. He stated that they had been to his committee looking for money. Mr. Brown responded to the question. He stated that this request came to them in the aftermath of the project. They had concluded building the Lucy T. Davis School as well as the Moore Middle School. This was not something that was overlooked. It was simply a request of the residents that were contiguous to those schools. They did not have knowledge of this prior to the project itself. Mr. Welch asked if this should not have been in the original plan. Mr. Brown said that it could have been but as we look at the relationship that the school district has with the City and the responsibilities, respectfully they fall under the SCDOT. Mr. Welch stated that he believed that these were all new construction roads. He stated that the SCDOT did the turn lane off of Hoffmeyer for them but some of this is all new roads and streets. Mr. Brown said that the bulk of the sidewalks are not on the property. Mr. Ervin stated that the majority of the sidewalks are inside the SCDOT right of way or public right of way maybe 85 or 90% of it.

Mayor Wukela stated that Mr. Welch's question was well placed however from the City of Florence prospective they have gotten numerous calls wanting to know why the City has not put sidewalks in there and looked to them for the responsibility of putting in the pedestrian pathways. Of course, the City did not have funds to do that. He thinks this is important to be included in the initial stage of a project going forward. Commissioner Wooten said that they had this question raised a couple of meetings ago and wanted to know why SCDOT kept getting involved in improvements for school districts. He answered respectfully to Mr. Brown that school districts put all of their money on purchasing the land, on the schools, the grounds and what they do in the classrooms. The school districts seem to feel like the rest is the responsibility of others. Under the last highway bill there was the Safe Routes to School Program for each state that could be competed for but under this bill that amount of money is dramatically small. You have the school districts focused on educating the kids and their building but they are not focused on anything outside their campus. The question always comes up as to whose responsibility is it? Is it the City's, DOT's or the County's? It would be great if there was a lot more coordination when new schools are built at the municipal level when the plans are reviewed as to how the kids are going to get there. He thinks that it could be handled a lot better but it has to be handled at the local level to bring up that question. Mr. Welch said that site plans should be first thing. Commissioner Wooten

said that when you look at transportation routing for getting in and out of the school for vehicular traffic and busses, there is a procedure that the designer has to go through, not only DOT but there is a special section on the board of education that looks at and approves that traffic routing plan. He does not think that pedestrians come in to that and maybe it should happen on a statewide level. Senator Leatherman asked if that was something that should be required at the State level. Commissioner Wooten said that it should be looked at under site plan review at the local level and State just like they look at vehicular travel patterns. It may slow down some of the after the fact requests that they see all of the time. Commissioner Wooten said that he does not think there has been a Commission meeting since he has been on the Commission when there has not been a funding request for additional vehicular help for pedestrian help with the school district.

Councilman Mumford said that he understands when the school is just looking at their premises but when they look at the roadway and the entrance they are probably looking at it as a City, County or State concern but it needs to be looked at as a safety issue and the liability falls on us so the children have safe passage to and from. Senator Leatherman concurs but agrees with Mr. Welch that it needs to be looked at on the front end instead of an afterthought. Commissioner Mumford and Mayor Gregg questioned the TAP funding. Commissioner Wooten explained that this was a competitive grant. This grant program is for projects like this where the school was built and the sidewalks are an afterthought. This grant is an off shoot of the Safe Routes to School program so the money is there. It is federal funding for the SCDOT but it is competitive. Ms. Matthews advised that the TAP applications are not required to be approved by the Policy Committee prior to forwarding to the SCDOT for consideration since the TAP grant is a Statewide Competitive grant. However, the Policy Committee has asked that she present all applications to them before forwarding to the SCDOT. Mayor Wukela stated that this would help the City out with the calls they have received and made a motion for approval. Councilman Mumford seconded. Vote carried unanimously.

The sixth item of business was an update on the SAFETEA-LU and Map-21 Enhancement projects.

- Transportation Enhancement Program (SAFETEA-LU):
 - Red Doe Plantation Restoration Project: (FY2008)
 - January 13, 2014 - The South Carolina Department Of Transportation (SCDOT) issued the approval for Florence County to award the Construction Contract to Midwest Maintenance;
 - February 17, 2014 - Florence County issued a Notice to Proceed to Midwest Maintenance;
 - Anticipated Completion Date is the end of June or first of July, 2014.
 - No Name Creek Trail: (FY2010)

- The City of Florence has submitted a new scope of work request for this project to the SCDOT;
- A new scope of work map was included in the Study Team’s packet;
- Phillip Lookadoo, The City of Florence presented new work scope as follows:

Phillip explained to the Policy Committee members that the City of Florence has submitted a new scope of work for the No Name Creek Trail as an amendment to the project. The original scope showed that they would pave behind Lowes and Walmart on David McLeod Blvd. and Beltline. The paving of that section would call for a lot more trees to be removed. Otherwise it would fail to meet the America’s Disabilities Act (ADA) requirement. Property owners that had easements were not interested in that so with the redevelopment with the old Pepsi plant as Academy Sports, the City had the opportunity to connect the existing rail trail to a sidewalk on Woody Jones Blvd. that Academy Sports developed with their project. With additional funds allocated to the City from the new penny sales tax, they will eventually tie into the Veteran’s Park and Civic Center.

- Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) (MAP-21):
 - Francis Marion University Highway SC 327
 - Engineering is projected to be completed by the end of this month;
 - SCDOT to prepare bid package in November, 2014;
 - Bid phase of one month to begin in December, 2014;
 - Contract Award & Scheduling to begin in January, 2015;
 - Anticipated construction date of February, 2015.

The seventh item of business was SCDOT updates. Michelle stated that the right of way acquisition is well under way for S. Cashua. The project is on schedule to Let in the fall of 2015. Regarding the Florence County sales tax projects, they received an additional \$90M in S.C. State Transportation Infrastructure funds in December which were approved by the Joint Bond Review Committee for the US301 Bypass and Alligator Rd. widening project. Sales tax collections received as of March 31st total \$138M excluding interest earnings. They have successfully Let four construction contracts between November and May. Those include the US378 widening. The groundbreaking was March 31st. US76 and TV Road widening has been Let and is under construction. All construction bids have come in under budget. The US378 widening is being Let in phases. Sections 3 & 4 were Let in May and section 5 will be Let in August. The first section of SC51 will be Let in early 2015. The current right of way acquisition phase is well under way. The US301 bypass project is in the preliminary engineering phase but they are working diligently to move forward. It’s actually way out in the future in terms of the Letting schedule. Commissioner Wooten asked if everything was on budget and Michelle replied yes. Mayor Gregg asked if there was a completion date for TV Rd. in which Michelle replied spring of 2015.

Councilman Mumford commended Michelle for her tremendous expertise and the wonderful job she is doing with Florence County.

The eighth item of business was transportation agency updates. Sherwin Welch stated that money was tight and they have over \$5M worth of projects throughout the County that need to be finished.

Chuck MacNeil with PDRTA stated that this time a year ago the transportation agency serving the entire Pee Dee (six counties), to be blunt was in financial distress. PDRTA had to cut 70% of their services including their workforce and resources and he was fearful as to whether they'd be able to save the agency. However, they were able to based on two fundamental approaches. One was very difficult in them having to cut some services throughout many areas in the six county region of the Pee Dee, but they were able to sustain mission critical services in the urbanized areas of Darlington and Florence. The other reason they were able to survive that period was the support of municipalities where service still exists today. The cities and counties became his quick heroes because they understood the economic impact of this service beyond the quality of life issues and the consequential detriment of losing this service to the economy in the region because people are either accessing a job or an education. So basically, in large part due to the cities and counties providing funds, they were able to provide the local match required to leverage the Federal dollars approved in the previous TIP for FY2013. Mr. MacNeil provided the committee with some documentation showing the use of their service for the Florence Transit system. The service did go down a little. They cut 1,700 hours of service which is a 9% loss of service from the previous year. Their main goal is to become more efficient. This past year they have increased the number of passengers per hour by 17%. Chuck stated that 45% of the riders are accessing jobs which help with regional economy. Twenty percent are going to school. They have had a significant increase of riders going to Francis Marion University (FMU) and Florence Darlington Technical College. PDRTA does have some commitments for the required local match for the upcoming fiscal year and he remains hopeful.

Mayor Wukela stated that in FY2013/14 the City of Florence more than doubled their allocation to the PDRTA because of the constraint they found themselves in. PDRTA has transitioned from a Medicaid transport provider to an urban transit provider. While they have cut their service by 70%, they have still seen their passengers per hour increase. The City of Florence regards them as critical to the City. Obviously they provide transportation to FMU as well. They are critical to the downtown's development. The City would like to see them get folks from McLeod back and forth to downtown.

Chuck stated that they are working on innovative things and rely on other potential resources such as private industry to help them with downtown shuttles which is moving forward and should have positive news on that in a couple of months or so as well as an evening shuttle service connecting the hospitality district with all of the great activity and development going on with downtown such as the FMU Performing Arts

Center and the Florence Little Theater. First they had to focus on the past year to make sure they could send the bus down the road.

The ninth item of business was the FLATS Newsletter. Ms. Matthews stated that this is an avenue to inform the public of transportation related activities performed by the FLATS MPO. She will be distributing those newsletters to various venues throughout the FLATS area.

The tenth item of business was Other Discussion. Ms. Matthews stated that the Non-Voting Policy Committee has a change in membership. Mr. John Walsh with the SCDOT has retired and Ron Patton whom is the Chief Engineer for Location and Design with the SCDOT will succeed Mr. Walsh.

Ms. Matthews advised that Mayor Watkins with the City of Darlington had requested a meeting with FLATS staff to discuss a potential intersection project to be included on the list of potential projects to utilize the 20% guideshare requirement. The City of Darlington is now in our urbanized area and eligible for FLATS funding. The City of Darlington has been in discussion with Walmart and a new intersection is required at the potential location. Ms. Matthews forwarded the information to the SCDOT for ranking. This project ranked fifth and it has been included on our list for future reference. Ms. Matthews is maintaining that list for the Policy Committee.

The Senator asked Commissioner Wooten if it was normal for the SCDOT to install new intersections for new businesses or if it was the responsibility of new businesses such as Walmart. Commissioner Wooten stated that normally the developer would be required to make these improvements. They would do a traffic study and whatever improvements are necessitated by that study would be the developer's responsibility.

Ms. Matthews replied that it was her understanding that the City of Darlington had made this offer as an incentive to get Walmart to come there and Mayor Watkins was hoping that this could be funded through the 20% guideshare requirement. Senator Leatherman said this type of a project was the DOT's standing operating procedure and he did not think that we wanted to start going outside of that and set a precedent. Commissioner Wooten stated that these type projects are normally reserved for industry coming in that goes to a coordinating council which has money set aside for those types of improvements. Rarely do you see those things done for a retailer.

The final item on the agenda was public comments: There were none.

There being no further business, Commissioner Wooten made a motion for the meeting to adjourn and Mayor Gregg seconded.