



**POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING
SUMMARY MINUTES
September 22, 2017 – 12:00 p.m. (NOON)
Manchester Meadows Conference Room**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Doug Echols (proxy), Brian Carnes, George Sheppard; Britt Blackwell; Guynn Savage; Bill Harris; Kathy Pender; Michael Johnson; Jim Reno; Wes Climer; Gary Simrill (proxy); and Gene Branham.

ADMINISTRATIVE / TECHNICAL / MANAGEMENT STAFF PRESENT:

Vic Edwards (SCDOT); Susan Britt (City of Tega Cay); Cliff Goolsby (City of Rock Hill); Yolanda Morris (FHWA); Joe Cronin (Town of Fort Mill); Berry Mattox (SCDOT); Penelope Karagounis (Lancaster County); Keith Powell (SCDOT); Allison Love (York County); Mark Pleasant (SCDOT); Bill Meyer (City of Rock Hill); Robby Moody (CRCOG); David Gamble (SCDOT); Jeremy Winkler (City of Rock Hill); Audra Miller (York County); Jim Feda (SCDOT); Rob Ruth (City of Rock Hill); Steve Allen (York County); Crystal McCutcheon (SCDOT); Cindi Howard (City of Rock Hill); David Harmon (York County); Jason Johnston (SCDOT); David Vehaun (City of Rock Hill); Bill Shanahan (York County); Josh Meetze (SCDOT); Ron Pompey (York County); Randy Imler (Catawba COG); Jessica Hekter (FHWA); Chris Herrmann (RFATS); and David Hooper (RFATS).

CITIZENS / VISITORS PRESENT: Frank Myers (CAC); Larry Huntley (Fort Mill Town Council); Luther Dasher (CAC); Dr. David Keely (CAC); Hisham Abdelaziz (CDM Smith); Patrick White (Fort Mill School District); Rob Youngblood (York County Chamber); Phil Leazer (KCI); Alexandria Savage (CN2); Kenneth Johnson (AECOM); Trudie Bolin-Heemsoth (Fort Mill Town Council); Teresa Thomas (Office of Sen. Lindsey Graham); Heather Overman (Tega Cay); Mike Mistretta (Tega Cay); Al Steele (Fort Mill); Scot Sibert (WSP); and David Kerns (HDR).

1. CALL TO ORDER:

a. Welcome – Vice-Chairman Carnes called the meeting to order at 12:02 P.M. and welcomed all in attendance. Mr. Sheppard made a motion to hear agenda item 5.a. first and agenda item 4.a. second; this was seconded by Ms. Savage and the motion was unanimously approved.

b. Citizen Comment Period – No comments were made at this time.

5. PROPOSED POLICY COMMITTEE ACTION ITEMS:

a. Amended Study Area – Mr. Hooper briefly reviewed the expanded study area for evaluating a broader range of planning options for the area originally covered in the 2011-12 Catawba River Bridge Feasibility Study as well as all adjacent roadways leading into and out of this study area. As a point of reference, it was noted that the original study evaluated the area between Mt Gallant and Sutton Road from the Sutton Road Interchange to just north of Harris Road for the potential incorporation of a new network link. Mr. Hooper then transitioned into a brief summary of the three principal approaches to addressing traffic congestion: (1) undertaking capacity improvements (i.e., road widenings, new alignments, alternate routes, etc.); (2) extracting a greater degree of efficiency from existing transportation infrastructure (i.e., interchange reconfigurations, intersection improvements, etc.); and (3) changes in travel and land use patterns that will cause drivers to utilize the transportation system in less congestion producing ways (i.e., transit, land use decisions, TDM, etc).

Mr. Hooper then outlined a range of evaluation options to include the following:

- The incorporation of an expressway south of the Catawba River connecting I-77 to Mt. Gallant Road to assist in lessening the southbound demand level approaching the I-77 / Celanese Road interchange by incorporating an alternate route to more effectively distribute travel demand during the PM peak period.
- Adaptive traffic control signals, which would adjust signal timing to operating conditions in real time to take account of shifting demand levels throughout the day.
- Performing operational analyses on corridor intersections in an effort to improve green time efficiency
- Examining one of the alternatives identified from the bridge feasibility study (the so-called Harris Road option); which would involve new interstate access.
- Evaluation of the operational impact of a mass transit system on overall demand levels (i.e., the transit mode split or the percentage of drivers who would opt for transit on a consistent and reliable basis, and then assessing what the operational impact would be on traffic congestion levels.
- Analysis of the Celanese / Riverchase intersection and potential options regarding “de-signalization and/or closure of this intersection with traffic being re-routed to Riverview Road further away from the I-77 exit ramp.

Ms. Savage then noted her appreciation for the expanded range of evaluation options being outlined, and then highlighted the importance of recognizing that the evaluation of congestion levels really involves two components – one along the arterial roadways, and another regarding the operational back-up / safety concern occurring along I-77 itself. Additionally, Ms. Savage referenced the color coding differences during peak periods from google maps, which reflects SC 160 and Sutton Road as red and the Celanese Corridor as orange during the morning peak period, and asked that this be kept in mind as this discussion continues.

Mr. Hooper then noted that the Policy Committee also requested that all prior analyses completed should be incorporated into the expanded study area analysis. As a point of reference, items noted included the 2015 Regional Travel Shed Analysis, which included evaluation of a “flyover” concept to provide access to I-77 northbound as well as interchange reconfigurations at exits 85 and 82. Additional analyses included the Celanese / Cherry Road Corridor evaluation of innovative intersection reconfigurations as well as a modeling analysis of the planned widening of the US 21 Corridor; both were completed in 2016.

Mr. Hooper then noted that this type of work effort is estimated to take approximately 4-5 months to complete, and has a cost estimate of roughly \$60,000.00. As a point of reference, Ms. Savage then asked for the total amount that has been spent studying an additional bridge crossing since 2000. In response, Mr. Hooper noted that the cost associated with the feasibility study was \$170,000, and the costs spent on the subsequent evaluations would place the combined estimate into the low to mid \$200,000’s.

Discussion then followed regarding the continuation of evaluating workable options to improve operating conditions. Specifically, Ms. Pender noted the importance of furthering the evaluation of the expanded study area so that the Policy Committee can consider what options might be deemed appropriate. Ms. Savage then noted that if this new study would bring forth different solutions other than an additional bridge crossing which has been voted down multiple times, that she would have no problem in a continuation of the evaluation process. Mr. Reno noted that the variety of options outlined today would appear to include different solutions; also highlighting the impact that chokepoints within the network could have on the broader operating environment if left unresolved.

Ms. Savage then stated that there remains an unresolved chokepoint on SC 160 which is not covered by the expanded study area. Ms. Savage went on to note that while interchange reconfigurations are slated for SC 160 and Gold Hill Road, that the impact of this work will result in considerable traffic congestion along both corridors. On a related note, Ms. Savage referenced the prior discussions about a potential interchange at Coltharp Road and the initial feedback from FHWA regarding interchange spacing and related evaluation variables associated with construction of a new interchange. Lastly, Ms. Savage noted that while a broader evaluation can proceed, she noted that she would not be agreeable to the incorporation of an additional bridge crossing, and wanted to make that absolutely clear up front before any additional money is spent on an additional study effort.

Mr. Harris then stated that the Policy Committee meets to make decisions that should benefit the planning area as a whole; noting the importance of leaving political considerations out of the process so that the best decisions can emerge. Mr. Sheppard then noted that this subject has been extensively discussed by the Policy Committee over the last decade and a half; and that, a range of elected officials have served on the Policy Committee during this time. Mr. Sheppard then offered a clarifying comment that an interchange at Coltharp Road was not able to proceed due to area development activity noted during the discussion of the East-West Connector concept. Mr. Sheppard then specifically stated that jurisdictional communication is not occurring regarding these types of planning decisions; and that, this is the biggest problem being encountered.

Ms. Pender then highlighted a request regarding the establishment of a Sub-Committee to include Mr. Climer, Mr. Johnson, Ms. Savage, Dr. Blackwell and Mr. Reno to steer the advancement of the study under consideration. Ms. Pender then made a motion to approve the formation of this Sub-Committee; this was seconded by Mr. Reno. Mr. Carnes then asked if there were any questions or comments related to the motion on the floor. Ms. Savage then stated that this subject has been studied for roughly 15 years at a cost of over \$200,000 and still a solution has not been agreed upon. Mr. Carnes then noted that conditions within the planning area have changed dramatically since the bridge project was originally identified; and it is important that this be acknowledged regarding just how much things have changed so that progress can be realized on any potential studies going forward.

Mr. Carnes then stated that he believed that the formation of a Sub-Committee is a good idea; noting that it appeared to be fair and balanced. Mr. Climer stated that he hoped that the formation of this Sub-Committee would enable a consensus to be formed regarding this study based on all the relevant facts. Mr. Sheppard then noted his disagreement with the formation of the Sub-Committee rather than the full Policy Committee being directly involved. As an alternative, Mr. Sheppard suggested that this topic could be further discussed as a workshop in October.

Ms. Pender then stated that the motion on the floor was for the formation of the Sub-Committee to work with staff and the hired consultant as the study progresses, which would involve more than a single meeting. Mr. Carnes then asked for clarification on the role of a Sub-Committee. Mr. Hooper then noted that as a general matter, Sub-Committees are formed in order to provide members an opportunity to be directly involved with a consultant team in real time and offer feedback and additional direction that may emerge as initial data is generated. Mr. Johnson then noted that separate from the formation of a Sub-Committee, is the need to broaden the evaluation area along the I-77 Corridor so that it may provide multiple solutions to congestion issues more broadly.

Mr. Hooper then noted that the geography of the study area can certainly be expanded to cover more of the network. It is also important to note that by enlarging the evaluation area (similar, though not at the same scale as the development of the LRTP), would effectively raise a policy question regarding the nature of improvements to be considered; specifically, whether larger but fewer improvements are made or whether a series of smaller scale projects should be pursued. As a point of reference, Mr. Hooper

noted that an expansion of the study area covering the I-77 Corridor (i.e., Gold Hill Road, SC 160, Celanese Road, US 21 and Pleasant-Sutton Road) would be a substantial undertaking with commensurate time and cost components. Discussion then followed regarding the potential for expanding the study area. Principal points of discussion included the significance of the I-77 Corridor and the need to improve east-west and north-south traffic movement.

Mr. Johnson then stated that without better understanding of how to address congestion in the expanded study area, the policy question of whether to target larger scale or smaller scale improvements is difficult to answer. Mr. Hooper then noted that the range of potential improvement options will be influenced by the largely built environment along the I-77 Corridor. Mr. Johnson then noted the importance of acknowledging growing congestion throughout the planning area which increases the need to expand the study area. Additionally, Mr. Johnson stated that a broader study area would help to identify the nature of improvements needed and further help the Policy Committee to make decisions on how to fund such improvements.

Mr. Climer then asked if it would be acceptable from a procedural standpoint to amend the study area to reflect a broader analysis of east-west and north-south traffic movement along the I-77 Corridor? Mr. Hooper noted that the Policy Committee can certainly amend the evaluation area as a new study, though it would involve amending relevant documents to reflect the study scope and appropriate funding levels. Additionally, Mr. Hooper noted that this would involve a separate procurement action.

Ms. Savage then made an amendment to the motion on the floor that the Sub-Committee be formed with six members rather than five which would allow a more balanced representation of the jurisdictions within the planning area; also moving that the area being studied be expanded to include the I-77 Corridor. Mr. Hooper then asked for clarification on specifically what roadways would be included in the expanded study area? Ms. Savage then responded that the expanded study area should focus on Gold Hill Road, SC 160 and Celanese Road, but should also include other connecting roadways in this area such as US 21, and Pleasant-Sutton Roads. Mr. Sheppard then seconded this amended motion.

Discussion then followed regarding the motion on the floor. Mr. Climer then made a motion to table this discussion noting that the expanded study area would be too large in scope and that it would be preferable to make a policy judgment regarding the nature of improvements desired by the Policy Committee before a study area can be decided upon. Dr. Blackwell seconded this motion. The motion then passed with a vote of 8-4 (Mr. Sheppard, Ms. Savage, Mr. Johnson, and Mr. Carnes dissenting).

A motion for adjournment was then made by Mr. Sheppard. Mr. Climer then made a motion to reconsider the previously tabled discussion; seconded by Mr. Harris. The motion was then approved with a vote of 10-2 (Mr. Sheppard and Mr. Johnson dissenting). Upon further discussion of expanding the study area, Ms. Savage withdrew the previous amended motion regarding the formation of a Sub-Committee and expansion of the study area. Ms. Pender also withdrew the original motion regarding the formation of a Sub-Committee.

Mr. Johnson then made a motion to expand the study area to include Gold Hill Road, SC 160, Celanese Road, US-21, and Pleasant-Sutton Road; also requesting a cost estimate to complete this study. Dr. Blackwell then asked to amend this motion to include a list of recommended priorities completed by staff, at an appropriate time, based on the objective modeling results. This amendment to the motion on the floor was then accepted by Mr. Johnson. This amended motion was seconded by Mr. Harris. The motion was then passed with a vote of 11-1 (Ms. Pender dissenting).

4. REPORTS:

a. MPO Agreement – Mr. Fedra briefly noted the request made at the June meeting for information regarding relevant procedural and administrative variables associated with the MPO agreement. As a point of reference, Mr. Fedra stated that there are no state or federal reasons that would warrant redesignating or moving staff regarding the performance of the MPO. Mr. Fedra noted that the federal reviews have been excellent, and that in meeting with other MPOs, it is not uncommon for FHWA / SCDOT to hold up practices at RFATS as best practices in the state. Mr. Fedra then noted that if there is a desire to consider any change, that would be a local decision.

Mr. Fedra then reviewed federal regulations regarding re-designation of an MPO. Specifically, it was noted that an existing MPO may be re-designated only by agreement between the Governor and the local governmental entities within the MPO that together represent at least 75% of the existing MPO planning area population, including the largest incorporated city based upon population. Mr. Fedra then explained that Rock Hill is the largest incorporated city in the planning area, and would thus have to be included in the 75% requirement.

Mr. Johnson then asked for clarification on what steps would be required if the MPO were to be re-designated? Mr. Fedra then responded that a transition plan would be required; and that, an estimated timeline of 18-24 months would be needed as well. Mr. Carnes then asked whether this was a matter which would only require a vote of the Policy Committee? Mr. Fedra responded in the negative – that a vote from each specific council of the individual jurisdictions would be needed. Lastly, it was noted that Mr. Hooper would provide some additional information associated with the decennial census at the November meeting.

5. PROPOSED POLICY COMMITTEE ACTION ITEMS:

b. FY 17-18 Transportation Alternatives Program – Mr. Herrmann briefly reviewed the Transportation Alternatives Program and the application submitted by the City of Tega Cay for the Windjammer Drive Sidewalk Project; noting that a 21-day public comment period had been completed and no comments were received. Mr. Herrmann then requested final approval to amend the TIP to reflect \$110,833 in TAP funding and \$273,677 in Guideshare funding; also requesting authorization for staff to forward to SCDOT for processing. Mr. Sheppard made a motion to approve; Mr. Harris seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

7. ADJOURNMENT:

The motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Sheppard and seconded by Ms. Savage; the motion was unanimously approved and the meeting was adjourned at 1:40 P.M.