

**GRAND STRAND AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
POLICY COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Virtual Meeting

May 21, 2021

MEMBERS PRESENT

Sen. Stephen Goldfinch, Chair
Hon. Bob Hellyer, Surfside Beach
Rep. Russell Fry, Vice Chair
Hon. Brendon Barber, Georgetown
Hon. Marilyn Hatley, North Myrtle Beach
Mr. Darrell Eickhoff, Coast RTA
Mr. Randall Thompson, Brunswick
Hon. Walt Eccard, Shallotte
Mr. Tony Cox
Hon. Debbie Smith, Ocean Isle Beach
Mr. Mike Chestnut
Mr. Gary Loftus, Horry County
Hon. Barbara Blaine- Bellamy (Adam
Emrick)
Hon. Brenda Bethune (Janet Curry)

**EX OFFICIO MEMBERS
PRESENT**

**STUDY TEAM/TAC MEMBERS
PRESENT**

Mr. Daniel Newquist
Mr. Stacey Johnson, SCDOT
Ms. Holly Richardson
Mr. Mark Hoeweler
Mr. Orlando Arteaga
Ms. Kelly Mezzapelle
Ms. Leah Quattlebaum
Mr. Adam Emrick
Ms. Sandra Yudice
Ms. Elizabeth Tucker
Ms. Shamika Peterson
Ms. Janet Curry

OTHERS PRESENT

Mr. Ryan Eckenrode
Mr. Al Jordan
Mr. Jason Werner
Ms. Carol Coleman

Adoption of the Agenda

Chairman Stephen Goldfinch called the meeting to order via Zoom video conference software at 10:30 AM. It was noted that a quorum was present.

Chairman Goldfinch called for a vote to adopt the meeting agenda. **All members present voted in favor.**

Adoption of Minutes from February 12, 2021

The minutes from the February 12, 2021 GSATS Policy Committee meeting were presented for approval. Chairman Goldfinch called for a vote to approve the minutes. **All members present voted in favor.**

Public Comment

Chairman Goldfinch asked if there were any members of the public who signed up to address the committee during the public comment portion of the meeting. There were no members of the public who provided comments.

Projects Update

Mr. Stacey Johnson, Assistant Program Manager with SCDOT, provided an update on the status of current and upcoming projects in the region. Of particular note are the following:

- Construction of the **US 501 SB** widening project is in progress.
- Right-of-way for the **Black River Road** is currently being acquired.
- Right-of-way for intersection improvements at **Tournament Boulevard and McDowell Shortcut** is currently being acquired.
- Utility relocation for the **S-57 and S-111** intersection project is in progress. Construction on the intersection itself will start the first week of June.
- Right-of-way plans for the **Riverwood Drive and Old Kings Highway** intersection project are being finalized.
- Right-of-way for the **US 501 NB and SB** widening project is currently being acquired.
- Right-of-way for the **SC 9 East of Loris** widening project is currently being acquired.
- Right-of-way for the **US 701 North of Conway** widening project is currently being acquired. The project is expected to be let for construction in the spring of 2022.
- Right-of-way plans for the **Forestbrook Road** widening project are being finalized. Acquisition is expected to start in the next three weeks.
- The right-of-way plans for the **US 17 Business Intersections in Garden City** project are being finalized. Acquisition is expected to start in the fall. An in-person public information meeting for the project is scheduled to be held sometime in July.
- Right-of-way acquisition for the **US 701 North of Loris** widening project has started. It is expected to let to construction in the spring of 2022.
- Right-of-way for the **US 501** realignment in Myrtle Beach is currently being acquired.
- Right-of-way for the **Conway Perimeter** project is currently being acquired.

Mr. Tony Cox asked when the Tournament Boulevard and McDowell Shortcut intersection project will be let for construction. Mr. Johnson replied that it is planned to be let sometime in the fall. Mr. Cox asked if the SC 9 widening project in Loris included a roundabout. Mr. Johnson responded that it did. Chairman Goldfinch inquired if the construction plans for the US 17 Business Intersections in Garden City have been finalized. Mr. Johnson answered that the conceptual plans have been finalized. Mr. Hoeweler noted that the project is in the TIP as a placeholder for federal eligibility if needed but GSATS is not very involved with that project because it is being paid for by RIDE III funds. Chairman Goldfinch asked if there were any funds

left in RIDE II that can be used to cover the US 17 Business Intersections in Garden City project cost overrun due to the addition of the Tadlock intersection. He noted that he heard there was \$25 million left in it. Mr. Johnson responded that he was unsure about the fund status of RIDE II and that he is working with Horry County to figure out a way to cover the shortfall. Chairman Goldfinch then asked Mr. Gary Loftus if he knew that status. Mr. Loftus replied that there were funds left and that there could actually be \$38 million left and there were already plans for spending that but he needed to verify that. Chairman Goldfinch asked if the intersections project had a cost overrun. Mr. Johnson replied that there was a cost overrun of about \$6 million due to the addition of Tadlock. Chairman Goldfinch asked Mr. Loftus if the remaining RIDE II funds could be used to cover the cost overrun. Mr. Loftus replied that it could be. Mr. Russell Fry inquired when the next in-person public comment meeting will be held for the US 17 Business Intersections in Garden City project. Mr. Johnson answered that it will be held in the first week of July at Seaside Elementary School in Garden City. Mr. Fry asked if the concepts have been finalized. Mr. Johnson responded that they have been and drainage plans have also been started. Mr. Fry inquired if Horry County will have to approve the plans when they are finished. Mr. Johnson replied that they will be and the design has been changed due to some of the feedback that was received. Mr. Fry asked if the design is changed whenever feedback is received. Mr. Johnson responded that they are to the extent of what SCDOT standards allow for. Mr. Fry noted that he would like Mr. Johnson to send him the original concepts and the concept changes that have been made since. Mr. Johnson replied that he would. Mr. Cox noted that early July might not be the best time for a public meeting because of the Fourth of July holiday and peak summer tourism season. Mr. Johnson responded that he could change the date. Mr. Mike Chestnut asked what the status was of the US 501 realignment in Myrtle Beach. Mr. Johnson replied that right-of-way acquisition has started and two years have been allocated for that process because there were so many commercial properties that will be affected. It is scheduled to be let for construction in 2023. Mr. Cox noted that there is a meeting about it on May 26 at 9 AM at Myrtle Beach City Hall. Mayor Marilyn Hatley asked what the timeline was for the US 17 and 27th Avenue South intersection project in North Myrtle Beach. Mr. Johnson replied that it is scheduled to be let for construction in December of 2024 and preliminary design for it has started.

Chairman Goldfinch introduced Ms. Caitlin Marks to present the NCDOT Projects Update. Mr. Mark Hoeweler noted that Ms. Marks was unable to attend the meeting and that he will present in her place. He then stated that an alternative will be chosen in the spring of 2022 for the Carolina Bays Parkway. The project team in North Carolina has been meeting with a citizen group. Mayor Walt Eccard added that the citizen group was very active and has a strong preference for a more northern route. Mr. Loftus asked if it was on the STIP. Mr. Hoeweler replied that funds for the project have not been allocated beyond the EIS. Mr. Cox inquired if there was a chance that the EIS will delay the project. Mr. Hoeweler responded that an alternative needs to be chosen first and that there are still three that are currently being studied. Mr. Johnson added that an alternative should be selected by the end of the year. Mr. Hoeweler added that the project has been progressing slowly due to a high number of alternatives and the COVID-19 pandemic causing an NCDOT budget shortfall last year. Chairman Goldfinch inquired if there were any changes to the SELL project. Mr. Johnson responded that they are still in the preliminary stages of its environmental study. Mr. Fry asked if a letter was sent to Horry County urging them to stop development in the vicinity of the SELL project. Mr. Hoeweler replied that GSATS staff could send one. Ms. Leah Quattlebaum added that they have identified the purpose and need and are

gathering traffic data necessary to develop the corridor necessary for the preferred alternative. Chairman Goldfinch noted that some environmental groups had purchased land near it with the sole intent of refusing to sell in order to obstruct the project.

Below is a summary submitted by Mr. Johnson of all other projects within the GSATS Study Area.

GRAND STRAND AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY (GSATS)

February 5, 2021

POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

PROJECT STATUS REPORT

GSATS PROJECTS

US 17 Business Access Management

Descr: Install raised landscaped median on US 17 Business within the town limits of Surfside Beach.

Status: Punch list items are being addressed.

US 501 Southbound Widening

Descr: Widening US 501 southbound from two to three lanes from Carolina Bays Parkway to Gardner Lacy Road, a distance of approximately 2.0 miles.

Status: Project is under construction.

US 17 Widening (Shetland to Backgate Interchange)

Descr: Widening US 17 from four to six lanes from Shetland Lane to Backgate Interchange, a distance of approximately 1.5 miles.

Status: Final construction plans are being developed.

Black River Road Widening

Descr: Widening Black River Road to three lanes from Willow Bank Road to Landgrave Street, a distance of less than 0.5 mile.

Status: The right-of-way phase of work is underway.

Tournament Blvd & McDowell Shortcut (Round 3 Intersection Improvement)

Descr: Intersection Improvement at Tournament Blvd and McDowell Shortcut in Horry County.

Status: The right-of-way phase of work is underway.

S-57 & S-111 (Round 3 Intersection Improvement)

Descr: Intersection Improvement at S-57 (Wampee Rd) and S-111 Little River Rd) in Horry County.

Status: Project is under construction.

Riverwood Dr. & Old Kings Hwy (Round 3 Intersection Improvement)

Descr: Intersection Improvement at Riverwood Dr and Old Kings Hwy in Georgetown County.

Status: Right-of-way plans are being finalized.

US 17 & 27th Ave (Round 3 Intersection Improvement)

Descr: Intersection Improvement at US 17 BUS (North Kings Hwy) and 27th Ave North in Horry County.

Status: Preliminary Engineering is underway.

US 378 & 16th Ave (Round 3 Intersection Improvement)

Descr: Intersection Improvement at US 378 (Wright Blvd) and 16th Ave in Horry County.

Status: Preliminary engineering is underway.

Enhancements

Descr: Enhancements at various locations in the GSATS study area.

Status: Specific information is presented below for all projects currently under development:

River Oaks Multiuse Path

Project is waiting to be let to construction.

Grand Park Linear Trail

Project nearing completion of construction.

NON-GUIDESHARE PROJECTS

Carolina Bays Parkway (SC-31) Extension to the NC State Line (RIDE III)

Descr: Extension of the Carolina Bays Parkway from its current terminus at SC Route 9 across the North Carolina state line to US 17. The proposed project is a new location, multilane freeway facility.

Status: Various environmental and engineering studies are underway which will be utilized to narrow down the reasonable alternatives to a preferred alignment in late 2021.

US 501 Corridor Improvements (RIDE III)

Descr: Widen US 501 from Gardner Lacy to SC 544 Interchange. Widening the existing 4-lane section to 6 lanes and improve signalized intersections with additional turn lanes and storage lengths.

Status: The right-of-way phase of work is underway.

SC Highway 9 Widening (East of Loris) (RIDE III)

Descr: Widen SC 9 for approximately 1.25 miles beginning east of Loris where the current 4-lane section terminates and extends to S-66 (SC Highway 66); traffic analyses will determine the typical section for capacity and safety improvements along the corridor.

Status: The right-of-way phase of work is underway.

US 701 Widening (North of Conway) (RIDE III)

Descr: Widen existing US Highway 701 North of Conway in Horry County from the intersection of SC 319 to the intersection of SC 22. The length of the project is approximately 4.3 miles. The proposed design includes widening US 701 North to a five (5) lane section and including bike/pedestrian facilities such as sidewalks and wider travel lanes where feasible.

Status: The right-of-way phase of work is underway.

Forestbrook Road Widening (RIDE III)

Descr: Widen Forestbrook Road (S-137) to a five lane section from US 501 to Dick Pond Road (S-616) with associated improvements to Dick Pond Road.

Status: Efforts are underway on the completion of right-of-way plans. The right-of-way phase of work is expected to begin in the summer of 2021.

Fred Nash Boulevard Widening and Extension (RIDE III)

Descr: Widen Fred Nash Boulevard to a three lane section and extend the roadway from its current termini to a proposed intersection with Harrelson Boulevard. Improvements will include bicycle facilities.

Status: The right-of-way phase of work is underway.

US 17 BUS Intersections in Garden City (RIDE III)

Descr: Intersection Improvements to the following four (4) intersections along US 17 Business in Garden City:

1. US 17 Business and Inlet Square Boulevard and Mt. Gilead Road
2. US 17 Business and Atlantic Avenue
3. US 17 Business and Garden City Connector
4. US 17 Business and Tadlock Drive

Status: The development of right-of-way plans is currently underway. The right-of-way phase of work is expected to begin in the fall of 2021.

US 701 Widening (North of Loris) (RIDE III)

Descr: Widen US Highway 701 for approximately 1.75 miles from Holly Street to SC Highway 9. A traffic analysis will determine the typical section for capacity and safety improvements along the corridor.

Status: The right-of-way phase of work is underway.

US 501 Realignment (Myrtle Beach) (RIDE III)

Descr: Realign US Highway 501 from Broadway Street (local) to 7th Avenue North (local) in the City of Myrtle Beach.

Status: The right-of-way phase of work is underway.

Conway Perimeter Road Phase II (RIDE III)

Descr: New Location 4-lane divided roadway west of Conway connecting US 378 at El Bethel Road to US 701.

Status: The right-of-way phase of work is underway.

Southern Evacuation Lifeline (SELL) (RIDE III)

Descr: New Location freeway from US 501 at SC 22 to US 17 near the Horry/Georgetown County Line. RIDE III funding only includes the Environmental Document and purchase of some right of way based on final alignment determined through the Federal Record of Decision (ROD).

Status: Efforts are underway to obtain the data necessary to perform the preliminary environmental studies and design for the project.

STATE TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE BANK (STIB) PROJECTS

Carolina Bays Parkway (SC Route 31) Extension

Descr: Extension of the Carolina Bays Parkway from its current terminus at SC Route 544 to SC Route 707, a distance of approximately 4.3 miles. The proposed project is a new location, multilane freeway facility that will include a bridge over the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway and interchanges at SC Route 544 and SC Route 707.

Status: Final punch list items are currently being addressed.

FY22-23 UPWP Adoption

Chairman Goldfinch introduced Mr. Hoeweler to present the UPWP Adoption. Mr. Hoeweler

began by noting that the UPWP is updated every two years and it identified transportation planning efforts that are anticipated over the next two fiscal years and a corresponding budget for each activity category. He then explained that the UPWP focuses on five different categories: administration, data collection for the model such as land use changes, special studies such as the US 17 corridor study in Georgetown County, long range planning, and maintenance upkeep of the TIP. The long range plan is updated every five years and the next update is due in November of 2022. Mr. Hoeweler concluded by noting that it was available for public comment but none were received. **Mayor Eccard made a motion to adopt the FY22-23 UPWP as presented. Mr. Cox seconded. All committee members voted in favor.**

2045 MTP TIP Budget Line Item

Chairman Goldfinch introduced Mr. Hoeweler to present the 2045 MTP TIP Budget Line Item. Mr. Hoeweler informed the committee that CARES Act funds in the amount of \$1.7 million was given to GSATS due to it being a large MPO, designated by FHWA as a Transportation Management Area. The funds are required to be spent on one project that is already underway. The US 17 widening project from Shetland to the Backgate interchange was selected for that funding. This allows \$1.7 million of the funding that was allocated to that project to be available for spending on other projects. Another line item added to the MTP TIP is \$400,000 for a consultant that will be hired for the long range plan update. Mr. Hoeweler concluded by noting that Brunswick County has already approved \$40,000 for their portion of the consultant cost.

Chairman Goldfinch asked why the US 17 widening project from Shetland to the Backgate interchange was selected for the CARES funding when there is another project that doesn't have enough funding. Mr. Hoeweler replied that the project was chosen because it is fairly expensive and it is currently well underway. He then noted that these funds will allow \$1.7 million to be spent on another project which could be that one. Mr. Fry asked if the funds will expire before the next Policy Committee meeting if the committee were to defer the matter for then. Mr. Hoeweler responded that the new funds do not affect the bottom line and would not expire. Chairman Goldfinch stated that if investigating would not affect receiving the funds then it should be deferred. Mr. Hoeweler noted that the committee still needs to vote on the addition of the \$400,000 line item. **Mr. Fry made a motion to defer the addition of \$1.7 million to the US 17 widening project from Shetland to the Backgate interchange until such funds are further investigated. Mr. Cox seconded. All committee members voted in favor.**

Mr. Fry then made a motion to approve the additional \$400,000 line item for the long range plan update consultant services. Mr. Chestnut seconded. All committee members voted in favor.

Other Business

Chairman Goldfinch asked if there was any other business to discuss. Ms. Elizabeth Tucker informed the committee that she is accepting applications for a new 5310 grant which provides funds to transit services for the elderly and individuals with disabilities. It is a CRRSAA pandemic relief grant for \$59,000 that has the same requirements of the usual 5310 grant.

However, it can only be used for one project and can't be combined with other 5310 funds. Information was sent to the regular 5310 applicants and is also available on the GSATS website. Mayor Eccard then informed the board that they are awaiting the results of the 2020 Census. It is expected that substantial growth will be recorded in the Brunswick County portion of GSATS. There have been some groups within Brunswick County who have expressed interest that Wilmington MPO be responsible for covering the entirety of Brunswick County. The GSATS member jurisdictions within the county there oppose this and want to remain part of GSATS. They believe that GSATS provides them with a lot of support and they don't want that to change.

Adjourn

With no further discussion Chairman Goldfinch called for an adjournment. **All members present voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 11:15 AM.**

Respectfully Submitted,



GSATS Chairman, Sen. Stephen Goldfinch

5 Nov 21

Date

