

**GRAND STRAND AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY
POLICY COMMITTEE MINUTES
Friday October 21, 2022, 10:30 AM Hybrid Meeting
Waccamaw Library**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Randall Thompson, Brunswick County
Rep. Lee Hewitt
Mr. Tony Cox, SCDOT Commissioner
Mr. Gary Loftus, Horry County
Hon. Debbie Smith, Ocean Isle Beach
Hon. Walt Eccard, Shallotte
Hon. Carol Jayroe, Georgetown
Hon. Bob Hellyer, Surfside Beach
Hon. Dave Bounviri, Briarcliffe Acres
Mr. Louis Morant, Georgetown County [Bob
Anderson]
Hon. Barbara Blain-Bellamy [Adam Emrick]
Sen. Stephen Goldfinch [Rep. Hewitt]
Hon. Marilyn Hatley, NMB [Kevin Blayton]
Ms. Machael Peterson SCDOT [Christina
Lewis]

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

STUDY TEAM/TCC MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Stacey Johnson, SCDOT
Mr. Mark Hoeweler, GSATS
Ms. Leigh Kane, GSATS
Ms. Holly Richardson, Georgetown County
Mr. Adam Emrick, Conway
Ms. Christina Lewis, SCDOT
Ms. Adrienne Cox, NCDOT
Mr. Chad Kimes, NCDOT
Ms. Shamika Peterson, SCDOT
Mr. Kevin Blayton, NMB
Mr. Behshad Norowzi, NCDOT
Ms. Kelly Mezzapelli, MB
Ms. Marla Watson, SCDOT

OTHERS PRESENT

Mr. Jason Werner, GSATS
Mr. Darryl Elliot, GSATS
Mr. Al Jordan
Mr. Bill Jordan
Ms. Dana Hamilton, NMB
Mr. Brett McCutchan
Mr. Jason Thompson, Horry County RIDE

Adoption of the Agenda

Due to the absence of Chairman Goldfinch and Vice Chairman Fry, Rep. Hewitt called the meeting to order at 10:30 AM. It was noted that a quorum was present.

Rep. Hewitt called for a vote to adopt the meeting agenda. **Mayor Eccard moved to adopt the meeting agenda. Mr. Loftus seconded. All members present voted in favor.**

Adoption of Minutes from March 4, 2022

The minutes from the March 4, 2022 GSATS Policy Committee meeting were presented for approval. Rep. Hewitt called for a vote to approve the minutes. **Mr. Cox moved to approve the minutes. Mr. Loftus seconded. All members present voted in favor.**

Public Comment

Rep. Hewitt 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 (SCDOT)

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

- The **US 501 SB** widening project is currently under construction and will likely be complete in the summer of 2023.
- The **S-57 and S-111** intersection project is currently under construction.
- The **US 17 widening from Shetland to Backgate** interchange project is scheduled to be let to construction next month.
- Right-of-way acquisition for the **Black River Road widening** project is underway.
- The **Tournament Boulevard and McDowell Shortcut** intersection project is scheduled to be let to construction next month.
- Right-of-way acquisition for the **Riverwood Drive and Old Kings Highway** intersection project is underway. It is scheduled to be let to construction in late 2023.
- Right-of-way acquisition for the **US 17 and 27th Avenue South** in North Myrtle Beach intersection project is underway. It is scheduled to be let to construction in 2024.
- The **US 378 and 16th Avenue** intersection project in Conway no longer has the support of the City, due to a nearby middle school being closed and opposition from the community. The no-build alternative will be selected for that project.
- A public hearing for the **Carolina Bays Parkway extension** will take place in the spring of 2023.

- Right-of-way acquisition for the **US 501 corridor improvements** is underway. It is scheduled to be let to construction in the summer of 2023.
- The **SC 9 widening east of Loris** project is scheduled to be let to construction in January of 2023.
- Construction plans for the **US 701 North of Conway** widening project are being finalized. It is scheduled to be let to construction in the spring of 2023.
- Right-of-way acquisition for the **Forestbrook Road widening** project is underway. It is scheduled to be let to construction in the summer of 2024.
- The **Fred Nash Boulevard widening and extension** project is scheduled to let to construction in February of 2023.
- Right-of-way acquisition for the **US 17 Business Intersections in Garden City** project is underway. It is scheduled to be let to construction in the fall of 2024.
- The **US 701 North of Loris** widening project has just been let for construction.
- Right-of-way acquisition for the **US 501 Realignment in Myrtle Beach** project is underway. It is scheduled to be let to construction in the summer of 2023.
- Right-of-way acquisition for the **Conway Perimeter Phase II** project is underway. It is scheduled to be let to construction in the fall of 2023.
- Corridor alternatives for the **Southeastern Evacuation Life Line (SELL)** project are expected to be presented to Horry County officials in early 2023.

Mr. Loftus asked Mr. Johnson how North Carolina was planning to connect their portion of the Carolina Bays Parkway to the South Carolina portion. Mr. Johnson replied that North Carolina is considering phasing their portion and the first phase will align with the corridor in South Carolina. Mr. Loftus asked if a preferred alternative has been selected. Mr. Johnson answered that the design team will probably determine the alternative in January of 2023. Mr. Loftus asked if the Carolina Bays Parkway extension is funded. Mr. Johnson responded that South Carolina's corridor is funded but North Carolina's is not. Mayor Eccard stated that funding is an issue for North Carolina's portion and it is possible that tolls can pay for it. Mayor Smith stated that the project is very important to the residents of Brunswick County. Mr. Chad Kimes, NCDOT Division 3 Engineer, reiterated that the project is a top priority and North Carolina officials are trying to figure out a funding source for the project with tolls being one possible solution.

Mr. Cox asked how much of the right-of-way for the Forestbrook Road widening project has been acquired. Mr. Johnson replied that approximately 40% of it has been acquired. Mr. Cox asked how the right-of-way acquisition for the US 501 realignment in Myrtle Beach was progressing. Mr. Johnson replied that some relocations are taking longer than expected with 7th Avenue businesses being the main issue. Mr. Cox asked if the community resistance to the Conway Perimeter Phase II project has been overcome. Mr. Johnson replied that it mostly was and that a lot of it was caused by a misunderstanding that has since been cleared. Mr. Cox asked how much funding has been allocated to SELL. Mr. Johnson answered that \$25 million has been allocated for the EIS and critical right-of-way acquisition.

Mr. Bob Anderson asked if the Waccamaw Neck in Georgetown County will be included for the SELL project because there are 28,000 residents who have to evacuate from that area. Mr. Johnson replied that he has not yet seen the corridor alternatives and was unsure.

Rep. Hewitt asked for a timeline of the Murrells Inlet I2I Phase II. Mr. Johnson replied that it will be let to construction in the spring of 2023 to line up with the resurfacing schedule of the road it will be on. Rep. Hewitt asked if it will go all the way to the Wachesaw Marina. Mr. Johnson responded that the project will be split into two phases: A and B. Phase II A will be from Riverwood Drive and Old Kings Highway to the Wachesaw roundabout and then east across US 17. Phase II B will be from Wachesaw roundabout to the marina. He noted that Phase II B is currently unfunded.

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

GRAND STRAND AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY

SEPTEMBER 16, 2022

POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

PROJECT STATUS REPORT

GSATS PROJECTS

US 501 Southbound Widening

Descr: Widening US 501 southbound from two to three lanes from Carolina Bays Parkway to Gardner Lacy Rd., 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 Ln. to Backgate Interchange, a distance of approximately 1.5 miles.

Status: Project is scheduled for November 2022 letting.

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.

Black River Road Widening

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

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

Tournament Boulevard and McDowell Shortcut (Round 3 Intersection Improvement)

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

Status: Project scheduled for November 2022 Letting.

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

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

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

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: Right-of-way plans are being developed.

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

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

Status: Project is on hold.

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 for construction.

Little River Neck Road Shared-use Path

Project is under construction.

Murrells Inlet I2I Multi-purpose Path

Final construction plans being developed.

NON-GUIDESHARE PROJECTS

Carolina Bays Parkway (SC-31) Extension to 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 early 2023.

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 SC-66 (SC Highway 66); traffic analyses will determine the typical section for capacity and safety improvements along the corridor.

Status: Final plans are being developed.

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: Final plans are being developed.

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: The right-of-way phase is underway.

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: Final plans are being developed.

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 right-of-way phase of work is underway.

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

Descr: Widen US 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: Project scheduled for October 2022 Letting.

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.

Projects Update (NCDOT)

Ms. Adrienne Cox, NCDOT, provided an update on the status of current and upcoming projects in the Brunswick County portion of the GSATS area. Of particular note are the following:

- The Wall Street and Main Street intersection realignment and park entrance project has been completed.
- Construction of shared-use paths and bike lanes in the beachfront communities are underway.
- The EIS of the Carolina Bays Parkway is under review by the FHWA and a public hearing about that is scheduled for March of 2023.

Mr. Cox asked for an update about the Carolina Bays Parkway in North Carolina. Ms. Cox responded that FHWA is reviewing the EIS which was supposed to be completed now but it ended up being delayed to March of 2023. The final alignment will be determined within that document. The project does not yet have a funding source but it will be on the top of the list for funding. She noted that both states are working together closely to complete the extension.

Transportation Alternatives Projects

Rep. Hewitt invited Mr. Hoeweler to present the Transportation Alternative projects. Mr. Hoeweler stated that two projects have been submitted and there is enough funding available to pay for both of them. He added that the Elm Street bike path in Conway experienced is about \$60,000 under cost estimates and that there are enough funds to pay for that as well. Mr. Hoeweler described the two submitted projects. The first project is to extend the East Coast Greenway from Atlantic Avenue in Garden City to the existing path in Murrells Inlet, which will cost about \$1.6 million. The second project is a shared-use path along Robert Edge Parkway in North Myrtle Beach which will cost about \$700,000. All projects require a 20% local match. Mr. Hoeweler noted that the new transportation bill has raised the funding amount for transportation alternative projects from \$300,000 to \$600,000 per year.

Rep. Hewitt called for a motion to approve of the transportation alternatives as recommended. **Mr. Cox made a motion to approve of the transportation alternatives proposal as presented. Mr. Loftus seconded. All committee members voted in favor.**

TIP Changes

Rep. Hewitt invited Mr. Hoeweler to present the TIP Changes. Mr. Hoeweler explained his proposal to add a safety project line item to the TIP. A safety committee made up of highway patrol and DOT officials was established three years ago to investigate fatal accidents that occur within the GSATS area and determine what can be done to prevent future fatalities at those locations. Accidents are divided into three groups: driver error, legislative issues such as the allowance of golf carts and mopeds, red-light cameras, etc., and physical issues such as lighting, alignment, etc. A safety line item can be added to the budget to pay for changes that the safety committee recommends that are not funding by any other source. Mr. Hoeweler then described cost increases of several projects. The Tournament Boulevard and McDowell Shortcut intersection project has increased by about \$1.45 million. The Riverwood Drive and Old Kings Highway intersection project has increased by about \$700,000 and was delayed to 2024. Since the US 378 and 16th Avenue project has been cancelled, the \$1.75 million dedicated to that can be returned to the budget. The Shetland to Backgate widening project has increased by about \$3.2 million. Continuing, Mr. Hoeweler indicated that the MTP update has been delayed to 2023 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and will have another public comment period. New 5307 and 5339 funds have been received. A fully-funded bridge replacement project over Crabtree Swamp has been moved to 2029. The new transportation bill increased the TIP budget to \$9.7 million per year. Mr. Hoeweler concluded by noting that the budget assumes an inflation rate of 3%, compounded annually, and that will cover the cost increases.

Mr. Anderson asked how much funding will be dedicated to the safety line item. Mr. Hoeweler answered that the study team will determine that and it would be about \$5 million. Mr. Anderson asked if the funding can be moved whenever it's needed. Mr. Hoeweler replied that the funding amount will be brought to the Policy Committee for approval. Mayor Eccard asked if the NCDOT's problem with the MTP update delay has been resolved. Mr. Hoeweler replied that it wasn't, but there won't be any negative effects when it is late. Ms. Carol Jayroe asked why the bridge replacement was moved seven years into the future when it is already deficient. Mr. Hoeweler responded that maybe another bridge was prioritized. The bridge replacement program is under the discretion of the state. Mayor Eccard asked if the 3% yearly inflation increase is too low. Mr. Hoeweler replied that it has historically worked and the budget usually balances itself out. Rep. Hewitt asked if the SC 707 and US 17 intersection in Murrells Inlet will be upgraded soon due to its failing grade and new apartments being built near it. Mr. Hoeweler answered that the intersection improvement was not a project submission in the recent round of project submissions for Georgetown County. Rep. Hewitt called for a motion to approve the TIP changes as recommended. **Mayor Eccard made a motion to approve of the TIP changes as presented. Mayor Jayroe seconded. All committee members voted in favor.**

Public Participation Plan Revisions

Vice Chairman Hewitt introduced Mr. Hoeweler to present the Public Participation Plan (PPP) Revisions. Mr. Hoeweler stated that the PPP is used internally for urban and rural transportation planning. He then described three revisions that were made. First, the public comment periods were aligned with those of both SCDOT and NCDOT. Second, some language that is covered in other documents was removed, and third, a section allowing meetings to be held remotely was added.

Mr. Loftus asked if the elderly and individuals with disabilities references were redundant. Mr. Hoeweler replied that they were. **Mr. Cox made a motion to approve of the Public Participation Plan Revisions as presented. Mr. Loftus seconded. All committee members voted in favor.**


Bylaws Amendment on Quorum

Rep. Hewitt introduced Mr. Hoeweler to present the bylaws amendment. Mr. Hoeweler stated that he was fond of North Carolina's rule on quorums and explained why. Since the membership of the policy committee is determined mostly by elected office, there is no attendance requirement. North Carolina's bylaw states that if a member is absent for three consecutive meetings, on the third consecutive absence they will no longer count against the number required to get a quorum, even if that absence has been excused. Mr. Hoeweler then proposed that the Policy Committee adopt the same rule. **Mayor Eccard made a motion to approve of the Bylaw Amendment. Mr. Anderson seconded. All committee members voted in favor.**

Adjourn

With no further discussion Vice Chairman Hewitt called for an adjournment. **All members present voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 11:30 AM.**

Respectfully Submitted,



GSATS Chairman, Sen. Stephen Goldfinch *h.ek*

FEB 17, 2023

Date