

**MINUTES  
POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING  
August 8, 2023**

Chairman Dan Perdue called the meeting to order at 10:32 a.m. Handouts were distributed to include: (1) Agenda; (2) Minutes of the May 9, 2023 meeting; and (3) WRATS Project Status Report.

**ATTENDEES**

Jessica Bird	Dan Perdue	Bryan Wood	Roy Lewis
Greg Boike	Jackie Williams	John Harley	Michael Chidester
Ann-Marie Day	Olivia Lewis	Terry Wood	Tim Thomas
LaRhonda Patrick	Harland Smith*	Vivian Canizares*	

\*participated via Zoom

A motion was made by Mr. John Harley and seconded by Mr. Bryan Wood to approve the May 9, 2023 minutes as circulated. The motion was passed unanimously.

**Adoption of FY 2024-2027 TIP**

Ms. Jessica Bird said this document has been updated since it was emailed to WRATS committees on June 30. Ms. Bird discussed the specifics of the document and explained that it indicates the urbanized area's transportation priorities for the next four fiscal years and contains projects that have been authorized and allocated for the State's construction work program. She briefly reviewed lump sum funding categories and financial tables.

Ms. Ann-Marie Day with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) asked if the list of authorized projects was the list of obligated projects that the MPO needs to publish. Ms. Vivian Canizares said this list is only good through April and the annual list will be forwarded to the MPO soon.

During Ms. Bird's discussion of the project sheet for the widening of SR 96 in Peach County, Mr. Roy Lewis with Peach County shared that he has mentioned to GDOT that ending the project at Fire Tire Road is not a good idea. He explained that doing so would dump a four-lane road into a two-lane near the Middle Georgia Megasite. There was some speculation among the group that the MPO boundary ends at Fire Tire Road, hence the project ending there.

Ms. Bird mentioned updates to the system performance report in Appendix F. She also announced the thirty-day public comment period ended on August 3 and no public comments were received. She explained that before the TCC meeting in July, FHWA wanted the public comment period to end before the TIP was discussed at the TCC meeting, which is not what the MPO has done in previous years nor what is written in the Participation Plan (PP). Ms. Bird explained that FHWA asked MPO staff to consult with

the Warner Robins City Attorney on the matter. The City Attorney did not have any objections with proceeding as scheduled this time as long as all public comments were shared with WRATS committees and because committee meetings are open to the public.

Ms. Bird stated that the adoption recommendation from the TCC was conditional provided all public comments were addressed and incorporated into the document before adoption. She also explained that had public comments been significant, then the document would have gone out for an additional fifteen-day public comment period. Any comments would have been presented to the PC for consideration and appropriate action. Ms. Bird also stated MPO staff have been encouraged to change the language in the PP with respect to the public comment period and TIP discussion by committees. She said MPO staff would work with the City Attorney to update this language but in a way that does not negatively affect the MPO's planning process if materials/financial figures/information are delayed from GDOT.

Mr. Bryan Wood with the City of Perry announced that they were looking at some options for providing transit and asked if there would be funding available through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5311 rural transit funds. Ms. Jessica Bird explained that because the City of Perry participates in the MPO it would probably be FTA Section 5307 funds. Mr. Greg Boike with the Middle Georgia Regional Commission (MGRC) explained that he and the City of Perry have already discussed the subject with the GDOT Intermodal Division and they think it will be 5311 funds because the City of Perry has been excluded from the urbanized area with the new Census determination. Ms. Bird encouraged continued discussion and agreed an amendment to the TIP may be needed at a later date if the City of Perry decides to use transit funding.

Mr. Bryan Wood asked when the new traffic signal at the intersection of SR 127/Houston Lake Road and Kings Chapel Road would be operational. Mr. Harland Smith with GDOT District 3 in Thomaston said he would reach out to the Area Engineer in Perry.

Ms. Ann-Marie Day asked if the document includes anything showing excess funding after comparing expected revenues and project expenditures. Ms. Jessica Bird explained that the expected revenues equals the project expenditures so there are no excess funds except in the case where the FTA Section 5303 and FTA Section 5307 funds are allocated but not applied for by the MPO.

Ms. LaRhonda Patrick asked if there was a public hearing/meeting for the document and how the public would know about the comment period. Ms. Jessica Bird explained that there is not a public hearing/meeting like the MPO does for the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and a legal ad ran in the Houston Home Journal announcing the public comment period and where to find draft documents. Ms. Bird also said that the document could be intimidating because of the acronyms and jargon.

Ms. LaRhonda Patrick asked how citizens could participate in the transportation planning process because citizens contact her about needing public transportation because they cannot drive due to a disability. Ms. Jessica Bird said all public feedback is accepted and does not have to pertain to a transportation document. Ms. Ann-Marie Day encouraged Ms. Patrick to look at the MPO's PP for more information on how the public is engaged and how they can get involved in the process.

Mr. Bryan Wood made a motion to adopt the FY 2024-2027 TIP. Mr. Michael Chidester seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

### **Approval to apply for Special PL Funds: 2050 MTP Update**

Ms. Jessica Bird announced this is the last PC meeting before the Georgia Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (GAMPO)/Planning (PL) Funds Committee meeting on October 2. Ms. Bird explained that MPO staff would like to apply for \$220,000 in Special PL (federal) funds to hire a consultant to complete the 2050 MTP Update. The 2050 MTP is a federally required transportation planning document with an adoption deadline of October 21, 2025 and the project is included in the unfunded section of the FY 2024 UPWP. She said the application, which is due on September 18 needs to include a resolution from the PC giving approval for MPO staff to apply for the federal funds and agreement to cover the local match of \$55,000.

Ms. Ann-Marie Day explained that the MPO is not using all of the federal funds that have been allocated to them. She did not understand why the MPO was going after Special PL funds when annual planning money for FY 2023 is leftover. Ms. Jessica Bird explained that she did not know she could use leftover funds from FY 2023. She said beginning in 2016 MPOs could no longer save unused funds. The unused funds went into a pot of funding now called Special PL funds. Ms. Vivian Canizares with the GDOT Office of Planning said it does make sense in theory that the MTP can go within the UPWP.

Chairman Dan Perdue voiced his frustration with doing a lot of transportation planning and being chided for not using all of our planning funds when money to implement projects is greatly needed. His statement started a brief discussion with GDOT Planning and FHWA explaining the necessity and requirement to plan as an MPO and how that planning and documentation helps to apply for discretionary grants under the new transportation authorization. Ms. LaRhonda Patrick stressed the importance of the MPO using all of its planning funds because we do not want the funding source to take those funds away. She also announced that she and council created a position to assist Ms. Jessica Bird to help with the planning, which will be paid through the general fund of the City of Warner Robins. Ms. Bird explained that a call or email from FHWA to ask her about the funding situation would have been courteous instead of waiting until the PC needed to vote on application approval.

Mr. Roy Lewis explained that if we cannot use the FY 2023 funds, then we have to go with this plan to apply for Special PL funds. Mr. Michael Chidester with the City of Byron asked where are the remaining annual funds not used for FY 2023. Ms. Vivian Canizares stated that unused funds go to a common pot called the GAMPO/Special PL funds. Chairman Dan Perdue asked if we could amend our FY 2023 UPWP to include the 2050 MTP. Ms. Canizares said she would need to check the regulations and Office of Financial Management (OFM) guidelines for planning.

Mr. Roy Lewis made a motion to approve the application for Special PL funds to complete the 2050 MTP. Mr. John Harley seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Bryan Wood asked the committee in moving forward if we should be planning for more projects, fewer plans to get them further along, or include more public participation.

He also mentioned getting more information from other MPOs as far as how they spend their annual funds.

### **Approval to apply for Special PL Funds: Byron Safety Improvement Master Plan**

Ms. Jessica Bird explained that MPO staff have been asked to apply for Special PL (federal) funds on behalf of the City of Byron to hire a consultant to complete the Byron Safety Improvement Master Plan. Mr. Michael Chidester explained that after some clarification he understands that the funds cannot be used on local roads. Mr. Chidester said he is most interested in the SR 42/Moseley Road interchange improvements and the SR 49 pedestrian safety project. These are the projects that the City of Byron is trying to have funded.

Ms. Jessica Bird stated that at the TCC meeting she asked if changing from the eight priority locations to the two state routes constitutes new information and therefore the need to go back before the TCC. She said she did not receive an answer from FHWA. Ms. Bird also reported that the TCC did not recommend the application of Special PL funds because only two of the projects were eligible. Ms. Ann-Marie Day explained that this does need to go back to the TCC for discussion with a new project scope and cost. Ms. Day asked if the City of Byron has looked at the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) funding and Mr. Chidester said yes but it is competitive. Mr. Greg Boike mentioned that the MGRC has written a few applications for SS4A and there is a requirement that before implementation funding is applied for, there must be a vision zero action plan or some sort of plan to reduce roadway user fatalities. Mr. Boike explained that there are two pots of money under SS4A and the first pot of money is for that planning. He said that last year the federal government did not use all of the available money in that pot and awarded everyone who applied; therefore, it is a good option for any of our communities and the MGRC is willing to assist for next year's round of funding.

Chairman Dan Perdue announced that we will delay the application approval for Special PL funds to another meeting and the City of Byron will present the narrowed down project scope to the TCC. Ms. Jessica Bird said she spoke with Mr. Ted Hicks from the GDOT Office of Planning who previously worked with Special PL funds applications. Ms. Bird said Mr. Hicks suggested looking at doing corridor studies instead of focusing on particular intersections because the intersection problems might be happening as a result of an issue further up the road.

### **Update on WRATS Project Status Report**

Mr. Harland Smith, GDOT District 3 Planning and Programming Liaison, provided a project report with project manager comments to the committee members and briefly highlighted comments and information on most of the projects.

There being no further business, Mr. Bryan Wood made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Roy Lewis seconded the motion and the motion was passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 11:56 a.m.

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