



Gainesville - Hall Metropolitan Planning Organization

GHMPO

Braselton - Flowery Branch - Gainesville - Oakwood - Hall County - Jackson County

POLICY COMMITTEE

Minutes of August 9, 2016

**Commissioners Meeting Room, Hall County Government Center
2875 Browns Bridge Road, Gainesville, GA 30504**

Voting Members Present:

Chairman Richard Mecum, Hall County
Mayor Mike Miller, City of Flowery Branch
Mayor Danny Dunagan, City of Gainesville
Mayor Lamar Scroggs, City of Oakwood
Matthew Fowler, GDOT

Voting Members Absent:

Kevin Poe, Jackson County

Others Present:

Ken Rearden, Hall County
Bill Andrew, City of Flowery Branch
Rhonda Brady, City of Gainesville
Bryan Lackey, City of Gainesville
Chris Rotalsky, City of Gainesville
Matt Tarver, City of Gainesville
Phillippa Lewis Moss, Hall Area Transit
Stan Brown, City of Oakwood
Garrett Wiley, Greater Hall Chamber
Adam Hazell, GMRC
Jeff Gill, The Times
Brian Stewart, WDUN
Srikanth Yamala, GHMPO
Sam Baker, GHMPO
Joseph Boyd, GHMPO

David Haynes, ARC
Jennie Agerton, SIE
Scott Jordan, SEI
Julia Billings, GDOT
Kaycee Mertz, GDOT
Wayne Stradley, CAC Chair
John Girardeau, Citizen
Andrea Timpone, Citizen
R K Whitehead, Citizen
Connie Propes, Citizen
Brad Farrow, Citizen
Gina Pilcher, Citizen
Ethan Pilcher, Citizen
Deborah Simental, Citizen
Connie Daniels, Hall County

1. Welcome

Chairman Mecum called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

2. Approval of May 10, 2016 Meeting Minutes

MOTION: *Mr. Fowler made a motion to approve the minutes of May 10, 2016, with a second from Mayor Dunagan, and the motion passed by a unanimous vote.*

3. Public Comments

MOTION: Mayor Scroggs made a motion to move the Public Comments to the end of the meeting, with a second from Mayor Dunagan, and the motion passed by a unanimous vote.

Mr. Girardeau, Chairman for Elachee Board of Trustees, stated Elachee Nature Center has over 100,000 visitors a year, and they expect this number to increase. They request that the Elachee Drive bridge plan addresses safety issues for pedestrians and bicyclists by incorporating high railings and adequate safety measures.

Mr. Farrow presented the board with a handout and spoke in opposition to Exit 14 and the widening of Martin Road and asked that the PC help stop this development. Mayor Miller responded in support of Exit 14 saying this is a needed project and that it has not been planned secretly. He suggested an alternative route could be putting the exit by the community center; this would keep the traffic off of Martin Road.

Ms. Pilcher lives on Martin Road and asked if "No Truck" signs could be put up on Winder Highway and Atlanta Highway in an attempt to keep trucks off of Martin Road. Mr. Fowler stated he would share this request with the district office.

Ms. Simental relayed that GDOT told her the purpose of Exit 14 was to get the truck traffic from McEver Road and Thurmond Tanner area on to I-985. She stated there are 125 acres of undeveloped land that can be used for this project without going down Martin Road. The Planning Committee, which she is a member of, will come up with three different options to get the traffic to Exit 14 without touching Martin Road.

4. Report from Technical Coordinating Committee

Mr. Andrew relayed that the TCC had recommended approval of the resolution amending the RTP and TIP to program funds for the replacement of the Elachee Drive bridge. This project is being driven by GDOT and will not take funds away from other MPO projects. The TCC also recommended approval of the resolution requesting additional funds for a Bike-Share Feasibility Study; this request is for additional funds and will not take funds from any other project. Mr. Andrew remarked that due to the time and work put in by Hall County and some of the jurisdictions on their trails, this seems like the next logical step. They also received an in depth analysis of the Green Street Study.

Mr. Andrew noted the TCC had discussed the proposed rulemaking that may result in the consolidation of the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) with the Gainesville-Hall MPO and are very concerned about keeping the integrity of GHMPO. Mr. Andrew spoke with Mr. Yamala and was assured there would not be additional funds available if the City of Flowery Branch went with Atlanta's MPO (ARC) instead of the Gainesville Hall MPO and that it would have less of a voice. Flowery Branch will draft a letter in opposition to the potential merger. Mayor Dunagan announced that the City of Gainesville has already sent a letter to Governor Deal stating its opposition.

5. Report from the Citizens Advisory Committee

Mr. Stradley reported that he had been elected Chair of the CAC and Rene Gerrell as Vice Chair. The CAC unanimously recommended approval of the resolution amending the RTP and TIP to program funds for the replacement of the Elachee Drive bridge. They recommended denial of the resolution requesting additional funds for a Bike-Share Feasibility Study. They are against spending the money and believe it would be better undertaken by a private entity.

The CAC is very concerned about the proposed rulemaking regarding MPO coordination and the potential redrawing of planning area boundaries and encouraged everyone to send comments in opposition to this. Mr. Stradley relayed that the Green Street Study presentation was fantastic. He presented a letter he had received from citizens opposing the widening of Oak Tree Drive and its use as a short cut. Mr. Stradley commented on research he had personally done regarding the public notification of citizens of upcoming projects.

6. Approval of the Resolution Amending the Regional Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program

Mr. Baker relayed that GDOT had requested the GHMPO to amend its Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and the 2016-2019 Transportation Improvement Program to program funds for the replacement of the Elachee Drive bridge over I-985. This will not affect funding of other projects or the financial constraint of the RTP. Public comments have been received, and all are positive. GDOT will take the suggestions into consideration and a public meeting will be planned at a later date. The TCC, CAC and GHMPO staff recommend approval of this resolution.

Mr. Fowler explained that GDOT has a bridge replacement program that is inspection and data driven. After further discussion, Mayor Miller requested that the minutes specifically note that there is no local funding allocated to this project, it will not replace any projects currently planned, and it will not postpone or delay any projects already in the plan; it is just being added to the plan.

MOTION: Mr. Fowler made a motion to recommend approval of the resolution amending the Regional Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program with emphasis on bicycle and pedestrian safety issues being addressed. The motion received a second from Chairman Mecum, and the motion passed by a unanimous vote.

7. Approval of the Resolution Requesting Additional PL Funds for a Bike-Share Feasibility Study

Mr. Baker stated that the GHMPO staff recommends requesting \$75,000 of additional planning funds to conduct a bike-share feasibility study encompassing the entire GHMPO area. The study would evaluate specific locations, define the size and phasing of the system, recommend a business model, and show what the benefits would be. The TCC recommended approval of this resolution while the CAC did not.

Mayor Dunagan suggested this study be put on hold until all the trails are connected, saying this may work at a future date but the infrastructure and population are not here now and

this would be wasting money. Mayor Miller expressed frustration that funds are available for this project and the bridge, but not for projects that are badly needed now that he believes are higher priorities. Mr. Fowler explained the process of where the funds come from and how they can be used.

Mr. Yamala encouraged the PC to talk with their staff and let them know of any planning related studies they would like done. Mr. Andrew remarked that the MPO is required to study all forms of transportation, automobile, bus, bike and pedestrian. This study could help them decide where the missing links in the trails are.

MOTION: Mayor Dunagan made a motion to deny the resolution requesting additional PL funds for a Bike-Share Feasibility Study with a second by Chairman Mecum and the motion passed by a 4 – 1 vote (Mayor Miller opposed, Chairman Crow absent).

8. Green Street Corridor Study: Phase 1 Completion Results

Ms. Agerton provided an overall assessment of their findings on the Green Street Corridor Study. This study was a joint project between GDOT, GHMPO and the City of Gainesville. They did an in depth survey of drainage, condition of pipes, paving, trees, and utilities (electric, sewer, water, gas and telephone). Not surprisingly, the analysis is that the roadway is too narrow, has minimal to no shoulder, has an aged infrastructure, has double the truck traffic of most state routes and has very little right-of-way. There are too few cross walks, and the sidewalks are not ADA compliant. Phase II of the study will look at potential alternatives to improve traffic flow on this street.

9. Proposed Rulemaking on Metropolitan Planning Organization Coordination and Planning Area Reform

Mr. Boyd announced that the U.S. Department of Transportation has proposed rules for MPOs that will substantially alter the MPOs' planning area boundaries and coordination among them. The goal of the proposed revisions is to result in unified planning products for each urbanized area, even if there are multiple MPOs designated within that urbanized area. This proposal could potentially affect the GHMPO's existence, planning area, planning documents, and extent of coordination with ARC.

The Gainesville urbanized area which is significantly different and unique from the Atlanta urbanized area could be required to merge as a result of the proposed rules. The governor and MPOs, however, can make the determination not to merge MPOs, based on size and complexity. Even if GHMPO is allowed to remain separate, certain planning documents would be required to merge with Atlanta, which would result in loss of local voice and control over our region.

Mr. Baker stated the MPO is drafting a formal response and encouraged individual jurisdictions to submit comments and provide the MPO with their comments and concerns to incorporate in the MPO's response. Comments are due by August 26th.

Mr. Haynes spoke representing Atlanta Regional Commission saying that they categorically oppose the rule as currently written and believe at the core that it exceeds congressional intent about the metropolitan planning process and would not improve the plans, the

process and in fact, think that in some cases it could be detrimental. They are actively opposing this rule change with other national organizations and seeking to have this rule withdrawn.

Mr. Yamala stated he has met with Representative Collins who will submit documents opposing this rule. Chairman Mecum stated the PC will also submit a letter in opposition.

10. Jurisdiction and Agency Reports

Representatives shared the status of transportation projects being completed by their jurisdictions: Mayor Miller for the City of Flowery Branch, Mr. Rotalsky for the City of Gainesville, Mr. Brown for Oakwood, Mr. Baker for GDOT, Mr. Hazell for GMRC, Mr. Rearden for Hall County and Mr. Baker for Jackson County.


11. Upcoming Meeting Date

The next PC meeting will be on November 9, 2016.

12. Adjourn

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.

MOTION: Mayor Dunagan made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:58 a.m. with a second by Mayor Scroggs and the motion passed by a unanimous vote.



Danny Dunagan, Chairman



Joseph Boyd, Secretary

