



Citizens Advisory Committee

**HR Training Room, 2nd Floor, Hall County Government Center
Minutes of January 25, 2024 Meeting**

Voting Members Present:

Renee Gerrell, Hall County – *Chair*
Patrick O’Rourke, Hall County – *Vice-Chair*
Berlinda Lipscomb, City of Gainesville
Beverly Nordholz, City of Gainesville
Betsy Wigington, City of Gainesville
Sammy Smith, City of Gainesville
Jason Cox, City of Gainesville
Tony Millwood, City of Oakwood
John Rudio, City of Flowery Branch
Billy Edwards, Town of Braselton
Adrienne Rice, Hall County
Brent Hoffman, Hall County

Voting Members Absent:

Nick Haynes, Hall County
Toni Buffington, Hall County
Kim Jackson, Hall County
Joe Kennedy, Hall County
Pat Jones, City of Oakwood
Jim Southard, Jackson County

Others Present:

Kristen Watanabe, Citizen
Joseph Boyd, GHMPO

Michael Haire, GHMPO

1. Welcome – Renee Gerrell, Chair

Ms. Gerrell opened the meeting at 4:00 PM.

2. Approval of October 26, 2023 Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Mr. Smith made a motion to approve of the October 26, 2023 meeting minutes, with a second from Mr. Hoffman, and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

3. Recommend Approval of Draft FY 2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Mr. Haire introduced the FY 2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), which serves as the MPO’s annual budget for planning activities from July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025. This

is the second and final round of review for this document, with the Policy Committee anticipated to adopt the UPWP at their February 13, 2024 meeting. Mr. Haire discussed that the only funding in the document that is not final is the base PL grant, and it is anticipated that state partners will provide these funding amounts in the near future. MPO staff anticipates that the funding will be final prior to Policy Committee adoption.

The primary update in this draft of the FY 2025 UPWP is the inclusion of two new studies: a partial update to the Jackson County Transportation Plan, and the State Route 13 / Atlanta Highway Corridor Improvement Study. These have been added to Work Element 4.5 – “Special Transportation Studies.”

MPO staff received a comment from Mr. Edwards regarding the apparent decrease in projected funding in the five-year plan found on page 30 of the draft UPWP, to which Mr. Boyd explained that while the projected funding utilizes a 1% year-over-year increase, the funding shown for FY 2025 includes funding for additional studies that the MPO might undertake during that fiscal year. These funds must be applied for, and have not been awarded to the MPO yet.

MOTION: Mr. Smith made a motion to recommend approval of the Draft FY 2025 Unified Planning Work Program, with a second from Ms. Nordholz, and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

4. Recommend Approval of Draft PL Fund Application for State Route 13 / Atlanta Highway Corridor Study

Mr. Boyd discussed the draft State Route 13 / Atlanta Highway Corridor Study PL application, which is being conducted by the MPO in coordination with the City of Gainesville and Hall County. This study will seek to identify short and long-range transportation improvements to help alleviate congestion and lower crash rates. Specifically, this study will focus on State Route 13 from Jesse Jewell Parkway south to Thurmon Tanner Parkway. The total cost of the study will be \$150,000.00, made up of \$120,000.00 in additional PL funds and \$30,000.00 in local cash match, which will be split by the City of Gainesville and Hall County. If approved by the GHMPO Policy Committee, MPO staff will apply for funds at the March 25, 2024 PL Review Committee meeting.

Mr. Boyd received a question from Mr. Edwards about whether or not this study will include pedestrian safety improvements, to which Mr. Boyd responded that it would, as would the Hall County Safe Streets For All Safety Action Plan that is currently underway.

Mr. Boyd received a question from Ms. Gerrell as to whether or not this study would help provide impetus for freight traffic improvements in the area, to which Mr. Boyd responded that it could provide context and analysis for GDOT to utilize in future transportation projects that would improve freight movements through the corridor.

MOTION: Mr. Rudio made a motion to recommend approval of the Draft PL Fund Application for the State Route 13 / Atlanta Highway Corridor Study, with a second from Mr. Hoffman, and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

5. First Review of Draft 2024 GHMPO Participation Plan

Mr. Haire introduced the Draft 2024 GHMPO Participation Plan. While the last Participation Plan, adopted in 2021, was included as an appendix to the Title VI Plan, updates to these documents are now being created separately. While it was initially anticipated that this document would be adopted in May after a second round of committee review, it may be adopted later in the year while GDOT considers updates to best practices.

The primary purpose of the Participation Plan is to provide for the public an explanation of what each major planning document is, the procedures for amending these documents, the strategies of public outreach that the MPO will engage in, and opportunities for public engagement on the part of the citizen.

6. First Review of Draft 2024 GHMPO Title VI Plan and Environmental Justice Analysis

Mr. Haire introduced the Draft 2024 Title VI Plan and Environmental Justice Analysis. This document is currently anticipated to be adopted in May as scheduled by the Policy Committee.

The purpose of the Title VI Plan and Environmental Justice Analysis is to ensure that no members of the public are discriminated against in the public participation process or through any other programs or planning activities undertaken by the MPO. The Title VI Plan includes a Title VI form that citizens can use to formally file a complaint, as well as a record of all past complaints, lawsuits, and investigations, of which there are none. Lastly, the Title VI plan contains demographic maps that can be used to determine where targeted outreach may need to occur, or where translation services may be required.

Mr. Smith made a comment that the demographic analysis of the three GHMPO committees shows that it is not very representative of the GHMPO planning area, to which MPO staff replied that they would pass that along to the Policy Committee, who appoints Citizens Advisory Committee members, in hopes of making the Citizens Advisory Committee more representative in future appointments.

7. Presentation on Future Year 2055 SE Data for the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP): 2025 Update

Mr. Haire provided a presentation on the Future Year 2055 Socioeconomic (SE) Data for the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP): 2025 Update. This update provided a recap of how the SE data provides inputs for the Travel Demand Model, which forecasts future travel demand and congestion through 2055. SE data includes estimated counts for population, households, employment, student enrollment, and university enrollment. Mr. Haire provided an overview of the 2020 Base Year SE Data, as well as the 2055 Future Year SE Data, which is a 35-year projection from the 2020 base year. Lastly, Mr. Haire discussed the MTP schedule for the remainder of the contract period.

Mr. Haire answered a few questions from committee members about the extent of the study area, and clarified that the population of Jackson County included within the GHMPO boundary is a part

of the listed overall population for Jackson County. Additionally, MPO staff discussed future census years and the potential of the entirety of Jackson County joining the MPO planning area.

8. Other

Mr. Boyd briefly discussed recent updates to the Highlands to Islands Trail, including the continued development of the Gainesville Airport Trail, which recently finished design and is anticipated to begin construction in 2024. Mr. Boyd briefly discussed some of the design challenges for the Gainesville Airport Trail, most notably the railroad crossing north of the airport.

Ms. Gerrell asked if there were any updates on the closed entrance to the Dawsonville Highway Best Buy shopping center across from Green Hill Circle, to which Mr. Boyd responded that there have not been any updates but the City of Gainesville is looking at how they can enforce maintenance requirements.

Committee members briefly discussed their desire to see SR 365/Cornelia Highway converted into a controlled access roadway.

Mr. Boyd briefly discussed the widening of I-985 with the committee, which was cancelled by GDOT due to concerns over I-85's ability to accommodate the traffic flow changes.

The Committee briefly discussed the SR 365 Study being conducted by GDOT, and expressed interest in seeing their project list. Mr. Boyd explained that we have not received any new news on the study in a while, and agreed to send a letter from the Citizens Advisory Committee asking for more information.

Mr. Edwards discussed his concerns with traffic on State Route 211 and State Route 53, moving east into Jackson County from the I-85 exits. Additionally, he asked about the Northeast Georgia Regional Commission's (NEGRC) Transit Development Plan, and was curious as to if they were coordinating with GHMPO, Hall County, or the Georgia Mountains Regional Commission (GMRC). Mr. Boyd explained that NEGRC has members on the Technical Coordinating Committee and have been coordinating with local technical staff.

Mr. Smith asked if there was a design available for the Green Circle Connector Project in Gainesville, to which Mr. Boyd responded that he would ask Gainesville and send over what the City had back to the committee.

Mr. Millwood asked about the timing of the project occurring at the intersection of McEver Road and Browns Bridge Road. Mr. Boyd responded that the project had started and would look to see if a projected finish date was available.

Mr. Hoffman stated that Hall County and Gainesville need to move forward on a Northern Bypass Study to help alleviate congestion in Gainesville and to provide alternative routes for freight vehicles to take with the regional poultry industry and with the new inland port opening in the coming years.

9. TCC Agency Report

Mr. Boyd briefly discussed some of the notable project updates from the TCC Agency Report.

10. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

11. Upcoming Meeting Date: April 25, 2024

Ms. Gerrell reminded the Committee that their next meeting would be on April 25, 2024.

12. Adjourn

There being no other items of business, the meeting adjourned at 5:00 PM.



Renee Gerrell, Chair

Patrick O'Rourke, Vice Chair



Michael Haire, GHMPO