

Policy Committee

**Commission Meeting Room, 2nd Floor, Hall County Government Center
Draft Minutes of February 13, 2024 Meeting**

Voting Members Present:

Mayor Ed Asbridge, City of Flowery Branch, Chair
Mayor Sam Couvillon, City of Gainesville
Chairman Richard Higgins, Hall County
Commissioner Jeff Stowe, Hall County
Commissioner Kathy Cooper, Hall County
Commissioner Jim Hix, Jackson County
Megan Weiss, GDOT

Voting Members Absent:

Mayor Lamar Scroggs, City of Oakwood

Others Present:

Corey Jones, City of Gainesville
Chris Rotalsky, City of Gainesville
Dan Branch, City of Buford
Tonya Parish, City of Flowery Branch
Shelley Ramey, GDOT
Justin Lott, GDOT
Jamie Dove, Jackson County
Srikanth Yamala, Hall County

Zach Propes, Hall County
Casey Ramsey, Hall County
Philippa Lewis Moss, Hall Area Transit
Joseph Boyd, GHMPO
Michael Haire, GHMPO
Jeff Gill, Gainesville Times
Steve Cote, RS&H

1. Welcome – Mayor Ed Asbridge, Chair

Mayor Asbridge opened the meeting at 10:00 AM.

2. Approval of November 14, 2023 Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Commissioner Stowe made a motion to approve of the November 14, 2023 meeting minutes, which received a second from Chairman Higgins, and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

3. Update from the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC)

Mr. Boyd provided the committee with a brief recap of the most recent Technical Coordinating

Committee meeting, which took place on January 24, 2024. The TCC unanimously recommended approval of all agenda items.

Mr. Boyd also provided a brief update on the TCC Trails Subcommittee. Mr. Boyd discussed the Airport Connector Trail, which is anticipated to begin construction mid-2024. Additionally, Mr. Boyd discussed discussions with Norfolk Southern that indicate that jurisdictions may be able to use railroad right-of-way for trails. Lastly, Mr. Boyd mentioned that the upcoming Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan is scheduled to kick off on February 26.

Commissioner Stowe asked if any existing trail segments along the Highlands to Islands Trail had lighting or safety call boxes, to which Mr. Boyd responded that portions of the trail in Gainesville (the Midland and Rock Creek greenways) currently had lighting installed. No safety call boxes had been implemented yet, but various jurisdictions had discussed the possibility of installing them along more isolated trail segments in the future.

4. Update from the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)

Mr. Boyd provided a brief recap of the recent Citizens Advisory Committee meeting, which took place on January 25, 2024. The CAC voted to approve all agenda items.

Mr. Boyd discussed some recommendations and concerns from the Citizens Advisory Committee, specifically their request that future appointees to the committee are selected to more accurately represent the diversity of the GHMPO planning area. The CAC also continued to express their desire for a northern arc/bypass study be conducted in the near future to help alleviate congestion passing through downtown Gainesville.

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

Mr. Boyd 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. Mr. Boyd discussed the updates to this draft, namely the finalization of funds allocated to the MPO for FY 2025. This document includes final amounts for FHWA's PL Funds, FHWA's Y410 Funds, FTA's Section 5303 Transit Planning Funds, and additional PL funds awarded for the Metropolitan Transportation Plan / Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Update and the State Route 13 / Atlanta Highway Corridor Improvement Study.

The primary update in this draft 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."

MOTION: Mayor Couvillon made a motion to approve of draft FY 2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), which received a second from Chairman Higgins, and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

6. 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 on State Route 13 from Jesse Jewell Parkway south to Thurmon Tanner Parkway. The total cost of the study will be \$200,000.00, made up of \$160,000.00 in additional PL funds and \$40,000.00 in local cash match, which will be split by the City of Gainesville and Hall County. MPO staff will apply for funds at the March 25, 2024 PL Review Committee meeting.

MOTION: Commissioner Stowe made a motion to approve of the draft PL Fund Application for the State Route 13 / Atlanta Highway Corridor Study, which received a second from Mayor Couvillon, and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

7. 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.

Mr. Haire received a question from Mayor Asbridge regarding whether or not the MPO gets much public participation, to which MPO staff responded that the MPO could always use more public participation, but will be increasing targeted public participation efforts in the near future as the Metropolitan Transportation Plan continues to be developed.

8. 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. 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.

9. Review of Future Year 2055 SE Data for the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP): 2025 Update

Mr. Cote of RS&H provided a presentation on the Base Year 2020 and 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. Cote 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. Cote discussed the MTP schedule for the remainder of the contract period.

10. Other

Mayor Asbridge and Chairman Higgins remarked on Mr. Yamala's nearly 20 years of service to Hall County and GHMPO, and wished him well in his new position at Barrow County.

11. Jurisdiction and Agency Reports

Representatives shared the status of projects being completed by their jurisdictions: Ms. Parrish for the City of Flowery Branch, Mr. Jones for the City of Gainesville, Mr. Branch for the City of Buford, Mr. Lott for the Georgia Department of Transportation, Ms. Moss for Hall Area Transit, Ms. Dove for Jackson County, and Mr. Boyd on behalf of Mr. Miller for Hall County.

12. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

13. Upcoming Meeting Date

Mayor Asbridge reminded the Committee of their next meeting date on May 14, 2024.

14. Adjourn

MOTION: Commissioner Stowe made a motion to adjourn the meeting, with a second from Chairman Higgins, and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Mayor Ed Asbridge, Chair

Michael Haire, GHMPO