

**MINUTES
NO QUORUM PRESENT
SUATS POLICY COMMITTEE
FRIDAY, March 31, 2023 @ 8:30 A.M.
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
(21 N. MAIN STREET, SUMTER, SC)**

POLICY COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: The Honorable Mayor **David P. Merchant**; County Council Chairman **James T. McCain, Jr.**; Sumter CTC Chairman **Hugh M. McLaurin, IV**; Sumter Economic Development Board President & CEO **Jay Schwedler**; Sumter City Manager **Deron McCormick**.

POLICY COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: Chairman; State Senator **J. Thomas McElveen, III**; Planning Commission Chairman **James Munford**; County Councilman **James Byrd, Jr.**; State Representative **J. David Weeks**; State Representative **G. Murrell Smith**; Sumter County Administrator **Gary Mixon**; Shaw Air Force Base Commander Col. **Derek O'Malley**, SCDOT 5th District Commissioner **David E. "Gene" Branham**, and SCDOT 6th District Commissioner **John Barnwell Fishburne**.

OTHERS PRESENT: (See sign-in sheet)

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Senior Planner **Kyle Kelly**, Planning Director **Helen Roodman**, and Planning Technician Marsha Grinnell.

A meeting of the Sumter Area Transportation Study (SUATS) Policy Committee was held on Friday, March 31, 2023, @ 8:30 a.m. in City Council Chambers (21 N. Main St., Sumter, SC). Chairman David Merchant called the meeting to order. In the absence of a quorum, informational items were discussed, and no action was taken.

FY2024 & FY2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Mr. Kelly stated the SUATS FY2024 & FY2025 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) will describe all urban transportation and transportation-related planning activities anticipated in SUATS for the period July 1, 2023, and ending June 30, 2025.

The ten (10) proposed major tasks are as follows:

- Task 1 – Administration and Management
- Task 2 – Long Range Planning
- Task 3 – Short-Range Planning
- Task 4 - Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- Task 5 – Project Implementation and Monitoring
- Task 6- Modal Planning
 - A – Bicycle and Pedestrian
 - B – Transit
 - C – Intermodal Freight
- Task 7 – Transportation Data Collection and Analysis

- Task 8 – Land Use Monitoring and Analysis
- Task 9 - Public Involvement
- Task 10 – MPO Consultant Services

Specific details and activities for each major task are included in the draft UPWP, along with Federal funding resources and budget summaries for both FY2024 and FY2025.

SCDOT has provided the summary of available planning funds for SUATS for the FY2023 & FY2024 period, which represents a consolidated federal planning grant that combines Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) Planning (PL) funds and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5303 Mass Transit Planning Funds.

Additionally, there are two items of national interest that impact SUATS funding this year:

USDOT Complete Streets Waiver – In January 2023, USDOT issued a waiver on the non-Federal match for Metropolitan Planning (PL) funds in support of Complete Streets Planning Activities. Under the waiver, MPOs may use federal funding for 100% of the expenses associated with such planning and research activities. MPOs are required to use at least 2.5% of provided federal PL funds on Complete Streets planning activities.

USDOT Accounting Error and Resulting Rescission of Funds – In February 2023, USDOT found a major error in their accounting system. The issue is connected to billions in “old money” that reports as available to states via a daily electronic interface versus USDOT’s internal bookkeeping system. USDOT has taken the position that their internal bookkeeping system is the official record, and as a result is disallowing access to the “old money” that was appearing in the daily electronic interface. For South Carolina a total of \$32,913.79 is being equally rescinded across the 11 MPOs, with a resulting rescission of \$2,992.16 applicable to SUATS.

A 21-day public comment period must be observed prior to adoption of the UPWP. A summary of substantive comments received will be made available to the Committee upon request. Pending no substantive comments, the UPWP will be adopted and submitted to SCDOT and FHWA.

US-378 (Robert E. Graham Freeway) Corridor Feasibility and Conceptual Engineering Design Project

Mr. Kelly mentioned the US-378 (Robert E. Graham Freeway) Corridor Feasibility and Conceptual Engineering Design Project was funded in 2022 via the SUATS Guideshare program with a budget of \$400,000. All necessary approvals have been obtained from SCDOT and a contract was executed with AECOM Technical Services, Inc. in February 2023 to complete the feasibility study and develop conceptual engineering designs for improvements to the corridor to improve safety for all users as well as increase connectivity between the areas to the north and south of the roadway.

Mr. Kelly added the project kicked off this month with a meeting of the technical steering committee, comprised of City, County, SUATS, and SCODT personnel. A stakeholder matrix is currently being developed, which will include community residents, business owners, public safety officials, and church representatives with a stake in the project area. The planning phase of this project is scheduled to be completed by June of 2024.

Staff offers this information for the Policy Committee's information. Additional briefings will be provided throughout the project, and the final report will be presented to the Policy Committee for further action, including decision-making on engineering design, right-of-way acquisition, and/or construction funding.

Updating the SUATS Urbanized Area and MPO Boundary based on 2020 Census Data

Mr. Kelly stated as defined by the U.S. Census and used throughout federal agencies as a mechanism for categorizing places, urban areas represent densely developed territory, and encompass residential commercial, and other nonresidential urban land uses. Urban areas are defined primarily based on housing unit density measured at the census block level.

Mr. Kelly mentioned the U.S. Census Bureau adopted two key changes to the methodology for classifying urban areas for the 2020 Census:

- 1) raising the minimum threshold for qualification as an urban area to at least 2,000 housing units or at least 5,000 people; and,
- 2) using primarily *housing* unit density to identify qualifying census blocks instead of *population* density.

Mr. Kelly added as found in the federal legislation that established the Metropolitan Planning Organization structure, MPOs, in cooperation with the state and transit providers, must review their boundaries after each Census to determine if existing MPA boundaries meet the minimum statutory requirements for new and updated urbanized area(s), and adjust them as necessary. As appropriate, additional adjustments should be made to reflect the most comprehensive boundary to foster an effective planning process that ensures connectivity between modes, improves access to modal systems, and promotes efficient overall transportation investment strategies.

Mr. Kelly stated while changes to the Census methodology do not cause any portions of Sumter's urban area to extend beyond the existing MPO boundary, there are opportunities to "rightsized" the MPO boundaries to reflect the boundaries that foster an effective planning process.

Staff offers this information for the Policy Committee's information. As staff identifies any potential boundary changes in consultation with SCODT and FHWA, those items will be presented to the Policy Committee for further action.

Active Projects Update

Mr. Kelly provided a brief status update on current area transportation improvement projects funded via the Sumter Penny for Progress sales tax initiative and SUATS Guideshare Program. The briefing focused on the implementation schedules for each major phase of work.

Respectfully submitted,

Kellie K. Chapman

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Board Secretary