

**Colquitt County 2035 Long Range Transportation Study
Kickoff Meeting Minutes
Colquitt County Courthouse Annex
November 6, 2008, 1:30 PM**

Meeting Attendees:

Christine Page, Colquitt County Board of Education
Nikie Brady, Colquitt County Volunteer Fire Department
Seth Brady, Colquitt County Volunteer Fire Department
Don Senkbeil, Doerun City Council
Tony Brock, Airport Authority Manager
Russell Moody, Colquitt Code officer
Mike Scott, City of Moultrie
Emily Watson, UGA Archway
Scott N. Brown, UGA Extension - Colquitt County
Charles Weathers, Colquitt County
Alfred Porter, Colquitt County
Darrell Moore, Colquitt County Chamber and Development Authority
Greg Monfort, City of Moultrie

John C. Peters, Colquitt County
Myrtis Ndawula, SWGA Community Action Council
Randy Weldon, SWGA Community Action Council
Laura Sapp, Sapp Trucking, Inc.
Jay White, Sapp Trucking, Inc.
Jane Wiggins, Moultrie Tech
Marion Hay, Colquitt County
Shane Pridgen, GDOT - District 4
Brent Thomas, GDOT - District 4
Roger Ruis, City of Moultrie
Stacy Griffin, Colquitt County
Beth Radke, MPH and Associates
Mary Huffstetler, MPH and Associates
Andrew Smith, HNTB
Garth Lynch, HNTB
Tim Hatton, HNTB
Lesla Walker, GDOT
Matthew Fowler, GDOT

Meeting Summary:

Lesla Walker, Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) Office of Planning, Project Manager, commenced the meeting, introduced the study and its purpose, and had meeting attendees introduce themselves. She then turned the floor over to Tim Hatton, HNTB Project Manager. Mr. Hatton thanked the group for attending, introduced the project team, and provided a PowerPoint presentation that described the purpose of the plan, provided an overview of the study, outlined the schedule, and established the roles and responsibilities of the County, Cities, and the Study Advisory Committee. The importance of collaboration and coordination with past and ongoing planning efforts was stressed. A summary of the data collection efforts to date and the remaining needs were discussed. Mr. Hatton explained that the study would have a multi-modal approach and would examine roads, bridges, railroads, freight, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, transit, and access to aviation facilities. The focus of the plan is to ensure that Colquitt County and its municipalities are able to meet the current and future (year 2035) mobility needs of residents and businesses. The plan will coordinate with other planning efforts and ensure transportation priorities match community priorities and are consistent with the Statewide Transportation Planning Process. The plan will provide Colquitt County with a prioritized list of multi-modal transportation needs for the early identification of funding issues and opportunities.

Following the presentation, the attendees were asked four questions to stimulate conversation regarding challenges, opportunities, priorities, and the desired outcome of the study. Also, the group was asked to provide input on goals and objectives for this Long Range Transportation Plan. A summary of the group discussion is provided in the next section of this document.

Mr. Hatton concluded with a discussion of the next steps of the study, which include continuing data collection efforts, developing a travel demand model, coordinating transportation study efforts with the recently approved comprehensive plan, finalizing the goals and objectives, and providing an existing conditions analysis. The next meeting will occur in early 2009.

Group Discussion:

The group was asked the following four questions:

- What are the biggest transportation challenges for the County as growth continues through 2035?
- Where are the opportunity areas / areas of concern in the County?
- What are your current transportation improvement priorities?
- What is the main outcome you would like to achieve through development of the plan?

Challenges and Opportunities

The challenges and opportunities facing Colquitt County are organized by generalized category based on the comments received from the study advisory committee. Because the answers to the questions regarding challenges and opportunities overlapped during the group discussion, they were combined.

Activity Centers and Circulation

The Colquitt County Comprehensive Plan passed in 2008 places an emphasis on nodal development that occurs at cross-road communities and in existing downtown areas. This transportation plan will support the desires of the citizens of Colquitt County as documented in the comprehensive planning process. Comments received from the Study Advisory Committee include:

- One-way pair design in downtown areas is confusing. Analyze the possibility of reverting to 2-way traffic and determine this modifications impact on downtown circulation overall.

Industry and Transportation

Economic development initiatives are partly dependent upon four-lane access and proximity to interstates. The recruitment of new businesses will be aided by the widening of SR 133 through Colquitt County and will provide regional transportation and economic benefits as well. In support of existing businesses, the operations and maintenance of existing roadways needs to consider the increase in the size and weight of farm equipment and freight hauling equipment and the toll that these are taking on the roads. The interaction between the large equipment travel movements from agrarian economic base economy needs to be taken into account when planning for traffic on the main transportation corridors. Comments received from the Study Advisory Committee include:

- SR 133 is a primary economic development generator. This four-lane project would serve regional economic development purposes.
- "Co-existing" with agriculture & transportation. As farm equipment gets larger, its weight and size are creating unsafe conditions on roadways. Improvements to sub-base and shoulders, and widening to four-lanes were suggested possible solutions offered by the group.
- There are 360 miles of dirt roads
- There are 900 miles of county roads which are designed primarily for farm to market. The current design is not holding up due to heavy loads.
- Most industrial areas are served by rail. The existing rail activity is limited. There is very little land left with rail access. A new site in the northwest part of country has been purchased.
- New industries shopping for space in Colquitt do not have much interest in new rail access, and they are more interested in four-lane access and proximity to interstate.
- SR 37 west of Moultrie has been proposed to be protected as agricultural land. Balance between preservation and minimum environmental requirements as improvements are proposed for SR 37.
- Truck traffic coming from SR 37 or SR 111 has difficulty moving from West through Moultrie
- Need easier access to interstates & other major roads.
- Need better access for military bases, agriculture products & residents.
- Connect SR 133 S to US 319 near hospital (either new road or upgrade existing) There is a Long Range project - This would help w/traffic from Valdosta & school traffic.

Schools, Safety, and Bike and Pedestrian facilities

The proximity of some schools to the location of housing limits the mode by which school children can travel to school. The group mentioned 80 percent of school children travel by bus to school. In addition, queuing to drop-off and pick-up school children creates back-ups on the roads leading to the schools, which are often major corridors. This creates an unsafe roadway condition. Comments received from the Study Advisory Committee include:

- SR 37/SR 11 has traffic backs up from the Junior High School making the travel slow and unsafe in the morning peak period.
- Analyze “in-town” schools for possible sidewalks
- Very few students live within a mile and a half of school
- Turn lanes have helped some at Sunset Elementary School, but more is needed to fix problems with safety.
- Pedestrian traffic crossing street from high school to Wal-Mart. Analyze pedestrian crossing solutions.
- Existing bike path
 - Loop to other RR corridor thru downtown YMCA
 - Lighting

Funding and Process

Funding was seen as a primary reason for delay in the implementation of transportation projects to address known transportation issues. Comments received from the Study Advisory Committee include:

- The process to obtain federal and state funds should be streamlined
- Funding issues
- Railroad crossings are bad and too expensive to fix per current specifications
- The lack of funding on the state level has placed the burden of responsibility on the local county staff

Priorities

The Study Advisory Committee stressed SR 133 as a top priority. The group suggested the continuation of the transportation needs identified in the 2001 plan as well as improvements to intersections and existing roads:

- Widening SR 133 was considered the number one priority for economic growth and regional benefit
- US 319 and SR 133 Connector
- Northeast bypass from US 319 to Industrial Drive (connects to new school)
- US 319 Bypass and Sylvester Drive, locally called Spaghetti Junction, is considered a dangerous intersection
- 4th Avenue NE and Rowland Drive is considered a dangerous five point intersection and is a potential candidate for a roundabout.
- Address congestion at SR 37 and SR 111 intersection and the schools west of Moultrie (narrow bridge)
- 5th Avenue, SR 133, Old Adel Road, Industrial Drive is considered a bad intersection and more industry, subdivision, and traffic have been introduced to the area since 2001

Outcome

The Study Advisory Committee stated that having a user-friendly, workable plan was the outcome they sought from this process. There were positive remarks about the existing plan. The following were the Study Advisory Committee’s desires for the outcome of the plan:

- Workable
- User-friendly
- Follow the lead of the existing plan from 2001
- Identify funding

Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives discussion revealed the following from the Study Advisory Committee:

- Maintain agricultural base in County
- Positive, meaningful growth
- Crossroad development around current community hubs
- Redevelopment versus new development following comprehensive plans lead, promote use of existing infrastructure before expanding to new areas.