

## **Citizens Advisory Committee**

**Finance Training Room, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Hall County Government Center  
Draft Minutes of January 30, 2025 Meeting**

### **Voting Members Present:**

Renee Gerrell, Hall County – *Chair*  
Patrick O’Rouke, Hall County – *Vice-Chair*  
Berlinda Lipscomb, City of Gainesville  
Beverly Nordholz, City of Gainesville  
Sammy Smith, City of Gainesville  
Pat Jones, City of Oakwood  
John Rudio, City of Flowery Branch  
Rick Marzano, City of Flowery Branch  
Adrienne Rice, Hall County  
Kim Jackson, Hall County  
Billy Edwards, Town of Braselton

### **Voting Members Absent:**

Jason Cox, City of Gainesville  
Tony Millwood, City of Oakwood  
Bob Norton, Hall County  
Nick Haynes, Hall County  
Brent Hoffman, Hall County  
Jesse Patton, Hall County  
Jim Southard, Jackson County

### **Others Present:**

Joseph Boyd, GHMPO  
Michael Haire, GHMPO

### **1. Welcome – Renee Gerrell, Chair**

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

### **2. Approval of December 5, 2024 Meeting Minutes**

**MOTION:** Mr. Smith made a motion to approve of the December 5, 2024 meeting minutes, with a second from Ms. Jones, and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

### **3. Recommend Approval of the Draft 2025 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) Fiscally Constrained Project List**

Mr. Haire provided an overview of funding changes that have affected the project list since the December Policy Committee meeting, and introduced four projects that were added to the project

list. Mr. Haire gave an additional overview of the remaining projects previously included in the Fiscally Constrained Project List, engaging with Committee members when clarifications or additional information were needed. Mr. Haire then discussed next steps, which is the completion and review of the final report by the three GHMPO Committees, and the final approval of the plan at the Policy Committee meeting on May 6, 2025.

The Committee engaged in additional discussion regarding the widening of State Route 365, and the potential impacts of the widening on new and potential land owners along the corridor. Ms. Rice expressed concern that continual development on the corridor will only raise the future cost of right-of-way required for the project, and that local agencies should consider either a moratorium on development or proactive right-of-way acquisition. Ms. Rice also expressed concern that a potential widening of State Route 365 would occur prior to a widening of I-985.

GHMPO staff discussed the challenges of limiting development for a project that has not undergone preliminary engineering or design. Additionally, staff echoed Ms. Rice's sentiments regarding the widening of I-985 needing to be a priority, and provided some insight into GDOT's approach to the corridor.

The Committee engaged in additional discussion regarding the need to integrate the MPO's transportation planning activities with the future land use planning at local planning agencies, and expressed interest in inviting local planning officials to future Citizen's Advisory Committee meetings for discussion.

GHMPO staff emphasized that after pre-engineering for a project, the project timeline and required funding can shift dramatically. Additionally, Mr. Haire clarified that the funding for the State Route 365 Widening is specifically earmarked for that project, and is a response to public concern regarding the traffic implications of the new Blue Ridge Connector.

**MOTION:** Mr. Smith made a motion to recommend approval of the Draft 2025 MTP Fiscally Constrained Project List, which received a second from Mr. O'Rourke, and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

#### **4. Recommend Approval of Draft Amendment #5 to the FY 2024-2027 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

Mr. Boyd introduced Draft Amendment #5 to the FY 2024-2027 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which contains all projects receiving funding between the fiscal years of 2024-2027, as well as Amendment #10 to the 2020 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The updates being made to the Transportation Improvement Program with Amendment #5 are below:

- New Project: GH-150 / PI 0020731: State Route 365 Widening from I-985 to Belton Bridge Road in Lula
  - Pre-Engineering (PE) funding added for FY 2026 in the amount of \$10,000,000.00.

This project was previously included in Amendment #4, but was tabled at the December Policy Committee meeting over concerns regarding the funding source. GHMPO, in consultation with GDOT, later met with Policy Committee members to discuss and resolve any remaining concerns.

This item is now planned to be adopted as Amendment #5 at the Policy Committee meeting on February 11, 2025.

**MOTION:** Mr. Smith made a motion to recommend approval of Draft Amendment #5 to the FY 2024-2027 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) which received a second from Mr. Rudio, and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

## **5. Recommend Approval of Draft FY 2026 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)**

Mr. Haire discussed the final draft of the FY 2026 Unified Planning Work Program, which is the annual operating budget for the MPO, funding all planning activities and any additional studies GHMPO would like to do. This draft of the FY 2026 UPWP contains finalized funding amounts for FHWA's PL grant and FTA's Section 5303 grant. Additionally, a new Work Element (4.6 – Air Quality) has been created to describe the work that GHMPO does with the Atlanta Regional Commission regarding air quality conformity. Lastly, Mr. Haire discussed the potential studies listed within the UPWP that GHMPO and local jurisdictions could choose to pursue in FY 2026 – namely, the Oakwood-Flowery Branch Connection Trail Study, which GHMPO could do utilizing the base PL grant, and the State Route 13 (Oakwood) Corridor Study, which would require applying for additional PL funds.

Mr. Smith requested that staff add a potential MPO-wide sidewalk inventory study to the unfunded projects section for FY 2026.

**MOTION:** Mr. Smith made a motion to recommend approval of the Draft FY 2026 Unified Planning Work Program, which received a second from Ms. Nordholz, and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

## **6. Recommend Approval Draft Application for US DOT's Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Grant Program**

Mr. Boyd led a discussion on US DOT's Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Grant Program. This program is designed to provide funding for planning activities and infrastructure improvements that increase the resiliency of the transportation network against extreme weather events and natural disasters. GHMPO intends to apply for a Planning Grant, which will fund the development of a Resiliency Improvement Plan. After a Resiliency Improvement Plan is in place, GHMPO and local agencies will be able to apply for additional PROTECT funding to begin implementing improvements identified in the Resiliency Improvement Plan. GHMPO is applying for \$400,000.00 to develop the plan, and no local match is required for PROTECT Planning Grants. The grant application is still under development, but GHMPO intends to apply prior to the February 24, 2025 deadline.

**MOTION:** Mr. Smith made a motion to recommend approval of the Draft Application for US DOT's Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation (PROTECT) Grant Program, which received a second from Ms. Jackson, and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

## **7. Update on the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan**

Mr. Haire briefly discussed the development of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. The Steering Committee met on January 29<sup>th</sup> to provide feedback on draft recommendations and prioritization criteria, and the project team is now working on refining their recommendations based on that feedback and developing the final report. The final report will be sent out to GHMPO Committee members prior to the next round of GHMPO Committee meetings, which begin at the end of April, for any final feedback or comments. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan is anticipated to be approved by the GHMPO Policy Committee at the May 6, 2025 meeting.

GHMPO and the project team are also planning on holding a final Public Open House for the project, which will be held from 5:00 – 6:30 PM on February 18, 2025 at the Gainesville Public Safety Complex. To consolidate meetings and not inundate the public, this meeting will feature the final recommendations from the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Safety Action Plan, and the State Route 13 / Atlanta Highway Corridor Study.

## **8. Update on the State Route 13 / Atlanta Highway Corridor Study**

Mr. Haire briefly discussed the development of the State Route 13 / Atlanta Highway Corridor Study. The project team has provided a draft list of recommendations, which is currently being revised based on feedback from GHMPO, Hall County, and City of Gainesville staff. These recommendations will be on display at the February 18<sup>th</sup> Open House. The State Route 13 / Atlanta Highway Corridor Study is anticipated to be approved by the GHMPO Policy Committee at the May 6, 2025 meeting.

## **9. Update on the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Safety Action Plan**

Mr. Boyd provided an update on the Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Safety Action Plan. This plan will provide a prioritized list of recommendations for safety improvements for vehicles and pedestrians throughout Hall County. A draft project list has been provided to the Steering Committee and is currently being developed into a prioritized list. These recommendations will be on display at the February 18<sup>th</sup> Open House. The Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Safety Action Plan is anticipated to be approved by the GHMPO Policy Committee at the May 6, 2025 meeting.

Ms. Gerrell requested that GHMPO staff share the flyer for the public meeting so that she can share it on social media.

## **10. Other**

GHMPO staff provided responses from the Technical Coordinating Committee on various questions asked by the Citizens Advisory Committee.

Regarding future upgrades at the intersection of Hog Mountain Road and Black Jack Road, Hall County and the City of Flowery Branch indicated there were no planned improvements at this time.

Regarding the railroad frequently blocking Athens Street, the City of Gainesville shared that they will be installing warning lights that alert drivers well before the tracks if the crossing is blocked.

In response to questions about finding information on local projects, Hall County and the town of Braselton indicated this information is available on their website – however, most agencies shared that they do not have this information posted online, and the best way to inquire is to call the Public Works departments directly.

In regards to the future upgrades at the intersection of Limestone Parkway and Beverly Road, local agencies indicated that a right turn lane off of Beverly Road is being installed in the near future, while the City of Gainesville has already asked GDOT to install dedicated left turn arrows off of Limestone Parkway.

## **11. TCC Agency Reports**

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

## **12. Public Comments**

Ms. Gerrell shared the passing of former CAC member Dianne O’Kelley.

Mr. Smith suggested that the CAC invite a representative from the Lakeshore Mall redevelopment to discuss the project and provide more detail on the redevelopment plans and how they relate to and affect transportation in the area. Ms. Rice responded that she knew a contact for the project and could request for them to meet with the CAC later this spring or summer.

## **13. Upcoming Meeting Date: April 24, 2025**

Ms. Gerrell reminded the committee of their next meeting on April 24, 2025.

## **14. Adjourn**

There being no other items of business, the meeting adjourned.

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Renee Gerrell, Chair

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Michael Haire, GHMPO