



Preparing For What Comes Next

The past year has presented the Florence Area Transportation Study (FLATS) with many unique challenges. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) had to adjust in a manner that would allow the MPO to function while keeping our committee members and members of the public safe. One measure the MPO took was to transition our traditional in public meetings to virtual meetings. In an effort to make sure that virtual meetings did not deter or hinder public involvement, the Policy Committee chose to amend the Public Participation Plan (PPP) so that it would include guidelines for staff to adhere to when conducting a public meeting in a virtual format. These guidelines included requirements such as making sure the public had reasonable access to the virtual meeting, and also established a call-in line citizens could use if they did not have access to internet. This allowed the MPO to carry on with required tasks, while also adhering to the recommended social distancing standards. Not only did this allow the MPO move forward with its day-to-day operations, the MPO was also able to move forward with new projects such as voting to begin the process of updating the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).

With the South Cashua Drive widening Project being completed, it was time for the MPO to start to consider the next project, or projects, to fund. To be eligible for MPO funding a project must be included within the LRTP. Out of the top four potential projects included in the LRTP, three of the projects did not have enough available data for the Policy Committee to know what the cost would be to complete the project, or what type of work would need to be done to make the potential project a success. To acquire this needed data, the Policy Committee voted last year to allocate a portion of the MPO's annual guideshare funding to fund three feasibility reports. These feasibility reports are for the following three potential projects: Intersection Improvements at Irby St., Second Loop Rd., and Pamplico Hwy., Operational improvements on a portion of David H. McLeod Blvd., and road widening on Radio Dr. and Ebenezer Rd. Though the funding was approved last year for these reports, SCDOT delayed the adoption of the new Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). This delay meant that SCDOT was not able to access funding to start the feasibility reports until this year. The goal of these reports is to be able to have more accurate cost estimates and timelines prior to funding the project. They are also



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The Florence Area Transportation Study (FLATS) is the metropolitan planning organization servicing a population of 124,316 from within two counties. The FLATS Study Team provides recommendations to the Policy Committee which has final local approval and authority. This committee consists of voting and non-voting members.

VOTING

Senator Hugh Leatherman, Chair
South Carolina Senate District 31

Teresa Myers Ervin, Vice-Chair
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Ashby Gregg
Mayor, Town of Quinby

Sherwin Welch
Flo. Cty. Transportation Committee

Representative Phillip Lowe
South Carolina House District 60

Tony K. Cox, SCDOT
Highway Commissioner, District 7

Pat Gibson-Hye Moore
Council, City of Florence, District 2

Willard Dorriety, Jr.
Flo. Cty. Council Chairman, District 9

Waymon Mumford,
Flo. Cty. Council, District 7

NON-VOTING

K. G. Rusty Smith
Administrator, Florence County

Shawn Brashear, Director
Florence County Planning

Jody Lane, Chairman
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Brent L. Rewis, SCDOT
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Kyle Berry, SCDOT
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Don Strickland, PDRTA
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Randall Osterman
City Manager, City of Florence

aimed at laying out what goals these projects hope to accomplish. Since the STIP was adopted, SCDOT and the MPO have been working together to complete these reports. The data that these reports produce will be used to help the policy committee determine which project(s) to fund next.

The continued work on the feasibility reports is not the only thing the MPO has been up to this year though. The MPO has also started the process of updating the LRTP. The current FLATS LRTP covers a planning period to the year 2040. The updated LRTP will move this planning window out to the year 2045. Maintaining a LRTP that includes at least a 20 year planning horizon is mandated by federal regulation, thus making it one of the required documents that a MPO must develop, maintain, and follow. The same federal regulation that mandates the development of the LRTP, also lays out what a MPO must include in their LRTP. One of the most important aspects of the LRTP, is the ranked project list. This list will lay out the projects that will be eligible for future MPO funding.

To ensure that the MPO produces the most applicable LRTP, while at the same time meeting all of the federal requirements, the Policy Committee voted to hire a consultant to assist with updating the LRTP. This was done by amending the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) so that the MPO could utilize federal planning dollars to assist with paying the consultant. By including this project in the UPWP, federal dollars will cover 80% of the total cost, and Florence County will cover the remaining 20%. After the initial step of establishing funding, staff began working with SCDOT and Florence County to issue a Request for Qualifications (RFQ). Once all RFQ's were received they were scored following SCDOT's Local Project Agreement (LPA) and Florence County Procurement standards. It was determined that the most qualified candidate was Kimley-Horn. Now that a consultant has been selected, staff will start the process of updating the LRTP. This process will include opportunities for public input. So, be sure to keep an eye out for your chance on getting to be apart of the future of the FLATS MPO!

