TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION

February 10, 2020

A meeting of the Committee on Traffic and Transportation was held this date beginning at 3:00 p.m., at City Hall, 80 Broad Street, First Floor Conference Room

Notice of this meeting was sent to all local news media.

PRESENT

Councilmember Seekings, Chair; Councilmember Brady, Councilwoman Jackson, Councilwoman Delcioppo, and Mayor Tecklenburg **Present:** Robbie Somerville, Keith Benjamin, Tracy McKee, Rick Jerue, Janie Borden, Devri Detoma, Taylor Green, Stuart Day, and Bethany Whitaker, Council Secretary

The meeting was opened with a moment of silence provided by Councilmember Brady.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On the motion of Councilwoman Jackson, seconded by Councilwoman Delcioppo, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the January 27, 2020 meeting.

Charleston County CTC/TST Projects and Resurfacing (Information Only)

Mr. Benjamin stated that they, as staff, had a really great relationship with County staff in how they coordinate and figure out different projects. The County started sending documentation of all the sales tax and CTC projects that were in the bounds of the City and where those projects stood. In the midst of doing that, they could also give a sense on things that needed to change. They wanted to give an update on the projects and how the CTC and TST worked.

Taylor Green stated that she was going to give an overview in how their division worked and how they spent the funds from half-cents sales tax, as well as the C-funds from the gas tax. They used to be referred to as the Transportation Development Department. Now, they were together with the Public Works Department, so they were the Transportation Division of Charleston County Public Works. Their department managed projects funded by the two half-cents sales tax, as well as the C-funds. The first half-cent sales tax passed in 2004, and they referred to it as TST (Transportation Sales Tax). It placed half-cents on all goods for 25 years or until they reached $1.3 billion, whichever came first. Collections began in May 2005 and the first half-cent sales tax funded 11 featured projects. Those were projects of local and regional significance, as well as over 200 annual allocation projects which were smaller. In 2016, a second half-cent sales tax was passed, similar to the first. It would run for 25 years or until they collected $2.1 billion. They began collecting that in May of 2017. The ordinance for the second half-cent sales tax identified 12 additional featured projects, and also continued the annual allocation program. The County Transportation Committee was a committee designed by the Legislative Delegation. It had twelve members and they decided how to expend C-funds. C-funds were part of the gas tax. The State collected the gas tax and then a portion of that gas tax went to a pot of money called C-funds. That was distributed to all of the counties in the State. The amount was going up thanks to the gas tax raise. In 2021, they would get about .3325 cents per gallon. For the half-cent sales tax, Charleston County Council decided which projects got funded ultimately. For the half-cent sales tax, they got about 70% of the funding to do the large projects and annual allocation. Another portion went to CARTA, and to the Greenbelt. From the first half-cent sales tax, their department saw about $847 million and from the second they would see about $936 million. They also had the annual allocation program, which was $9 million set

aside annually. They received requests from all of the municipalities and then they broke that into smaller projects. The Charleston County Transportation Committee decided how the C-funds were split up. Typically, the CTC decided to set aside 75% of that funding to go towards resurfacing, and then what was left (about $2 million) went towards smaller projects.

Chairman Seekings asked how much they got annually from the C-funds. Ms. Green stated that it would be about $8 million. That was projected. It would change depending on how much they brought in each year. Councilwoman Jackson asked as it went up, if the percentages would change. Ms. Green said that the CTC made that decision. They did have resurfacing needs, because they maintained a lot of the roads.

Ms. Green showed a map of all featured projects from the second half-cent sales tax. She would go into detail about the projects that fell within the City. Chairman Seekings asked how much was left on the first half-cent sales tax. Ms. Green said that it was anticipated they would get their before the final year. She wasn't sure exactly how much was left. The only featured project left was the northern pitchfork. The rest was for annual allocation. Chairman Seekings said there was a lot of talk about that first half-cent sales tax and how leftover money would be used. Ms. Green showed a timeline of the featured projects. They had a staggered start date. Some of them had funding prior to the passing of the second half-cent. A big complaint they got from citizens was why projects took so long, especially the large projects. Part of it was that they had to go through the National Environment Policy Act when the project had federal funding or they needed a federal permit. The NEPA process took a long time. Typically, it could take 5-8 years. Charleston County had a good track record with getting it done closer to three years. They tried to have a good relationship with the federal agencies, either the Federal Highway Administration or the Army Corp of Engineers. They kept in constant communication with them. NEPA process typically took the longest. Once they had approval from the federal agency, they could move into final design, and then right-of-way acquisition. The construction was typically the shortest time frame to get the projects going. The NEPA process took a long time because they had to do a lot of due diligence. They would start with a survey of the area to get as much information as possible. They wanted to make sure that the alternatives they came up with met the purpose and need of the project. Throughout the whole process, they liked to keep the public involved. They would come up with alternatives and bring it to the public to get comments. They then could consider those comments as they moved into final design and decision. Eventually, they had to put together an environmental document. Typically, they did environmental assessments. She didn't think they had to do an impact assessment on any of the projects.

Councilwoman Jackson asked who decided the lead federal agency. Ms. Green said it depended on the permit they needed or who was providing the funds. She continued and said she was going to talk about the projects in the City. The first was the last project from the first half-cent sales tax. That was the northern pitchfork. They submitted the critical area permit to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control in December. As soon as they received the permit from DHEC, they would go ahead and advertise for construction. They anticipated advertising in the first quarter and getting construction underway by the second/third quarter of the year. The second project was the Main Road Corridor. Main Road had been split up into three different segments. The first, segment A, ran from Bees Ferry to River/Chisolm. They held a public information meeting in May of 2019. They had a lot of attendance at the meeting and did a 30 day comment period following. Major themes from that were what kind of environmental impacts there would be, relocation concerns with businesses, acceleration of construction, and people against the roundabout at River and Chisolm. That was interesting because they also had the

highest interest in the roundabout when it came to comments. The most interest was the option of the bridges that connected from Main Road down to Hwy 17. They would be meeting with the Army Corp on February 17 and that would help them quantify the impacts that the alternatives would have on the area and which was preferred to the public. The second segment they were focusing on was Segment C which was from Maybank to Betsy Kerrison. Originally, they talked about just widening Bohicket. Currently, the process would dictate possibilities of maybe widening River Road. All options were on the table. Through the NEPA process, they were looking at the study area, what kind of impacts there would be, and what was feasible. They would then take those options to the public in the second quarter of the year to weigh in. Mayor Tecklenburg asked if one of the alternatives would be the cross-island parkway. Ms. Green said they were looking at that.

Ms. Green stated that for the Glenn McConnell widening, they held the first public meeting in December 2018. They took two widening alternatives because they were trying to stay within the right-of-way. That would accelerate construction and keep the cost down. This was one of the only featured projects that didn't have to go through the NEPA process. The main themes from the public meeting were preserving greenscape in the middle, having a dedicated right hand turn lane at Essex Farms, minor pedestrian improvements and drainage improvements. Based on the comments, they decided to go with an inside-outside widening. They would widen from the inside on the high school side and the outside on the park side of Glenn McConnell. They took that alternative to the public last month, and they were currently in their comment period portion. Chairman Seekings asked if the bike-ped improvements were separated. Ms. Green said it was a multi-use path all the way from Bees Ferry to the intersection at Magwood. It would be 8-12 feet depending on the location. Chairman Seekings asked if it connected with other bike facilities. Ms. Green said there were some crossings and it would connect to the sidewalk. It would be on the high school side. Mr. Benjamin said that when Henry Tecklenburg was resurfaced, part of the coordination was to get bike lanes on Henry Tecklenburg that connected all the way up to the bikeway. Ms. Green said there was a sidewalk project on Savage Road that would be under construction soon.

Ms. Green stated the next project was James Island Intersection and Bike/Ped Improvements. It was split up into four separate projects. The first was Central Park/Riverland Drive Intersection Improvements. They originally had two alternatives until they took it to County Council. There were some concerns because it had significant right-of-way impacts to an heirs property. County Council asked them to take the project to the DOT for consideration. They would make some sort of recommendation on a path forward. The second was Folly Road Bike-Ped Improvements. It had some CHATS funding, so it had to go through the NEPA process because it was federal guideshares that CHATS distributed. Currently, they had come up with about 30% design plans and had given them to the City, State, and Town of James Island to consider. They were also drafting a participation agreement with the State so the County could manage the project. Chairman Seekings asked how far north this went to. Ms. Green said it went from Walmart to Ellis Creek. The other two projects in the James Island project was Fort Johnson at Secessionville and Fort Johnson at Camp Road. They had preliminary designs on both intersections and were coordinating with County Council to hold a public meeting in the first quarter of the year.

Ms. Green said that the next project was US 17 Corridor Congestion Improvement Study. This was a large study that went from the Avondale area all the way across the Septima Clark Parkway. They had received some alternative design improvements, short-term and long-term, that they could potentially put in. The design team was reviewing them, and they hoped to bring them to the public to review in the first quarter of

the year. Only the study was funded. Mr. Benjamin said it would have prioritized recommendations and short and long term improvement ideas. They were talking about what low-lying projects could possibly be TST requested within that area. Councilwoman Jackson asked where the Courtney/Calhoun intersection fell on this. Ms. Green said it was technically a TST allocation project.

Ms. Green stated that for the TST allocation projects, they set aside about $9 million annually to fund the smaller projects. They send out request letters to the municipalities for continued maintenance once the projects were completed. Typically, County Council allocated about $1 million to bike/ped improvements, $2 million to intersection improvements, $2 million for local pavement, and $4 million for resurfacing. Chairman Seekings asked if that was just flat budgetary management by County Council. Ms. Green said it was. Chairman Seekings said they needed to redistribute some of that. They had C-funds for resurfacing already.

Ms. Green stated that they had a few projects of interest. One was Lockwood/Beaufain. That project was getting ready to be advertised for construction. It would make a dedicated left-hand turn and a dedicated straight. Another project was Maybank/River. They would get an additional left-hand turn lane on River Road for people turning onto Maybank Highway going towards the City. The improvements would include retiming of the light. Some other projects included Calhoun Street/James Island Connector, which they were working towards final design for. Councilmember Brady asked what the Bees Ferry/Sanders Road improvements consisted of. Ms. Green said that they were looking at putting in a light there. Currently, the traffic didn't warrant a light there. Once the middle school opened, and traffic was directed down Sanders Road, the anticipation was that it would warrant a light and DOT would approve that. Mr. Benjamin said they had to take many steps including getting the sidewalks, and approving the road, and the next step was getting the signalization there. Councilmember Brady asked how the light would impact the other lights in that area. Mr. Benjamin said that it was about signalization and timing. Ms. Green said they were looking at Complete Streets funding to put in a sidewalk that would connect to Woodland Shores. Right now, they had funding for the design, but not for construction. Mr. Benjamin stated that the sidewalk on Woodland Shores would be multi-use on Maybank up to the crossing. Ms. Green said it was 8' on Maybank. Mayor Tecklenburg asked what they were considering for Oceanic Street. Ms. Green said it would be a connection from the skate park to the new development. Ms. Green stated that as of now, they had completed 64 CTC projects, and 47 TST projects in the City.

Mayor Tecklenburg referred to the new sidewalk on Wappoo Road that would connect Savannah Highway and the Greenway. Mr. Benjamin said he didn't think it was TST funding. It was directly through COG dollars. They did have the US 17 large capacity project that was improving intersections, so that would be helpful. They were coordinating with that. Mayor Tecklenburg said they had few Savannah Highway projects. One was Savage Road. Ms. Green said that for Savage Road, it was changing the radius of the intersection for trucks turning right onto Savage Road. There was also a sidewalk project on Savage Road. Ms. Detoma said they also had the capacity improvements. They were working with a consultant on options for that.

Mayor Tecklenburg thanked Ms. Green and Ms. Detoma for being with them. This was the most clarity and clearest explanation he had seen on this topic. He sensed great cooperation between the City and the County in moving the projects forward.

Maybank/Riverland Presentation and Recommendation

Mr. Benjamin stated that Maybank and Riverland was an intersection that was identified as one of the thirteen priorities in the City-wide Transportation Plan that was unanimously approved by Council in July

2018. They walked the site and had come up with a concept on what they wanted to see at the intersection. It wasn't necessarily something that DOT was in full agreement with. Because of that, in coordination with the County, they asked about the County studying the intersection for what the improvements could be and what the feasibilities would be. The biggest ask was about turn lane movement off Maybank onto Riverland, specifically coming towards Johns Island. A number of elected officials had agreed that the intersection needed to be focused on. They were grateful that the County had used some dollars to study it. They wanted the Committee to be aware of the data and background and what the options were, both the pros and cons. That way, they could walk away with some recommendations about how to approach it.

Stuart Day, Stantec, stated that they were at the meeting in October to speak about this. He apologized if they had seen the slides before, but he wanted to make sure everyone was on the same page. The first picture he showed highlighted the issue. It showed people clearly turning left against the red signal. They went out there and took a look at it. Riverland Drive had left-hand turn lanes approaching the intersection, and Maybank Highway had a four-lane section where the left and through were shared and the through and right were shared. They saw a small number of westbound left turning vehicles. They saw something similar heading east bound. They also noticed a very heavy northbound left out of Riverland Drive going towards Johns Island, and heavy eastbound rights in the mornings. He had taken a video while out there which showed all of the perspectives. The through volumes in the eastbound direction were very high in the morning, and westbound was very heavy in the evening. For the westbound lefts, 30 people were making that turn in the morning and 33 in the afternoon. For northbound lefts, there were 314 in the morning, and 441 in the peak. To consider dual-left turn lanes, the number they generally looked for was about 300.

They started trying to think about what could be done at the intersection. They took a multi-phase approach and looked at all options. The first was adding a standard left turn lane. It would take out a lot of trees, so they asked if it could be tapered down. They looked at a adding a protected left-turn phase. Essentially, there would be a green arrow at the beginning of the cycle. They had also looked at replacing with a jug handle turn, so that the left turns were not made at the intersection. That idea may seem foreign, but it was actually how turning from the Crosstown worked to go to Ashley Avenue. The last option they looked at was restricted left turns on Maybank Highway. Even with the modifying the first option to add the left turn lane, it would have a lot of tree impacts and a large majority were considered grand trees. For the second option of adding a protected left-turn phase, SCDOT wouldn't allow it because it only met one of their six criteria. They had talked about the jug handles and looked at a layout, but it would still have a lot of tree impacts. It would also impact the golf course. If they looked back a little bit, there was Golf View Drive and they could use that as an existing roadway to act as the existing jug handle. They could direct people that way. The last option of restricting lefts on Maybank Highway at the intersection. Those cars would have to find other ways on the grid to get to where they want to go. This option anticipated the fewest crashes.

Mayor Tecklenburg asked if they could do both of the last two options, where they did the jug handle on Golf View Drive and restricted the left turns. Mr. Day said that they could do that. They would go hand in hand. They just wouldn't build a new facility for the jug handle. They recommended the restricted left turns, option #4. Long-term, they might want to consider east-bound right turn, and potential northbound dual left turns onto Maybank Highway. Mayor Tecklenburg asked why they wouldn't go ahead and recommend both #3 and #4. If he lived that way, he would learn to go that way anyway. Mr. Day said it could work hand in hand. The question was what they wanted to sign off on. Did they want people to only use Golf View, or be able to choose their own route? Ms. Detoma said that any of the options would work better than what was there

now. Mr. Jerue asked if they had taken into consideration the changes they were making to the golf course. Mr. Day said they met with a golf course architect very early on before they had made recommendations. Mr. Jerue said that for the jug-handle option, they were moving the tenth green closer to Golf View. Chairman Seekings said they could couple this with signage, because one of the unintended consequences would be that people would be headed to Johns Island because they couldn't turn left. To him, that would create more problems. They needed to talk to people on Golf View Lane and let them know what was coming. Mr. Benjamin said that their recommendation was from their analysis. The City hadn't moved on the recommendation because when it began there was a lot of input. There were sacrifices with all the options. He wasn't afraid to say that none of them were happy at all about choosing an option that would take away the trees. Restricting left turns just at peak hour wouldn't be worth it. The trade-off of restricting left turns completely was where cars would end up going. He wanted them to know the reasons behind coming to the Committee.

Chairman Seekings asked who had the ultimate decision. Ms. Detoma said that the County funded the study, and they were putting it back to the City to tell them how to move forward. Councilwoman Jackson asked if it was an action item. Mr. Benjamin said that was the ask, to get some direction on how to proceed.

On the motion of Councilwoman Jackson, seconded by Mayor Tecklenburg, the Committee voted unanimously to recommend the restriction of left-turns at the intersection, combined with alternative three that directed people to the jug handle routes.

Brigade Street Bikeway (Information Only)

Mr. Benjamin stated that he was excited about this project because it was indicative of partnership with many others. If completed, it would be the first protected bike infrastructure in the City. In short time, they found out from DOT that this road was going to be resurfaced this year. The intersection at Meeting and Brigade was one of the most dangerous in the City. Since 2015, they had 28 accidents there. They were trying to figure out how to improve the intersection. There had been a lot of advocacy work and a lot of visits to Columbia to get DOT on board. The street coming up for resurfacing opened the door for partnering with DOT on bringing a project of improvement. At the beginning, they were talking about how to connect the Bridgeview neighborhood to the eventual Lowline. Essentially, they had SCDOT who had agreed to not only resurface the entirety of Brigade Street, but also would do protected bike lane markings for the entirety, as well as resurfacing the actual intersection and the concrete bulb outs as well. The City would be footing the bill for the rapid beacon flashes. The other piece that the City would handle would be what would end up being the barriers. They were talking about between 5 and 7 feet with buffer. They had done site visits with both neighborhood presidents and had done a presentation with Stantec to the North Central neighborhood earlier in the year. They were excited. They had some other asks, such as the bus stop being moved. For the timeline, they were told that Brigade was on the list for resurfacing towards the end of the summer. They were coordinating so that the improvements to the intersection happened at the same time, so it didn't look like two separate projects.

Chairman Seekings asked if they had talked with engineering to look at water to make sure that they wouldn't have a bunch of water in the bike lane. Mr. Benjamin said that a few weeks ago, he had met with Mr. Kronsberg and Mr. Fountain and they went through the whole corridor and talked about the drainage pieces. It didn't affect very much. Chairman Seekings asked if they had funding and Mr. Benjamin said they did.

Director's Update

Mr. Benjamin stated that there were ten intersections that SCDOT had identified as unsafe for non-motorized use. Four were in the City. SCDOT had set aside $5 million for all ten of the priority locations.

Having no further business, the Committee adjourned at 4:06 p.m.

Bethany Whitaker
Council Secretary