

**MINUTES**  
**SUATS POLICY COMMITTEE**  
**FRIDAY, APRIL 25, 2025, @ 12:00 P.M.**  
**CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**  
**(21 N. MAIN STREET, SUMTER, SC)**

**POLICY COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:** The Honorable Mayor **David P. Merchant**; State Senator **Jeff Zell**; County Council Chairman **James T. McCain**; Sumter Economic Development Board President & CEO **Jay Schwedler**; City Councilman **Colin Davis**; County Councilman **James Byrd, Jr.**; State Representative **J. David Weeks**; Planning Commission Chairman **James Munford**; SCDOT Commissioner, 5<sup>th</sup> District **Curtis Spencer** (*non-voting*); and SWRTA Executive Director **Tanisha Gibbons** (*non-voting*).

**POLICY COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:** Sumter CTC Chairman **Hugh M. McLaurin, IV**; State Representative **G. Murrell Smith**; Sumter City Manager **Deron McCormick** (*non-voting*), *Sumter County Manager Gary Mixon* (*non-voting*); Shaw Air Force Base Planner **Ashley Nichols** (*non-voting*); and SCDOT 6<sup>th</sup> District Commissioner **John Barnwell Fishburne** (*non-voting*).

**OTHERS PRESENT:** (See sign-in sheet)

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:** Senior Planner **Kyle Kelly**, and Executive Assistant **Kellie Chapman**.

A meeting of the Sumter Area Transportation Study (SUATS) Policy Committee was held on Friday, April 25, 2025, @ 12:00 p.m. in City Council Chambers (21 N. Main St., Sumter, SC). The Honorable Mayor David P. Merchant called the meeting to order.

A motion to approve the agenda for the April 25, 2025, meeting was made by Councilman McCain and seconded by Councilman Byrd. The motion carried a unanimous vote.

A motion to approve the minutes from the February 21, 2025, meeting was made by Councilman Davis and seconded by Councilman Byrd. The motion carried a unanimous vote.

**New Business – Action Items**

**Action Item #1 - Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for FY2026 and FY2027**

Mr. Kelly presented an overview of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) adoption process, noting that SUATS must adopt a new Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) that describes all transportation-related planning activities anticipated in the MPO from July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2027.

The UPWP work program includes tasks to achieve the overall goal of bringing effective transportation improvements to the SUATS planning area.

Mr. Kelly mentioned that SCDOT has provided the summary of available planning funds for

SUATS for FY2026, 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.

SUATS will not receive notice of FY2027 funding until early 2026, but finding levels are expected to remain consistent from FY2026 to FY2027. An amendment to the UPWP will be presented for Committee action in early 2026 to right-size the plan's funding levels to actual resources once those figures are provided from SCDOT.

Mr. Kelly noted that one federal policy waiver that continues to apply to SUATS this year, specifically 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 planning (PL) funds on Complete Streets planning activities.

The projected FY2026 and FY2027 funding summary is outlined below:

<b>Federal Allocation for FY2026</b>	\$ 243,884.74
<b>Projected Carryover From Prior Year</b>	\$ 26,587.38
Local Match Required (20%), Less Complete Streets Waiver	\$ 43,800.00
<b><i>Anticipated</i> Federal Allocation for FY2027</b>	\$ 243,884.74
<b>Projected Carryover From Prior Year</b>	\$ 272.12
Local Match Required (20%), Less Complete Streets Waiver	\$ 43,200.00
<i>Projected Carryover to FY2028</i>	<i>\$1,356.86</i>
<b>Projected UPWP Total (for 2-Year Program)</b>	<b>\$601,628.98</b>

A motion to adopt the proposed FY2026 & FY2027 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), subject to completion of a 21-day public comment period was made by Mr. Schwedler and seconded by Councilman McCain. The motion carried a unanimous vote.

**Action Item #2 - Revision #8 to FY2024-2033 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

Mr. Kelly presented that the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is the SUATS area's transportation capital improvement program, which contains a matrix of transportation projects consistent with federal regulations and area policies and strategies. The TIP serves as a planning tool to ensure the most effective use of limited funding for transportation improvements. Federal transportation legislation requires that transportation improvements be identified in the TIP to be eligible for federal funding.

The proposed Revision #8 to the current TIP for FFY2024-2033, includes the following proposed modifications:

**Corridor Retrofit, N./S. Harvin Street (Project #P044198)**

- **Shift** Preliminary Engineering (PE) phase totaling \$220,000 from FY2026 to FY2025.
- **Shift** Right of Way (ROW) phase totaling \$1,000 from FY2027 to FY2026.

**Intersection Improvement, Broad St. @ Loring Mill Rd. (Project # P039635)**

- **Shift** Construction (C) phase totaling \$1,655,000 from FY2025 to FY2026.

**Intersection Improvement, Broad St. @ Robert Dinkins Rd. and @ Alice Dr. (Project #P039636)**

- **Shift** Construction (C) phase totaling \$1,750,000 from FY2025 to FY2026.

**SWRTA Transit Operations**

- **Add** Partial FY25 Section 5307 Urbanized Area Apportionment for Sumter totaling \$548,547.

**Carbon Reduction Program**

- **Add** Preliminary Engineering (PE) phase totaling \$67,451 to previous funding obligation line representing FY22 and FY23 funding.
- **Add** Construction (C) phase totaling \$382,223 to previous funding obligation line representing FY22 and FY23 funding.
- **Add** Preliminary Engineering (PE) phase totaling \$29,555 to FY24.
- **Add** Construction (C) phase totaling \$167,480 to FY24.
- **Add** Preliminary Engineering (PE) phase totaling \$30,146 to FY25.
- **Add** Construction (C) phase totaling \$170,829 to FY25.
- **Add** Preliminary Engineering (PE) phase totaling \$30,749 to FY26.
- **Add** Construction (C) phase totaling \$174,246 to FY26.

A motion to adopt Revision #8 to the SUATS Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), subject to completion of a 21-day public comment period was made by Councilman Byrd and seconded by Councilman McCain. The motion carried a unanimous vote.

**Action Item #3 - Connect 378 (US-378) Corridor Project**

Mr. Kelly briefed that the South Carolina Transportation Infrastructure Bank (SCTIB) has established a Rural Projects Program and has committed \$250 million to the Rural Project Program over the next 10 years. SCTIB is offering up to \$50 million total toward projects in 2025. The application window this year is open through June 13, 2025. SCTIB has invited the submission of applications from local governments (project sponsors or owners) for

financial assistance for transportation projects.

An eligible project provides a public benefit required by the SCTIB Act and has eligible project cost of at least \$25 million. The proposed project must provide a public benefit in one or more of the following areas:

- Enhancement of mobility and safety
- Promotion of economic development
- Increase in the quality of life and general welfare of the public

A “Rural Project” is defined as a project:

- Located in a county with a population of 115,000 or less, or
- Located in a county with a population between 115,000 and 200,000 but outside a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Study Area.

The county in which the project is located cannot have an active project with SCTIB at the time of the submission or pendency of the application. SCTIB has not previously funded any projects in Sumter County, nor are there any active projects funded by SCTIB in Sumter County.

SUATS has completed a feasibility study and corridor evaluation with conceptual engineering plans for a proposed redesign of 2.6 miles of the Robert E. Graham Freeway (US 378 Bypass) between US 521 (Camden Highway) and US 15 (N. Main Street). The project also includes the US 378/76 Bypass and 2 frontage roads adjacent and parallel to the Bypass known as N. Pike West (S-1428) and S. Pike West (S-1429). The area is poised for future growth and redevelopment as the concentration of high activity uses expands with little resistance from conflicting land uses.

The purpose of the project, which has been named “Connect 378” is to eliminate transportation barriers caused by the US-378/76 Bypass by establishing an accessible and functional network of streets and paths that improve mobility and safety for all users.

A condensed List of Alternatives was developed with enough detail to provide levels of service, delay, growth, safety, cost/benefit, and consider public input, and may be considered in the Preliminary Engineering (PE) and National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) phase of the project. The condensed list of alternatives ranges from Alternative 3A – “Culvert” with an estimated cost of \$54 million to Alternative 1 – “Raise the Road” at an estimated cost of \$110 million. Each alternative can be separated into phases for implementation.

In 2024, Sumter County voters approved a capital projects sales tax referendum that included a \$6 million allocation for the Connect 378 project. At this time, given the total anticipated cost of the project, and in consideration of the local commitment already made, staff seeks the Committee’s decision regarding submission of a project application for the 2025 SCTIB Rural Project Program to begin implementation of the Connect 378 project.

A motion to adopt the presented revisions to the organizational bylaws was made by Councilman Byrd, seconded by Councilman Davis and carried a unanimous vote.

## **New Business – Info Items**

**Info Item #1 – W. Liberty St. Corridor Project Briefing**

SCDOT Preconstruction Office staff Mr. Ken Martin and project consultant representatives Mr. Mitchel Cooper presented a briefing on the status of the W. Liberty Street Corridor project, including data and analysis collected to date, and discussed draft project alternatives that have been developed in preparation for the public engagement public engagement and comment phase of the project.

Chairman Merchant accepted the report on behalf of the committee, and no further action was taken

**Info Item #2 – Long Range Transportation Plan Amendment #3 – 2024 LRTP Report Card**

Mr. Kelly briefed the Committee that SUATS is receiving support via the USDOT’s Thriving Communities Program to conduct a review of the Action Items in the 2050 LRTP in order to better categorize and align these actions with the MPO’s planning and policymaking roles. The goal of this evaluation is to present an LRTP amendment that removes inadvertent duplications, separates large aspirational goals into incremental steps, improves categorization, and adds status tags to action items. The amendment would also establish the structure for an annual “report card”, that will allow the Committee to track progress made toward stated policy objectives.

There are 55 total action items outlined on p.206-209 of the LRTP, separated into six categories (general, policy, street improvement, walk+bike, transit, and freight). Staff has prepared a tracker (below) that categorizes action items based on status. As noted in the prior paragraph, duplication of some actions and the need to separate aspirational goals into multiple incremental actions would alter the total number of action items and the associated tracking metrics.

Mr. Kelly presented this information for the Committee’s consideration and discussion, and noted that staff is working to provide a full draft of proposed corrections/revisions to LRTP action items along with a draft 2024 report card document for Committee consideration and action at the scheduled June 2025 meeting.

Chairman Merchant accepted the report on behalf of the committee, and no further action was taken.

**Old Business - Info Items**

**Info Item #1 - Active Projects Update**

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

**Executive Session**

Councilman Davis made a motion to enter executive session. Councilman McCain seconded the motion and the motion carried. To discuss appointments to Committees in accordance with *Section 30-4-70(a)* of the South Carolina Code of Laws. No action was taken following the executive session.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kellie K. Chapman*

Kellie K. Chapman

Board Secretary