

MINUTES
SUATS POLICY COMMITTEE
FRIDAY, JUNE 20, 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**; State Representative **G. Murrell Smith**; County Councilman **James Byrd, Jr.**; State Representative **J. David Weeks**; Planning Commission Chairman **James Munford**; SCDOT Commissioner, 5th District **Curtis Spencer** (*non-voting*); Sumter City Manager **Deron McCormick** (*non-voting*), Sumter County Manager **Gary Mixon** (*non-voting*); and SWRTA Executive Director **Tanisha Gibbons** (*non-voting*), and Shaw Air Force Base Planner **Ashley Nichols** (*non-voting*).

POLICY COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: Sumter Economic Development Board President & CEO **Jay Schwedler**; Sumter CTC Chairman **Hugh M. McLaurin, IV**; City Councilman **Colin Davis**; and SCDOT 6th District Commissioner **John Barnwell Fishburne** (*non-voting*).

OTHERS PRESENT: (See sign-in sheet)

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

A meeting of the Sumter Area Transportation Study (SUATS) Policy Committee was held on Friday, June 20, 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 June 20, 2025, meeting was made by Councilman McCain and seconded by Representative Weeks. The motion carried a unanimous vote.

A motion to approve the minutes from the April 25, 2025, meeting was made by Representative Weeks and seconded by Councilman McCain. The motion carried a unanimous vote.

New Business – Action Items

Connect 378 (US-378) Corridor Project

Mr. Kelly stated SUATS has completed a feasibility study and conceptual engineering plans for a proposed operational improvement of the 2.6 mile corridor between US 521 (Camden Highway) and US 15 (N. Main Street) that includes the Robert E. Graham Freeway (US 378 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, and cost/benefit. This data can be considered in the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) and design phases 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. The project can be separate into phases for implementation.

Mr. Kelly mentioned 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, need to follow the necessary processes to maintain federal eligibility, and in consideration of the local funding commitment already made, the next step in project development would be initiation of the Preliminary Engineering (PE) phase of work to complete NEPA and preliminary design required for the project to be competitive for grant funding. One possible source of funds for this phase is the SUATS Regional Mobility Program (RMP).

Following the briefing, a motion to defer action on commitment of preliminary engineering funds to the Committee’s next meeting was made by Representative Weeks and seconded by Mr. Munford. The motion carried a unanimous vote.

Revision #9 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 #9 to the current TIP for FFY2024-2033, which incorporates the following modifications:

E./W. Calhoun St. Corridor Improvement (N. Washington St. to Daconia St.)

- **Shift** Right of Way phase from FY25 to FY26

SCDOT and SUATS policies categorize the content of this revision as a “correction”, which does not require SCDOT Commission approval or public comment.

A motion to adopt Revision #9 to the SUATS Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), in the category of a “correction” was made by Councilman Byrd and seconded by Representative Weeks. The motion carried a unanimous vote.

Old Business - Info Items

Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Amendment #3 – Policy Action items, LRTP Report Card Format, and 2024 Report Card

Mr. Kelly mentioned SUATS has received support from the USDOT's Thriving Communities Program to review 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 effort is to present an LRTP amendment that removes inadvertent duplication, 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 current action items outlined on pp. 206-209 of the LRTP, separated into 6 categories (general, policy, street improvement, walk+bike, transit, and freight). As noted in the prior paragraph, duplication of some actions, need to separate aspirational goals into multiple incremental actions, and need to separate some actions into a county and city subcategory results in a proposed total of 60 action items that would be used as the basis for tracking if the Policy Committee adopts the proposed LRTP Amendment #3.

A motion to adopt the revised action items list and 2024 report card as Amendment #3 to the SUATS 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), subject to completion of a 21-day public comment period was made by Representative Smith and seconded by Senator Zell. The motion carried a unanimous vote.

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.

Respectfully submitted,

Kellie K. Chapman

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Board Secretary