

MINUTES
SUATS POLICY COMMITTEE
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2025, @ 12:00 P.M.
SANTEE WATEREE RTA BUILDING – MEETING ROOM
(129 SOUTH HARVIN ST., SUMTER, SC)

POLICY COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: The Honorable Mayor **David P. Merchant**; State Senator **Jeff Zell**; Sumter Economic Development Board President & CEO **Jay Schwedler**; Sumter CTC Chairman **Hugh M. McLaurin, IV**; State Representative **G. Murrell Smith**; 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*), and SWRTA Executive Director **Tanisha Gibbons** (*non-voting*).

POLICY COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT: County Council Chairman **James T. McCain**; City Councilman **Colin Davis**; County Councilman **James Byrd, Jr.**; Sumter County Manager **Gary Mixon** (*non-voting*); Shaw Air Force Base Planner **Ashley Nichols** (*non-voting*) and SCDOT 6th 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, October 17, 2025, @ 12:00 p.m. in Santee Wateree RTA Building – Meeting Room (129 South Harvin St., Sumter, SC). The Honorable Mayor David P. Merchant called the meeting to order.

A motion to approve the agenda for the October 17, 2025, meeting was made by Representative Weeks and seconded by Mr. Hugh McLaurin. The motion carried a unanimous vote.

A motion to approve the minutes from the June 20, 2025, meeting was made by State Representative Smith and seconded by Mr. Jay Schwedler. 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 corridor evaluation 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 the pair of 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, 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 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, need to follow the necessary processes to maintain federal eligibility, and in consideration of the local funding commitment already made, staff seeks the Committee’s decision regarding commitment of preliminary engineering funds from the SUATS Regional Mobility Program (RMP) to complete the NEPA and preliminary design required for the project to be competitive for external grant funding opportunities.

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

Broad St. and Loring Mill Rd. Intersection Improvement Project

Mr. Kelly stated In 2020, SUATS began studying the feasibility of intersection improvements for the 4 highest ranked intersections identified in the 2045 SUATS Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). These intersections were:

- 1) Broad St. at N. Saint Paul’s Church Rd.
- 2) N. Guignard Dr. at W. Liberty St.
- 3) Broad St. at Loring Mill Rd.
- 4) Broad St. at Robert Dinkins Rd.

Following completion of the feasibility studies in June 2021, the SUATS Policy Committee voted to fund improvements to 3 of the 4 intersections using the MPO’s Regional Mobility Program. (The 4th intersection, N. Guignard Dr. at W. Liberty St., was incorporated into the separate W. Liberty St. corridor project).

Since that programming decision, SCDOT has developed the Broad St. at Loring Mill Rd. project through right-of-way plans (60% plans), and the agency has acquired necessary right-of-way for the proposed improvements.

In 2025, it was identified that the actual cost to relocate a City of Sumter-owned water utility line in the project area would exceed the City’s means. Because the City of Sumter is not considered a “small utility” under SCDOT’s utility relocation policies, the City is not eligible for the cost of utility relocation to be borne by the project. A further complication is that a separate water utility (High Hills Rural Water Company) *is* eligible for full reimbursement of

relocation costs for their infrastructure, which reduces the pool of funds available to partially offset the City's costs.

Acting on this information, staff conducted a re-evaluation of the purpose and need basis for the Broad St. at Loring Mill Rd. intersection. Unexpectedly, and in a departure from the other intersections advanced from the 2045 LRTP, crashes at the Broad St. at Loring Mill Rd. intersection dropped by nearly 50% from the 2015-2019 period (59 crashes) to 2020-2024 period (31 crashes). The intersection is now ranked #57 among SUATS intersections based on the last 3 years of data (2022-2024) and is ranked #69 based on SCDOT's new predictive network screening tool, which utilizes 2020-2024 data. There have been no fatal crashes and only 1 serious injury crash at the intersection since 2014 based on currently available SCDOT/SCDPS data.

Though a causative relationship is unconfirmed, staff believes that there is a correlation between the improvement to the intersection's safety performance and a pair of separately implemented SCDOT maintenance projects, specifically resurfacing of the westbound portion of Broad St. in the area of the intersection as well as upgrades to signal equipment at the intersection.

Staff recommends that the Policy Committee delay the construction phase for the Broad St. at Loring Mill Rd. intersection improvements to FY2033 (the final year of the current SUATS TIP timeline). While failure to implement the project within 20 years would result in a requirement for SUATS to repay funds expended on right-of-way acquisition to FHWA, staff believes that improvements to the intersection are a matter of when, and not if, between now and 2044.

Following the briefing, a motion to approve action until the June 2026 meeting on the Broad St. at Loring Mill Rd. Intersection Improvement Project was made by State Representative Smith and seconded by Representative Weeks. The motion carried a unanimous vote.

Revision #10 to FY2024-2033 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Mr. Kelly added the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is the Sumter area's transportation capital improvement program, which contains a matrix of transportation projects consistent with federal regulations and local 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.

Staff has drafted Revision #10 to the current TIP for FFY2024-2033, which incorporates the following modifications:

US-378 (Robert E. Graham Freeway) Operational and Design Improvements (a.k.a. "Connect 378")

- **Add** \$3,500,000 in FY26 Preliminary Engineering funding (NEPA and preliminary design services).
- **Add** \$1,250,000 in FY28 Right-of-Way funding.

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

- **Shift** Right of Way phase from FY26 to FY27.
- **Shift** Construction phase from FY26 to FY28.

US-378 (Broad St.) at Loring Mill Rd. Intersection Improvement

- **Shift** Construction phase from FY26 to FY33.

Hauser St. Bridge over Turkey Creek

- **Shift** Construction phase from 25 to FY26.

US-15 Southbound Bridge over Pocotaligo River

- **Shift** Right-of-Way phase from FY26 to 27.

US-76/378 Bypass over E. Calhoun St. Extension and CSX Railroad

- **Add** Preliminary Engineering phase to FY26 in the amount of \$500,000.

Sumter Disability and Special Needs Board ADA Vehicle Purchase

- **Add** ADA vehicle purchase funding to FY26 in the amount of \$235,294,000.

Turkey Creek Greenway, Phase 1

- **Shift** Right-of-Way phase from FY26 to FY27.

Sumter County CTC Paving

- **Add** paving budget for non-Federal Aid Secondary Streets for FY24 in the amount of \$6,876,800.

SCDOT and SUATS policies categorize the combined content of this revision an “Amendment”, which requires SCDOT Commission approval. In addition, a 21-day public comment period must be observed prior to adoption of the UPWP. Details for all substantive comments received during public comment will be provided to the Committee. Assuming the Committee approves and there are no substantive public comments requiring Committee reconsideration, TIP Revision #10 will be submitted to SCDOT.

A motion to adopt Revision #10 to the SUATS Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for FY 2024-2033, in the category of an “Amendment”, subject to completion of a 21-day public comment period as required by the SUATS Public Participation Plan was made by State Representative Smith and was seconded by Mr. Munford. The vote carried an unanimous vote.

The Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Amendment #4 – Fiscally and Non-Fiscally Constrained Project Lists and Rankings

Mr. Kelly presented since the adoption of the 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan in late 2023, SUATS staff has kept a log of corridors, intersections, and sidewalk segments of need that were not included in the LRTP’s projects listings. Staff has developed a listing of project updates and corrections for Policy Committee consideration, as follows:

- **Proposed Revision of “Road Diet” category to “Corridor Retrofit” to more effectively reflect possible improvements to be developed during project development.**
- **Proposed Addition of 1 Corridor Improvement**
 - Project #RF-7 - E. Hampton Ave. from N. Harvin St. to Green St.
- **Proposed Addition of 11 Intersection Improvements**
 - Project #IS-24 - Bultman Dr. @ N. Guignard Dr.
 - Project #IS-25 - Broad St. @ E/W. Wesmark Blvd.
 - Project #IS-26 - N. Lafayette Dr. @ E. Calhoun St.
 - Project #IS-27 - S. Guignard Dr. @ W. Oakland Ave.
 - Project #IS-28 - Alice Dr. @ W. Wesmark Blvd.
 - Project #IS-29 - Alice Dr. @ Wise Dr.
 - Project #IS-30 - Broad St. @ Patriot Parkway
 - Project #IS-31 - Broad St. @ Bultman Dr.
 - Project #IS-32 - Thomas Sumter Hwy @ Alice Dr.
 - Project #IS-33 - Thomas Sumter Hwy @ Jefferson Rd.
 - Project #IO-11 - Patriot Parkway @ Shaw Dr.
- **Proposed Addition of 3 Sidewalk Improvements**
 - Project #SW-38 - Dicks Street from Rast St. to Brunhill St.
 - Project #SW-39 - Kolb Rd. from McCray’s Mill Rd. to Sun Valley Dr.
 - Project #G-23 - Pitts Road from Wedgefield Rd. to McCray’s Mill Rd.

A motion to adopt the revised project list as Amendment #4 to the SUATS 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), subject to completion of a 21-day public comment period was made by Mr. McLaurin and was seconded by Mr. Schwedler. The vote carried an unanimous vote.

LRTP Amendment #5 – 2022-2026 Safety Performance Targets

Mr. Kelly added the Long-Range Transportation Plan is used as the guide for how SUATS plans to invest in the area’s transportation system over a 20 or greater year period. Federal regulations and SCDOT Planning Procedure Agreement PL-2017-01 require that MPO Long Range Transportation Plans include Safety Performance Measure Targets for urbanized areas.

To accomplish this requirement, staff is proposing Amendment #5 to the current 2050 LRTP to adopt the Statewide Annual Safety Performance Measure Targets for the 5-year average period covering 2022-2026, as follows:

Measure	Statewide 2022-2026 Targets	SUATS 2020-2024 Averages
Number of Fatalities	1,059	19.4
Fatality Rate*	1.87	2.40

Number of Serious Injuries	2,549	52.6
Serious Injury Rate*	4.50	6.52
Number of Non-motorized Fatalities and Serious Injuries	467.9	8

* *Per 1 Million Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)*

A 30-day public comment period must be observed prior to any amendment to the LRTP. A summary of substantive comments received will be made available to the Committee upon request. Pending no substantive comments, the Amendment will be included in the SUATS LRTP.

A motion to adopt proposed Amendment #5 to the 2050 SUATS Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), subject to opening a 30-day public comment period was made by Mr. Hugh McLaurin and seconded by Mr. Jay Schwedler. The motion carried a unanimous vote.

New Business – Info Items

1. US-521 Corridor Study

Santee-Lynches Regional Council of Governments (SLCOG) and SCDOT have been conducting an evaluation of the feasibility of widening US-521 for an approximately 13-mile section from Interstate 20 to Little Rafting Creek (in Sumter County). As of September of 2025, SCDOT has reached the conclusion that widening of the corridor is not feasible, given a ~\$330 million estimated cost. SCDOT has identified several interim recommendations, including:

- Implement tiered speed limit approaching Rembert
- Evaluate intersection improvement projects for Old Boykin Mill Rd., T.B. Wright Rd., and Ellerbe Mill Rd.
- Widen US-521 to a 4-lane divided section between I-20 and SC-261 in Kershaw County
- Widen US-521 to a 4-lane divided section *or* a 3-lane section with passing lanes from 1 mi. south of Rember toward Sumter.

While the bulk of the corridor lies outside SUATS MPO’s jurisdiction, updates to the SUATS boundary following the 2020 Census did bring a portion of the study corridor into the MPO’s planning boundary. Further, the 2050 SUATS Long Range Transportation Plan does identify 3 separate projects in the corridor, as follows:

- Project #IS-15
 Purpose & Need: Intersection Safety Improvements to US-521 North at Dinkins Mill Rd.
 Planning Level Cost Estimate - \$4,850,000
 Project Rank: #35
- Project #IS-16
 Purpose & Need: Intersection Safety Improvements to US-521 North at Spencer Rd.

Planning Level Cost Estimate - \$4,850,000
Project Rank: #31

- Project #O-20

Purpose & Need: Operational improvements to US-521 North between Peach Orchard Rd. and Dinkins Mill Rd.

Planning Level Cost Estimate - \$27,839,000

Project Rank: #26

Projects O-20, IS-15, and IS-16 are currently ranked outside the fiscally constrained LRTP list. However, the 2024 Sumter Penny for Progress Referendum includes \$10 million of local funds to leverage transportation improvement funds from external sources, including SLCOG and SUATS programs.

Finally, according to data provided by the SC Dept of Public Safety via SCDOT, there were 52 total crashes in the 2-lane section of the US-521 corridor within the SUATS MPO boundary from 2022-2024. 2 of these crashes resulted in fatalities, representing 3% of fatalities for the MPO over the 3-year period (57 total fatalities from 2022-2024).

SCDOT is currently implementing a Rural Road Safety Project covering the US-521 corridor between Dalzell and Camden, with a goal of reducing crashes, particularly fatal and serious injury crashes, through a combination of shoulder widening, rumble strip installation, and other safety countermeasure installation targeted to reduce vehicle lane departures.

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