

MINUTES
SUATS POLICY COMMITTEE
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2026, @ 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 **J. David Weeks**; Planning Commission Chairman **James Munford**; 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)** 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 State Representative **G. Murrell Smith** and SCDOT 6th District Commissioner **vacant (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, February 27, 2026, @ 12:00 p.m. in Santee Wateree RTA Building – Meeting Room (129 South Harvin St., Sumter, SC). County Council Chairman called the meeting to order.

A motion to approve the agenda for the February 27, 2026, meeting was made by Representative Weeks and seconded by Mayor David Merchant. The motion carried a unanimous vote.

A motion to approve the minutes from the October 17, 2025, meeting was made by Mr. Hugh McLaurin and seconded by State Senator Jeff Zell. The motion carried a unanimous vote.

Old 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.

At this time, given the total anticipated cost of the project, requirement to follow necessary alternative selection processes to maintain federal eligibility, and in consideration of the local funding commitment already made, staff seeks the Committee’s decision regarding commitment of partial preliminary engineering funds from the SUATS Regional Mobility Program (RMP) in the amount of \$3,500,000 to complete National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) alternative selection and preliminary design required for the project to be competitive in soliciting external funding support.

A motion to incorporate Connect 378 (US-378) Corridor Project into the SUATS TIP via Amendment was made by Mayor David Merchant and was seconded by Representative David Weeks. The vote carried an unanimous vote.

New Business – Action Item

2026 Meetin Calendar

Mr. Kelly stated in 2025, the SUATS Policy and Technical Committees met pursuant to an annual calendar. Policy Committee meetings were scheduled for even number months (six scheduled meetings) and the Technical Committee meetings were scheduled monthly (twelve scheduled meetings).

The Policy Committee scheduled one ad-hoc meeting (May 2025) and cancelled the July and December meeting due to scheduling conflicts. One of the twelve scheduled meetings for the Technical Committee was cancelled due to a scheduling conflict. Staff’s evaluation of the standard meeting schedule and feedback received from participants was overwhelmingly positive.

Staff is proposing that the Policy Committee adopt a similar schedule for calendar year 2026, with meeting dates and time consistent with the 2025 schedule.

Following the briefing, a motion to approve the 2026 Meeting Calendar was made by State Senator Zell and seconded by Representative Weeks. The motion carried a unanimous vote.

Proposed Revision #11 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 #11 to the current TIP for FFY2024-2033, which incorporates the following changes, grouped by category of change (amendment, administrative modification, and rightsizing:

Amendment:

US-378 (Robert E. Graham Freeway) Operational and Design Improvements (“Connect 378”)

- **Add** \$3,500,000 in FY26 Preliminary Engineering (PE) funding for NEPA and partial engineering design services.

North Main Street Corridor Revitalization

- **Reduce** FY25 Construction (C) phase funding from \$3,882,000 to \$0.

Manning Avenue Corridor Revitalization

- **Reduce** FY25 Construction (C) phase funding from \$3,788,000 to \$0.

Santee-Wateree Regional Transportation Authority (SWRTA) Operating, Capital, Administration, and Planning (5307-SU)

- **Add** FY25-29 SWRTA Operations, Capital, Administration, and Planning funding line items to *Figure 7.6*.

Administrative Modification:

W. Liberty Street Corridor Improvements

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

Hauser St. Bridge over Turkey Creek

- **Shift Construction (C) phase from FY26 to FY27.**

Rightsizing:

N./S. Harvin Street Retrofit Project

- **Increase** Preliminary Engineering (PE) phase from \$220,000 to \$750,000.

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

- **Increase** Right-of-Way (ROW) phase from \$50,000 to \$140,000.

US-378 (Broad St.) at North Saint Paul's Church Rd. Intersection Improvement

- **Increase** Right-of-Way (ROW) phase (FY24) from \$35,000 to \$112,000.
- **Add** Right-of-Way (ROW) phase (FY25) in the amount of \$15,000.
- **Increase** Construction (C) phase from \$1,000,000 to \$1,302,000.

US-378 (Broad St.) at Robert Dinkins Rd. and Alice Dr. Intersection Improvement

- **Reduce** previous year Planning (PL) obligation from \$8,000 to \$7,000.

North Main Street Corridor Revitalization

- **Increase** previous year Right-of-Way (ROW) obligation from \$580,000 to \$695,000.

A motion to adopt Revision #11 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 Mayor Merchant and was seconded by State Representative Weeks. The vote carried an unanimous vote.

2050 LRTP Report Card for Year #2 (2025)

Mr. Kelly stated in June 2025, the SUATS Policy Committee adopted Amendment #3 to the 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) which improved the categorization and alignment of action items contained in the LRTP to the MPO’s planning and policymaking roles. Also established was a structure for an annual “report card”, that allows the Policy Committee to track progress toward stated policy objectives.

A motion to adopt the SUATS Year 2 (2025) LRTP report card was made by County Councilman Byrd and was seconded by State Representative Weeks. The vote carried an unanimous vote.

New Business – Info Items

1. Updated SCDOT Commission Policy #3

On December 4, 2025, the SCDOT Commission approved revisions to *Policy #3: Regional Mobility Program Use, Match, and Maintenance Responsibility*. The updated policy

clarifies the mission and proposed goals of the Regional Mobility Program (RMP).

The mission statement of the Regional Mobility Program as stated in Commission Policy #3 is “To develop and implement transportation plans and cost-effective projects that deliver a safe, efficient, reliable, and accessible transportation system meeting both the current and future needs of the region.

The four goals adopted via Commission Policy #3 are:

1. Safety: Reduce crashes, injuries, and fatalities experienced by users of the regional transportation network.
2. Accessibility: Promote accessible systems that enable people to reach their destinations through multiple modes of travel.
3. Reliability & Congestion: Optimize traffic flow across various modes of transportation to ensure reliable travel times and reduce congestion.
4. Economic Vitality: Support the region’s economic vitality by enhancing system performance to accommodate future growth.

The Commission Policy #3 also establishes two new metrics related to the program:

- The first metric is allocation of available RMP funds to projects. The goal for this metric is that at least 80% of available RMP funding be allocated, based on a four-year rolling window. SUATS was one of four MPOs that met the standard based on data presented to the Commission in December 2025, with 84% of RMP funding allocated to projects.
- The second metric is conformance to the four stated RMP policy goals. The goal for the metric is for 100% of planned RMP funding meet at least one of the four stated goals. SUATS currently meets this standard, as do all MPOs statewide.

Finally the policy clarifies eligible activities and the match and maintenance responsibility (whether state or local) for each project type.

Staff presents this information to the Policy Committee for information.

2. 2050 LRTP Project(s) to be Funded via SUATS Regional Mobility Program (RMP)

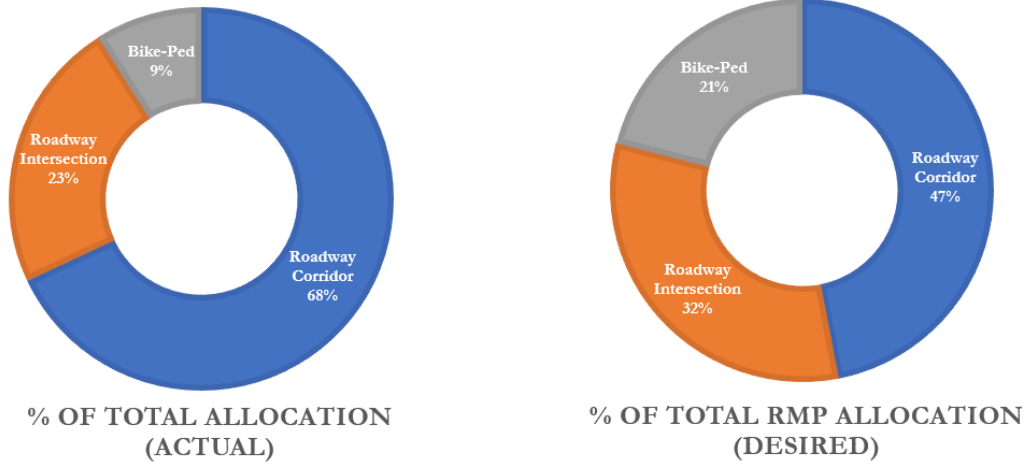
SUATS currently has a projected \$35.7 million balance available during the FY2024-2033 TIP window.

While remaining phases for existing projects (e.g. W. Liberty Street Corridor and Turkey Creek Greenway Phase 1) and possible inflationary cost impacts to active projects are likely to require commitment of a portion of these available funds, there are opportunities to begin planning a next SUATS Regional Mobility Program project.

The current SUATS 2050 Long Range Transportation Plan separates projects into three primary categories to enable effective ranking within each category. During the

planning horizon of the LRTP, the expected division of funds in these categories compared to the actual allocations made is shown in the diagram below:

Planned vs. Actual Regional Mobility Program Allocations



The project ranking system established in the LRTP is by its nature reactive to previously measured data in identifying areas to be addressed on Sumter’s transportation network. This means that projected or planned development (commercial, industrial, and residential) can create an impact on Sumter’s transportation network that is not included in available data or effectively scored via the project prioritization rubric.

In situations involving new growth where Sumter’s transportation needs can be best served by selecting a project ranked lower on the project list, the SUATS Policy Committee may make project selection based on additional information (e.g. traffic impact studies, details on new developments) that becomes available once new commercial, industrial, or residential development is planned.

Staff presents this information for the Policy Committee’s consideration and discussion. No action is required at this time, though staff requests direction from the Policy Committee on scope of projects the Committee would like considered for funding and the desired timeline for presentation of alternatives.

3. End of Year 2025 Regional Mobility Program (RMP) Financial Summary

Each year, SCDOT provides SUATS with a federal fiscal year-end financial statement. This report captures all activity through September 30, 2025. Where the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) functions as a checkbook for planning and decision-making by the Policy Committee, the year-end financial statement represents a full accounting of funds committed and funds expended on each project through September 30, 2025.

Staff presents this information to the Policy Committee for information. No action is required at this time.

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