

# **Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments Rural Long Range Transportation Plan**



**November 2006**

(Updated January 2007)

**Prepared By:**

Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments

**In Cooperation With:**

South Carolina Department of Transportation  
and the  
Technical Advisory Committee

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# Chapter 1 Introduction and Vision

## Introduction

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) has partnered with the 10 state Council of Governments, representing all of South Carolina's 46 counties, to conduct a rural system upgrade program to identify and prioritize the state highway needs. The Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments (WRCOG) serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Rural Planning Organization (RPO) for Georgetown, Horry, and Williamsburg Counties.

## Background

At the request of SCDOT, WRCOG has prepared this report to identify and prioritize the rural transportation needs of the tri-county area. Prior to the SCDOT requesting this report, the Waccamaw region had already begun identifying the rural transportation needs through the formation of the *Greater Georgetown Regional Transportation Task Force* (Task Force). The Task Force published a progress report dated February 20, 2003, which outlined the rural needs in the tri-county region—although please note that the Task Force considered a much larger region than just Georgetown, Horry, and Williamsburg Counties.

This report builds on the efforts began by the Task Force and considers the transportation needs identified after the 2003 progress report was published.

## Task Force and Public Involvement

The Task Force was formed at a meeting in Georgetown on August 7, 2002, by a vote of the Georgetown County Legislative Delegation. Senator Yancey McGill was installed as the Chairman of the Task Force. The Task Force began meeting every third Tuesday of the month from August through November in 2002 to formulate a comprehensive long range plan for roadway improvements in the Greater Georgetown region. At each of the meetings, the Task Force heard from a variety of different stakeholders that are involved in transportation related matters in the region. Concerned citizens voiced their opinions at two of the meetings. During the October 15, 2002 Task Force meeting all of the various environmental resource agencies voiced their concerns. The resource agencies supported the widening of US 521 to I-95, but had serious reservations about the remainder of the projects under consideration by the committee.

### **Task Force Members:**

Senator Yancey McGill – Chairman,  
Mr. Linwood Altman – Vice Chairman, Former State Representative  
Rep. Vida Miller,  
Mr. Sel Hemmingway, Georgetown County Council Chairman  
Mr. Johnny Morant, Georgetown County Council  
Mr. Boyd Johnson, City of Georgetown Administrator  
Mr. David Dwyer, Prominent Property Owner along US 701

Mr. Joe Young, Georgetown County Planning Commission  
 Mr. James Jerow, Chairman, Georgetown Economic Development Commission  
 Mr. Wallace McNight, Prominent local businessman and community leader  
 Ms. Nancy Cave, South Carolina Coastal Conservation League  
 Mr. Cliff Rusch, Waccamaw Neck resident  
 Mr. Walt Burner, Waccamaw Neck resident

**Resource Members:**

Mr. Tommy Edwards -- Georgetown County Administrator  
 Mr. Allen Burns – Georgetown County Planning  
 Mr. Ken Thompson – Executive Director, WRCOG  
 Mr. Mark Hoeweler – Transportation Director, WRCOG  
 Mr. Mitchell Metts – SCDOT Program Manager  
 Mr. Rob Hamzy – SCDOT Program Manager

*Appendix A includes the minutes from the meetings that have been held.*

**Technical Advisory Committee**

As part of the Rural Long Range Plan, a Technical Committee provided input and guidance throughout the process.

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>(12)</b>
Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments	Transportation Planner	(1)
SC DOT	District Engineer (Florence)	(1)
SC DOT	Planning Representative (Columbia)	(1)
SCDOT	Rural Program Manager	(1)
Waccamaw Regional Transportation Authority / LYMO	Executive Director	(1)
Williamsburg County Transit	Executive Director	(1)
Georgetown County	Representatives (One staff from either Planning, Public Works, or County Engineer’s offices):	(1)
Horry County	Representatives (One staff from either Planning, Public Works, or County Engineer’s offices):	(1)
Williamsburg County	Representatives (One staff from either Planning, Public Works, or County Engineer’s offices):	(1)
Rotational City representatives for all three counties*	Representatives (One staff from either Planning, Public Works, or City/County Engineer’s offices)	(3)

\*Rural city representatives from all three counties serves on the Technical Committee. Since the number of rural cities within each of the three counties varies, each county has one city or town representative at a time.

- Georgetown County has only one rural city/town, therefore Andrews serves as the city/town representative.
- Horry County has two rural cities/towns, Aynor and Loris, therefore they will take turns on an annual basis. The city of Aynor serves the initial year on the technical committee.
- Williamsburg County has five rural cities/towns, which take turns on an annual basis to represent the county on the Technical Committee. The order in which the cities/towns serves on the committee will be alphabetical: Greeleyville, Hemingway, Kingstree, Lane, and Stuckey.

## Chapter 2 Highways and System Upgrades

### Prioritized Projects and Descriptions

At the November 19, 2002 meeting, the Task Force voted on a list of projects based upon the ranking criteria shown in Table 1 on the following page. The following is that list of the projects, in the order that the Task Force prioritized:

- 1) US 521 Widening from Andrews to I-95
- 2) US 701 Connector/Southern Conway Bypass
- 3) US 701 Widening from Conway to Georgetown
- 4) Georgetown Bypass
- 5) US 378 Widening from I-95 to Conway
- 6) SC 261 from Yauhannah to US 521
- 7) SC 41 Widening from Andrews to Mullins
- 8) SC 9 Widening from Marion County to S-441 @ Green Sea

*Appendix B illustrates the different project locations on a map.*

1) US 521 4-lane widening from Andrews to I-95 is part of the approved plans for Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments (WRCOG), Santee Lynches Council of Governments (SLCOG), and SCDOT. This rural 2-lane road has high fatality rates, and would benefit the region from an evacuation and tourism perspective because it would enhance the system connectivity for the region. The project has partial funding.

2.) 701 Connector/Southern Conway Bypass would provide possible links to the Interstate Highway System by diverting long distance trips from Highway 17 where there is already much congestion. The project would benefit the region because it would greatly increase evacuation times in an emergency situation along the coast, and it would service a large number of the tourist and residential population by providing an alternate north-south route in the region. The project is consistent with the Grand Strand Area Transportation Study (GSATS) Long Range Plan (LRP) prepared by WRCOG. This project is currently unfunded.

3) US 701 4-lane widening from Conway to Georgetown is consistent with the GSATS LRP prepared by WRCOG. The widening would enhance the connectivity to the Interstate Highway System by diverting long distance trips from Highway 17 where there is already much congestion. This segment of US 701 has high fatality rates. The project would benefit the region because it would moderately increase evacuation times in an emergency situation along the coast, and it would serve a large number of the tourist and residential population by providing an alternate north-south route in the region. This project is currently unfunded.

4) Georgetown Bypass is also consistent with the GSATS LRP prepared by WRCOG. The project would help separate heavy vehicles, such as trucks, from local and tourism travel because it would divert truck trips from Highway 17. The safety benefits from separating the truck traffic from daily traffic on Highway 17 would be substantial because of the high volume of logging trucks and other heavy vehicles in this part of Georgetown County. This project is currently unfunded.

5) US 378 4-lane widening from I-95 to Conway is part of the approved plans for WRCOG and SCDOT's State Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP). The 2-lane rural road has high fatality rates and would benefit from a safety perspective, if widened. The project would also benefit the region by enhancing the evacuation capabilities in the region, and providing an alternate east-west route for the tourist and residential populations. This project has partial funding.

6) SC 261 4-lane widening from Yauhannah to US 521 is not part of any approved plan, however high fatality rates have caused this project to be added to these findings. The widening project would also moderately benefit the region in an emergency evacuation, and it would provide an alternate east-west route to reduce traffic congestion on other roads. The project is currently unfunded.

7) SC 41 4-lane widening from Andrews to Mullins is also not part of any approved plans, but similar to SC 261 has high fatality rates along the rural 2-lane road warranting improvement considerations. The project would have some benefits in an emergency evacuation, because it would provide another alternative north-south route in the region. The project is currently unfunded.

8) SC 9 lane widening from Marion County to S-441 @ Green Sea is not part of any approved plans at this time. The project would benefit the community by providing another emergency evacuation corridor to connect to US 701. The project is currently unfunded.

Project	Part of an Approved Plan	Relieve Congestion	Access to Interstate	Safety	Benefit in Evacuation	Tourist Route	Minimal Impacts	System Connectivity	Partial Funding
US 521 (4 lanes)	WRCOG, SLCOG, SCDOT		4 Lanes From I 95 to Georgetown	Rural 2 Lane Roads - Highest Fatality Rates	HIGH	YES	YES	4 Lanes From Interstate 95 to Georgetown	YES
701 Connector	GSATS Long Range Plan	Divert Long Distance Trips From US 17	Possible Link to Interstate		HIGH	YES	NO	Alternate North - South Route	NO
US 701 (4 lanes)	GSATS Long Range Plan	Divert Long Distance Trips From US 17	Possible Link to Interstate	Rural 2 Lane Roads - Highest Fatality Rates	MODERATE	YES	YES	Alternate North - South Route	NO
Georgetown Bypass	GSATS Long Range Plan	Divert Truck Trips From US 17		Separates Heavy Vehicles From Traffic		NO	NO		NO
US 378 (4 lanes)	WRCOG, SCDOT - STIP		4 Lanes From I 95 to Conway	Rural 2 Lane Roads - Highest Fatality Rates	HIGH	YES	NO	Alternate East - West Route	YES
SC 261 (4 lanes)				Rural 2 Lane Roads - Highest Fatality Rates	MODERATE	NO	YES	Alternate East - West Route	NO
SC 41 (4 lanes)				Rural 2 Lane Roads - Highest Fatality Rates	LOW	NO	YES	Alternate North - South Route	NO
SC 9				Rural 2 Lane Roads	LOW	NO	YES	Alternate East - West Route	NO

## Estimated Cost of Prioritized Projects

The following cost estimates were derived from historical data taken from projects recently constructed in this region. The estimates were generated from a cost per mile standpoint and adjusted for the number of bridges that occur along the corridor. The figures are very preliminary and should be used for general discussion purposes only. In the coming months, field reviews will be done for the five roadway widening projects in order to fine-tune those estimates. The two new location project estimates (US 701 Connector and the Georgetown Bypass) will need to be refined when the preferred alignment is selected.

• US 521 – From Andrews to I-95 -----	\$275,000,000
• * US 701 Connector -----	\$105,000,000
• * Georgetown Bypass -----	\$251,000,000
• US 378 – From I-95 to Conway -----	\$275,000,000
• US 701 Widening – From SC 51 to Conway -----	\$187,000,000
• SC 41 – From Mullins to Andrews -----	\$325,000,000
• SC 261 – From Yauhannah to Manning -----	\$315,000,000
• SC 9 - From Marion County to S-441 @ Green Sea-----	<u>\$72,000,000</u>

Total ----- \$1,805,000,000

US 521 between SC 261 and Greeleyville (blue segment on map in Appendix B) has \$15,000,000 already committed in funding, thus reducing the total need to \$1,718,000,000.

\* New location projects

## Chapter 3 Intersections and Safety

### Existing Conditions

Narrow rural roads in the region, combined with unsignalized intersections can lead to high accident/fatality rates. In the rural areas of Horry, Georgetown and Williamsburg Counties many of the 2-lane roads are paralleled by drainage ditches, leaving little room for error for drivers avoiding wildlife, standing water on the roadway, or possibly even oncoming vehicles. Additionally, low traffic volumes on these rural roadways can unintentionally encourage speeding. Many of the rural roads have pavement deterioration or they remain unpaved. High speeds along unpaved roads that have “washboard” cuts can cause vehicles to lose control, which is another safety concern along rural roads. A common scene on the rural roads in the Waccamaw region is to see a farming tractor driving down the rural road to the next farm.

Widening the rural roads to improve safety is definitely a solution, however due to fiscal and environmental constraints widening the roadway is not always the best alternative. There are several other options to improve the safety of rural roads that avoid the costly option of widening the roads: widening and paving the shoulders, lowering speed limits, median barriers to prevent head-on collisions, lane restrictions for heavy vehicles, and increasing law enforcement to name

a few. Realigning roads, reconfiguring intersections and curves, and more modern traffic calming techniques can also be implemented to increase safety along the rural roads.

**Identified Needs**

The SCDOT, through their safety program, has provided WRCOG a list of prioritized safety projects in the tri-county area. The table below details the intersections of highest safety concern in each county and details a possible solution that SCDOT identified for each interchange.

<b>County</b>	<b>Possible Solutions to Safety Concerns</b>
<b>Horry County</b>	
S-29 @ S-343 @ S-1201 in Conway	Realign the intersection to 90 degrees and/or “pull roads from intersection”.
SC-410 @ S-19	Realign the intersection to 90 degrees.
<b>Georgetown County</b>	
US-701 @ S-4	Reduce curve and add left turn lanes on US-701 at the intersection.
<b>Williamsburg County</b>	
SC-261 @ SC-512 @ S-290	Add left turn lanes, flatten curve, and realign to 90 degrees.
S-186 (US-52 to 0.3 miles toward S-159)	Reduce the curve near the railroad tracks.

**Chapter 4 Bridges**

**Existing Conditions**

Bridge replacement and rehabilitation are prioritized by SCDOT using a Bridge Management System (BMS) that was initiated in the early 1990’s. Statewide bridge inspection continues to be a high priority and critical component to be eligible for federal-aid Bridge Program Funds.

**Identified Needs**

The following bridges have been identified for replacement or rehabilitation by SCDOT:

<b>FY2007/FY2008 (or later)</b>		
<b>Road</b>	<b>Crossing Waterway</b>	<b>County</b>
SC-377	Black River & swamps	Williamsburg
US-378	Little Pee Dee River & swamps	Horry/Marion
SC-917	Little Pee Dee River & overflows	Horry/Marion

<b>FY2008/FY2009 (or later)</b>		
Road	Crossing Waterway	County
US-701	Great Pee Dee River & overflows & Yauhannah Lake (3 total)	Horry/Georgetown

<b>FY2009/FY2010 (or later)</b>		
Road	Crossing Waterway	County
S-107	Brown Swamp	Horry
S-107	Brown Swamp (2 <sup>cd</sup> crossing)	Horry
S-24	Pawleys Swamp	Horry

## Chapter 5 Signalization

### Existing Conditions

SCDOT maintains and replaces all of the signals in the rural areas of Horry, Georgetown and Williamsburg Counties—and in the Metropolitan Planning Organization’s entire region except for the City of Myrtle Beach since SCDOT contracts the City to maintain their own. No Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) exist in the rural areas.

### Identified Needs

SCDOT has not identified any signalization or ITS needs in the rural areas at this time. As noted earlier in this report, the implementation of signals in rural areas could potentially improve intersection safety in the region. However, due to low traffic volumes, those signals are not warranted from a level of service (LOS) perspective.

## Chapter 6 Mass Transit

Currently, two mass transit providers service the tri-county Waccamaw Region, including Coast Transit Providers (formerly known as Lymo Transit Providers) and the Williamsburg County Transit Authority.

### Coast Transit Providers

Coast consists of 35 vehicles, and offers service seven days a week. Coast buses travel on 15 routes servicing the Coastal Carolina region, including Myrtle Beach, North Myrtle Beach, Surfside Beach, Conway, Loris, and Aynor. Coast also offers senior citizens, persons with disabilities, students, and Medicare card holders reduced fare passes. Coast intends to extend services into the Georgetown County area in the near future. In the past, transit users sometimes would flag down a bus to stop and pick them up—creating an unofficial transit stop along the route.

The Coast Regional Transportation Authority had 22.5 percent fewer people riding its buses last year, and due to service reductions. Coast's buses drove fewer miles in fiscal year 2005-2006 because of a major route restructuring that took place just before the year started.

The transit agency carried an average of 0.438 passengers for every mile driven in 2005-2006 compared with 0.445 passengers per mile in 2004-05. In general, Coast is paying about 28 percent more for diesel fuel and 29 percent more for gasoline this year compared with a year ago.

Some of the highlights from The Coast's year-end ridership report for 2005-06 include:

- Ocean Boulevard South was the agency's most popular route last year, with 125,239 riders—which is a 40 percent decline from the 208,707 people who rode that route the previous year.
- The Conway-to-Myrtle Beach route had an 8.8 percent drop in passengers - to 101,464 riders in 2005-06 from 111,242 riders the previous year.
- Coast had year-over-year passenger declines on all but its Myrtle Beach-to-Georgetown route, which showed a 23.4 percent increase to 72,667 passengers last year.
- The Ocean Boulevard South and Ocean Boulevard North routes combined for 33.4 percent of Coast's ridership last year. Those routes accounted for about half of the agency's passengers in previous years.
- Myrtle Beach officials eliminated bus-only lanes in April 2006 that had helped buses maneuver through congested traffic since 2003. It now takes buses an hour or longer to run the Boulevard routes, which were supposed to operate on a 30-minute schedule.
- Coast is currently implementing a uniform bus shelter program.

Riders on fixed-route bus service:	Fiscal 2005-06 - 464,553
	Fiscal 2004-05 - 599,658
	Difference - 22.5 percent decline
Mileage on fixed-route bus service:	Fiscal 2005-06 - 1,060,182
	Fiscal 2004-05 - 1,346,601
	Difference - 21.3 percent decline

### **Williamsburg County Transit Authority (WCTA)**

The Williamsburg County Transit Authority serves the entire geographic area of Williamsburg County. All residents of Williamsburg County, including the low-income, the elderly, and citizens with disabilities are encouraged to use the transit authority. Covering an estimated 935,000 square miles within the Williamsburg County service area, including a Myrtle Beach fixed route service, more than 450,000 citizens are transported annually.

During peak as many as one 45-passenger, ten 17-passenger, and two 39-passenger vehicles transport citizens to worksite at Myrtle Beach daily. As many as 16 vans each with capacities of 17 are utilized to transport clients through contract routes with human services agencies, such as DSS, DSN, Title XIX Medicaid Program, Upward Bound Program through Williamsburg County Technical College and Special Service routes (churches and other organization). Services are also provided for demand response clients needing to be transported to drug stores, resource agencies doctors and hospital appointments.

WCTA is equipped with a fleet of 54 vehicles (Vans, mini-buses, and buses.) In addition WCTA is equipped with 1- 2000 and 1- 2003 crown Victoria, 1- pick-up truck and 1-service truck.

WCTA is constantly recruiting, and seeking through surveys to find out transportation needs of communities that may not be receiving adequate transportation services. An in-county fixed route is also one of WCTA main concern to hopefully establish in the very near future

### **Identified Needs**

Ridership on Coast has been slowly increasing over the past couple of years. Recently, Coast has been working in cooperation with the other municipalities in the region to develop a system of bus shelters that would serve the transit riders and would create a visual identity for the bus system in the region. The shelters may reduce the number of users that flag-down the bus, because they will have a visible and comfortable place to wait for the next bus. An ITS system, detailing the individual bus routes may also be provided at some of the more urban shelters to aid in the efficiency of the system.

As the population increases in the Waccamaw region, there may be a need to expand the existing transit structure to accommodate rider demands to get to destinations like the beach or urban areas along the coast. It should be noted that most of these new planned developments occurring in the rural areas are being purchased typically by “second home buyers”--who are less likely to ride transit to run errands. As ridership continues to increase in the future, perhaps a more comprehensive transit system could be implemented – including park-n-rides to accommodate commuters or people traveling to the beach or urban areas.

## **Chapter 7 Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities**

### **Existing Conditions**

Currently, very few bicycle and pedestrian facilities exist in the rural areas. Most bike and pedestrian activity is limited to the narrow shoulder (if any) along the existing highways. Due to the rural dispersion of the population, biking and walking are not often the most efficient or safe option, as compared to getting in a personal vehicle or on transit.



Very few rural roads have shoulders for walking and biking.

## **Identified Needs**

The East Coast Greenway is proposed to connect all the major cities of the East Coast along a continuous, off-road path. The East Coast Greenway spans 2,950 miles from Calais, Maine to Key West, Florida. A portion of the greenway falls within the Grand Strand Area Transportation Study's (GSATS) project area; however plans to connect to the greenway to the rural inland areas of the three counties have not yet been identified. A connected system of greenways, sidewalks, and trails would provide a transportation system for the rural bicyclists and pedestrians.

## **Chapter 8 Financial Plan**

### **Principal Funding Sources**

According to the Federal Highway Administration's Rural Transportation Planning Workshop Final Report dated Summer 1999, "South Carolina combines National Highway System (NHS), STP, and minimum allocation funding and then suballocates it. SCDOT shares 2.06 cents of the gas tax with counties. Counties can and have successfully levied a special options sales tax for transportation purposes – citizens vote on a specific list of projects. A maximum of one-quarter of 1% of the gas tax, or \$5 million, is allocated to transit. The legislature also set aside 4 cents of the gas tax for improving mobility and safety. However, much of this funding has been diverted, such as after Hurricane Hugo. Transportation commissioners have a \$25 million pot of funding to allocate at their discretion. Generally, legislators and local governments whose projects do not receive regional funding petition for this money."

## **Chapter 9 Unfunded Projects**

Everything in the plan other than the Andrews Bypass Phase I is unfunded.

## **Chapter 10 Next Steps**

The project lists from all ten Councils of Governments are used to develop a draft State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) to be presented to the SCDOT Transportation Commission. After the commission gives tentative approval to the STIP, the STIP is distributed back to the COGs for the public review period. Following the public review period and the receipt of comments, the commission adopts the STIP and forwards it to the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration for their approval.

# **Appendix A**

# **Task Force Public**

# **Meeting Minutes**

**GREATER GEORGETOWN REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION TASK FORCE**

**September 17, 2002 at 6:00 PM**

Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments Conference Room  
1230 Highmarket Street, Georgetown, SC

MEMBERS Present: Sen. Yancy McGill, Chairman  
Mr. Linwood Altman, Vice-Chairman  
Rep. Vida Miller  
Mr. Boyd Johnson  
Mr. Sel Hemingway  
Mr. James Jerow  
Mr. Wallace McKnight  
Mr. Joe Young  
Mr. Johnny Morant  
Ms. Nancy Cave  
Mr. David Dwyer

Others Attending: Mr. Mitchell Metts  
Mr. Rob Hamzy  
Mr. Ken Thompson  
Ms. Janine Peccini  
Mr. Tommy Edwards  
Mr. Allen Burns  
Ms. Janice Shoemaker  
Representatives from the Coastal Observer and the Georgetown Times

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The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Senator McGill who also started the meeting by offering a prayer.

Sen. McGill passed out a master map showing the location of existing routes and projects included in the Regional Transportation Task Force Study Area.

Mitchell Metts discussed the status of DOT projects located throughout the region.

Rob Hamzy discussed the ongoing Southern Conway Bypass Connector study and provided copies of an Interim Report. He said the final report is expected to be ready by January 03. It will include several alternatives recommended for consideration in an Environmental Impact Study.

There was a discussion regarding the future of I-73 and how it relates to the Southern Conway Bypass. Mr. Metts stated that the two projects do not hinge on each other but project planning should be coordinated.

Mr. Hamzy stated that he would provide expected funding costs for a Southern Conway Bypass EIS during the October meeting. He also discussed some of corridors DOT was looking at now and added that the 31 scenarios will be narrowed down to three.

Sen. McGill requested that the master map be updated to include:

- US 521 and I-95
- SC 41 through Andrews and
- SC 261 to I-95 and
- US 378 in Lake City to I-95

Mr. Young asked in Georgetown County was included in the alternatives analysis for the Southern Conway Bypass. Mr. Hamzy said a southern route was originally considered but the traffic numbers were not enough to justify further study in Georgetown County.

Sen. McGill stated that Don Freeman wants a master plan of the Region and he wants to know how to get there.

Sen. McGill asked the group if they should proposed an alternative for the Georgetown Bypass that uses Penny Royal Road or Hwy 24. A discussion followed regarding the future of a Georgetown Bypass. Traffic needs to get around Georgetown but also trucks need to come into the City. Mr. Young stated that IP at one time did not want traffic on Ridge Road but they may be more receptive to the idea now. Mr. Johnson and Mr. Metts will get together and discuss the issue further.

The issue of a potential I-73 was discussed, as was the future of US 701. Comments that the group offered included that it was likely that US 701 would (and some believe it should) be widened to include four lanes but that does not mean it should be an Interstate Highway. Some members of the group saw the widening as critical to the future growth of Georgetown County. A comment was added that people did not want the type of growth that has east of the river in Georgetown County to occur on the west side of the River. It is known that 701 is one of the deadliest sections of roads in the state.

Sen. McGill discussed that this planning is for the future. We must plan for improvements now so we do not end up with congestion like Horry County now has. Sen. McGill asked members of the group to discuss their concerns and comments.

The discussion included the following comments:

North/south traffic flow needs to be improved

WRCOG Rural Long Range Transportation Plan

Appendix A

701/17 is a bottleneck - a by-pass around Georgetown would help

Another evacuation route is needed to get the traffic off the Waccamaw Neck (i.e. another connector over the river)

If 701 is developed, 701 will no longer provide relief for an evacuation

1. We need to know what we want the 701 area to look like.

Environmental protection is critical but other issues are important too: evacuation and growth planning for 701 widening is critical - without it Georgetown will be doomed

The 521 bypass projects should be prioritized - they are critical

Growth will occur in spite of narrow roads - roads will have to be constructed after the fact (e.g. SC 41 in Mt. Pleasant)

If 701 is widened and water and sewer provided - the land will be prime real estate

We need to think about quality of life

Alternative other than evacuation need to be explored

Andrews will eventually be congested

A study that looks at through traffic should be to be completed

Sen. McGill asked that everyone think about his or her ideas. He asked Ms. Cave to contact the Dept. of Natural Resources and other Federal Agencies to come to the next meeting. He reminded everyone that the focus should be on opportunities to enhance the quality of life and the focus should be on the future.

The meeting ended at 8:15

**GREATER GEORGETOWN REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION TASK FORCE**

**October 15, 2002 at 6:00 PM**

Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments Conference Room  
1230 Highmarket Street, Georgetown, SC

MEMBERS Present: Sen. Yancy McGill, Chairman  
Mr. Linwood Altman, Vice-Chairman  
Rep. Vida Miller  
Mr. Boyd Johnson  
Mr. James Jerow  
Mr. Joe Young  
Mr. Johnny Morant  
Ms. Nancy Cave  
Mr. David Dwyer

Others Attending: Mr. Mitchell Metts, SCDOT  
Mr. Rob Hamzy, SCDOT  
Mr. Ken Thompson  
Mr. Tommy Edwards  
Mr. Mark Hoeweler  
Mr. Patrick Tyndall, FHWA  
Mr. Ed Duncan  
Representatives from the Coastal Observer and the Georgetown Times

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The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM. Mr. Altman gave an update on several items that were of interest to the Task Force. He talked about the Arcadia East development, the possible addition of a Wal Mart in Murrells Inlet and the expansion of the Port of Georgetown.

Mitchell Metts discussed the modifications to the project map. US 521 was extended to Interstate 95, SC 41 was extended from Mullins to Andrews (\$325 M) and SC 261 was extended to Manning (\$315 M).

Jane Lareau, representing the South Carolina Coastal Conservation League, stated that the Committee needed to first identify what the problems are and then look at how to solve them. She suggested a project-by-project analysis of the problems and their potential solutions. She suggested new ways of determining what portions of the population are at risk, decreasing the number of people that need to evacuate when a hurricane is eminent. Mr. Altman talked about the potential for flooding and how it complicates an evacuation scenario. Mr. Jerow spoke about the implications beyond Georgetown County and the need for job creation.

Mr. Edwin Cooper, representing Ducks Unlimited, asked the Committee to move with caution and respect for natural resources. He asked that improvements be made based upon need and not perception.

Mr. Hampton Shuping, representing The Winyah Rivers Foundation, stated that his group was not anti growth, but in favor of managed growth. He spoke about problems associated with runoff and its impact on agriculture. He further stated that the Committee should look to improve existing roads before wanting to create new alignments. Senator McGill asked if Mr. Shuping if he thought the resent improvements in Horry County were needed. Mr. Shuping replied that he thought improvements to US 501 were needed.

Mr. Jack Peachey, representing the Waccamaw Audubon Society, stated that roads should not be built solely for hurricane evacuation; that roads should be built to serve local needs and to reduce congestion. He further stated that based on current conditions the widening of US 701 is not needed.

Mr. Jack Cassidy, representing the Winyah Chapter of the Sierra Club, stated that he liked the planning process that the Task Force was employing and added that using the issue of hurricane evacuation as a justification for building roads was insincere. He is in opposition to the 701 Connector and the widening of US 701.

Ms. Nancy Cave stated that she had strong reservations about the projects that were being discussed. She read two letters into the record. The first letter was from the Georgetown County League of Women Voters. The League endorsed the US 521 widening but was opposed to the 701 Connector and the widening of US 701. The second letter was from Mr. Daniel K. Thorne, the owner of Georgetown Steel. He stated that he supported the widening of US 521 but was opposed to a bypass of Georgetown stating that its benefits to the mill would be minimal. He also opposed the 701 Connector and the widening of US 701.

Sen. McGill thanked the various groups for their comments. He stated that there is a need to find some common ground. He cited the Horry County example as one were the community did not sit idly by, but acted to try to solve common problems. He further stated the desire to hear from all interested parties. Senator McGill spoke to the issue of the Waccamaw Wildlife Refuge and the differing opinions about the 701 Connector's inclusion in a list of potential improvements that would not be precluded by the creation of the Refuge.

Senator McGill concluded by telling the group that the Committee is not just concerned with evacuation, but with planning for needs forty to fifty years in the future. He stated that it was the Committee's task to come up with a plan that can be submitted to SCDOT.

The meeting ended at 7:15

**GREATER GEORGETOWN REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION TASK FORCE**

**November 19, 2002 at 6:00 PM**

Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments Conference Room  
1230 Highmarket Street, Georgetown, SC

**Members Present:** Sen. Yancy McGill, Chairman  
Mr. Linwood Altman, Vice-Chairman  
Mr. Walt Burner  
Mr. Boyd Johnson  
Mr. Wallace McKnight  
Mr. Joe Young  
Mr. Johnny Morant  
Ms. Nancy Cave  
Mr. David Dwyer  
Mr. Cliff Rusch

**Others Attending:** Mr. Mitchell Metts  
Mr. Murray Vernon  
Mr. Ken Thompson  
Mr. Mark Hoeweler  
Mr. Tommy Edwards  
Mr. Allen Burns  
Representatives from the Coastal Observer, Sun News and the Georgetown Times

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The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Senator McGill, who asked Mr. McKnight to offer a prayer.

Sen. McGill added Mr. Cliff Rusch and Mr. Walt Burner to the Task Force Committee.

Ms. Cave made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 15, 2002 meeting. Mr. Altman seconded the motion and all voted in favor of the motion.

Sen. McGill opened the floor for any comment from the public. Hearing none the Senator asked if the evenings discussion could focus on three points of interest that were raised at the previous meeting; Is there a demonstrated need for a project, does a project instigate unplanned growth or promote sprawl in areas without zoning, without demonstrating an economic benefit for the community, and never change a road or build a new road without a clearly demonstrated need or problem.

Sen. McGill asked Mr. Burns if all the rural areas of the county were zoned. Mr. Burns responded that approximately half of the county was zoned, with a majority of the US 701 alignment not zoned. He stated that the county is currently working on a countywide zoning plan and also a rewrite of the zoning ordinance. Sen. McGill asked Mr. Burns about a demonstrated need and or economic benefits in relation to the projects that were being discussed. Mr. Burns stated that there would be an immediate economic benefit due to job creation and a positive effect for hurricane evacuation. Mr. Boyd Johnson stated that a bypass of Georgetown would be a tremendous benefit for the city. Mr. Burns then said that there are increasing development demands along the US 701 corridor.

Sen. McGill asked the committee members that live along the US 701 corridor if they had personally noticed an increase in the amount of traffic using that road. Mr. Dwyer said that he did not feel like there had been a significant increase in the last few years. Mr. Young said that he had noticed an increase, especially with regard to the truck traffic. He further noted that the increase was made more obvious when the bridge was closed several years ago. Mr. Morant said that he would like to echo the comments made by Mr. Young.

Sen. McGill then wanted to know who would benefit from a connector from the Carolina Bays Parkway to US 701, tourist or local traffic? Mr. Young responded that he thought that both types of traffic would benefit from a connector. Mr. Altman concurred with Mr. Young, further noting that access to jobs and hospitals for the people west of the waterway would be improved.

Sen. McGill's next question for the group was about the differences between winter versus summer traffic, or peak versus off peak traffic. Mr. Rusch responded that in the years he has lived on the Waccamaw Neck the summer peak has been less pronounced, referring to the fact that traffic in the off peak has increased at a more rapid rate than the peak season traffic has.

Sen. McGill spoke about the C.A.R.S. Committee in Horry (Citizen's Advocating Road Safety) that was also interested in a project similar to the US 701 Connector project. That committee was being lead by Councilmen Frazier and Cooper. Mr. Altman introduced a report on new development along the Waccamaw Neck that was compiled by the Midway Fire Department. There was discussion about the study being done by SCDOT entitled the Southern Conway Bypass and how it was looking at routes in the vicinity of Bucksport and the Holmestown Road area.

The Waccamaw Wildlife Refuge was discussed in relation to road improvements along the US 701 corridor, SC 544 and the US 701 Connector. Sen. McGill talked about the hearings that were held, in conjunction with US Fish and Wildlife, and stated that assurances were made that the Wildlife Refuge would not be prohibitive to transportation improvements on US 701, SC 544 or the 701 connector from Carolina Bays Parkway to US 701. He concluded by saying that we need to develop partnerships and teamwork to get things accomplished as Horry County has already done. Both Mr. Rusch and Mr. Burner stated that the 701 Connector is the only alternative to future traffic problems for the Waccamaw Neck. (Mr. McKnight left the meeting)

Sen. McGill asked the Committee if anyone thought there were negative economic impacts due to the lack of four lane highways that serve the region? Mr. Burns offered that he considered it to be a detriment to economic development efforts in the present as well as in the future. He further stated that, if US 521 were four lanes all the way to I 95, it would be a definite economic benefit to the region. Mr. Young presented a letter submitted by the South Carolina Trucking Association. In the letter Mr. Todd, president of the association, supports the idea of a bypass around the city of Georgetown for economic and air quality reasons.

Sen. McGill posed the question about the effects on tourism after the events of September 11, 2001. Mr. Altman stated that things have pretty much remained the same. Sen. McGill said that PRT has told him that the State has not seen a decrease in tourism post September 11<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Cave asked Mr. Young what would happen if US 701 were widened and the Connector was built? Would development follow? How much development would result? Mr. Young replied that he couldn't predict too far into the future and that in his mind we were talking about things that were a minimum of ten years away. Ms. Cave responded that she was concerned that the dialogue so far did not mention incorporating zoning into the planning process. Mr. Young said that zoning the rural portions of the County was something the Planning Commission was working on, but the idea would be a hard sell to the rural population. Mr. Altman interjected that a large number of groups had adopted resolutions in support of the 701 Connector: the Georgetown County Economic Development Commission, the Grand Strand Area Transportation Study Policy Committee, the Waccamaw Neck Property Owners Association, the City of Georgetown, the Waccamaw Neck Alliance, the Georgetown County Chamber of Commerce, the steering committee for the US 17/Georgetown County Corridor Study, the Waccamaw Neck Civic Association and the Georgetown County Council. He further added that all of these groups are acting in, what they consider to be, the best interests of Georgetown County.

Sen. McGill asked Ms. Cave about the Coastal Conservation League's position on the development plan for Arcadia East. Ms. Cave responded that the League has decided to reserve all comment until the development plan is further along. Sen. McGill asked if anyone in attendance other than the committee members would like to comment. Mr. Murray Vernon, representing the Chamber of Commerce, stated that we must take this opportunity to plan for the future. Mr. Young relayed that the only opportunity the majority of the public will have to see any of the Waccamaw Wildlife Refuge would be the scenic views that would be afforded from the Connector. Mr. Morant offered that he was concerned about that lack of discussion of quality of life issues. He added that these issues are not given enough weight in a comparative analysis. He stated that Georgetown County residents should not have to depend on Horry County to provide economic opportunities. Every effort should be made to enhance economic opportunity while planning for the future. Mr. Johnson said he was in agreement with Mr. Morant and added that he understood that economic development was a main goal of County Council. Mr. Burns stated that infrastructure was critical for the County's economic development and that industry looking to locate in a new area wants to know how far a site is from the interstate system. Mr. Johnson added that no one was in favor of sprawl. (Mr. Dwyer left the meeting)

Sen. McGill asked Mr. Hoeweler to review the list of projects and give his recommendations on how they should be evaluated. He reviewed the criteria used to rank the different projects and discussed the addition of the widening of US 17 to six lanes on the Waccamaw Neck. Both the list of projects and the map were amended to reflect the change. Mr. Hoeweler stated that Mr. Metts and he had worked together on what criteria should be used and how each project rated with regard to each of the criteria. Discussion centered on how the 701 Connector would function in relationship to future trip making in the US 17 corridor. Sen. McGill stated that it was now time for Georgetown County to step forward and work together to enjoy the same kind of success that Horry County has experienced recently and Greenville and Columbia have in the past.

Sen. McGill expressed his thanks to Mr. Thompson for the COG's support and the use of the facilities. He said that there would not be a meeting in either November or December. The Committee's next meeting will be the third Tuesday in February, whether the Committee makes any recommendation or takes a vote on what has been presented this evening. Sen. McGill read a list of people that should receive a copy of the Committee's progress and the material presented this evening.

Mr. Young asked if it was appropriate for the committee to prioritize the list of projects or would that be something that SCDOT would do after receiving a list from the group. Mr. Metts responded that the SCDOT would like the people that live and work in the community to present a list detailing what they think are the priorities for their own community. Mr. Young made a motion to accept the list of projects as submitted to the Committee by Mr. Hoeweler. Mr. Morant seconded the motion. Sen. McGill asked if there was any discussion.

- Mr. Altman stated that the Connector needed to be ranked higher on the list. His preferred order would be: 701 Connector, US 521, US 701 and then US 17 widening, followed by the remaining projects in the order presented.
- Mr. Burns questioned if all or most of the funding for US 521 improvements was in place. Sen. McGill said that a majority of the funding was not in place, and it would be a struggle to obtain it.
- Mr. Young suggested that US 17 improvements be shifted down on the list and that the Connector and US 701 should be moved to just below US 521.
- Mr. Hoeweler said that US 17 ranked higher on the presented list because it will be needed before other projects. He further stated that the US 17 project was added at the end of the process and is not a regional project on the area on the fringe of the urban area, like the other projects being considered.
- Mr. Altman reasserted that he still thought the Connector should be number one followed by US 521 and US 701.
- Mr. Young asked if the Committee could list several projects as being the first priority. Mr. Burner responded, stating that the final list would lose its impact and be a watered down version of what the Committee wanted to present if this strategy were followed.
- Sen. McGill told the Committee that he felt in no uncertain terms that US 521 should be the number one priority project.
- Mr. Hoeweler suggested that the Committee consider removing US 17

improvements from the list of projects, feeling confident that US 17 would be prioritized during the urban planning process.

Mr. Young amended his motion to remove US 17 from the list of projects and to move everything else up in the order it was presented to the Committee. Mr. Morant seconded the motion. All voted in favor of the motion, with the exception of Ms. Cave. Mr. Altman cast a proxy vote for Mr. Jerow in favor of the motion.

Sen. McGill concluded that he thought that the Committee had gotten off to a good start, but he wanted everyone to know that this was just the beginning. He thanked everyone for his or her time and assured that the Committee would be protective of environmental concerns. Mr. Young commended Georgetown County on its planned growth in the past and an effort to continue that approach in the future. Ms. Cave added that the Committee needed to consider what could happen to the rural communities if these changes occurred.

Mr. Altman made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Rusch seconded the motion and all voted in favor to adjourn.

**GREATER GEORGETOWN REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION TASK FORCE  
SUBCOMMITTEE**

**March 31, 2003 at 6:00 PM**

**Meeting Summary**

Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments Conference Room  
1230 Highmarket Street, Georgetown, SC

**Members Present:** Mr. Linwood Altman, Chairman  
Mr. Jim Jerow  
Ms. Glenda Shoulette  
Mr. Boyd Johnson  
Mr. Harvey Shepard  
Mr. R.L. Port  
Mr. Johnny Morant  
Mr. Mark Hoeweler  
Mr. Howard Ward

**Ex-Officio**

**Members Present:**      **Rep. Vida Miller**                      **Mr. Sel Hemingway**

**Others Attending:**    Mr. Mitchell Metts                      Mr. Tommy Howard  
                                 Mr. Murray Vernon                      Mr. Jesse Tullis  
                                 Mr. Allen Burns                              Mr. Charles Swenson  
                                 Mr. Gene Crider

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The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM. Nominations and elections were held for Chairman and Vice-Chairman. Mr. Altman was installed as Chairman and Mr. Port was elected the Vice-chairman.

Mr. Jesse Tullis, editor of the Georgetown Times, spoke about his take on the US 701 Connector project. He stated that there is no middle ground, people are either in favor of the project or diametrically opposed to it. Opponents of the project cite sprawl and wetland issues. Proponents of the project cite existing conditions and project those problems into the future. He quoted an article from the New York Times to emphasize that Charleston is a major destination for people in the Northeast. He stated that he would support the project, but would need help in the form of letters to the editor. Mr. Shepard suggested that the group needed to appoint a spokesperson.

Mr. Charles Swenson, editor of the Coastal Observer, was the next speaker. He noted that congestion was becoming more of a year round problem. He said that the opposition to the project that he has heard has been that it does not make economic sense. He further stated that he has never heard how the connector would cure traffic problems. Rep. Miller said that the committee was tasked to look at what conditions would be like in ten to twenty five years. Mr. Hemingway stated that he had talked with Horry County Councilman Terry Cooper and had been informed that a study on evacuation had been funded for \$30,000 and that the C.A.R.S. Committee had asked this group to identify two routes from the Southern Conway Bypass study that would be acceptable.

Mr. Altman set the next meeting for April 28, 2003 at six o'clock. He thought that representatives from the Horry County effort should be brought in to dialogue with our committee.

Mr. Hamzy, with SCDOT, distributed the document from the Southern Conway Bypass Study. He reviewed the fifteen alignments from the report. He thought that the group is trying to accomplish an objective similar to what the Carolina Bays Parkway group had done in Horry County.

The Committee voted on the two alternatives that it would favor from the Southern Conway Bypass Study. The two selected were alignment "U" and "Y". The decision was unanimous. Mr. Jerow was elected to fill the role as spokesperson for the committee.

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm.

**GREATER GEORGETOWN REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION TASK FORCE  
SUBCOMMITTEE  
April 28, 2003 at 6:00 PM  
Meeting Summary**

Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments Conference Room  
1230 Highmarket Street, Georgetown, SC

**Members Present:** Mr. Linwood Altman, Chairman  
Mr. Jim Jerow  
Mr. Walt Berner  
Mr. Boyd Johnson  
Mr. Harvey Shepard  
Mr. R.L. Port  
Mr. Johnny Morant  
Mr. Joe Young  
Mr. Howard Ward  
Mr. Sel Hemingway

**Others Attending:** Mr. Rob Hamzy, SCDOT  
Mr. Murray Vernon  
Mr. Mark Hoeweler, WRCOG  
Mr. Gene Crider  
Mr. Tommy Howard  
Ms. Kelly Burch  
Mr. Mark Kelley  
Mr. Paige Sawyer

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The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM. The Chairman entertained a motion to approve the minutes from the March 31, 2003 meeting. Mr. Port motioned for approval. Mr. Jerow seconded. All present voted in favor of the motion.

The Chairman informed the committee that Horry County Council's report on the hurricane evacuation study would not be ready for several more weeks. That report would be discussed at the next meeting of the subcommittee, on May 19, 2003.

Mr. Jerow reported on the various activities he has been involved with in his role as spokesperson for the committee. He had appeared on talk radio and informed the group about articles that had appeared in the Coastal Observer, Georgetown Times and the Sun News. He stated that the Southern Conway Bypass report is being reviewed and that the issue of zoning is being looked at.

Mr. Keith Hinson, from Glenmore Plantation, spoke to the committee about the large number of conservation easements that were in place on many plantations along the Waccamaw River. He stated his concern that US 701 should be widened to four lanes after the Connector is built. He reasoned that urban sprawl should not be an issue and cited the widening of SC 9 with no resulting development along that corridor. He concluded by saying that he has concerns over the number of log trucks that use US 701 and listed the easier access to jobs as a benefit.

Former South Carolina State Representative Mark Kelley addressed the Committee. He stated that while he had recently been employed as a consultant, he had not been hired in relationship to the US 701 Connector. As the recent Chairman of the Grand Strand Area Transportation Study (GSATS) he wanted to advise the group that the general area where the Connector was proposed was a very sensitive environmental area and that care should be taken to minimize impacts. He stated that there would eventually be a crossing of the Waccamaw; it is just a matter of when, where and how. He spoke about issues of safety, economic benefit, logging trucks and hurricane evacuation. He concluded by saying that both Horry and Georgetown Counties would benefit from the Connector and that the best decision would be the one that benefits the most people.

Mr. Rob Hamzy, with SCDOT, reviewed the conclusions of the Southern Conway Bypass Conceptual Route Study. He showed how sixty-one alignments had been narrowed down to fifteen segments. The study took two years to complete and cost \$500,000. It had originally been set aside from the Carolina Bays Parkway effort to look at making a connection to US 701. After an initial overview the scope of the project was expanded to include the area from south of Aynor and US 501 down to Murrells Inlet. The corridors identified in the report are 2,000 feet wide and conceptual in nature. Two public meetings were held during the course of the study.

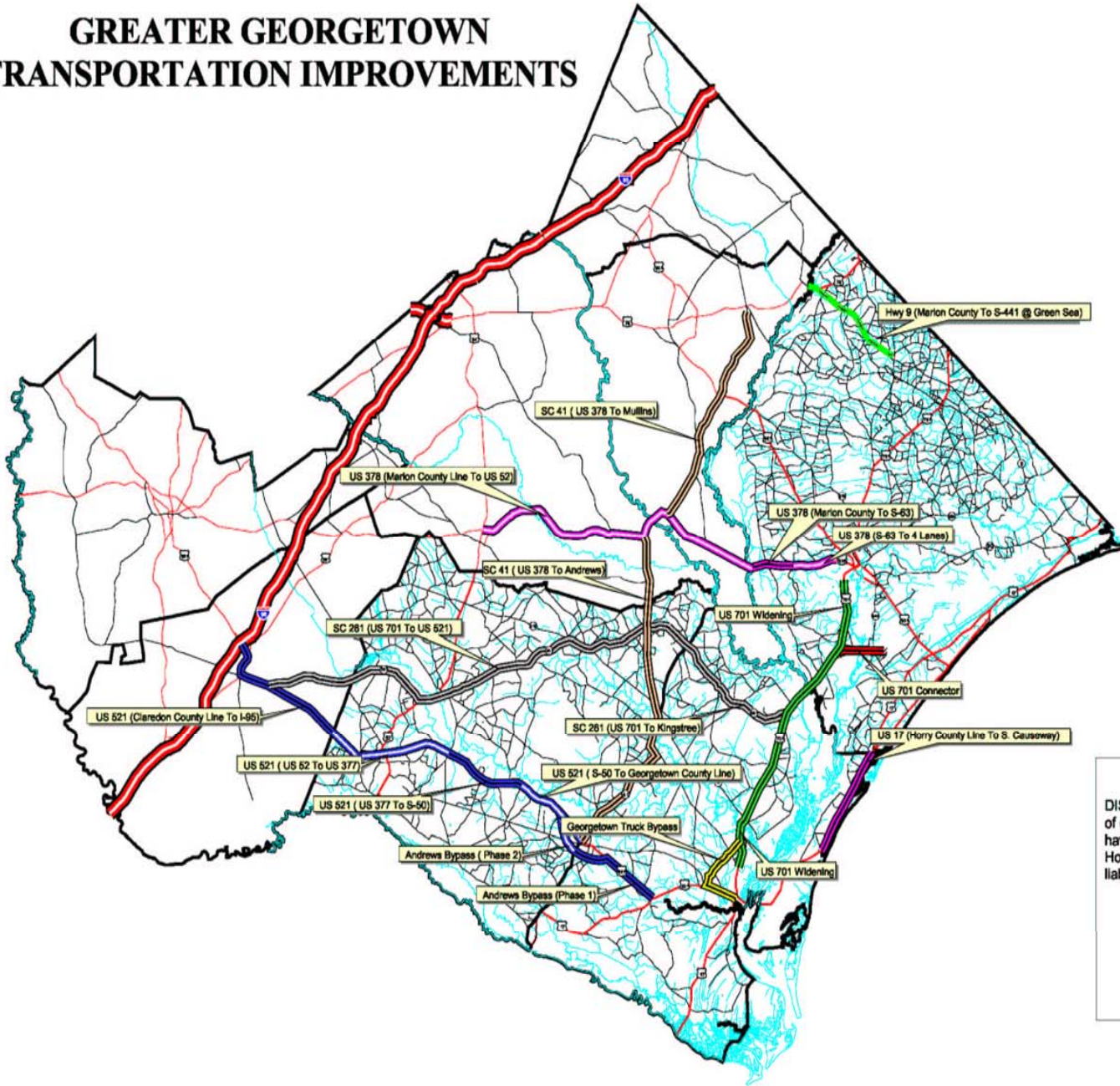
Several people in attendance at the meeting requested an opportunity to address the Committee. Mr. Young requested that only people that were new to the process speak. Mr. Robert Schofield asked questions about the formation of the Committee, how the projects were conceived and the relationship to hurricane evacuation. (Mr. Young exited the meeting 7:00 PM) The committee continued to hear people in the audience that had questions or who wanted to make a statement.

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 PM.

# **Appendix B**

# **Project Location Map**

# GREATER GEORGETOWN TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS



## Roadway Projects

- Andrews Bypass (Phase 2)
- Andrews Bypass (Phase 1)
- US 521 (S-60 To Georgetown County Line)
- US 521 (US 377 To S-60)
- US 521 (US 52 To US 377)
- US 521 (Clarendon County Line To I-95)
- US 521 (Clarendon County Line To US 52)
- US 701 Connector
- Georgetown Truck Bypass
- US 378 (Marion County To S-63)
- US 378 (S-63 To 4 Lanes)
- US 378 (Marion County Line To US 52)
- US 701 Widening
- SC 41 (US 378 To Andrews)
- SC 41 (US 378 To Mullins)
- SC 261 (US 701 To US 521)
- US 17 (Horry County Line To S. Causeway)
- Hwy 9 (Marion County To S-441 @ Green Sea)

- US 521- From Andrews To I-95 (\$275,000,000)
- US 701 Connector (\$105,000,000)
- Georgetown Truck Bypass (\$251,000,000)
- US 378- From Lake City To Conway (\$275,000,000)
- US 701 Widening- From SC 51 To Conway (\$187,000,000)
- SC 41- From Mullins To Andrews (\$325,000,000)
- SC 261- Yaulohannah To Manning (\$315,000,000)

DISCLAIMER: This map is a graphic representation of data obtained from various sources. All efforts have been made to warrant the accuracy of this map. However, WRCOG disclaims all responsibility and liability for the use of this map.



# Sources

Greater Georgetown Regional Transportation Task Force Progress Report. Prepared by Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments. February 20, 2003.

Photos by Katrina Everett

WRCOG Rural Long Range Transportation Plan