Voting Members present:
Ron Cross, Chairman Columbia Co. Commission – Chairman
Eddie Butler (representing Ronnie Young, Chairman, Aiken County Council)
Dave Cox (representing GA DOT Commissioner)
George Patty (representing Deke Copenhaver, Mayor of Augusta)
Fred Cavanaugh, Mayor of Aiken – Vice-Chairman
Terry Smith (representing Col John Holwick – Fort Gordon)
Skip Grkovic (representing Lark Jones, Mayor of North Augusta)
Tom Cobb, Mayor of Blythe

Voting Members absent:
Dennis Trudeau, Mayor of Grovetown
Robert Buchwitz, Chairman Hephzibah Commission
D. H. Freeman, SC DOT State Highway Engineer
C. H. Williams, Mayor of Burnettsville

Others Present (N = Nonvoting Member)
Augusta-Richmond Co. Planning Commission
Paul DeCamp
Lynn Russell
Juriah Lewis
Calvin Abram

City of Augusta
Heyward Johnson
David Griffith

Aiken County
Stephen Strohminger

LSCOG
Fred Catchings
Amanda Seivers

Aiken County
Stephen Strohminger

Invocation and Introductions – Ron Cross

(1) Consider approval of the minutes of the Policy Committee held on September 7, 2006.

Mr. Cavanaugh moved to approve the minutes. Mr. Butler seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.
(2) Status of Project Reports:

(a) Georgia Highways

Ms. Everett distributed a handout to the Committee members. There have been no significant changes since the last meeting. There have been a couple projects added to be let in the next three months.

- I-20 widening project from Belair Road to Wheeler Road
- I-20 / I-520 Interchange reconstruction project;
- SR 47 construction of passing lanes.

Mr. Merritt gave a brief explanation of why the SR 56 / Bobby Jones Expressway ramp project is not complete. The project is virtually complete and clean up is underway. There was a section of the barrier wall between the ramps that was poured and as soon as it was poured the Sub-Contractor doing the work went out of business. GA DOT is working with the company’s bonding company to get this wall completed and get the hole filled in within the next month.

(b) South Carolina Highways

Mr. Peterson presented this item and distributed a handout to the Committee members. There are no significant changes from the last report.

- Palmetto Parkway Phase 2 from US 1 to I-20 – Due to the increases in construction costs resulting from escalating material and fuel prices, the SCDOT was unable to move forward with the selection of the Design Build Contractor as originally scoped. SCDOT issues a RFB based on the revised scope of work and a fixed budget on September 21, 2006. The bids were submitted to SCDOT on October 12. United Contractors Inc. was awarded the project. The contract was executed for the design and construction of Palmetto Parkway Phase II on November 22, 2006 and it is anticipated that a Notice to Proceed will be issued early January 2007. The construction duration is expected to two years and seven months.
- Georgia Avenue – The preliminary design phase is well underway. Representatives from SC DOT and FHWA attended a second tribal consultation at the Cherokee Reservation in November 2006 to finalize the Management Summary, Programmatic Agreement, Research Design and Data Recovery Plan and the Burial Preservation Plan including deed restrictions covering green space areas. These revised documents will have to be sent to all consulting parties and require a 30-day comment period. SHPO will also need to concur with these documents. SCDOT is planning to let the project to construction in January 2007 with a 60-day award stipulation. If the consultation comment period proceeds without complication, the project would be awarded within a normal award timeframe.
- Silver Bluff Road – Surveys are complete. A public involvement plan is being developed that will include coordination with the city, county and local citizens. It is anticipated that right-of-way acquisition will begin in the summer of 2007 and construction will begin in the fall of 2008. Once the scope is determined, a more defined project schedule will be determined.
- East Buena Vista Avenue – Preliminary scoping has begun and will advance to the preliminary design phase once the surveys are complete. Discussions with the City of North Augusta are ongoing and to determine the limits of the project. It is anticipated that the right-of-way will begin the winter of 2007 and construction will begin in the spring of 2009.
➢ Fifth Street Bridge Interchange Project – Preliminary engineering activities have begun. Surveys are complete and preliminary design work is underway. The project was environmentally classified as a Categorical Exclusion Type B (CE Type B) which means that no individual environmental document was required. Two million dollars has been earmarked for this project.

(c) Augusta Public Transit

Mr. Johnson presented this item. APT held a public hearing on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving to give the public the opportunity to comment on the proposed service changes and Fare adjustment. There were anywhere between 100 and 200 people in attendance. The public comments were basically that they didn’t want either one. The vast majority of people who commented said they did not want the fare adjustment. Fred Russell, the City Administrator was in attendance and, at Commission budget meeting held the following Thursday, Mr. Russell relayed the comments at that time. The Commission approved the 2007 budget without any fare increases, but did approve the service changes to save an estimated $700,000. They eliminated Saturday service and three routes were affected and one route was eliminated. Notices will be sent out at the first of the year.

APT is still working with the Georgia Transit Association to get the Transit System Flexibility Act of 2006 Bill approved in the House and Senate. The federal government arbitrarily decided that in any metropolitan area of over 200,000 the transit systems could not receive operating assistance. Augusta and Aiken County have been lumped in with the larger transit systems. This bill now in the House and Senate will modify the law so that if you have 200,000 in population, but under a hundred vehicles, your federal allocation can be used for operating or capital expenses. The Senate Bill is 3973 and the House Bill is 6097. They were hoping to get the bill attached to a continuing Resolution, but Congress is not in session for much longer this year.

On the state level, a bill was introduced for a regional transportation tax to be used for any type of transportation whether it is roads, transit, bike paths or highways. Basically it would allow a community to approve a transportation tax on a regional basis. The Georgia Transit Association is trying to help the bill get passed to allow communities to vote on this transportation tax.

(d) Aiken County Transit

Ms. Seivers presented this item. Three new buses were brought into the system in late August and are now up and running. The Safety and Security Study is underway. The study has three sections – security assessment, technology assessment and the disaster recovery plan. This study was mandated by SAFETEA-LU and FTA is requiring Best Friend Express to spend one percent of the budget on this study. A contract was awarded to develop a new marketing plan for the transit system. The project will begin after the first of the year.

(3) Consider approval of an amendment to the FY 2007 Unified Planning Work Program by adding $202,242 to Work Element 4.13 Special Studies for a Regional Freight Study and update of the Public Involvement Policy (see attached).

Ms. Russell presented this item. This was earmarked in the FY 2004 and FY 2005 Unified Planning Work Program for the regional freight study. The study was put on hold until GA DOT could complete
their statewide freight study. This money will now be rolled into the FY 2007 UPWP to fund the Regional Freight Study and update the ARTS Public Involvement Policy.

Mr. Patty moved to approve this amendment to the UPWP. Mr. Cobb seconded.

Mr. Patty stated that we’ve been discussing this for years and have modeled all the passenger vehicle trips. The models are validated and we think have done a good job of figuring out where to put improvements to accommodate passenger vehicles. A huge part of the transportation problem is trucks and freight movement and we have no idea how that occurs or why it occurs or what to do to improve it. So this is real important. We’ve been talking about this study for ten years. An RFQ is being drafted and close to being finalized.

Mr. DeCamp stated that the expectation of this study is we get a profile not only of freight being hauled on trucks, but also by rail.

The amendment was approved by a unanimous vote.

(4) Consider recommending approval of the draft FY 2008 Unified Planning Work Program (see attached).

Mr. Abram presented this item. The FY 2008 UPWP and FY 2007 are very similar, but with the SAFETEA-LU guidelines, there is more or an emphasis placed on safety and security in the UPWP. The work elements will remain the same. The work elements that have the greatest impact and focus on the SAFETEA-LU are Transit and the Participation Plan. The Plan will have a more aggressive stance toward getting the public involved. They also want more agency participation and want us to focus on local agencies / government department / communities to get their input and to document everything. Aside from that environmental and social economic data is being processed for more accurate information.

The quarterly newsletter is also being prepared at this time and if anyone has an article, please contact Mr. Abram.

Mr. Smith moved to approve the draft FY 2008 UPWP and Mr. Cavanaugh seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

(5) Consider recommending approval of an amendment to the ARTS Policy and Procedures Manual by replacing the South Carolina State Highway Engineer as a voting member on the Policy Committee with the Second and Third Congressional District Commissioners (see attached letter). The First and Second Congressional District Commissioners are currently non-voting members of the Policy Committee.

Mr. Fulmer presented this item. One of the recommendations from the State Highway Engineer is to remove him as a voting member and replace him with the two Commissioners. Both Commissioners will share one vote.

Mr. Grkovic moved to approve this amendment to the ARTS Policy and Procedures Manual. Mr. Butler seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.
(6) Early Action Compact - An Air Quality Initiative

(a) Aiken County

Mr. Strohminger presented this item. Aiken County continues to participate in the Early Action Compact and meet deadlines. There were no exceedences recorded in Aiken County during the period. Milestones are being reached. There are very few changes.

(b) Richmond County

Mr. DeCamp presented this item. We are continuing to monitor the situation on this side of the river and stay in touch with air quality personnel at Georgia EPD and South Carolina DHEC. We have another year to go on the Early Action Compact, so if there are any changes, we will inform the committee as soon as possible.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.

George A. Patty
Executive Director