



**Newton County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP)  
Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting  
Thursday, January 24, 2008  
The Center for Community Preservation and Planning  
Covington, Georgia**

**Attendees:**

---

Chairman Aaron Varner  
Commissioner Mort Ewing  
Commissioner Monty Laster  
John Middleton  
Kevin Walter  
Steve Horton  
Billy Skinner  
Vickey Giles  
Linton Lovett  
Shelley Stiebling  
Randy Vinson  
Mary Horton

Connie Waller  
Terry Savage  
Ann Laster  
Sallie Paschal  
Kathy Morgan  
Hoyt Oliver  
Deborah Robertson  
John Penland  
Michael Penland  
Bob Rutland  
Frank Turner  
Hawneitha Williams

---

**Consultant Team:**

Faye DiMassimo, URS  
Jim P. Brown, URS  
Janide Sidifall, URS

---

**AGENDA**

**Welcome & Introductions**

**CTP Overview and Discussion Presentation**

Kevin Walter welcomed everyone, called on the group for self introductions, and introduced Jim Brown who made a Powerpoint presentation. During the presentation, Faye DiMassimo informed the group that there is a difference in future year 2030 population and employment projections between those included in the County's Comprehensive Plan and those derived by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) that are utilized by the CTP in the travel demand modeling process. Because of this difference, the CTP includes travel demand scenarios for both sets of projections

## Group Discussion

After the main presentation points were completed, Kay Lee facilitated a group discussion to address the following major topics:

- Have transportation needs been adequately identified?
- Are there needs that you are aware of that have not been addressed?
- In your opinion, what are the most important transportation needs?
- Do the identified needs support growth and future development patterns?
- Do the identified needs support the CTP's vision and goals?

The following points were discussed:

- There is a major problem getting projects approved into the construction process in a timely fashion. This causes cost to increase and project to become outdated. Funding that is previously approved can become unavailable. Need to streamline the plan development process through region/state/federal steps. How can we speed up the process to implementation? Kay responded that there are over 150 steps in the federal process, so no wonder it takes so long.
- We should not restrict our planning because of budget constraints. We can constrain implementation because of funding, but not planning, because if project(s) not included in the CTP, it will not happen.
- We can begin to streamline right-of-way acquisition and the Environmental Assessment (EA) process with various strategies and we can begin to identify funding for the highest priority/need projects. We need to identify the most important projects with the greatest need and develop an implementation strategy.
- Locally funded projects can move more quickly such as 2-3 years. Federally funded projects can take 2-3 times longer. However, both processes are too long from planning to construction. Part of the problem is the state DOT with their reevaluation of how they program problems.
- Need for local bus service as inter-community transportation; Stakeholder Interviews revealed that immediate need is for longer distance commuter service through vanpools, GRTA Xpress bus, and/or commuter rail; A local bus system at this time appears early and should be addressed through a separate transit feasibility study; A rural transit program could also be considered to address some immediate needs. There is some need for bus service to Georgia Perimeter College in Newton County; The question of service for seniors was mentioned and responded that many senior facilities provide direct transportation to their clients/residents. It was mentioned that bus service is currently provided between the Oxford and Emory campuses and should be included in consideration of transit services.
- The widening/reconstruction of US 278 over the Alcovy River between the Covington Bypass eastward to SR 142 was discussed. This was a prior project, but due to state's budget shortfall was pushed into long range status. Unless county can provide funding, this is a total state funded project.
- Since the Comprehensive Plan is nearing completion and the Board of Education plan for new schools is pending, has the CTP been coordinated with these efforts-yes with Comprehensive Plan and not with school plan, however, this will be considered during the CTP recommendations development.
- Consideration should be given to the pending development at Stanton Springs/Georgia Perimeter College area as grants to support infrastructure have been requested.
- There is more probability to get a project constructed/implemented if local funding is used to get the project to a certain level through SPLOST, TADs, CIDs etc. We should consider how best to use local funds to fast track projects and be proactive.
- What coordination was done with the existing water and sewer infrastructure? This was considered as part of coordination with Comprehensive Plan.
- Can we examine ways to keep more of the sixty percent of current county workers from leaving the county for employment? This is typically addressed within the Comprehensive Plan. The Newton County Leadership Collaborative is looking at diversifying/increasing employment within the county through developing a process over six months to examine economy and other factors to help identify where the county should invest its funds.
- Improved/additional connectivity to I-20 is needed.

- With escalating project costs, is there anyway to tell how much it would cost to implement sooner? There is a process to prioritize projects to use available funding (SPLOST/Impact Fees) to implement new highest priority projects.
- How will trails be prioritized and funded? As trail system is developed and accepted by DOT, the system will be implemented as roadways constructed. It is important that these plans are coordinated with DOT construction to ensure inclusion in their infrastructure and that landscaping is considered. These projects need to be considered/prioritized as next SPLOST is developed.
- The issue of sidewalks and the desirability of children walking to school was discussed. Newton County has a generous school bus distance policy that promotes this service to virtually all attendees as parents have expressed concerns about the safety of walking to school.
- To remove trucks traffic from Oxford and Covington, routing trucks off SR 81 from north of Oxford and redirecting to SR 142 should be considered.
- The state should take over SR 81 and build a bypass to connect to SR 142.
- Covington has been talking over ten years about the status of SR 81 and Covington Bypass and perhaps this issue should be addressed to the new GDOT Commissioner.
- There is a need for the west Covington Connector Road which included a new I-20 interchange, however, while the state approved this, the FHWA did not.
- Should include consideration of Scenic Byways from Comprehensive Plan in the CTP.
- It is not listed, but SR 11 should be identified for widening between US 278 and I-20 to ensure funding is requested.
- The issue of county bonds to fund projects was mentioned, but this is already being done as part of SPLOST, but will also be a revenue method through Impact Fee process.
- The SAC needs to consider priorities and express to decision makers.

### **Next Steps**

Following the group discussion, Jim completed the presentation including review of the Next Steps. Jim and Kay requested everyone to let the community know about the pending CTP Public Information Meeting on February 12, 2008 at 7:00pm in the Old Courthouse.