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**2015-2019**  
**Transportation Improvement Program**

Lowcountry Area Transportation Study (LATS)  
Metropolitan Planning Organization

December 2015

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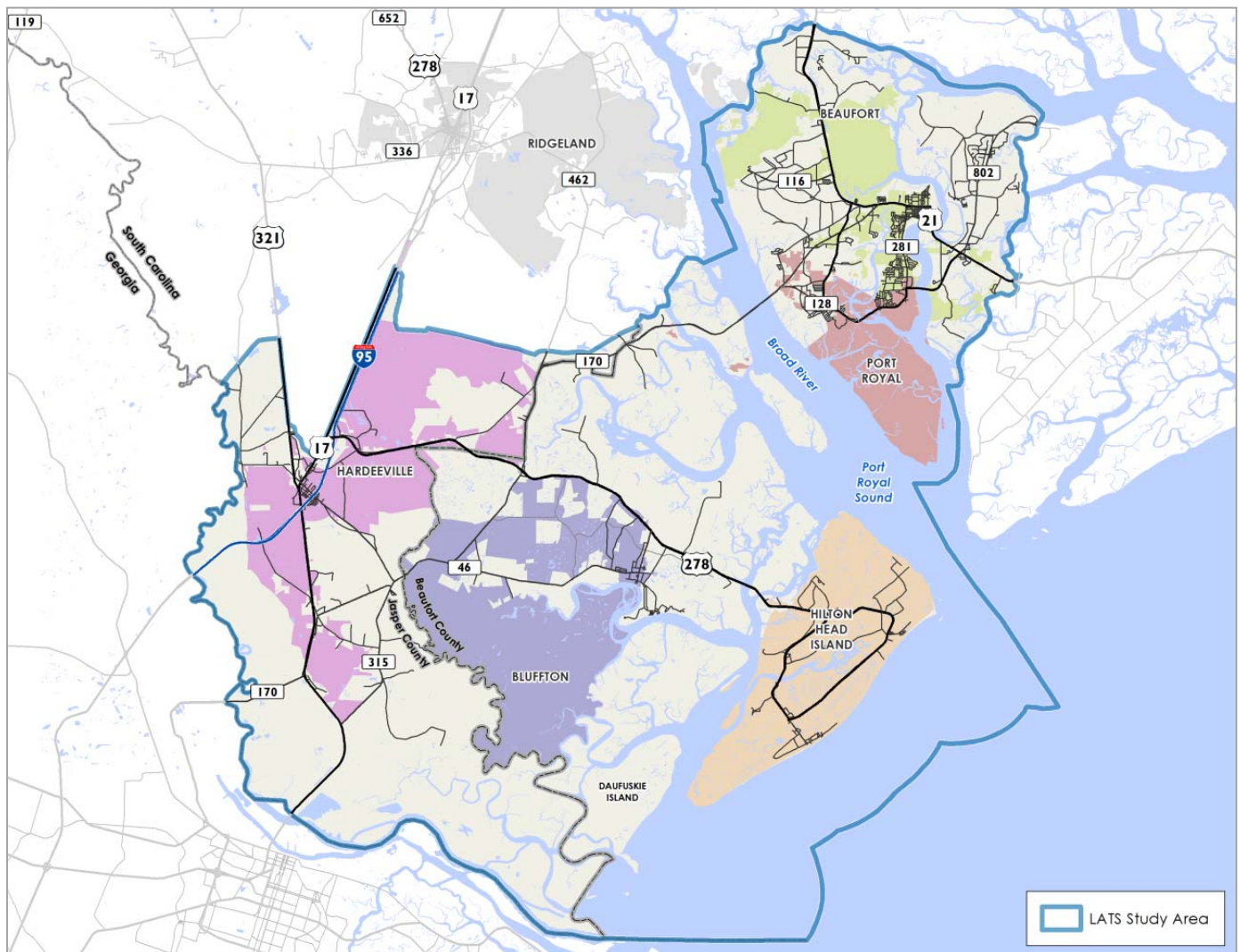
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## List of Acronyms

<b>FHWA</b>	Federal Highway Administration
<b>FTA</b>	Federal Transit Administration
<b>LATS</b>	Lowcountry Area Transportation Study
<b>LRTP</b>	Long Range Transportation Plan
<b>MPO</b>	Metropolitan Planning Organization
<b>MAP-21</b>	Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century
<b>PPP</b>	Public Participation Plan
<b>SAFETEA-LU</b>	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users
<b>SCDOT</b>	South Carolina Department of Transportation
<b>TIP</b>	Transportation Improvement Program
<b>UPWP</b>	Unified Planning Work Program
<b>USDOT</b>	United States Department of Transportation
<b>UZA</b>	Urbanized Area

## Introduction and Background

On March 27, 2012, the US Census published the list of 2010 Urbanized Areas (UZA) and reported the Beaufort/Hilton Head Island area urbanized population as 68,998. Federal regulations require the designation of a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to provide continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning for areas with an urbanized population of 50,000 or more. As a result, the Lowcountry Area Transportation Study (LATS) was established as the MPO responsible for coordinating the transportation planning process for the urbanized areas of Beaufort and Jasper Counties in South Carolina, including the municipalities of Beaufort, Bluffton, Hardeeville, Hilton Head Island, and Port Royal. In general, the MPO area includes land designated as urban by the most recent (2010) US Census and other land expected to be urbanized within the next 20 years.



## **Structure**

To facilitate and encourage interaction among stakeholder groups and the local community, the LATS adopted a committee structure composed of a Policy Committee and Technical Committee. The functions of these two committees are detailed below:

### Policy Committee

- Contains the voting membership
- Has final local approval and authority on all major transportation decision, policies, and programs of LATS

### Technical Committee

- Provides recommendations to the Policy Committee on technical methods, procedures, and standards that are used in the development of transportation plans and programs
- Prioritizes projects in accordance with the criteria established by SCDOT and MAP-21 requirements
- Develops funding scenarios for consideration by the Policy Committee and individual governmental entities

Membership of the Policy Committee and Technical Committee is prescribed by the LATS Policy Committee bylaws. The voting members consist of the following (or their designees):

- Town of Hilton Head Island Mayor
- Town of Bluffton Mayor
- Town of Port Royal Mayor
- City of Beaufort Mayor
- City of Hardeeville Mayor
- Beaufort County Council Chairman
- Jasper County Council Chairman
- Beaufort County Legislative Delegation Member
- Jasper County Legislative Delegation Member
- SCDOT Commissioners representing areas within the Lowcountry Metropolitan Planning Area
- LRTA Board Chairman

## ***Supporting Legislation***

### MAP-21

Adopted federal regulations require public participation as part of the metropolitan transportation planning process. The previous federal legislation (SAFETEA-LU) addressed the challenges the modern transportation system faces, including safety, security, traffic congestion, intermodal connectivity, freight movement, environmental protection, and delays in project delivery. To further guide the planning process, SAFETEA-LU set forth eight planning factors that agencies must consider when developing their plans. These planning factors remained unchanged as part of MAP-21:

1. Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.
2. Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
3. Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
4. Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight.
5. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns.
6. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, people, and freight.
7. Promote efficient system management and operation.
8. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

Additionally, MAP-21 emphasizes four broad focal points for transportation investment:

1. Streamlines Federal Highway transportation programs.

MAP-21 continues to provide the majority of Federal-aid highway funds to the states through core programs. However, the core highway programs have been reduced from seven to five.

The Interstate Maintenance, National Highway System, and Highway Bridge program were streamlined to create a single new program, called The National Highway Performance Program. The program will provide increased flexibility, while guiding state and local investments to maintain and improve the conditions and performance of the National Highway System (NHS). This will eliminate the barriers between existing programs that limit states' flexibility to address the most vital needs for highways and bridges and will hold states accountable for improving outcomes and using tax dollars efficiently.

2. Establishes a performance-based system.

MAP-21 improves statewide and metropolitan planning processes to incorporate a more comprehensive performance-based approach to decision making. Utilizing performance targets will assist states and metropolitan areas in targeting limited resources on projects that will improve the condition and performance of their transportation assets.

3. Creates jobs and supports economic growth.

The LATS MPO will coordinate transportation projects with local governments and agencies to improve the MPO region's global competitiveness. This will be achieved by promoting transportation corridors that improve access to the region.

4. Supports the Department of Transportation's (DOT) aggressive safety agenda.

MAP-21 builds on the successful Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP). MAP-21 substantially increases the amount of funding for this program because of the strong results it has achieved in reducing fatalities. Under HSIP, states must develop and implement a safety plan that identifies highway safety programs and a strategy to address them.

This program also replaces the current Surface Transportation Program, but retains the same structure, goals and flexibility to allow states and metropolitan areas to invest in the projects that fit their unique needs and priorities.

#### Title VI and Environmental Justice

Environmental justice has been a federal requirement since recipients of federal funds were required to certify nondiscrimination through Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. A 1994 Presidential Executive Order required all federal agencies to make environmental justice part of their missions. The law was enacted to avoid the use of federal funds for projects, programs, or other activities that generate disproportionate or discriminatory adverse impacts on minority or low-income populations. The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) promotes environmental justice as an integral part of the long range transportation planning process as well as individual project planning and design.

According to the USDOT, environmental justice requires the understanding and incorporation of the unique needs of distinct socioeconomic groups in order to create transportation projects that fit harmoniously within the framework of their communities without sacrificing safety or mobility. The environmental justice assessment incorporated in the LRTP is based on three fundamental principles derived from guidance issued by the USDOT:

- Avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority and low-income populations.
- Ensure all potentially affected communities' full and fair participation in the transportation decision-making process.
- Prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

Investments made in the TIP must be consistent with federal Title VI requirements. Additionally, the process by which new projects are identified and prioritized for inclusion in the TIP must consider the equitable selection of projects in accordance with federal Title VI requirements.

### Joint Federal Highway Administration/ Federal Transit Administration Planning Rule

The Joint Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)/ Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Planning Rule (23 CFR part 450, 49 CFR part 613) also requires MPOs to conduct locally-developed public participation. This legislation requires “a proactive public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and early and continuing involvement of the public in developing plans and TIPs (Transportation Improvement Programs),” including the Long Range Transportation Plan [23 CFR part 450.316(b)(1)].

## Planning Efforts

### ***Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)***

The Lowcountry Area Transportation Study (LATS) 2015-2019 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) details projects and programs that have obligated federal funding. These projects and programs derive from the 2040 LATS Long Range Transportation Plan. The TIP has been developed by LATS with the cooperation of SCDOT and LRTA. The TIP has been advertised and made available for public comment. While the TIP is usually approved every three years, the document may be amended throughout the year. The TIP may also include surface transportation projects that are being implemented by the state, city, county, or regional transit agency for which federal funding is requested as well as regionally significant projects requiring action by the FHWA or the FTA.

### ***Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)***

The *2040 Lowcountry Area Transportation Study (LATS) Metropolitan Planning Organization’s Long Range Transportation Plan (2040 LATS LRTP)* defines the community’s strategy for creating a regional transportation system that accommodates the current mobility needs of residents and looks to the future to anticipate where new needs may arise. The *2040 LATS LRTP* is a financially constrained plan, meaning it identifies projects and programs that can reasonably be implemented through the plan’s horizon year. In response to federal mandates and the desires of local residents, the LRTP addresses all modes of transit, including automobile, bicycle, pedestrian, transit, air, and rail movements.

The *2040 LATS LRTP* is the largest planning effort required for completion by the Lowcountry Area Transportation Study. By its nature, it is also the most far-reaching. The *2040 LATS LRTP* represents the first major planning effort conducted by the newly formed MPO. The plan fulfills federal requirements and serves as the region’s transportation vision. It seeks to characterize current and future transportation needs, outline the region’s long-range transportation vision, document multi-modal transportation strategies to address needs through the year 2040, and identify long-term opportunities beyond the current ability to fund projects. Federal funding cannot be allocated to transportation projects within the MPO region unless they are included in the financially-constrained plan.

### ***Public Involvement***

Public involvement associated with LATS serves to actively solicit ideas from residents and stakeholders of the study area. Public involvement also seeks to provide meaningful ways for these residents and stakeholders to communicate with those making decisions regarding the allocation of transportation

funds. To better detail the role of public involvement in the preparation of key planning documents, LATS has adopted a Public Participation Plan (PPP). Through the implementation of the PPP, residents and stakeholders have access to information as well as established ways to provide feedback.

### ***Metropolitan and State TIPs***

Just as each MPO is required to develop a TIP, each state is required to compile a Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan (STIP) as a requirement of federal regulations. The STIP includes all federally funded transportation projects from throughout the state. In South Carolina, MPO TIPs are included in the STIP once approved by the relevant metropolitan planning organization (i.e. LATS in this area) and after the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) make their required financial constraint and air quality findings (as necessary). Projects must be in the STIP before funding authorities, such as FTA, FHWA, or the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) can obligate or commit monies to contracts and therefore, before sponsors can actually spend any of these funds.

## **Funding**

LATS projects are funded through federal and state transportation funds. Several sources of funds are involved in projects that appear in the TIP.

### ***Guideshare Funds***

LATS projects are funded through federal and state transportation funds. Guideshare Funds, funds for road improvements, are allocated by SCDOT through the Guideshare Program. The South Carolina Transportation Commission sets aside approximately \$138 million dollars of FHWA and SCDOT funds each year and distributes the money among the state's eleven MPOs and ten Councils of Governments based on population and vehicle miles of travel in each region. The Guideshare sets the annual budget for highway improvements within each MPO or COG, and total project costs in any given year normally cannot exceed the Guideshare apportionment.

Road improvements may include constructing new roads, adding traffic lanes to existing roads, constructing paved shoulders, installing traffic signals, constructing sidewalks or bike lanes, or making safety improvements. Major maintenance improvements may also be included, such as resurfacing a road. However, minor maintenance activities such as patching potholes are not funded through LATS, but are handled directly by SCDOT maintenance units.

As a new MPO, LATS anticipates a FY2015 apportionment of approximately \$2.255 million from the Guideshare program, increasing in FY 2016 to \$4.413 million.

### ***Transportation Alternative Program Projects***

In 2012, Congress passed the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) Highway Authorization Bill. The former Transportation Enhancement Program, created by ISTEA, was rebranded as the Transportation Alternative Program, or TAP, to maintain a level of funding for projects that had



**LATS MPO 2015-2019 Transportation Improvement Program**

Project Description	County	Federal Program	FY 2014 Planned	FY 2015 Planned	FY 2016 Planned	FY 2017 Planned	FY 2018 Planned	FY 2019 Planned	2014-2019 Project Cost	Remaining Cost
<b>Guideshare</b>										
<i>System Upgrade</i>										
Intersection Improvements - US 278 at Windmill Harbor	Beaufort	NHPP	822 C						822	
Intersection Improvements - US 21 at Grays Hill	Beaufort	NHPP	1,200 C						1,200	
Intersection Improvements - SC 802 at S-112 (Holly Hall)/S-72 (Brickyard)	Beaufort	STP	800 R		1,500 C				2,300	
Intersection Improvements - US 21 at S-86 (Shanklin)	Beaufort	NHPP	950 C						950	
Intersection Improvements - US 21 at US 21 Business	Beaufort	NHPP		870 C					870	
US 17 (Georgia State Line to SC 315), Widening	Jasper	NHPP					19,000 C		19,000	
<b>Non-Guideshare</b>										
<i>Bridges</i>										
S-79, Jarvis Creek	Beaufort	STP		400 P 520 R 6,200 C					7,120	
US 17, S.C.L. Railroad	Jasper	NHPP		84 R	2,846 C				2,930	
<i>Earmark</i>										
Beaufort Rail Trail (Green Corridor Project)	Beaufort	Earmark (Discretionary)	1,304 C						1,304	
<i>Public Transit</i>										
Lowcountry Regional Transportation Authority	Beaufort	5307	197 AD 150 PL 313 OP 413 CA		175 AD 100 PL 175 OP 674 CA	200 AD 50 PL 200 OP 314 CA	200 AD 50 PL 200 OP 314 CA	200 AD 50 PL 200 OP 314 CA	4,489	
<i>Pavement/Reconstruction</i>										
Beaufort County Pavement Preservation, SC 170 (S-399 (Pearlstone Dr) to Local (Heffalump Rd))	Beaufort	NHPP/STP	176	176					4,950	
Beaufort County Pavement Resurfacing, US 278 (0.14 mi E of S-141 (Squire Pope Rd) to 0.46 mi E of S-141 (Squire Pope Rd))	Beaufort	NHPP/STP	2,299	2,299						
US 278 (0.46 mi E of S-141 (Squire Pope Rd) to S-482 (Gumtree Rd))	Beaufort	NHPP/STP								
Ramp 5003 (US 278 (Fording Island Rd) to SC 170 (Okatie Hwy))	Beaufort	NHPP/STP								
Ramp 5004 (SC 170 (Okatie Hwy) to US 278 (Fording Island Rd))	Beaufort	NHPP/STP								
Ramp 5006 (US 278 (Fording Island Rd) to SC 170 (Okatie Hwy))	Beaufort	NHPP/STP								
SC 170 (0.09 mi SW of S-761 to 0.22 mi SW of US 21)	Beaufort	NHPP/STP								
S-442 (US 278 (Independence Blvd) to 0.12 mi W of Beaufort County Line)*	Jasper	NHPP/STP	525	525					1,050	
<i>Transportation Alternatives Program</i>										
May River Infrastructure Extension (sidewalk and drainage)	Beaufort	TAP Local			400 491				891	
Allison Road Pedestrian Connector (multi-use path/streetscape)	Beaufort	TAP Local			400 347				747	
<i>Recreational Trails</i>										
Beaufort County Daufuskie Island Park (FY 2014 Recreational Trails program)	Beaufort	TAP Local	99 25						124	

**Assumptions:**

\* = cost determined by factoring a per mile cost of the three facilities shown in the Jasper County STIP

**US 17**

The LATS MPO's portion of the Phase 1 project funding is shown in this TIP.

Lowcountry COG is providing \$35 million towards the construction of Phase 1 during the life of the TIP.

Phase 2 includes the construction of the twin bridge. Between \$8 million and \$15 million is currently being projected towards this bridge in the year 2021 from LATS MPO funding.

**Lowcountry Regional Transportation Authority**

Administration, Planning, and Capital: Funding split is 80% Federal/20% SMTF-Local

Operations: Funding split is 50% Federal/50% SMTF-Local

Funding information provided by LRTA

**Definitions:**

SMTF = State Mass Transit Funds

frequently been left out of highway improvement plans in past years. Three specific activities are permitted for use of TAP funding by SCDOT, as detailed below. All projects must have a clear relationship to transportation, and not merely beautification or recreation. More information is available on the internet at [www.enhancements.org](http://www.enhancements.org).

For the Transportation Alternatives Program, a pedestrian is not only defined as a person traveling by foot but also “any mobility impaired person using a wheelchair.” The definition of a bicycle transportation facility is “a new or improved lane, path, or shoulder for use by bicyclists and a traffic control device, shelter, or parking facility for bicycles.” Bicycle and pedestrian projects must be “principally for transportation, rather than recreation purposes.” It must also demonstrate a logical sense of connectivity.

### ***Additional Funding Sources***

Other projects in this TIP are programmed within the following funding categories:

1. Bridges
2. Earmark
3. FTA Section 5307 Capital
4. FTA Section 5307 Operations
5. Pavement/Reconstruction
6. Recreational Trails

With each program, the proposed projects represent priority regional needs identified through the comprehensive transportation process. The projects are identified in the table following this narrative.