



Florence Area Transportation Study

Metropolitan Planning Organization

2009-2015 Transportation Improvement Program

Purpose

The Florence Area Transportation Study (FLATS) is the designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) responsible for carrying out the transportation planning process for the urban Florence area. The FLATS MPO study area boundary (Figure 1) includes the City of Florence, Town of Quinby and surrounding unincorporated areas of Florence and Darlington counties. The primary responsibilities of any MPO are to 1) develop a Long-Range Transportation Plan, which is, at a minimum, a 25- year transportation vision for the planning area; 2) develop a financially constrained Transportation Improvement Program, which is the agreed upon list of specific projects for which federal funds are anticipated; and 3) develop a Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), which identifies in a single document the annual transportation planning activities that are to be undertaken in support of goals, objectives and actions established in the Long Range Transportation Plan.

As the MPO, FLATS provides the avenue for continuous and cooperative decision making in developing regional transportation plans and programs. The MPO is comprised of elected and appointed officials representing local, state and federal governments or agencies having interest or responsibility in comprehensive transportation planning.

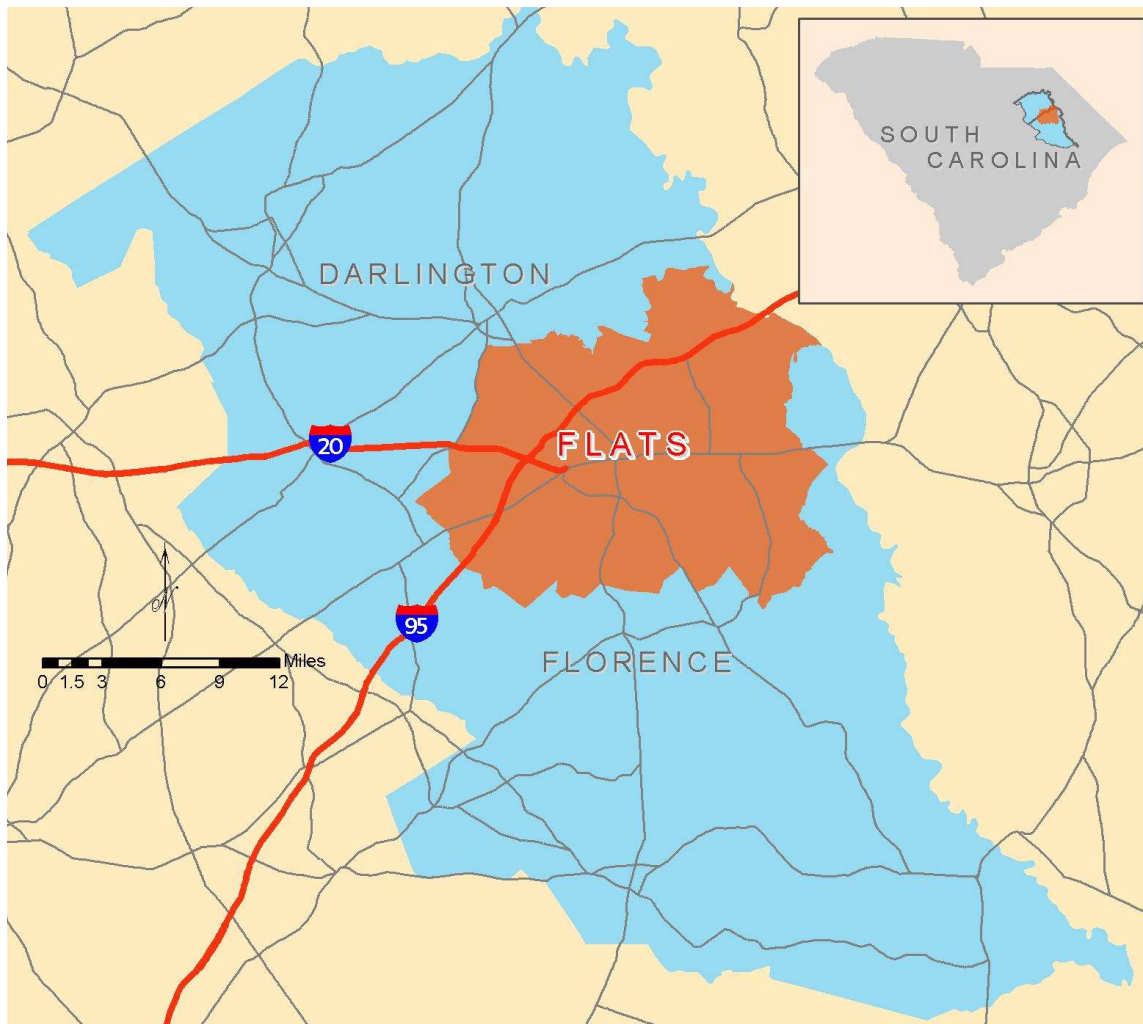
Structure

To facilitate and encourage interaction among stakeholder groups and the local community, the FLATS adopted a committee structure. The Policy Committee is the official decision making body that establishes policies for the overall conduct of the FLATS, adopts plans and programs and approves study recommendations.

The Study Team, which is established by the Policy Committee, provides a forum for discussion and resolution of relevant issues and monitors technical activities including the development of the UPWP and the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) for recommendation to the Policy Committee. In addition, the Study Team directs and considers for recommendation to the Policy Committee all major studies and planning activities.

Membership of the Policy Committee and Study Team is prescribed by the FLATS by-laws.

Figure 1. FLATS planning boundary.



Long Range Transportation Plan

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) mandates that MPO's have a Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) which includes environmental, social and intermodal considerations. The LRTP must also provide a financially constrained 25-year vision of future transportation improvements.

The FLATS 2030 LRTP was adopted in June 2006 and is on track to be updated at the required five year interval. Although this update is significant, the five year updates are focused on changing conditions and new planning principals. Currently, FLATS is revising its LRTP for 2035 and is scheduled to be presented to the Policy Committee by April 2010. Due to the transition between LRTPs, together with funding dedicated to debt service, Guideshare projects (explained in the next section) are anticipated to be proposed to the TIP next fiscal year. At that time, Guideshare monies will be available to allocate to a project highlighted by the LRTP.

The process for undertaking major transportation studies, identifying short and long term needs and targeting major growth areas in the FLATS area for intensive study will strengthen subsequent programming for the TIP. The entire planning/programming/implementation process is specific and involves input by federal, state and local governments and the public in the early planning stages, and carries through into TIP programming.

Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)

The 2009-2015 TIP for FLATS is a seven year program of transportation capital projects together with a seven year estimate of transit capital and maintenance requirements. While the TIP is usually approved biennially, the document may be amended throughout the year. SAFETEA-LU, as well as the Metropolitan Planning Regulations mandates that a TIP comprise the following:

1. Identify transportation improvement projects recommended for advancement during the program years. The projects required are those located within the study area and receiving Federal Highway Administration (FHA) or Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds;
2. Identify the criteria and process for prioritization for inclusion of projects in the TIP and any changes for past TIPs;
3. Groups improvements of similar urgency and anticipated staging into appropriate staging periods;
4. Include realistic estimates of total costs and revenue for the program period;
5. Include a discussion of how improvements recommended for the Long Range Transportation Plan and congestion model were merged into the plan;
6. List major projects from previous TIPs that were implemented and identified and major delays in planning implementation.

The TIP may also include regional highway projects that are being implemented by the state, city and county for which federal funding is requested.

Five pieces of federal legislation significantly affect this TIP and the planning and programming of transportation projects. These laws include ISTEA, TEA-21, SAFETEA-LU, The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), and potentially the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 (CAA).

The majority of the projects in the TIP are aimed at increasing the efficiency and safety of the existing transportation systems rather than construction of new facilities. This, in part, reflects:

1. Transportation policies to implement low cost alternatives where feasible;
2. The limited funding resources available to meet the costs of new construction and improvements;
3. The increased concerns over congestion, the environment especially air quality;
4. The enhancement of freight movement and economic development;
5. The interest of bicyclists and pedestrians; and

6. The preservation of neighborhoods.

The TIP contains all Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration transportation projects in the Florence metropolitan area, which are expected to utilize federal, state and local funds within the next seven years.

Guideshare Funds

Funds for road improvements are allocated by SCDOT through the Guideshare Program. The S.C. Transportation Commission sets aside approximately \$114 million dollars of FHWA and SCDOT funds each year and distributes the money among the state's ten MPOs and 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 (a fiscally constrained TIP).

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. However, minor maintenance activities such as resurfacing and patching potholes are not funded through FLATS, but are handled directly by SCDOT or City maintenance units.

FLATS apportionment from the Guideshare Program is \$2.294 million annually. Of this amount, an average \$916,000 per year is devoted to debt service. SCDOT developed an innovative financing plan in 1998 to accelerate construction of many projects that were built between 1998 and 2007, and issued bonds to fund the plan. Debt service payments will continue through 2016 to retire the bonds that were issued to fund the accelerated construction program.

Transportation Enhancement Projects

In 1991, Congress passed a landmark transportation bill, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). The Transportation Enhancement Program, created by ISTEA and continued with SAFETEA-LU, has been widely popular in part because it funds projects that had frequently been left out of highway improvement plans. Generally, the SCDOT Commission supports the use of these funds for pedestrian and bicycle facilities, landscaping and scenic beautification of transportation facilities and rail corridor preservation.

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

1. American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)
2. Capital Project Sales Tax (local referendum)
3. FTA Section 5307 Capital
4. FTA Section 5307 Operations
5. FTA Section 5310 Florence County Disabilities and Special Needs Board
6. FTA Section 5316 Job Access and Reverse Commute Program
7. FTA Section 5317 New Freedom

8. Interstate Maintenance (IM)
9. SAFETEA-LU Earmarks

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.

Title VI Compliance

Investment made in the TIP must be consistent with federal Title VI requirements. Title VI prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, income and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. Public outreach to and involvement of individuals in low income and minority communities covered under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and subsequent Civil Right Restoration Act, and series of federal statutes enacted pertaining to environmental justice, are critical to regional planning and programming decisions. The fundamental principles of environmental justice include:

1. Avoiding , minimizing or mitigating disproportionately high and adverse health or environmental effects on minority and low-income populations;
2. Ensuring full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process; and
3. Preventing the denial, reduction or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority populations and low-income communities.

The decision process by which new projects are selected for inclusion in the TIP must consider equitable solicitation and selection of project candidates in accordance with federal Title VI requirements.

Financial Constraint

The TIP must be financially constrained, meaning that the amount of funding programmed must not exceed the amount of funding estimated to be available. In developing the 2009-2015 TIP, FLATS has taken into consideration the transportation funding revenues anticipated during the seven years of the TIP (federal FY 2008-2009 through federal FY 2014-2015), and has found the 2009-2015 TIP to be financially constrained.

Should an action occur in the future that significantly affects the funding of programmed projects in the TIP, FLATS along with its partners and the project sponsors would review the impact to the TIP. Appropriate action, such as potential amendments to the TIP, to address the funding of affected projects would be taken at that time.

TIP Period

The number of years of programming included in the TIP varies by funding source. All seven years of programming in the 2009-2015 TIP, fiscal years (FYs) 2008-2009 through 2014-2015, will be officially adopted by the state as part of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan. In the case of some projects, carryover funding from prior TIPs is included and noted as “FY 2009.” In addition, estimated funding for projects in future years is included for information under the heading “Remaining Cost (2016+).”

Public Participation Process

Engaging the public often and early in the planning process is critical to the success of any transportation plan or program in addition to being required by various federal and state laws. Such legislation reinforces the necessity of public involvement, calling on MPOs such as FLATS to provide citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agencies, private providers of transportation and other stakeholders with a reasonable opportunity to participate and comment on plans and programs.

How the TIP relates to Federal and State Transportation Programs

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. FLATS in the Florence 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.

Conclusion

The proactive cooperation of the FLATS committee members, membership governments and staff will continue to contribute to better transportation infrastructure and mobility in the Florence area. With the completion of the projects contained in the TIP and those projects yet to come, the region can look forward to improved connectivity between modes, improved air quality and mobility as well as improved infrastructure and safety.

*** FLATS FINANCIAL STATEMENT ***

(ALL VALUES IN THOUSANDS)													2009-2015 TIP	
													Policy Committee Approved 2/19/2010	
PIN #	PRIORITY	GUIDESHARE PROJECTS	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	TIP COST (2010-2015)	REMAINING COST (2016+)	FUNDING		
		OPERATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS												
		DEBT SERVICE *	1,003	922	918	915	915	914	913	\$5,496	8,554			
		GUIDESHARE SUBTOTALS	\$1,003	\$922	\$918	\$915	\$915	\$914	\$913	\$5,496	\$8,554			
		GUIDESHARE ALLOCATION	2,294	2,294	2,294	2,294	2,294	2,294	2,294	\$13,764				
		CARRYOVER AVAILABLE	(1,389)	(98)	1,274	2,650	4,029	5,408	6,788	\$8,169				
		BOND PROCEEDS												
		GUIDESHARE SUBTOTALS	(1,003)	(922)	(918)	(915)	(915)	(914)	(913)	(\$5,496)	(\$8,554)			
		BALANCE	(98)	1,274	2,650	4,029	5,408	6,788	8,169					
ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS														
		FLATS ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM	117	117						\$117				
		IRBY STREET GATEWAY	117											
		ENHANCEMENT SUBTOTALS	0	\$117						\$117				
PROJECTS EXEMPT FROM GUIDESHARE														
AU-2		I-95 @SC 327 EXIT 170		10,350 C						\$10,350		ARRA		
II-9		INTERCHANGE RECONSTRUCTION		1,150 C						\$1,150		IM		
				459 C						\$459		EARMARK-SAFETEA-LI		
				3,318 C						\$3,318		EARMARK-SAFETEA-LI		
				310 C						\$310		EARMARK-APP.		
IM-60		INTERSTATE REHAB	1800									ARRA		
		I-95 (MM 156.0 to MM 159.9, Northbound)	200									IM		
			\$2,000							\$15,587				

CAPITAL PROJECT SALES TAX

SC 577 (Pine Needles Road) (WIDENING)		6,534 R	5,808 R 50,177 C	2,904 R 38,757 C	18,241 C				\$122,421	
US 378 (E. Myrtle Beach Highway) (WIDENING)		5,566 R	23,705 C						\$29,271	
US 76 (W. Palmetto Street) (WIDENING)			6,776 R		24,743 C				\$31,519	
S-26 (TV Road) / S-343 (N. Inby Street) (WIDENING)		9,716 R		29,588 C					\$39,304	
US 51 (Pamplico Highway) (WIDENING)										
CAPITAL PROJECT SALES TAX SUBTOTALS		\$21,816	\$86,466	\$71,249	\$42,984				\$222,515	

ARRA FUNDING

RESURFACING 16.81 miles PORTA BUS AND BUS FACILITIES		3,327	1,100						\$3,327	
REPAINT/RENOVATE TROLLEY & BUSES MAINT. FACILITY - ENG. DESIGN MAINT FACILITY - REHAB RENOVATION PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE		178 115 553 110							\$2,056	
ARRA FUNDING TOTAL		\$4,283	\$1,100						\$5,383	

FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION

PEE DEE REGIONAL TRANS AUTHORITY	1,047 CA 173 OP 140 CA 76 CA	891 CA 250 OP 164 CA 116 CA	895 CA 255 OP	900 CA 260 OP	905 CA 285 OP	910 CA 270 OP	915 CA 275 OP		\$5,416 \$1,575	5307 (Capital & PM) 5307 (Operations) 5316 (JARC) 5317 (New Freedom)
FLORENCE CO DSN BOARD (PS)	30 CA	35 CA							\$35	5310
FTA SUBTOTALS	\$1,466	\$1,456	\$1,150	\$1,160	\$1,170	\$1,180	\$1,190		\$7,026	
GRAND TOTAL	\$4,470	\$28,477	\$89,634	\$73,324	\$45,069	\$2,094	\$2,103		\$256,007	\$8,554

KEY: P - PRELIMINARY ENGINEERING, R - RIGHT OF WAY, C - CONSTRUCTION, CA - CAPITAL PURCHASE, OP - OPERATING, PS - PURCHASE OF SERVICE CONTRACT, IM - INTERSTATE MAINTENANCE