

**MINUTES
 BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
 UPPER SAVANNAH COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
 DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
 430 HELIX ROAD
 GREENWOOD, SOUTH CAROLINA
 AUGUST 28, 2023**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Diane Anderson, Jackie Brown, John Calhoun, Jim Coleman, Frank Daniel, Ken Durham, Qwen Etheredge, Charles Goodwin, Otis Grier Jr., Charlie Henry, Tiffani Ireland, Charles Jennings, Theo Lane, Wes McAllister, Miliken Matthews, Marian Miller, Matthew Miller, Sen. Floyd Nicholson, Willie Norman, Ernie Segars, Brandon Smith, Albert Talbert, Faye Thomas and David Tribble.

MEMBERS ABSENT: John Carter, Sen. Shane Massey, David Sawyer, Roy Smith Jr., Don Smoak, and Sen. Danny Verdin.

STAFF PRESENT: Patricia Hartung, Sam Leaman, Sandra Moore, Rick Green, Melissa Phillips, Willie Matthews, David Hays

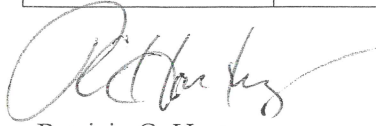
GUEST PRESENT: Pamela Christopher, Vice Chairman of the SCDOT Commission and Commissioner of the 3rd Congressional District; Joseph Cheung, PE, Safety Engineer, Federal Highway Administration; Scott Himes, PhD, PE, Highway Safety Engineer, VHB; Riana Tanzen, Highway Safety Analyst, VHB; Tyke Redfearn, Clint Scoville and Kevin McLaughlin, SCDOT; Scott Neely, Dominion Energy; Myranda Butler, Saluda Town Council; Brandie Greer, Anderson Area Chamber of Commerce

<p>Call to Order</p>	<p>The meeting was held in person with the option to attend via conference call. Jim Coleman gave the invocation and Chairman Albert Talbert called the meeting to order.</p> <p>The June 26, 2023, minutes were approved unanimously.</p>
<p>Guest Presentation: S.C. Department of Transportation Update</p>	<p>Pamela Christopher, Vice Chair of the SCDOT Commission and Commissioner of the 3rd Congressional District, updated the Board on the State of South Carolina’s 10-Year Strategic Plan on rural road safety, paving, bridges, and interstate projects.</p> <p>She said South Carolina has the fourth largest system of roads in the nation with more than 41,000 miles and is the third fastest growing state. The 2017 Roads Bill was passed to provide an increased and sustainable revenue stream from gasoline taxes to improve the highway system. Christopher praised SCDOT Commissioner Christy Hall for her leadership and also the General Assembly for providing additional funding that wasn’t included in the Roads Bill.</p> <p>Christopher said \$250 million from the gas tax has funded 946 miles of rural road safety improvements since 2017, while \$2.5 billion from the gas tax has funded more than 7,300 miles of paving. She said 312 bridges have been completed and another 75 are in the construction phase.</p> <p>Christopher also updated the Board on traffic fatality trends, reporting 1,094 total statewide in 2022 with 611 in rural areas. There were 505 through July 4, 2023, she said.</p>

	<p>Christopher said interstate widening projects are ongoing with I-26 scheduled for completion in 2026, I-95 in 2028, and I-85 in 2035. Included in the projects are “Malfunction Junction” (I-26 and I-20 interchange in Columbia) improvements that are scheduled for completion around 2027, she said.</p> <p>There was much discussion about funding for rural highway improvements. District 3 Administrator Kevin McLaughlin said SCDOT has assisted with funding some rural road safety projects.</p>
<p>Upper Savannah Regional Roadway Departure Safety Implementation Plan</p>	<p>Joseph Cheung, PE, Safety Engineer with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Scott Himes, PhD, PE, Highway Safety Engineer with VHB Consulting gave presentation on the Upper Savannah Regional Roadway Departure Safety Implementation Plan which is in the development stage. USCOG has been working with the FHWA group studying the cause of roadway departure crashes in the Upper Savannah region. A full report is expected in early fall.</p> <p>Cheung said the Plan will focus on implementing safety measures that will decrease chances of roadway departures, severe injuries and fatalities.</p> <p>Himes told the Board that the Plan will take a systemic approach to safety. He said the roadway departure crashes in the Region are random and sporadic in location but consistent in number of accidents per year.</p> <p>Himes said USCOG Government Services Director Rick Green reached out to FHWA to address rural road safety in the Region. He said it was a natural fit for FHWA to develop a Roadway Departure Safety Implementation Plan specific to the Upper Savannah Region to identify which roads might be priority and use it as a model for the State’s other COGs.</p> <p>Himes said there are approximately 1,000 fatalities statewide per year with roadway departures accounting for 55 percent of those deaths. He said the Upper Savannah Region averages around 57 fatalities annually with approximately 70 percent related to roadway departures.</p> <p>He said SCDOT established a Rural Road Safety Program in 2017 that includes roads in the Upper Savannah Region. He said the Roadway Departure Safety Implementation Plan will help complement the SCDOT Program.</p> <p>Himes said in developing the implementation plan, the group is using five years of crash data from the Region’s six counties to identify the most common factors listed in law enforcement reports, whether they are rollover accidents, tree collisions, night-time wrecks, wet pavement, etc. He said they are focusing on crashes that result in death or serious injuries.</p> <p>He said the systemic approach involves identifying which roads are highest risks for fatal or serious injuries whether they have commonly occurred there or not. The plan will then recommend countermeasures to be deployed at those locations to minimize risks.</p> <p>The first goal of the implementation plan is to keep vehicles on the road, reduce the</p>

	<p>potential for crashes, and minimize the severity of these wrecks, Himes said. Countermeasures can include pavement friction treatments, rumble strips, clear zones, safety edges, guardrails, etc.</p> <p>Himes said he and his colleagues would have a workshop Tuesday, Aug. 29, at the Greenwood Genetic Center to provide more details about the plan and gather feedback. USCOG transportation stakeholders including Upper Savannah Board members, and local and state SCDOT engineers and planners were invited.</p> <p>The role of distracted driving in fatal and serious accidents was discussed, but Himes said that can be difficult for law enforcement officers to determine.</p>
<p>SC Brownfields Environmental Site Testing (SC BEST) Program – Brownfields Grant Update</p>	<p>Government Services Director Rick Green discussed the SCDHEC \$1 million Brownfields Environmental Site Testing (BEST) Program that was introduced earlier this year. Catawba COG is administering the program, allocating funding to each COG region in the State based on population. The Upper Savannah region is receiving approximately \$73,446. The funding allows for environmental testing of brownfields sites that could be used for future development. The brownfields site with contamination or perceived contamination can be owned by a city, town or county, or by a private owner who agrees to an assessment. Green said the first phase of environmental testing costs around \$3,500.</p> <p>Upper Savannah staff reviews all potential BEST program projects and then the projects must be approved by the Board.</p> <p>Three BEST projects had already been submitted and approved - the old McCormick County Administration Building and two old mill sites in the City of Clinton – Lydia Mills and Clinton Mills. Four more have since been approved – three in Edgefield County and one in Abbeville County.</p> <p>Green said the Town of Edgefield is pursuing a BEST project for the old Plantation House hotel on the square. A developer is interested in acquiring the property for a hotel and other uses. The project was approved upon motion by Jim Coleman, seconded by Floyd Nicholson.</p>
<p>EDA Revolving Loan Fund – Revised Plan</p>	<p>Assistant Director Sam Leaman asked the Board to consider updates to the Economic Development Administration’s (EDA) Revolving Loan Fund Plan (RLF Plan). EDA requires the RLF Plan be updated every five years. The plan covers a variety of topics including the RLF’s business development objectives, lending strategies, operational procedures such as underwriting, approval process, portfolio management, environmental compliance, etc. The plan was provided to Board members prior to the meeting. The Board approved unanimously.</p>
<p>Director’s Report</p>	<p>Hartung announced that long-time Board member John Carter will resign due to health reasons.</p> <p>She recognized Upper Savannah Office Manager Sandra Moore for 30 years of service to the COG.</p> <p>Hartung updated the Board on the SCCOGS Annual Training Conference to be held</p>

	Nov. 19-21 at Kingston Plantation in Myrtle Beach. She asked Board members to turn in their registration forms. Upper Savannah is in charge of this meeting, which will be themed Re-imagining Communities. USCOG Board member Willie Norman will preside over the conference. Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy Christopher Coes will be the keynote speaker, Hartung said.
Adjourn	Being no other business, the meeting was adjourned.



Patricia C. Hartung
Executive Director