

MATS
Macon Area Transportation Study
Participation Plan

Prepared by
Macon Bibb County Planning & Zoning Commission
in Cooperation with the
Federal Highway Administration
and the
Georgia Department of Transportation

May 2015

Amended: November 4, 2020

Administrative Modification: October 13, 2021

The contents of this report reflect the views of the person or persons preparing the document and those individuals are responsible for the facts and the accuracy of the data presented herein. The contents of this report do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of Transportation State of Georgia, The Federal Highway Administration, or The Federal Transit Administration. This report does not constitute a standard, specification, or regulation.

Acronym Definitions

APA	American Planning Association
CAC	Citizen's Advisory Committee
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
GDOT	Georgia Department of Transportation
IAC	Interagency Coordinating Committee
LRTP	Long Range Transportation Plan
MAP-21	Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21 st Century Act
MATS	Macon Area Transportation Study
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
STIP	Statewide Transportation Improvement Program
TCC	Technical Coordinating Committee
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
TRB	Transportation Research Board
UPWP	Unified Planning Work Program
USEPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
USDOT	U.S. Department of Transportation

**A RESOLUTION OF THE MACON AREA TRANSPORTATION
STUDY POLICY COMMITTEE ADOPTING THE PARTICIPATION PLAN**

WHEREAS, it is the objective of the Macon Area Transportation Study, hereinafter referred to as MATS, to maintain a comprehensive transportation planning process which results in plans and programs consistent with comprehensively planned development of the urbanized area;

WHEREAS, the MATS Policy Committee desires to involve the community and stakeholders in the development of the Long Range Transportation Plan; and

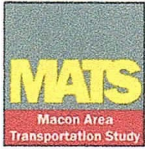
WHEREAS, under the MAP-21 guidelines the current public involvement program needs to be updated to include additional participation measures and become a valid participation plan;

WHEREAS, MATS has developed a Participation Plan that has been subject to the required review period by the public in the MATS process and recommended for adoption by the Technical Coordinating Committee;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the MATS Policy Committee hereby approves the adoption of the Participation Plan.

Adopted by the MATS Policy Committee on the 13th day of May 2015.

By: 
MATS Policy Chairman



Macon Area Transportation Study

A RESOLUTION OF THE MACON AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY POLICY COMMITTEE APPROVING AMENDMENTS TO THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

WHEREAS, it is the objective of the Macon Area Transportation Study (MATS) to maintain a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive transportation planning process which results in plans and programs consistent with comprehensively planned development of the urbanized area; and

WHEREAS, under the requirements set forth in Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Title 23, Section 450.316, MATS “...shall develop and use a documented participation plan that defines a process for providing... reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.”; and

WHEREAS, as part of the findings from the most recent quadrennial MPO Certification Process, completed by Georgia Dept. of Transportation in December 2019, MATS was “encouraged to clarify language in the [Public Participation Plan] related to the determination of ‘significant’ public comments to be brought before the Policy Committee, particularly in the criteria used to make the determination of a ‘significant’ comment”; and,

WHEREAS, as a result of guidance provided to Georgia Metropolitan Planning Organizations from Federal Highway Administration on March 16, 2019 regarding the requirements for conduct of remote meetings stemming from the Covid-19 pandemic, and subsequent declarations and renewals of State of Emergency from the Governor’s Office of the State of Georgia, MATS has deemed it prudent to develop and incorporate formal protocols for the conduct of public meetings using remote meeting technologies;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the MATS Policy Committee, the forum for cooperative transportation decision-making in the Macon urban area, does hereby approve the following amendments to the MATS Public Participation Plan;

Determination of Significant Public Comment (MATS Program Structure & Requirements—Amendment Processes—Participation Plan; pg. 17 -18)

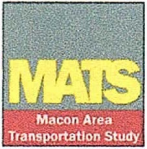
1. Only those comments deemed significant must be reported out by MATS staff to the MATS Committees. “Significant” comments are described as follows:

Materially Significant Comments Include:

- Comments addressing the need for the project or policy change under consideration;
- Comments addressing the scope and/or methods employed in the project or policy under consideration;
- Comments identifying possible secondary effects from a project or policy change under consideration;
- Comments about the adherence to proper public participation procedures, as required by State and Federal regulations and/or previously adopted MATS MPO policies

Materially Significant Comments Do Not Include

- Comments not clearly related to the specific project or policy under consideration;
- Comments or actions taken for the sole purpose of delaying or disrupting the normal business of the MATS Committees;
- Ad hominem personal attacks on any elected official, public agency staff, or members of the general public;
- Threats of physical force or personal consequences, either direct, or perceived threats reasonably implied or inferred from the context in which the comment is given and/or action is taken.



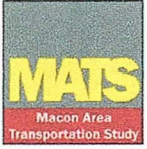
Macon Area Transportation Study

Materially Significant Comments Include (Continued):

- Comments indicating the exclusion from the Public Participation Process, either deliberately or inadvertent, of identified population groups covered under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964;
 - Any other comments deemed by MATS MPO staff to contribute a useful point of discussion on a project or policy under consideration, and which does not otherwise violate the guidelines for which a comment might be excluded (see next column)
-
2. For the purposes of reporting significant public comment to the MATS Committees, multiple comments that effectively state the same concern or underlying argument may be consolidated into a single statement, with indication of the frequency of the comment
 3. Comments that are not deemed significant do not need to be reported to the MATS Committees, However, comments not deemed significant may (at the discretion of the MATS Executive Director) may be forwarded to other relevant partner agencies or departments for additional clarification on the question or comment raised.
 4. In the event of a threat, the MATS Executive Director may refer a comment (and any information identifying the originator of the comment) to relevant law enforcement organizations.

Remote Meeting Technology Protocols (Public Participation Techniques—Public Meetings; pg. 9 - 10)

1. To the extent possible, meetings may be simultaneously broadcast through the MATS MPO website (www.maconmpo.com) and other social media outlets.
2. Electronic archives of MATS meetings are a complement to, not a replacement of, the written minutes collected at the MATS meetings. Meeting minutes of the various MATS Committees shall continue to be kept in written format, submitted for approval by the respective committees described above, and approved minutes archived in the written MATS records.
3. Where meeting recording archives are not available, the approved written minutes, along with a copy of the corresponding meeting agenda and attendance sheet, shall stand as the sole official record of any MATS committee or sub-committee meeting.
4. Normal rules for quorum and conducting meetings still apply, including the ability for the public to observe the meetings in real time, and provide spoken and public comment.



Macon Area Transportation Study

5. For the purposes of determining quorum, a committee member shall be considered present if they are either physically present at the meeting venue, or are able to participate via simultaneous two way communication. MATS staff shall differentiate those committee members participating via remote communication, and those attending in person.

Adopted by the MATS Policy Committee on the 4th day of November 2020.

By: Robert A. B. Leichert
MATS Policy Chairman

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
2. Background... ..	3
3. Public Participation Techniques... ..	8
4. Performance Measures... ..	11
5. MATS Program Structure & Requirements.....	12
6. Regulations Governing the Participation Process.....	18

Introduction

The purpose of the Participation Plan is to provide a forum for input from all segments of the community so that all concerns can be known to the Macon Area Transportation Study (MATs) Policy Committee before making formal determinations and decisions. The public involvement process for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is used to satisfy the Georgia Department of Transportation public participation process for the Program of Projects (POP).

The requirements for the Participation Plan were established by the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21). This act set regulations for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) relating to public participation in the transportation planning process.¹ The contents of the participation plan should be developed in conjunction with all interested parties who have reasonable opportunities for comment. The Participation Plan defines the process for providing a broad cross section of input into the transportation planning process for the MATs. This includes citizens from all segments of the public including, but not limited to, users of pedestrian and bicycle facilities, representatives of the disabled, the poor, and minority communities. This also includes public agencies, providers of public transportation, providers of non-emergency transportation services, providers of freight transportation services, entities responsible for safety and security operations including fire and police, and other interested parties.

One of the goals of the Participation Plan is that input into the transportation planning process should be accessible and reasonable to those willing to participate. Furthermore, the public should be involved early in the participation and decision making process. Participants should be provided with the information they need to participate in a productive and beneficial manner. Measures should be developed to provide information to those groups who are traditionally underserved such as low income and minority groups. The input and the concerns of the public should be considered and included in the final outcome. Based on these goals, the objectives for the Participation Plan have been developed as shown below.

Objectives of the Participation Plan

1. Provide adequate public notice of public participation activities and adequate time for public review and comment at key decision points in the transportation planning process. This will include reviewing and commenting on the following:
 - a. Long Range Transportation Plan
 - b. Transportation Improvement Program
 - c. Unified Planning Work Program
 - d. Participation Involvement Plan
 - e. Other reports that may be required to conduct the business of the Macon Area Transportation Study

¹For a concise definition and description of what is an MPO, please refer to; "The Transportation Planning Process-Key Issues: A Briefing Book for Transportation Decisionmakers, Officials and Staff", U.S. Federal Highway Administration, 2007. Document control number: FHWA-HEP-07-039. Also found online at: http://www.planning.dot.gov/documents/briefingbook/bbook_07.pdf

2. Provide timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and projects.
 - a. Information placed on the MATS Website
 - b. Information accessible in readily available formats
3. Hold Citizens Advisory Committee and other MATS public hearings at convenient and accessible locations and times.
4. Seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services. This could be accomplished by placing information in minority newspapers and posting notices on public transit buses. Public meetings could also be held in locations that are readily accessible. The Participation Plan will comply with all Title VI & Environmental Justice requirements to ensure that services are available to all people regardless of race, gender, age, disability, national origin or income.
5. Provide response to public comments received during the development of the Long Range Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, and Participation Plan.
6. Provide additional opportunity for public comment, if the final Long Range Transportation Plan or Transportation Improvement Program differs significantly from the version made initially available for public comment.
7. Coordinate the MATS participation process with the statewide transportation planning participation involvement process.
8. Develop performance measures for the Participation Plan.
9. Periodically review the effectiveness of the Participation Plan.
10. Make modification to Participation Plan to improve the process.

Background

MATS

The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) that was signed into law in 2012 established the guidelines for conducting a comprehensive transportation planning process. These regulations specify that certain planning factors be addressed in planning projects and strategies. The Macon Area Transportation Study (MATS) meets the federal requirements for transportation planning to receive federal transportation funding, required for all urbanized areas (as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau) with population over 50,000. The MATS urbanized area includes all of Bibb County, the southern portion of Jones County, and a portion of Monroe County. A map of the MATS area is included on the following page

MATS Technical Staff

The MPO technical staff is the Macon-Bibb County Planning & Zoning Commission, working at the direction of the MATS Policy Committee. The Executive Director of the Macon-Bibb County Planning & Zoning Commission is the MATS Technical Director, supervising the work of the MATS technical staff based on the direction given by the MATS Policy Committee.

Required Reports

Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) – A required forecast covering a time period of no less than 20 years, addressing topics including population, housing, employment and regional land use. A wide range of social, environmental, energy and economic factors such as air quality are considered for developing a list of transportation projects that can best meet regional goals. These transportation projects are placed on a project list that is part of the Long Range Transportation Plan. Under the current federal requirements, MATS must update and adopt this Long Range Transportation Plan every four years. In the development of the LRTP, the Macon MPO will consult with other federal, state and local government agencies as well as the general public.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) – A four year list of specific transportation projects developed by the MPO in cooperation with the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). This list of transportation projects comes directly from the LRTP. The transportation projects in the TIP must be “fiscally constrained,” (i.e., demonstrate sufficient federal, state, local and/or private funds to implement the proposed improvements, as well as operate and maintain the entire system).

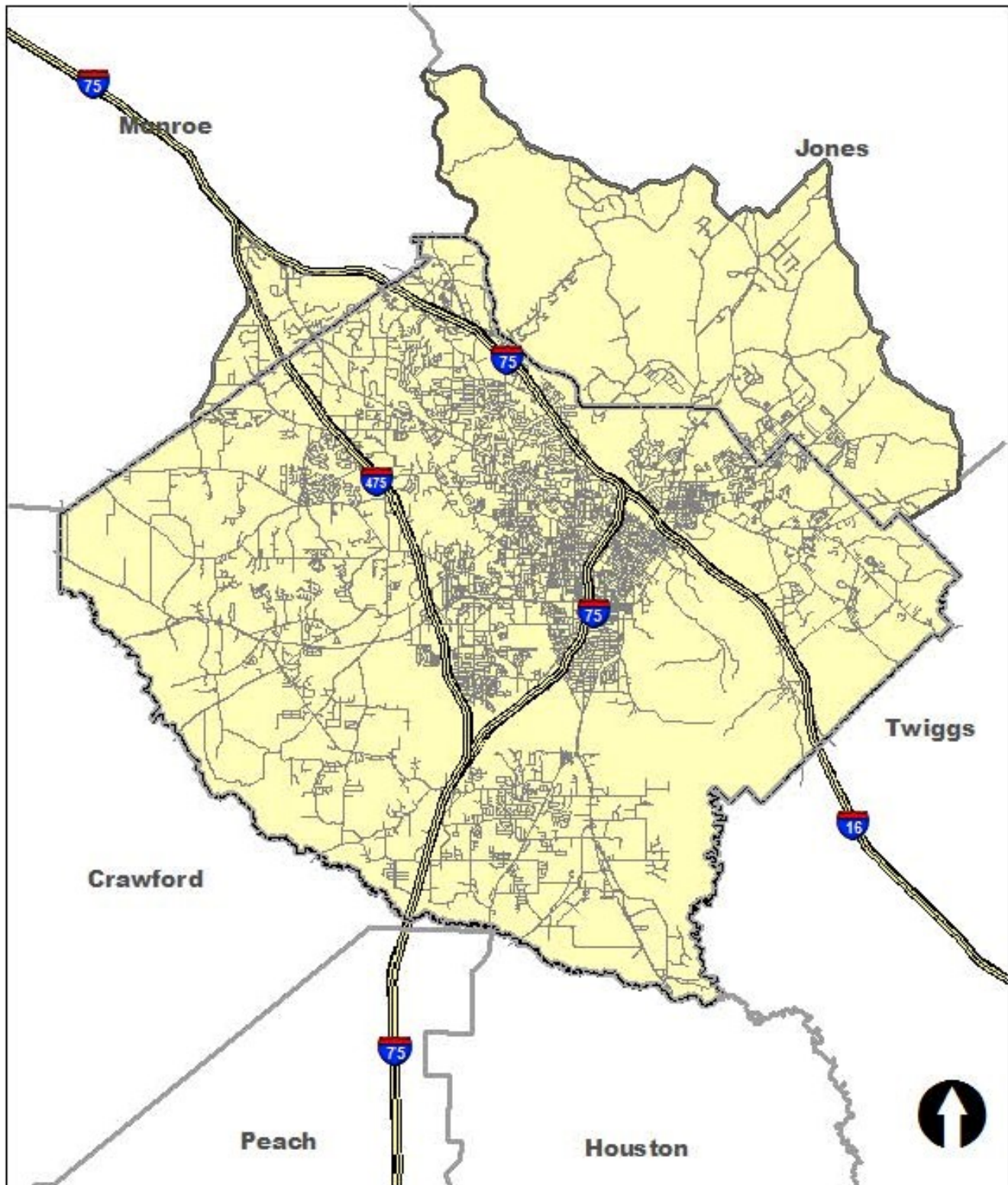
Elements of a TIP can include preliminary engineering, right-of-way acquisition, utility relocation, or construction. In the development of the TIP, the Macon MPO will consult with other federal, state and local government agencies as well as the general public.

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) – An annual report prepared by the MPO staff and adopted by the MATS Policy Committee identifying all transportation planning activities anticipated for the next fiscal year. This includes a schedule for the completion of tasks and activities.

Participation Plan - The formalized process for soliciting, and providing, a broad cross section of public input into the transportation planning processes undertaken by MATS. This

includes the Title VI Documentation Report required for Federal Transit Administration Transit Planning Funds, and a Limited English Proficiency Plan to address language barriers.

Macon Area Transportation Study MPO Region



MATS Committees

MATS consists of three committees which meet quarterly at regularly scheduled meetings and at special called meetings. The three committees are the Policy, Technical and Citizens Advisory which are discussed in further detail below.

Policy Committee

The Policy Committee (PC), which is the final authority for MATS, has regular meetings at least once a quarter, held on the first Wednesday of a month in which the meeting is scheduled, at 9:30 a.m. The purpose of the Policy Committee is to carry out a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive multimodal transportation planning process that includes the development of the LRTP and TIP. The membership of the Policy Committee is listed below.

Policy Committee – Voting Members:

- Mayor of Macon-Bibb County
- 3 Macon-Bibb County Commissioners
- Chairman of Jones County Commission
- Chairman of Monroe County Commission
- Chairman of the Macon-Bibb County Transit Authority
- Chairman of the Middle Georgia Regional Commission
- Chairman of the Macon-Bibb County Planning & Zoning Commission
- Chairman of the Macon-Bibb County Water Authority
- Director of Planning, Georgia Department of Transportation
- Chairman of the Citizens Advisory Committee
- Chairman, Macon-Bibb Co. Industrial Authority

Policy Committee - Nonvoting Members:

- 8th District Representative, Georgia State Transportation Board
- 2nd District Representative, Georgia State Transportation Board
- Executive Director, Macon-Bibb Co. Planning & Zoning Commission
- Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration
- Chairman, Macon-Bibb Co. Urban Development Authority
- County Manager, Macon-Bibb County
- Macon-Bibb Co. Engineer
- Executive Director, Middle GA Regional Commission
- Local State Representative, State of Georgia

Technical Coordinating Committee

The Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) has regular meetings each quarter at 10 a.m., on the third Wednesday of a month in which the meeting is scheduled. The TCC is responsible for collecting information, performing technical reviews, formulating recommendations and other matters as directed by the Policy Committee. The membership of the Technical Committee is listed below.

Technical Coordinating Committee – Voting Members:

- Macon-Bibb Traffic Engineer
- Macon-Bibb County Sheriff's Department
- Macon-Bibb County Engineer
- Macon-Bibb County Attorney
- Manager of Middle Georgia Regional Airport
- Macon-Bibb County Director of Facilities Management
- Macon-Bibb County Director of Economic & Community Development
- Jones County Zoning Enforcement Officer
- Monroe County Zoning Enforcement Officer
- Project (Executive) Director of the Macon-Bibb County Planning & Zoning Commission
- Planning Director of the Macon-Bibb County Planning & Zoning Commission
- Transportation Planner of the Macon-Bibb County Planning & Zoning Commission
- Transportation Planner –Georgia DOT Planning Office
- Transportation Planner – Georgia DOT Intermodal Office
- Pre-Construction Engineer – Georgia DOT – Thomaston District Office
- Planning Director of the Middle Georgia Regional Commission
- Executive Director of the Middle Georgia Regional Commission
- Director of the Macon-Bibb County Water Authority
- Executive Director of the Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority
- Director of the Macon Transit Authority
- Executive Director of the Macon-Bibb County Urban Development Authority
- Representative, Transportation Committee, Chamber of Commerce
- Executive Director of the Macon-Bibb County Business Development Department
- Chief of the Macon-Bibb County Fire Department

Technical Coordinating Committee – Nonvoting members

- Intermodal Planning Engineer – Federal Highway Administration
- Area Engineer – Georgia DOT
- Chairman, Citizens Advisory Committee
- Urban Designer, Georgia D.O.T.
- Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration

Citizens Advisory Committee

The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) has regularly scheduled meetings each quarter at 6:00 p.m on the second Wednesday of the month. The purpose of the CAC is to provide a forum for identifying and discussing broad based citizen input regarding local transportation matters and the transportation planning programs of the MPO. The members of the CAC are below. (Also see MATS Bylaws).

Citizens Advisory Committee – Voting Members:

- One Citizen from each of the 9 Macon-Bibb County Commission Districts appointed by the Commissioner of that District.
- One Citizen who resides in the MATS area within Jones County appointed by the Jones County Commission.
- One Citizen who resides in the MATS area within Monroe County appointed by the Monroe County Commission.
- The above group of Citizens Advisory Committee members will appoint the following members representing interests:
 - One Pedestrian/Bicycle User
 - One Transit User
 - One Environmental Interest
 - One Member of the Disabled Population
 - One Disabled Transportation User
- One Citizen appointed by the American Association of Retired People (AARP).
- One Citizen appointed by the Macon Housing Authority.
- One Citizen appointed by the Bibb County Board of Education.
- One Citizen appointed by the League of Women Voters.

Public Participation Techniques

In the past, the MATS program has used various public participation strategies, described below. These strategies have been used to increase public awareness of important comprehensive planning issues.

1. Newsletter Publications

The MPO has periodically published a newsletter dealing with important issues and projects related to local transportation planning. Publications such as these serve as a good introduction for interested parties/stakeholders in the comprehensive planning process, and encourages community feedback regarding specific projects. MATS will continue to use newsletters as a method for engaging the public and soliciting input, as appropriate (i.e., depending on the level of detailed description and/or project stage associated with various projects and policy developments).

2. MPO Website

The website provides the public with information regarding the comprehensive planning process, along with the opportunity to review and comment upon full copies of draft studies. Also, the website contains information on special projects and meetings that may be of interest to the general public. In the future, a copy of the Citizens Guide to Transportation Planning for the MATS Area will be updated and placed on the website to allow the public to better understand the planning process. Currently, the website is in the process of being revised to include an MPO portal, in order to make the information more accessible to the public.

3. MATS Citizen Advisory Committee

The Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) is one of the MATS Committees which advises the Policy Committee on transportation planning initiatives. The CAC represents a broad spectrum of citizens in the community and meets quarterly to discuss important transportation planning issues. The membership of the CAC includes minority and disabled individuals in order to provide a diverse community perspective regarding local transportation issues. Representatives of the CAC also serve as members on the MATS Technical and Policy Committees. In the past, orientation meetings have been conducted for new MATS members, to inform them about the transportation planning process and the roles performed by the various MATS committees. As part of this orientation process, presentation materials will be developed that will include appropriate source documents from public agencies, both State (e.g., GDOT, GAEPD, etc.) and Federal (e.g., US EPA, FHWA, FTA, US DOT).

4. Training Opportunities

In addition, to the CAC orientation, all MATS Committee members will be informed of training and continuing education opportunities (e.g., special meetings, webinars, conferences, classes, etc.) regarding important topics in the comprehensive planning process. Organizations and resources already identified for providing continuing training include:

- State:
 - GAMPO

- GDOT
- GAEPD
- Federal:
 - FHWA
 - FTA
 - USEPA
 - USDOT
- Professional:
 - APA (both National and Georgia State Chapter)
 - TRB

Additional organizations and resources will be added as they are identified.

5. E-mail Blasts

This involves periodic e-mails to the various committee lists serves to provide important information and updates to interested parties, and as a supplemental method to notify the public of meetings that are held in relation to the MATS process and other planning requirements. At all meetings, the attendees can provide their e-mail address so they can be included in future e-mail distributions as well.

6. Public Meetings

All MATS committee meetings are open to the public. Also, the MPO occasionally conducts special public meetings to present draft documents for review. These meetings provide a forum for public input and are an important part of the public participation process. At these meetings, comments are submitted by the public that are included in the final document as part of the participation process. The public is notified of these meetings through emails, the newspaper, and the MPO website. In addition, measures are taken to inform the traditionally underserved sections of the population, such as low-income and minority groups. Meeting notices are placed in minority publications and posted on public transit buses as well. In addition, these meetings are scheduled at convenient times and locations. As part of the process to develop this Participation Plan, members of interested groups were invited to attend MATS meetings where the plan was an element of the agenda. These groups included public transit agencies, bike/ped users, disabled individuals, and minority members. In addition, these interested groups have been advised of the public review period for the draft Participation Plan so they would have an opportunity to comment on the document.

With respect to on-line meeting protocols, MATS policies are designed to be consistent with guidance from Federal Highway Administration to Georgia Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations, dated 16 March 2020. To that end, MATS uses on-line meeting capabilities that have the ability to record both video and audio media, and archives all meeting recordings for future reference in non-proprietary electronic formats. To the extent possible, meetings may be simultaneously broadcast through the MATS MPO website (www.maconmpo.com) and other social media outlets. Macon MPO is working on expanding public input by hosting and obtaining feedback virtually and will continue to explore the use of online tools, user-friendly apps, social media, polling tools, among other resources that may be available. Normal rules for quorum and conducting meetings still apply, including the ability for the public to observe the meetings in real time, and provide spoken and public comment. For the purposes of

determining quorum, a committee member shall be considered present if they are either physically present at the meeting venue, or are able to participate via simultaneous two way communication. MATS staff shall differentiate those committee members participating via remote communication, and those attending in person.

Electronic archives of MATS meetings are a complement to, not a replacement of, the written minutes collected at the MATS meetings. Meeting minutes of the various MATS Committees shall continue to be kept in written format, submitted for approval by the respective committees described above, and approved minutes archived in the written MATS records. Where meeting recording archives are not available, the approved written minutes, along with a copy of the corresponding meeting agenda and attendance sheet, shall stand as the sole official record of any MATS committee or sub-committee meeting.

7. Visualization Surveys

A Visual Preference Survey was conducted by the Macon MPO in 2003 which led to the development of comprehensive planning initiatives. The survey was taken to local industry, civic organizations, church, professional organizations and neighborhood associations. The Visual Preference Survey provided guidance for the MATS program and the comprehensive planning process.

Performance Measures

The Macon Area Transportation Study (MATs) is dedicated to improving our public participation methods. The procedures contained in the Participation Plan will be reviewed each fiscal year to ensure its effectiveness. The effectiveness of the Participation Plan can be monitored by the volume of public comments received as well as the attendance of citizens at public meetings. In addition, the inclusion of public input information into final MPO documents and plans can also be used as a way to monitor the success of the participation process.

According to the requirements, the participation plan should be developed in consultation with all interested parties and they should also have the opportunity to comment on the transportation plans that are produced. Public meetings that are conducted should be held at convenient and accessible locations and times. In addition, visualization techniques should be used to describe plans. Public information should be made available in an electronically accessible format such as the internet to provide a chance for an adequate review of the materials. In addition, notices regarding public meetings and information should be placed in newspapers of general circulation as well as minority publications. Furthermore, meeting notices and other information should be placed on public transit buses and sent out via e-mail to interested groups. In regards to the MATs process, applications for membership in the Citizens Advisory Committee should be available at all public meetings and should also be sent via e-mail to interested organizations.

MATS Program Structure & Requirements

Meetings

Regularly Scheduled MATS Meetings: The time, place, and date of the regularly scheduled MATS meetings will be posted in City Hall and in the office of the Macon-Bibb County Planning & Zoning Commission.

Special Called Meetings: The Chairman of each committee may call a special meeting provided that a notice of the time, place, and date of the meeting is posted twenty-four hours in advance of said meeting. The written notice for the special called meeting will be in the same manner as for the regularly scheduled meeting.

Agendas and Minutes: Agendas for each committee will be available to the committee members and general public two weeks prior to each regularly scheduled committee meeting. The minutes of each committee will be available at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the committee.

Open Meetings: All committee meetings will be open to the public. Exceptions to this policy will be as provided by Georgia Law.

Public Participation Requirements for Reports

Public Participation Process (initial adoption and subsequent revisions): A public review period will be required for the adoption or subsequent revision to the Public Participation Process for the Macon Area Transportation Study. Public notice will be given for this comment period by publishing an advertisement in a newspaper(s) for general circulation at least forty-five (45) days before the final public participation process is adopted or subsequently revised by the Policy Committee. The public notice will be placed on MPO website as well as other places of general interest. The public review notice will also be made available to other interested parties (i.e. public transit agencies, freight companies, and bike/ped users). In addition, the public review period notice will also be made available in minority publications and on public transit buses for minority and low income groups. The proposed Participation Plan will be made available to the public at the Macon-Bibb County Planning & Zoning Commission and on the Commission's website.

Long Range Transportation Plan: A public review period will be required before the adoption of the Transportation Plan. Public notice for the comment period will be given by publishing an advertisement in a newspaper(s) of general circulation at least thirty (30) days before the final transportation plan is adopted by the Policy Committee. The public notice will also be placed on the MPO website as well as other places of general interest. Furthermore, the public review notice will also be made available to other interested parties (i.e. public transit agencies, freight companies, and bike/ped users). In addition, the public review period notice will also be made available in minority publications and on public transit buses for minority and low income groups. If determined by the Policy Committee that the final transportation plan differs significantly from the one which was made available for public comment, and such plan raises new material issues which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts,

an additional public comment period will be required. Public notice for this comment period will be given by publishing an advertisement in a newspaper(s) of general circulation, in addition to the other locations previously discussed and posting a notice on the website at least fifteen (15) days before the plan is finally adopted by the Policy Committee. The draft Transportation Plan will be made available to the public at the Macon-Bibb County Planning & Zoning Commission and on the Commission's website. Final copies of the Transportation Plan will also be made available to the public for information purposes and posted on the Commission's website. If the Policy Committee determines it necessary to amend the final plan, the Policy Committee may approve the proposed amendment(s) subject to a 15 day public review and comment period. If no significant comments are received, the amendments will stand as approved with no further action required by the Policy Committee. Results of the public review and comment period will be provided to the Policy Committee, for their information, at the next regularly scheduled meeting. If comments are received which the MPO staff considers as potentially significant, the comments will be presented to the Policy Committee for consideration and appropriate action. A summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made as part of the final document.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP): A public review period will be required for the adoption of the Transportation Improvement Program. Public notice will be given by publishing an advertisement in a newspaper(s) of general circulation at least thirty (30) days before the final Transportation Improvement Program is adopted by the Policy Committee. The public notice will also be placed on the Commission's website as well as other places of general interest. Furthermore, the public review notice will also be made available to other interested parties (i.e. public transit agencies, freight companies, and bike/ped users). In addition, the public review notice will also be made available in minority publications and on public transit buses for minority and low income groups. If determined by the Policy Committee that the final Transportation Improvement Program differs significantly from the one which was made available for public comment, and such plan raises new material issues which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts, an additional public comment period will be required. Public notice for this comment period will be given by publishing an advertisement in a newspaper(s) of general circulation, in addition to the other locations previously discussed and posting the notice on the website at least (15) days before the final Transportation Improvement Program is adopted by the Policy Committee. A summary, analysis and report on the disposition of comments shall be made as part of the final document. The draft Transportation Improvement Program will be made available to the public at the Macon-Bibb County Planning & Zoning Commission and on the Commission's website. Final copies will also be made available for information purposes and will be posted on the Commission's website.

If it is necessary to amend the TIP, a 15 day public review and comment period will be required. If no significant comments are received, no further action is required once the proposed amendment(s) have been approved by the Policy Committee. However, if comments are received which the MPO staff considers as potentially significant, the comments will be presented to the Policy Committee for consideration and appropriate action. Where a TIP amendment requires changes to the source LRTP document, the TIP amendment and LRTP public comment period will run concurrently.

In addition, if a new Conformity Determination Report (CDR) is required for air quality then measures similar to the one described for the main TIP will be implemented for the CDR document. The public review process will begin subsequent to a review and approval of the CDR by the Interagency Coordination Committee (IAC).

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Citizen participation is encouraged in the development of the UPWP through the MATS process which provides opportunities for input into various planning tasks and project review. The MATS Committees consist of a Citizen Advisory Committee, the Technical Committee and the Policy Committee. The implementation of the Unified Planning Work Program is the responsibility of the MPO. The MATS Policy Committee is responsible for adopting the final Unified Planning Work Program. In addition, any amendments to the UPWP must be approved by the MATS Policy Committee. The UPWP is readily available to the public in hard copy and on the MPO website.

Amendment Processes

In some cases, it may be necessary to amend certain planning documents. The information below summarizes the amendment process under the MATS program in case revisions are needed.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Long Range Transportation Program (LRTP)

If the Policy Committee determines it necessary to amend the final LRTP and/or TIP, the proposed change will be brought before the Interagency Coordinating Committee (IAC) for review and comment. IAC is a statewide body consisting of staff representatives throughout the state who are responsible for executing their respective regional transportation programs, plus staff from GDOT, FHWA and FTA.² At the time the proposed change is brought before IAC, it will be classified as either an Administrative Modification or an Amendment (described below).

Administrative Modifications

The following actions are eligible as Administrative Modifications to the TIP/LRTP:

- A. Revise a project description without changing the project scope, conflicting with the environmental document or changing the conformity finding in nonattainment and maintenance areas (less than 10% change in project termini according to GDOT). This change would not alter the original project intent.
- B. Splitting or combining projects.
- C. Federal funding category change.
- D. Minor changes in expenditures for transit projects as stipulated by GDOT.
- E. Roadway project phases may have a cost increase less than \$2,000,000 or 20% of the amount to be authorized.
- F. Shifting projects within the 4-year STIP as long as the subsequent annual draft STIP was submitted prior to September 30.

² For full details on the federal regulations describing the activities of the IAC, please see 40 CFR, Chapter I Sub C., Part 93, on line at: http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=8451745d69bb76f41ce23a064a90301e&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title40/40cfr93_main_02.tpl

- G. Projects may be funded from lump sum banks as long as they are consistent with category definitions.

An Administrative Modification can be processed in accordance with these procedures provided:

- 1. It does not affect the air quality conformity determination.
- 2. It does not impact financial constraint.
- 3. It does not require public review and comment.

The administrative modification process consists of a monthly list of notifications from GDOT to all involved parties, with change summaries sent on a monthly basis to the FHWA and FTA by the GDOT.

The GDOT will submit quarterly reports detailing projects drawn from each lump sum bank with remaining balance to the FHWA.

Amendments for Initial Authorizations:

The following actions are eligible as Amendments to the TIP/LRTP:

- A. Addition or deletion of a project.
- B. Addition or deletion of a phase of a project.
- C. Roadway project phases that increase in cost over the thresholds described in the Administrative Modification section.
- D. Addition of an annual TIP.
- E. Major change to scope of work of an existing project. A major change would be any change that alters the original intent i.e. a change in the number of through lanes, a change in termini of more than 10 percent.
- F. Shifting projects within the 4-year STIP which require redemonstration of fiscal constraint or when the subsequent annual draft STIP was not submitted prior to September 30. (See Administrative Modification item F.)

Amendments to the STIP/TIP/LRTP will be developed in accordance with the provisions of 23 CFR Part 450. This requires public review and comment and responses to all comments, either individually or in summary form. For amendments in MPO areas, the public review process should be carried out in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Participation Plan. The GDOT will assure that the amendment process and the public involvement procedures have been followed. Cost changes made to the second, third and fourth years of the STIP will be balanced during the STIP yearly update process. All amendments should be approved by FHWA and/or FTA.

Notes:

- 1. The date a TIP becomes effective is when the Governor or his designee approves it. For nonattainment and maintenance areas, the effective date of the TIP is based on the date of U.S. Department of Transportation's positive finding of conformity.
- 2. The date the STIP becomes effective is when FHWA and FTA approve it.
- 3. The STIP is developed on the state fiscal year which is July 1-June 30.

4. Funds for cost increases will come from those set aside in the STIP financial plan by GDOT for modifications and cost increases. Fiscal Constraint will be maintained in the STIP at all times.

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for the Macon Area Transportation Study (MATS) describes the transportation planning tasks and studies that will be conducted utilizing FHWA-PL and FTA 5303 planning funds. The implementation of the Unified Planning Work Program is the responsibility of the MPO. As earlier stated, the Commission staff works at the direction of the various Macon Area Transportation Study Committees structure composed of a Policy Committee consisting of local and state officials, a Technical Coordinating Committee consisting of government department heads and technical staff involved in transportation and a Citizen Advisory Committee consisting of interested citizens. Citizen participation is also encouraged through the public involvement process which provides opportunities for input into various planning tasks and project review. The MATS Policy Committee is responsible for adopting the Unified Planning Work Program.

Amendment Process

For alterations to a specific fiscal year UPWP related to the types of changes described in the TIP and LRTP process:

- Administrative modifications to the UPWP can be achieved by MPO staff coordinating with GDOT and the relevant Federal partner agency (i.e., FHWA or FTA);
- Full amendments to the UPWP must first be brought forward by MPO staff and approved by the MATS Policy Committee, then submitted to GDOT and the relevant Federal partner agency (i.e., FHWA or FTA) for final approval.

All planning documents are readily available to the public through the use of printed materials, newsletters and the Planning & Zoning website.

Participation Plan (PP)

Amendment Process

If revisions to the Public Participation Process are needed, then the MATS Policy Committee must approve the changes. A public review period will be required for the subsequent revision to the Participation Plan. Public notice will be given for this comment period by publishing an advertisement in a newspaper(s) for general circulation at least forty-five (45) days before the final public participation process is approved by the Policy Committee. The public notice will be placed on the MPO website as well as other places of general interest. The public review notice will also be made available to other interested parties (i.e. public transit agencies, freight companies, and bike/ped users). In addition, the public review period notice will also be made available in minority publications and on public transit buses for minority and low income groups. The proposed Participation Plan will be made available to the public at the Macon-Bibb County Planning & Zoning Commission and on the Commission's website.

Public Comments: When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft transportation plan or TIP as a result of the public involvement process or the interagency consultation process required under the U.S. EPA's conformity regulation, a summary analysis

and report on the deposition of comments will be made part of the final plan and TIP. Plan and/or TIP amendments and the resulting public comments will be made part of the Policy Committee minutes and will be kept on file in the MPO office. Amendments and comments also will be incorporated into copies of the Plan and TIP made available at central locations.

Public comment on a project or policy change under consideration by the MATS may be submitted by contacting MATS staff by telephone call, e-mail or submitting a comment through the MATS website (www.maconmpo.com) prior to the close of the posted public comment period for the project or policy under consideration. Public comment may also be given in person at the meeting where the project or policy is being voted upon, in accordance with the meeting rules for comment set forth by the chair of the MATS Policy Committee.

Only those comments deemed significant must be reported out by MATS staff to the MATS Committees. “Significant” comments are described as follows:

Materially Significant Comments Include:

- Comments addressing the need for the project or policy change under consideration;
- Comments addressing the scope and/or methods employed in the project or policy under consideration;
- Comments identifying possible secondary effects from a project or policy change under consideration;
- Comments about the adherence to proper public participation procedures, as required by State and Federal regulations and/or previously adopted MATS MPO policies;
- Comments indicating the exclusion from the Public Participation Process, either deliberately or inadvertent, of identified population groups covered under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964;
- Any other comments deemed by MATS MPO staff to contribute a useful point of discussion on a project or policy under consideration, and which does not otherwise violate the guidelines for which a comment might be excluded (see next column)

Materially Significant Comments **Do Not Include**

- Comments not clearly related to the specific project or policy under consideration;
- Comments or actions taken for the sole purpose of delaying or disrupting the normal business of the MATS Committees;
- Ad hominem personal attacks on any elected official, public agency staff, or members of the general public;
- Threats of physical force or personal consequences, either direct, or perceived threats reasonably implied or inferred from the context in which the comment is given and/or action is taken.

For the purposes of reporting significant public comment to the MATS Committees, multiple comments that effectively state the same concern or underlying argument may be consolidated into a single statement, with indication of the frequency of the comment (Example: “MATS staff received 50 comments on the project under consideration. Of those comments, 35 identified excessive cost as a major concern; 23 identified lack of pedestrian infrastructure; 30 identified insufficient lighting/safety...” etc.).

Comments that are not deemed significant do not need to be reported to the MATS Committees. However, comments not deemed significant may (at the discretion of the MATS Executive Director) may be forwarded to other relevant partner agencies or departments for additional clarification on the question or comment raised. In the event of a threat, the MATS Executive Director may refer a comment (and any information identifying the originator of the comment) to relevant law enforcement organizations.

Regulations Governing the Participation Process

The guidelines for the participation plan were established by the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) that was signed into law on July 6, 2012. This act established regulations for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) in regards to public participation in the comprehensive transportation planning process. The following is taken from MAP-21 in regards to participation requirements for Metropolitan Planning Organizations.

(1) Participation by interested parties.--

- (A) In general.--Each metropolitan planning organization shall provide citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the transportation plan.
- (B) Contents of participation plan.--A participation plan--
 - (i) shall be developed in consultation with all interested parties; and
 - (ii) shall provide that all interested parties have reasonable opportunities to comment on the contents of the transportation plan.
- (C) Methods.--In carrying out subparagraph (A), the metropolitan planning organization shall, to the maximum extent practicable--
 - (i) hold any public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;
 - (ii) employ visualization techniques to describe plans; and
 - (iii) make public information available in electronically accessible format and means, such as the World Wide Web, as appropriate to afford reasonable opportunity for consideration of public information under subparagraph (A).

In addition, the MAP-21 legislation requires the Metropolitan Planning Organizations to consider

the following eight planning factors in their projects as detailed below.

- (1) In general.--The metropolitan planning process for a metropolitan planning area under this section shall provide for consideration of projects and strategies that will--
 - (A) support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
 - (B) increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and nonmotorized users;
 - (C) increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and nonmotorized users;
 - (D) increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight;
 - (E) 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;
 - (F) enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
 - (G) promote efficient system management and operation; and
 - (H) emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

The MAP 21 Act also focuses on national transportation goals in order to improve projects through performance management measures as discussed below.

- (A) National Goals.--It is in the interest of the United States to focus the Federal-aid highway program on the following national goals:
 - (1) Safety.--To achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads.
 - (2) Infrastructure condition.--To maintain the highway infrastructure asset system in a state of good repair.
 - (3) Congestion reduction.--To achieve a significant reduction in congestion on the National Highway System.
 - (4) System reliability.--To improve the efficiency of the surface transportation system.
 - (5) Freight movement and economic vitality.--To improve the national freight network, strengthen the ability of rural communities to access national and international trade markets, and support regional economic development.
 - (6) Environmental sustainability.--To enhance the performance of the transportation system while protecting and enhancing the natural environment.
 - (7) Reduced project delivery delays.--To reduce project costs, promote jobs and the economy, and expedite the movement of people and goods by accelerating project completion through eliminating delays in the project development and delivery process, including reducing regulatory burdens and improving agencies' work practices.

Amendments

1. On March 9, 2016 the Policy Committee amended the Introduction section to add language about how the MATS TIP review process satisfies the public review process for the GDOT Program of Projects (pg. 1, par. 1).
2. On March 9, 2016 the Policy Committee amended the MATS Program Structure & Requirements section to clarify that where a TIP amendment requires changes to the source LRTP document, the TIP amendment and LRTP public comment period will run concurrently (pg. 12, end of par. 4).
3. On November 4, 2020, the Policy Committee amended the Public Meetings portion of the Public Participation Techniques section. The changes address how MATS employs the use of remote meeting technologies (pg. 9, par. 3 through pg. 10, par. 1).

These changes are adopted in response to guidance provided by Federal Highway Administration to Georgia Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (dated 16 March 2020), on the appropriate use of remote meeting technologies for the purposes of conducting MPO meetings and business.

4. On November 4, 2020, the Policy Committee amended the Public Comment portion of the Amendment Process section, to clarify what constitutes a “significant” public comment for the purposes of staff reporting (pg. 17, par. 1 through pg. 18, par. 2).

These changes are adopted as a result of comments received from Georgia Dept. of Transportation-Office of Planning, as part of the MATS Certification Review Report, dated December 2019.

Administrative Modification

1. On October 13, 2021, MATS Staff updated the roster of the voting members for the MATS Policy Committee, changing the Georgia Dept. of Transportation (GDOT) representative from the Commissioner to the Director of Planning (pg. 5). The change was initiated at the request of GDOT Office of Planning, pursuant to an e-mail received on 6/2/2021. Because a delay of one regular meeting cycle of MATS Committee hearings was required before a similar change could be made to the MATS Bylaws, this Administrative Modification was delayed in order for both changes to move forward simultaneously.

After consultation with GDOT and Federal Highway Administration, this change is allowed to proceed as an Administrative Modification because:

- It is an update to an existing organization already identified as a voting member;
- It doesn't change the number of voting members, or the underlying voting agency;
- It formalizes an already ongoing practice (i.e., having the GDOT Office of Planning represent the agency at MATS);
- It has no budget implications;

GDOT stated in an e-mail of 10/12/2021 that they and FHWA were in agreement with using the Administrative Modification process to make the requested changes.