

TSPLOST 2018 Program
Prince Avenue Corridor Improvements: Project 16

User Group Meeting – Draft Minutes
April 28, 2021 9:00 A.M. - <https://youtu.be/EdxDrKBxlgA>

User Group Members Present: Ellen Walker, Jeanne Connell, Forrest Huffman, Mark Ebell, Stephen Bailey, Clint McCrory, Emily Tatum, Peter Norris, Ilka McConnell, Bruce Lonnee, Daniel Sizemore

Members Absent: Jennifer Rice , Tim Griffeth

Other Staff Present: Blaine Williams, Gavin Hassemer, Todd Miller, Todd Dickey, Jeff Montgomery, Tommy Thurmond, Tim Griffeth, Steve Decker, Victor Pope, Joseph D'Angelo, Mary Martin, Emilie Castillo, Derek Doster, Keith Sanders, Diana Jackson

Guests: Ernie Boughman, John Walker, Erik Hammarlund

General Business

Diana Jackson, called the meeting to order at 9:03 A.M., welcomed the members in attendance and thanked them for being present.

Quorum: Established quorum was present.

User Group Actions

Meeting Minutes Review & Approval – Mark Ebell made a motion to approve the edited March 24, 2021 Minutes and Ilka McConnell seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Peter Norris made a motion for the survey format where it will first categorize by improvement type (not location) and then allow, for those who want, to add more detailed comments. Ellen Walker seconded. The vote was unanimous.

The below is a brief summary of the key discussion items, not a transcript. The full video is available at the above noted YouTube link. The below notes are only to identify the items discussed and the general order of those discussion to make finding the information on the video easier.

TPW Traffic Count Information

Steve Decker presented recent traffic count data for the Pulaski and Dougherty intersection. He feels that more traffic studies should be conducted before changing any roadway configuration.

Mark Ebell stated that speeds along Prince Avenue are too high, making it dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists.

Peter Norris said part of the problem is too much traffic – how do we get cars off the streets? All of the traffic funnels down to this one intersection. Prince Avenue is a commuter throughway for people outside of the county to get into Clarke County. Any solution the UG comes up with to make the streets safer will have to reduce speeds and cars.

Stephen Bailey suggested that the next step would be to take the UG list and reassess using traffic analysis software. Not just for this one intersection but for all ideas along the corridor. What the UG is likely to find is that there are options where roadway reconfiguration will work. The UG may want to consider this before assigning priorities.

Ernie Boughman is supportive of traffic studies and said it is a step that needs to be conducted before making any modification to roadway configuration design. He asked TPW if the issue with the counts is considered to be a safety issue or a delay issue as they are two different things.

Mark felt that some might see that the convenience of commuters from outlying counties is being prioritized over the desires of local residents. If the drivers come to Prince that is now three-laned and have to sit through an extra light cycle, he's fine with that.

Blaine Williams stated that we needed to be careful about anecdotal references as there are a lot of interests being served by Prince Avenue. Staff is not saying that something cannot be done, but that there should be due diligence. Staff will obtain data to help the UG determine what might be the consequences and outcomes of any potential projects.

Stephen said that this is the right time to be looking at these additional studies; however, before resources are spent on them, we need to know what is important to the UG and that's exactly where we are. Once we get the data, we can then determine what can be done and if there's any need to adjust our proposed recommendations.

Public Engagement Options

Mary Martin, Emilie Castillo, and Joseph D'Angelo presented some story map options for the UG to consider. Gaining insight from the other two corridor study surveys, they are opting to use the journal format. This allows the user to scroll between surveys and to move back and forth without losing their place or changing previous decisions.

Mark asked GIO staff if there's any data about how many surveys have been complete via mobile vs desktop.

Joseph stated that it was about 50-50. One of the lessons learned is that you have to build it for a desktop prior to optimizing it for mobile. This process is time consuming so there needs to be a few days between edit cut off and the survey going live.

Mary wondered if the UG would be interested in a pilot where we take one segment and show projects/options before building the entire survey?

Clint McCrory said that it would be very useful for the M&C to know something about the people who filled out the survey – especially if they are business or property owners. This has traditionally been important as the M&C make decisions.

Mark reiterated that the more GIO can do to reduce information overload – we should make it a goal to categorize things to only 2-5 decisions or opinions.

Clint wondered if the UG is more interested in users making comments or ranking preference?

Joseph said that is the UG prerogative. They can build whatever the UG wants. We just need to be able to state what information is helpful and in what format.

Derek Doster spoke about the other two corridor surveys. It was those UG's desire to present exactly what the respondents showed. He says whatever we do we need to keep it as simple as possible.

Diana Jackson asked the UG if they wanted the Public Engagement subcommittee to work with GIO to develop a mock-up for a segment and bring it back to the group. If the UG is okay with it, it could be expanded for all segments.

Ellen Walker felt like that was a good idea. She liked Emilie's format as it is simple and gives some numerical data along with the option for commenting. She likes the idea of grouping as it will help users stay engaged. Certain demographics are important to gather, so you can see who you have NOT reached. These groups could be targeted by the UG for in-person gatherings/surveys.

Clint also really liked the general idea of designing the survey so that there are differing levels of engagement.

Ilka McConnell agreed that it allows people to go as deep as they're interested in and options for how much they want to be engaged.

Emily Tatum asked if the UG was going to develop a simple paper survey – like to leave at the hardware store?

Derek suggest that the UG is going to have to have a paper version of it to reach certain members of the community and reduce criticism.

Daniel Sizemore said that we could easily prepare “packets” of project information sheets by category, so if a user was only interested in a type of project, they could focus just on that type. He wondered if anyone other members wanted to join the Public Engagement subcommittee and if her are any decision that the UG wanted to make as a whole in terms of form, layout, presentation style before it goes to subcommittee?

Clint said that the various improvements are not independent of each other – he doesn't have a solution but wonders about it since as it may not have existed to such a large extent with the other two corridor studies.

Ellen agreed but wondered if we could use the categories. We could divide them into categories and then see what the commonalities are and where the highest rankings are and then it can be triaged from there.

Daniel said that if certain projects rate pretty high and certain segments come out more popular then it allows the UG to work with TPW to refine project concepts for proposing to M&C. It enables the UG to understand constraints and then determine whether they can or can't be implemented.

Peter and Ellen asked to be added to the Public Engagement subcommittee.

Update from Project Concept Subcommittee

Ellen shared the final tabulation that includes all 10 voting members. The subcommittee came up with four segments/districts – Sunset (Sunset to Pound), HSC (Pound to Oglethorpe), Normal Town (Oglethorpe to Milledge) and Downtown (Milledge to Pulaski).

Ellen shared the results/gradations. Safety was the top criteria. There were 34 items that ranked between 1.0 and 1.99. She then shared those projects that just missed this cutoff and asked that UG members advocate to add any project. She believes they need to decide how they want to give this information to the public engagement subcommittee, so they can begin building the survey. This identifies the top priorities including yellow highlighted as UG project proposals and green highlighted things as GDOT project proposals.

She also wanted to hear from staff that if there's a project on the list that can't happen then the UG needs to know. The last thing the UG wants to do is put out a project on a survey that is not implementable.

Mark felt that it still is important to preserve the list for the future similar to the older studies that had ideas that the UG found compelling. He asked if it might be good to show the projects within each category by ranking/color coding.

Ellen stated that she agrees with the preservation of the listings, but again reiterated that she does not want to publish anything that TPW says is a no-go. Mark felt that perhaps there is an internal document and then one that goes out to the public that reflects what is feasible.

Stephen said that he would take this list and bring it to staff prior to next meeting.

Keith Sanders reminded the UG that while they are focused on developing a TSPLOST project list that they are also Corridor Committee that enable the group to develop policy issues that might be beyond the TSPLOST.

Diana reminded the UG that we are on the June 8th work session where we are to present our proposed list. Following with that, we will begin public engagement.

Project Schedule

Next step is to work towards finalizing the UG's list of Potential Projects and for the Public Engagement subcommittee to work with GIO staff to develop one segment of the survey.

Assignment for future meetings

- Next meeting is May 12, 2021 **from 9-10:30 am**
- Finalize List of Potential Projects that the UG is recommending go out for public engagement - June 8th Work Session
- Public Engagement subcommittee updates
- TPW to review DRAFT project list to provide input if there are projects that are not feasible.
- TPW recommendation to UG to for streetlight recommendation to GDOT
- Other options for speed calming – Ernie and Erik to provide

These minutes are not a transcript of the meeting but instead is a general summary of the key points, ideas, or considerations from the discussion.