



Susie - GAMPO files

March 17, 2010

Jane Hayse, Chairwoman
Georgia Association of MPOs
Atlanta Regional Commission
40 Courtland Street, NE
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

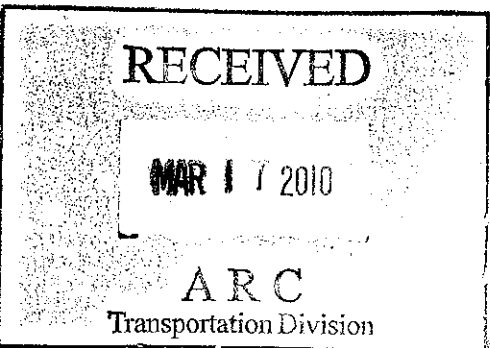
Subject: Matching Federal Metro Planning (PL) Funds

Dear Ms. Hayse:

The Department is in receipt of the Georgia Association of Metropolitan Planning Organization (GAMPO) letter (see attached), dated January 4, 2010 concerning the Department's inability to assist the MPOs in matching Federal Metropolitan Planning (PL) Funds, beginning in FY 2011. Since initially receiving the GAMPO letter, the Department has been monitoring the budget condition to determine if we were able to assist the MPOs with the FY 2011 match; unfortunately, the Department's budget has not improved.

As you may be aware, on March 5, 2010, we met with Mr. Chick Krautler (Atlanta MPO) and Mr. Thomas Thomson (Savannah MPO) concerning the Department's ability to provide half of the MPO's FY 2011 PL match. As discussed in the meeting, the Department's unprecedented funding shortfall has not improved, since Mr. Ross initially informed the MPOs via a letter dated May 14, 2009 (see attached), that the Department could no longer assist the MPOs with the PL match beginning in FY 2011. The Department's funding shortfall continues to strain our operations and we anticipate a greater decrease in the availability of state motor fuel funds during FY 2011. Therefore, the Department is unable to assist the MPOs in matching PL funds.

I understand that some of the MPOs are pursuing the option of using in-kind services (such as; non-federally funded, local staff time) as a "soft" match for PL funds. The Department fully supports the MPOs in using eligible in-kind services as a matching source. The Department's Planning staff will work with each MPO, as appropriate, to address any procedural issues associated with implementing an in-kind match arrangement.



Page 2 of 2
Ms. Hayse
March 17, 2010

The Department looks forward to continuing the cooperative transportation planning process with each of the MPOs, during these challenging budgetary times. We also look forward to seeing each MPO at the June 25, 2010 GAMPO Work Session, being held here in the GDOT Board Room.

Sincerely,



Vance C. Smith, Jr.
Commissioner

VCS:MF

Attachments (2)

cc: **Todd Long, PE, Director of Planning**
Gerald Ross, PE, Chief Engineer
Kathryn Pfirman, Treasurer
GDOT Office of Planning Staff
Howard Brown, Albany MPO
Brad Griffin, Athens MPO
Chick Krautler, Atlanta MPO
George Patty, Augusta MPO
David Hainley, Brunswick MPO
Melissa Taylor, Chattanooga MPO
Rick Jones, Columbus MPO
Bob McLeod, Dalton MPO
Randy Knighton, Gainesville MPO
Sonny Timmerman, Hinesville MPO
James Thomas, Macon MPO
Sue Hiller, Rome MPO
Thomas Thomson, Savannah MPO
John Leonard, Valdosta MPO
Robert Sisa, Warner Robins MPO
Rodney Barry, FHWA
William Farr, FHWA
Andrew Edwards, FHWA

GAMPO

Georgia Association of MPOs

www.gampo.org

January 4, 2010

Commissioner Vance Smith
Georgia Department of Transportation
600 West Peachtree Street, 22nd Floor
Atlanta, GA 30308

Mr. Todd Long, Planning Director
Georgia Department of Transportation
600 West Peachtree Street, 22nd Floor
Atlanta, GA 30308

Dear Messrs. Smith and Long:

Subject: Matching of Federal PL Funds

We, the members of the Georgia Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (GAMPO), are writing to express our concern regarding GDOT's decision to stop providing State funds for half of the required match for Metropolitan Planning (PL) funds for the Georgia Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) beginning in 2011. GAMPO represents all 15 Georgia MPOs which includes three bi-state MPOs (Augusta, Columbus and Chattanooga). Many of our member MPOs have written to the Department earlier in the year expressing opposition to the Department's decision. We understand the Department's funding issues and realize that you are taking unprecedented actions to fill the shortfall. This PL match is extremely important to us. We and our member governments are experiencing serious funding issues too.

For FY 2009, the PL allocation for the State was approximately \$7,500,000. Under the current policy, for the required 20% match, GDOT will provide approximately \$937,500 and the MPO's will provide \$937,500. If GDOT discontinues providing its share of these matching funds, the MPOs will not be able to make up this shortfall which will mean that we will not be able to fully match all available federal PL dollars. Assuming we kept the dollar amount of our match constant, the State would have to forego approximately \$3,750,000 in federal funds. We, the MPOs, would be forced to severely curtail our transportation planning program by reducing staff and consultant support. In other words, this would cause us to have to cut our planning program in half.

The MPOs play a vital role in transportation planning. Much of the work that we would be forced to cut would still have to be done. We must then assume this work we are unable to do would be done by GDOT resulting in increased costs to the Department.

Recently, the national Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) conducted a survey of its members to determine how PL funds were matched nation-wide. The results of that survey show that many states provide all or a portion of the PL matching funds. Some of the states provide cash match, as GDOT does, and some states such as Texas and Florida provide 100% of the PL match (all 20%) using in-kind or soft match. It is our understanding that Texas DOT has used the cost of their planning staffs at both their headquarters and in their Districts as in-kind match for the MPO PL funds and that Florida DOT uses toll credits as soft match for their entire PL allocation. Perhaps GDOT could find a way to do this here in Georgia by identifying work currently being done by the Department that is related to the planning process and that is funded with state dollars. A soft match could be phased in over

two to three years, which would immediately reduce the cash-funding provided by GDOT and give MPOs time to reduce budgets to accommodate the soft match. Under a soft match scenario we would still take a hit but it certainly would not be as severe as eliminating the state match altogether.

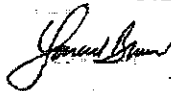
In summary, the loss of the States matching funds to MPOs will severely impact all of our planning programs. In the current economy, our member governments cannot make up this shortfall. The relatively small amount of money that GDOT would save by eliminating its contribution would have a profound effect on transportation planning in the State and we believe it could harm our ability to comply with federal planning requirements for many years to come. Given the current transportation funding crisis in Georgia, it does not make any sense to forego any available federal dollars that might be lost due to an inability to provide matching funds.

We strongly recommend that GDOT continue to provide half of the required match as it has done for many years. If that is not possible then we recommend that you explore an in-kind or soft match scenario or consider a less drastic reduction of the state share. We do not believe that the decision to stop matching a portion of planning funds is in the best interest of the Department, MPOs in Georgia or the entire State of Georgia. The consequences of this decision will have long lasting impact on transportation planning and ultimately project delivery.

Sincerely,


The Georgia Association of MPOs

Albany (DARTS)



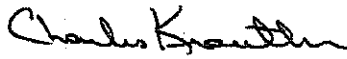
Howard Brown, Director
Albany-Dougherty Planning & Development
Services

Athens (MACORTS)



Brad Griffin, Director
Athens-Clarke County Planning Commission

Atlanta (ARC)



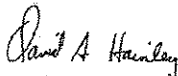
Chick Krautler, Director
Atlanta Regional Commission

Augusta (ARTS)



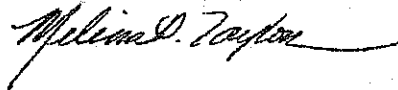
George A. Patty, Executive Director
Augusta-Richmond County Planning Commission

Brunswick (BATS)



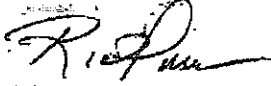
David Hainley, Director
Glynn County Community Development

Chattanooga (CUATS)



Melissa Taylor, Director of Transportation Planning
Chattanooga-Hamilton County Regional Planning
Agency

Columbus (CPCTS)



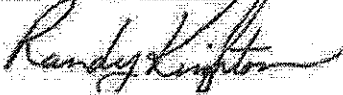
Rick Jones, Director
Columbus Department of Planning

Dalton



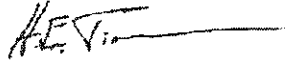
Bob McLeod, County Administrator
Whitfield County

Gainesville (GHMPO)



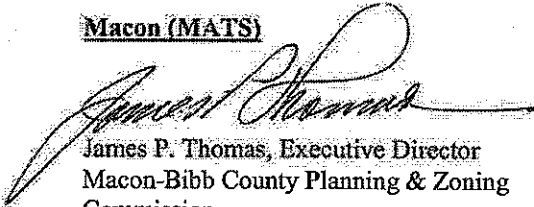
Randy Knighton, Director
Hall County Department of Planning

Hinesville (HAMPO)



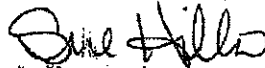
H. E. "Sonny" Timmerman, Executive Director
Liberty Consolidated Planning Commission

Macon (MATS)



James P. Thomas, Executive Director
Macon-Bibb County Planning & Zoning
Commission

Rome (FRUTS)



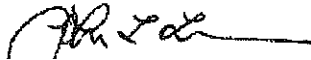
Sue Hiller, Planning Director
Rome-Floyd County Planning Commission

Savannah (CORE)



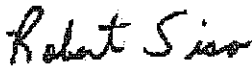
Thomas L. Thomson, Executive Director
Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan
Planning Commission

Valdosta (VLMPO)



John Leonard, Executive Director
South Georgia Regional Commission

Warner Robins (WRATS)



Robert Sisa, Director
Warner Robins - Department of City
Development

Gerald M. Ross, P.E., Commissioner/Chief Engineer



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

One Georgia Center, 600 West Peachtree Street, NW
Atlanta, Georgia 30308
Telephone: (404) 631-1000

May 14, 2009

Mr. Howard Brown, Director
Albany-Dougherty Planning Commission
Planning and Development Services
222 Pine Avenue
Albany, Georgia 31702-0447

Dear Mr. Brown:

Recently, you were forwarded an e-mail requesting that you comment on a proposed change to the state's contribution to the Metro Planning (PL) funds match, see attached. The Department has reviewed the feasibility of continuing our participation in assisting each MPO with matching their PL funds. As discussed in the e-mail, the Department's FY 2010 budget was reduced by approximately \$106,000,000 in state motor fuel funds. State motor fuel funds are the source which the Department has used to subsidize the MPO's PL match since the early 1990s. State motor fuel funds are also the primary source of funding for the Department's entire operations. Beginning with FY 2009, the Department began scaling back motor fuel funded activities; such as: personal services (employee salaries/expenses); travel; routine roadside maintenance; along with many other reductions. Unfortunately, the Department's financial situation is not expected to improve during FY 2010 or FY 2011.

In recognition of the hardship that would be placed on some MPOs to secure additional funds to match FY 2010 PL Contracts, if the Department withdrew participating in the PL funds match at this time; the Department has decided to provide half of the MPO's match for FY 2010 PL Contracts as we have done for the past several years. However, beginning with FY 2011 the Department will no longer subsidize the MPO's match. The Office of Planning staff is available to assist or guide you with development of future UPWPs or PL Contracts which will reflect the MPOs providing the full match (20%) beginning with FY 2011. The Department appreciates your understanding during these difficult financial times.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "GMR", is written over the typed name.

Gerald M. Ross, P.E.
Chief Engineer

GMR:MF

Attachment

cc: Johnny Floyd, GDOT Board Member
Rodney Barry, FHWA Georgia Division
Angela T. Alexander, Director of Planning and Transportation Data

From: Alexander, Angela

Sent: Wednesday, April 22, 2009 4:36 PM

To: 'gpatty@augustaga.gov'; 'mmoultrie@augustaga.gov'; 'thomsont@thempc.com'; 'wilkesm@thempc.com'; 'jpthomas@mbpz.org'; 'kniorth@mbpz.org'; 'rsisa@warnerrobinsga.gov'; 'jfountain@warnerrobinsga.gov'; 'jbird@warnerrobinsga.gov'; 'DHamilton@dougherty.ga.us'; 'HBrown@dougherty.ga.us'; 'ltemples@columbusga.org'; 'rjones@columbusga.org'; 'dhainley@glynncounty-ga.gov'; 'yphillips@glynncounty-ga.gov'; 'elandon@glynncounty-ga.gov'; 'stimmerman@cityoffinesville.org'; 'rhatcher@thelcpc.org'; 'jleonard@sgrdc.com'; 'jshewchuk@sgrdc.com'; 'chull@sgrdc.com'; 'tpc@ngrdc.org'; 'ed@ngrdc.org'; 'acrorts@co.clarke.ga.us'; 'melissa@mail.chattanooga.gov'; 'shiller@romea.us'; 'jhayse@atlantaregional.com'; 'rknighton@hallcounty.org'; 'syamala@hallcounty.org'; 'pdecamp@augustaga.gov'

Cc: 'andrew.edwards@fhwa.dot.gov'; Mitchell, Ulysses; Kassa Jr., Tamrat; McQueen, Thomas; Simpson, Radney; VanDyke, Cindy; 'Sabrina.David@fhwa.dot.gov'; 'Latoya.Jones@fhwa.dot.gov'; 'comelius.davis@fhwa.dot.gov'; 'Carlos.Gonzalez@fhwa.dot.gov'; Crane, Jason; Fowler, Matthew; Gwin, Kelly; Cox, Dave; Hughes, Robert; Parker, Jabari; Day, Ann-Marie P.; Fowler, Krystal; Basse, Anietie; Trigueros, Marco; Mote, Kyle

Subject: MPO Planning Funds/PL Match

Dear MPOs:

As I am sure you are aware, the Department has experienced a severe funding shortfall throughout Fiscal Year 2009 (July 1, 2008-June 30, 2009). Over the course of FY 2009, we hoped that the funding situation would improve; unfortunately, the funding shortfall has only worsened. In fact the Department's FY 2010 (July 1, 2009-June 30, 2010) budget was reduced by approximately \$106,000,000 due to a reduction in state motor fuel revenue projections. The Department has implemented several measures in order to reduce our costs to match revenues; including our road-side maintenance efforts, furloughing 100% of our staff and numerous other actions.

However, additional cost savings are needed to meet our greatly reduced FY 2010 budget. As with most federal funds, FHWA reimburses Metropolitan Planning funds (PL) at a rate of 80%, requiring the recipient to provide a 20% match. Since the early 1990s, the Department has paid half of the MPO's 20% match as a gesture of goodwill and collaboration with transportation planning. Due to the unprecedented funding shortfall, the Department is exploring the possibility of no longer sharing the MPO's match for FHWA's Metropolitan Planning funds, beginning with the FY 2010 PL Contracts. We will accept e-mail comments on this proposal through Friday, May 8th. Please retain "MPO Planning Funds/PL Match" in the subject line so that we can track all comments received.

I do apologize for the short notice; however, FY 2010 begins on July 1st for GDOT and many of the MPOs and we hope to make a decision regarding this issue prior to execution of any 2010 PL contracts. Thank you for your consideration of this proposals as well as your comments.

Thanks

*Angela F. Alexander
Director of Transportation Planning and Data
Office: (404) 631-1987
Cell: (404) 895-7945*