



***Florence Area Transportation Study***

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***Metropolitan Planning Organization  
(MPO)***

***FY2017 – FY2022***

***Transportation Improvement Program  
(TIP)***

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## Introduction

The Florence Area Transportation Study (FLATS) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Florence urbanized area. The FLATS study area covers the City of Florence, the City of Darlington, the Town of Quinby, the Town of Timmonsville and surrounding unincorporated areas of Florence and Darlington counties.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regulations require the designation of an MPO to provide continuous, cooperative and comprehensive transportation planning for areas with an urbanized population of 50,000 or more. This determination is a result of the U.S. Census. FLATS is the MPO for the Florence area.

In addition to others, there are three primary responsibilities of an MPO:

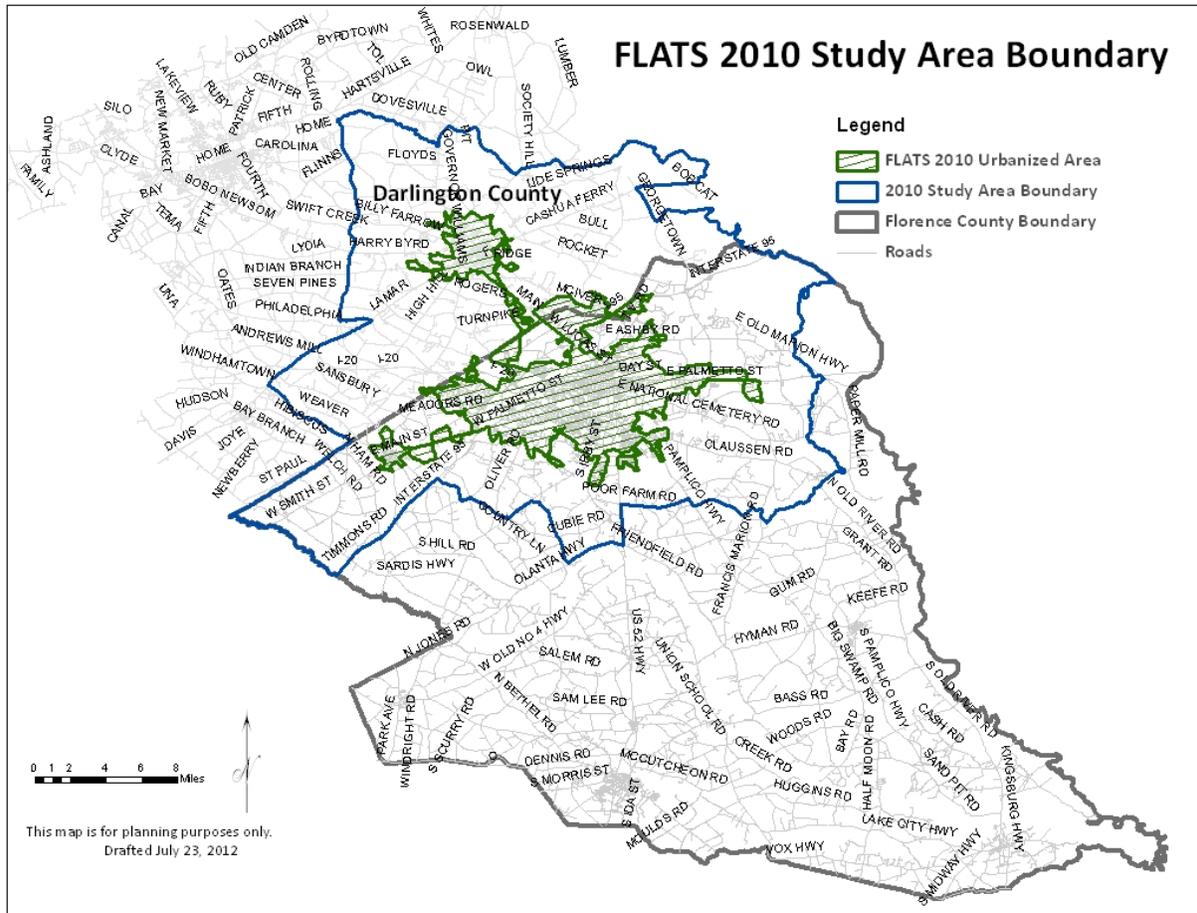
- 1) Develop and maintain a Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), which is, at a minimum, a 25-year transportation vision for the planning area; and
- 2) Develop and maintain a financially constrained Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which is the agreed upon list of specific projects for which federal funds are anticipated; and
- 3) Develop and maintain a Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), which identifies the annual transportation planning activities that are to be undertaken in support of goals, objectives and actions established in the LRTP.

The above referenced documents are periodically corrected or amended. Opportunities for public input are advertised and public comments are actively solicited for each.

The federal funds utilized for Guideshare projects in the TIP Financial Plan are allocated through the current Surface Transportation Program (STP) Bill/Law approved by the U.S. Congress. This Law is reauthorized through FY2020. Over the past ten years, the STP has funded, on average, about 53 percent of the District Department of Transportation's annual outlays for road construction, planning and design work and right-of-way acquisitions.

The TIP Financial Plan outlines projects, for which funding is available, through the above referenced Law, to be funded over a six fiscal year span. The current TIP is for fiscal years **2017-2022**. A project must be in the LRTP before it can be listed in the TIP; subsequently listed in the TIP and the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) State Improvement

Transportation Plan (STIP), before federal funding can be allocated. Projects in the LRTP are prioritized based on area-wide needs, in accordance with ACT 114 and the scheduling requirements of the state and federal governments. The TIP draws projects from various components of the LRTP such as access management, corridor improvements, intersection improvements, widening, etc. and schedules them for implementation.



## Structure

The FLATS MPO is composed of a voting and non-voting Policy Committee and a Study Team. Membership of each committee is a representative for the FLATS MPO area as prescribed by the FLATS Bylaws. The functions of these committees are detailed below:

### **Policy Committee (Voting)**

The FLATS transportation planning process is guided by this committee. The Policy Committee is the official decision making body that establishes policies for the overall conduct of the FLATS MPO, granting final approval to all plans, projects and funding. This committee is comprised of elected and appointed officials representing local, state and federal governments or agencies having interest or responsibility in comprehensive transportation planning within the FLATS study area.

The voting Policy Committee members consist of:

- South Carolina Senator
- City of Florence, Mayor
- County Transportation Commission, Chairman
- South Carolina House of Representative, District 60
- South Carolina Department of Transportation Commissioner, District 07
- Town of Quinby, Mayor
- County Council Chairman, District 02
- County Councilmember, District 07
- City Councilmember, District 01

### **Policy Committee Non-Voting)**

This committee serves as an advisory board for the voting Policy Committee if necessary.

The non-voting Policy Committee members consist of:

- County Administrator
- County Planning Commission, Chairman
- City of Florence Planning Commission, Chairman
- City of Florence, Manager
- Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority, Executive Director
- Florence Regional Airport Commission, Chairman
- Florence Regional Airport, Administrator
- Federal Highway Administration, Division Administrator
- South Carolina Department of Transportation, Engineering Administrator, District 05
- South Carolina Department of Transportation, Deputy Secretary of Intermodal Planning
- County Planning, Director

## **Study Team**

The Study Team, which is established by the Policy Committee, also participates in the planning process. They provide a forum for discussion and resolution of relevant issues and monitors technical activities including the development of the UPWP and the TIP for recommendation to the Policy Committee. In addition, the Study Team directs and considers for recommendation to the Policy Committee all major studies and planning activities. The Study Team is made up of city and county staff, representatives from each jurisdiction within the FLATS urbanized area, along with representatives from the SCDOT and FHWA.

The Study Team members consist of the following representing the FLATS MPO area:

- County Planning Commission, Chairman
- County Planning, Director
- City of Florence Planning Commission, Chairman
- City of Darlington, Councilmember
- Darlington County, Planner
- Pee Dee Council of Governments, Special Projects Manager
- Pee Dee Council of Governments, Economic Development Manager
- Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority, Executive Director
- City of Florence Planning Commission, Chairman
- Federal Highway Administration, Community Planner
- South Carolina Department of Transportation, Traffic Engineer, District 05
- South Carolina Department of Transportation, Regional Planner
- South Carolina Department of Transportation, Pee Dee Regional Production Group Program Manager and Assistant Program Managers
- South Carolina Department of Transportation, Transit Regional Manager
- South Carolina Department of Transportation, Enhancement Coordinator

## **FLATS Products**

### **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Financial Plan**

The TIP Financial Plan is developed by FLATS staff, cooperatively with the SCDOT, and outlines transportation projects, within the FLATS study area, that federal funding has been allocated towards. The projects are listed in sections according to which Federal Program is funding them. The Financial Plan Sections Include:

- Guideshare Projects: (Annual Federal Allocation to an MPO, through the SCDOT – amount depending on MPO population as directed by the U.S. Census);
- Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP): (Statewide Competitive Federal Grant Program for Bicycle/Pedestrian projects);
- Capital Sales Tax Projects: (Does not utilize FLATS Federal funds. Listed for project status updates);
- Federal Transit Administration: (Required to be in the FLATS TIP before public transportation representative within the FLATS study area can utilize their allocated funding);
- Projects Exempt from Guideshare: (Does not utilize FLATS Federal funds. Projects provided by the SCDOT as federal funding is allocated to various types of projects that they are working on, within the FLATS study area.)

➤ **State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)**

As each MPO is federally required to develop a TIP, each state is required to develop a Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The STIP includes all federally funded transportation projects throughout the state. Projects included in FLATS MPO TIPs are included in the STIP once approved by the Policy Committee and after the FHWA and FTA make their required financial constraint and air quality findings, if necessary. Projects must be in the STIP before funding authorities, such as the FHWA, FTA and SCDOT can obligate or commit funding to project contracts.

### **Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)**

The current LRTP is the **2040 LRTP**. The LRTP describes the policies, strategies and facilities proposed for highway improvements within the MPO study area. The Plan includes environmental, social and intermodal considerations. The LRTP must provide a financially constrained 25-year vision of future transportation improvements. It is the process of developing a transportation model that shows the demand on the transportation network in the FLATS area. In response to federal mandates and the desires of local residents, the LRTP addresses all modes of transportation including automobile, bicycle, pedestrian, transit, air and rail movements. The projects identified in the LRTP are ranked and prioritized in accordance with ACT 114 as regulated by the SCDOT. South Carolina passed Act 114 in 2007 to create a balanced prioritization to establish project rankings. This Act added Sections 57-1-370 and 57-1-460 to the South Carolina of Laws. These sections provide details of the ranking process to be

used by the SCDOT, MPOs and Councils of Government (COGs). Federal law requires the LRTP be updated every five years, so the projects could change every five years, depending on need.

A Third-Party Consulting Firm is normally secured to assist staff in updating this document. A Transportation Advisory Committee is formed from local residents, business, etc. with input on transportation infrastructure improvements necessary for the FLATS study area. This committee along with staff, meet with the third-party consulting firm regularly during the development of the document. Upon completion, a 30-day public comment is provided before presenting the document to the FLATS Study Team for their recommendation to the FLATS Policy Committee for adoption/approval. An adopted/approved copy is provided for the SCDOT, FHWA and FTA.

### **Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)**

The UPWP serves as the basis for all FHWA, FTA, SCDOT and local funding assistance for transportation planning activities. This document is federally required as a basis and condition for all funding assistance for transportation planning to State, local and regional agencies. The UPWP's responsibilities are managed by the Public Law (PL) Funding Program. This is an 80/20% local match program. The authority for this requirement and for the Federal funding is found in two separate Federal legislative acts establishing transportation planning programs:

- 1) Title 23, U.S. Code Section 134, Section 5303(c) (Federal Aid Highway Act of 1962, as amended)
- 2) Title 49, U.S. Code Section 1603 et. al.: (Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964, as amended)

The UPWP is intended to be consistent with the metropolitan planning requirements of the Surface Transportation Program Bill. (STP) These Legislations require that the Metropolitan Transportation Planning (MTP) process shall provide for the establishment and use of a performance-based approach to transportation decision-making to support the nations goals described in section 150(b) of Title 23 and in section 5301(c) of Title 49. The UPWP outlines a framework for the work program which the FLATS staff is expected to accomplish and provides guidance with respect to a financial plan to support the Work Program.

The UPWP is the element of the planning process that identifies the activities to be completed by the FLATS staff and outside consultants. All planning activities must be listed in the UPWP to be eligible for the PL funds. The PL Funding Program is not the same as the Guideshare Federal

Program as listed in the TIP. This Program pays 80% of planning activity hours, with a local 20% match. The FLATS UPWP is updated every two years. A ten-day public comment period is required prior to presenting the updated UPWP to the FLATS Policy Committee for adoption. The adoption is certified by Resolution executed by the Policy Committee, Chairman or Vice Chairman and the Florence County Planning Director. An executed copy is forwarded to the SCDOT, FHWA and FTA for their records.

➤ **Quarterly Reports**

**Quarters Reported:** July – September; October – December; January – March; April – June. (Staff forwards to the SCDOT around the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month following the quarter reported.)

- FLATS staff maintains a quarterly time sheet of planning activities performed during a quarter. An invoice for staff total hours for the quarter is prepared;
- A FLATS PL Summary report is prepared for the quarter outlining staff’s planning activities in the appropriate category as specified in the UPWP;
- The invoice and the PL summary is forwarded to the SCDOT along with a cover letter regarding the 80% reimbursement for the quarter as directed by the PL Program;
- Florence County is responsible for the remaining 20% match for this Program.

➤ **Annual Report**

- At the end of the fiscal year (June 30<sup>th</sup>), the four PL summary reports serve as the FLATS MPO’s Annual Report outlining staff’s planning activities and hours for the entire fiscal year. Staff forwards the summary reports to the SCDOT. The quarterly invoices are not sent again.

## **TIP Amendment Process**

The process for amending the TIP involves staff evaluation, agency coordination, public review of the proposed action, and then approval by the MPO’s Policy Committee. When these actions are completed, the amended document is submitted to the SCDOT for further evaluation and approval to be incorporated into the STIP.

## **Policy Amendments**

Policy amendments are those that:

- Add a new project to the TIP, regardless if the project has been in a previous TIP or not (with the exception of the project types included in the administrative modification/corrections section below);
- Omit a programmed project from the TIP;
- Omit or change a regionally significant project feature of an existing project (for example, change the project termini);
- Change a project's funding; or
- Change a project description/scope or introducing any other change that is inconsistent with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation or will alter the NEPA determination.

### **Administrative Modifications/Corrections**

Administrative modifications/corrections include all changes other than policy amendments. These modifications usually involve:

- Shifting funds between years for an individual project or for projects within pools;
- Moving project staging between years without affecting the scope of the project;
- Affecting its expected completion within the TIP or affecting the current year staging;
- Changing the federal/state/local funding source;
- Changing the designated responsible agency with the original sponsor's approval;
- Changing project funding;
- Changing the program allocation to the projects;
- Adding new projects from unallocated money in the SCDOT budget;
- Adding bridge replacement or rehabilitation projects, pavement resurfacing or preservation projects, intersection or corridor improvement projects, interstate safety improvements or preservation and construction projects that are funded through the SCDOT via the National Highway Performance Program (NHPP), Surface Transportation Program (STP), Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) or Interstate Program; or
- Adding rural/small urban, elderly and disabled, Jobs Access/Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom transit projects.

### **Processing of Revisions**

Policy amendments are recommended by the FLATS Study Team for the FLATS Policy Committee's consideration and action. Formal public meetings are held for policy amendments to the TIP with a ten-day public comment period prior to the public meeting.

Administrative modification/corrections submitted to the FLATS staff by the SCDOT are corrected in the TIP and confirmed to the SCDOT by execution of a STIP/TIP Transmittal Form. The corrections are presented as information to the Study Team and Policy Committee during the next available meeting. Administrative modifications do not require committee review or approval.

## **TIP Funding**

### **Guideshare Funds**

Funds for road improvements are allocated by SCDOT through the Federal Guideshare Program. The S.C. Highway Commission sets aside a specific amount of FHWA and SCDOT funds each year and distributes the money among the state's eleven MPOs and Councils of Governments (COGs) based on population and vehicle miles of travel in each region. The Guideshare sets the annual budget for highway improvements within each MPO or COG, and total project costs in any given year normally cannot exceed the Guideshare apportionment (a fiscally constrained TIP).

Road improvements may include constructing widening existing roads, new roads, adding traffic lanes to existing roads, constructing paved shoulders, access management, corridor improvements, intersection improvements, installing traffic signals, constructing sidewalks or bike lanes, or making safety improvements. Minor maintenance activities such as resurfacing and patching potholes are not funded through FLATS, but are handled directly by SCDOT or City maintenance units.

The SCDOT advises the MPO of its Federal apportionment from the Guideshare Program for each fiscal year during the six year TIP. SCDOT developed an innovative financing plan in 1998 to accelerate construction of many projects that were built between 1998 and 2007, and issued bonds to fund the plan. As a result of this, the FLATS MPO devotes an average of **\$800,000** per year of their Guideshare Allocations to debt service for the accelerated projects completed within the FLATS study area..

### **Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)**

The Transportation Alternatives Program was established as a result of one of the Federal Surface Transportation Bills, Moving Ahead for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (MAP-21). The Transportation Alternatives Program is a statewide competitive grant program. The SCDOT Highway Commission is the decision making body for the applications submitted for this program. The

eligible project categories authorized in this program and by the SCDOT Commission are pedestrian facilities, bicycle facilities, streetscaping projects and enhancement of public transit services if applicable. Exclusive landscaping and scenic beautification projects are not allowed under this program. If the Commission chooses a project within the FLATS study area boundary, FLATS staff is notified for an administrative change to include this project in the TAP section of the TIP.

### **Federal Transit Administration Projects**

The projects listed in this section on the TIP Financial Plan are Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funds allocated based on urbanized areas. Urban funding can be used for capital, operations and some maintenance areas. However, the funds under the Section 5307 Program can be utilized for Planning. FTA funds are provided directly to the Transit recipient. Urban funding provides the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) a specific authorization level amount annually for transit programs. Several important goals of the DOT include safety, state of good repair, performance and program efficiency.

The FTA formula programs for transportation agencies within the FLATS urbanized area are:

1. FTA Section 5307 Small Urban Program;
2. FTA Section 5309 Capital Investment Program or Vehicle Acquisition;
3. FTA Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program;

The FLATS program supports public transportation agencies and provides information or data necessary to assist in their efforts to serve their clients. The transportation agencies within the FLATS urbanized area that receive FTA urban funds directly and are required to be listed in the FLATS TIP and STIP are:

- The Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority (PDRTA);
- The Florence Senior Citizens Association;
- The Florence County Disabilities and Special Needs Board;
- The Darlington County Council on Aging; and
- The Darlington County Disabilities and Special Needs Board.

### **Capital Sales Tax Projects**

In 1997, as a result of a local Referendum, Florence County implemented a one-cent sales tax program to improve the infrastructure on County roadways. The Referendum called for a

combination of the one-cent sales tax and the South Carolina’s SIB match 2:1. The local tax contribution to this program was anticipated to generate approximately \$148M, with the SCTIB’s initial allocation of \$250M to match funds raised by Florence County. Fourteen projects were selected and prioritized by the residents of Florence County, with hopes that the first six projects could be completed as a result of this Referendum.

In 2013, it became apparent that the total funds the program would generate potentially would only be able to fund the first five projects. The SIB allocated an additional approximate \$90M to the program, which will allow all six projects to be completed. This section is listed in the TIP to inform the public as the SCDOT allocates funds for preliminary engineering, right-of-way and construction to each project.

In 2014, Florence County implemented a new 1 cent sales tax program. Unlike the first capital sales tax program, which was utilized for the widening of six specific highways, this referendum is utilized for resurfacing, paving, water infrastructure, Fire Stations and EMS facilities, just to mention a few. Florence County plans to renew the Sales Tax Referendum when available.

### **Projects Exempt from Guideshare**

These projects do not utilize FLATS Federal funds. As the SCDOT utilizes other federal program funding for transportation related projects within the FLATS study area, FLATS staff is provided this information from the SCDOT to include in the TIP for information purposes to the FLATS committees. The type funding programs these projects receive apply to but are not limited to:

- Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)
- Surface Transportation Program (STP)
- National Highway Performance Program (NHPP)
- Interstate Maintenance (IM)
- Preventative Maintenance (PM)

The types of projects include but are not limited to:

- Bridge Rehabs
- Bridge Replacement
- Pavement Preservation
- Pavement Resurfacing
- Intersection Improvements
- Section Corridor Improvements

- Interstate Safety Improvements
- Interstate Pavement Preservation Project Grouping
- Interstate Preservation & Reconstruction
- Interstate Preservation/OGFC Grouping
- Safety

## Public Participation Process (PPP)

The FLATS MPO is required under Title 23 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 450 to develop, maintain and follow a PPP. This Process fulfills requirements outlined in the Final Rule for Statewide and Metropolitan Transportation Planning as published in the Federal Register on February 14, 2007 by the FHWA and FTA. The PPP details the approach, values and activities that are followed to ensure full and effective public participation in the planning process. Engaging the public often and early in the planning process is critical to the success of any transportation plan or program in addition to being required by various federal and state laws. Such legislation reinforces the necessity of public involvement, calling on MPOs such as FLATS to provide citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agencies, private providers of transportation and other stakeholders with a reasonable opportunity to participate and comment on plans and programs.

A variety of methods are used to solicit public input, including small group presentations, news releases, distribution of printed and electronic newsletters, surveys, public workshops, development of corridor studies and area plans and public hearings. just to name a few. Specific details regarding the various locations the documents are located for input are shown on the FLATS webpage. These venues include, but are not limited to the following:

- The Morning News published advertising;
- The Florence County Planning and Building Inspections Department FLATS webpage located at <http://www.florenceco.org/offices/planning/flats/>;
- The Florence County Planning and Building Inspections Department Lobby located at 518 S. Irby Street, Florence, SC;
- The Reference Desk at The Drs. Bruce and Lee Foundation Library located at 509 S. Dargan Street, Florence, SC.

A 45-day public comment period is held for the PPP prior to presenting to the FLATS Study Team for recommendation to the FLATS Policy Committee for approval.

### ➤ **FLATS Newsletter**

In an effort to reach more of the public, the FLATS staff develops an annual Newsletter regarding transportation plans, programs, projects and documents to inform the public of FLATS MPO activities and to emphasize the importance of their input. The Newsletter is normally completed in time for the fiscal year-end committee meetings in June of each year. A copy of the Newsletter is given to the audience attending the FLATS Policy Committee meeting. Other venues for the public:

- Posted on the FLATS webpage;
- The Florence County Planning and Building Department's Lobby, 518 S. Irby Street, Florence, SC;
- The Drs. Bruce and Lee Foundation Library Reference Desk, 509 S. Dargan Street, Florence, SC;
- Numerous copies placed at local businesses within Florence County;
- Staff notifies, via email, the members on a FLATS Distribution List that the Newsletter is posted on the FLATS webpage and located at the various locations for distribution. In addition, recipients on this list are notified as new activity, business, projects or report information is available. The list affiliates FLATS staff with area residents who have expressed an interest in the FLATS MPO activities, many Committees, Government Entities, area businesses, etc.

## **Conclusion**

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

## **Certification**

An annual self-certification process, which certifies that the FLATS transportation planning process complies with federal requirements, is included in the UPWP, which is adopted every two years.

## List of Acronyms

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| COG      | Council of Governments  |
| FAST Act | Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act                   |
| FHWA     | Federal Highway Administration                                |
| FTA      | Federal Transit Administration                                |
| FLATS    | Florence Area Transportation Study                            |
| HSIP     | Highway Safety Improvement Program                            |
| JARC     | Jobs Access/Reverse Commute                                   |
| IM       | Interstate Maintenance  |
| L RTP    | Long Range Transportation Plan                                |
| MAP-21   | Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Act |
| MTP      | Metropolitan Transportation Planning                          |
| MPO      | Metropolitan Planning Organization                            |
| NHPP     | National Highway Performance Program                          |
| NHS      | National Highway System                                       |
| PDRTA    | Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority                     |
| PM       | Preventative Maintenance                                      |
| PPP      | Public Participation Process                                  |
| SCDOT    | South Carolina Department of Transportation                   |
| SCTIB    | South Carolina Transportation Infrastructure Bank             |
| STIP     | Statewide Transportation Improvement Program                  |
| STP      | Surface Transportation Program                                |
| TAP      | Transportation Alternatives Program                           |
| TIP      | Transportation Improvement Program                            |
| UPWP     | Unified Planning Work Program                                 |
| USDOT    | United States Department of Transportation                    |

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