

South Carolina Mitigation Association
Membership Quarterly Meeting
March 9, 2022 | 10:00 AM
SC Ports Authority, Charleston, SC Hybrid Meeting

I. Opening

Daniel Johnson, SCMA Vice President, welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order. He noted the meeting was hybrid.

Mr. Johnson thanked American Mitigation Company for sponsoring the meeting and noted that sponsorships are available for all Membership Quarterly Meetings at \$250 for members and \$350 for non-members. He also requested members send ideas for meeting venues in Greenville, Columbia, and Charleston. The SCMA is meeting across the state to engage more members.

Mark Messersmith, Permitting Manager with the SC Ports Authority, welcomed everyone. The port in is the 8th largest container port in the country. He noted that they need mitigation plans and banks. He posed his own questions related to scoring of mitigation projects with the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). He wondered about agencies and NGOs not using mitigation banks when it is required by law.

II. *IIJA: Discretionary Funding Opportunities for South Carolina*
Matt Gehman, Principal and Senior Vice President, TranSystems Corporation
Robert A. Mariner, Vice President, Grants, TranSystems Corporation

Matt Gehman is a Principal and Senior Vice President with TranSystems Corporation, a mid-sized transportation infrastructure engineering firm with three offices in South Carolina. Matt is a freight transportation planning professional that works out of TranSystems North Charleston office, which provides roadway, bridge, civil and railroad design, and construction inspection engineering.

Rob Mariner is the Vice President of Grants for TranSystems Corporation and has over 20 years of experience in the transportation industry promoting domestic and international policies. He has represented USDOT as a speaker across the country and with foreign governments and organizations on various transportation policy matters, including topics such as MAP-21 Reauthorization, the \$5.6 billion TIGER discretionary grant program, the \$4.5 billion INFRA discretionary grant program, and the Department of Transportation's credit programs.

Mr. Gehman introduced the company, [TranSystems Corporation](#), a national engineering firm focused solely on transportation. Locally, they have worked on the Navy Base Intermodal Facility, Camp Hall (Volvo) Rail Build-in, Inland ports in Greer and Dillon, and more.

Mr. Mariner provided the IIJA update. He wrote policies and procedures for grant evaluations and for grant administration post selection for the Department of Transportation. He reviewed federal grant programs and discussed how to be more competitive with matching funds. Mr.

Mariner explained his Four P's of successful grant applications - Prioritize, Prepare, Present, Promote.

A question was posed on what SC is doing to ensure access to the infrastructure funds. Mr. Gehman replied that the SCDOT is securing \$200 million in matching funds that will help in its project applications but also allow SCDOT access to funds that other DOTs are not using. In 2022 there will be \$5 billion in discretionary grant funding in existing programs. There will be an additional 17-20 new programs with possibly an additional \$10 billion. Some SC organizations are proactive, such as the SC Ports Authority, SCDOT, the City of Greenville, Beaufort, Berkeley County, and Greer (SCDOT, SC Ports Authority, BMW and Norfolk Southern private public partnership) and have been successful in many of these grants. Mr. Gehman recommended reaching out to congressional representatives about securing funds for SC.

Mr. Johnson noted that state entities often pursue these grants. The last four years SC has received three DOT and two EPA grants. Mr. Mariner reminded us that these grants provide great opportunities, but to be patient. The timelines may be longer than many private investors are accustomed to.

III. Committee Updates

- **SCDOT Partnership Committee:** Mr. Johnson noted the Mitigation Dashboard did run into technical difficulties but should be up and running soon. The SCDOT continues to solicit feedback on financial assurances to support solicitations. The SCDOT has expressed concern with the SQT and have their own team running tests on the tools. Their report on these tests will be shared with the SCMA. Three solicitations are expected soon.
- **USACE Meeting:** Bob Perry, Ross Nelson, Tory Grayson and Mr. Johnson met with the Amanda Heath and David Wilson of the USACE on February 24. The USACE is advertising a position to assist David Wilson. The USACE asked SCMA to express support for making the WRDA more flexible to our SC congressional delegation. Mr. Wilson is working on checklist for the SOP revisions. The USACE's formal position is that it is operating under the current SOP and has not adopted the SQT.
- **Partnership Committee:** Sydni Redmond, Co-Chair, introduced the new SCMA scholarship to membership. She circulated the draft document and asked for comments. She requested volunteers to review the applications mid-July. She mentioned fundraising ideas for the scholarship including a clay shoot and raffle. Mr. Redmond thanked Emory McClary for kicking off the social media efforts on Instagram and LinkedIn. Outreach and sharing information on the SCMA platform continue to be a priority including at conferences and workshops, and through partnerships such as the SC Land Trusts and Carolina Wetlands. Sponsorships are available for all the Quarterly Membership Meetings at \$250 for members and \$350 for non-members.
- **Technical Committee:** Mr. Johnson explained that the Stream Qualification Tool was created to standardize evaluating inter-functional degradation and functional lift. It was

developed in NC and has spread across many districts with a few tweaks. The SCDNR has led the development of this tool in SC. The USACE is evaluating this tool for adoption. The SCMA Technical Committee has commented on versions of the SQT. Tory Grayson, Technical Committee Chair, commented that they are evaluating every aspect of the SQT and converting credits between the SOP and SQT. There is a different conversion rate for every type of impact. The Technical Committee is running tests on all types of impacts. He encouraged everyone to participate in the testing process or Technical Committee because of its importance.

Clemson University is holding a workshop April 19-20 that will include an introduction to the SQT.

Mr. Johnson reelected on Mr. Messersmith's question on ranking and scoring of mitigation projects. This is really a question only the USACE can answer. He noted the revised SOP will assess wetlands differently. The USACE will differentiate wetland improvements and preservation based on the condition of the wetlands. The current SOP puts all in the same category. The new SOP will apply a larger scale.

Mr. Johnson requested the members get involved in the committees.

III. New Business

Larry Faulkenberry made a motion to consult with the IRT to again conduct in-person meetings to discuss their comments received on a Mitigation Banking Instrument (MBI) provided by a bank sponsor. This meeting would take place within 45 days of the deadline of the Corp of Engineers Rule (33 CFR 332.8(d) (6-7)). Bob Perry seconded the motion. Ms. Redmond noted this has been a point of discussion with the USACE. Mr. Johnson confirmed that at the last meeting the USACE has hired an additional attorney and is soliciting a position to assist David Wilson, both of which will help with timeliness. In addition, revising the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) may allow for additional staffing. The SCMA is approaching this in a manner of *how can we assist?* Mr. Perry shared that in early 2020 the SCMA did submit a letter to the Corps District Commander on timeliness. The response, signed by the Major (not the Colonel), came in May 2021 stating that they were aware of the timeline and were trying to adhere but then listed reasons why they were not adhering to the timeline, including COVID and delays in the IRT. It was also discussed in the SCMA – USACE July 2021 meeting. The SCMA members have met with Tim Scott and Lindsey Graham's offices to encourage funding for the USACE.

Mr. Faulkenberry stated his point is time is valuable. These delays are costly.

Mr. Perry motioned that this matter be referred to the Executive Committee. Mr. Faulkenberry seconded the motion, which carried.

Mr. Perry stated that the Conservation Act passed with funding for the Conservation Bank and other appropriations for about \$33 million. An additional \$30 million has been approved by the House. This funding would come through the Conservation and Antiquities Act, which also

considers flooding and other issues. The Office of Resiliency has been created and is involved in this. This Act also allocates Board seats on the Conservation Bank for the SCDOT and Department of Commerce putting them in a direct position to approve or disapprove funding projects. Mr. Perry noted that land costs are high, and this puts our industry in a position of getting sponsors but not being able to buy a whole tract. The Conservation Bank may be able to fund projects if certain criteria are being met such as public access, species protection, and cultural resources

Lyles Cooper noted that 75% of the \$30-\$60 million is earmarked for SCDNR for acquisition and maintenance. Only 25% is for private land conservation. The Office of Resiliency is focused on private homeowners in lower income areas or lower income individuals to rebuild or to buy them out. Focus may broaden with time.

Ms. Cooper asked if furloughed golf courses can have easements if it has wetlands on it and is adjacent to state and protected lands? Mr. Johnson stated that there is a model to support that.

Attachments:

Attachment A: Speaker Bios

Attachment B: [PowerPoint Presentation](#)

Attachment C: [Recording of the Meeting](#)

Attachment D: Attendee List

Attachment A: Speaker Bios

Matt Gehman is a Principal and Senior Vice President with TranSystems Corporation, a mid-sized transportation infrastructure engineering firm with three offices in South Carolina. Matt is a freight transportation planning professional that works out of TranSystems North Charleston office which provides roadway, bridge, civil and railroad design, and construction inspection engineering. Matt has been with TranSystems for over 20 years. He attended Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Urban Planning and Regional Development.

Matt's professional career has focused on program management, technical analyses, and planning for both commercial marine and inland waterway port terminals. His professional experience includes domestic and international projects involving marine container terminal evaluations, terminal operation analyses and master planning of container terminals, general cargo facilities, inland waterway ports and intermodal rail facilities.

Over the past 10 years Matt has been involved or managed freight infrastructure Federal grant applications including assisting the SCPA with their Express Corridor BUILD Grant. The BUILD grant application was cosponsored by SCDOT, Norfolk Southern Railway and BMW, and a portion of that grant award is funding the construction of the expansion of Inland Port Greer. Matt is currently managing Federal grant application opportunities for APM Terminals capital improvement projects in Alabama and Louisiana. AMPT is the third largest container terminal operator in the world and subsidiary of AP Moller – Maersk.

Rob Mariner is the Vice President of Grants for TranSystems Corporation. Rob brings more than 20 years of experience in the transportation industry promoting domestic and international policies. He has represented USDOT as a speaker across the country and with foreign governments and organizations on various transportation policy matters, including topics such as MAP-21 Reauthorization (authorized as the FAST Act), the \$5.6 billion TIGER discretionary grant program, the \$4.5 billion INFRA (formerly FASTLANE) discretionary grant program, and the Department of Transportation's credit programs (e.g., TIFIA and RRIF Loans and Private Activity Bonds).

Rob directed the development of USDOT's signature \$5.6 billion TIGER discretionary grant program, leading a 75+ person, multi-modal team responsible for the implementation, administration, and delivery of more than 420 surface transportation projects across multiple modes of transportation in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

Rob has held various positions within the US Department of Transportation including Deputy Director. He holds a MA in Transportation Policy, Operations and Logistics from George Mason University and a BS in Civil Engineering from Morgan State University.

Attachment D: Attendees

First name	Last name	Company Name	Attended
Fred	Barber	Aquatics Restoration	In-person
Robby	Bowen	Aquatics Restoration Inc	In-person
Gary	Brown	Goodwyn Mills Cawood, LLC	Virtually
Tim	Burns	Passarella & Associates, Inc.	In-person
Daniel	Coggin	Coggin Asset Management, LLC	In-person
Allen	Conger	Wood	Virtually
Lyles	Cooper	Pee Dee Land Trust	In-person
Tucker	Creed	Sandy Creek Partners, LLC	Virtually
Kip	Dillihay	Sandy Creek Partners, LLC	Virtually
Rheta	DiNovo	RES	Virtually
Larry	Faulkenberry	Southern Land & Investment	In-person
Jerry	Faulkenberry	Southern Land & Investment	In-person
Monica	Folk	Norfolk Southern Railway/Brosnan Forest	Virtually
Adrienne	Graham	SCMA	In-person
Tory	Grayson	Palustrine Group, LLC	In-person
Daniel	Johnson	Wildlands Engineering, Inc.	In-person
Kristin	Knight-Meng	KCI Technologies, Inc.	Virtually
Emory	McClary	American Mitigation Company	In-person
Mark	Messersmith	SC Ports Authority	Guest
Jonathan	Page	River Mechanics PLLC	In-person
Bob	Perry	Palustrine Group	In-person
Sydni	Redmond	Passarella & Associates, Inc.	In-person
Ryan	Smith	LMG (Davey Resource Group)	Virtually
Matthew	Thomas	JMT	In-person
Phillip	Todd	North State Environmental	Virtually
Joel	Wells	Norfolk Southern Corp	Virtually
G Alan	Wood	American Forest Management	Virtually