

# Regional Transit Development Plan

Southern Georgia Regional Commission

**BOOK 2**

**Appendix: Public Involvement Documentation**

August 2025



In partnership with



Blue Cypress Consulting  
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Spatial Plans

# Public Involvement Documentation

This Appendix includes summaries of engagement activities carried out during the Southern Georgia Regional Transit Development Plan development process, along with the Public Participation Plan that guided these activities. These documents are provided in the below order:

- Public Participation Plan
- Stakeholder Interview Summary
- PAC Meeting Minutes
- Public Meeting Summaries
- Public Survey Summaries

The following sections provide concise overviews of engagement activities, ahead of the summaries that follow.

## 1.1 Public Communications

The planning team launched a project-specific website at the beginning of the planning process. The website included an option for members of the public to subscribe to project outreach list. The project team periodically sent email campaigns to the outreach list to inform the public of events and input opportunities. In addition to website updates and email campaigns, the planning team prepared and distributed social media ads, hard-copy handouts, and flyers to promote the planning effort and encourage participation in public meetings and surveys. The team also engaged with local media outlets to help raise awareness about the plan.

## 1.2 Project Advisory Committee Meetings

The Project Advisory Committee (PAC) consisted of representatives from across the region, transit operators, and state agencies. The PAC met twice during the planning process. The first meeting occurred in-person on January 9, 2025, at the Southern Georgia Regional Commission's (SGRC's) Valdosta office, and the second meeting occurred virtually on March 25, 2025. The PAC's input shaped the understanding of transit needs and helped prioritize transit service recommendations.

## 1.3 Stakeholder Interviews

In the fall of 2024 and winter of 2025, the project team held ten individual or group interviews with key stakeholder organizations. These interviews included SGRC departments, staff from state agencies, city and county representatives, nonprofit organizations, and transit operators.

## 1.4 Public Meetings

Two public meetings were held during the planning process. These meetings launched the two public input periods during the plan development process, whereby the public shared input to inform the plan's development via community surveys, as described in Section 1.5.

- The first public meeting, held on January 9, 2025, at the SGRC Valdosta office, primarily served as an educational meeting, giving people the opportunity to review analysis completed to date by the project team. Community members were invited to provide input to help shape the TDP vision and goals. The meeting corresponded with the first community survey launch.
- The second public meeting, held on April 17, 2025, via Zoom, provided an update on the status of the project, an overview of the transit needs at a high-level, and a presentation of potential transit service alternatives (including transit expansion, transit enhancements, and administrative tools and guidance). The meeting served as the official launch for the second community survey.

## 1.5 Community Surveys

To collect more detailed input as well as hear from those unable to attend the public meetings, the project team developed and distributed two community surveys. The project team provided signage and physical copies of surveys to support SGRC with the implementation of a public roadshow to further the reach of the community surveys.

- The first survey, hosted via SurveyMonkey and distributed as physical copies, launched on January 9, 2025, and closed February 28, 2025. Questions focused on individual travel patterns, awareness of existing transit services, desired characteristics of transit offerings, and regional destinations. Eighty-five people completed the survey. Response rates varied by question.
- The second survey, hosted via SurveyMonkey and distributed as physical copies, launched on April 17, 2025, and closed on May 18, 2025. Participants provided their feedback on alternatives for transit service expansion and enhancement. Two hundred and fifteen people completed the survey. Response rates varied by question.

# Regional Transit Development Plan

Southern Georgia Regional Commission

## Public Participation Plan

November 2024



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## List of Acronyms

<b>DCH</b>	Georgia Department of Community Health
<b>DHS</b>	Georgia Department of Human Services
<b>FTA</b>	Federal Transit Administration
<b>GDOT</b>	Georgia Department of Transportation
<b>PAC</b>	Project Advisory Committee
<b>PPP</b>	Public Participation Plan
<b>PST</b>	Project Study Team
<b>RTDP</b>	Regional Transit Development Plan
<b>SGRC</b>	Southern Georgia Regional Commission

# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Overview

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC) received a grant through the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Areas of Persistent Poverty (Program to study and assess the region's transit opportunities, with focus on expanding equitable access to transit for essential services. This planning effort will culminate in a new Regional Transit Development Plan (RTDP) for the 18-county Southern Georgia Region.

## 1.2 Document Purpose & Context

The Public Participation Plan (PPP) details the approach to public and stakeholder involvement in the RTDP process. The PPP clarifies how the Project Study Team will conduct engagement activities cohesively with technical planning work to arrive at a plan that represents the community's vision for regional transit.

The FTA's Areas of Persistent Poverty Program emphasizes that the grant activities include equity-focused community outreach and engagement of underserved communities. As such, the goals of this RTDP public participation program are:

1. Increase awareness of transportation needs.
2. Educate the public about the regional transit planning process.
3. Make participation easy and accessible, particularly to underserved communities such as low income populations, the elderly, and persons with limited English proficiency.
4. Build implementation support for cross-disciplinary actions to improve overall access and mobility to jobs, education, healthcare, and other resources throughout the region.

## 1.3 Roles and Responsibilities

The public participation program's success will rely upon each entity carrying out specific roles, as outlined below:

### Consultant Team (Blue Cypress and Spatial Plans)

- Develop materials for project communications, engagement meetings, online survey, and roadshow activities.
- Provide guidance on outreach tactics.
- Facilitate PAC meetings, public meetings, and stakeholder interviews.
- Share engagement results in a timely manner.

### Project Study Team

- Made up of SGRC key project management staff and others as determined appropriate by SGRC (e.g., GDOT).
- Review and provide feedback of all engagement and communications materials.
- Partner with the consultant team to spread the word about public outreach opportunities (surveys, public meetings, etc.)
- Participate in PAC and public meetings.
- Distribute materials for public input roadshows and other communications as described later in this document.

### Project Advisory Committee (PAC)

- Participate in two meetings during the process.
- Help champion the planning process by sharing communications within local communities.

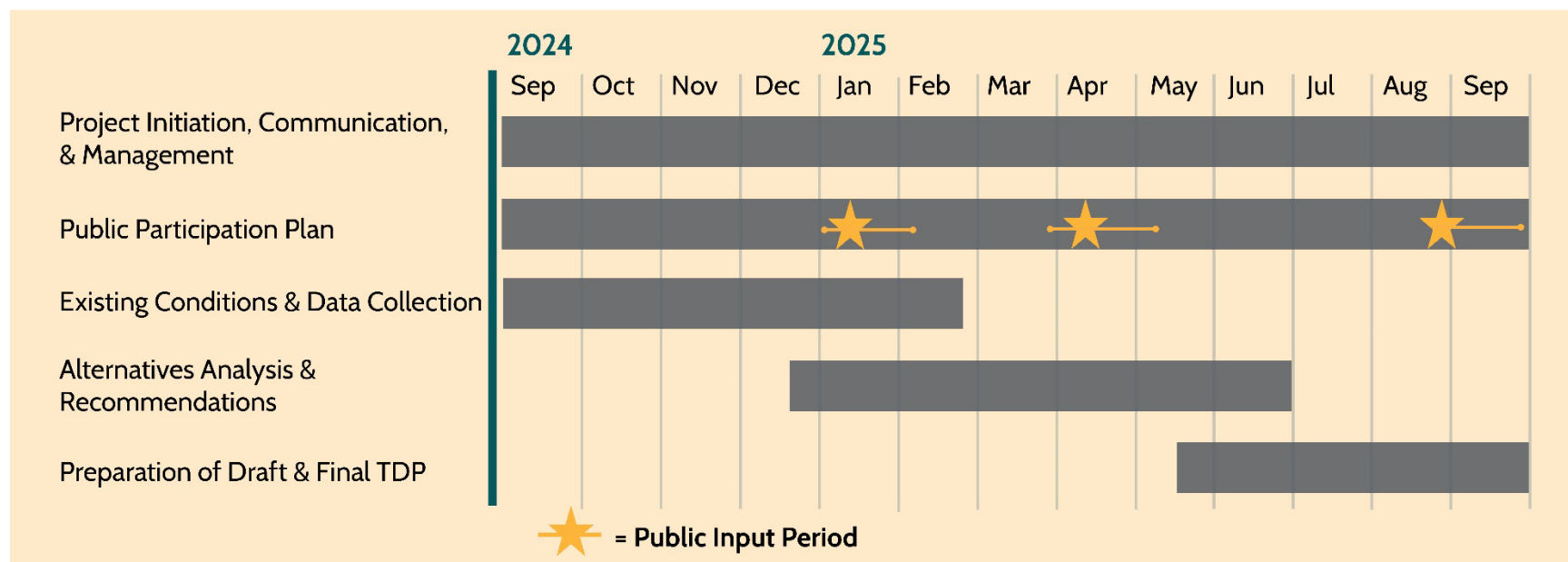
### Southern Georgia Regional Council

- Be informed of the planning process and help to raise awareness, particularly during public input periods.
- Review plan documents and consider adopting the plan at the end of the process.

## 1.4 Public Involvement Schedule

As shown in Figure 1, the RTDP process includes two major public input periods. The following section of this PPP goes into detail about the activities that will occur within these periods.

Figure 1: Project Schedule



## 2.0 Outreach Strategies and Tactics

The RTDP process includes two key touchpoints with transit stakeholders as well as two broader outreach efforts to hear from the general public about transit needs. These outreach periods coincide with key points in the plan's development, specifically, 1) near completion of existing conditions/initiation of alternatives consideration and 2) during alternatives assessment/recommendations refinement. Interviews with stakeholders involved in public transit policy and operations or that serve with populations reliant on public transit will bring more voices to the planning process. A third call for public feedback will take place at the end of the process to allow for formal submissions of comments prior to the plan being considered for adoption. This multifaceted outreach approach will help ensure that the transit needs of different populations are considered.

### 2.1 Project Advisory Committee

The PAC will serve an essential role in guiding the RTDP's development. SGRC, in coordination with other members of the Project Study Team, will confirm the makeup of the PAC. Transit professionals, local government representatives, and representatives from state agencies (GDOT, DHS, and DCH) will be invited to participate. Once SGRC finalizes the PAC roster, the consultant team will develop an invitation letter to introduce the PAC member role and announce the first meeting. The PAC will meet twice during the planning process. The first meeting will take place in-person, and the second will be facilitated through Zoom or another web-based platform. Table 1 provides the purpose and timing of each PAC meeting. A list of individuals to be invited to participate in the PAC is in Section 5.

Table 1: Project Advisory Committee Meetings

PAC Meeting	Topics	Timeline
#1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning process introduction</li> <li>Existing conditions highlights</li> <li>Transit vision/goals/preliminary alternatives</li> </ul>	January 2025
#2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identified needs</li> <li>Alternatives analysis</li> <li>Recommendations under consideration</li> </ul>	March/April 2025

### 2.2 Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews will take place during the Existing Conditions phase. The project team will organize and facilitate interviews with up to 15 stakeholders, grouping stakeholders into focus groups as appropriate to maximize the efficacy of the interviews as well as cross jurisdiction collaboration. The goal of the stakeholder interviews is to hear from every county in the region, as well as non-governmental organizations that serve populations who may use transit, such as health and human services agencies, colleges and universities, and major employers. Proposed stakeholder interviews are identified in the Section 5.

## 2.3 Public Meetings

Two public information and outreach meetings will be held, each shortly after the Project Advisory Committee meetings (as shown in Table 2). The first public meeting will be held in-person, and the second will be hosted virtually via Zoom or a similar web meeting platform. The consultant team will use a mix of input mechanisms to hear from the public, such as interactive boards and polling exercises. The information shared at the public meetings will be similar, but higher-level, to that presented at the PAC meetings.

**Table 2: Public Meetings**

Public Meeting	Discussion Topics	Timeline
#1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning process introduction</li> <li>• Existing conditions highlights</li> <li>• Transit vision/goals</li> </ul>	January 2025
#2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identified needs</li> <li>• Recommendations under consideration</li> </ul>	March/April 2025

## 2.4 Public Input Periods and Activities

Commencing with each public meeting, public input periods (lasting approximately one month each) will give community members the opportunity to weigh in on transit priorities and preferences through online surveys twice in the planning process. The final call for public feedback will allow for formal comments on the draft RTDP prior to the plan being considered for adoption.

The consultant team will support more robust stakeholder and public engagement program over the 18-county region by providing roadshow materials for SGRC to utilize and deploy via four sub-regions (Waycross, Tifton, Douglas, and Valdosta) to build awareness and gather input from residents in / around these areas during the two rounds of public input during the plan's development. The consultant team anticipates using methods that have been effective for past regional planning efforts, such as hard copy surveys and handouts with QR codes. A logistics guide will be developed for each roadshow, and the Project Study Team will have the opportunity to give feedback and suggestions.

Execution of the public input roadshows will rely on the Project Study Team's support. The consultant team will outline in the roadshow logistics guides how the SGRC staff and other local stakeholders can help with publicizing plan information and encouraging public participation.

## 3.0 Public Communications

Effective communications will underly the success of the public participation program. The use of various media, both online and physical materials, will help make the RTDP process accessible to all. The consultant team will ensure that the project meets all public participation policies and protocols of the SGRC transit program (as outlined in the SGRC Title VI Plan).

### 3.1 Information Sharing

A project website will be the primary tool for sharing information as the planning process progresses. The consultant team will develop and host a user-friendly website built on Wix and manage updates throughout the planning process. A translation function will be enabled to allow for an auto-translation to Spanish. The consultant team will post interim project documents and meeting materials to ensure that the public has adequate background information before participating in the RTDP surveys.

### 3.2 Public Facing Project Contacts

The SGRC project manager, or her/his designee, will be the key contact for questions or comments about the RTDP. In addition, the consultant team will create and manage a project-specific email address for sending and receiving project communications to the public.

### 3.3 Promotional Materials

Promotional materials throughout the RTDP process will be drafted by the consultant team and provided to SGRC for review, approval, and distribution. The consultant team envisions creating social media matrices with share graphics and proposed caption language to promote the public meetings and input periods. The consultant team will meet with SGRC Communications staff to help ensure that project communications meet SGRC branding requirements and other preferences.

The consultant team will also utilize email campaigns, a built-in functionality of Wix, to promote the public input opportunities. The project website will have a subscription button that will allow community members to sign up for project updates. The Project Advisory Committee and Southern Georgia Regional Council members will be added to the outreach list before the first campaign.

In addition to digital promotions, the consultant team will prepare limited hard-copy promotional materials, such as flyers and postcard handouts. The consultant team will rely on the SGRC team to distribute physical materials in the region.

## 4.0 Public Involvement Tracking and Evaluation

### 4.1 Documentation

The Project Study Team will work together to facilitate transparency in the planning analysis and how public input is being incorporated in the plan. As summary documentation is completed and approved by SGRC, the consultant team will post the documents to the project website.

### 4.2 Evaluation Methods

The success of the RTDP will be measured, in part, by how effective it is at reaching public transit stakeholders and incorporating their feedback. The consultant team will monitor engagement statistics throughout the project to understand how specific engagement techniques are working. The Project Study Team is also encouraged to share feedback that they may receive from regional stakeholders.

Table 3: Engagement Monitoring

Goal	Monitoring Tools
Increase awareness of transportation needs and educate the public about the regional transit planning process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Website traffic and unique visitors</li> <li>Public and stakeholder feedback</li> <li>Subscriptions to project outreach list</li> </ul>
Make participation easy and accessible, particularly to underserved communities such as low income populations, the elderly, and persons with limited English proficiency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participant polls at stakeholder and public meetings</li> <li>Comparison of survey participant demographics to overall region demographics</li> <li>Spatial distribution of survey participants across the 18-county region</li> </ul>
Build implementation support for cross-disciplinary actions to improve overall access and mobility to jobs, education, healthcare, and other resources throughout the region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documented interviews and stakeholder meeting summaries</li> <li>Data collected from interactive input tools for each meeting</li> <li>Documented ideas and strategy refinements throughout the planning process</li> <li>RTDP adoption by Regional Council</li> </ul>

## 5.0 Stakeholder Lists

Table A1: Project Advisory Committee

### Transit Providers

Name		Organization	Title/Role
Megan	Fowler	Southern Georgia Regional Commission Transit	Transit Director
Micheal	Erwin	Southern Georgia Regional Commission Transit	
Stone	Pinson	Southern Georgia Regional Commission Transit	
Larry	Ogden	City of Valdosta Public Works/Valdosta On-Demand Transit	Public Works Administrator
Selah	Hampton	Via	
Arielle	Panitch	Via	
James	Carter	Via	

### Other SGRC and State Contacts

Name		Organization	Title/Role
Johnathan	McLoyd	GDOT Division of Intermodal	Transit Planner
Phil	Peevy	GDOT Division of Intermodal	Transit Planning & Environmental Manager
Kimberly	Bryant	GDOT Transit Program Delivery Area 8	Transit Project Manager
Algenia	Skinner	GDOT Transit Program Delivery Area 7	Transit Project Manager
Carrie	Toole	GDOT Division of Intermodal	Transit Assistant Program Delivery Manager
Scott	Courson	Southern Georgia Regional Commission	Area Agency on Aging
Amy	Jones	Southern Georgia Regional Commission	Workforce Development
Roberta	Lovett	Southern Georgia Regional Commission	Executive Director
Cheryl	Herrington	Georgia Department of Human Services	
Wendy	Guinn	Georgia Department of Human Services	
		Georgia Department of Community Health	

### Elected Officials or Administrative Leaders

Name		Organization	Title/Role
Jason	Hill	SGRC Executive Committee	Ben Hill County
Lee	Gowen	SGRC Executive Committee	Charlton County
Buddy	Duke	SGRC Executive Committee	Cook County
Joyce	Evans	SGRC Executive Committee	Lowndes County



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Dennis	Fender	SGRC Executive Committee	Lanier County SGRC Council County Rep
Neal	Bennett	SGRC Executive Committee	Pierce County
Barbara	King	SGRC Executive Committee	Ware County
James	Maxwell	Brooks County	Commissioner
Vivian	Cody-Miller	City of Valdosta	Councilwoman/Mayor Pro-Tem
Demarcus	Marshall	City of Valdosta	Facilities
Henry	Moylan	Clinch County SGRC Council County Rep	Clinch County Commission Chairman
Tom	Kennedy	Clinch County SGRC Council City Rep	City of Hommerville Mayor
Stanley	Cobbert	Echols County SGRC Council County Rep	Echols County Commission Chairman
Cheryl	Garner	Echols County SGRC Council City Rep	Echols County Tax Commissioner
Bill	Darsey	Lanier County SGRC Council City Rep	City of Lakeland Mayor
JD	Dillard	Lowndes County	Planning Department
<b>Other</b>			
Shannon	McConnico	Wiregrass	VP for Enrollment
Ariel	Godwin	City of Valdosta	Citizen

Table A2: Stakeholder Interview List

Interview	Type
SGRC Transit & RMS	Group
City of Valdosta On-Demand Transit	Individual
GDOT Local Transit Program Delivery	Group
Valdosta Lowndes County Metropolitan Planning Organization	Group
Human Services: Georgia Department of Human Services, Georgia Department of Community Health, and SGRC Area Agency on Aging	Group
Higher Education: Valdosta State University, Wiregrass, ABAC, Coastal Pines Technical College, South Georgia State College	Group
Community Groups: Action Pact, United Way of Valdosta	Group
Economic Development/Chambers: Valdosta Chamber, Okefenokee Chamber of Commerce & Economic Development, Waycross-Ware Chamber of Commerce, Ocilla-Irwin County Chamber of Commerce & Industrial Authority, Tifton Chamber of Commerce, Douglas-Coffee County Chamber of Commerce, Pierce County Chamber of Commerce	Group
SGRC Workforce Development	Individual
County Group Option 1	Group
County Group Option 2	Group
County Group Option 3	Group
Clinch County: Lead County administrator	Individual
Echols County: Lead County administrator	Individual
Lanier County: Lead County administrator	Individual

# Southern Georgia Regional Transit Development Plan

## Stakeholder Interviews Summary

May 2025



## 1.0 Overview

Stakeholder interviews were conducted between late December 2024 and late February 2025. The project team worked with SGRC to develop a stakeholder list representing different transit agencies and operators, elected representatives from communities across the region, organizations that work with transit-dependent populations, and entities working in economic or workforce development. Stakeholders were invited to participate in virtual meetings at mutually available times. To ease participation, the planning team also sent a questionnaire to stakeholders who were unresponsive to the meeting requests.

### 1.1 Interview Participants

**Table 1** provides a summary of the participant organizations, individual versus group format, and the meeting date. Not listed here are several other organizations invited to participate that declined or did not respond to interview requests.

*Table 1. Interview Participants*

Stakeholders Representing	Individual or Group	Meeting Date
Valdosta On-Demand	Individual	12/16/2024
SGRC Transit + Operator (RMS)	Group	12/19/2024
GDOT Local Area Program Delivery Staff	Group	1/6/2025
Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS), Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH), and SGRC Area Agency on Aging (AAA)	Group	1/6/2025
SGRC Workforce Development	Individual	1/29/2025
Via (Operator of Valdosta On-Demand)	Individual	1/29/2025
Valdosta Chamber of Commerce	Individual	2/20/2025
Action Pact	Individual	2/27/2025
Valdosta-Lowndes Development Authority	Group	4/24/2025

### 1.2 Questionnaire Participants

The County Representatives questionnaire gathered one response. The form did not require that the participant included their name or county affiliation, and the one participant chose to remain anonymous.

Questionnaires were also sent to representatives of higher education institutions, economic development agencies/chambers of commerce, and community organizations. These forms did not garner any responses.

## 2.0 Key Themes

Several themes arose through stakeholder interview discussions. A high-level summary of themes is below, and more highlights from interviews follows in Sections 3 and 4.

- Coordination among different transit services is essential to ensuring that there are **no gaps in service coverage** across the region.
- There is a need to increase **public awareness** of existing transit services.
- Connecting people to their **places of employment** is a major issue facing industries in the region, particularly the manufacturing industries.
- Transit should be **reliable for customers**, including timely pick up/drop off, easy-to-navigate technology, and a relevant service area.
- **Infrastructure availability**, such as electric vehicle charging stations and roadway capacity, may pose a challenge for the future of transit in the region.
- **Right-sizing transit service fleets** with demand and driver availability is critically important to the success of transit in the Southern Georgia Region.
- SGRC Transit may be **unaffordable** to customers in remote/rural locations due to its fare structure.
- Transit should work in **partnership** with existing (non-transit) programs to support seniors with their **daily needs** (medical, grocery, etc.).
- **Vanpools** or other transit programs geared toward **commuters** would serve an essential need, specifically where **workforce housing and major employment areas** are located.

## 3.0 Transit Needs

### 3.1 Transit Challenges

This section details various transit challenges, including transit providers' administrative and operational challenges, challenges with coordinated transportation, and challenges from the public's perspective.

#### 3.1.1 Administrative and Operational Challenges

**Table 2** provides a summary of various types of challenges that transit agency stakeholders raised, including both administrative and operational challenges.

*Table 2. Transit Agencies' Administrative and Operational Challenges*

Challenge	Stakeholders who Discussed this Challenge
Rightsizing the fleet size to meet demand	SGRC Transit Valdosta On-Demand Via
Purchasing vehicles	SGRC Transit
Hiring and retaining drivers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offering competitive salaries</li> <li>Competing with larger employers</li> <li>Providing enticing bonuses</li> </ul>	SGRC Transit Valdosta On-Demand Action Pact
Securing vehicles – some drivers are parking the vehicles at their homes	SGRC Transit
Meeting administrative requirements of different state agencies	SGRC Transit GDOT, DHS, DCH
Rightsizing the marketing approach to ensure demand can be met by existing capacity	SGRC Transit Via
Serving areas in the urbanized area	SGRC Transit
Serving areas outside the city limits	Valdosta On-Demand

Challenge	Stakeholders who Discussed this Challenge
Serving rural areas and employment hubs	SGRC Workforce Development Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber of Commerce Valdosta-Lowndes Development Authority
Insufficient funding to meet demand/needs	Georgia DHS Georgia DCH SGRC AAA
Maintaining timely schedules for pickup and drop off.	Action Pact
Infrastructure in Valdosta supporting the execution of timely transit trips.	Via

#### 3.1.2 Coordinated Transportation

Action Pact, DHS, DCH, and the SGRC AAA stakeholders primarily spoke to the populations that they serve, who utilize SGRC Transit by way of purchased transportation trips (transportation coordinated through different state and federal programs). Challenges noted by these participants include:

- Each senior center picks select days for transportation to be provided; the AAA program does not have sufficient funding to book transit for their clientele every day of the week.
- Senior centers often must limit trip types. Most of the senior centers prioritize dialysis trips.
- Affordability is a concern when the clientele of these programs must opt for a public trip. Partnership with nonprofits, such as United Way, was discussed as a potential way to overcome this barrier.

### 3.1.3 User Challenges

Stakeholders noted several challenges that impact transit users, which are listed in **Table 3**.

*Table 3. Challenges Experienced by Transit Users*

Challenge	Applicable Transit Agency
The Let's Ride mobile application has not been a functional way to book a ride.	SGRC Transit
Via's corner-to-corner operating model often requires users to walk to a pickup spot, which is often not desirable.	Valdosta On-Demand
Service area limitations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Users of Valdosta On-Demand cannot book rides outside of the city limits. Via tracks the number of requests they receive for trips outside the service area.</li> <li>People living just outside the city limits can walk to a pickup spot within the service area to book a ride.</li> </ul>	Valdosta On-Demand
Wait time and transportation time for users.	SGRC Transit

## 3.2 Transit Needs by Key Population Segments

SGRC Transit noted that, in general, there is not currently a broad public awareness of transit. Transit is particularly important for serving the needs of those who do not have access to a vehicle or cannot drive. Insights into the needs of these population segments—seniors, individuals with disabilities, and students—are listed in the following subsections.

### 3.2.1 Seniors

- The AAA discussed that seniors, who are often on fixed incomes, may find that SGRC Transit is unaffordable.
- Action Pact noted that seniors often struggle with technology and that having dedicated staff would be most helpful to this age group as they navigate the transit options.
- Action Pact also added that seniors particularly are traveling to medical appointments and to their local senior center.

### 3.2.2 Individuals with Disabilities

- Stakeholders from Georgia DHS noted that there is not enough funding under the *Division of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities* to fully fund the transportation costs of individuals with disabilities.

### 3.2.3 Youth

- SGRC Workforce Development has partnered with local high schools to assist local manufacturing companies with part-time work; however, many students do not have transportation.
- Students in the Southern Georgia Region are concerned about their ability to get a job after graduation.

## 4.0 Transit Opportunities

### 4.1 Jobs Access

The Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber of Commerce and SGRC Workforce Development identified the ability to get people to work, particularly in manufacturing industries, as a major employment related issue facing the region. The Valdosta-Lowndes Development Authority also noted that industries located within the region are primarily located in rural areas, and as a result, are not accessible via walking.

#### 4.1.1 Employment Locations within the Region

Interviewees identified the following specific employment sites:

- **Tyson Plant** – SGRC discussed that this is a large employer (located in Tifton) that has employee retention concerns due to transportation challenges.
- **Wild Adventures** – SGRC has previously worked with this employer to offer rides to their workforce.
- **Moody Airforce Base** – Valdosta On-Demand has previously discussed with the base the option of having transit vehicles drop off and pick up from the base entrance gates.
- **Walmart Dairy** – This employer/facility is coming to the region soon and is anticipated to bring a significant number of jobs.
- **JAF** – Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber of Commerce noted that this large roofing company would benefit from shuttle/vanpool services.
- **AJM/Folkston Industrial Plant** – Workers are picked up/dropped off at Walmart and the SGRC Waycross office then driven five to seven miles to the industrial plant in Waycross.
- **Arglass** – This glass manufacturer in Lowndes County is expanding their current operation.

- **Home Depot Distribution Center** – Located in Lake Park, this is an employment hub for people living in Valdosta.
- **Saint Augustine Corridor** – This corridor is home to numerous industries with entry level jobs, referred to by Valdosta-Lowndes Development Authority.
- **Azalea Business Park** – Valdosta-Lowndes Development Authority highlighted this business park as home to multiple businesses that may be a good candidate for transit service.

#### 4.1.2 Employment Locations outside the Region

Specific employment locations located outside the region that were raised during the interviews include:

- **Jacksonville** – Residents, particularly those in the southern part of the region such as Chilton County, are traveling here for employment.
- **Tallahassee** – Residents in Valdosta are traveling here for employment.

### 4.2 Medical Transportation

Medical transportation remains a vital part of the transit system within the Southern Georgia Region, as noted by SGRC Transit and SGRC Workforce Development, in addition to stakeholders from Georgia DHS.

There are known barriers to access to some medical facilities in the region—stakeholders shared the following examples:

- SGRC Transit noted that they cannot serve trips to the **South Georgia Medical System** because it is located within the Valdosta Urbanized Area. These trips can be accommodated through private pay, which may have a different fare structure than SGRC Transit's public service.



- SGRC Workforce Development spoke about the need to connect the workforce with healthcare options in addition to places of employment.
- **Tift Regional Hospital** was noted as a destination that would benefit from increased transit opportunities, as noted by the Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber of Commerce.

### 4.3 Other Trip Types

Interviewees identified the following additional types of trips and frequent destinations that Southern Georgia Region community members often access by public transit services:

- Shopping centers within Valdosta (for Valdosta On-Demand).
- Ware and Pierce Counties have a high rate of intercounty travel for employment, medical, and other reasons, such as recreation/leisure activities.

Additionally, Valdosta On-Demand expressed interest in working with VSU to offer special promotions/extended operating hours for university events, such as football games.

### 4.4 Other Desired Outcomes of this Plan

All stakeholders were asked to reflect on their vision for transit over the long-term planning horizon, which extends to 2050. Below are summary discussion points about the future of transit:

- Coordination of transit services is essential so that there are no gaps in service coverage across the region.
- Electric vehicles are not a short-term opportunity, given the lack of charging infrastructure across the region, but there is interest in moving toward more sustainable fuel options.

- Valdosta On-Demand noted that it has had discussions about shifting to one or more electric vehicles in the near future.
- Based on observations of a high number of people walking in the community, Action Pact believes Waycross would be a strong candidate for an on-demand service like Via.
- The Valdosta-Lowndes Chamber of Commerce felt that vanpool will be necessary to improve transit, specifically where workforce housing and major employment areas are located.
- The region's largely rural and low-density land use context makes it difficult to connect workers to places of employment. As a result, employers have difficulty recruiting and retaining employees who are able to access these jobs.
- Workforce transit and childcare remain two of the biggest economic development factors facing the region. Considerations for workforce transit as well as childcare that meets the needs of those working manufacturing and industry jobs will be key to the future growth of the region.
- Partnerships with community organizations, such as Valdosta-Lowndes Development Authority are key to spread awareness and provide insight into the transit needs within the region.

# **Southern Georgia Regional Transit Development Plan**

## **Project Advisory Committee Meeting #1**

### **Minutes**

January 9, 2025



## 1.0 Overview

### 1.1 Meeting Details

January 9, 2025

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

Southern Georgia Regional Commission  
1937 Carlton Adams Drive, Valdosta, GA 31601

### 1.2 Meeting Agenda

10:00 Welcome & Introductions  
10:20 Plan & Process Overview  
10:30 Existing Conditions & Trends Highlights  
10:40 Break & Board Input  
11:00 Group Discussion  
11:55 Closing Remarks

### 1.3 Attendees

#### 1.3.1 PAC Members In Attendance

- Amy Jones - SGRC Workforce Development
- Amy Martin - SGRC Transportation Director
- Barbara King - City of Waycross, see transit vans around town
- Buddy Duke - Cook County (Adel)
- Henry Moylan - Clinch County Commission, here to gather information; we did not participate [in SGRC Transit] last time.
- James Carter - Field Manager for Via, grew up in community; glad to see transit come back; works in Cobb and Buckhead
- Jason Dunn - City of Fitzgerald, SGRC Executive Committee
- John Carter - RMS
- Kimberly Bryant - GDOT 5311 Transit Manager
- Larry Ogden - City of Valdosta, works with Via to implement Valdosta On-Demand
- Sandra Tuley - Valdosta City Council, one of the reasons she joined the City Council was to improve transit
- Scott Courson - Area Agency on Aging, 18 contracted senior centers - diversify funding to increase trips
- Stone Pinson - RMS
- Torrence Weaver - SGRC Transportation Planner

#### 1.3.2 Planning Team in Attendance

- Amanda Hatton - Blue Cypress Consulting
- Ansley Belton - Blue Cypress Consulting
- Lauren Leary - Spatial Plans

## 2.0 Minutes

### 2.1 Welcome & Introductions

Amy Martin (Amy M.), Transportation Director with Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC), welcomed everyone to the meeting and spoke to the importance of the planning effort. Amy M. briefly covered the meeting agenda and meeting flow. She introduced and handed the floor over to Amanda Hatton, who is the consultant project manager with Blue Cypress Consulting. Amanda highlighted other consultant team members in attendance. Ansley Belton (Blue Cypress) and Lauren Leary (Spatial Plans) briefly introduced themselves.

Amanda Hatton facilitated introductions of those in attendance, asking each person to introduce his/her name, organization, and to share his/her experience and/or community's experience with transit in the Southern Georgia Region. Transit-related notes provided with introductions are highlighted under attendee lists.

### 2.2 Plan & Process Overview

Amanda gave an overview of the plan and planning process, supported by a slide deck provided to all Project Advisory Committee (PAC) members after the meeting. She discussed the planning context that led to this update, including SGRC's 2019 Transit Development Plan, Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) transit planning initiatives, and county specific transit plans. She then shared the plan update goals and the purpose of the Regional TDP. Lastly, she emphasized that this plan focuses on public transit, which is a transportation service that is accessible to anyone for any purpose.

Amanda followed the plan overview by talking about plan elements, the planning timeline/process, and the PAC's role in the effort. The group will guide TDP development and is asked to help raise awareness of the planning effort and encourage public participation in the process. She ended by briefly highlighting the first round of public input that launches with the public meeting later in the day and will extend into February.

Amanda paused for questions prior to transitioning the floor to Ansley.

### 2.3 Existing Conditions & Trends Highlights

Ansley Belton gave an overview of the existing conditions analysis work that the team has carried out. This work is synthesized in the Draft Existing Conditions Report, currently under review by SGRC, and covers demographic trends, labor force/job/industry trends, existing transportation network and travel trends, related plan review, existing transit service review, transit-supportive land use analysis, and transit funding.

Ansley highlighted demographic trends and projections via a series of slides. She also spoke to Areas of Persistent Poverty, as defined by USDOT, which are an important consideration in the plan. The planning effort encompasses both rural and urban transit and will consider coordination needs with other state-administered transit services. Population centers are a special area of focus in existing conditions analysis and moving forward as we look to alternatives.

Ansley ended the existing conditions review by discussing public transit funding sources and SGRC Transit's operating budget. This discussion is important as it will play a role in consideration of alternatives and recommendations for transit expansion and enhancement.

## 2.4 Break & Board Input

Amanda followed Ansley's presentation with a review of items for the group to provide input on via four boards, covering the following:

- Visioning 2050 - Vision for public transit services in the Southern Georgia Region in 2050
- Visioning - Goals for improved mobility in the region, including what should stay the same and what should change.
- Needs Identification (Location) - Where are unmet transit needs located? Where are cross-jurisdiction transit needs not being met? Are there destinations outside of the region (GA or FL) that should be serviced?
- Needs Identification - Do you feel there is awareness of existing transit service in your community? Which populations around the region have difficulty accessing transit?

PAC members were given sticky notes, dots, stars, and pens/markers to provide input over roughly 20-25 minutes. The planning team helped facilitate input during this period. Following the input period, the planning team synthesized input collected with the group to help make sure input was interpreted correctly and to help facilitate consensus and areas of differing opinions among the group.

### 2.4.1 Visioning 2050

- 1) *When you close your eyes and imagine what transit in the 18-county Southern Georgia Region looks like in 25 years, what do you see? (add a check or star to a note already posted if you agree with it)*
  - Flying drones, autonomous driving, coordinating vehicles (1 agreement dot)
  - Transportation is just a barrier to employment
  - Coordinated transport via buses, trains & on demand vehicles
  - Coordination across modes -> connect to trains
  - Coordination
    - Urban to Rural
    - DHS/DCH
    - Public/Private

### 2.4.2 Visioning (Change/Keep Same) Comments

- 1) *What goals do you have for improved mobility in the region?*
  - Broaden agreement w/ VSU + medical centers, help offset costs.
  - Sponsorship/logos to build revenue
  - Seamless transition from country/rural to urban
  - Transportation fee w/ colleges exempt
  - Continue to improve infrastructure

Table 1: Summary of “Change/Keep the Same” Activity

Topic Area	Change	Keep the Same
<b>Transit Service Areas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fixed route service</li> <li>Connect &amp; get transit in counties not currently participating</li> <li>Out of region + out of state trips (Medical Centers) Savannah, GA Jacksonville, FL</li> <li>Clinch County trips are far = expensive to ride</li> <li>Cook -&gt; to Tifton or Cook-&gt; to Valdosta for emergency rooms.</li> <li>Advertising \$ - Valdosta wants to explore how to bring in more revenue from businesses</li> </ul>	<i>No notes or dots were provided in this column.</i>
<b>Mix of Transit Service Types</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demand-response public transit</li> <li>Commuter service</li> <li>Micro-transit service</li> <li>Fixed-route service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Goal: Valdosta expanding to help serve VSU and SGMC</li> <li>More large employers</li> </ul>	<i>No notes or dots were provided in this column.</i>
<b>Transit Service Costs &amp; Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cost of bus routes rather than per person/demand routes               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Valdosta</li> <li>Top 10 Locations</li> <li>Add stops along the way</li> </ul> </li> <li>Fixed route in Valdosta               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[There] is no funding for fixed route [transit service].</li> <li>Industrial Blvd. [areas] -&gt; jobs [Fixed route transit to these areas is needed.]</li> </ul> </li> <li>Diversified &amp; Increased Funding. Some seniors (others) can't afford the \$3 cost of public transit</li> </ul>	<i>No notes or dots were provided in this column.</i>

**2) Verbal Comments:**

- Sandra noted that in Valdosta, in addition to on-demand, mobility hubs are another opportunity.
- Barbara - Consistent service is important.
  - Lauren noted that a fixed route shuttle may make sense in certain cases.
  - Lauren noted that signage is a potential related need.
- Amy Jones (Amy J.) noted that all the different systems are confusing to the public.

- Larry noted that if we are tracking information [related to transit service requests and use], we can work together to improve across all transit services in region.
  - Amy J. noted MARTA as a transit services/system example of coordinating trips.
  - There should be a hub for transit services to connect.
  - Amy M. noted that SGRC has TOD Guidelines that tie into this.

### 2.4.3 Needs Identification (Location) Comments

#### 1) *Where are unmet transit needs located?*

- Most of the population live in the country vs w/in the city limits. Getting people to work in various locations is tough.
- ½ hour earlier and tweak later schedule to accommodate workers, or those needing rides to medical appts
- Lanier, Echols, Clinch
- 3 counties w/o transit are in greatest need
- Important destination –Coffee County has unique destination + distribution centers. Migration from Coffee into City of Douglas

#### 2) *Where are cross-jurisdiction transit needs not being met?*

- Folkston (Charlton) employer picks up employees at 2 locations for work – obvious need- other employers could replicate.
- Needs for medical trips out of region & state. Jacksonville, FL. Savannah, GA.
- Dedicated paratransit vehicles

#### 3) *Are there destinations outside of the region (GA or FL) that should be serviced?*

- Madison + Hamilton. Closely tied w Valdosta. Lake City is competition w/Valdosta
- Charlton – starting to see growth from Calahan

#### 4) *Verbal Comments:*

- Scott talked about how providing transit connections to Jacksonville is important due to trips to medical specialists.

- Barbara talked about the challenge of getting people to medical appointments.
- Amy J. – What are the top destinations and peak times of travel? Top 10 locations overall and top 10 per county – this would be helpful to know.
- Henry noted that people on east side are going to Jacksonville and Savannah, outside the region.

### 2.4.4 Needs Identification (Awareness of Existing Service/Difficulty Accessing Transit)

#### 1) *Do you feel there is an awareness of existing transit service in your community? (place a dot)*

- No, I do not think most people are aware of existing transit service - 4*
  - Comment – how is general public, nursing homes, hospitals in Ware County made aware of service.
- The people that need transit services know it exists. - 0*
- Yes, everyone I know is aware of existing transit service available. - 0*
- N/A - 0*

#### 2) *Which populations around the region have difficulty accessing transit?*

- Those living in the county. Cost is a barrier to access transit services.
- Aging & Disability – Technology (Depends On) and Cost (Low Income)



### 2.4.5 Other

- Sandra asked if the 5311-funded service allows a rider to return home if they take a trip to an urban area? Kimberly responded, yes - trips can go from rural to urban and from urban to rural.

## 2.5 Group Discussion

Following the board input, Lauren Leary with Spatial Plans facilitated a series of polling questions to collect more focused input on potential transit service expansion, transit service enhancement, and other administrative or forward-thinking transit strategies. Responses to polling questions are on the following pages. Additional, related discussion, where relevant, follows each question.

## 2.6 Closing Remarks

Amanda closed the meeting by thanking PAC members for a productive meeting and highlighted next steps for the planning process. The first public meeting for the planning effort is tonight (January 9) at the McMullen Southside Library. The PAC members were asked to please build awareness about the planning effort in their communities and/or among the communities they serve. Promotional handouts for the survey were handed out to PAC members before they left.



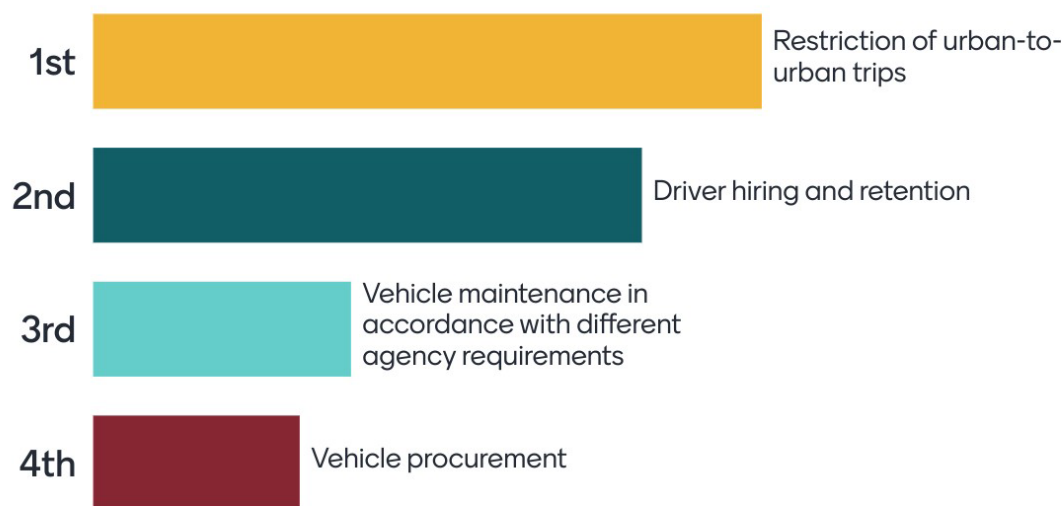
*Top: PAC members providing input via boards; Bottom: PAC members providing input via polling platform*





### 3.0 Mentimeter Polling Responses & Discussion Comments

Q1) What are existing pain points for SGRC Transit's operations? Rank the below options. The next slide will provide a space for additional answers.



#### Related Comments

- James noted that Via [Valdosta On-Demand] drivers are independent contractors. They pick and choose their own hours. Driver retention can be challenging due to hiring/retention due to state or agency requirements. Some other jobs (like with Amazon/Uber) might offer bonuses. James noted that they leverage bonuses.
- Stone noted that they have full-time employees. People may leave due to better seasonal payment. Sometimes, drug tests and other required items may be barriers to employment.
- Buddy asked if special licenses are required for drivers of Valdosta On-Demand.
  - No special license is required to drive for Valdosta On-Demand.

Q2) Are you aware of other pain points of SGRC Transit (from operator or customer perspective)?

Misinformation and lack of awareness concerning initiatives and opportunities

Hours of service for public ridership. This should be expanded to meet needs of citizens.

Access and time availability

Availability of transportation

Connections between networks

Do you offer 2) part time positions rather than 1) full time to get a larger applicant pool?

Customer service like other industries, disgruntled passengers, etc.

Weekend coverage

Not being able to meet a need for a time.

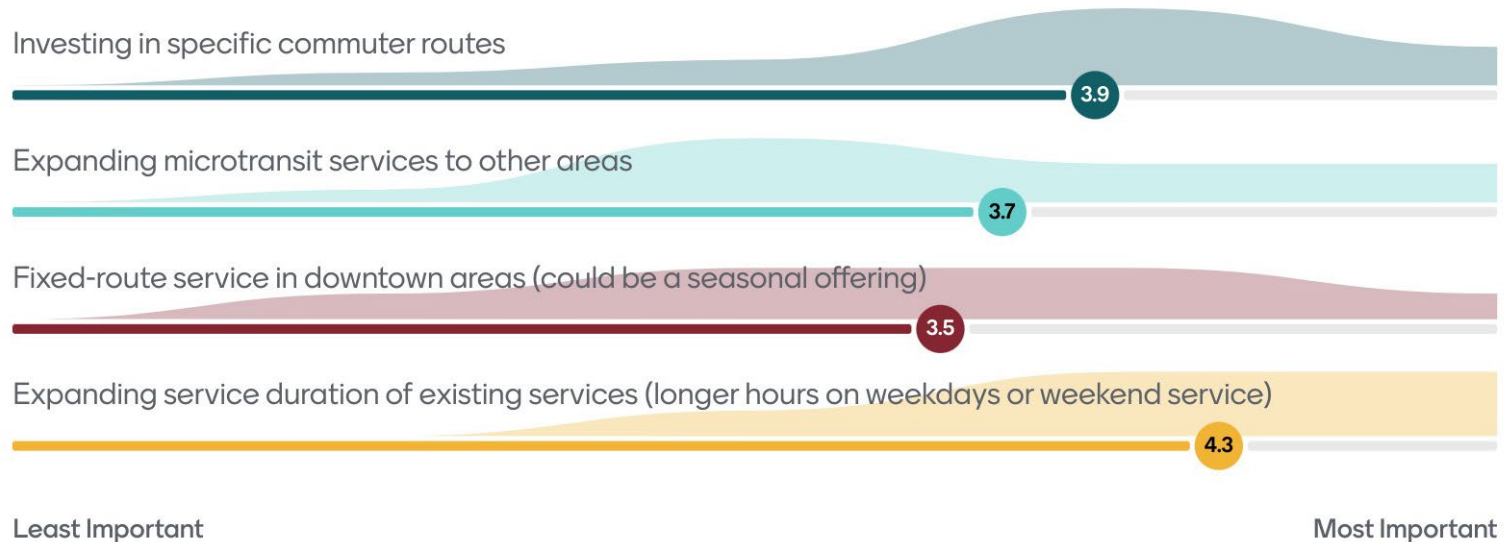
#### Related Comments

- Buddy noted that we do not need to post driver responsibility. Hire good people.

Q3) Are you aware of pain points affecting Valdosta On-Demand's operations? (From operator or customer perspective)

Coordination between the two systems through a single platform to reduce rider confusion and misunderstanding.

## Q4) Rate the importance of the following transit expansion possibilities.



### Related Comments

- Access to interstate-area jobs. There is no service on the weekend - we cannot get people to jobs.
- James noted that they didn't anticipate the demand for on-demand transit service that Valdosta On-Demand is experiencing.

## Q5) What locations come to mind when thinking about expanding microtransit?

Tifton, Waycross

Douglas, Tifton,  
Waycross

Douglas Tifton Waycross

Homerville

Tifton, Douglas,  
Waycross, Fitzgerald

Brunswick, Savannah

Hospital, VSU, Wiregrass,  
local businesses

Existing pick up locations in  
Waycross for AJM (Charlton  
employer) to go to the Ware Co  
Industrial Park. Locations are  
Walmart and Circle K/McD

Q6) Who could be potential partners for launching a commuter service? (Private sector, nonprofits, colleges/universities)

Colleges, large  
employers, health  
facilities (hospitals)

Colleges, employers,  
medical centers

Colleges/ Universities  
Industrial Businesses

Medical facilities

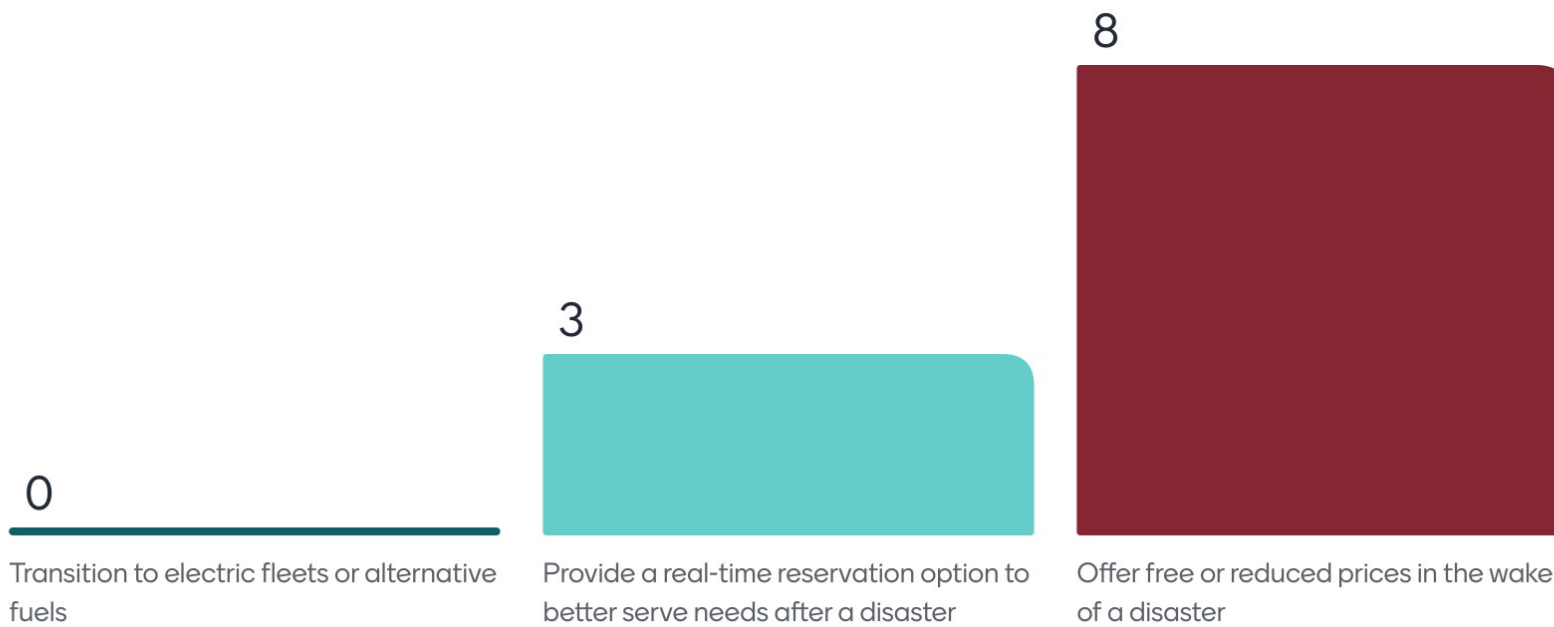
Valdosta State  
University, Wild  
Adventures, Technical  
Colleges

Large employers

Large  
employers/warehouse

Large retailers Medical  
areas Entertainment  
areas

Q8) How can we make the SGRC Transit's service more resilient to severe weather and prepared to operate following natural disasters?



### Q9) Do you have other ideas for how transit can help community members after a natural disaster?

Evacuations

Provide hot spot on the buses

Wellness checks

Keeping communities informed of transit availability.

Work with and under the direction of fema/gema on a contractual basis for natural disasters.

Connections to hubs for disaster and emergency services, like FEMA offices, DFCS SNAP, etc. Special needs list of citizens

Provide food/supplies delivery

Delivery of food and goods to certain areas as well as delivery of medical supplies in those areas

#### Related Comments

- James spoke to Sarasota, Florida having a best practice for how to prepare public transit to respond effectively for a potential natural disaster. Public transit service users can sign up in advance to be picked up in the case of an evacuation.



## Q10) What other changes will be important for the transit agencies to plan for?

Growth in population

Bolster collaboration between agencies/employers, etc to provide expanding access

Statewide coordinated transportation. Better serving industry and making jobs more accessible to help attract industry.

Infrastructure changes or improvements coming, new neighborhoods, apartments, communities.

Accommodating infrastructure to match grown

Ways to communicate to public different services offered

Identify hubs for pick up and delivery of riders to come to for greater efficiency

# **Southern Georgia Regional Transit Development Plan**

## **Project Advisory Committee Meeting #2**

### **Minutes**

March 25, 2025



## 1.0 Overview

### 1.1 Meeting Details

March 25, 2025

10:00 am - 11:30 am

Virtual via Zoom

### 1.2 Meeting Agenda

10:00 Welcome & Project Refresher  
 10:10 Stakeholder & Public Input  
 10:15 Vision & Goals for Transit in Southern GA  
 10:25 Transit Needs Assessment  
 10:35 Transit Alternatives Discussion  
 11:25 Next Steps & Closing Remarks

### 1.3 Attendees

#### 1.3.1 PAC Members in Attendance

- Amy Martin – SGRC Transportation Director
- Torrence Weaver – SGRC Transportation Planner
- Megan Fowler – SGRC Transit Director
- Daniel Hampton – SGRC Transit Coordinator
- Roberta Lovett – SGRC Deputy Executive Director
- Scott Courson – SGRC AAA
- Barbara King – Ware County, SGRC Board Member
- Jason Dunn – Ben Hill County
- Johnathan McLoyd – GDOT
- Phil Peevy – GDOT
- Kimberly Bryant – GDOT
- Mary Flatt – GDOT
- Carrie Toole – GDOT
- Larry Ogden – City of Valdosta
- Kim McKnight – Georgia DCH
- Allanda Batiste – Georgia DHS
- Heather Griffin – RMS
- Michael Erwin – RMS
- James Carter – Via

#### 1.3.2 Planning Team in Attendance

- Amanda Hatton – Blue Cypress Consulting
- Ansley Belton – Blue Cypress Consulting
- Lauren Leary – Spatial Plans
- Billy Bachman – Spatial Plans
- Sara Huie – Spatial Plans

## 2.0 Minutes

### 2.1 Welcome and Introductions

Amy Martin welcomed the group and thanked them for attending this important meeting. She introduced SGRC team members in attendance. Amanda Hatton (Blue Cypress) then introduced the consultant team and other members of the Project Study Team.

Amanda walked through a recap of the project overview and schedule.

### 2.2 Stakeholder and Public Input

Ansley Belton (Blue Cypress) provided a summary of key themes from the stakeholder and public input collected to date. She discussed highlights from the January 9 Public Advisory Committee Meeting and Public Meeting, as well as a Regional Council meeting that occurred later in January. She then shared key topics raised during stakeholder interviews. Lastly, Ansley shared some of the highlights from the first public survey, which had 85 responses.

### 2.3 Vision and Goals

Amanda introduced the draft vision and goals, noting that these statements incorporate public and stakeholder input to date, as well as the priorities from the past Regional TDP and the Statewide Transit Plan. A polling question allowed the PAC members to express their level of agreement with the drafted vision statement. All thirteen participants selected, “It nails it – 100 percent.”

On an open-ended polling question asked PAC members to identify any key words or phrases that they felt were missing from the vision statement. One participant commented, “equity maybe?” Two others expressed positive feedback with comments including, “Nailed it!” and “Like – good.” No other words or phrases were provided.

The PAC members also rated each of the draft six goals to weigh in on how important they are – a rating of 1 was considered least important, and a rating of 5 was considered most important.

Table 1 provides a summary of the weighted average ratings of each goal, and the following figures show each goal’s response breakdown.

*Table 1. Summary of Goal Ratings*

Goal	Weighted Average Rating
Goal #1: Deliver fiscally responsible and efficient transit services.	5.0
Goal #2: Provide for the unique needs of transit dependent populations.	5.0
Goal #3: Advance a multifaceted and connected system through regional collaboration and coordinated services.	4.7
Goal #4: Implement context-sensitive transit and last mile connectivity solutions in population centers.	3.8
Goal #5: Pursue creative and collaborative solutions to further economic opportunities.	4.3
Goal #6: Promote innovation and adaptability to meet future needs.	4.4

Figure 1. Importance of Goal #1 (1= least important; 5 = most important)

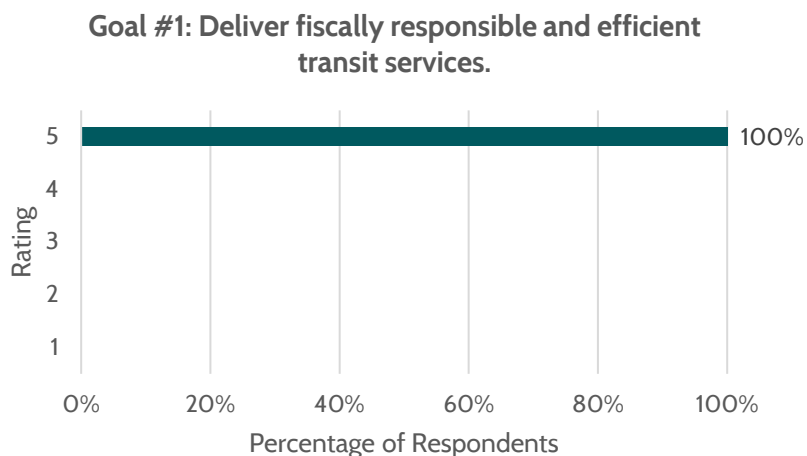


Figure 2. Importance of Goal #2 (1= least important; 5 = most important)

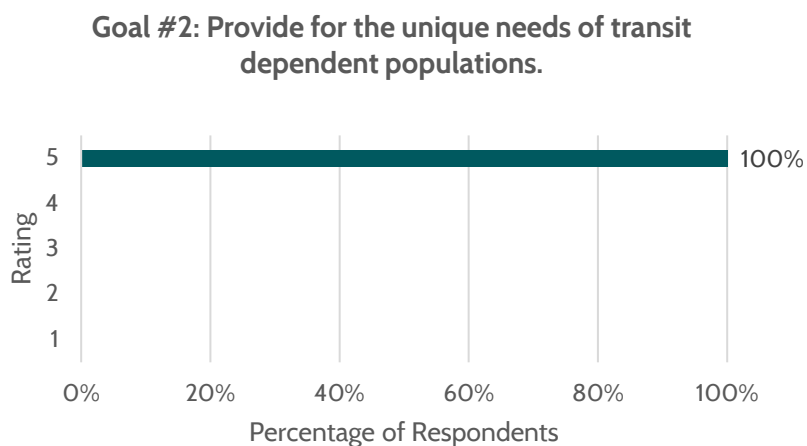


Figure 3. Importance of Goal #3 (1= least important; 5 = most important)

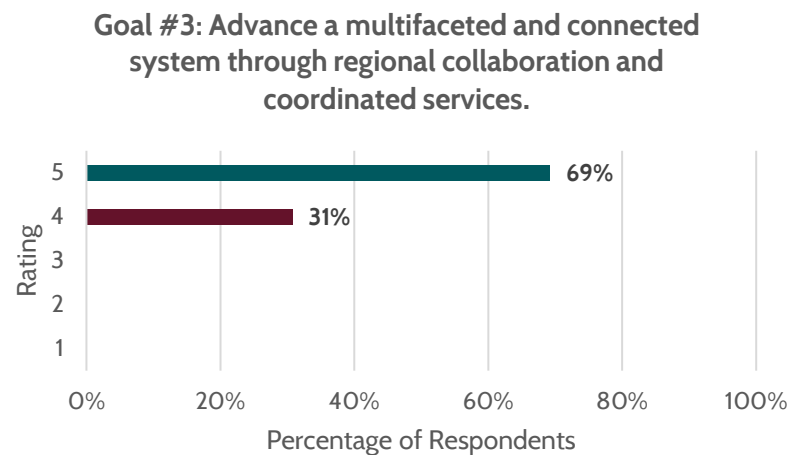


Figure 4. Importance of Goal #4 (1= least important; 5 = most important)

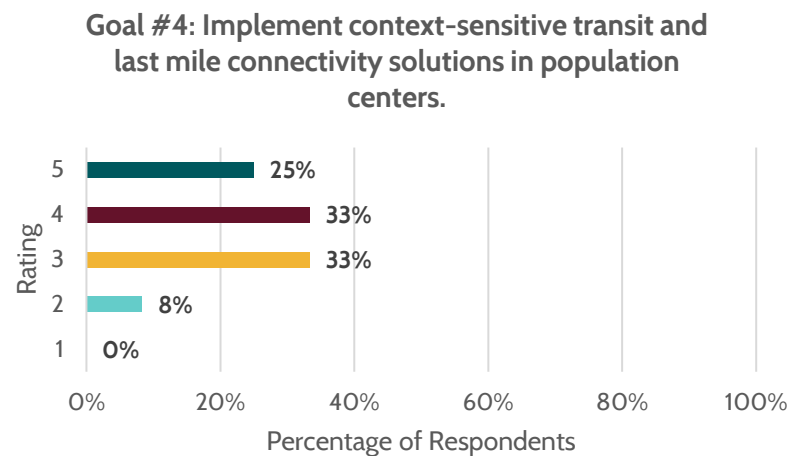


Figure 5. Importance of Goal #5 (1= least important; 5 = most important)

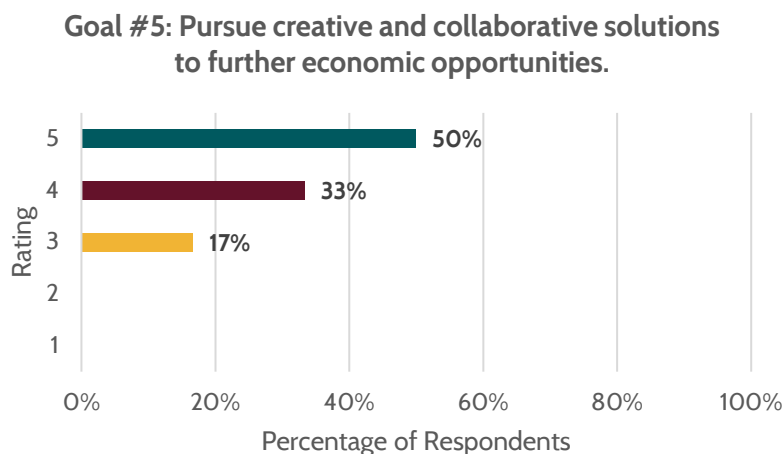
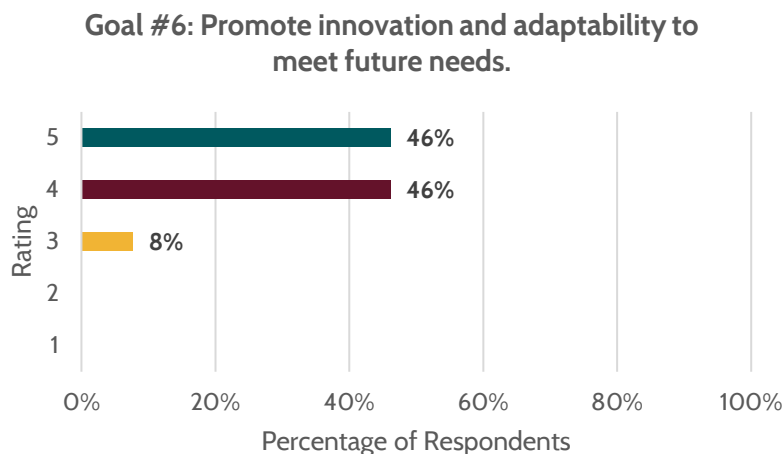


Figure 6. Importance of Goal #6 (1= least important; 5 = most important)



## 2.4 Transit Needs Assessment

Ansley provided a high-level overview of the analyses covered in the Needs Assessment Technical Memo, which the PAC members received in advance of the meeting. She highlighted the methodology for the following assessments:

- 1) Rural transit demand
- 2) Transit propensity
- 3) Transit-supportive residential density
- 4) Transit-supportive residential and employment density
- 5) Compatible transit service types based on propensity and residential/employment density

## 2.5 Transit Alternatives

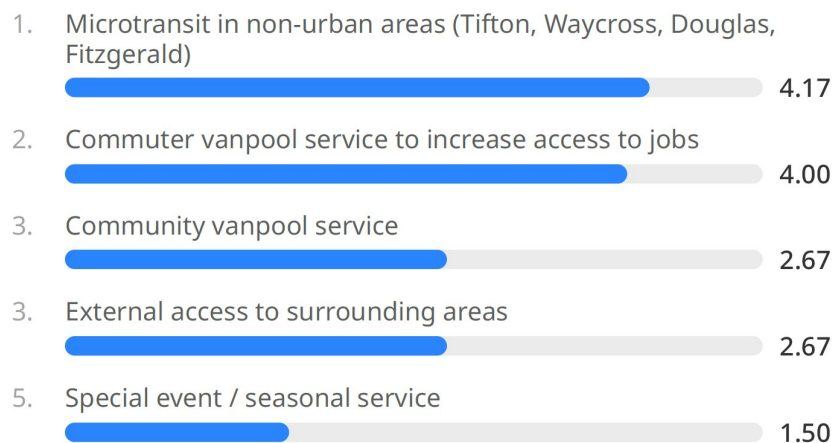
Lauren Leary (Spatial Plans) emphasized the importance of getting feedback at this meeting. She began the alternatives discussion by describing the three overarching strategy buckets: transit expansion, transit enhancement, and administrative tools and guidance. She discussed the timeframe for the alternatives, which includes shorter-term (next five years), mid-term (6 – 10 years), and longer-term (11 – 25 years) categories. She provided an example that a fixed-route service in Valdosta would require a feasibility study and a longer time to implement.

Lauren provided an overview of the following Rural Expansion Alternatives:

- 1) SGRC Transit expansion to cover all 18 counties
- 2) Microtransit service in non-urban population centers
- 3) Special event/seasonal circulators
- 4) Community vanpool support
- 5) Commuter vanpools
- 6) Transit connections with other transportation systems external to the Southern Georgia Region

The PAC members were then asked to rank the above set of alternatives via a poll. The top two ranked alternatives were 1) microtransit in non-urban areas, and 2) commuter vanpool service to increase access to jobs.

*Figure 7. Ranked Rural Transit Expansion Alternatives*



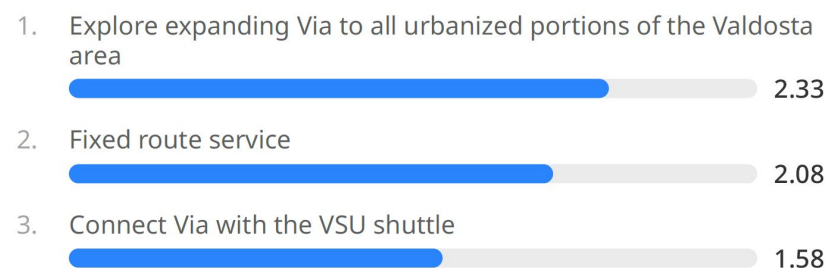
*Discussion Comments:*

- Kimberly Bryant (GDOT) felt that these two alternatives work well together. Kimberly discussed that community buy-in and infrastructure to support a commuter vanpool service would be important.
- Megan Fowler (SGRC) discussed that she sometimes gets calls from people who need access to neighboring counties, and she noted that sometimes she does help coordinate trips outside the region. She mentioned that people with specialty medical needs often need access to Brunswick and Jacksonville.
- Amy (SGRC) mentioned that there is an industrial plant in Live Oak, Florida that has previously coordinated a vanpool service to pick up workers who live in Lowndes County.

Next, Lauren introduced three Urban Expansion Alternatives:

- 1) Expand Valdosta On-Demand's service beyond city limits to serve the broader urbanized area. The FTA Section 5307 funding that Valdosta receives is based on the population of the urbanized area.
- 2) Fixed-route service
- 3) Valdosta State University integration

*Figure 8. Ranked Urban Transit Expansion Alternatives*



*Discussion Comments:*

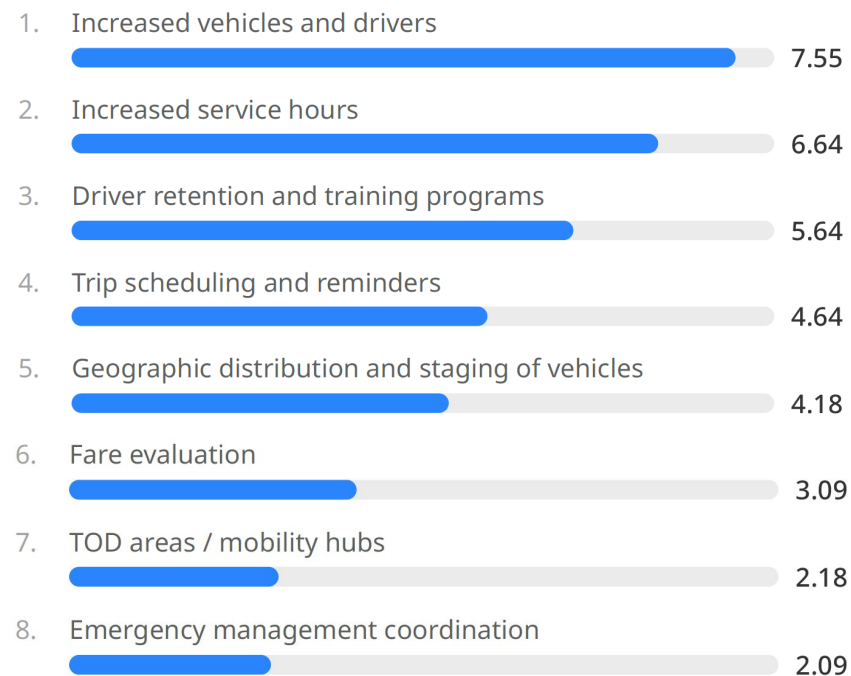
- Larry Ogden (City of Valdosta) noted that Valdosta On-Demand currently does not consider expanding beyond the city limits as feasible. He feels that it would lead to longer wait-times and more inefficient service. He shared that the Valdosta On-Demand service currently does provide limited trips to destinations outside the city limits, such as Wiregrass Technical College. He is interested in seeing more coordination with the rural service, such as a designated drop-off/pickup hub.
- Larry shared that Valdosta On-Demand and Valdosta State University have had conversations about this alternative, and VSU is interested in eliminating its bus service (due to its lower ridership) and working with Valdosta On-Demand to ensure a high level of service for students.

- Lauren noted that this alternative would likely require the middle timeframe for implementation.

Billy Bachman (Spatial Plans) introduced the following set of Rural Transit Enhancement alternatives:

- 1) Geographic distribution and staging of transit vehicles
- 2) More vehicles and drivers
- 3) Increased service hours
- 4) Evaluate and update trip scheduling and reminder methods
- 5) Driver retention and training
- 6) Evaluate fares
- 7) TOD areas / mobility hubs
- 8) Emergency management (GEMA and Red Cross) coordination

*Figure 9. Ranked Rural Transit Enhancement Alternatives*

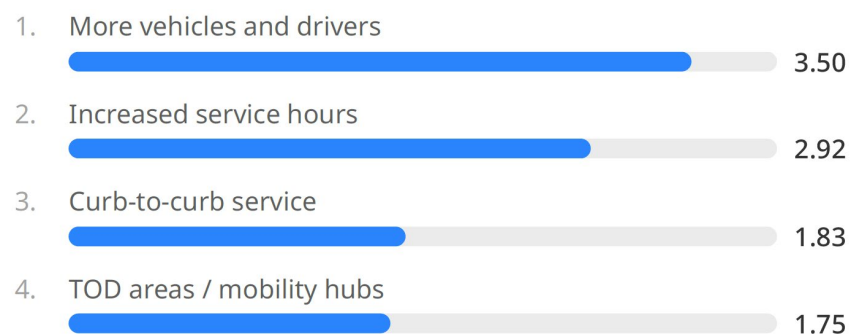




Next, Billy covered the four urban enhancement alternatives:

- 1) More vehicles and drivers
- 2) Increased service hours
- 3) Curb-to-curb service
- 4) TOD areas/mobility hubs

*Figure 10. Ranked Urban Transit Enhancement Alternatives*



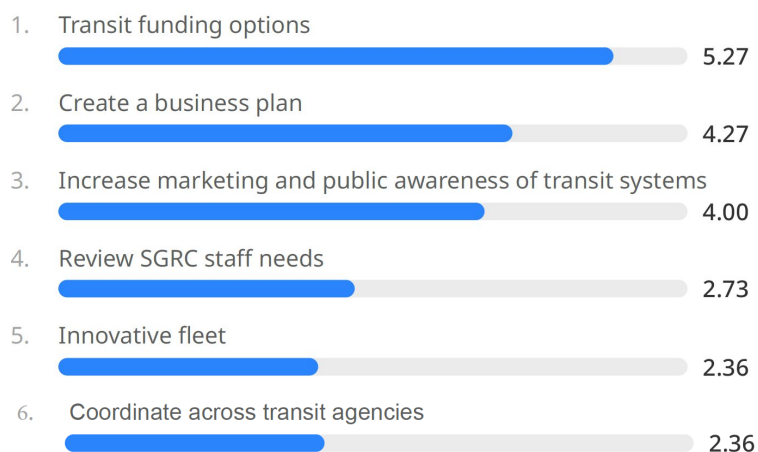
*Discussion Comments:*

- Amanda (Blue Cypress) discussed that increasing capacity by hiring drivers and purchasing more vehicles has been a challenge across the state. Driver training and enticement programs may need to be a concerted economic development effort.
- James Carter (Via) commented on the curb-to-curb alternative. Although Via's service was designed to function with "virtual bus stops," he noted that Via is evaluating if they can shift to more curb-to-curb (in shopping areas) or door-to-door service (in residential areas). In addition, Via offers a promo code to customers with eligible mobility challenges to book a curb-to-curb trip.
- Larry discussed that many citizens do not want to walk at all to the "virtual bus stop." He is aware that some riders are gaining access to the promo code to request a curb-to-curb ride, even if they do not have any mobility challenges that would warrant a need for that.
- Scott Courson (SGRC) noted in chat: curb-to-curb is hard for some of our older adult clients

Lastly, Billy covered the following set of administrative tools and guidance strategies:

- 1) Explore transit funding options
- 2) Create a business plan
- 3) Explore SGRC staff needs
- 4) Marketing of transit service
- 5) Continue to explore innovative transit fleet options
- 6) Coordination across transit programs

*Figure 11. Ranked Administrative Tools and Guidance Alternatives*



#### *Discussion Comments:*

- Megan (SGRC) and Kim McKnight (Georgia DCH) both complimented RMS for their work to ensure that all trip types (public, DHS, DCH, others) are served efficiently.
- Kim (Georgia DCH) also noted that people are willing to pay extra for curb-to-curb service.
- Megan (SGRC) reiterated that there are reasons people will need curb-to-curb, such as rainy or hot weather.
- Amanda (Blue Cypress) noted that in the future, mobility hubs may provide more enticement for people to take a short walk to use the transit service.
- Amy (SGRC) discussed the SGRC Transit Oriented Development Guidelines, which evaluated mobility hubs and the infrastructure/amenities that would be needed to support them.

## 2.6 Next Steps

Amanda (Blue Cypress) shared important upcoming dates. She noted that this meeting was the second and final PAC meeting; however, the planning team would like the PAC members to stay engaged in the process and continue to help guide the plan's direction. There will be one more public meeting and survey, which will go live in April. In addition, the planning team may reach out to members of the PAC for specific questions as we wrap up work on the alternatives and recommendations report. All are invited to reach out to the planning team with any questions or feedback.

# Southern Georgia Regional Transit Development Plan

## Public Meeting #1 Summary

January 2025



# 1.0 Overview

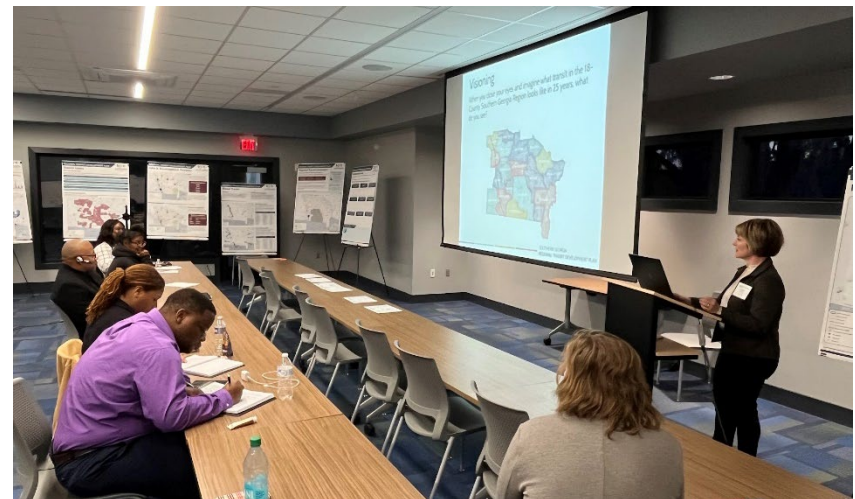
The first public meeting for the Southern Georgia Regional Transit Development Plan (TDP) was held on January 9, 2025 from 4:00 to 6:30 p.m. at the McMullen Southside Library in Valdosta. Informational boards highlighting information about the planning process and outcomes, as well as existing conditions and trends analysis, were displayed around the room. Meeting attendees could peruse the information at their own pace and talk with planning team members. Some of the boards included input activities, which are summarized in this document. The meeting also included two brief project overview presentations, given at 4:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m.

## 1.1 Attendance

Five members of the public, all of whom indicated that they live in Lowndes County, attended the meeting.

Table 1. Meeting Attendees by County

Residential County	Count of Attendees
Lowndes County	5



## Presentation and Discussion

The planning team gave a brief presentation twice during the meeting, at 4:30 p.m. and again at 5:30 p.m. Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC) streamed the first presentation on its Facebook page. The recorded presentation was also posted to the project website. During the presentation, the team walked through the purpose and goals of the Regional TDP, highlights from the demographic and socioeconomic analyses documented in the existing conditions report, details about the existing transit services in the region, and a discussion of next steps in the planning process.

In-person meeting attendees provided the following comments and questions for the project team after the presentation.

- We should consider safety, sidewalks, lighting, and trash cans in areas in and near transit stops.
- It would be great to have regular [fixed-route] service that comes every 30 minutes or so.
- Consider incentives for non-profits to help support access to or supplement public transit.
- In the New York City area, the transportation system is well-connected with pedestrian-friendly with a comprehensive [local/regional] bus system, train transit system, and greyhound. In nearby Remerton, transit helps people get home safely if they have been drinking. It would be great if this area could build a more comprehensive, connected network like this.
- We should consider technology [use/advancements] in the transit plan.
- Thomasville to Valdosta is a common transit trip.
- We need to plan transportation needs for youth in our region who do not want to drive.
- Can we create hubs for transit use?

- Amy Martin with SGRC responded by highlighting SGRC's Transit Oriented Development Guidelines work and how that work can be built upon.
- Is there money set aside for the plan implementation and how much? How do you make the funding work?
  - Amy Martin spoke to how TSPLOST has helped fund several transportation infrastructure projects in the region.
  - Amanda Hatton with Blue Cypress noted that the Regional TDP will consider costs and funding sources for advancing several transit strategies, but the plan will not be cost constrained, i.e. funding is not necessarily available or identified.





## 2.0 Public Input

### 2.1 Existing Conditions & Trends Discussions

As attendees walked around, informal discussions occurred, helping provide insight into existing conditions and trends.

- An attendee representing Lowndes County discussed anticipated growth in housing and development northeast of Moody Air Force Base.
- Growth of South Georgia Medical Center expansion should be considered as a part of evaluating future transit needs.

### 2.2 Vision and Goals

An input activity asked community members to use three dot stickers to indicate their priorities for transit in the Southern Georgia Region. One meeting attendee participated in this activity. As shown in the following table, only two of the identified focus areas were prioritized by this participant.

*Table 2. Vision and Goals Prioritization Activity Results*

Focus	Count of Input Dots
Providing connections to existing and future job centers	1
Providing transit throughout the Southern Georgia Region	1

One open-ended comment identified a long-term goal for the region to have trains and long-distance options.

### 2.3 Key Destinations Activity

The Key Destinations Overview board displayed a map of the 18-county Southern Georgia Region, with key destinations identified. The activity instructed participants to share their residential location, as well as places that they would like to be able to access with transit or locations where they think people with transportation needs may like to access using transit. These results are captured in the following lists.

#### Where You Live

- Waycross
- Valdosta

#### Where You Would Like to be Able to Go on Transit

- Valdosta
- Valdosta Regional Airport
- Waycross
- Fitzgerald
- Tifton
- Douglas
- Blackshear
- Homerville

#### 2.3.1 Greater Valdosta Area Transit Destinations

The Greater Valdosta Area board displayed Valdosta and the surrounding areas. Participants provided input on locations around the greater Valdosta area where they would like to go using transit.

#### Where You Live

- Valdosta State University

### Where You Would Like to be Able to go on Transit

- Moody Airforce Base / 23rd Medical Group – Moody AFB
- Valdosta Regional Airport
- McMullen Southside Library
- Valdosta Downtown at Ashley Street and Hwy 84

### Comment

- Downtown art center destinations – downtown squares, coffee shop, libraries, airport, Aldi, and other grocery stores

None of the participants provided input on other area-specific boards, which included Tifton, Fitzgerald, Douglas, and Waycross.



# Southern Georgia Regional Transit Development Plan

## Public Meeting #2 Summary

April 2025





## 1.0 Overview

The second public meeting for the Southern Georgia Regional Transit Development Plan (TDP) was held on April 17, 2025, from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. The meeting was held virtually, and members of the public were invited to join the live presentation via Zoom. The meeting was also recorded, then posted on the project website for the public to view. The meeting included a project overview, highlights from work completed to date, and discussion related to transit alternatives, vision and goals statements, and next steps. Meeting participants provided input via an interactive polling tool throughout the meeting.

### Meeting Agenda

- 6:00 Welcome & Project Overview
- 6:10 Community Input & Vision and Goals
- 6:20 Highlights from Conditions & Needs Analysis
- 6:30 Transit Alternatives & Input
- 6:55 Next Steps & Stay Engaged

### 1.1 Attendance

Three members of the public attended the virtual meeting.

*Table 1. Meeting Attendees by County*

Residential County	Count of Attendees
Lowndes County	2
Coffee County	1

*Figure 1. Social media collateral for the 2nd Public Meeting*

**Southern Georgia Regional Transit Development Plan**

*Your feedback will help inform future transit solutions!*

**PUBLIC MEETING #2**  
April 17, 6:00 - 7:00 pm

Visit the website below for Zoom meeting access information:  
[www.southernnga-transitplan.com](http://www.southernnga-transitplan.com)

**sgirc** SOUTHERN GEORGIA  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

## 2.0 Meeting Summary

### 2.1 Welcome and Project Overview

The planning team, led by Amy Martin with Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC), began with introductions before interactive introductions for members of the public. Using Mentimeter, the planning team asked participants to share their experience with public transit in the Southern Georgia Region, with one attendee indicating that they have used SGRC Transit and two additional attendees indicating they had not used SGRC Transit or Valdosta On-Demand.

An overview of the project was then given by Amanda Hatton, with Blue Cypress Consulting. She outlined the purpose of the Regional Transit Development Plan (TDP), including historical context of transit planning within the Southern Georgia Region and the state of Georgia. Amanda also gave an overview of the planning goals, key plan components, and project schedule, which showed that the plan is scheduled to be adopted in September of 2025.

### 2.2 Community Input & Vision and Goals

The presentation touched on the role of community input within the planning process. Highlights from this process include Project Advisory Committee meetings, public meetings, public surveys, a roadshow of materials at local community centers, and interviews with Southern Georgia Region stakeholders. Amanda shared key, recurring themes from community input thus far, which include:

- All areas of the region should have access to transit.
- Transit service at its core is about providing more mobility options, particularly for those who do not have the option to drive.

- The population is aging, and reliable transit is necessary to provide access to medical appointments, grocery shopping, and other daily needs.
- Transit as a means to access jobs is critical for the region's economic development.
- Infrastructure and technology trends are important considerations for the future of transit in the region.

Lastly, the draft Vision and Goals Statements were shared, and participants were encouraged to review the statements and provide feedback using Public Survey #2, which include questions surrounding the draft Vision and Goals Statements.

### 2.3 Highlights from Conditions & Needs Analysis

Ansley Belton, with Blue Cypress Consulting, highlighted some key aspects of the existing conditions analysis, including existing transit services, travel patterns in the region and adjacent communities, and destinations the community travels to frequently based on the first community survey. She also discussed findings from the planning team's transit propensity analysis, which explored factors such as zero-car households, individuals with disability, seniors, and more. The analysis shows counties with the highest transit propensity and likely the greatest needs for transit service. She also discussed rural transit demand (current and projected) for rural areas of the region. Compatible transit service types for population and employment centers in the region, including Tifton, Waycross, and Valdosta, were explored through the needs assessment process. The needs assessment included both technical analysis and inputs from the community input process.

## 2.4 Transit Alternatives and Input

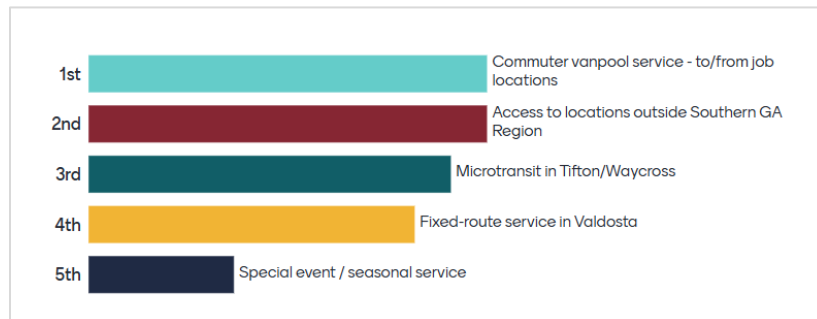
Billy Bachman, with Spatial Plans, gave an overview of transit alternatives being considered for plan recommendation. He began by highlighting the types of transit that could be considered as a part of the plan. Transit alternatives are organized in three distinct categories: transit service expansion, transit service enhancements, and administrative tools & guidance. Billy gave an overview of each category and the potential alternatives for each, then asked participants to give feedback on the alternatives using a web-based polling tool.

Below are the results from the various polling questions.

### 2.4.1 Transit Service Expansion

Billy reviewed six different transit service expansion options that asked participants to prioritize expansion options for five expansion options that were not yet planned.

Figure 2. Rank the transit expansion alternatives by priority



Participants were then asked to name specific locations that they may want to access in the following questions:

Can you think of any specific employers or work locations that could benefit from having a commuter van service?

- Hotel/Motel and food service

Are there locations outside of the Southern Georgia Region that you would like to access via transit?

No responses to this question.

If fixed-route service (such as bus with set stops) is implemented in Valdosta, what areas of town (or specific locations) should be considered?

No responses to this question.

### 2.4.2 Transit Service Enhancement and Administrative Alternatives

The project team then gave an overview of the transit service enhancements and administrative alternatives, explaining the options which included changes to service hours and schedules, marketing tactics, increasing the number of vehicles available, evaluating fares, and improving service. The responses to these questions can be seen in the figures below.

Figure 3. Rank the transit enhancement/admin alternatives by priority

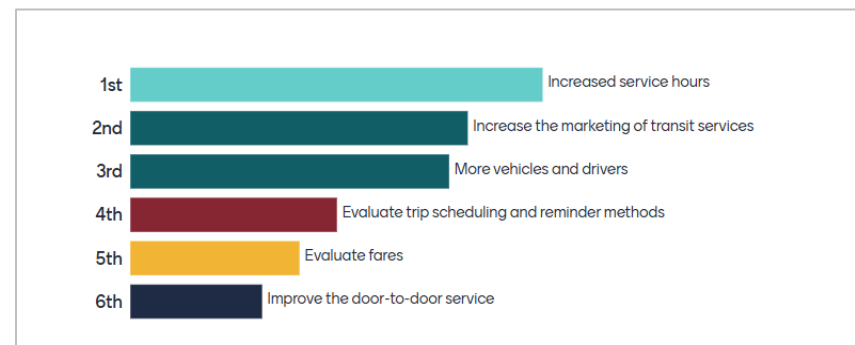


Figure 4. On a typical weekday, during what times of day would it be most useful for you to have transit service (SGRC Transit, Via, or other) available?

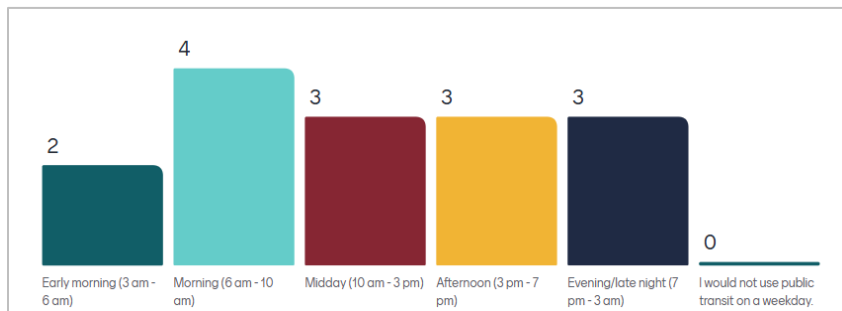


Figure 5. On a typical weekend, what day(s) would it be most useful for you to have transit service (SGRC Transit, Via, or other) available?

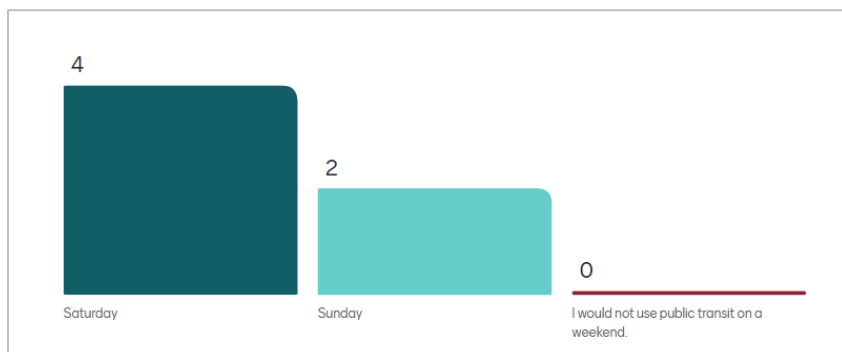


Figure 6. What is the best method for you to schedule, cancel, and get updates about transit rides?

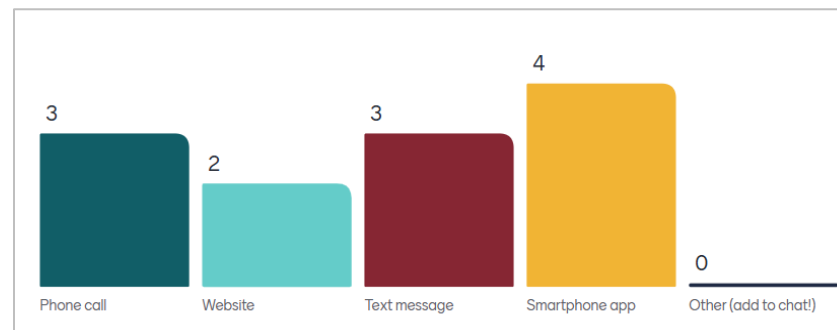


Figure 7. What is the best way(s) to get the word out about transit service? (Select all that apply)



Is there anything else that you would like to share with us as we plan for future transit in the region?

No responses to this question,

## 2.5 Next Steps & Stay Engaged

Before ending the meeting, Amanda (Blue Cypress) gave reminders about the next steps and the planning process. Community members are encouraged to stay engaged and participate in the second public survey. SGRC will be distributing hard copies of the survey. The final public input period is anticipated for August 2025, when the draft plan will be made available for a 30-day public comment period prior to its adoption. More information is available at the project website.

Amy Martin (SGRC) ended the meeting by thanking the planning team for its hard work. She noted that the recording will be posted and that SGRC will be promoting the final community survey online. She encouraged community members to participate in the survey and provide input.

# Southern Georgia Regional Transit Development Plan

## Public Survey #1

March 2025



## 1.0 Overview

The first public survey for the Southern Georgia Regional Transit Development Plan (TDP) occurred during the existing conditions analysis and needs identification phase of the planning process. A total of 85 community members participated between January 9, 2025 and February 28, 2025 and included 60 online responses and 25 hard copy responses.

All but 2 of the 18 counties in the region garnered at least one response. Echols and Irwin counties were the only two counties where no residents participated. The highest participation came from Lowndes County, with 31 percent of the total responses, followed by Pierce County, with 12 percent of the total.

**Table 1. Participants by County**

Residential County	Number of Participants	Percent of Total
Atkinson	2	2%
Bacon	6	7%
Ben Hill	3	4%
Berrien	9	11%
Brantley	3	4%
Brooks	3	4%
Charlton	1	1%
Clinch	6	7%
Coffee	1	1%
Cook	3	4%
Echols	0	0%
Irwin	0	0%
Lanier	1	1%
Lowndes	26	31%
Pierce	10	12%
Tift	1	1%
Turner	1	1%
Ware	8	9%



## 1.1 Format and Distribution Methods

The planning team launch the survey at the first public meeting, which was held in-person at the McMullen Southside Library in Valdosta on January 9, 2025. The following promotional methods were used to raise awareness about the survey:

- Social media – Both Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC) and Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization social media accounts shared social posts to promote the survey period.
- Email campaigns – The planning team sent multiple email campaigns during the survey period to the outreach list (which consists of anyone who signs up for information via the project website).
- Promotional handouts and business cards – Several sets of handouts and business cards containing a QR code linking to the survey were provided to Project Advisory Committee members.
- Hard copy surveys – The SGRC Area Agency on Aging staff distributed printed surveys and promotional handouts to senior centers across the region. In addition, SGRC Transit provided hard copies and promotional handouts on the transit vehicles.

*Roadshow events – The SGRC team attended community meetings around the region to share information about the Regional TDP and distribute the promotional handouts. SGRC Council members received handouts at their January Council meeting.*

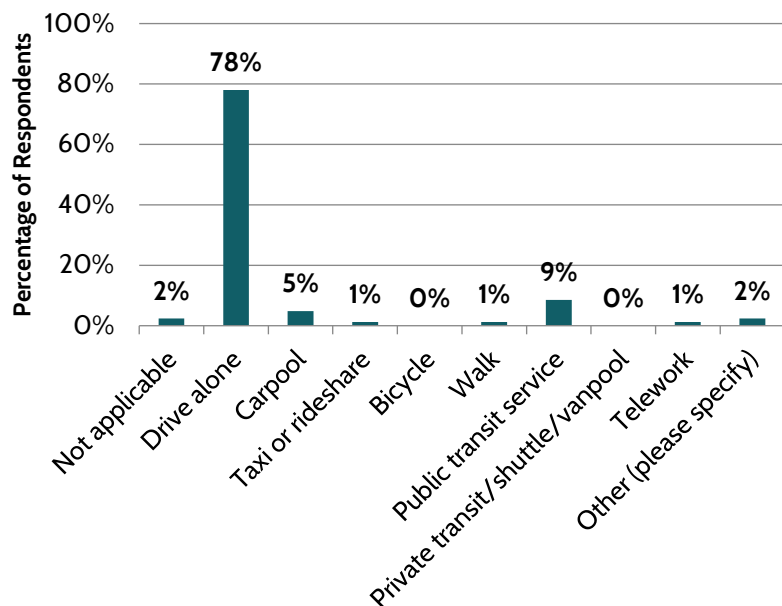
Figure 1. Excerpt from Email Campaign Promoting the Survey



## 2.0 General Travel Questions

The following set of questions gathered information about participants general travel habits. The majority of survey respondents indicated that they drive alone to get to work, school, and other destinations. More people indicated that they use public transit for work or school trips than those that use public transit trips for other purposes (including grocery, services, and non-emergency medical trips), at 9 percent and 4 percent respectively.

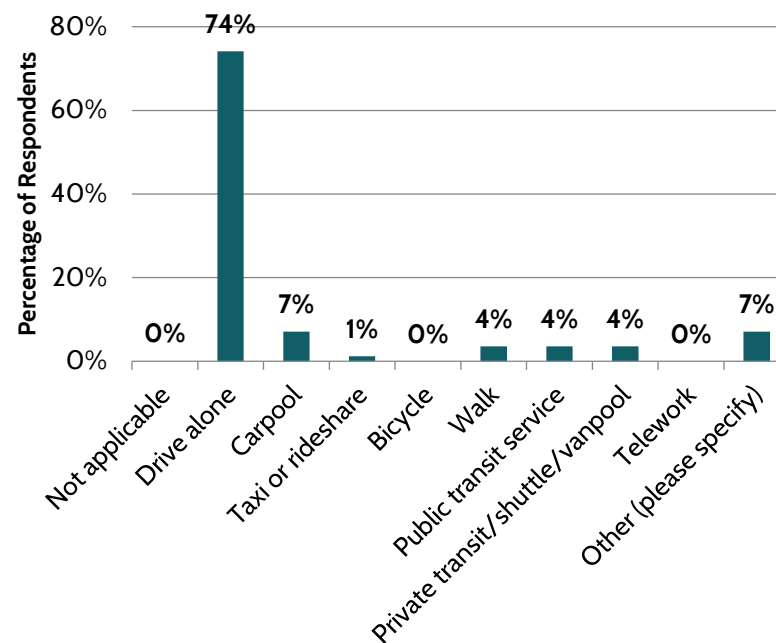
Figure 2. If applicable, how do you usually get to work and/or school?



Other Responses:

1. Public Transportation service, Private transit/shuttle/vanpool. It's hard to get a ride.
2. Lyft

Figure 3. How do you usually make other trips, such as groceries/shopping, access to services, and non-emergency medical trips?



Other Responses:

1. My brother in law takes me
2. Caregiver/ Grandaughter
3. Own car
4. Motivcare
5. Very rarely make these trips, other family does for me
6. Family

\*Note: The open-ended responses are listed exactly as provided; the planning team did not make any adjustments for spelling or grammar.

As the following two charts show, the breakdown of respondents who frequently travel to Florida is about half, with leisure being the most popular type of trip to Florida.

Figure 4. Do you frequently travel to Florida?

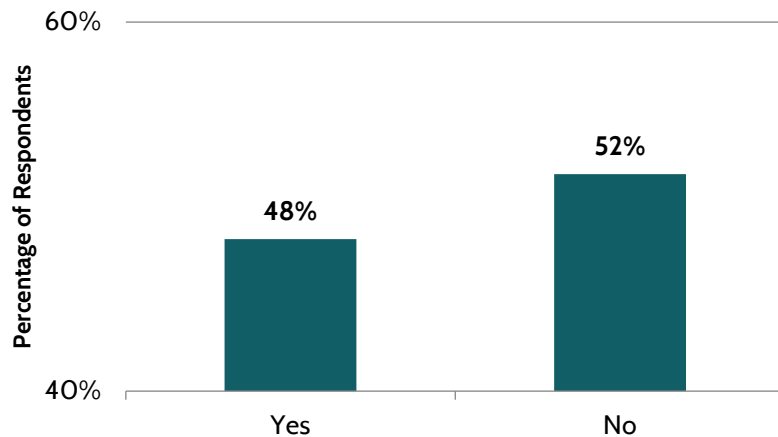
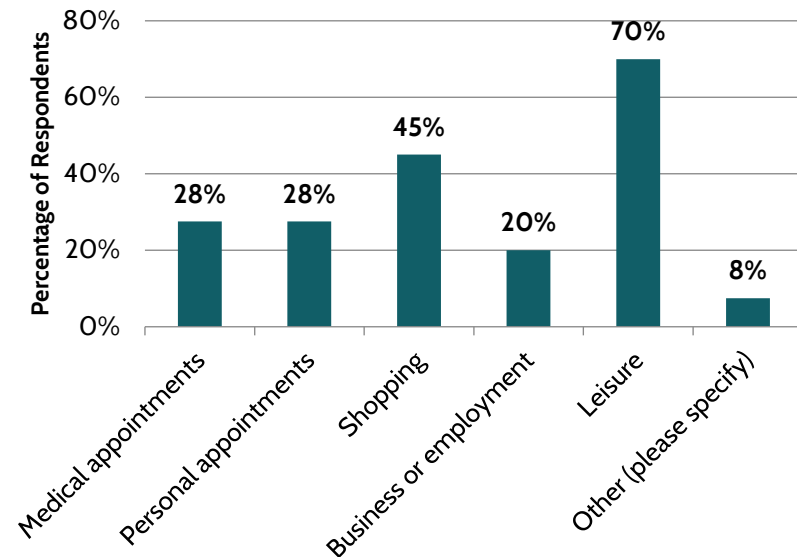


Table 2. Frequent Travel to Florida based on Participant's Residential County

Residential County of Participant	Respondents who Indicated Frequent Travel to Florida
Atkinson County	1 of 2 (50%)
Ben Hill County	2 of 3 (67%)
Brantley County	2 of 3 (67%)
Brooks County	3 of 3 (100%)
Clinch County	3 of 6 (50%)
Coffee County	1 of 1 (100%)
Lowndes County	20 of 26 (77%)
Turner County	1 of 1 (100%)

*\*Note: Only the residential counties where at least half of that county's participants indicated frequent travel to Florida are included in the table above.*

Figure 5. What type of trips do you make to Florida?



Other Responses:

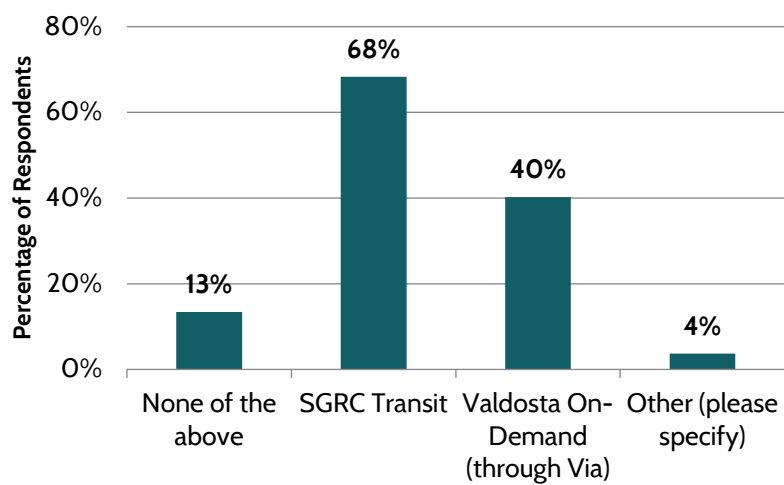
1. Ministry
2. Family vacation
3. Visiting family

*\*Note: The open-ended responses are listed exactly as provided; the planning team did not make any adjustments for spelling or grammar.*

### 3.0 Transit Experience Questions

The Transit Experience questions sought to learn about the level of familiarity with the transit services in the region. These questions also gathered service-specific feedback,

*Figure 6. There are several different transit services within the Southern Georgia Region. Which ones are you familiar with? Select all that apply and list any others not mentioned.*



#### Other Responses:

1. i dpn't know
2. Ware Transit
3. Taxi services within the city and county

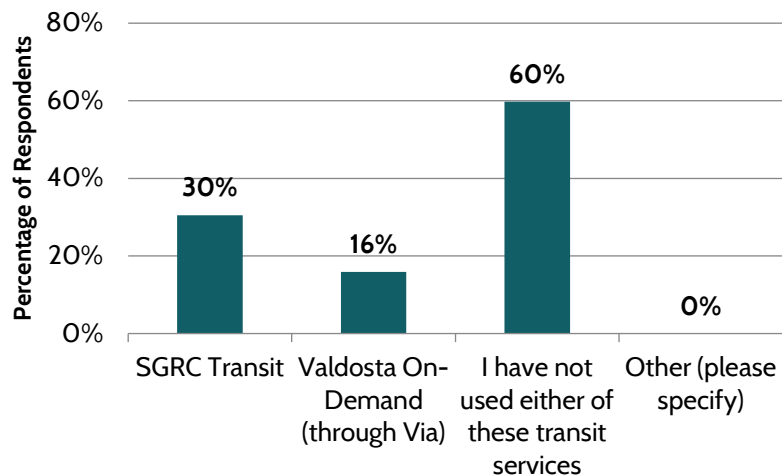
*\*Note: The open-ended responses are listed exactly as provided; the planning team did not make any adjustments for spelling or grammar.*

The level of familiarity with SGRC Transit was high, with 56 out of 82 respondents (68 percent) indicating that the service was familiar. A lower proportion of respondents were familiar with Valdosta On-Demand, with 33 out of 82 participants, or 40 percent, responding that they were familiar with this service.

When broken down by the residential county of the respondent, Valdosta On-Demand was most familiar to Lowndes County residents (22 out of 25 Lowndes residents were familiar with Valdosta On-Demand). However, only 2 of 25 Lowndes residents were familiar with SGRC Transit. Residents of the other 17 counties were more familiar with SGRC Transit than Valdosta On-Demand.

Further analysis found that no notable relationship exists between age of respondents and familiarity with transit services. For example, a similar proportion of respondents in the 25-35 age bracket are familiar with SGRC Transit (75 percent) and Valdosta On-Demand (38 percent) as those respondents in the 65 and up age bracket, with 77 percent familiarity with SGRC Transit and 38 percent familiarity with Valdosta On-Demand.

Figure 7. Which transit service(s) have you taken?



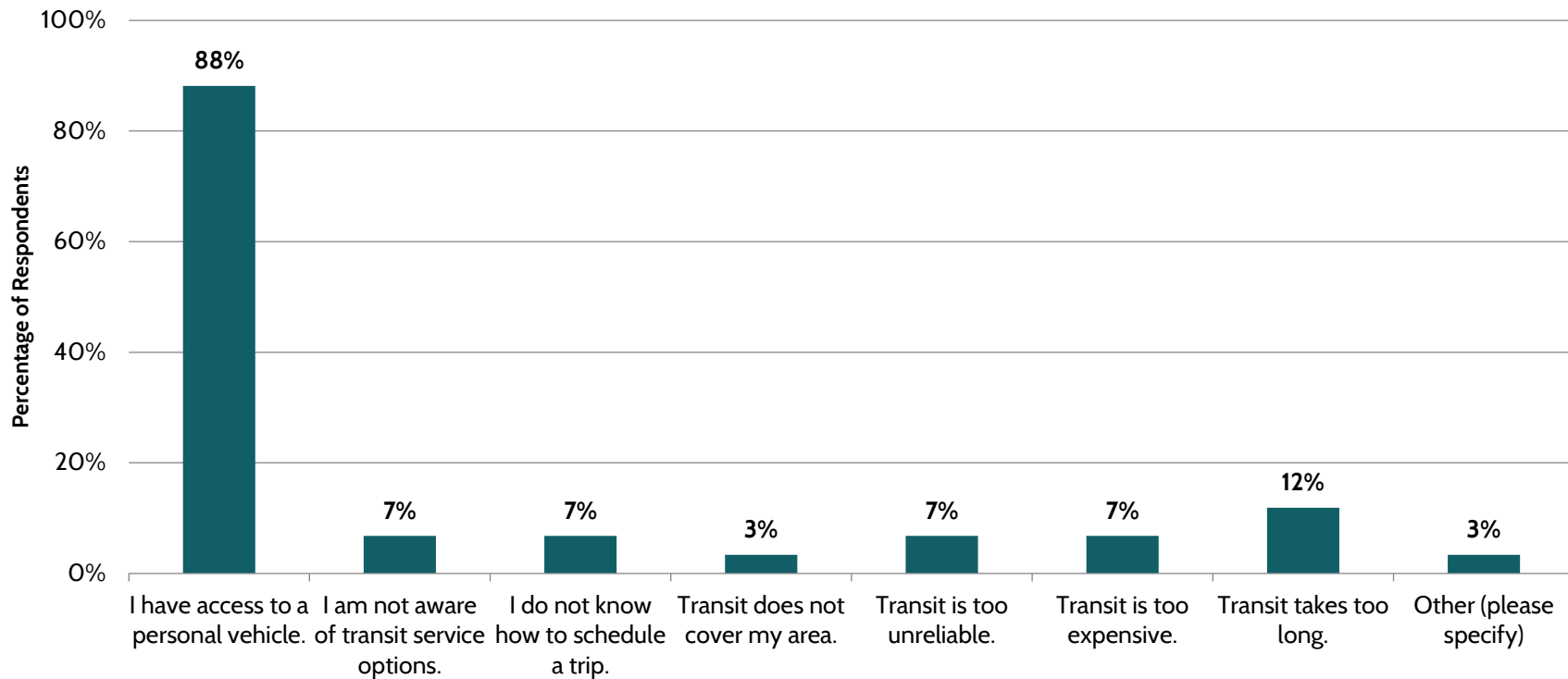
The percentage of survey respondents who have taken transit in the region is much lower than the percentage of respondents who are familiar with these services. Only 30 percent of respondents had used SGRC Transit, and an even lower percentage (16 percent) had used Valdosta On-Demand. While age does not seem to be a factor in transit service familiarity, it does impact who has used the transit services. **Table 3** shows that 15 of 26 respondents in the 65 and up age bracket have used SGRC Transit.

Table 3. Use of Each Transit Service by Age of Respondents

Age Group	Number of Participants	Percent of Age Group who has used SGRC Transit	Percent of Age Group who has used Valdosta On-Demand
18 - 24	1	100%	100%
25 - 34	8	38%	13%
35 - 44	7	0%	14%
45 - 54	9	0%	0%
55 - 64	10	30%	0%
65 and up	26	58%	12%

Sixty percent of respondents indicated they do not ride public transit. For most of these respondents (88 percent), having access to a personal vehicle is their primary reason for not using transit. Another 12 percent of these respondents indicated their reason for not using transit is the length of time associated with a transit trip.

Figure 8. If you do not ride public transit, why not?



*Other Responses:*

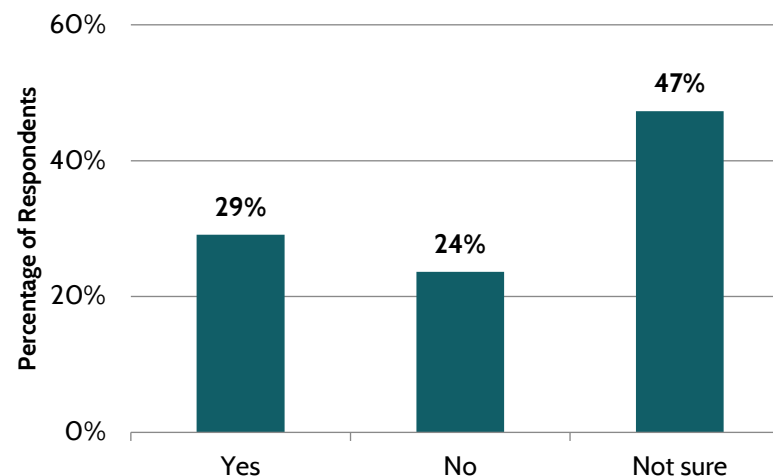
- We do not have a transit system
- I use transit

*\*Note: The open-ended responses are listed exactly as provided; the planning team did not make any adjustments for spelling or grammar.*

A review of respondents' reasons for not riding public transit by their residential county unveils some interesting insights:

- Some respondents who live within counties served by transit (Lowndes and Tift counties) are unaware of the transit options.
- Seven respondents selected, "transit takes too long." One of these respondents lives in Pierce County, and the other six respondents are residents of Lowndes County.
- Four respondents selected, "transit is too unreliable." Three of these respondents live in Lowndes County, and the other respondent lives in Pierce County.
- Four respondents selected, "transit is too expensive." Three of these respondents live in Lowndes County, and the other respondent lives in Pierce County.
- Four respondents selected, "I don't know how to schedule a trip." Three of these respondents live in Lowndes County, and the other respondent lives in Berrien County.

*Figure 9. If the reasons you do not ride public transit were addressed, would you be inclined to ride transit?*



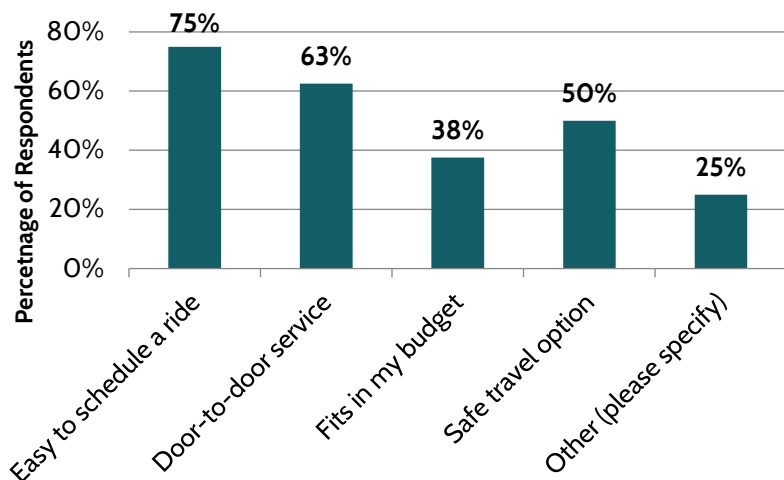
Of the 55 respondents who answered, 16 selected "yes," indicating that they would be inclined to ride transit if their concerns could be mitigated. The residential counties of the respondents who selected "yes" are:

- Berrien (2 respondents)
- Brooks (1 respondent)
- Lowndes (8 respondents)
- Pierce (1 respondent)
- Tift (1 respondent)
- Turner (1 respondent)
- Ware (2 respondents)

### 3.1 SGRC Transit Service Feedback

Fifteen riders of SGRC Transit responded to this set of questions. The most popular types of trips among this group are senior center (62 percent) and medical (38 percent) trips. About one-fourth of this group use SGRC Transit daily, and about one-fourth use it weekly.

Figure 10. What do you like about SGRC Transit? (Select all that apply)



Other responses:

1. n/a
2. n/a
3. like. drivers-friendly.
4. Sometimes Hard
5. None
6. Great customer service

\*Note: The open-ended responses are listed exactly as provided; the planning team did not make any adjustments for spelling or grammar.

Figure 11. How often do you ride SGRC transit?

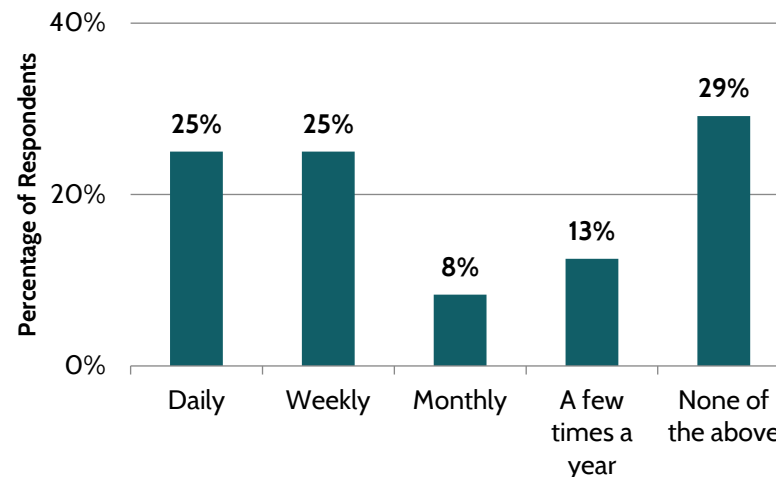


Figure 12. What types of trips do you book with SGRC Transit? (Select all that apply)

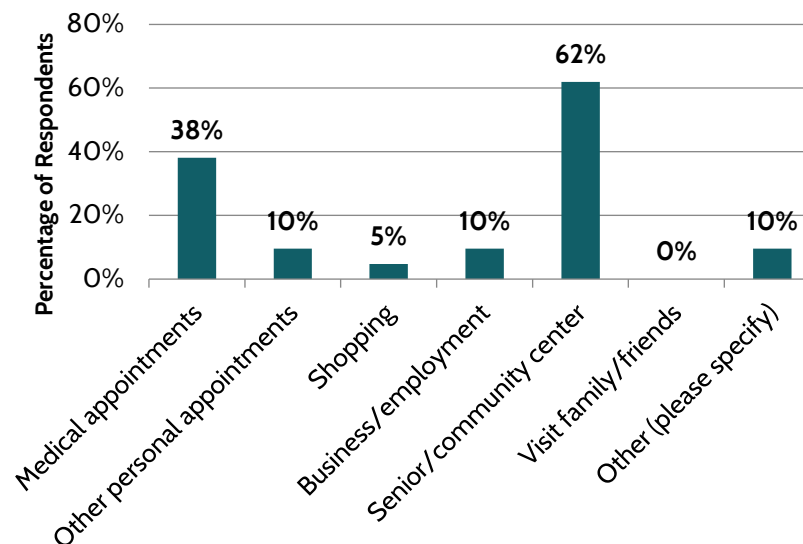
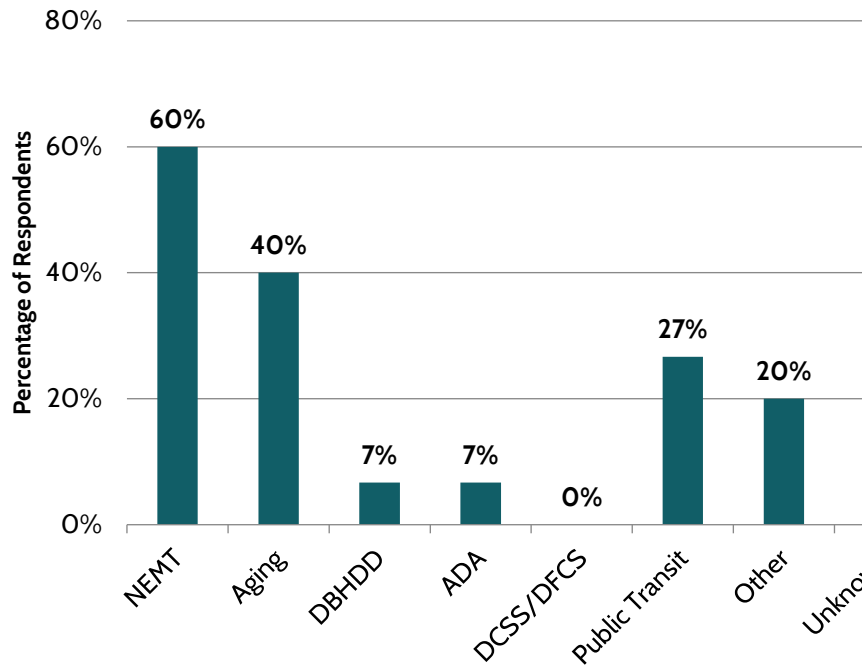




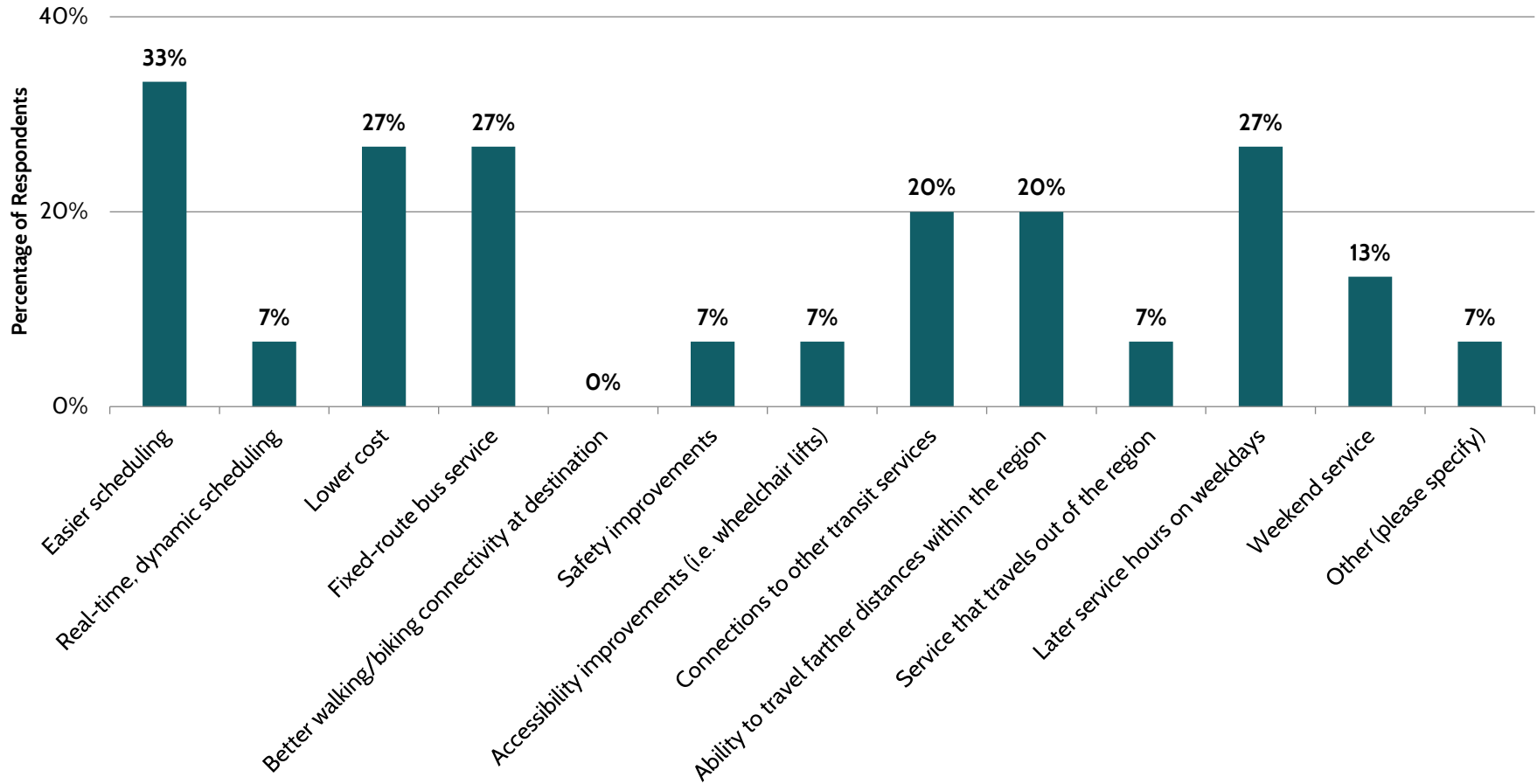
Figure 13. For medical trips, please specify the type(s) of trips that you are utilizing (if known)?



#### Acronyms in Chart

- **NEMT:** Non-Emergency Medical Transportation
- **DBHDD:** Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities
- **ADA:** Americans with Disability Act
- **DCSS/DFCS:** Department of Child Support Services/Division of Family and Children Services

Figure 14. What improvements could be made to SGRC Transit's service? (Select all that apply)



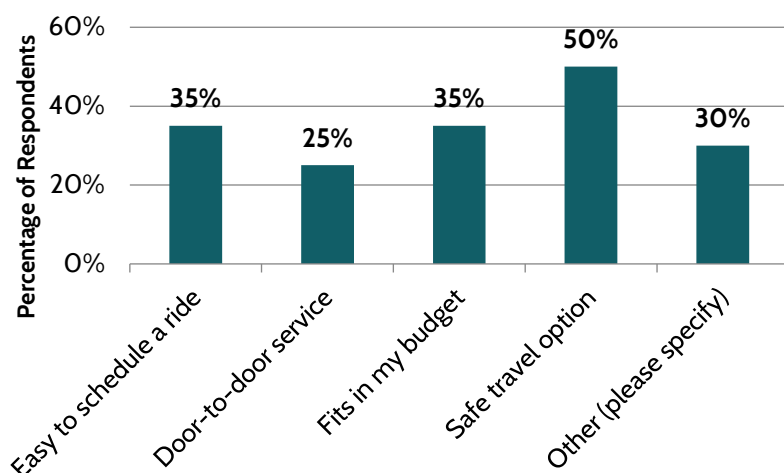
Other responses:

1. I'm fine.

### 3.2 Valdosta On-Demand Service Feedback

Fifteen riders of Valdosta On-Demand responded to this set of questions. While these respondents do not rely on transit for daily transportation needs (based on the ride frequency question), the top trip type (37 percent) is senior/community center trips.

Figure 15. What do you like about Valdosta On-Demand? (Select all that apply)



Other responses:

1. n/a
2. n/a
3. n/a
4. n/a
5. I don't use Valdosta on-demand
6. Its ok we need shuttle buses similar what vsu has that would do good for the city Valdosta on demand is just a bandaid for the city we need bigger transportation vehicles like a bus it don't have to be traditional buses but something nice so people will know Valdosta is a metropolitan city they have a bus system not just vans riding around people still don't know we have transportation here because Valdosta on demand is not go fix alot . Valdosta is too big not to have a fix transportation for the city and county.

\*Note: The open-ended responses are listed exactly as provided; the planning team did not make any adjustments for spelling or grammar.

The respondent pool was comprised of people who are not regular users of Valdosta On-Demand, based on the reported frequency of using the service, as depicted in **Figure 16**. Of these users, the most common trip types (shown in **Figure 17**) are 1-senior/community center (37 percent), 2-business/employment (32 percent), and 3-medical appointments (26 percent).

Figure 16. How often do you ride Valdosta On-Demand transit?

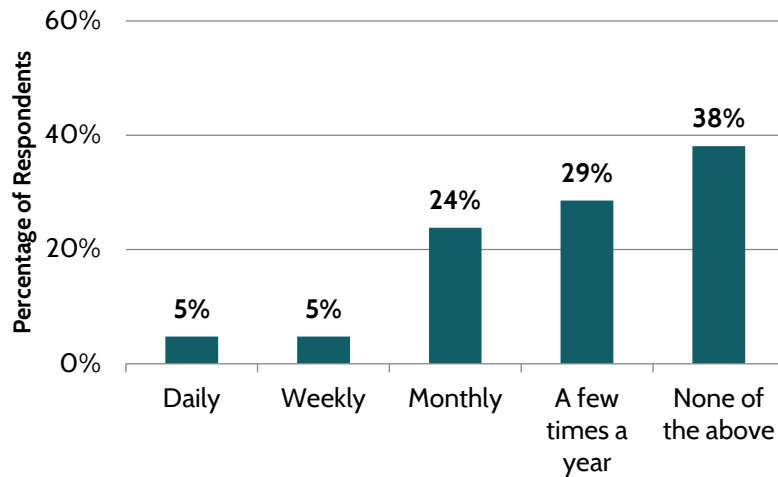
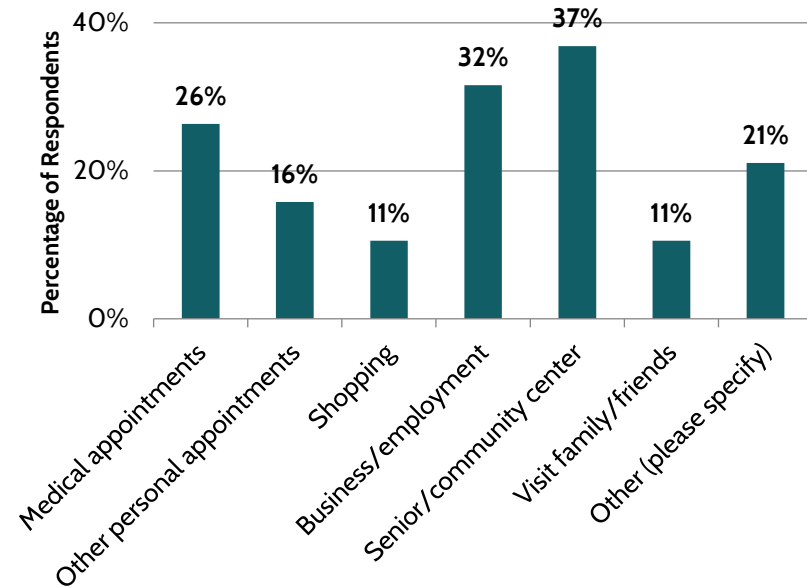


Figure 17. What types of trips do you book with Valdosta On-Demand? (Select all that apply)

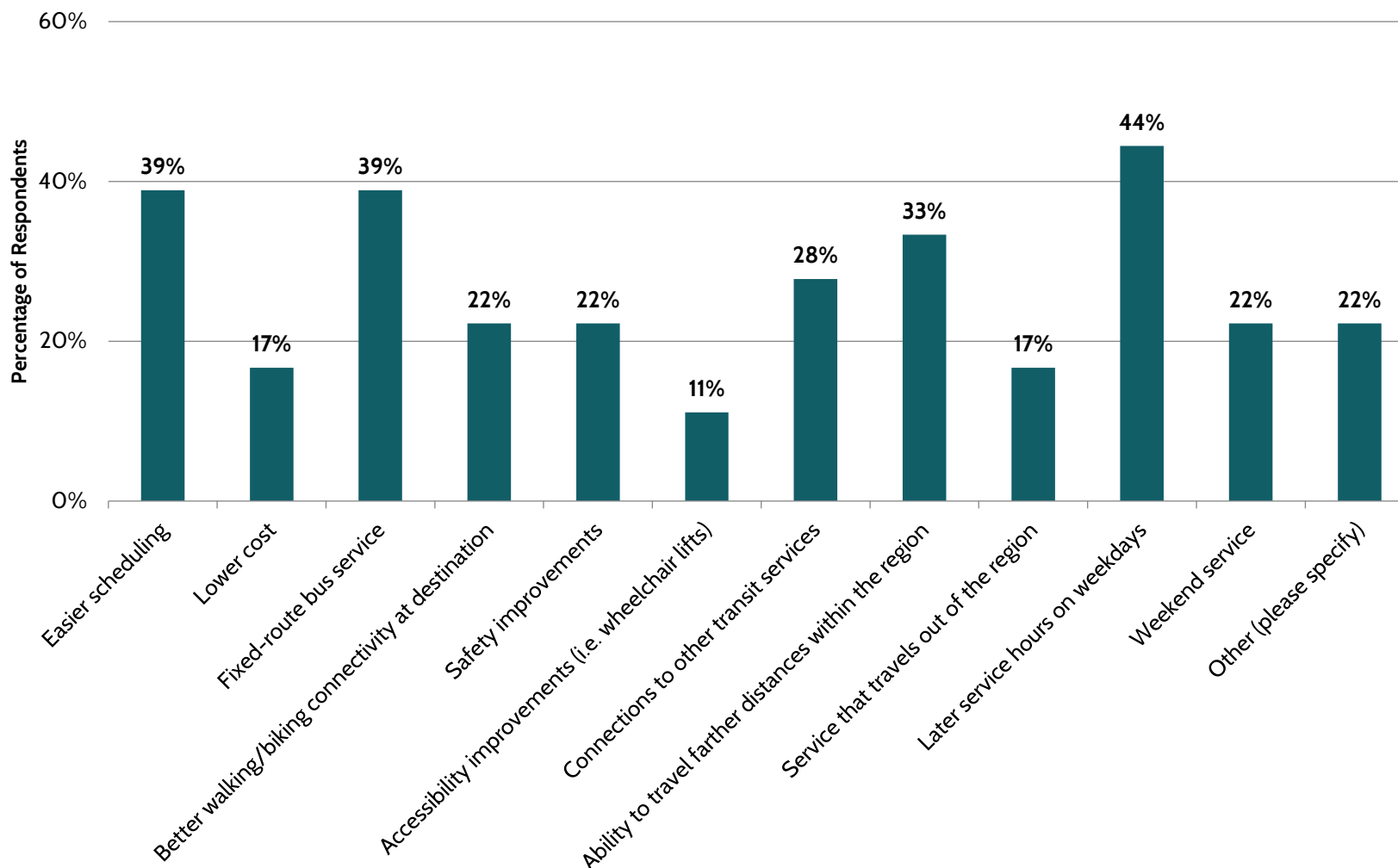


Other responses:

1. N/a
2. None
3. N/a
4. Work and shopping

As shown in **Figure 18**, the top desired improvement for the Valdosta On-Demand service was “later service on weekdays,” selected by 44 percent of respondents. There was a tie for the second desired improvement type, with 39 percent of respondents selecting both “fixed-route bus service” and “easier scheduling.”

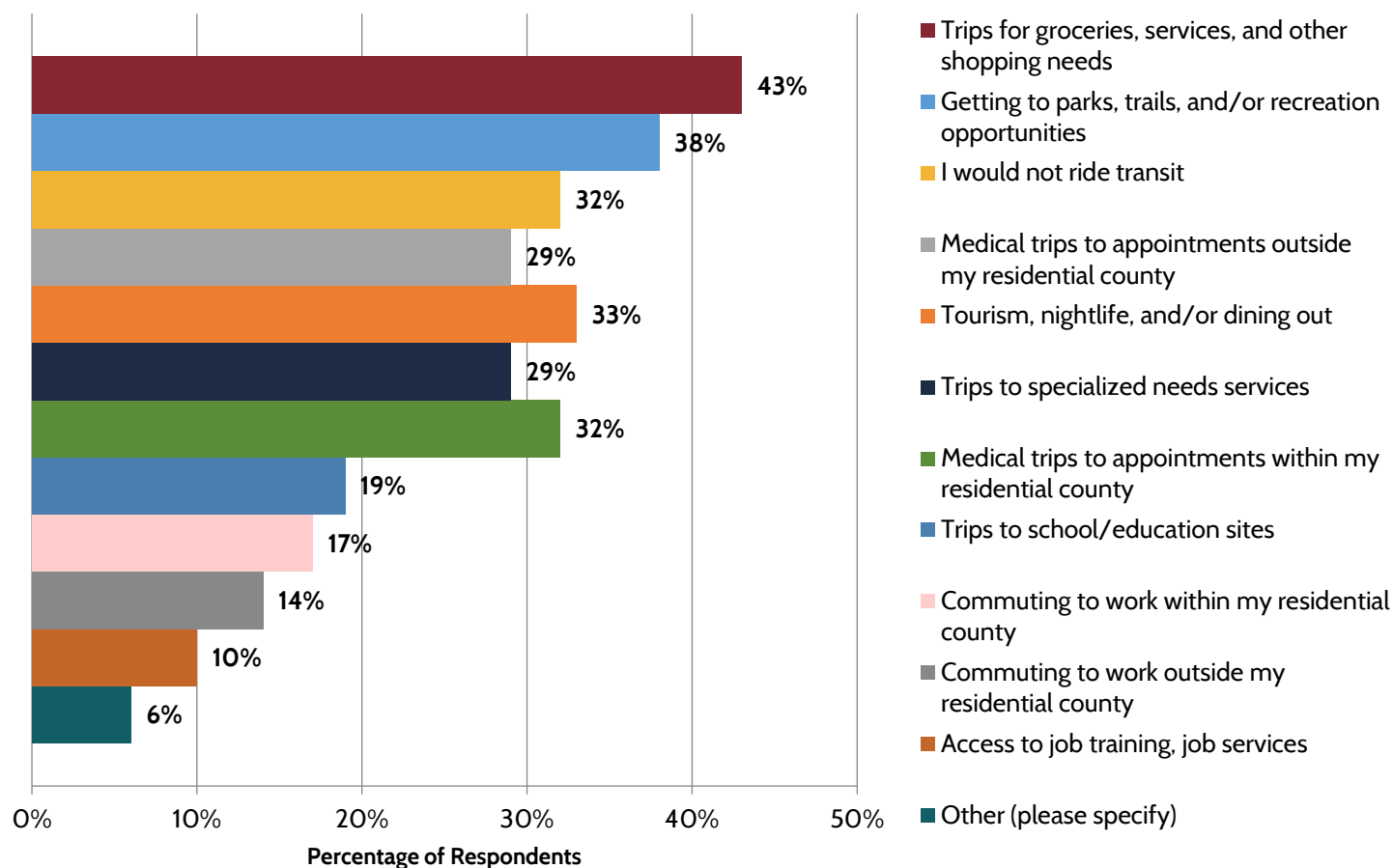
Figure 18. What improvements could be made to Valdosta On-Demand's service? (Select all that apply)



## 4.0 Imagining our Transit Future Questions

The next set of questions focused on the desired future conditions of transit in the region. The first “Imagining our Transit Future” question asked about the types of trips that respondents would use transit for if expanded offerings were available. The most popular answer choice was “trips for grocery, services, and other shopping needs” (selected by 27 of 63 respondents on this question, or 43 percent).

Figure 19. What types of trips would you take public transit for if expanded offerings were available? (Select all that apply)



Based on a review of the desired trip type responses along with the respondents' residential county, some county-specific desires emerge, as shown in **Table 4**. These observations are only reported for those counties that had at least five respondents for this question.

*Table 4. County-Specific Preferences for Future Transit*

Residential County	# Responses to Question	Desired Transit Trip Types (or Disinterest in Transit)
Berrien	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trips for groceries, services, and other shopping needs (6 out of 7 respondents, or 86 percent)</li> <li>• Medical trips to appointments outside my residential county (4 out of 7 respondents, or 57 percent)</li> <li>• Medical trips to appointments within my residential county (4 out of 7 respondents, or 57 percent)</li> <li>• Trips to specialized needs services (4 out of 7 respondents, or 57 percent)</li> </ul>
Bacon	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism, nightlife, and/or dining out (4 of 6 respondents, or 67 percent)</li> <li>• Getting to parks, trails, and/or recreation opportunities (3 of 6 respondents, or 50 percent)</li> <li>• Trips for groceries, services, and other shopping needs (2 of 6 respondents, or 33 percent)</li> </ul>
Clinch	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I would not ride transit (5 out of 5 respondents, or 100 percent)</li> </ul>
Lowndes	17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting to parks, trails, and or/recreation opportunities (12 out of 17, or 70 percent)</li> <li>• Trips for groceries, services, and other shopping needs (11 out of 17, or 64 percent)</li> <li>• Tourism, nightlife, and/or dining out (10 out of 17, or 59 percent)</li> </ul>
Pierce	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I would not ride transit (4 out of 6 respondents, or 67 percent)</li> <li>• Trips for groceries, services, and other shopping needs (2 out of 6 respondents, or 33 percent)</li> </ul>
Ware	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medical trips to appointments outside my residential county (2 of 5 respondents, or 40 percent)</li> <li>• Tourism, nightlife, and/or dining out (2 of 5 respondents, or 40 percent)</li> <li>• Getting to parks, trails, and/or recreation opportunities (2 of 5 respondents, or 40 percent)</li> </ul>

The second “Imagining our Transit Future” question asked about locations people would like to access with transit. Both **Figure 20** and **Table 5** summarize responses to this question.

*Figure 20. Where would you like to be able to go using public transit? List as many locations as you wish to provide.*

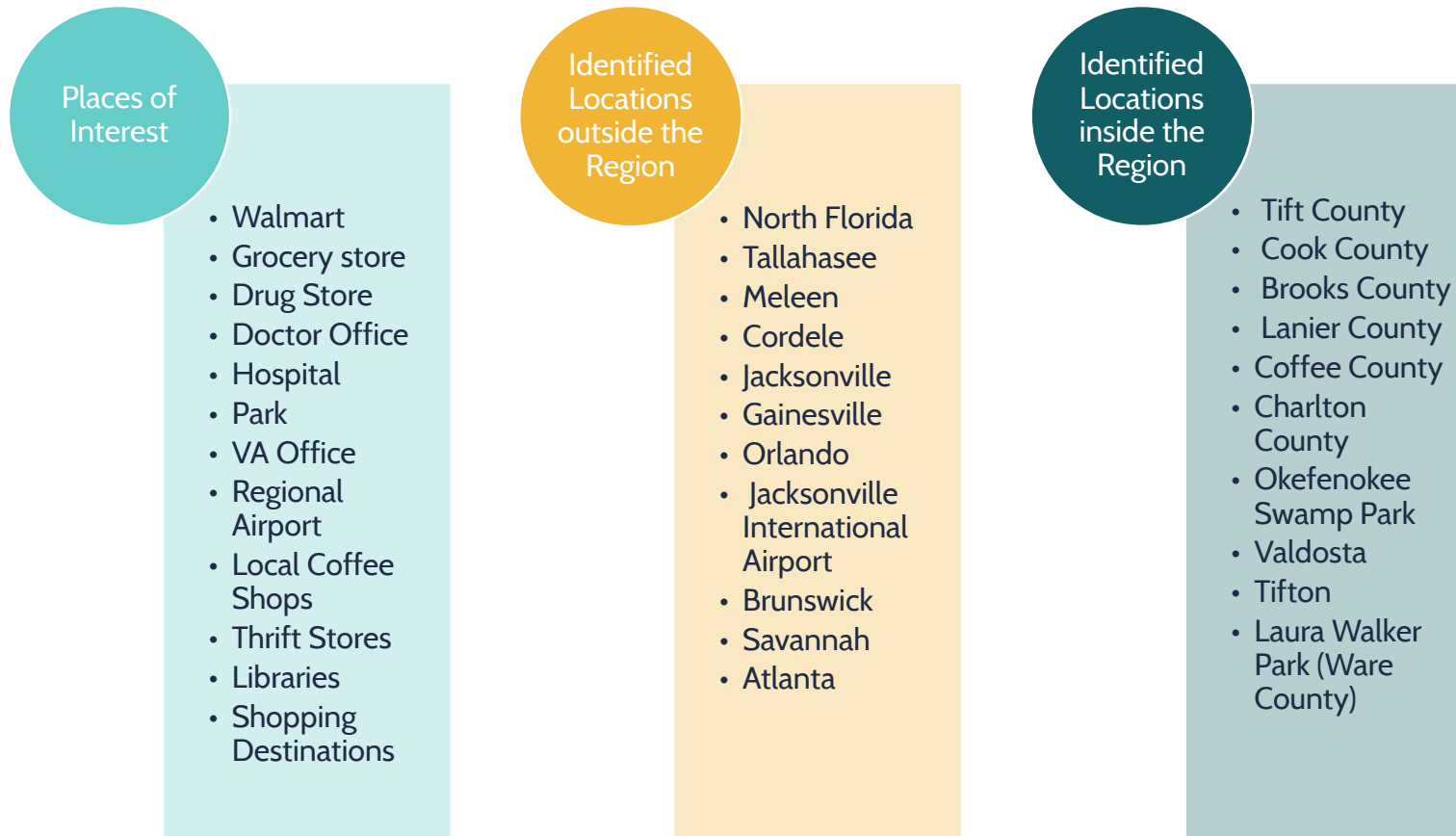




Table 5. Desired Destinations by Participants' County of Residence

County of Residence	Desired Destinations
Atkinson County	Within living area
Bacon County	Special trips to parks, restaurants, day trips
	Recreational day trips
Berrien County	Walmart Grocery Store Drug Store
	Grocery Store
	to go buy groceries stuff i need for my home
	Doctors, shopping, recreation
Lowndes County	Anywhere
	Jacksonville, Tallahassee, and Atlanta
	Direct connections to TAL or JAX
	Everywhere within lowndes county limits.
	Gainesville, FL Atlanta, GA Orlando, FL
	Anywhere throughout the southern reason
	Cook, Brooks, Tift, Lanier
	All over the city to appointments and grocery shopping
	regional airport, local coffee shops and thrift stores, local libraries, libraries in different counties, shopping in other counties and towns, specialty shopping in other counties.
	Na
	Work
Pierce County	I do not travel without my granddaughter outside of going to the senior center.
	Tift County Coffee County Charlton County
	Parks Shopping mall
Tift County	Dr Grocery shop Hospital Park Valdosta Atlanta
Turner County	North FL - Tallahassee, Meleen, Douglas, Tifton, Cordele
Ware County	Okefenokee Swamp Park, Laura Walker Park, Shopping and/or dinner in Valdosta, Brunswick, Tipton, Savannah, Florida
	Jacksonville International Airport

\*Note: The open-ended responses are listed exactly as provided; the planning team did not make any adjustments for spelling or grammar.

**If not for yourself, do you have family members or friends/neighbors/colleagues that would benefit from public transit service? Please describe any unique transit needs.**

A common theme among these open-ended responses (provided in **Table 6**) was that transit would benefit senior citizens, particularly those who can no longer drive. Multiple comments note the need for medical trips among seniors and people with disabilities. A couple responses highlight that transit could provide a way for people to get to work or technical colleges.

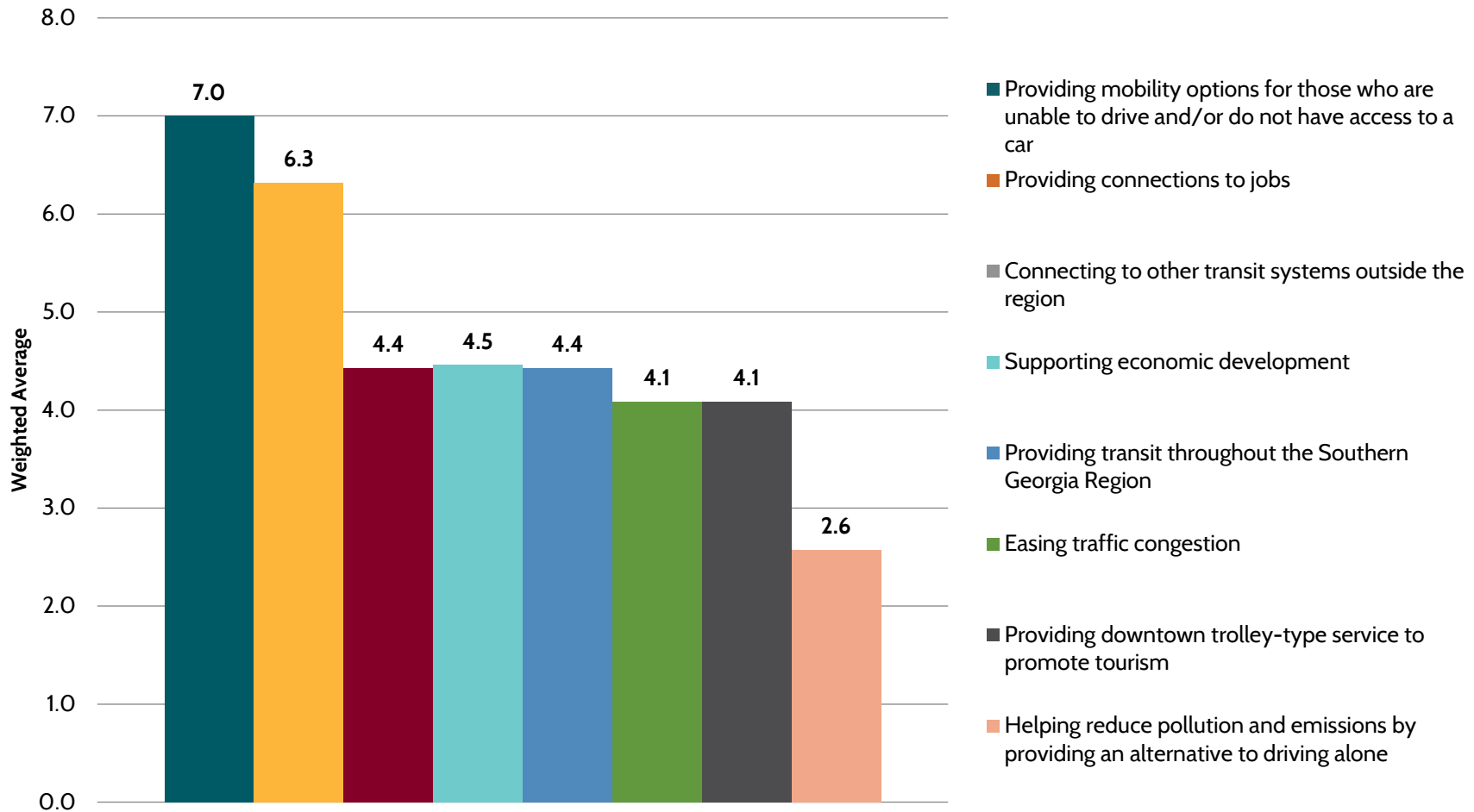
*Table 6. Open-Ended Responses for “If not for yourself, do you have family members or friends/neighbors/colleagues that would benefit from public transit service? Please describe any unique transit needs.”*

ID	Comment	Comment Tag(s)
1	n/a	
2	n/a	
3	No	
4	None	
5	No	
6	no	
7	N/A	
8	N/A	
9	I believe everyone can benefit from public transportation options.	Transit benefits all
10	Not really	
11	yes	
12	Same as mine	
13	Elderly travel alternatives	Senior
14	Yes, they ride a shuttle to work.	Employment
15	Yes, elderly friends & relatives who can no longer drive have to rely on friends & family for rides.	Senior
16	The elderly population would benefit from public transit.	Senior
17	Yes lots of senior citizens need this!	Senior
18	Elderly people who do not have someone that is available to help them.	Senior
19	elderly needs access to transit for food, medical	Senior
20	no	
21	Yes	
22	My dad he is 85	Senior

ID	Comment	Comment Tag(s)
23	Medical trips	Medical
24	No	
25	Maybe some of the senior citizens may need it for doc appointments and grocery shopping	Medical Grocery
26	My aunt does not have a car in Brantley County.	
27	yes. Transit to the technical college and employment centers are most important.	Employment Technical College
28	No	
29	Yes, many in our community would benefit having a regularly scheduled transportation route from residential neighborhoods to industrial work areas, shopping districts, medical districts, food districts, and downtown in Waaycross and Ware County	Employment Shopping Medical Leisure
30	"My sister and my niece need to go to pay bills and grocery shop. They need to go to the drug store and sometimes to the emergency room, or Dr's appointment.	Grocery Services Medical
31	Yes. Several elderly neighbors and people with physical and mental disabilities	Senior Disability
32	Yes, there are many who would benefit from a way to get to the grocery and dr appts	Grocery Medical
33	yes - those unable to drive for long distances alone or lack the car modifications to do so, those with disabilities that rely on transit if family/friends are unable to have licenses.	Disability No Vehicle
34	They don't have a personal vehicle	No Vehicle
35	Yes	

*\*Note: The open-ended responses are listed exactly as provided; the planning team did not make any adjustments for spelling or grammar.*

Figure 21. Which of the following goals are most important for the future of public transit options in Southern Georgia Region? Please rank in order from most important to least important, with 1 being most important and 8 being least important.



The top two goals, as indicated in the chart above, are “providing mobility options for those who are unable to drive and/or do not have access to a car” (weighted average score of 7.0) and “providing connections to jobs” (weighted average score of 6.3).

### Do you have suggestions for additional goals for transit in the Southern Georgia Region that were not covered in the previous question?

Multiple responses to this question allude to a desire for a fixed-route service, such as a bus route or a streetcar. The streetcar idea was noted as a possibility for making Valdosta more unique and attractive to tourists. Some respondents want to see greater connectivity to other regions and into Florida. One comment expressed the need to improve mobility of seniors and youth, and another comment discussed education on how to access the system and a mobile application for convenient booking.

*Table 7. Open-Ended Responses for “Do you have suggestions for additional goals for transit in the Southern Georgia Region that were not covered in the previous question?”*

ID	Comment	Comment Tag(s)
1	no	
2	Bring back the streetcar! It would make Valdosta completely unique and draw national attention, we'd be the smallest city in the US with municipal rail service. Change a very ordinary, generic city into something unusual!	Fixed-route service Unique to Valdosta - tourism
3	No	
4	It could be a public transit bus like the Meta train in Atlanta.	Fixed-route service
5	We need plane travel to somewhere other than ATL.  We also need rail service! Florida is getting high speed rail & it will eventually connect allover the state & beyond.	Fixed-route service
6	Ways to cut down on waiting time between appointments	Reduce wait times
7	no	
8	no	
9	No	
10	Bus stops or bus line added	Fixed-route service
11	More Education on how to access and use, APP for convenience	Ease of Use
12	Provide access outside of the region	External Destinations
13	None	
14	Providing transportation to the seniors or young adults that do not have transportation to and from jobs.	Senior Youth
15	No	
16	More stops and an actual bus route that continuously runs with multiple buses	Fixed-route service
17	No	
18	None	

ID	Comment	Comment Tag(s)
19	No	
20	n/a	
21	Please pickup sometime real late waiting long time dr. office Go Home.	Reduce wait times
22	Make seniors a priority, The reason I no longer ride is all the trips outside of my trip. I go to the center and back for seniors. I'm picked up late or have to go to other places. I am 94 years old.	Senior
23	No	
24	No	
25	NO	
26	n/a	
27	n/a	
28	No	
29	No	

*\*Note: The open-ended responses are listed exactly as provided; the planning team did not make any adjustments for spelling or grammar.*

### Is there anything else you would like to share with us about current or future transit service in your community or the Southern Georgia Region?

As shown in **Table 8**, the comments are generally positive regarding the existing transit options. Some of the comments speak to populations with mobility needs (elderly, low-income people, and students). Others focus on the key places where people require transit access, such as medical appointments outside of the region and connections to larger cities.

*Table 8. Open-Ended Responses for “Is there anything else you would like to share with us about current or future transit service in your community or the Southern Georgia Region?”*

ID	Comment	Comment Tag(s)
1	i need transportation	Need for transit
2	n/a	
3	NO	
4	N/A	
5	No Thanks	
6	Debra is a great driver for us seniors in Blackshear. Communication is also important. Unless my granddaughter calls to see whats going on I never know. There should only be seniors to and from the center only. Other scheduled outside of that time. Also the employees in the transit office have terrible attitudes. My granddaughter had to set them straight.	Positive Feedback for SGRC Transit Driver

ID	Comment	Comment Tag(s)
	Debra always keeps me informed when we will have a sub driver. She does a great job. I no longer ride due to my granddaughter being fed up. I would get home late or travel outside of my area to pick up someone who wasn't going to the senior center. It was to much on me and my granddaughter worrying over my whereabouts.	
7	Not at this time	
8	N/A	
9	Consider small communities and our need to connect to larger cities to have needs met.	Destinations Connecting rural and urban areas
10	Medical appointments outside of region.	Destinations Trip types
11	No	
12	need more	
13	No	
14	Yes, I'm ready for it to be more reliable	
15	I have heard some people find it hard to access the system	Difficulty booking trips
16	no	
17	no	
18	No	
19	Future travel routes	Infrastructure Destinations
20	Cost for elderly and less fortunate	Serving populations with no other transportation options (Senior & Low-Income)
21	A more effective way for the community to know that transit service is available - hours, cost of service.	Awareness of transit service operating hours and fares
22	For safety of drivers and buses we need county roads without roots under them that have destroyed the quality of the road, repaved and wider. All county roads in 18 counties need to be repaved and maintained. Pierce County has failed to keep out roads better.	Infrastructure and safety
23	Have a system like Marta or other systems in big cities. A bus stop on every corner and shopping centers,or markets.	Transit service type
24	In Columbia sc we had a great public transportation system that many college students were able to utilize along with the whole community	Students

ID	Comment	Comment Tag(s)
25	No	
26	No	
27	n/a	
28	appreciate your service	Positive feedback for SGRC Transit

*\*Note: The open-ended responses are listed exactly as provided; the planning team did not make any adjustments for spelling or grammar.*



## 5.0 Demographic Questions

The following set of optional questions gathered demographic and socioeconomic participant information. This information helps the planning team gauge the reach of the survey and also understand how well overall participants reflect the demographic makeup of the Southern Georgia Region.

Compared to the demographics of the region as a whole, the survey had an overrepresentation of white participants (70 percent in the survey pool compared to 60 percent of the region's population). Participants that identified as Black or African American – 28 percent – matched the actual population share of this segment of the population. The survey did not capture many responses from the Hispanic/Latino ethnic group, which makes up about 8 percent of the region's population. Only 2 percent of survey participants identified as Hispanic or Latino.

A greater proportion of seniors (65+) participated (43 percent) compared to the senior share of the region's population (21 percent).

Participants reflected the range of annual household incomes in the region, representing spectrum of lower-income to higher-income brackets.

Figure 22. Do you have your own, personal vehicle?

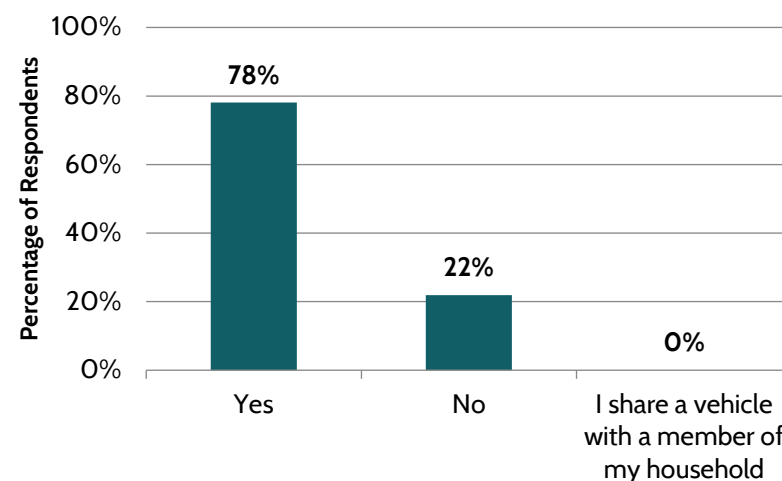


Figure 23. What is your age?

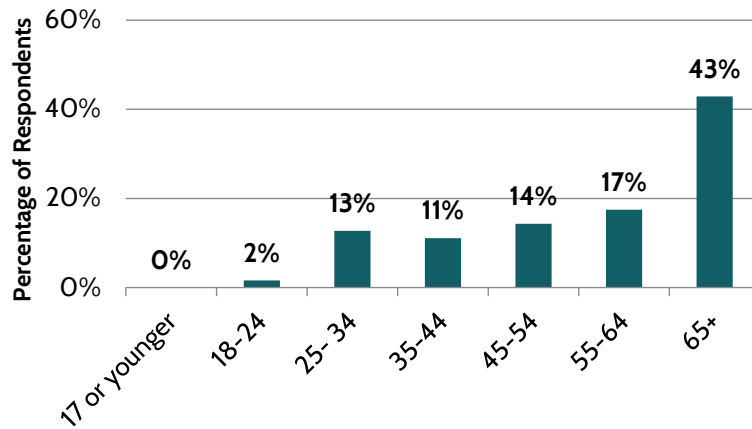
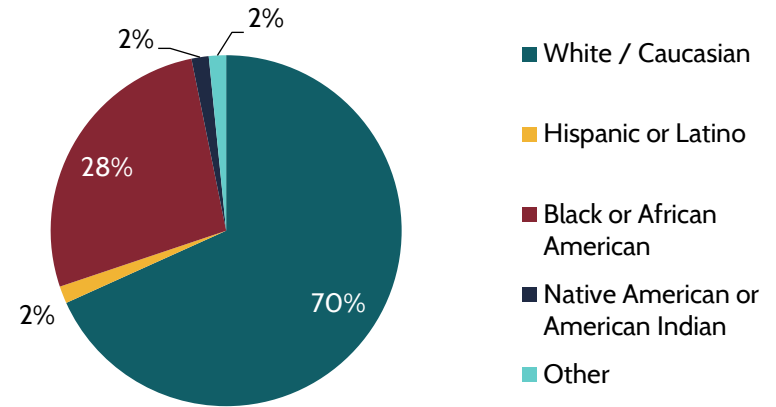
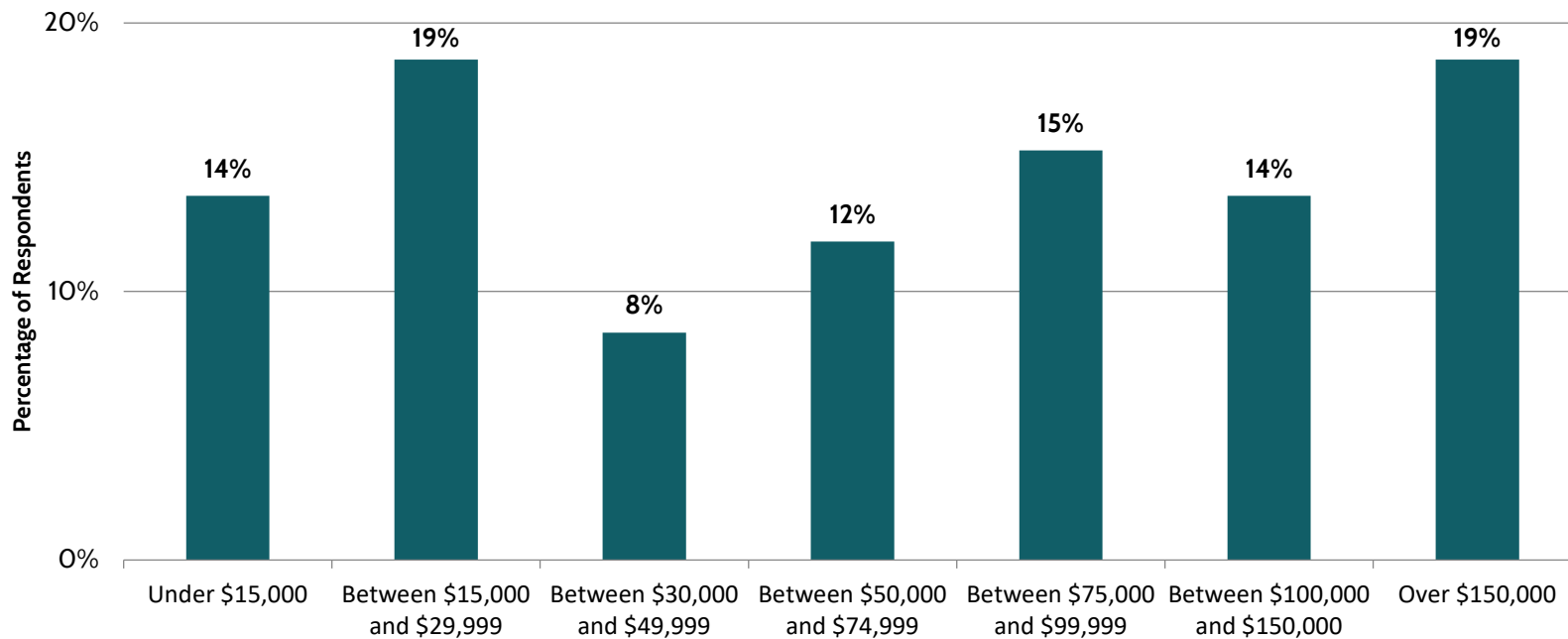


Figure 24. Please specify your race/ethnicity (Select all that apply).



\*Note: Zero participants identified as Asian or Pacific Islander.

Figure 25. What is your approximate annual household income?



# Southern Georgia Regional Transit Development Plan

## Public Survey #2 Summary

June 2025



# 1.0 Overview

Between April 17 and May 18, 2025, a second and final public survey was conducted to gather additional insight into the transit needs of community members in the Southern Georgia Region, as well as to receive feedback on the preliminary vision and goals statements and potential transit recommendations for the Regional Transit Development Plan. A total of 215 people participated in the survey.

Residents in 16 of the 18 counties in the Southern Georgia Region participated in the survey as well as 2 participants from outside the region. No residents participated from Brantley and Turner counties. The highest participation came from Lowndes County, with 54 percent of the total responses, followed by Coffee County, with 12 percent of the total.

Given these participation rates, it should be noted that the perspective of Lowndes County residents is heavily reflected in survey responses and sentiment collected via the survey. Responses to the survey provide anecdotal information to support transit needs and preferences in the region and should not be considered a representative sample of the region. Further assessment of who participated is available in Section 7.0

WHAT'S INSIDE?

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4.0 Vision and Goals Questions..... 6

5.0 Potential New Transit Service Options..... 11

6.0 Proposed Transit Improvements.....15

7.0 Demographic Questions ..... 26

Table 1. Participants by County

Residential County	Number of Participants	Percent of Total
Atkinson	1	0.47%
Bacon	2	0.93%
Ben Hill	1	0.47%
Berrien	3	1.4%
Brantley	0	0%
Brooks	8	3.72%
Charlton	1	0.47%
Clinch	8	3.72%
Coffee	19	8.84%
Cook	3	1.4%
Echols	6	2.79%
Irwin	2	0.93%
Lanier	9	4.19%
Lowndes	117	54.42%
Pierce	6	2.79%
Tift	13	6.05%
Turner	0	0
Ware	14	6.51%
Other	2	0.93%

## 1.1 Format and Distribution Methods

The survey was launched online during the public meeting on April 17, 2025. The following promotional methods were used to raise awareness about the survey:

- Social media – Both Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC) and Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization social media accounts shared social posts to promote the survey period.
- Email campaigns – The planning team sent multiple email campaigns about the final community survey during the survey period to the Regional TDP outreach list, which consists of anyone who signs up for information via the project website as well as stakeholders engaged in the planning process.

The planning team provided a packet of hard copy surveys and promotional flyers for distribution in each county in the Southern Georgia Region. SGRC planning staff distributed printed surveys and promotional across the region.

Figure 1. Social Media Campaign Promoting the Survey



**Southern Georgia Regional  
Transit Development Plan**

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**Take the Survey Today**

*Don't miss this chance to share your feedback on preliminary  
vision, goals, and transit strategies!*

[www.surveymonkey.com/r/SouthernGA-RTDP-2](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SouthernGA-RTDP-2)

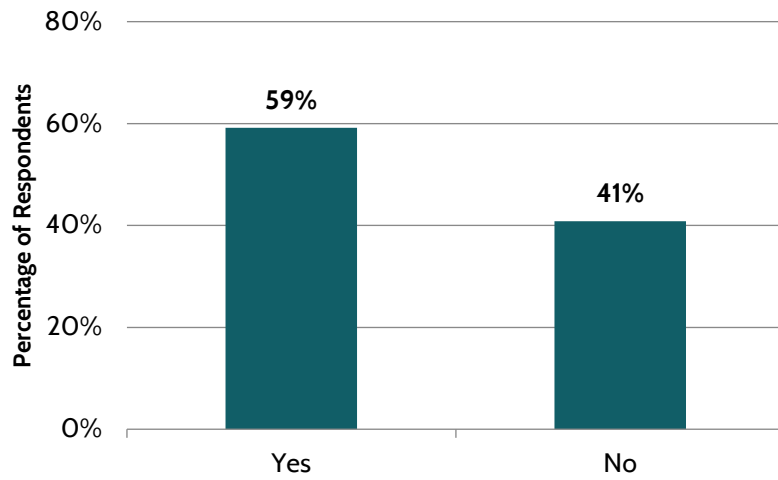
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**sgirc** SOUTHERN GEORGIA  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

## 2.0 General Questions

An introductory question gathered information about the awareness of transit services in participants. The majority of those that responded to this question (59 percent) indicated that they are aware of public transit services within their residential area.

*Figure 2. Are you aware that there is a public transit service available in your residential area?*

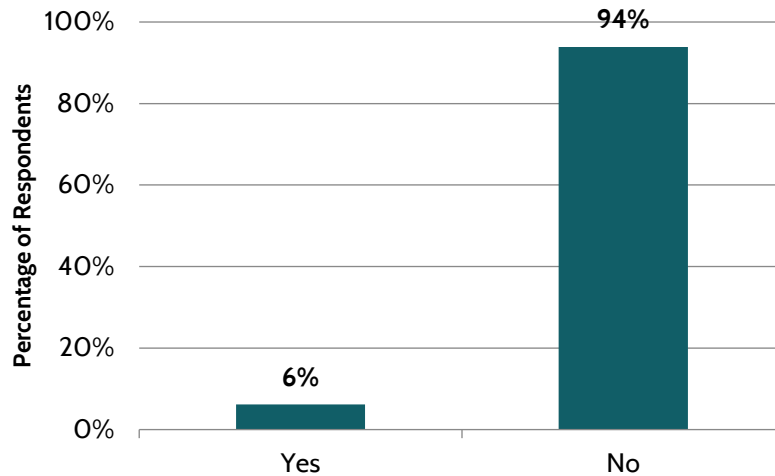




### 3.0 Transit Experience Questions

The transit experience questions centered on the participants' familiarity and frequency of use with public transit options in their residential area.

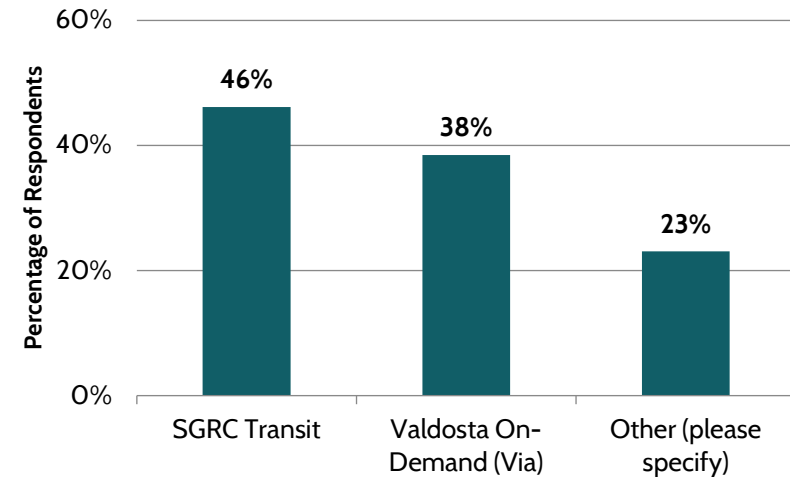
Figure 3. Do you regularly (more than once per month) use public transit?



A large portion (94 percent) of the respondents do not frequently use public transit. The majority of those who indicated that they do use public transit live in Lowndes County (eight of the total “Yes” respondents).

When looking at age of those who utilize public transit, those between 35 – 44 (3 responses) and 45 – 55 (4 responses) had the highest number of respondents. All other age categories did not have a notable number of responses indicating that they do take public transit.

Figure 4. Which public transit service do you typically use?



Other Responses:

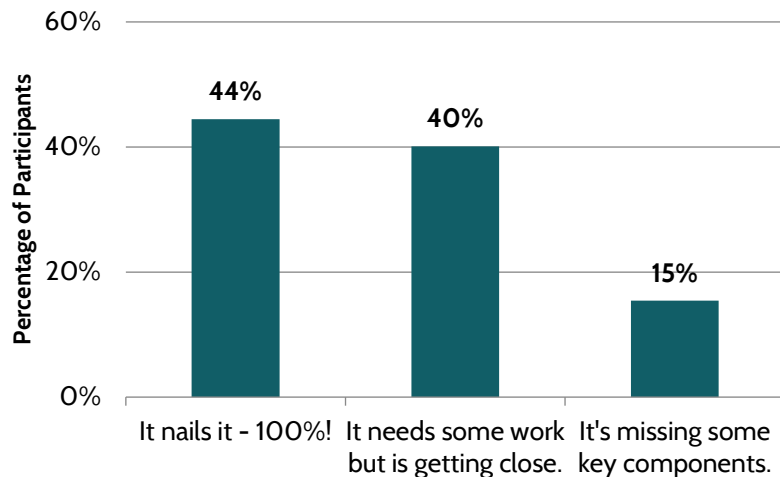
1. Uber
2. I would if it was more accessible
3. Uber/Lyft

SGRC Transit is the most typically used public transit service amongst respondents who indicated that they do utilize public transit, garnering 46 percent of the responses. Another 38 percent of the respondents indicated that they use Valdosta On-Demand (Via), while a 23 percent indicated they use “other”.

## 4.0 Vision and Goals Questions

Participants were asked rate how well they felt vision and goals statements reflected what they want the future of transit in the region to look like. These questions allowed participants to provide feedback on how well the vision and goals statements capture the needs for the region while allowing participants to add other ideas they deemed important.

*Figure 5. Rate how well the vision statement reflects what you want the region's long-term transit future to be like.*



Forty-four percent of respondents felt that the vision statement “Nails it – 100%,” while another forty percent felt that the statement was getting close but still needed some work. An additional 15 percent of respondents felt that the statement was missing some key components.

Participants were then asked to share any words they felt were missing from the vision statement. These responses included some suggestions on wording as well as new ideas or initiatives to further detail how the vision would be accomplished. Many participants indicated the vision should be more specific focusing on the “how” and “why”. The comments also included a desire for a more robust transit service to be established in Valdosta and the greater Southern Georgia Region. A complete listing of the free responses to this question are available in Table 2 on the following pages.

### Draft Vision Statement

In 2050, transit services in Southern Georgia Region will seamlessly transition between urban and rural areas, facilitate greater accessibility to destinations across the region, and further the region's adaptability to the future.

Table 2. Responses to “Please share any words you feel are missing”\*

Response	
Not sure	You need a “I don’t know button”
Too long, keep it SIMPLE, clear and concise. Draft Vision Statement: “In 2050, transit services in Southern Georgia Region will facilitate greater accessibility to destinations across the region between urban and rural areas.”	Just needs more of an explanation of how and ensuring it is truly accessible for all who will need this essential service.
Availability to all. Daily schedule. Safety Concerns.	In my humble opinion, it need the “how”
We need a bus system. Valdosta is the only metro area in Georgia without a public bus system. Valdosta on demand is insufficient and inconvenient.	The Valdosta area is already dying without these services. The current system is woefully inadequate and a waste of the millions of dollars that the area has received. We should have had a proper bus system decades ago.
Maybe “BY 2050” instead of “IN 2050”	Increase availability of the serve
App accessibility for scheduling. Maximum lead time of 24hours. Service oriented personnel. Handicap accessibility with routine routes for Healthcare locations and Household needs.	It is a farce. I do not support public transportation anywhere in our Region.
Bicycle paths need to be included for alternative modes of travel between rural and urban areas.	2050 is way too far away. We need this sooner, especially as the economy falters.
“transit” needs to be defined. Because I have no idea what public transport options there are, I do not know what you mean by “transit.” Are these busses, shuttles, trains, etc.?	Maybe add language about sustainability? I’d love to see cleaner air and an overall less compromised environment around here.
By 2050, transit services in the Southern Georgia Region will allow residents to more easily transition between urban and rural areas, facilitate greater accessibility to destinations across the region, and aid regional population and industry growth.	The fact it is forced on us. We voted NO. Meanwhile we can’t afford to fix our bridges. But that doesn’t matter. Let’s send another million to Adel, send another couple hundred thousand to Fitzgerald. Don’t worry about our bridges of the main arterial roads. Also don’t worry about the tax increases. Don’t worry that people are on a fixed income. Don’t worry that the local school systems are completely shafting us. Don’t worry that we were told money had been allocated to Pine Grove high school... But then suddenly those plans are postponed and a multimillion dollar IDPF was bought instead. Or that the citizens of Lowndes county voted against it yet we are supposed to believe the LCS superintendents husband, a washed up baseball player, and former pharmaceutical sells rep whose wife got him EVERY SINGLE job since he left medical sales is somehow a qualified Loan officer whose office just so happens to be located with the Lowndes county schools office. Or it may be simple case that this job posting was never promoted to find the best candidate, but rather the family needed another salary.
We have to walk about 2 miles before they can pick us up. I use a walker. That isn’t workable. We have to walk about 2 miles before they can pick us up. I use a walker. That isn’t workable.	Valdosta on Demand does not work at all. Need proper taxicab system and not a bootleg Uber/Lyft.
We have to walk about 2 miles before they can pick us up. I use a walker. That isn’t workable.	Affordable

Response	
Need to have stops available with shelter from the weather and a bench	I have a Russian driver Pikuff Dropov
Public transit needs to be have consistent time tables and reach most places within the city, acting as an economic accelerator and benefiting people's lives by having real options rather than being stuck with being forced to use a car as the only viable modal system.	The Valdosta metro area needs a real public transit system and not a quasi taxi service called Valdosta On Demand
What is the proposed mode of conveyance? What are the forecasted stops and at what frequency? How will the project be funded and what is the plan for logistics and financial sustainment?	The services offered need to be timely and dependable. Its not as much a benefit to the community if it cant be used for appointments and work transportation that needs to be at a set time
MASS TRANSIT, BUS ROUTES & STOPS	n/a
We need city busses that run a routes like they have in Atlanta living in Lowndes county with no real public transportation bus routes makes it very hard for me since I have no car I used public transportation in ocala fl and rode the buses every where I needed too go Valdosta doesn't o ly for the Vau college kids and that seems unfair what about the rest of us we are left out	Reliable transportation. I lost my job for either being late or missing work due to rides not available, late or not showing up at all. When I lost my ride on weekends I had to walk at least 8 miles to and from work.
Accessibility, cost friendly, extended hours, weekend hours, reliability	I feel 2050 is too far away. This should be more of a 10 year goal.
South Georgia needs better roads and infrastructure. Without updating our highways and adding news ones to connect our rural areas, the current goal will not work. What about high speed trains?	we need public transportation at least till midnight on any given day. Also open on the weekends.
This is designed to waste tax payer dollars and will not service those carrying the burden	I think the statement is missing how the mission is accomplished. Feels incomplete.
Timely,convenient, reliable,affordable	People need some skin in the game.
Needs more drivers	Affordability
Too wordy	N/A
N/A	Will employ drivers that treat patrons with dignity and respect
In a timely manner	Will fail and close

*\*Responses are shown exactly as entered by survey respondents. No spelling or grammar corrections were made by the planning team.*

Participants reviewed the long-term goals for the transit in the region and provided additional words that they felt should be included in the goals, shown in Table 3 below. Participants generally felt that the goals should be more specific and refer to certain groups such as the elderly and disabled population. Multiple participants discussed the need for a bus system, especially in the rural area, and the need for drivers to be courteous and speak multiple languages.

### Draft Long-Term Goals

- Deliver fiscally responsible and efficient transit services.
- Provide for the unique needs of transit dependent populations.
- Advance a multifaceted and connected system through regional collaboration and coordinated services.
- Implement context-sensitive transit and last mile connectivity solutions in population centers.
- Pursue creative and collaborative solutions to further economic opportunities.
- Promote innovation and adaptability to meet future needs.

Table 3. Feedback on Draft Long-term Goals

Responses	
Sounds like an AI-generated load of bureaucratic butt-speak. Can you put it in layman's terms?	Making sure the technology and/or software used is accessible to all users. Example: Captions for videos, screen readers for blind/low vision consumers, etc.
Just want to know how.	More advertising, regular stops and pick up times / early starts
This may be already in the works, but hiring more drivers for the on demand service would allow more people to use them and not have to wait up to an hour to hopefully book a ride.	Please consider handicap, accessibility fo those using wheelchairs, scooters, walkers or other assistive devices. Assistance getting to and from appointments would be a godsend.
Climate controlled access points with seating and handicap access. Eco-friendly vehicles	Improvement in services for "rural" areas within the existing service area needs to be improved. The excuse of "unpaved" roads preventing services for senior citizens needs to be addressed. Services should not be limited because drivers choose to not navigate dirt roads.
No	Sounds great!
Regular transit service connecting cities in Coffee County	There may be more pine trees than people around here. Not enough scale to support rural transport. If there was, we'd already have private bus lines.
No	Would love to see more details with specifics.
We need a bus system	No. Seems fine
Why is this necessary? What is wrong with the current system? Why does it need to be improved? Why should we invest in this?	The cringiest, most generically broad, goals ever. Those should be daily goals for employees and the long term goals should be specific to the organization that other government departments do not look after.
Make it more available	No
No. It sounds like positives for this area.	That the transit service should not be solely on-demand. We need services like bus service that runs on a schedule.
Make sure drivers can speak multiple languages.	Should be biking and hiking trails included. There needs to be safe options for people who choose to walk or bke

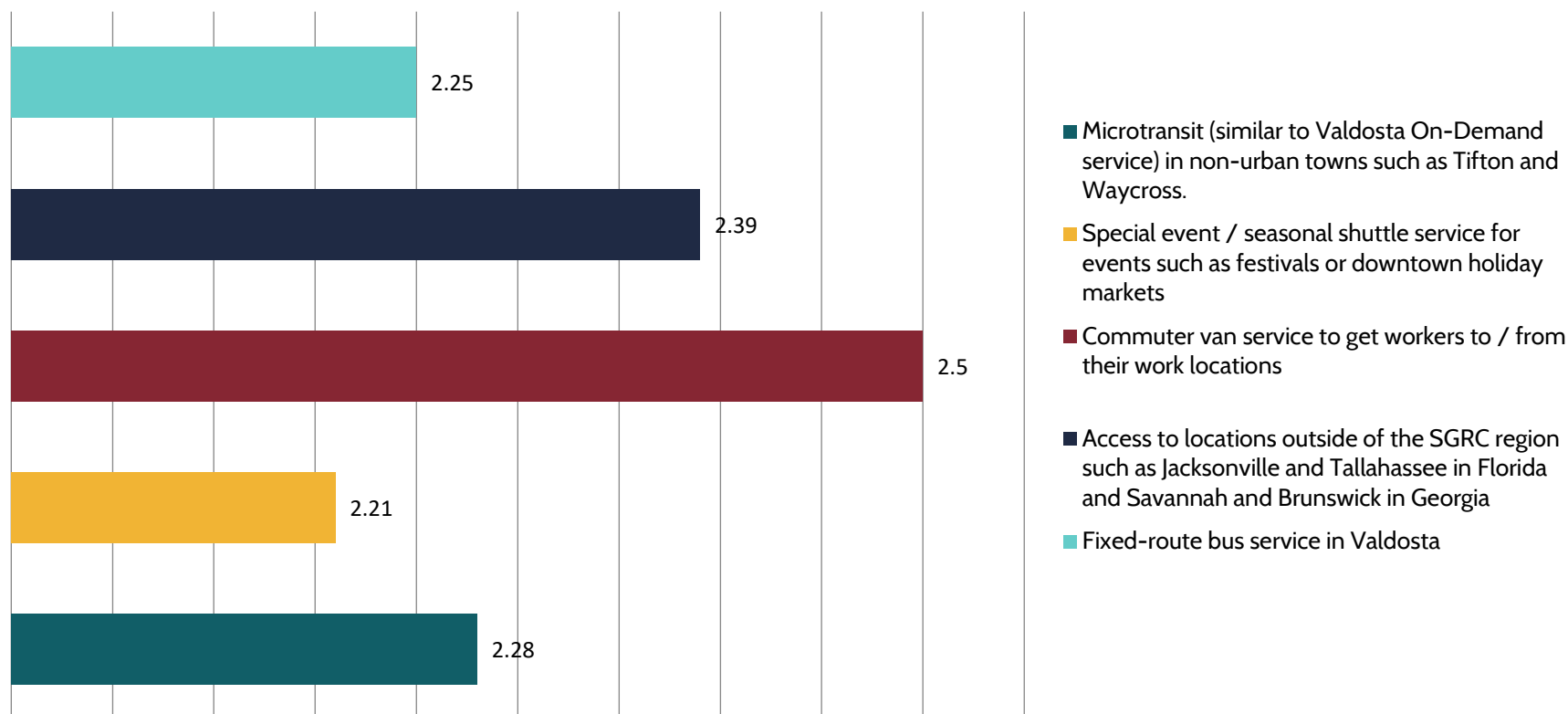
Responses	
This is well and good. More transit options need to be brought back, like the tram that Valdosta once had, and expanded on.	Cheap train travel would be worth bringing back since a good majority of those counties have major rail lines still passing through.
Goals are good. I would like to see safe bike and walking paths as well. When we lived in Anchorage, AK we were able to walk/bike on over 500 miles of connecting trails. It was a huge disappointment to move here and nearly get hit by passing traffic on Skipper Bridge Rd. Walking/biking access increases the health of the population as well.	Not specified, but I'd expect this effort is a rail transport system and not a road vehicle. Rural Georgia, south of Macon, could benefit from a mass transit rail system. I'd imagine a concept similar to the Bright Line in Florida. From your proposed service area, I don't think it would work unless you extend service to more desirable destinations. The east-west boundaries are rural counties with no draw for passenger service to be sustainable. I'd recommend extending to service coastal stops. The system "Hub and spoke" with Macon, Albany, Valdosta, Cairo and Brunswick as hubs.
None	I don't use public transit. I have a car and a car payment which I pay with my income from my job.. please don't raise my taxes because of something I will never use.
It would be nice to start considering regional rail service with busses serving the surrounding communities.	Yes utilize buses similar to the one Valdosta State has
Lots of words here, but no "REAL" vision. We need access to and connection between popular areas that offer job opportunities - the mall, Walmart, hospital, industrial, downtown (Valdosta and Hahira), VSU, Moody AFB, Wiregrass, GMC, churches, grocery stores, medical plazas, large communities where younger adults are trying to progress. Transit should run on regularly scheduled routes and begin at 6am and end no earlier than 10pm for routes near the hospital. The SGRC transit is not reliable for time sensitive needs and never showed up on more than one occasion, and they do not utilize the app efficiently.	Make sure that it will cover all the 18 counties to make sure all has access. Needs to be made known that this service is available with some cost. Some clients read the website and think it's free service. So update the SGRC website would be great.
Stretcher services, dialysis assistances	Promises that never materialize
Why should taxpayers pay for people to get where they want to go. Why wouldn't the taxpayers money be better spent on employment services?	Better roads around Atlanta! Instead of all the scrambled mess into their congested roads!
Cancel this plan immediately. I do not support it.	Those goals are far too abstract and immeasurable. I don't understand what you're trying to accomplish. Perhaps take a look at the SMART goals acronym.
Not at this time	It would have been a great help if the Valdosta-based MSA agreed to by voters many years ago had not sent back the Federal funds it received for which it had promised area transportation.
No	No
It needs to be available for all.	These are starting to sound overly wordy, and too broad based.
N/A	Weekend service is a need
All efforts to improve are very much needed and appreciated.	Eventually purse on demand services on a timely manner
Looks good	n/a

\*Responses are shown exactly as entered by survey respondents. No spelling or grammar corrections were made by the planning team.

## 5.0 Potential New Transit Service Options

The next set of questions focused on the potential new transit service options in the region. The first question asked participants to rank on a scale of 1 (not important) to 3 (very important) select transit expansion alternatives. Commuter van service to get workers to/from their work locations was rated the most important overall, with 61 percent selected very important, followed by microtransit in non-urban towns, such as Tifton and Valdosta.

Figure 6. On a scale of 1 (not important) to 3 (very important), how would you rate each of the following transit alternatives?



When looking at potential alternative recommendations, the project team sought feedback from participants on the potential locations for an employer commuter van shuttle. Participants were asked to provide their response in the form of a free response, which can be seen in Figure 7 below.

The most popular answers included Wild Adventures Valdosta as well as the Walmart Distribution Center. General locations, such as industrial parks and the Five Points Shopping Plaza were also included as responses to this question.

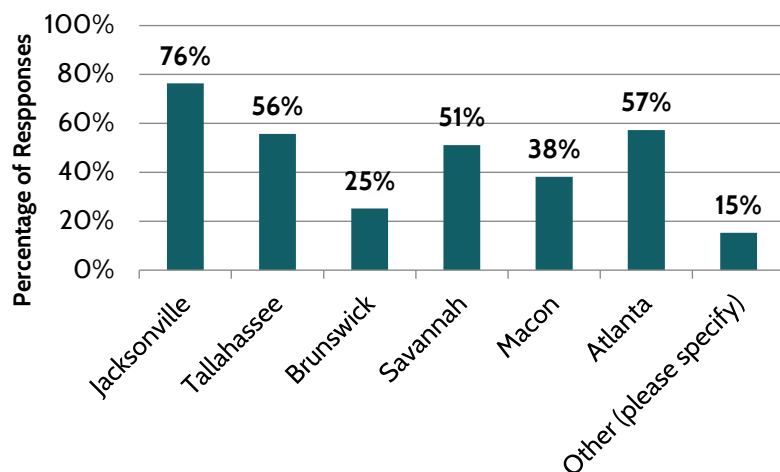
*Figure 7. Are you aware of any specific employers or work locations that could benefit from having a commuter van service?*

Employers	Community Destinations	Employment Centers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wild Adventures Valdosta</li> <li>• Home Depot Distribution Center</li> <li>• Walmart Milk Distribution Center</li> <li>• Elixir</li> <li>• South Georgia State College</li> <li>• Coastal Pines Technical College</li> <li>• Wiregrass Technical College</li> <li>• Bimbo</li> <li>• Martins</li> <li>• SAFT</li> <li>• GAFT</li> <li>• Ace Electric</li> <li>• Publix</li> <li>• SGMC</li> <li>• VSU</li> <li>• Smith Northview</li> <li>• Arglass</li> <li>• Pilgrims Pride</li> <li>• Affinity Lakeland</li> <li>• PCC</li> <li>• Pecan Plant</li> <li>• CJB</li> <li>• Union Tank</li> <li>• Alpha ProTech</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lakeland</li> <li>• Douglas</li> <li>• Coffee County</li> <li>• County &amp; City Schools</li> <li>• JAX Airport</li> <li>• Courthouse Area</li> <li>• Counseling Centers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Major Manufacturers/Distributors</li> <li>• Industrial Park Locations</li> <li>• Healthcare</li> <li>• Medical</li> <li>• Hotels</li> <li>• Valdosta Industrial Plant</li> <li>• Valdosta Mall</li> <li>• Five Points Shopping Plaza</li> </ul>



To better understand participants' travel habits and to inform potential transit recommendations, participants were asked to identify which major hubs outside of the Southern Georgia Region they would like to travel to. Jacksonville and Atlanta were the two most popular responses, receiving 76 percent and 57 percent of responses respectively. Tallahassee, at 56 percent, and Savannah, at 51 percent, received similar response rate as Atlanta.

Figure 8. What major hubs outside of the Southern Georgia Region would you most likely travel to via demand-response transit if available?



*Other Responses:*

- Valdosta and Waycross and Tifton
- Hartfield Jackson Airport
- Valdosta
- None
- Augusta, Thomasville, Columbus, Albany
- Thomasville
- None
- St Augustine
- None
- Albany, Gainesville, Lake Park
- Tampa
- Gainesville, FL
- Definitely to the airports
- Thomasville
- Orlando
- None
- None
- None
- None
- JAX Airport

Focusing on fixed-route transit in the Valdosta area, the next question asked participants to identify destinations that they wish would be serviced by public transit.

*Figure 9. If fixed-route bus service is implemented in Valdosta, what areas of town (or specific locations) should be considered?*

Community Facilities	Community Services	Employment Centers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VSU</li> <li>• Hahira downtown</li> <li>• Southside</li> <li>• Westside</li> <li>• Grocery stores</li> <li>• Colonial Mall</li> <li>• Walmarts/ Sams Club</li> <li>• SGMC</li> <li>• Target</li> <li>• Downtown Valdosta</li> <li>• Clyattville</li> <li>• Dasher</li> <li>• Lake Park</li> <li>• Quitman</li> <li>• Five Points</li> <li>• Publix</li> <li>• Lowndes County</li> <li>• Clayetville</li> <li>• Boston</li> <li>• Ray City</li> <li>• Nashville</li> <li>• Tifton</li> <li>• Waycross</li> <li>• Patterson</li> <li>• Blackshear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hospitals</li> <li>• Schools</li> <li>• MD Offices</li> <li>• County probation office</li> <li>• Airport</li> <li>• Post Office</li> <li>• Senior facilities</li> <li>• Government Buildings</li> <li>• Low-Income Housing</li> <li>• Election sites</li> <li>• Lowndes County Admin Building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moody Airforce Base</li> <li>• Valdosta Industrial Plant</li> <li>• Medical Office Park</li> <li>• Warehouse centers</li> <li>• Gil Harbin Industrial Park</li> <li>• Wild Adventures</li> </ul>

## 6.0 Proposed Transit Improvements

### 6.1 SGRC Transit

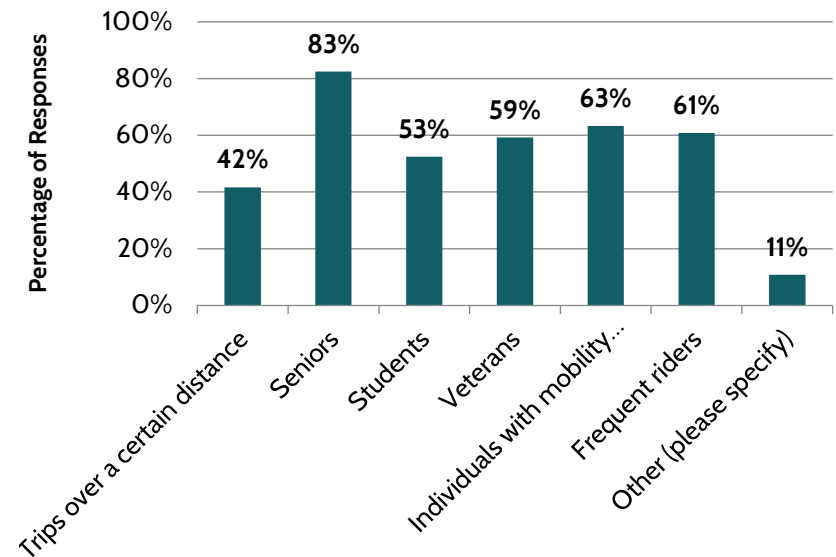
The survey asked participants to respond to potential improvements to the transit system itself through a myriad of questions on peak usage times, fare costs, ease of use, and general improvements.

The first question in this section asked participants to identify groups for which they think fare discounts would improve transit ridership. Eighty-three percent of responses for this question indicated that seniors should receive a discount.

#### Other Responses:

- Pre-pay voucher/coupon system
- Far should be fare
- None
- No. No public transit.
- Trips for medical services – supplemented by hospital authorities
- Kids/families who live within a certain area
- It's not free... if someone gets it free, that means the taxpayer is paying for them.
- Disabled people who don't need mobility aids, for example people who are blind
- Just a flat rate for all
- Discounts are needed for all the groups listed above
- No
- None
- Check your wording

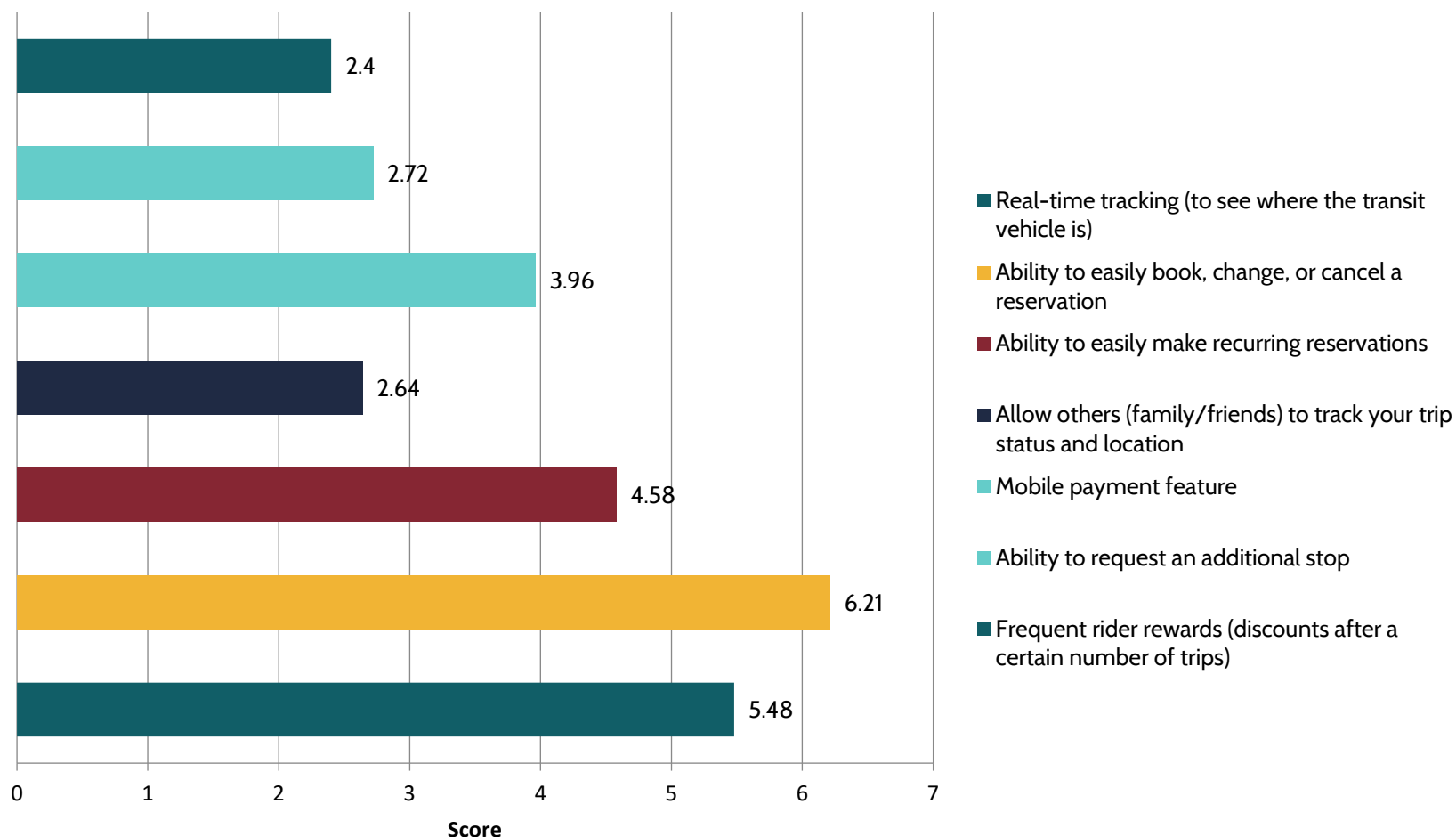
Figure 10. Current transit fares are \$3 for up to 10 miles and \$0.50 per additional mile over 10 miles for SGRC Transit. Do you think fare discounts for the following would improve transit ridership? Select all that apply.



Participants were then asked to reflect on the challenges and successes associated with booking a ride on SGRC transit. This question asked participants to rank, in order of importance, features when it comes to booking, changing/cancelling, and getting updates about rides booked through SGRC Transit.

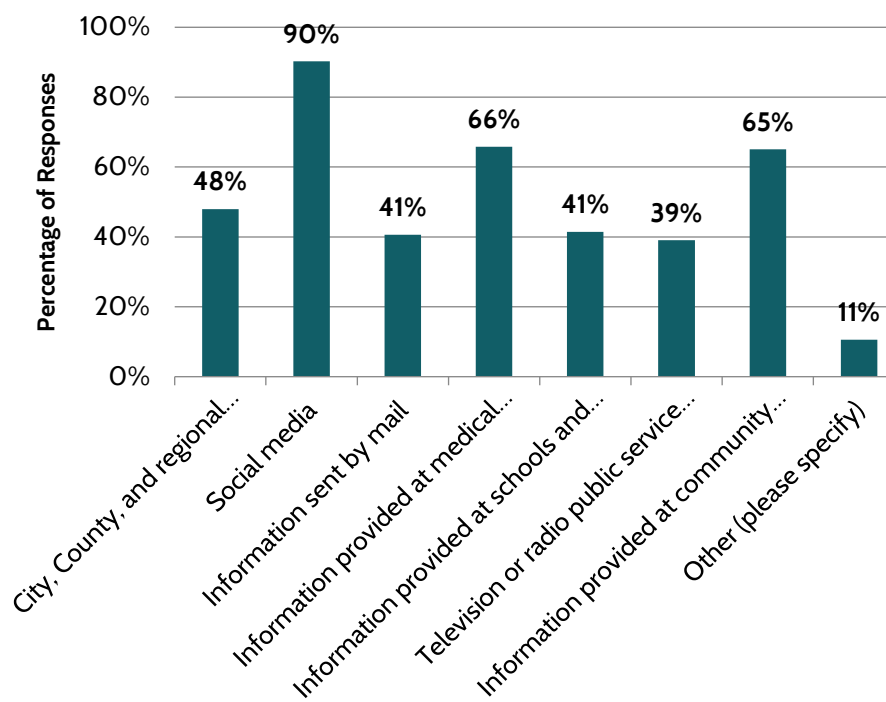
The most important feature, according to respondents, is the ability to easily book, change, or cancel a reservation followed by Real-time tracking (to see where the transit vehicle is). The least important improvement was frequent rider rewards.

*Figure 11. Rank the below features in order of importance (1 is most important, 7 is least important) when it comes to booking, changing/cancelling, and getting updates about rides booked through SGRC Transit.*



When asked what the best way to spread the word about SGRC Transit, participants selected “social media” as the most popular choice. Other methods, such as “information provided at community locations, such as grocery stores, senior centers, churches/faith-based facilities, restaurants, bars, etc.” and “information provided at medical facilities or doctors offices” also received a large amount of selections.

Figure 12. What is the best way to spread the word about SGRC Transit's service?

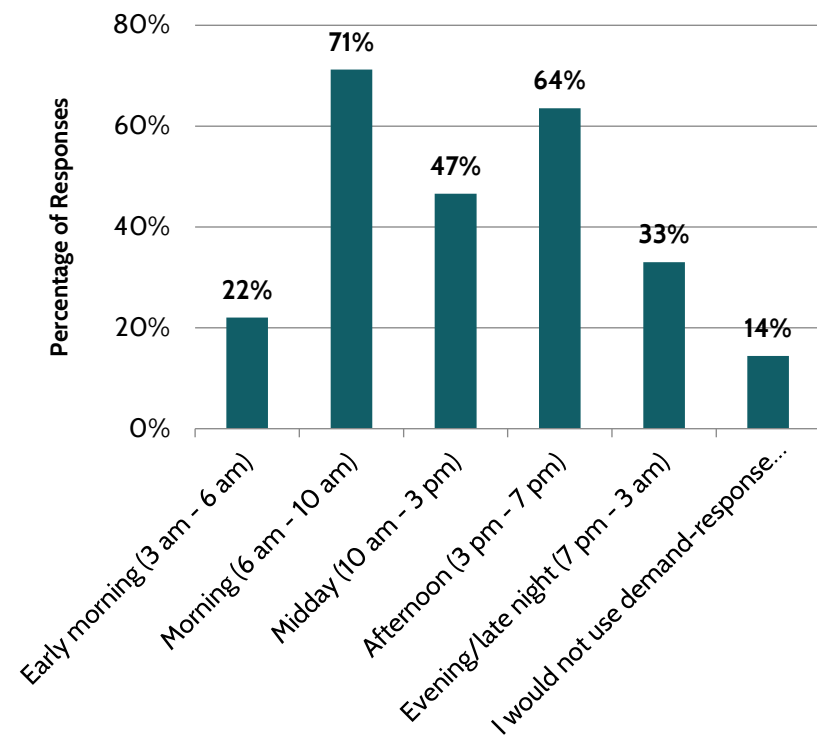


*Other:*

- Community events
- Facebook group for info and scheduling
- Let the college students know!! And community groups such as churches
- Billboards / ads at restaurants, malls
- None.
- App
- Information tables at VSU and Wiregrass TC
- Whatever doesn't cost money
- Not needed
- Don't
- Utility bill enclosures
- Flyers sent to local businesses to display
-

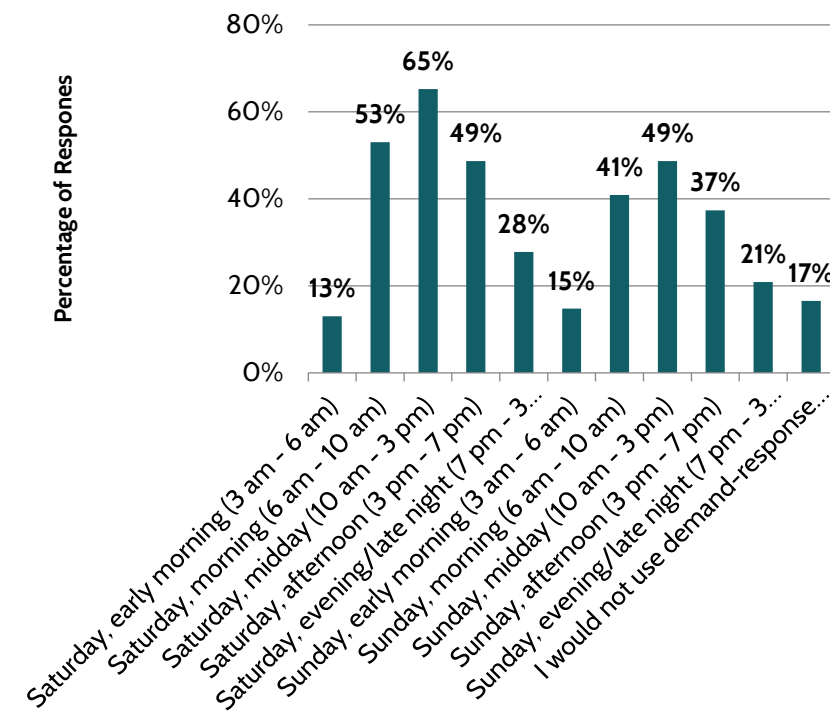
Participants were asked to indicate what times of days they would take SGRC Transit, both during the weekdays and on the weekends. The most popular time for weekday transit was morning, between 6 am and 10 am. This was closely followed by afternoon, from 3 pm to 7 pm, aligning closing with typical commuting times.

Figure 13. On a typical weekday, during what times of day would it be most useful for you to have SGRC Transit's service available?



On the weekend, the most popular time participants stated that they would use SGRC Transit was Saturday, morning (6 am - 10 am) and Saturday, midday (10 am - 3pm). Midday was a popular time on Sunday as well, selected by 49 percent of participants.

Figure 14. On a typical weekend, during what times of day would it be most useful for you to have SGRC Transit's service available?



To build a complete picture of participants' views on the improvements for SGRC Transit, a final question asked for any additional comments. The free responses to this question can be seen in Table 4 below.

*Table 4: Is there anything else we should keep in mind as we plan for expansion and improvements to SGRC Transit?\**

ID	Comment
1	Valdosta to Hahira is much needed
2	Cost per mile for operation. These are tax dollars, correct?
3	Needs to connect to Lakeland
4	Keeping pricing low to help accommodate low income earners get to work, personal appointments to help break out of poverty.
5	No
6	I'm sure there is a need for this kind of public transportation. I applaud your efforts to survey this area. I'm sad however there are safe routes to travel using bicycles and wheelchairs in both urban and rural areas.
7	If they can afford a thousand dollar phone they can afford an old car. What is needed is better education- put your money in charters
8	Not sure
9	Waycross!! And it would go a long way if there were scheduled, consistent shuttles back and forth between Waycross and Douglas (preferably timed to SGSC class schedules to allow for students to easily take classes on both campuses), AND it would be great if you could do everything in real time on demand over the phone (mobile app!!). It is a real hassle and a huge deterrent to have to book so far in advance
10	Safety features, customer service training
11	No public transportation. No transportation subsidized by any government.
12	Establish partnerships with stakeholders. Hospitals, industries and other authorities would be willing to partner to make affordable transportation available in our communities. Valdosta on-demand is a great model, but it needs to be scalable across the region.
13	I think establishing the infrastructure is important. State and Federal funds can be reallocated on a whim. I do not think stressing a fledgling regional transit system with long distance trips and daily commuter vans is a good idea. Who decides which communities get these services? Is there money to cover all communities receiving them? Excessive wear and tear add up to shorter vehicle lifespan and increased fleet maintenance costs. If I remember correctly, GA wants fleet vehicles rotated at 100k miles. Long distance, or high frequency, travel will balloon beyond what people have anticipated.
14	Bus passes. Also, vouchers that can be given to individuals living in shelters or homeless.
15	Free ride vouchers for homeless/need to help get them to work or school
16	No
17	No Nissan altimas
18	Actually having enough vehicles to provide rides would be nice so you can get a ride to work
19	Public transit needs to be available, consistent, accessible, affordable, and connect people's homes to work, school, and leisure. Its existence needs to be more convenient than the car and needs to be maintained to remain clean. If it's not more convenient than the car, then people will opt for the car. If it's not maintained and cleaned, then people won't want to use it.
20	Walking paths and trails.

ID	Comment
21	Consistent/timely transportation is a must so people can trust it and continue to use it. I'm happy to learn the region is working on this. And I would love to see bike lanes and walking paths added to the transit plan.
22	Do not compete with uber and Lyft
23	Please be more selective with who you hire. The ones you have driving the vans are horrible drivers.. when they aren't in the drive thru lines they are on their phones..
24	making sure to communicate with people of various disabilities to get an understanding of what they need from local and regional transit. and making sure people know it exists. i only know because i've noticed the vans around town.
25	More drivers who pay attention to the correct address and have a sense of time management. Reliable drivers who will pick up as required and not ghost riders. Stretcher and wheelchair vans
26	Providing transportation to people is not how people want their taxes spent!!!
27	Do not expand.
28	Make sure all employees wear appropriate dress attire and wear company shirt
29	More public info
30	N/A
31	Screen your drivers. Some hate wheelchair riders so much they deliberately cause them to miss appointments.
32	No

*\*Responses are shown exactly as entered by survey respondents. No spelling or grammar corrections were made by the planning team.*



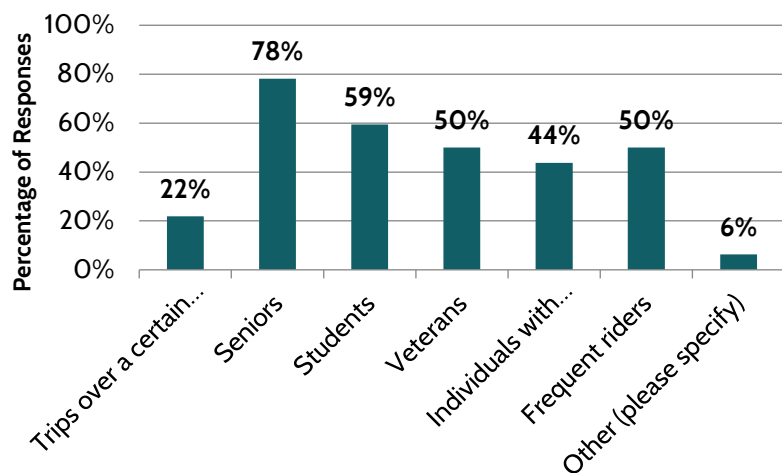
## 6.2 Valdosta On-Demand

The second set of questions, in this section, pertained to potential enhancements to Valdosta On-Demand. The first of these questions asked participants to identify groups for which they think fare discounts would improve transit ridership. 78 percent of responses for this question indicated that seniors should receive a discount.

### Other Responses:

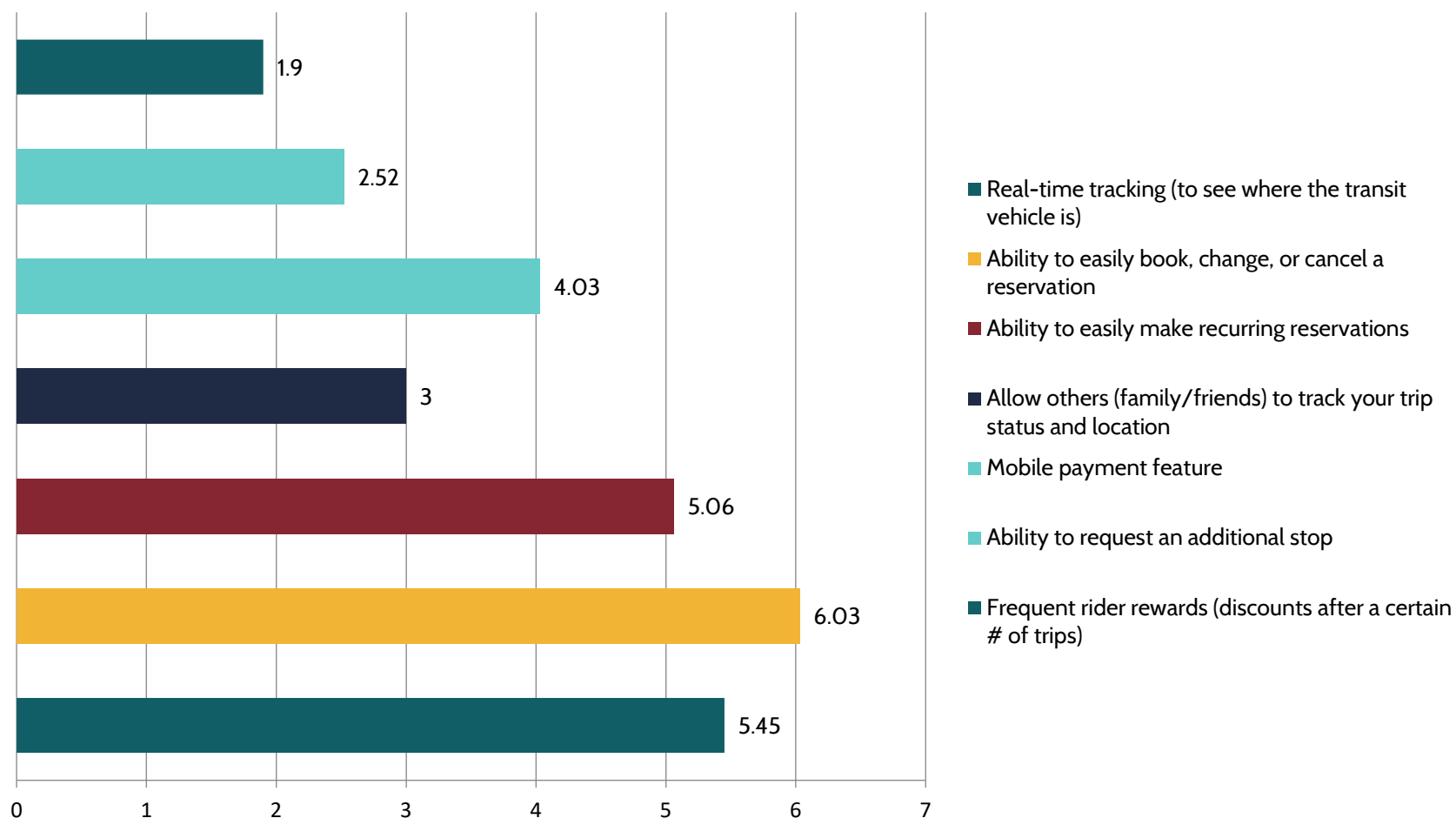
- *Healthcare visits – supplement with partnership with hospital authorities*
- *It's already cheap ... Who's paying for the service?*

Figure 15. Current transit fares are \$2 per trip and \$1 per trip for each additional passenger for Valdosta On-Demand service. Do you think far discounts for the following would improve transit ridership?



Participants then ranked, in the order of importance to them, different features regarding the booking, changing/cancelling, and getting ride updates for Valdosta On-Demand. The most important feature, according to respondents, is the ability to easily book, change, or cancel a reservation followed closely by real-time tracking (to see where the transit vehicle is) and ability to easily make recurring reservations. The least important improvement was frequent rider rewards.

Figure 16. Rank the below features in order of importance (1 is most important, 7 is least important) when it comes to booking, changing/cancelling, and getting updates about rides booked through Valdosta On-Demand (Via).



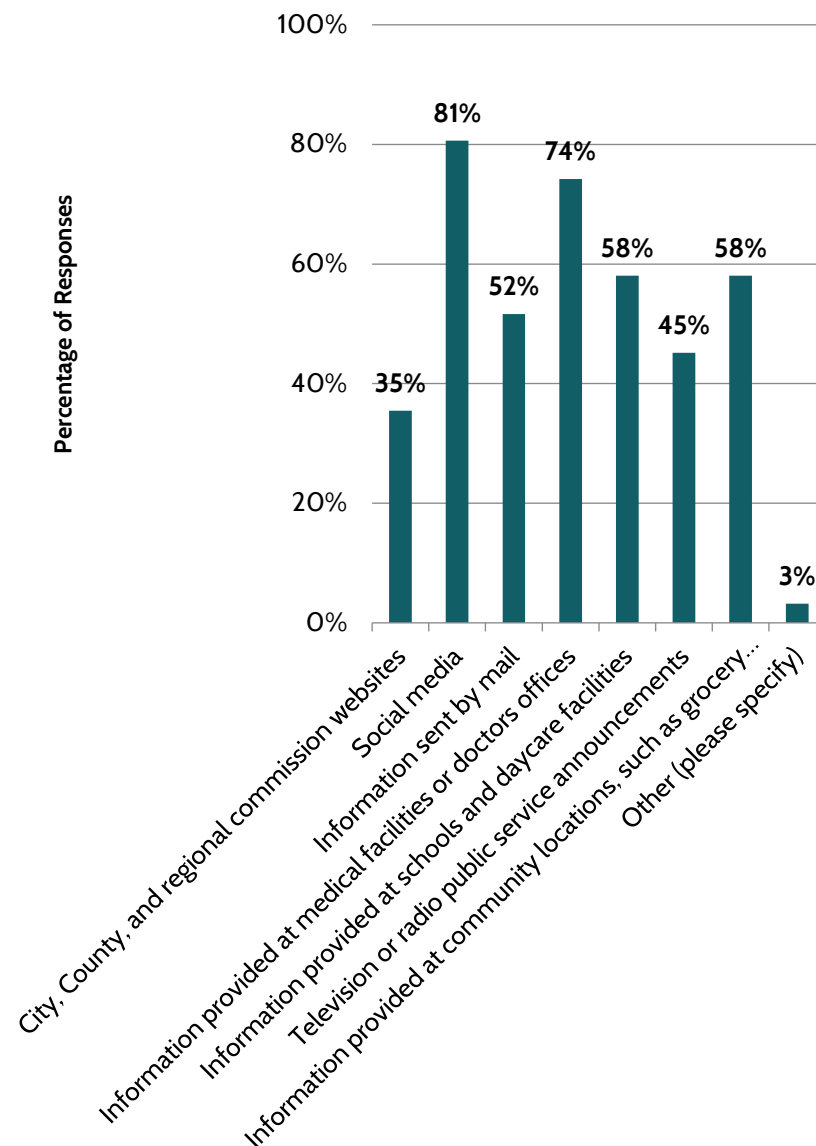
When asked about the best way to increase awareness of Valdosta On-Demand:

- 81 percent of participants selected “social media.”
- 74 percent selected “information provided at medical facilities or doctors offices”
- 58 percent selected “information provided at schools and daycare facilities” and “information provided at community locations, such as grocery stores, senior centers, churches/faith-based facilities, restaurants, bars, etc.,”

*Other Responses:*

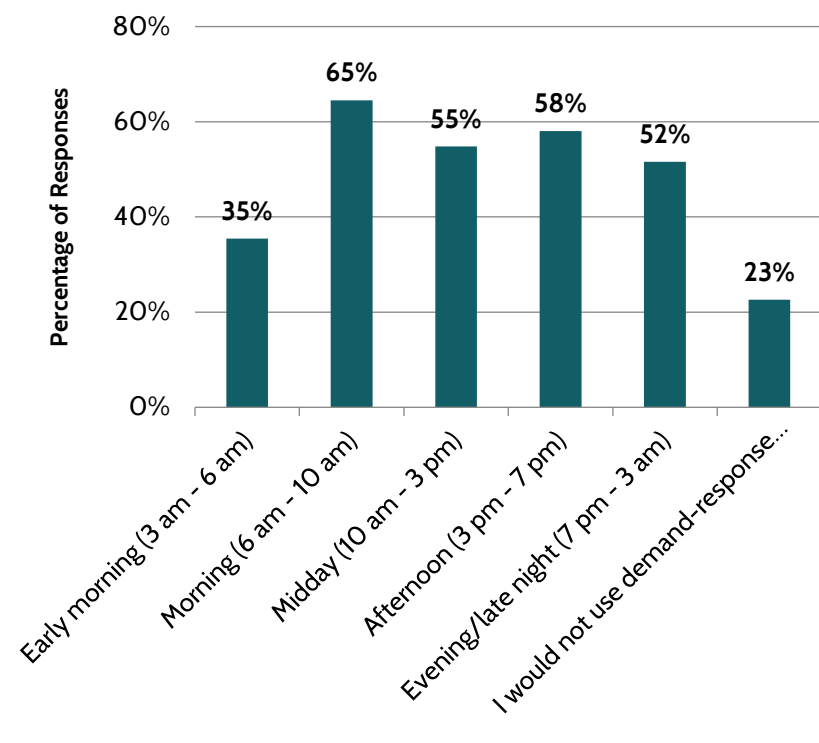
- *Information table at VSU and Wiregrass*

Figure 17. What is the best way to spread the word about Valdosta On-Demand service?



Participants responded to what times of days they would take Valdosta On-Demand transit, both during the weekdays and on the weekends. The most popular time for weekday transit was Morning, between 6 am and 10 am and Afternoon, from 3 pm to 7pm, aligning closing with typical commuting times. Midday (10am – 3pm) and Evening (7 pm – 3 am) also received a large number of selections.

Figure 18. On a typical weekday, during what times of day would it be most useful for you to have Valdosta On-Demand service available?



On the weekend, the most popular time participants stated that they would use Valdosta On-Demand Transit was Saturday, midday (10 am – 3pm), garnering 65 percent of participant's selections. Saturday, afternoon (3 pm – 7 pm) and Sunday, midday (10 am – 3 pm) were also very popular choices, each being selected as a response by 58 percent of participants.

Figure 19. On a typical weekend, during what times of day would it be most useful for you to have SGRC Transit's service available?

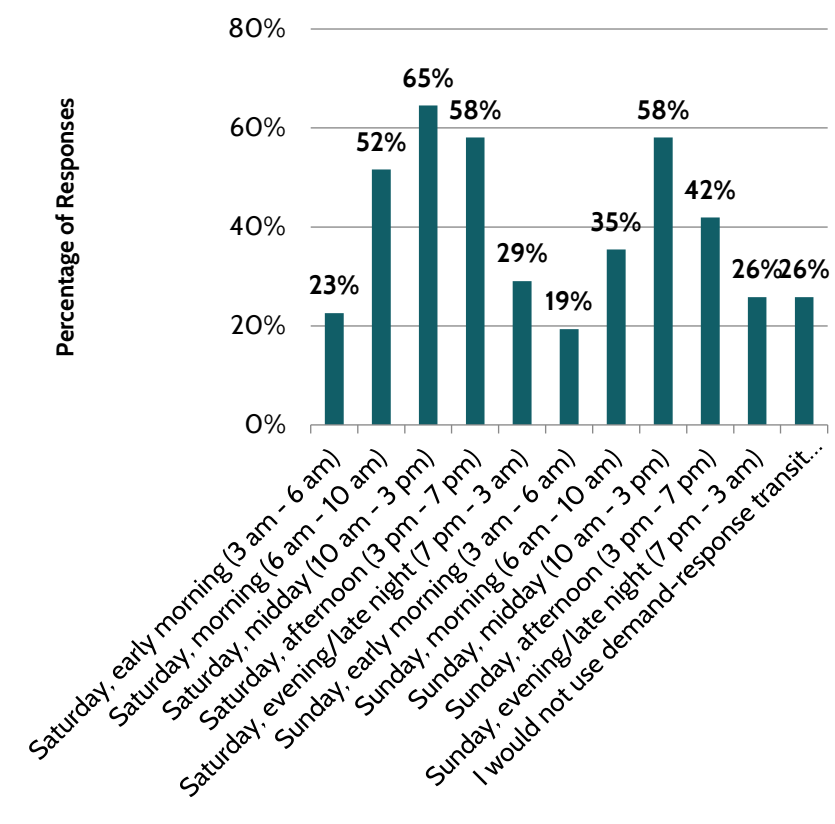


Table 5 shows additional comments provided by participants on Valdosta On-Demand Service.

*Table 5: Is there anything else we should keep in mind as we plan improvements to Valdosta On-Demand Service?*

ID	Comment
1	Elderly people transportation ! They need to wait longer than 5 minutes , some times they don't show up ,
2	Local partnerships with stakeholders like the hospital, industries and other authorities will help ensure the programs success
3	Door to door service.
4	Most people work weekends and shifts outside of 8-5
5	Free ride vouchers for homeless/disabled/low income/elderly to get to medical treatment, work, etc
6	Micro-transit is fine as a stepping stone but ultimately it's just another car on the street and as such becomes yet another piece of traffic. A city-funded taxi service is okay but we need real public transit that does not get stuck in traffic. We need light rail and maybe busses with dedicated lanes.
7	Better hiring practices.. stop hiring all the same people... they look scary and wild and I wouldn't want to be in the car with them.. maybe a uniform and proper appearance would help?
8	Valdosta on demand is a poor service
9	More vans are needed. And fixed routes
10	Add info at Health Department, DFCS, WalMart, Dollar General and churches.

## 7.0 Demographic Questions

The following set of questions were optional and gathered insight into the demographic and socioeconomic participant information. This insight allows the project team to review the reach of the survey and also understand how well overall participants reflect the demographic makeup of the Southern Georgia Region.

Compared to the demographics of the region as a whole, the survey had an overrepresentation of white participants (83 percent in the survey pool compared to 60 percent of the region's population). Participants that identified as Black or African American –as well as Hispanic/Latino ethnic group, which makes up about 8 percent of the region's population were underrepresented in survey responses. Only 11 percent of respondents identified as Black or African American while only 3 percent of survey participants identified as Hispanic or Latino.

The age group with the largest proportion of participants were those between the ages of 55 – 64, consisting of 26 percent of participants. The senior population participated at a higher level (24 percent) compared to the senior share of the region's population (21 percent).

As shown in Figure 22, participants reflected the range of annual household incomes in the region, representing a spectrum of lower-income to higher-income brackets.

As shown in Figure 23, a total of 8 percent of participants do not own a personal car, while another 10 percent share a car with a member of their household.

Figure 20. Please specify your race/ethnicity (Select all that apply).

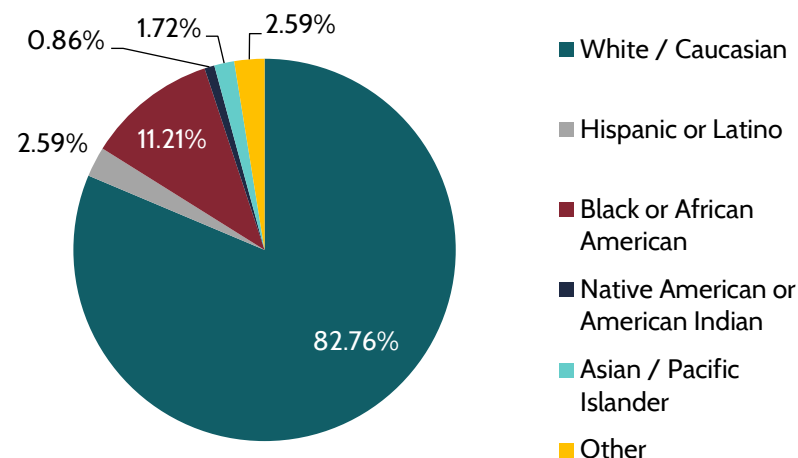


Figure 21. What is your age?

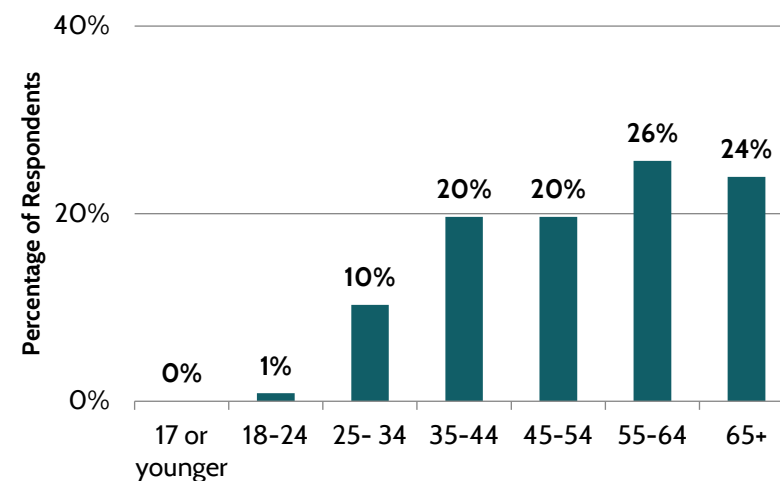


Figure 22. What is your approximate annual household income?

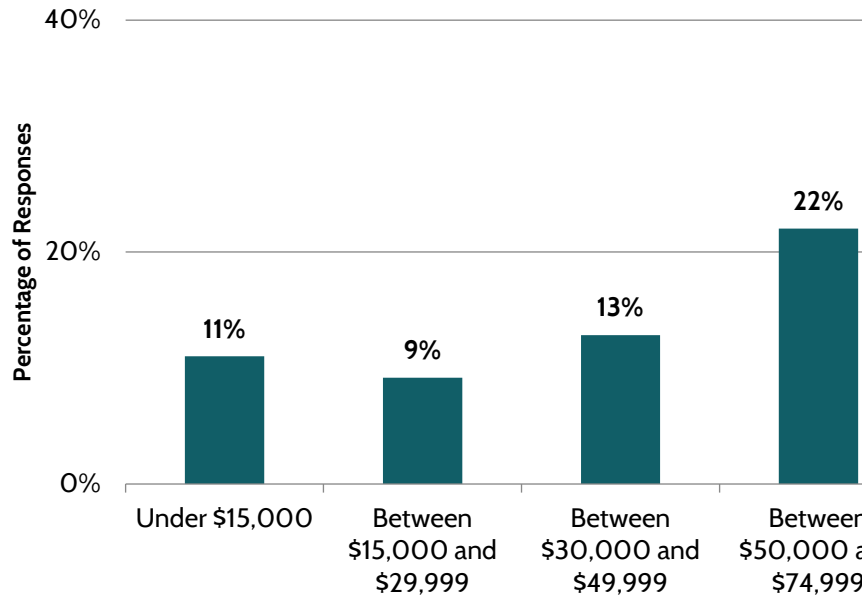


Figure 23. Do you have your own, personal vehicle?

