Southern Georgia
Regional Transit Development Plan

BOOK 3

Transit Recommendations Report

August 2025

sgrc SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION

In partnership with

GDOT Georgia
Department
of Transportation

Blue Cypress Consulting

&

Spatial Plans

Table of Contents

Exhibits

Exhibit 1: Alternatives Considered but not Advanced to Recommendations

Exhibit 2: U.S. Census LODES Origin-Destination Table

Exhibit 3: Scoring Breakdown by Recommendation Category

Appendices

Appendix A: Transit Service Types and Demand Response Service Technologies

Appendix B: Funding Sources

Appendix C: Technical Needs Assessment Memorandum

Appendix D: Cost Estimates Technical Memorandum

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List of Figures

List of Tables

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List of Acronyms

ACS	American Community Survey		**PAC**	Project Advisory Committee
AoPP	Areas of Persistent Poverty		**PST**	Project Study Team
DCH	Georgia Department of Community Health		**TDP**	Transit Development Plan
DHS	Georgia Department of Human Services		**SGRC**	Southern Georgia Regional Commission
EV	Electric Vehicle		**SWTRP**	Statewide Transit Plan
FTA	Federal Transit Administration		**TDP**	Transit Development Plan
GDOT	Georgia Department of Transportation		**TOD**	Transit-Oriented Development
GDOL	Georgia Department of Labor		**TRB**	Transportation Research Board
IIJA	Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act		**TTFP**	Georgia Transit Trust Fund Program
LEHD	Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics		**USDOT**	United States Department of Transportation
LEP	Limited English Proficiency		**UZA**	Urbanized Area
LODES	LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics		**VLMPO**	Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization
MTP	Metropolitan Transportation Plan			
NTD	National Transit Database		**VSU**	Valdosta State University

1.0 Introduction

1.1   Document Overview

The Transit Recommendations Report includes four chapters as described below.

Chapter 1.0: Introduction
Chapter 1.0 sets the stage for the Regional Transit Development Plan (Regional TDP) by outlining the Southern Georgia Region's growing transit challenges, including an aging population and limited access to jobs and services. It presents a long-term vision and goals for a connected, flexible, and inclusive transit system, and provides a high-level introduction to transit service types and technologies relevant to Southern Georgia.

Chapter 2.0: Transit Needs and Priorities
Chapter 2 identifies where and why transit is most needed across the Southern Georgia Region using data analysis and community feedback. It highlights unmet demand in both rural and urban areas and organizes key needs into five themes: access to essential services, economic opportunities, service improvements, context-sensitive planning, and emergency preparedness.

Chapter 3.0: Recommendations
This chapter presents detailed transit recommendations, including service expansions, enhancements, and administrative tools. Recommendations range from adding microtransit, employer vanpools, and fixed routes to improving scheduling technology, driver training, and marketing. Community and stakeholder input helped shape and prioritize these ideas.

Chapter 4.0: Implementation
Chapter 4.0 outlines a strategy to implement the top recommendations, organized by level of impact. It includes a project prioritization scoring system, a timeline for action, and roles for partner agencies. A one-year action plan highlights early steps to expand transit service, improve access and awareness, and maintain the Southern Georgia Region's current momentum.

Appendices and Exhibits contain detailed information about specific topics such as transit modes, financial planning, and the transit needs assessment, to name a few.

1.2   Plan Context

The Existing Conditions Report and Transit Needs Assessment reveal several critical demographic challenges and employment changes that will shape future transit recommendations for the Southern Georgia Region:

- The region is forecast to witness a 20-30 percent growth in the population aged 60 and older. This higher number of seniors will require transportation options to access essential services such as medical care and access to family and friends.
- Population growth is projected to be concentrated in City of Valdosta/Lowndes County and along the I-75 corridor, while other areas of the region are expected to experience modest, stable, or declining population changes by 2050.
- Although the current unemployment rate is low, the Georgia Department of Labor forecasts an addition of over 18,000 jobs in the next five years. Getting workers to jobs is a primary way to raise individuals out of poverty.

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Future transit recommendations must address three primary challenges for Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC) and the City of Valdosta:

- **Meeting Transit Demand**: The existing transit services provided by SGRC's demand response service and Valdosta's On-Demand microtransit systems are insufficient to meet current and future demand.
- **Improving Mobility for Transit-Dependent Populations**: An increasing portion of the population will face mobility challenges, making them more reliant on affordable, demand-response transit services. The existing conditions analysis reveals that the senior population is widely distributed across the region, particularly in rural areas. Other factors, such as households without access to a vehicle and the population of individuals with disabilities, also present mobility challenges throughout the region.
- **Improving Access to Jobs**: Funded through a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Areas of Persistent Poverty (AoPP) grant, this Regional TDP seeks to improve transit options for all individuals with specific focus on those living in poverty. As shown in the Existing Conditions Report, lower income populations reside throughout the region. Transit service is a critical component to helping individuals access jobs and improve their economic condition.

Along with the Vision and Goals set out for this project, these three main challenges are the contextual focus for the development of public transit recommendations and plan to move them forward to implementation.

1.3   Vision and Goals

Visioning was a core component of the TDP process. Several inputs fed into the visioning process, as illustrated in **Figure 1**. The process to derive the vision and goal statements is detailed in the **Vision and Goals Statement.** The transit vision statement expresses the desired conditions of public transit in the region in the year 2050, the end of this TDP's planning horizon. The prioritized list of goals, organized as Tier 1 Goals and Tier 2 Goals, have guided the development of recommendations for improving the region's transit system effectiveness.

Figure 1: Visioning Inputs

- 2019 Regional TDP
- 2020 Statewide Transit Plan
- 2023 Regional Plan
- Transit-Oriented Development Guidelines

- Areas of Persistent Poverty Grant
- 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan

Past Plans

Ongoing Planning Efforts

Public Input

Stakeholder Input

- Public Meetings (2 rounds)
- Public Surveys (2 rounds)

- Project Advisory Committee (2 meetings)
- Southern Georgia Regional Council
- Stakeholder Interviews

1.3.1   Vision Statement

> *Transit services in the Southern Georgia Region will seamlessly connect urban and rural areas, facilitate greater accessibility to destinations across the region, and further the region's adaptability to the future.*

1.3.2   Tier 1 Goals

The Tier 1 pillars represent the goals that have been a part of SGRC Transit and Valdosta On-Demand's mission and purpose since the systems were established.

1) Deliver fiscally responsible and efficient transit services.
2) Provide for the unique needs of transit dependent populations.
3) Pursue creative and collaborative solutions to further economic opportunities.

1.3.3   Tier 2 Goals

Tier 2 goals go beyond day-to-day transit operations and require cross-disciplinary action. Some of the Tier 2 goals have a longer-term implementation horizons.

4) Advance a multifaceted and connected system through regional collaboration and coordinated services.
5) Implement context-sensitive transit and last mile connectivity solutions in population centers.
6) Promote innovation and adaptability to meet future needs

1.4 Transit Service

Currently there are two types of public demand-response transit service operating in the Southern Georgia Region: SGRC Transit and Valdosta On-Demand (microtransit). **Table 1** includes these two services as well as others that may be appropriate for the Southern Georgia Region in the future.

Table 1: Transit Service Type Descriptions

Demand Response 	Demand-response transit services pick up riders from specified locations and drop them off at their requested destination within the service area. This type of service typically requires advanced reservations, although some providers can provide same day service on a case-by-case basis
Microtransit 	Microtransit services use smaller transit vehicles, like cutaway buses or vans, to transport users that request a ride using a smartphone app. Like Uber or Lyft, the app provides the rider with a real-time estimate of their vehicle's arrival.
Vanpool 	Vanpool service is a flexible service which is like carpooling, but with larger vehicles. A group of people (typically five or more) with similar trip origins and destinations meet at a common location of their choosing, where a commuter vehicle (a van) is available for them to ride to their common destination area. Vanpools are often used to transport workers to their employment location.
Fixed Route 	Fixed-route transit services follow a specified route and picks up riders at designated stops. Most fixed-route services in the United States are provided by rubber tire vehicles such as buses or vans, though this service mode also includes rail service.

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Circulator / Shuttle	Circulator and special event service operates along a route or loop where high demand may be seasonal or short-term, such as a festival or holiday events in a downtown square. The main goal of a circulator is to provide convenient, frequent, and reliable transportation for residents and visitors to travel within a specified area.
Autonomous Vehicles	Emerging technologies such as autonomous vehicles are becoming more prevalent in society thanks to companies like Waymo and Zoox. While these are better suited as urban solutions, their usage in more rural areas is possible and will become more likely as technology, and more importantly, charging infrastructure improves.

Appendix A contains a longer description of each transit service type as well as information about demand-response service technologies.

1.5 Transit Funding

The project team has evaluated the transit funding landscape for service within the Southern Georgia Region. The largest source of transit funding comes from the federal government through programs like FTA Section 5311 (for rural areas) and Section 5307 (for urbanized areas such as the City of Valdosta). These programs support operating and capital expenses, with funding allocations increasing slightly each year from 2021 to 2025.

At the state level, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) contributes to capital projects through programs like the Transit Trust Fund Program (TTFP), funded by rideshare tax revenues. SGRC received the largest multi-county TTFP allocation in FY2025 and has proposed a variety of capital and operational projects for FY2024 through FY2026, including bus surveillance, driver training, mobile mechanics, and software upgrades.

Local funding, including general funds, advertising, and Purchase-of-Service (POS) contracts, plays a vital role in securing matching funds. This diversified funding strategy positions the Southern Georgia Region well for transit expansion and innovation.

Appendix B dives into the range of federal, state, and local funding sources available to support rural and urban transit in more detail.

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2.0 Transit Needs and Priorities

2.1 Introduction

Identification of transit service needs and priorities was a core component of the Regional TDP process. This chapter provides an overview of the needs assessment process and findings. As Figure 2 conveys, the planning team derived the transit needs through various quantitative and qualitative (community) inputs. The resulting set of needs provides a foundation for the transit recommendations discussed in the remainder of this report.

Figure 2: Inputs to Derive Transit Needs

2.2 Quantitative Analysis

The planning team conducted several technical analyses to inform future transit service needs in the Southern Georgia Region. These analyses included:

1. **Rural Transit Demand Analysis:** Calculations that identify current and future (2050) rural transit demand estimates for each county, including how much of the demand is unmet through current ridership. For Lowndes County, only the area outside of the urbanized area was included in this analysis.

2. **Urban Transit Demand Analysis:** Calculations that identify current and future urban transit demand estimates for Valdosta On-Demand and how much of the demand is unmet through current ridership

3. **Transit Propensity Analysis**: Geographic Information System (GIS) representation of the share of potential transit riders per census tract

4. **Transit Supportive Residential and Employment Density Analysis**: GIS representation of combined residential (households per acre) and employment (jobs per acre) densities

5. **Transit Service Type Suitability Assessment:** GIS representation of transit service type compatibility based on both the transit propensity and the residential and employment densities

This section provides a high-level overview of the findings from the above analyses. For more details, see the Technical Needs Assessment Memorandum in **Appendix C**.

2.2.1   Rural Transit Demand

The planning team utilized the Federal Transit Administration (FTA)/Transportation Research Board (TRB) Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) Report 161: Methods for Forecasting Demand and Quantifying Need for Rural Passenger Transportation "non-program demand method" to estimate trip demand for rural public transit services. Based on this methodology, the planning team estimated rural transit demand for each county in the Southern Georgia Region, along with a cumulative total for the entire region, for 2025 and 2050. By comparing these numbers to the total number of trips that SGRC Transit provided in 2023, the estimated unmet demand was derived. **Figure 3** illustrates the results of this analysis.

Figure 3: Regional Rural Transit Demand Estimates (Total and Unmet Demand), 2025 and 2050
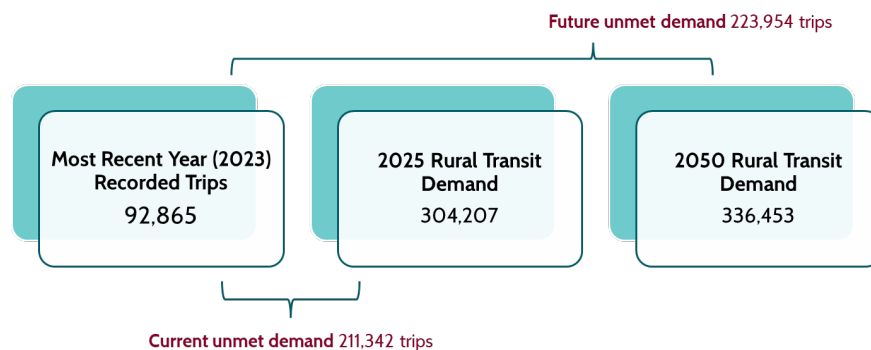
2.2.2   Urban Transit Demand

The analysis in the preceding section is applicable to rural areas, which covers the entire region with the exception of the federally-designated urbanized area that overlaps with much of the City of Valdosta as shown in **Figure 4**. To assess unmet demand in the City of Valdosta, the planning team analyzed data from Valdosta On-Demand's third-party operator, Via.

According to historic ridership and trip requests, Valdosta On-Demand currently meets about 60 percent of its daily demand. On an annual basis, the estimated, current total demand for Valdosta On-Demand is 167,615 trips annually. In 2023, Valdosta On-Demand provided 100,569 trips, meaning there is currently an estimated unmet demand of 67,046 trips.

Based on the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget's 2050 population projections, Lowndes County is projected to grow by approximately 19.2 percent. By applying this growth rate to the current transit demand of Valdosta On-Demand, the future transit demand is estimated at 199,797 trips. Assuming annual trips remain consistent with the 2023 trips, there would be an unmet demand of 132,751 trips in 2050.

Figure 4: Valdosta Urbanized Area with Respect to City Limits
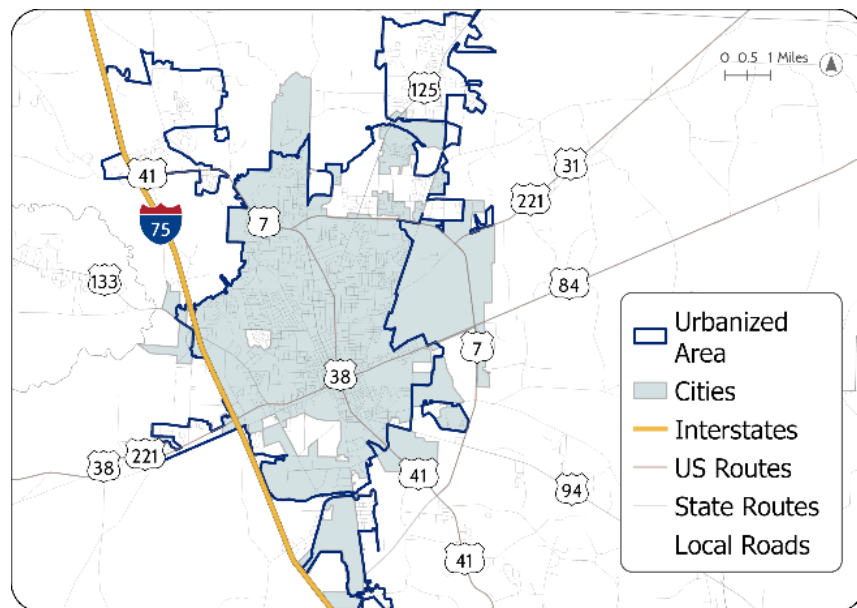
2.2.3 Transit Propensity

Transit propensity measures the likelihood of transit usage by various population groups. The planning team utilized the FTA / TRB TCRP Report 161 Methodology to quantify transit propensity at the census tract level within the Southern Georgia Region. The formula synthesizes the following seven demographic categories into a transit propensity score, utilizing U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates:

1. Zero-car individuals

2. Individuals with disabilities

3. Seniors (ages 60+)

4. Low-income individuals

5. Minority individuals

6. Individuals with limited English proficiency

7. Youth (ages 15-19)

Figure 5 displays the geographic results of this analysis. Population groups most likely to use transit are present throughout the region, but on a countywide level, the counties with the highest transit propensity are Turner, Brooks, Atkinson, Clinch, and Charlton counties.

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Figure 5: Regional Transit Propensity
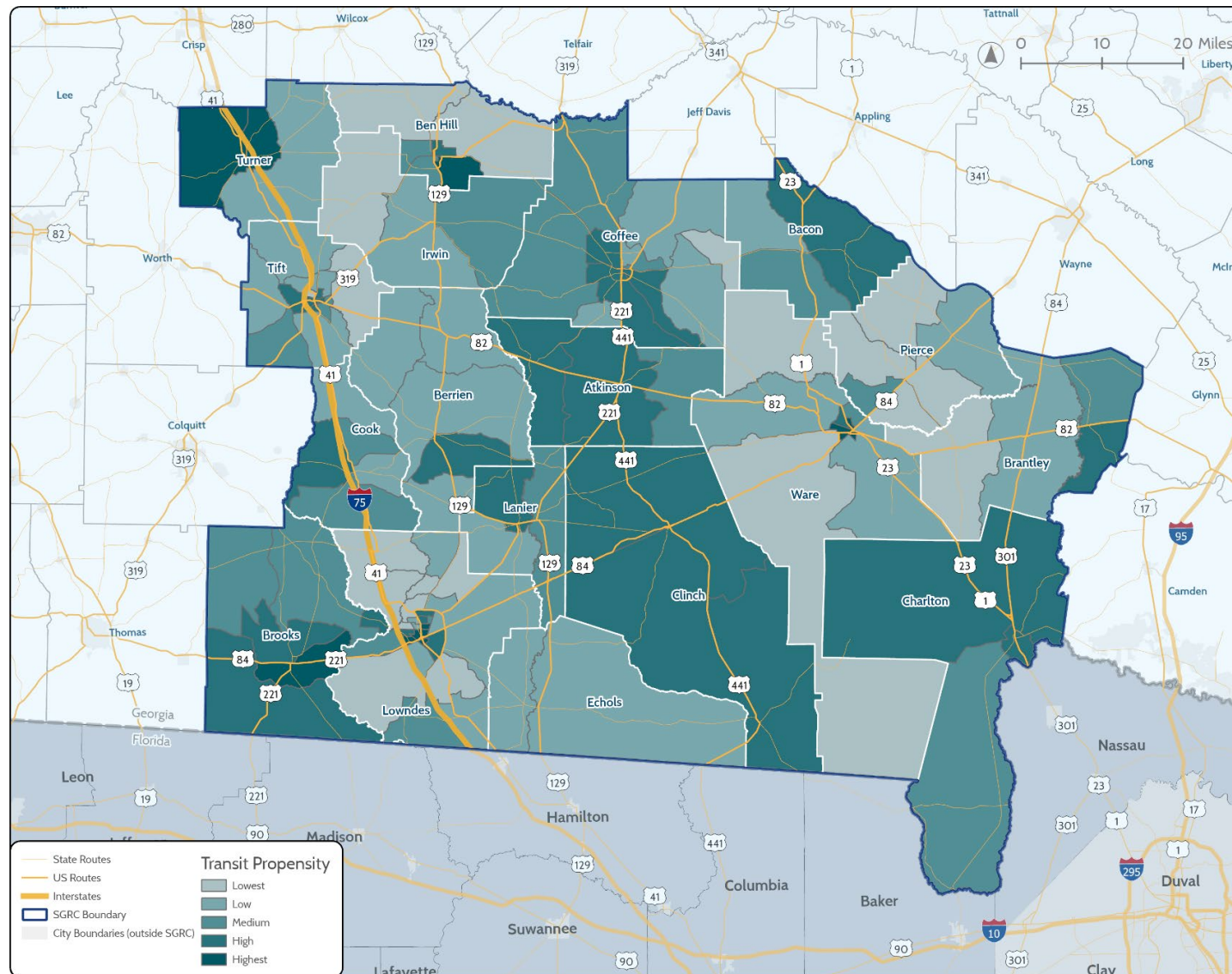
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget 2023 Population Projections

2.2.4 Transit-Supportive Densities

Land use patterns, such as housing and job densities, are important considerations for transit planning, particularly in deciding the transit service type that is most cost-effective and efficient to serve the needs of a community. The planning team analyzed residential and employment densities to assess the potential of different transit service types. This analysis yielded the following takeaways:

The relatively low residential density throughout most of the Southern Georgia Region is most compatible with demand-response transit service.

The City of Valdosta exhibits a patchwork of census block groups that meet the minimum residential density threshold for fixed-route bus service (greater than 6 households per gross acre), as well as some census block groups where either demand-response or fixed-route transit may be appropriate (between 4 and 6 households per gross acre). When employment density and population density are considered together, there is a stronger case for fixed-route transit in the City of Valdosta. In addition, the Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization (VLMPO) is in the process of updating their Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MPO), where additional support for fixed-route transit is expected.

The cities of Tifton and Waycross have the next highest population densities following the City of Valdosta. Solely based on residential densities, demand-response transit would be the most compatible transit type, but when employment densities are factored in, these communities exhibit some potential for microtransit services.

2.2.5 Compatible Transit Service Types

Transit-supportive residential and employment densities (also referred to as transit potential) and transit propensity must be analyzed in tandem to make an informed decision about the transit service types that are most suited to an area.

By layering the data from both preceding analyses, the planning team assessed the suitability of transit types to consider in the five largest population and employment centers in the region: Valdosta, Douglas, Fitzgerald, Tifton, and Waycross.

As shown in **Table 2**, Valdosta has a significant area where there is potential for moderate or higher frequency fixed-route service.

The cities of Tifton and Waycross each have a considerable area where the transit potential and transit propensity suggest that microtransit service would be worthwhile to further study.

The cities of Douglas and Fitzgerald have fewer areas that currently meet the suitability criteria for microtransit, but these areas should continue to be monitored for future growth that may warrant consideration of a different transit strategy.

Table 2: Results of Microtransit and Fixed-Route Suitability Analysis

Population Center	Number of Census Block Groups Suitable for Micro transit	Total Land Area Suitable for Microtransit (Acres)	Number of Census Block Groups Suitable for Moderate or Higher-Frequency Fixed-Route	Total Land Area Suitable for Moderate or Higher-Frequency Fixed-Route (Acres)
Valdosta	8	3,194	19	4,664
Douglas	5	2,051	0	0
Fitzgerald	5	2,796	0	0
Tifton	9	3,284	4	825
Waycross	14	4,829	2	502

2.3 Qualitative Inputs

Community engagement was an integral part of the Regional TDP process and helped to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the region's transit needs.

2.3.1 Methods of Collecting Input

As shown in **Figure 6**, the planning team carried out a multifaceted engagement process. Engagement activities focused on educating the public about the transit planning and factors that influence transit use/needs, hearing from community members–particularly transit-dependent populations–about ways that transit could better support their travel needs, building implementation support among key stakeholders, and laying the groundwork for future partnerships.

Figure 6: Engagement Tactics

PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Two committee meetings (transit agencies, county, regional, and state stakeholders)

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Two meetings with materials and recordings made available afterwards via project website

PUBLIC SURVEYS

Two public survey periods (with digital and physical surveys) collected responses across the 18-county region

ROADSHOWS

Presentations given to the Southern GA Regional Council and audiences at local community planning events

2.3.2 Thematic Community Sentiments

Table 3 provides a sampling of direct quotes pulled from the Regional TDP engagement process. These quotes point to several resonating themes that were expressed through the project's multiple engagement forums.

Table 3: Transit Needs Expressed by Stakeholders and the Public

Stakeholder Quotes	"**Transportation is just a barrier to employment.**" "**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.**" "**Seniors–who are often on fixed income–may find that SGRC Transit is unaffordable.**" "**Consistent service is important.**" "**A fixed-route shuttle may make sense in certain cases.**"
Public Input Quotes	"I believe everyone can benefit from public transportation options." "Consider incentives for non-profits to help support access to or supplement public transit." "Transit to the technical college and employment centers are most important." "There are many who would benefit from a way to get to the grocery and dr appts." "[Transit is needed for] 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." "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."

2.4 Overarching Themes

Bridging the technical needs assessment findings with community input was an important step for grounding the Regional TDP's recommendations. In this process, the planning team developed a list of twenty needs, organized under the following five themes: a) essential services, b) economic opportunities, c) transit operations and enhancements, d) context sensitive transit solutions, and e) long-term preparedness. **Figure 7** contains a synthesis of these themes.

A. Essential Services

This theme emphasizes that public transit's primary purpose is to serve community members who have limited or no other mobility options.

1. Raise awareness of transit services throughout the 18-county region.
2. Partner with medical facilities and supportive services to facilitate access to medical appointments.
3. Reduce rider fares, particularly for those with low and/or fixed incomes.
4. Continue to assess transit demand for travel to essential services in Florida.
5. Facilitate transit connections to grocery stores and shopping.

B. Economic Opportunities

This theme highlights that transportation is a key component of the region's economic success. Public transit plays an important role in providing equitable access to opportunities.

6. Increase access to jobs and job training centers.
7. Address the transportation needs of second and third-shift workers.
8. Continue to assess demand for public transportation to serve job sites east of the region and in the Brunswick/ Savannah areas.
9. Explore the option of local circulators.
10. Increase driver retention and safety.

C. Transit Operations and Enhancements

This theme reflects community desires for improvements to the current transit programs that would better support travel needs.

11. Address gaps in service coverage, particularly for rural to urban trips.
12. Expand service hours (weekend service and weekday hours).
13. Improve access to information and ease booking transit trips.
14. Reduce trip times, particularly for demand response services.
15. Promote adaptability to environmental changes.

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D. Context Sensitive Transit Solutions

This theme acknowledges that the built environment is a critical factor for informing public transit investments. Improvements to the built environment and alignment with existing and anticipated development contexts are essential to the success of public transit interventions.

16. Establish mobility hubs within activity centers and as a transfer point between urban and rural systems.

17. Explore enhanced transit service for non-urban population centers.

18. Explore advancing multi-faceted transit services in Valdosta, including addition of limited fixed route.

E. Long-term Preparedness

This theme is based upon the Region's desire to adapt to the future, embracing technology and best practices for transit to bolster the area's resilience to extreme weather events.

19. Adapt to new technology.

20. Coordinate response to extreme weather events with emergency management partners and other key stakeholders.

Figure 7: Synthesis of Transit Needs and Priorities in the Southern Georgia Region
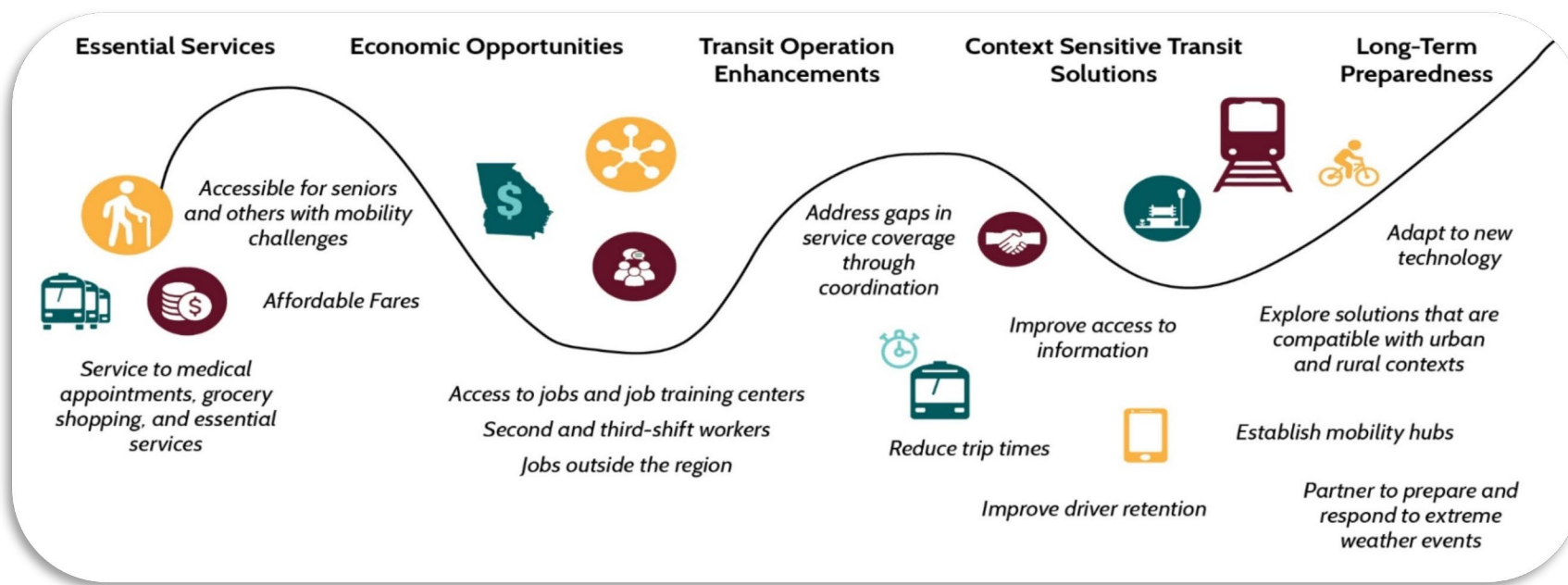
3.0 Recommendations

The transit recommendations included in Chapter 3.0 are the result of the project team's analysis of existing conditions, transit needs and propensity, and input from the PST, PAC, stakeholders, and community members across the region. Key recommendations are focused on the following items:

- Helping to address the unmet transit demand across the region for all populations
- Maintaining financial stability for the regional transit system
- Getting workers to employment locations
- Improving efficiency and connection between the rural and urban systems
- Addressing resiliency and emergency preparedness concerns

3.1 Overview of Recommendation Categories

The Regional TDP utilizes the GDOT Statewide Transit Plan (SWTRP) strategy categories as a framework for the identified alternative projects and recommendations, ensuring consistency with the statewide plan. Reflecting these categories, recommendations are classified into three main categories: transit expansion, transit enhancement, and administrative tools and guidance.

- **Transit Service Expansion:** These recommendations advance GDOT's goal of providing public transit service statewide. Expansion alternatives include increasing transit capacity through enhanced demand-response service operations, introducing new transit service modes (such as microtransit or fixed-route services), and expanding the geographic area of the service. Expansion alternatives are identified for rural service (SGRC Transit) and urban service (City of Valdosta On-Demand).

- **Transit Service Enhancement:** These recommendations are designed to improve the efficiency, reliability, ease-of-use, and safety of existing public transit services. Enhancements include extending service hours (longer days and weekend service), evaluating fare structures, flexible scheduling and communication options, and others. Enhancement alternatives are identified for rural service (SGRC Transit) and urban service (City of Valdosta On-Demand).

- **Administrative Tools and Guidance:** These recommendations encompass management efficiency, marketing and technology tools, active evaluation and application of potential funding methods, and resiliency and emergency preparedness.

Recommendations are discussed within these three categories, and cost estimates are provided in the orange text boxes. **Appendix D** contains the Cost Estimates Technical Memorandum, which delves into the cost estimate methodologies and inputs in more detail.

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3.2 Transit Service Expansion

The following subsections explore recommendations for providing new transit services to address current demand. The transit expansion sections are divided into SGRC Transit expansion, Valdosta transit expansion, expansion through partnerships, commuter services expansion, and external access expansion.

3.2.1 SGRC Rural Transit Expansion

Table 4 includes the transit service expansion recommendations in the rural areas. There are six recommendations in this category, which are further detailed in the following subsections.

3.2.1.1 *Provide Enhanced Operational Support within New Service Areas. (TEX-R-1)*

GDOT's strategic priority is to establish rural public transit service in every county statewide. At the start of the Regional TDP update process in 2024, 15 of the 18 SGRC counties were part of the regional transit system. As of July 1, 2025, SGRC Transit's service area expanded to cover all 18 counties in the region with Clinch, Echols, and Lanier counties formally joining the system. While this regional coordination represents significant progress, current demand substantially exceeds SGRC Transit's operational capacity, with projections indicating increasing demand through 2050. Over the next few years, SGRC will need to dedicate resources for enhanced operational and marketing support within the three counties that recently joined the system for the expansion to be successful.

Table 4: Transit Service Expansion Recommendations (Rural)

Transit Service Expansion Recommendations	Recommendation ID and Description
Transit Service Expansion Recommendations (Rural Areas)	**TEX-R-1:** Provide enhanced operational support within new service areas: Dedicate resources for enhanced operational and marketing support within the three counties that most recently joined SGRC Transit (Clinch, Echols, and Lanier counties).
	TEX-R-2: Expand SGRC Transit's current demand response capacity: Increase the number of daily operating vehicles/drivers on an annual basis to meet unmet transit.
	TEX-R-3: Add SGRC Transit shuttles to serve major destinations outside of the region: Add a limited shuttle service to major connections in Brunswick and Jacksonville.
	TEX-R-4: Add microtransit service to Tifton and Waycross: Support local travel demand for immediate travel needs.
	TEX-R-5: Implement limited-service circulators. Utilize transit service for use in downtown areas during peak use times, holidays, festivals, etc.
	TEX-R-6: Employment center specific shuttles: Work with employment centers and/or specific employers to establish and operate shuttle to employment centers.

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3.2.1.2   Expand Demand-Response Capacity (TEX-R-2)

Analysis in Chapter 2.0 demonstrates that SGRC's current demand response service capacity falls significantly short of both present and projected regional transit needs. The recent incorporation of Clinch, Echols, and Lanier counties into the regional system intensifies regional transit demand pressures. **Table 5** presents a comparative analysis of actual 2023 ridership against projected demand through 2050. This is based on the rural transit service demand discussed in Chapter 2.0. It includes the calculated demand for the 18-county region, with the exception of the urbanized area in Lowndes County.

Table 5: Forecasted Annual Rural Transit Service Demand (18-County Service Area)

2023 Unlinked Passenger Trips	2025 Demand	2050 Demand	Future Unmet Demand
92,865	304,207	336,453	243,588

The cost to expand regional service to Clinch, Echols, and Lanier assumes that SGRC will purchase six new vehicles with two vehicles operating in Clinch County, one vehicle for Echols County, and three vehicles in Lanier County. Service hours and fares will be consistent throughout the other 15 counties with service available from 7:30 AM to 5:30 PM Monday through Friday at a cost of $3.00 per ride. The annual operating and maintenance cost is projected to be $309,999, and the one-time capital cost is $706,000. SGRC staff support will be needed to provide operational support within these new service areas. Section 2 of the Cost Estimates Technical Memorandum (**Appendix D**) illustrates these costs in more detail.

It is important that SGRC continue to cover the local match for these 3 counties in addition to the other 15 counties through the POS revenue. This is discussed in more detail in **Section 3.4 Administrative Tools and Guidance**.

Additionally, increasing current demand response service capacity through the addition of more vehicles and drivers will allow SGRC to meet more of the current and future demand.

Annual monitoring of demand-response trip fulfillment versus trip requests will allow SGRC to prioritize an increase in service capacity. SGRC should monitor their trip fulfillment success rate, particularly the rate of trip requests that are denied due to lack of capacity.

Based on the SGRC Transit 2023 performance metrics, the cost of a new light-duty cutaway vehicle is estimated at $138,000 with annual operating and maintenance costs of $89,000. Section 2 of the Cost Estimates Technical Memorandum (**Appendix D**) details these costs in more detail.

3.2.1.3   Add Shuttles to Destinations Outside of the Region (TEX-R-3)

Demand for travel to destinations outside of the region is evident from the existing conditions analysis and the project advisory committee. INRIX travel data indicates that there is demand from Lowndes County into locations in Florida and from Brantley County, on the eastern side of the region, into Glynn County. Further analysis of 2022 U.S. Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LODES) county-level origin-destination data (**Exhibit 2**) shows that over 50 percent of work trips (3,000+ trips daily) travel from Brantley County to other locations in Georgia. The majority of these trips go to the Brunswick or Jekyll Island areas of Glynn County. The LODES data also shows over 20 percent of home-to-work trips traveling from Charlton County to points in Florida, primarily Jacksonville. In both counties, the closest urban areas that have significant employment and service opportunities are outside of the Southern Georgia Region.

Adding a shuttle service connecting Waycross, GA, to points in Brantley County, and then to stops in Glynn County (downtown Brunswick, Jekyll Island Convention Center) would offer SGRC's population a public transit alternative that could accommodate travel demand.

SGRC and GDOT will need to evaluate the institutional barriers of providing public transit to locations in Florida, which is currently prohibited under GDOT policies. This is of particular importance to residents of Charlton County, which is close proximity to the Jacksonville, Florida region. Shuttle service Folkston to Jacksonville, FL and Valdosta to Tallahassee, FL. Connections could be at major airports or other transportation hubs.

> The cost to establish long-distance shuttles to destinations outside the region has been modeled. From Valdosta to Tallahassee, FL and Folkston to Jacksonville, FL, the annual operating and maintenance costs are projected to be $36,000 and $30,000 respectively with a one-time capital cost of $138,000 for each route. This assumes service on two days per week with one vehicle. Section 2 of the Cost Estimates Technical Memorandum (**Appendix D**) documents these costs in more detail.

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3.2.1.4 Add New Microtransit Services (TEX-R-4)

As discussed in Chapter 2.0, microtransit represents an increasingly adopted transit service model gaining traction throughout Georgia and nationwide. While sharing the flexibility of traditional demand-response services by operating without fixed routes, microtransit eliminates the typical 24–48-hour advance reservation requirements of conventional demand-response systems and relies heavily on smartphone applications for scheduling and driver communication. Similar to commercial rideshare platforms, microtransit employs dynamic routing capabilities that optimize transit vehicle routing as ride requests accumulate.

Via Transportation currently operates a successful microtransit program within the City of Valdosta that serves over 100,000 unlinked trips annually. The Needs Assessment (Chapter 2 and **Appendix C)** indicates that Waycross and Tifton demonstrate population and employment densities sufficient to support similar services. Expanding microtransit coverage to these communities would provide residents with demand-response scheduling capabilities for both routine short-distance travel and immediate transportation needs resulting from disruptions to primary travel arrangements.

New microtransit services would also reduce pressure on traditional demand-response transit services by absorbing many local and short-distance trip requests.

> Costs for new microtransit services in Tifton and Waycross are based on peer systems (Valdosta On-Demand, Hall Area Transit, and RIDE Wilson). These systems are expensive to start and maintain and will likely require additional funding sources. The annual operating and maintenance cost for microtransit service in Tifton is $325,000 with a one-time capital cost of $216,000. This assumes two vehicles and weekday service between 7:30 AM and 5:30 PM, similar to the Valdosta On-Demand service. The Waycross service has slightly higher annual operating and maintenance costs as the city is larger in square miles. Section 2 of the Cost Estimates Technical Memorandum (**Appendix D**) illustrates these costs in more detail.

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3.2.1.5   Add Limited-Service Circulators (TEX-R-5)

A limited-service circulator is a temporary or supplemental transit system designed to transport large numbers of people to and from events such as concerts, sports games, festivals, or fairs. Circulators are often short-distance, fixed-route systems that connect major event venues with key locations like transit hubs, parking areas, or popular attractions. This service can be very helpful in ensuring that residents with mobility challenges have access to special events and activities. A service like this can also assist with increased transit service exposure and access to community events by the general public, particularly if the service is free or very low cost.

Regular South Georgia events in the region that may generate enough future demand include:

- Valdosta and Lowndes Azalea Festival
- Valdosta Blueberry Festival
- Valdosta Christmas Parade and Tree-Lighting
- Tifton Hometown Holidays
- Waycross Swampfest
- Waycross Pumpkin Fest

Downtown Tifton, a Potential Location for a Circulator

(Picture Taken by Team Member on March 28, 2025)

Limited-service circulars are a lower cost service as they operate with existing vehicles. Based on an assumption that a seasonal circulator would operate twice per month for 4-hour periods, the annual operating and maintenance costs is $4,950. The fare for this service is assumed to be $1.00, making the service cost-effective for riders. Section 2 of the Cost Estimates Technical Memorandum (**Appendix D**) illustrates these costs in more detail

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3.2.1.6   *Add Employment Center Shuttle Service (TEX-R-6)*

Commuting represents the regular travel pattern between residential locations and employment centers. Public transit serves as a critical commuting resource for various demographic segments. For individuals without personal vehicles, transit access significantly expands employment opportunities while providing reliable transportation scheduling. For vehicle owners, transit offers essential contingency transportation options.

A primary SGRC strategic objective is strengthening regional economic vitality through comprehensive workforce transportation solutions. **Figure 8** illustrates the geographical relationship between employment centers and worker home locations based on the 2022 LODES dataset. Dark blue points are locations where there are high employment and a high number of worker homes. Pink points are locations with high employment and low numbers of worker home. Light blue points have low employment but high number of worker homes. Major employment concentrations primarily cluster around principal urban centers throughout the region. While worker residences demonstrate similar urban concentration patterns, they also exhibit significant distribution across rural areas.

Figure 8: 2022 LODES Data
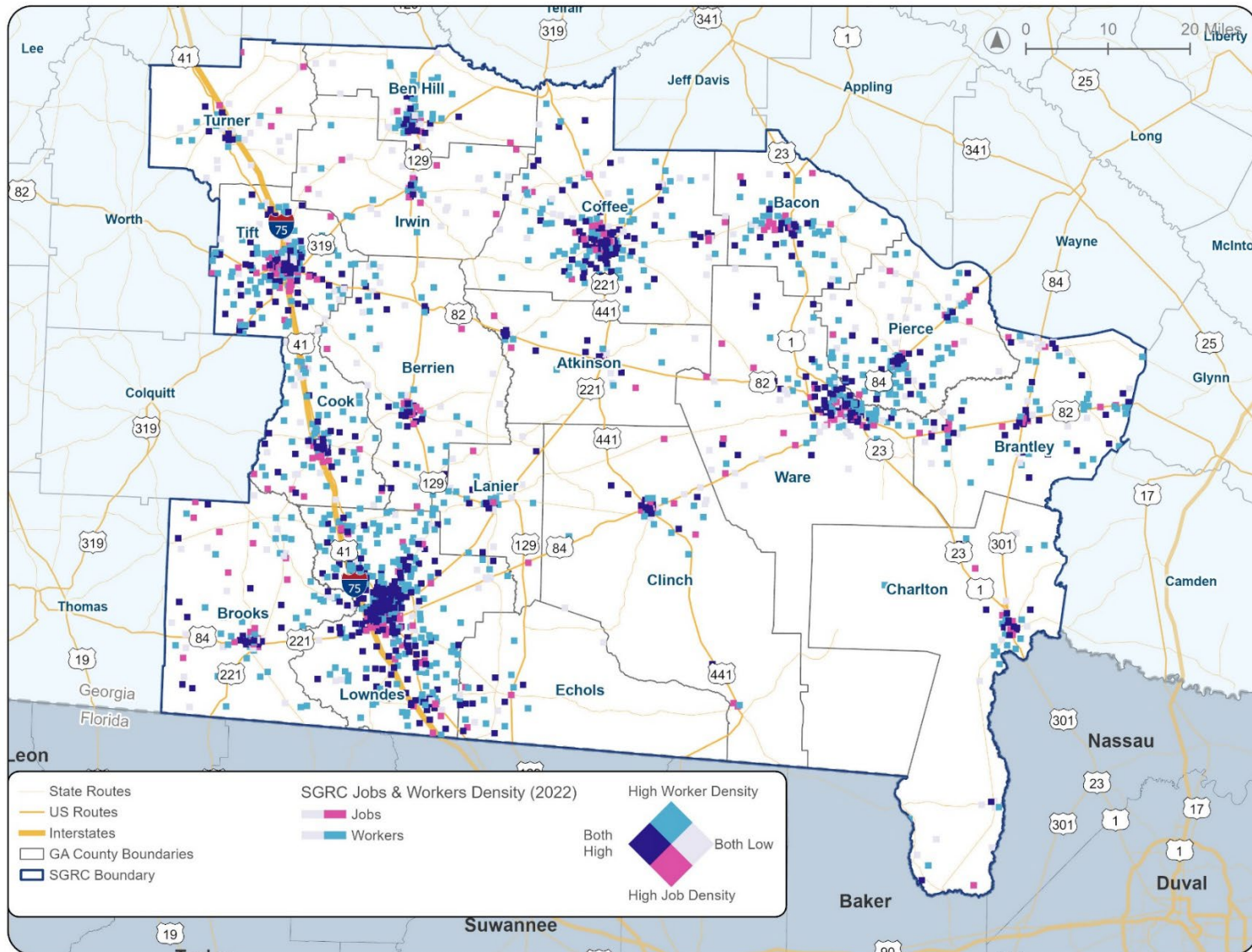
The Valdosta/Lowndes County area shows the largest concentration of employment and workforce in the Southern Georgia Region and is projected to experience the region's most substantial growth in both employment opportunities and workforce population.

Further analysis of the 2022 LODES county level origin-destination data (**Exhibit 2**) shows that there are several counties in the Southern Georgia Region where more people travel to jobs outside of the county than within it. Brooks, Echols, Lanier, and Turner counties have more workers traveling to Lowndes County than remaining in their own county. Berrien, Brooks, Cook, and Lanier counties each have over 1,000 work trips per day going to the Lowndes County area.

While the LODES data is useful for identifying likely trends and movements of workers around the region, there are some flaws in the data that limit its reliability. Many workers report an employment location that is not their physical work location (corporate office or headquarters). The broad trends are useful; however, SGRC should use the information in **Exhibit 2** to guide further exploration into potential employment shuttle service locations. SGRC should study its own travel data for common trip requests to the LODES-identified major employment clusters such as:

- The Gil Harbin Industrial Park in Lowndes County
- The Southwell Blvd area of Tift County
- The South Fitzgerald Industrial Area
- The Thompson Drive Industrial Area in Douglas
- The Fulford Road Industrial Area of Waycross

There are several isolated major employers around the region that could be candidates for a vanpool service partnership:

- Chappal Boats in Berrien
- Arglass in Lowndes
- Wild Adventures in Lowndes
- Lee Container in Clinch
- SGMC Health hospital in Valdosta
- Moody Air Force Base in Lowndes
- Spartan Cargo Trailers in Coffee County

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3.2.2   City of Valdosta Urban Transit Expansion

As discussed in the Existing Conditions Report, the City of Valdosta and surrounding areas within Lowndes County are the only urbanized areas within the Southern Georgia Region. Currently, Via Transportation operates microtransit service within the city limits.

Table 6 includes the transit service expansion recommendations in the urban area and includes the four recommendations related to expanding the urban transit service.

Table 6: Transit Service Expansion Recommendations (Urban)

Transit Service Expansion Recommendations	Recommendation ID and Description
Transit Service Expansion Recommendations (Urban Areas)	**TEX-U-1:** Expand Valdosta On-Demand capacity: Increase the number of daily operating vehicles/drivers on an annual basis to meet unmet transit demand.
	TEX-U-2: Add Valdosta fixed-route service: Add new fixed-route service pending additional service area analysis
	TEX-U-3: Integrate with the Valdosta State University Shuttle System: Integrate the VSU shuttle system with Valdosta On-Demand microtransit.
	TEX-U-4: Expand Valdosta On-Demand Service Area: serve urbanized areas outside of the City of Valdosta with microtransit service.
	TEX-U-5: Add Valdosta Commuter Route to Moody Air Force Base.

3.2.2.1   *Expand Valdosta On-Demand Capacity (TEX-U-1)*

The City of Valdosta's On-Demand microtransit service conducted over 100,000 trips in 2023 (Existing Conditions Report Figure 29). Moderate growth in Lowndes County is expected through 2050, with an increase in population of approximately 15 percent (Existing Conditions Report, Section 2.7 Future Demographics). The demand for Valdosta On-Demand service is expected to increase at the same pace or greater. Microtransit demand could also increase due to expansion of service as described in other sections of this document. All of this points towards a period of growing demand for microtransit in the City of Valdosta that will require increased service capacity through the addition of more operating vehicles and drivers. Adding a fixed-route service, as noted in this document as a long-term recommendation, may help alleviate microtransit demand in future decades.

Based on current estimates, an addition of seven vehicles are needed to meet the demand. The cost estimate to increase the fleet by seven vehicles includes an annual operating and maintenance cost of $809,000 and one-time capital cost of $720,000, or $90,000 per vehicle. Section 3 of the Cost Estimates Technical Memorandum (**Appendix C**) illustrates these costs in more detail.

The City of Valdosta and Via Transportation should initiate regular monitoring of the proportion of trip requests that cannot be fulfilled with the current fleet during operating hours. This metric should be established as a key performance indicator and incorporated into the annual assessment process to inform decisions regarding potential service adjustments.

3.2.2.2 Add a Fixed-Route Service (TEX-U-2)

Fixed-route transit service operates on predetermined schedules with designated boarding and alighting locations. As documented in the Transit Needs Assessment Technical Memorandum (**Appendix C**) and shown in **Figure 9**, the City of Valdosta's residential and commercial density metrics currently support the implementation of fixed-route bus/van service. With regional growth projections for Valdosta exceeding other regional municipalities, the viability of a fixed-route service will continue to grow.

Historical Valdosta On-Demand service utilization data identifies several high-traffic destinations throughout Valdosta (illustrated in **Figure 10**), providing foundational corridors for potential north-south and east-west route development. The draft VLMPO MTP supports north-south and east-west routes, too.

Figure 9: Fixed-Route Transit Suitability Analysis Results
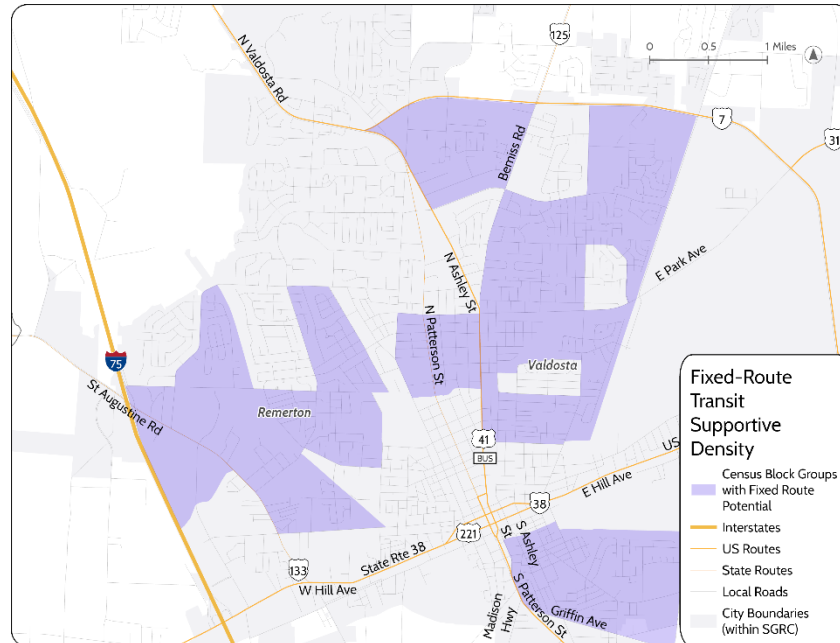
Figure 10: High Demand Valdosta On-Demand Locations and Possible Fixed Route Connections
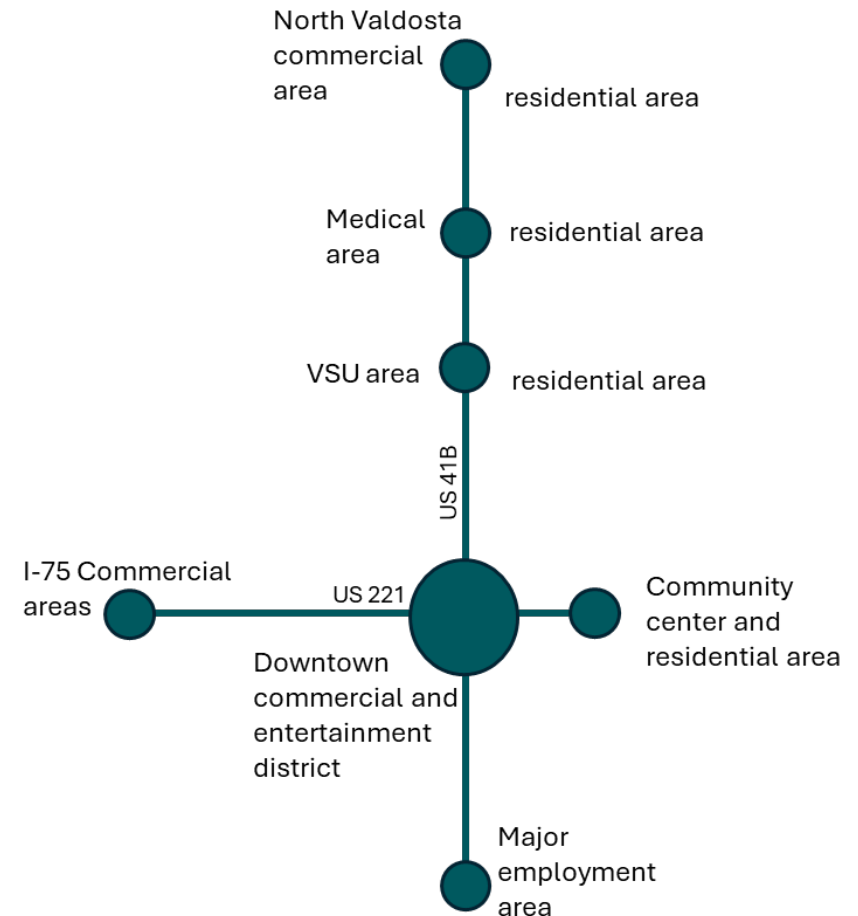
Implementing a new fixed-route system requires systematic development including the following considerations:

- Comprehensive feasibility analysis (needs assessment, financial planning, economic impact evaluation)
- Strategic community engagement (public input solicitation, service marketing)
- Financial structure development (funding source identification, capital/operating budget establishment)
- Technical route planning and scheduling (alignment development, stop placement, schedule optimization, accessibility compliance)
- Fleet and facility development strategy (vehicle specification, procurement procedures, storage and maintenance)
- Compliance planning (ADA, Title VI, and environmental justice)

The cost for a fixed-route system for the north-south corridor shown in **Figure 10**, not including a comprehensive feasibility analysis, includes an annual operating and maintenance cost of $351,000 and one-time capital cost of $432,000. This cost estimate assumes two vehicles and 7:30 AM to 7:30 PM weekday service with a fare of $2.00 per ride. Section 3 of the Cost Estimates Technical Memorandum (**Appendix D**) illustrates these costs for the north-south and east-west routes.

3.2.2.3 Partner with Valdosta State University's Shuttle Service (TEX-U-3)

Valdosta State University (VSU) currently operates the "Blazer Shuttle Express" campus transit service on weekdays from 7:30 AM to 11:00 PM along fixed campus routes. Via Transportation has documented significant student ride requests for both on-campus and off-campus destinations. Preliminary coordination discussions between Via Transportation and VSU administrators have been initiated to explore potential service integration options.

Strategic benefits of system integration include:

- Operational cost efficiencies through consolidated transit management and capital resource optimization
- Enhanced user experience through unified service access for students and university personnel
- Service enhancement opportunities including off-campus destination access and demand response flexibility

This partnership represents a valuable opportunity to maximize transit resources while improving mobility options for the university community.

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3.2.2.4 Serve the Full City of Valdosta / Lowndes County Urbanized Area (TEX-U-4)

Via Transportation currently provides microtransit services within the Valdosta city boundary, while accommodating reasonable destination requests beyond municipal limits in an ad-hoc manner. Significant residential density concentrations have developed in areas immediately north of the city, particularly along the I-75 corridor and GA-125 approaching Moody Air Force Base.

Demographic projections indicate moderate residential and employment growth throughout this region through 2050, suggesting microtransit demand will increasingly extend beyond current municipal service boundaries. Additionally, the existing city limits do not correspond with the Urban Area boundaries established by the U.S. Census Bureau, which serve as the geographical determinant for 5307 Urbanized Area Formula grant eligibility. There is a need to expand Valdosta On-Demand service to the full urbanized area. An operating agreement to expand service would be needed, and there are some challenges for the City of Valdosta and Lowndes County to work through.

The cost to expand the area is based on the premise that the current number of vehicles is sufficient and the increased service area size is minimal. The additional annual operating and maintenance cost for this expansion is estimated to be $30,000. Section 3 of the Cost Estimates Technical Memorandum (**Appendix D**) includes these details.

Figure 11 shows the City of Valdosta boundary (red outline) and the Census Bureau's Urbanized Area (teal).

Figure 11: Urbanized Area Boundary in Comparison to Current Valdosta On-Demand Service Area
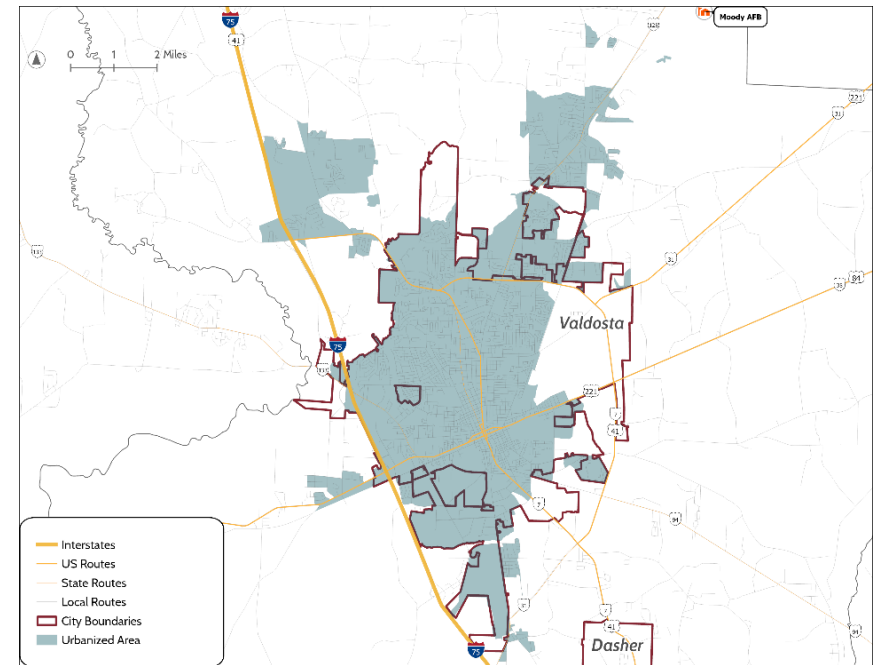
3.2.2.5 Add Valdosta Commuter Route to Moody Air Force Base (TEX-U-5)

A commuter route could connect residential and commercial centers in Valdosta with Moody Air Force Base and other surrounding neighborhoods. This would provide military personnel and civilians service to and from Valdosta and the base. A park-and-ride lot at Perimeter Road or Ashley Street could allow for potential transfers with future fixed route service in the area.

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3.2.3 Conduct Scoping and/or Planning Feasibility Studies

Scoping and / or planning feasibility studies are needed to help SGRC evaluate and plan for major investment options (employment shuttles, microtransit services, and fixed-route service). This type of study will likely cost as low as $10,000 and as high as several hundred thousand dollars, but will help SGRC ensure that a service change is viable, sustainable, and aligned with community needs.

3.3 Transit Service Enhancements

Transit service enhancements refer to operational improvements that would make transit more accessible and effective for the region. Demand-response transit level of service (LOS) estimates consider wait time, travel time, reliability, and schedule. The following subsections explore several transit service enhancement alternatives for the SGRC region. **Table 7** includes the transit service enhancement recommendations for the rural area.

Table 7: Transit Service Enhancement Recommendations – Rural Areas

Transit Service Enhancement Recommendations	Recommendation ID and Description
Transit Service Enhancement Recommendations (Rural Areas)	**TSE-R-1**: Extend weekday hours: Extend weekdays to 5:30 AM to 8:00 PM.
	TSE-R-2: Expand service to include Saturday hours: Saturdays from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM
	TSE-R-3: Update the communication technology between rider, driver, and scheduling system: Improve communication to prevent missed trips and efficient use of rider/driver/vehicle time.
	TSE-R-4: Adapt the fleet of vehicle/fuel types to match trip occupancy and daily travel distance demand: Adjust new vehicle purchases to align with trip occupancy distributions. Review daily vehicle travel distances to look at cost-efficient fuel-type options.

Transit Service Enhancement Recommendations	Recommendation ID and Description
	TSE-R-5: Implement fare restructuring for certain age groups, trip types, and longer distance trips: Identify different demographic populations that may be unduly impacted by fare policies and consider capping the maximum fare for longer trips.
	TSE-R-6: Establish mobility hubs in one or more locations in rural areas to assist with long-distance trips: Align with SGRC Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Report goals.

3.3.1   SGRC Rural Transit Service Enhancements

3.3.1.1   Service Hours (TSE-R-1)

Hours of service are a key factor impacting the convenience of using transit for passengers. It is a measure of supply that does not reflect utilization and can be used to measure convenience but should be done so with caution for rural transit systems. The Transit Capacity and Quality of Service Manual[1] classifies the LOS of transit providers based upon the number of hours per day that services are provided, with 1 being the best and 10 being the worst. SGRC currently provides 10 hours of service on weekdays (Monday – Friday), which equates to a rating of 3, on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being the highest level of service.

The increase in operating costs associated with expanding hours of service could be mitigated by greater ridership. In addition to accommodating second and third-shift workers, expanded hours of service would serve the significant numbers of community survey respondents who indicated interest in grocery shopping, medical appointments, tourism and nightlife, and recreation opportunities. Transitioning to 12-hour or 24/7 transit service is unlikely to suit every county nor occur immediately; in the meantime, modest expansions of weekday service hours and the addition of weekend service hours are steps worth considering.

Weekday Service Hours: To better accommodate early medical trips (such as dialysis) and job-related availability, extending the hours of operation to start at 5:30 AM and end at 8:00 PM could be beneficial. The cost estimate for this recommendation is based on expanding service by one hour per day (7:30 AM to 6:30 PM) and has an annual operating and maintenance cost of $4,344,000 across the 44-vehicle fleet.

3.3.1.2   Saturday Service Hours (TSE-R-2)

Saturday Service: To better accommodate shopping, recreation, and social travel, demand-response service can be extended to Saturdays from 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM. While not currently recommended, SGRC may want to expand Saturday service for a longer duration in the future.

Section 3 of the Cost Estimates Technical Memorandum (**Appendix D**) shows the cost inputs and breakdowns.

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[1] https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/24766/transit-capacity-and-quality-of-service-manual-third-edition

3.3.1.3   Update the Communication Technology Between Rider, Driver, and Scheduling System (TSE-R-3)

Improving scheduling technology involves updating the communication technology between the rider, the driver, and the scheduling system. Improving the scheduling technology would also improve communication to prevent missed trips and improve the efficiency of the entire system for rider, driver, and vehicle. The goal of improving the scheduling technology is to improve the operational efficiency and the rider experience.

SGRC has deployed GDOT's "Let's Ride" app to facilitate the customer experience of booking a trip,. Morgan County and the Coastal Region also utilize the GDOT created app. This app allows customers to schedule ride pick-up and drop off locations, review their trips, and serves as a helpful transit resource. While the app allows scheduling through a smart phone, methods for booking through phone call and a text message reminder service would allow riders to cancel or update booking. The Let's Ride app also provides transit agencies with useful data to continue to invest and improve their systems.

PAC members have advised that the Let's Ride app is not compatible with the booking services used by DHS and DCH. An app that 'talks' to all three agencies is not currently recommended but is listed in **Exhibit 1** as an alternative that the planning team considered but was not advanced to a recommendation.

3.3.1.4   Asset Management (TSE-R-4)

Analysis of National Transit Database (NTD) fleet statistics indicates that fleets across the Southern Georgia Region range from six to ten years old, with the vast majority of the cutaway buses being over GDOT's recommended useful life benchmark of seven years. All of Valdosta On-Demand's minivans are five years old and outside of their useful life (four years). **Table 8** contains statistics on the fleet size and age of both SGRC and the City of Valdosta.

SGRC fleet are parked and maintained at the RMS office locations. These facilities are not included in the GDOT Transit Asset Management Plan.

Table 8: Fleet Size and Age Statistics

Agency	Number of Vehicles	Average Age of Vehicles
SGRC	59	3.9
Valdosta	9	5.0

Source: Dataset Provided by SGRC's Transit Director

3.3.1.5   Fare Restructuring (TSE-R-5)

The Southern Georgia Region may want to implement a fare differential for certain populations (seniors, youth, individuals living in poverty, veterans, and other individuals with mobility challenges) to meet the needs of the community. Additionally, due to the trip lengths in certain parts of the region, there may need to be a maximum capped fare. Other transit agencies in Georgia have adopted similar policies.

An additional idea is to provide 'frequent rider discounts' that reward loyal customers.

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3.3.1.6 Mobility Hubs (TSE-R-6 and TSE-U-4)

SGRC and the Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization have explored the concept of mobility hubs in the 2024 Transit Oriented Development Guidelines. Typically recommended in relatively more dense activity centers with a mix of land uses, mobility hubs present an opportunity for commingling a variety of transportation modes, such as rural demand-response transit, urban microtransit, commuter shuttles, intercity bus, and light-individual transport options like bikeshare. At these locations, parking should be available, as well as a shelter with benches where riders can wait safely for a transit vehicle. Mobility hubs increase transit efficiency by maximizing vehicle occupancy and saving time. They also provide a convenient meeting point for riders that may be sharing a trip or transferring to a different vehicle. In the SGRC region, nine locations were identified as possible transit hub locations as shown in **Figure 12** and listed in **Table 9**. Locations 1-5 are recommended due to having high demand and a critical highway juncture. Locations 6-9 were selected due to the high transit propensity in the area.

Figure 12: Proposed SGRC Transit Hub Locations
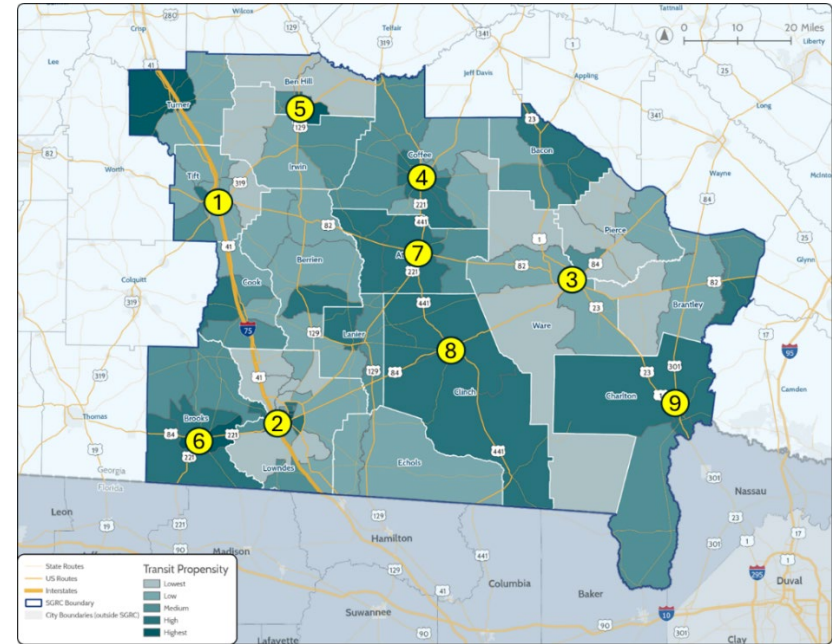
Table 9: Potential Locations for Transit Hubs based on the location of Major Junctions or Transit Propensity Analysis

#	County	Major junction or areas of high transit propensity
1	Tift	Along U.S. Route 82 at I-75 in Tifton (junction)
2	Lowndes	Along U.S. Route 221 at I-75 in Valdosta (junction)
3	Ware	Along U.S. Route 84 in downtown Waycross (junction)
4	Coffee	Along U.S. Route 441 in downtown Douglas (junction)
5	Ben Hill	Along U.S. Route 129 in Fitzgerald (junction)
6	Brooks	Along U.S. Route 221 in Quitman (propensity)
7	Atkinson	Along U.S. Route 441 in Pearson (propensity)
8	Clinch	Along U.S. Route 84 in Homerville (propensity)
9	Charlton	Intersection of U.S. Route 23 and U.S. Route 301 (propensity)

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3.3.2 City of Valdosta Urban Transit Service Enhancements

The Valdosta transit service enhancements are shown in **Table 10** below.

Table 10: Valdosta Transit Service Enhancement Recommendations

Transit Service Enhancement Recommendations	Recommendation ID and Description
Transit Service Enhancement Recommendations (Urban Areas)	**TSE-U-1:** Extend weekday evening service hours: Extend Monday-Friday evening service to midnight (or later) to accommodate shift work hours
	TSE-U-2: Add Saturday service: Add 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM service and then adapt service hours based on demand
	TSE-U-3: Minimize the distance for riders to walk to onboarding locations: Adjust the policy to minimize the distance required to meet a Valdosta On-Demand transit vehicle, particularly in certain weather conditions.
	TSE-U-4: Maximize the use of mobility-hubs for centralized pick-up / drop-off locations: Establish strategic meeting points in activity areas.
	TSE-RU-1: Conduct scoping and / or pilot studies: Conduct a scoping and/or pilot studies to plan for and test out the enhancement recommendation before full implementation.

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3.3.2.1 Extend Weekday Service Hours to Accommodate 2nd and 3rd work shifts (TSE-U-1)

Extending weekday evening service hours from the evening service to midnight or later could help accommodate more work shift hours. This extension could help increase mobility throughout Valdosta for people without access to private vehicles and whose current work shift hours are not met through the existing service.

Not only would extending weekday service accommodate additional work shifts, it could also extend the number of trips residents of the Southern Georgia Region could make. This could allow for further recreational trips in the evenings and help bolster areas of the region that do not traditionally receive a significant number visitors.

3.3.2.2 Saturday Service Hours (TSE-U-2)

Adding Saturday service from 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM could be a good starting point for the service. This would allow for more people to use the service and give it a try, if they have not already. Additionally, after a brief pilot period, these hours could be adjusted to more adequately meet the existing demand. These extended service hours will help support a broader transit user base. Marketing and a public awareness campaign must accompany this new service offering.

3.3.2.3 Minimize the Distance Riders Must Walk to Board or Alight a Vehicle (TSE-U-3)

Adjust the existing policy to minimize the distance required to meet a Valdosta On-Demand transit vehicle, particularly in adverse weather conditions, such as high temperatures or rain. This enhancement would provide better door-to-door service for riders and ensure rider comfort and safety in poor weather conditions.

Adjust the existing policy to minimize the distance required to meet a Valdosta On-Demand transit vehicle, particularly in adverse weather conditions, such as high temperatures or rain. This enhancement would provide better door-to-door service for riders and ensure rider comfort and safety in poor weather conditions.

3.3.2.4 Conduct Scoping and/or Planning Feasibility Studies (TSE-RU-1)

As noted in the Transit Service Expansion section, scoping and / or planning feasibility studies are needed to help SGRC and the City of Valdosta evaluate and plan for service enhancements. It is wise to extend hours for a six-month period or try out Saturday service on one area of the region before full-scale implementation. GDOT TTFP funding can help with these shorter-term feasibility studies.

3.4 Administrative Tools and Guidance

The administrative tools and guidance recommendations are shown in **Table 19**.

3.4.1   SGRC Rural Transit and the City of Valdosta Urban Transit

The recommendations in this section include actions appropriate for both SGRC Transit and Valdosta On-Demand service.

Table 11: List of Recommendations for Administrative Alternatives

Transit Service Enhancement Recommendations	Recommendation ID and Description
Administrative Tools and Guidance Recommendations (All Areas)	**AD-1**: Develop a Transit Service Agreement Implementation Strategy: For SGRC and the City of Valdosta, develop service agreement policies and procedures.
	AD-2: Increase SGRC staff time focused on financial planning and grant requests: Prioritize TFFP, TSPLOST, POS, etc.
	AD-3: Create a Business Plan to ensure that POS funding covers the county local match: Evaluate and monitor Purchase-of-Service (POS) contracts to ensure that local matches are covered.
	AD-4: Evaluate a driver training program partnership with Wiregrass Technical College: Leverage area training resources and help address driver shortage.
	AD-5: Transit staff training and retention: Evaluate driver and staff training/onboarding procedures, pay scales, and benefits to increase employee retention.
	AD-6: Implement marketing campaign to the region: Establish a marketing campaign at high use areas (shopping centers, hospitals, doctor's offices, employment centers).

Transit Service Enhancement Recommendations	Recommendation ID and Description
	AD-7: Outreach to rural organizations with transit capabilities: Provide rural organizations with guidance on establishing private transit services for members (churches, senior centers, community centers).
	AD-8: Coordinate the SGRC on-demand and Valdosta On-Demand microtransit service: Establish procedures for communication between SGRC and Valdosta On-Demand operations to complete traveler itineraries.
	AD-9: Coordinate scheduling for GDOT public transit, DHS, and DCH: Establish a single access point (phone, web, app) for scheduling SGRC on-demand trips.
	AD-10: Develop preparedness plan for supporting GEMA/FEMA emergencies: Establish a plan of action and communication protocols for emergency operations in coordination with GEMA.
	AD-11: Study the feasibility of providing Wi-Fi on transit vehicles (both SGRC and Valdosta On-Demand): Support rider communication, coordination, and access to critical information on a typical and post disaster basis.
	AD-12: Develop a notification protocol (e.g., use of transit app or other app) for transit agencies to support customers with basic needs following a natural disaster: Establish a notification system to send messages to transit riders by county or across the region.

SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION

3.4.1.1 Develop a Transit Service Agreement Implementation Strategy (AD-1)

Increasing coordination between SGRC and other transportation operators in the region can improve the rider experience, broaden service capacity, and develop regional partnerships to foster growth and adaptation. Developing a "Transit Service Agreement" strategy would establish the procedural and legal protocols and draft documents that will guide future transit service agreements between SGRC, City of Valdosta, and private organizations such as major employers or special events. Having a draft legal document (including agreement terms, definitions, service descriptions, roles and responsibilities, compensation, and performance metrics) will ensure that SGRC is prepared for moving into contractual relationships with partners in the region.

The City of Valdosta should also review existing contract terms with Via Transportation in the context of future growth and expansion opportunities. In particular, the City of Valdosta, Via, and Valdosta State University (VSU) should have clear agreements in place if shared or replacement service are offered to VSU.

3.4.1.2 Increase Staff Time Dedicated to Financial Planning and Grant Requests (AD-2)

Funding policies at the federal, state, and local levels, as well as within the private sector, are subject to change. SGRC must proactively monitor these evolving landscapes to identify and capitalize on innovative funding opportunities.

Current transit demand within the region surpasses the capacity of the transit system. Addressing this demand will necessitate enhanced financial support and the establishment of a robust financial foundation to effectively serve the community.

The Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP), authorized under 49 U.S.C. § 5311(b)(3), allocates $65,000 annually to each state to support the design and implementation of training, technical assistance, financial planning, and other support services tailored to meet the needs of transit operators in nonurbanized areas.

SGRC is encouraged to engage with their GDOT Transit Service Project Manager to explore the utilization of these funds for staff development in financial planning and related training initiatives.

3.4.1.3 Create a Business Plan to Ensure that Purchase-of-Service Revenue Aligns with County Local Match Obligations (AD-3)

Similar to the Financial Planning Recommendation AD-2, creating a Business Plan for one, five, and ten years out is a sound financial practice for any agency, but especially for a dynamic, multi-county transit service. Not only will it provide SGRC with a financial roadmap, the plan can be utilized as a marketing tool for service expansion and upgrades.

One aspect of the business plan that is important in the Southern Georgia Region is that the POS revenue cannot be used to support a county's "local match" obligation. However, DHS or Medicaid trips may utilize a 5311 funded vehicle for transport and act as a POS revenue source. Many rural counties have a difficult time prioritizing local tax revenue for transit local match requirements. The monitoring of DHS and DCH POS revenue by county can identify potential shortfalls before they happen and allow DHS and Medicaid trip request priority for those counties.

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REGIONAL COMMISSION

3.4.1.4 Evaluate a Driver Training Program with Wiregrass Technical College (AD-4)

SGRC needs a team of well-qualified, well-trained, and motivated drivers. An agency's drivers are not only essential for operating the service, but they are also responsible for safe and reliable service and are the most visible representatives of an organization. It can be challenging to recruit and retain good people, particularly when funding and an available labor pool are restrictive. Wiregrass Technical College (WTC) currently offers commercial vehicle training for class A and B commercial driver licenses (CDL). SGRC can work with WTC to develop a class C CDL specific to rural transit operations where there are specific challenges in working with transit dependent populations that may have physical or mental disabilities.

The National Rural Transit Assistance Program (NTAP)[2] offers guidance on driver recruitment, training, and retention. This guidance can assist in developing driver curriculum that can be discussed with WTC for future driver training classes. Elements of training should include training regarding:

- Vehicle operation
- Communication technology
- Defensive driving techniques
- Emergency procedures
- Customer service skills
- Passenger assistance and sensitivity

- First aid and CPR
- Drug and alcohol awareness

3.4.1.5 Transit Staff Training and Retention Program (AD-5)

The American Public Transit Association (APTA) published a report in 2022 regarding transit workforce shortages and retention[3]. This report, still relevant in 2025, stated that 84 percent of transit agencies experienced workforce shortages affecting their ability to provide consistent service. The shortages, according to APTA, are due primarily to workers leaving for jobs outside of the transit industry for better pay, benefits, and work schedules. The APTA report provides many ideas that can be considered and possibly implemented by SGRC, including:

- Increasing compensation
- Wages
- Benefits
- Student loan and tuition benefits
- Access to childcare
- Work schedules
- Flexibility in work schedules
- Rate benefits for harder shifts
- Workforce culture
- Clear pathways for advancement
- Employee recognition
- Employee social events

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[2] https://www.nationalrtap.org/Toolkits/Transit-Managers-Toolkit/Administration/Driver-Recruitment-Training-and-Retention

[3] https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/APTA-Transit-Workforce-Shortage-Report.pdf

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SGRC Transit and its third-party operator, Resource Management Systems (RMS) Inc., voiced challenges regarding recent employee retention, particularly for drivers. Holidays can be particularly challenging as other delivery companies, such as Amazon and UPS, offer higher wages during these peak periods. SGRC should initiate a review of current employment practices in comparison to other workplaces in the region as well as other sister agencies in rural Georgia.

3.4.1.6 Implement a Marketing Campaign Across the Region (AD-6)

Limited awareness of transit offerings within the Southern Georgia Region was cited by the public in surveys and by the stakeholders in meetings. Even though current transit capacity is not able to meet current demand, marketing campaigns could better inform the region's population that most need low-cost travel options.

To address this issue, various marketing campaigns should be employed across the regions to the general public, transit dependent populations, commuters, college students, and seniors. The National Rural Transit Assistance Program has a free rural marketing transit tool kit that SGRC should utilize as a marketing resource. The Mobility Manager, or other suited member of SGRC, should utilize multiple marketing mediums to increase transit awareness, including:

- Regular social media postings and updates
- Information flyers at doctor's offices and community centers
- Website postings and updates
- Newsletters (virtual and paper copies)
- Ads in the mail or on utility bills
- Radio ads
- Signage and wording on transit buses/vans

3.4.1.7 Outreach to Rural Organizations with Transit Capabilities (AD-7)

Various organizations across southern Georgia maintain multi-passenger vehicle fleets supporting group transportation needs, including faith-based institutions, senior centers, and community facilities. While partnership opportunities exist, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Charter Service Agreement prohibits utilization of FTA funds for non-public services and requires all operational partners to comply with public transit vehicle and operational standards.

Despite these constraints, strategic outreach, coordination, and communication initiatives can be implemented within the FTA bounds, allowing for support of private organizations in developing complementary transportation services for their constituencies.

Strategic Benefits:
- Enhanced resource efficiency through locally-housed transportation assets
- Community cohesion development through shared transportation experiences
- Streamlined coordination through established organizational structures

Implementation Challenges:
- Independent financial responsibility for capital and operations
- Driver recruitment and retention
- Vehicle maintenance and lifecycle management responsibilities

3.4.1.8 Coordinate the SGRC Transit and Valdosta Microtransit Service (AD-8)

The SGRC and Valdosta On-Demand microtransit service frequently overlap with drop-off locations. SGRC passengers frequently alight in the City of Valdosta, and Valdosta On-Demand passengers occasionally alight just outside of the City of Valdosta boundary.   Coordination between SGRC and Valdosta On-Demand could provide increased efficiency for both agencies and riders. SGRC riders that need multiple trips within the City of Valdosta could use an SGRC/ Valdosta On-Demand coordination agreement for scheduling and paying for trips. Valdosta On-Demand and SGRC Transit can also make use of the mobility hubs for shared boarding and alighting stops.

3.4.1.9 Coordinate Scheduling for GDOT Public Transit, DHS, and DCH (AD-9)

Coordination with the transportation programs administered by DHS and DCH is key for transit agencies to serve the spectrum of users who most depend on transit. DHS and DCH have (POS) contracts with SGRC that allow the scheduling and service to their clients. Currently, scheduling a DHS or DCH trip requires access through each organization instead of directly through SGRC. This process could be altered to have a single contact point for scheduling all trips (GDOT, DHS, or DCH). This change may ease an individual's navigation of the trip scheduling process.

3.4.1.10 Develop Preparedness Plan for Supporting GEMA/FEMA Emergencies (AD-10)

Transportation plays a critical role throughout all phases of emergency management–before, during, and after disasters. Transit resources can facilitate evacuations, provide mobility options during disruptions, help return residents when conditions are safe, and restore normalcy by resuming regular service. SGRC must clearly understand its emergency responsibilities and be prepared to adapt services to meet the needs of transit dependent populations.

When the President or Governor declares a state of emergency, FEMA and GEMA assume operational authority and may request transportation resources through GDOT to support evacuation and recovery efforts. SGRC's fleet, including wheelchair-accessible vehicles, represents a valuable resource that could be mobilized during emergencies.

To effectively serve Southern Georgia during crises, SGRC should develop a comprehensive "Rural Transit Emergency Preparedness Plan" that details:

- Internal and external coordination protocols, including contact information for essential personnel
- Complete inventory of transit assets (detailing capacity, specialized equipment, communication capabilities, and storage locations)
- Procedures governing the use of SGRC vehicles by external operators
- Safety parameters and limitations for SGRC staff involvement

This preparedness plan should be finalized and distributed to GEMA and GDOT emergency transportation coordinators responsible for the Southern Georgia Region. The following resources can provide valuable guidance for SGRC in understanding emergency procedures and developing an effective preparedness plan:

- Georgia Emergency Operations Plan: https://gema.georgia.gov/document/document/2024-geop-updatepdf--UNPUBLISHED-document--DO-NOT-SHARE-this-URL--/download

- GDOT Emergency Support Plan: https://gema.georgia.gov/document/document/esf-1-transportation-annexpdf--UNPUBLISHED-document--DO-NOT-SHARE-this-URL--/download

- FTA Guidance: https://www.apta.com/wp-content/uploads/APTA-SS-SEM-RP-019-24.pdf

3.4.1.11 Study the Feasibility of Providing Wi-Fi on Transit Vehicles for Both SGRC Transit and Valdosta On-Demand (AD-11)

In-vehicle Wi-Fi systems utilize cellular technology to provide internet connectivity within transit vehicles, benefiting both passengers and operations. These systems typically feature enhanced antennas capable of maintaining cellular connections even in areas where mobile phones lose service. This technology enables SGRC and/or Valdosta On-Demand to maintain direct communication between drivers and central dispatch, while supporting additional functions like Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) for real-time tracking.

Passenger Wi-Fi access represents a valuable amenity that allows riders to work or enjoy entertainment during longer journeys. SGRC should evaluate incorporating this technology into new vehicle purchases and potentially upgrading existing vehicles. It's worth noting that some vehicles in the current fleet may already have this capability installed.

3.4.1.12 Develop a Notification Protocol for Transit Agencies to Support Customers with Basic Travel Information Needs Following a Natural Disaster (AD-12)

SGRC and Valdosta On-Demand should establish an emergency communication system to notify current and former customers during crisis situations. Communications should detail how to request transportation services, locate shelter locations, and alert residents when evacuation vehicles arrive in their neighborhood. This communication protocol should be incorporated into the 'Rural Transit Emergency Preparedness Plan' and shared with both GDOT and GEMA. Implementing this system will ensure that SGRC Transit and Valdosta On-Demand effectively address the safety and transportation needs of transit dependent populations throughout the region.

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3.5 Alternatives Feedback from Stakeholders and the Public Survey

3.5.1 Stakeholder Feedback

Alternatives were reviewed by Regional TDP stakeholders during a virtual meeting on March 25, 2025. Twelve attendees ranked alternative options and provided commentary to help refine and prioritize alternatives.

3.5.1.1 Transit Service Expansion (Rural)

The stakeholders selected the addition of microtransit (TEX-R-4) and an increase in demand-response capacity (TEX-R-1) as the highest rated alternatives, followed by commuter vanpools (TEX-R-6) and external shuttle service (TEX-R-3). The seasonal circulator alternative (TEX-R-5) was ranked the lowest. These rankings suggest a recognition of the success of Valdosta's microtransit service and the region's need for more vehicle and drivers to meet a growing demand. **Figure 13** illustrates the ranking of the rural transit expansion alternatives.

Figure 13: Ranked Rural Transit Expansion Alternatives

1. Microtransit in non-urban areas (Tifton, Waycross, Douglas, Fitzgerald) — 4.17
2. Commuter vanpool service to increase access to jobs — 4.00
3. Community vanpool service — 2.67
3. External access to surrounding areas — 2.67
5. Special event / seasonal service — 1.50
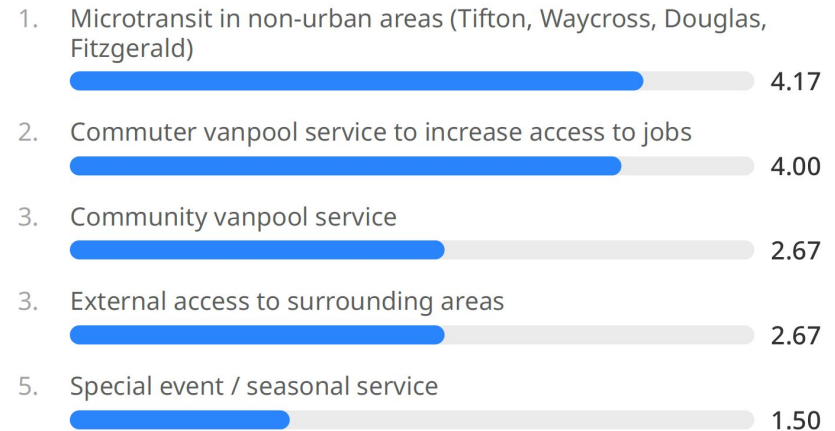
Downtown Waycross. Picture Taken by Project Team Member on March 28, 2025

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3.5.1.2 Transit Service Expansion (Urban)

The stakeholders selected the expansion of Valdosta On-Demand to all urbanized portions of the Valdosta area (TEX-U-4) was ranked the highest, followed by the addition of a fixed-route bus service (TEX-U-2) and then the integration of Valdosta On-Demand and the VSU shuttle (TEX-U-3). These rankings also suggest that the Valdosta On-Demand microtransit service is working well and should be expanded beyond the city limits to meet demand. **Figure 14** illustrates the ranking of the urban transit expansion alternatives.

Figure 14: Ranked Urban Transit Expansion Alternatives

1. Explore expanding Via to all urbanized portions of the Valdosta area

   2.33

2. Fixed route service

   2.08

3. Connect Via with the VSU shuttle

   1.58
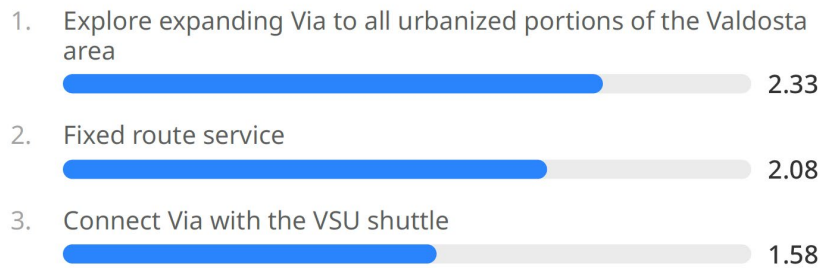
3.5.1.3 Transit Service Enhancement (Rural)

The stakeholders selected the increase in service hours (TSE-R-1, TSE-R-2) as the highest priority, followed by an improvement in communication technologies (TSE-R-3). The alternative focused on Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and mobility hub locations (TSE-R-7) was ranked lowest. These rankings suggest that the stakeholders recognized a need to add service for longer periods of time during weekdays and on Saturday. There were several comments and specific reasons including early morning medical appointments and work schedules. **Figure 15** illustrates the ranking of the rural transit enhancement alternatives.

Figure 15: Ranked Rural Transit Enhancement Alternatives

1. Increased vehicles and drivers

   7.55

2. Increased service hours

   6.64

3. Driver retention and training programs

   5.64

4. Trip scheduling and reminders

   4.64

5. Geographic distribution and staging of vehicles

   4.18

6. Fare evaluation

   3.09

7. TOD areas / mobility hubs

   2.18

8. Emergency management coordination

   2.09

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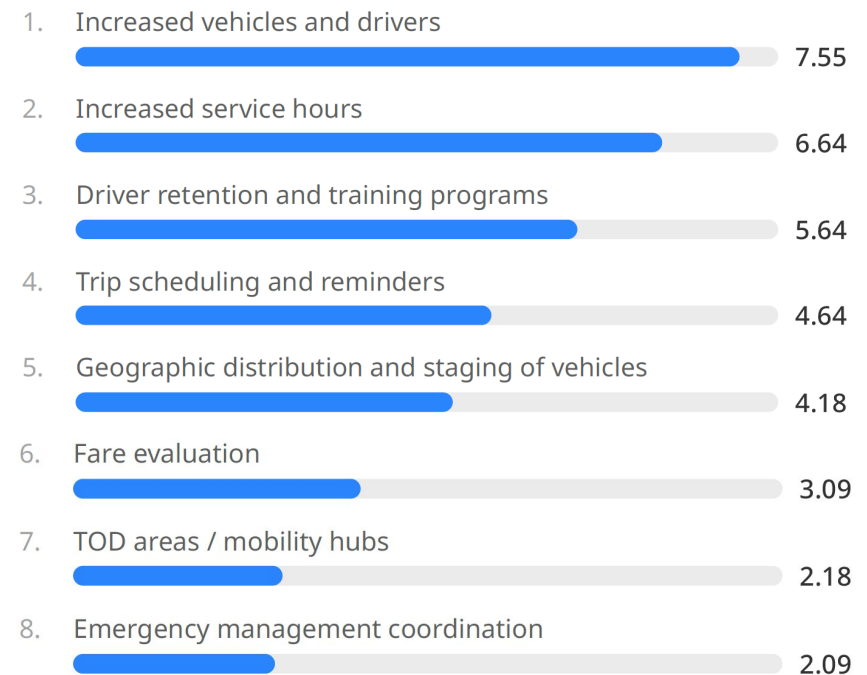
3.5.1.4   Transit Service Enhancement (Urban)

The stakeholders selected the increase in service hours (TSE-U-1, TSE-U-2) as the highest priority. Improving curb-to-curb service (TSE-U-3) and the use of mobility hubs (TSE-U-4) were ranked slightly lower. These rankings suggest that the stakeholders recognized a need to add service for longer periods of time during weekdays and on Saturday. **Figure 16** illustrates the ranking of the urban transit enhancement alternatives.

Figure 16: Ranked Urban Transit Enhancement Alternatives

1. More vehicles and drivers
    3.50
2. Increased service hours
    2.92
3. Curb-to-curb service
    1.83
4. TOD areas / mobility hubs
    1.75
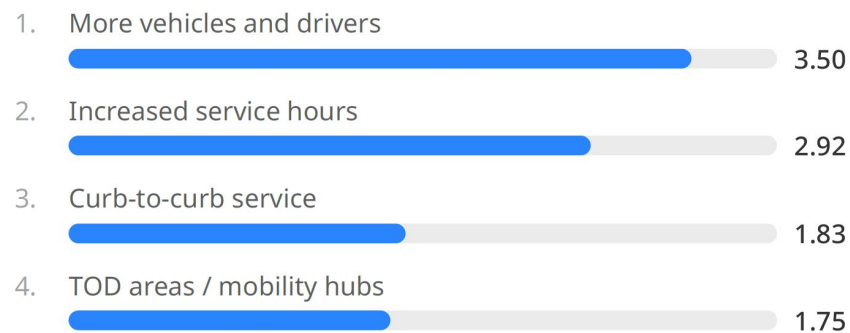
3.5.1.5   Administrative Tools and Guidance

The stakeholders selected an increase of SGRC staff time committed to finding and implementing financial resources (AD-2) and the establishment of a business plan (AD-3) as the top priorities, followed by the development of marketing campaign (AD-6) and driver training (AD-4). The coordination of rural transit services (AD-8) was ranked lowest. These results suggest the recognition of a need to continue to ensure that the financial resources available to SGRC are maximized and organized in an intentional plan for the future. **Figure 17** illustrates the ranking of the administrative tools and guidance alternatives.

Figure 17: Ranked Administrative Alternatives

1. Transit funding options
    5.27
2. Create a business plan
    4.27
3. Increase marketing and public awareness of transit systems
    4.00
4. Review SGRC staff needs
    2.73
5. Innovative fleet
    2.36
6. Coordinate across transit agencies
    2.36

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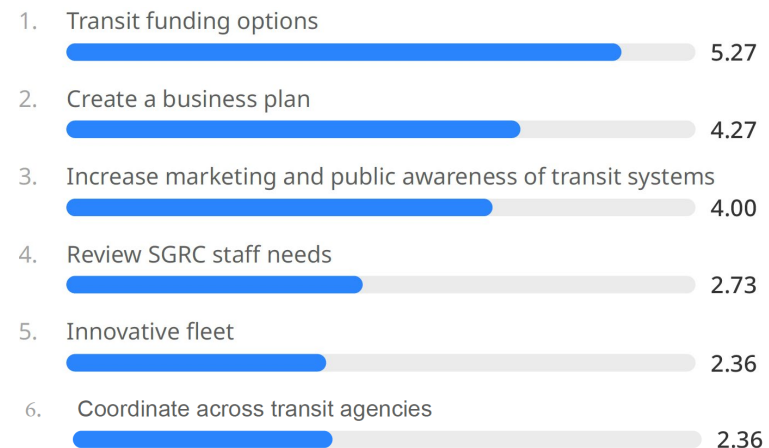
4.0 Implementation Strategy

4.1 Framework and Criteria

4.1.1 Prioritization and Scoring Methodology

A scoring methodology was developed to prioritize and categorize the recommendations into three impact tiers based on qualitative criteria. The scoring methodology is based on alignment with project goals, feedback from the PST, which includes SGRC and GDOT, the PAC, stakeholders, and community members, and the recommendation's ability to help address unmet transit demand. An additional criterion is the recommendation's alignment with the focus of the FTA AoPP grant.

Two criteria are worth two points, and the others are one point each. The criteria that are two points are meeting one or more of the top three regional goals and priority for the PST. The maximum number of points that a recommendation can receive is eight points.

Table 12 summarizes the transit recommendations scoring methodology. Each transit recommendation received a composite score, which is the total score from the sum of the six criteria. The maximum composite score is eight, and the recommendations have been grouped into Impact Tiers based on their composite score. The complete recommendations scoring matrix can be found in **Exhibit 3.**

SGRC Transit, Picture Taken by Project Team Member on January 13, 2025 in Valdosta

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Table 12: Transit Recommendations Scoring Methodology

Scoring Criteria	Maximum Score
Meets SGRC Regional TDP Goals (two points for meeting one or more of the top three goals): • Deliver fiscally responsible and efficient transit services. • Provide for the <u>unique</u> needs of transit dependent populations. • Pursue creative and collaborative solutions to further economic opportunities.	2
Meets SGRC Regional TDP Goals (one point for meeting one or more of the other goals): • Advance a multifaceted and connected system through regional collaboration and coordinated services. • Implement context-sensitive transit and last mile connectivity solutions in population centers. • Promote innovation and adaptability to meet future needs.	1
Identified as an important priority by the PST members	2
Received high scores by the PAC, stakeholders, and community members	1
Increases service capacity to help address the unmet transit demand in the region	1
Aligns with the focus of the FTA Areas of Persistent Poverty grant by addressing social and economic challenges related to improving transit in underserved and historically disadvantaged communities and increasing access to jobs and essential services.	1

4.1.2   Impact Tiers

The project team established three impact tiers: high impact, mid impact, and a fundamental tier. These tiers are described in the next section.

High Impact Tier

Mid Impact Tier

Fundamental Tier

High Impact Tier: The recommendations that received a composite score of 7 or 8 met project goals, received broad support, have a significant impact on addressing transit demand, and / or align with the FTA AoPP goals. The scoping and feasibility study recommendations are in the high impact tier as they are needed to determine operational and funding needs for complex projects before advancing to implementation. Recommendations in this tier have been advanced as the top priorities. High impact tier recommendations are shown in Section 4.3.

Mid Impact Tier: The recommendations that scored between 3 and 6 are more targeted or incremental in their impact. These recommendations are grouped as mid impact tier recommendations and are listed in Section 4.3. It is important to note that the mid impact tier recommendations help advance transit service across the region, but they may not affect as many riders due to their smaller service area or incremental change.

In some cases, these recommendations may be easier and faster to implement than the high impact tier as they are smaller in scale. Additionally, not all of these recommendations were presented to regional stakeholders and community members due to the large number of recommendations that came out of the project analysis resulting in some lower scores.

Fundamental Tier: The administrative tools and guidance recommendations are critical for implementation of the TDP recommendations over time. These recommendations focus on projects that SGRC staff can support, technological improvements, and recommendations focused on resiliency and emergency preparedness. Since these recommendations are different in nature than the Transit Service Expansion and Transit Service Enhancement projects, they were not scored. The fundamental tier recommendations are listed in Section 4.3.

4.1.3   Relationship Between Project Goals and Recommendations

The recommendations are the heart of the Regional TDP. As shown in **Figure 18**, the recommendations help to carry out the six goals established discussed in the *Regional TDP: Vision and Goals Report*.

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Figure 18: Alignment of Goals and Recommendations

Tier 1

Goal 1:
Deliver fiscally responsible and efficient service

- Business plan
- Driver training and retention
- Scoping and feasibility studies

Goal 2:
Provide for the unique needs of the transit dependent populations

- Employment center shuttles
- Extended hours
- Fare restructuring for certain populations

Goal 3:
Pursue solutions to further economic opportunities

- Employment center shuttles
- Expand Valdosta On-Demand service area
- Transit Service agreements

Tier 2

Goal 4:
Advance a multifaceted and connected system

- Establish mobility hubs
- New microtransit service

Goal 5:
Implement context-sensitive transit and last mile connectivity

- Shuttles and circulators
- Curb to curb service
- Valdosta fixed route service

Goal 6:
Promote innovation and adaptability

- Text notification, WiFi on buses
- Fuel efficient fleet
- Emergency preparedness plan

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REGIONAL COMMISSION

4.2 Implementation Plan

4.2.1   Timeline

Each recommendation has been assigned a project ID and includes a description, project timeframe, responsible party, and a cost estimate.

Within each tier, the projects are organized into short (0-5 years), mid (6-10 years), or long-term (10-25 year) timeframes. A one-year implementation plan is included at the end of this section.
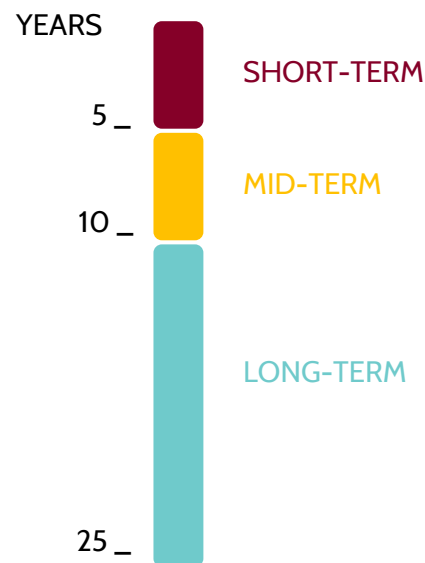
4.2.2   Roles and Responsibilities

SGRC has the leading role in moving the transit recommendations forward in coordination with GDOT and FTA. SGRC's transportation and transit staff are top-notch and are responsible for SGRC Transit service being a model in the state of Georgia. SGRC needs to continue to involve and coordinate with DHS, DCH, the City of Valdosta, and the county and city leaders throughout the region.

4.2.3   Monitoring and Evaluation

Effective performance monitoring and evaluation systems are essential components for transit agencies striving to maximize service delivery while minimizing operational costs. This balanced approach becomes particularly crucial in rural regions such as Southern Georgia, where geographical challenges create unique operational hurdles. The significant travel distances required to support even a single passenger trip in these areas can substantially impact both service quality and operational efficiency.

For SGRC, implementing a robust performance monitoring framework is important for maintaining sustainable operations. A well-designed monitoring system provides the data-driven insights needed to optimize resource allocation, identify improvement opportunities, and justify funding requests based on quantifiable service outcomes.

- **Trip Denial Percentage:** Current demand forecasts for transit services in the Southern Georgia region significantly exceed available capacity. This metric systematically tracks the proportion of trip requests that cannot be accommodated due to resource constraints. By documenting denied trips, SGRC can quantify the actual unmet demand throughout the service area. This metric can also be used to Identify specific geographic areas or time periods with highest demand-capacity gaps and

strengthen grant applications and stakeholder support by demonstrating documented need.

While industry standards vary based on service context, SGRC should aim for a trip fulfillment rate of 90-95 percent. This target rate balances service accessibility with operational realities.

Other useful monitoring metrics for the SGRC and the City of Valdosta focus on cost efficiency and are available in "The Guidebook for Rural Demand-Response Transportation: Measuring, Assessing, and Improving Performance".[4]

Recommended metrics relevant to the SGRC include:

- **Passenger Trips per Vehicle-Hour:** This productivity metric provides essential insights into operational efficiency by measuring how effectively vehicles are utilized during their service hours. Higher values indicate more productive service delivery. Maximizing passenger trips per vehicle-hour would indicate that the SGRC can transport more riders without proportional increases in operating costs, effectively expanding service capacity through improved efficiency rather than solely through resource expansion.
- **Operating Cost per Vehicle-Hour and Operating Cost per Mile:** These metrics capture cost efficiency which includes trip assignment efficiency and vehicle efficiency. Reducing costs allows SGRC to make more efficient use of limited resources.

- **Safety Incidents per 100,000 Vehicle-Miles:** This metric can be used to evaluate driver training and management protocols as well as vehicle maintenance costs.
- **On-Time Performance:** Meeting scheduling pick-up and drop-off times are important for maintaining high trip fulfillment performance and serving the needs of the riders.

Additional metrics for SGRC's consideration are included in the Vision and Goals Report. By systematically tracking these metrics, SGRC can build a comprehensive understanding of its operational performance, identify specific areas for improvement, and demonstrate the impact of transit investments to community stakeholders, GDOT, FTA, and other funding partners.

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[4] https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/14330/guidebook-for-rural-demand-response-transportation-measuring-assessing-and-improving-performance

4.3 Recommendations by Tier

4.3.1 High Impact Tier

The high impact tier recommendations are listed in **Table 13**.

Table 13: High Impact Tier Recommendations

ID	Sub-Category	Recommendation	Timeframe	Implementing Agency	Total Capital Cost	Capital Local Share	Total Annual O&M Cost	Annual O&M Local Share
TEX-R-1	Transit Service Expansion (Rural)	**Provide enhanced operational support witihin new service areas**: Dedicate resources for enhanced operational and marketing support within the three counties that most recently joined SGRC Transit (Clinch, Echols, Lanier counties).*	Short	SGRC				
TEX-R-2	Transit Service Expansion (Rural)	**Expand SGRC Current On-Demand Capacity**: Increase the number of daily operating vehicles/drivers on an annual basis to meet unmet transit demand. (Cost is per vehicle)	Short	SGRC	$138,000	$14,000	$89,000	$11,000
TEX-R-6	Transit Service Expansion (Rural)	**Employment Center Specific Shuttles**: Work with employment centers and/or specific employers to establish and operate shuttle to employment centers. (Cost is for Employment Site #1)	Short	SGRC, Employers	$102,000	$10,000		$59,000
TEX-U-1	Transit Service Expansion (Urban)	**Expand Valdosta On-Demand Capacity**: Increase the number of daily operating vehicles/drivers on an annual basis to meet unmet transit demand. (Cost is for seven vehicles.)	Short	City of Valdosta	$720,000	$72,000	$809,000	$308,000
TEX-U-4	Transit Service Expansion (Urban)	**Expand Valdosta On-Demand Service Area**: serve urbanized areas outside of the City of Valdosta with microtransit service.	Short	City of Valdosta			$30,000	$11,000
TEX-RU-1	Transit Service Expansion (Rural and Urban)	**Conduct Scoping and/or Planning Feasibility Studies**: Evaluate and plan for major investment options (shuttles, microtransit, and fixed route service).	Short	SGRC, City of Valdosta				
TSE-R-1	Transit Enhancement (Rural)	**Extend weekday hours:** Extend weekdays to 5:30 AM to 8:00 PM.	Short	SGRC			$4,344,000	$516,000
TSE-R-5	Transit Enhancement (Rural)	**Implement fare restructuring for long distance travel for certain age groups and trip types**: Identify counties and different demographic populations that may be unduly impacted by fare policies.	Short	SGRC				
TSE-R-6	Transit Enhancement (Rural)	**Establish mobility hubs in one or more locations in rural areas to assist with long distance trips**: Align with SGRC TOD goals.	Short	SGRC				

*Cost estimates to establish service in these three counties is included in Appendix D Table 2.

ID	Sub-Category	Recommendation	Timeframe	Implementing Agency	Total Capital Cost	Capital Local Share	Total Annual O&M Cost	Annual O&M Local Share
TSE-U-1	Transit Enhancement (Urban)	**Extend Weekday Evening Service Hours**: Extend Monday-Friday evening service to midnight (or later) to accommodate shift work hours	Short	City of Valdosta			$1,220,000	$460,000
TSE-U-3	Transit Enhancement (Urban)	**Minimize the distance for riders to walk to onboarding locations**: Adjust the policy to minimize the distance required to meet a Valdosta On-Demand transit vehicle, particularly in certain weather conditions.	Short	City of Valdosta				
TSE-U-4	Transit Enhancement (Urban)	**Maximize the use of mobility-hubs for centralized pick-up / drop-off locations**: Establish strategic meeting points in activity areas.	Short	City of Valdosta				
TSE-RU-1	Transit Enhancement (Rural and Urban)	**Conduct Scoping and / or Pilot Studies**: Conduct a scoping and/or pilot studies to plan for and test out the enhancement recommendation before full implementation.	Short	SGRC, City of Valdosta				
TEX-R-3	Transit Service Expansion (Rural)	**Add SGRC shuttles to serve major destinations outside of the region**: Add a limited shuttle service to major connections in Brunswick and Jacksonville.	Mid	SGRC			$4,950	$2,175
TEX-R-4	Transit Service Expansion (Rural)	**Add microtransit service to Tifton and Waycross**: Support local travel demand for immediate travel needs. (Cost is shown for both systems)	Mid	SGRC	$432,000	$43,000	$713,000	$214,000
TSE-R-3	Transit Enhancement (Rural)	**Update the communication technology between rider, driver, and scheduling system**: Improve communication to prevent missed trips and efficient use of rider/driver/vehicle time.	Mid	SGRC				
TEX-U-2	Transit Service Expansion (Urban)	**Valdosta Fixed Route Service**: Add new fixed route service pending additional service area analysis. (Cost is for N-S route only)	Long	SGRC	$432,000	$43,000	$351,000	$160,000

SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION

4.3.2 Mid-Impact Tier

The mid impact tier recommendations are listed in **Table 14**. The fundamental tier recommendations are listed in **Table 15** on the next page.

Table 14: Mid Impact Tier Recommendations

ID	Sub-Category	Recommendation	Timeframe	Implementing Agency	Total Capital Cost	Capital Local Share	Total Annual O&M Cost	Annual O&M Local Share
TEX-R-5	Transit Service Expansion (Rural)	**Shuttles and Circulators:** Utilize transit service for use in downtown areas during peak use times, holiday, festivals, etc.	Short	SGRC			$4,950	$2,175
TEX-U-3	Transit Service Expansion (Urban)	**Integration with the Valdosta State University Shuttle System**: Integrate the VSU shuttle system with Valdosta On-Demand microtransit.	Short	City of Valdosta, Valdosta State University				
TSE-R-2	Transit Enhancement (Rural)	**Expand service to include Saturday hours:** Saturdays from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM.	Mid	SGRC				
TSE-R-4	Transit Enhancement (Rural)	**Adapt the fleet of vehicle/fuel types to match trip occupancy and daily travel distance demand**: Adjust new vehicle purchases to align with trip occupancy distributions. Review daily vehicle travel distances to look at cost-efficient fuel-type options.	Mid	SGRC, GDOT, City of Valdosta				
TSE-U-2	Transit Enhancement (Urban)	**Add Saturday service**: Add 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM service and then adapt service hours based on demand.	Mid	City of Valdosta				
TEX-U-5	Transit Service Expansion (Urban)	**Add Commuter Service:** Add Valdosta Commuter Route to Mody Air Force Base.	Long	City of Valdosta				

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4.3.3 Fundamental Tier

Table 15: Fundamental Tier Recommendations

ID	Sub-Category	Recommendation	Timeframe	Implementing Agency	Total Cost
AD-1	Administrative Tools and Guidance	**Develop a Transit Service Agreement Implementation Strategy:** For SGRC and the City of Valdosta, develop service agreement policies and procedures.	Short	SGRC, City of Valdosta	Staff hours
AD-2	Administrative Tools and Guidance	**Increase SGRC staff time focused on financial planning and grant requests:** Prioritize TFFP, TSPLOST, POS, etc. planning and pursuit.	Short	SGRC	Staff hours
AD-3	Administrative Tools and Guidance	**Create a Business Plan to ensure that POS funding covers the county local match**: Evaluate and monitor Purchase-of-Service (POS) contracts to ensure that local matches are covered. Changes to operations and marketing can increase ridership in lower performing areas.	Short	SGRC	Staff hours
AD-5	Administrative Guidance and Policy Tools	**Transit staff training and retention:** Evaluate driver and staff training/onboarding procedures, pay scales, and benefits to increase employee retention	Short	SGRC, GDOT, City of Valdosta	Staff hours
AD-7	Administrative Tools and Guidance	**Outreach to rural organizations with transit capabilities:** Provide rural organizations with guidance on establishing private transit services for members (churches, senior centers, community centers).	Short	SGRC	Staff hours
AD-8	Administrative Tools and Guidance	**Coordinate the SGRC on-demand and Valdosta On-Demand microtransit service**: Establish procedures for communication between SGRC and Valdosta On-Demand operations to complete traveler itineraries	Short	SGRC, City of Valdosta	Staff hours
AD-10	Administrative Tools and Guidance	**Develop preparedness plan for supporting GEMA/FEMA emergencies:** Establish a plan of action and communication protocols for emergency operations in coordination with GEMA	Short	SGRC, GDOT, GEMA / FEMA	Staff hours
AD-11	Administrative Tools and Guidance	**Study the feasibility of providing WiFi on transit vehicles (both SGRC and Valdosta On-Demand):** Support rider communication, coordination, and access to critical information on a typical and post distaster basis.	Short	SGRC, City of Valdosta	Staff hours
AD-12	Administrative Tools and Guidance	**Develop a notification protocol (e.g., use of transit app or other app) for transit agencies to support customers with basic needs following a natural disaster:** Establish a notificaton system to send messages to transit riders by county or across the region.	Short	SGRC, City of Valdosta	Staff Hours and possibly consultant time to program an app
AD-4	Administrative Tools and Guidance	**Evaluate a driver training program partnership with Wiregrass Technical College:** Leverage area training resources and help address driver shortage.	Mid	SGRC, City of Valdosta, Wiregrass Technical College	Staff hours
AD-6	Administrative Tools and Guidance	**Implement marketing campaign to the region:** Establish a marketing campaign at high use areas (shopping centers, hospitals, doctor's offices, employment centers)	Mid	SGRC, GDOT, City of Valdosta	Staff hours
AD-9	Administrative Tools and Guidance	**Coordinate scheduling for GDOT public transit, DHS, and DCH:** Establish a single access points (phone, web, app) for scheduling SGRC on-demand trips	Mid	SGRC, GDOT, DHS, and DCH	Staff hours

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REGIONAL COMMISSION

4.4 One Year Action Plan – Keep the Momentum!

The Regional Transit Development Plan establishes a strategic framework for advancing the Southern Georgia Region's transit vision and goals. It is important to note that this document serves as a guiding blueprint rather than a mandated implementation plan, and recommendations are not currently funded. Successful execution will require sustained collaboration among key stakeholders, including the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC), and the City of Valdosta. Taking steps to move the following actions forward should be a priority for the responsible parties over the next year. Transit within the Southern Georgia Region has significant momentum, especially with the recent additions of Clinch, Lanier, and Echols counties to the regional system. Let's keep it going!

The One Year Action Plan should include the following tasks:

- **Public Awareness Campaign**: Develop and execute a comprehensive marketing strategy to increase regional awareness of existing demand-response transit services. Start with Clinch, Lanier, and Echols Counties as they are newcomers to the transit system. Note that a regionwide campaign must be rolled out carefully given that there is already unmet transit demand.
- **Financial Sustainability Plan**: Develop a comprehensive Business Plan ensuring alignment between formula grants, supplementary funding sources, Purchase-of-Service contract revenue, and county local-match obligations.
- **Fare Structure Analysis**: Conduct a thorough assessment of current fare structures and mileage thresholds for both the rural and urban systems, with particular emphasis on the three newly incorporated counties. Look at fare discounts and subsidies for certain population groups.

- **Employer Shuttle Pilot:** Develop an employer shuttle system pilot program to increase job access at a large employment center. Create a public-private partnership agreement and run the shuttle service for six months. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses after six-months and use this pilot as a blueprint for other employer shuttles.
- **Performance Monitoring**: Establish systematic track of service denials (instances where trip requests cannot be accommodated due to resource constraints) and trip fulfillment metrics to quantify current capacity limitations and inform future expansion requirements.
- **Communication System Enhancement**: Plan for an automated notification system utilizing phone calls and text messaging to provide riders with real-time updates on their transportation services.
- **Workforce Development**: Initiate discussions with Wiregrass Technical College regarding the potential development of a specialized curriculum for demand-response driver training.
- **Scheduling Integration**: Establish a centralized contact point for coordinated scheduling of GDOT public transit, Department of Human Services (DHS), and Department of Community Health (DCH) transportation services.
- **Emergency Preparedness**: Initiate the development of a Rural Transit Emergency Preparedness Plan in collaboration with Georgia Emergency Management Agency and GDOT.

As implementation progresses, certain initiatives may advance while others may be deprioritized based on evolving circumstances and resource availability. Subsequent iterations of this Regional TDP should therefore incorporate systematic monitoring of these initiatives and document their implementation status.

Exhibits

Exhibit 1: Alternatives Considered but not Advanced to Recommendations

Exhibit 2: U.S. Census LODES Origin-Destination Table

Exhibit 3: Scoring Breakdown by Recommendation Category

Exhibit 1. Alternatives Considered but Not Advanced

Several alternatives were discussed during the planning process but were not advanced to final recommendations. It is important to document these options, as they may warrant reconsideration during the next RTDP update in 2030:

- **Microtransit Service in Douglas and Fitzgerald**: These cities were considered for microtransit service; however, current population levels were deemed too low to support implementation. SGRC should monitor population growth in both municipalities for future feasibility.

- **Shuttle Service to Macon and the Atlanta Region**: While this service was discussed, shuttle routes to Florida and the Brunswick area were identified as higher priorities at this time.

- **Saturday and Sunday Service**: A half-day Saturday service (8:00 AM–1:00 PM) is recommended. Extension of Saturday hours and the potential for Sunday service should be revisited in the future.

- **Coordinated Ride Booking System**: A unified booking system across GDOT, DHS, and DCH was discussed. While GDOT's Let's Ride app is currently in use, broader coordination across all transit providers remains a long-term opportunity.

- **Statewide Transit Coordination**: Aligning services among GDOT, DHS, and DCH was identified as a potential strategy, but it falls outside the scope of this plan.

Exhibit 1

SOUTHERN GEORGIA
REGIONAL COMMISSION

Exhibit 2. U.S. Census Bureau's Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) Home-To-Work Origin/Destination Table

LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES) is a dataset produced by the U.S. Census Bureau's Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) program. LODES provides information about where workers live and work, linking home and workplace locations at the census block level. This allows analysts to examine commuting patterns, employment centers, and workforce characteristics across geographic areas. There are a few noted limitations to the county-level origin-destination data shown below. For multi-establishment employers, jobs may be assigned to headquarters rather than actual work locations, particularly affecting large employers or government agencies. Independent contractors and self-employed individuals are inadequately represented in the dataset. Despite these limitations, LODES remains one of the most comprehensive resources available for understanding spatial relationships between jobs and workers at a detailed geographic level and this could be a valuable resource to SGRC when looking at the possibility of adding employment shuttles in and outside of the region.

Table 1 includes the LODES origin-destination table for the counties within the Southern Georgia Region.

Exhibit 2

Table 1: 2022 SGRC County-Level Origin Destination Data for Home to Work Travel

		Atkinson	Bacon	Ben Hill	Berrien	Brantley	Brooks	Charlton	Clinch	Coffee	Cook	Echols	Irwin	Lanier	Lowndes	Pierce	Tift	Turner	Ware	Other Georgia	Florida
	Atkinson	27%	1%	1%	2%	0%	1%	0%	3%	25%	0%	0%	1%	0%	4%	1%	3%	0%	4%	23%	4%
	Bacon	0%	42%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	9%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	2%	1%	0%	8%	30%	4%
	Ben Hill	1%	0%	43%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	6%	0%	0%	7%	0%	3%	0%	8%	1%	0%	27%	2%
	Berrien	2%	0%	1%	32%	0%	1%	0%	0%	2%	4%	0%	1%	2%	16%	0%	13%	0%	1%	23%	2%
	Brantley	0%	1%	0%	0%	21%	0%	2%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	4%	1%	0%	12%	51%	4%
	Brooks	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	21%	0%	0%	1%	2%	0%	0%	0%	33%	0%	3%	0%	0%	33%	5%
	Charlton	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	28%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	1%	1%	0%	5%	36%	22%
Origins	Clinch	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	49%	3%	0%	0%	0%	1%	10%	1%	1%	0%	5%	20%	4%
	Coffee	3%	2%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	55%	0%	0%	1%	0%	3%	0%	2%	0%	2%	24%	3%
	Cook	0%	0%	1%	4%	0%	1%	0%	0%	2%	30%	0%	0%	0%	20%	0%	11%	0%	1%	27%	2%
	Echols	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	17%	0%	1%	45%	0%	1%	0%	1%	22%	9%
	Irwin	0%	0%	16%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	7%	1%	0%	23%	0%	3%	0%	17%	1%	0%	27%	2%
	Lanier	1%	0%	0%	6%	0%	1%	0%	4%	2%	2%	1%	0%	18%	35%	0%	2%	0%	1%	26%	2%
	Lowndes	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	2%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	64%	0%	2%	0%	0%	23%	4%
	Pierce	0%	2%	0%	0%	2%	0%	1%	1%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	29%	1%	0%	27%	28%	3%
	Tift	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	2%	0%	1%	0%	5%	0%	54%	1%	1%	29%	2%
	Turner	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	1%	0%	1%	0%	3%	0%	22%	26%	0%	38%	2%
	Ware	1%	2%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	2%	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	6%	2%	0%	46%	28%	4%

Destinations

Source: [2022 US Census LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES)](#)

Exhibit 2

SOUTHERN GEORGIA
REGIONAL COMMISSION

Exhibit 3. Scoring Breakdown by Recommendation Category

Table 1: Transit Service Expansion Recommendation Scores

Category	ID	Sub-Category	Recommendation	Meets 1+ of the Top 3 Goals (2 pts)	Meets 1+ of the Other Goals (1 pt)	Identified as an Important Priority by the PST (2 pts)	High Scores from the PAC, Stakeholders, Community (1 pt)	Increases Service Capacity to Address Unmet Demand (1 pt)	Aligns with FTA AoPP Goals (1 pt)	Cumulative Score (Max 8 pts)
Transit Service Expansion	TEX-R-1	Transit Service Expansion (Rural)	**Incorporate Clinch, Echols, and Lanier counties into SGRC's service area:** Dedicate resources for enhanced operational and marketing support within the three counties that most recently joined SGRC Transit.	2	1	2	1	1	1	8
	TEX-R-2	Transit Service Expansion (Rural)	**Expand SGRC Current On-Demand Capacity:** Increase the number of daily operating vehicles/drivers on an annual basis to meet unmet transit demand.	2		2	1	1	1	7
	TEX-R-3	Transit Service Expansion (Rural)	**Add SGRC shuttles to serve major destinations outside of the region:** Add a limited shuttle service to major connections in Brunswick and Jacksonville.	2		2	1	1	1	7
	TEX-R-4	Transit Service Expansion (Rural)	**Add microtransit service to Tifton and Waycross:** Support local travel demand for immediate travel needs.	2	1	2	1	1	1	8
	TEX-R-5	Transit Service Expansion (Rural)	**Shuttles and Circulators:** Utilize transit service for use in downtown areas during peak use times, holiday, festivals, etc.	2	1					3
	TEX-R-6	Transit Service Expansion (Rural)	**Employment Center Specific Shuttles:** Work with employment centers and/or specific employers to establish and operate shuttle to employment centers.	2	1	2	1	1	1	8
	TEX-U-1	Transit Service Expansion (Urban)	**Expand Valdosta On-Demand Capacity:** Increase the number of daily operating vehicles/drivers on an annual basis to meet unmet transit demand.	2		2	1	1	1	7
	TEX-U-2	Transit Service Expansion (Urban)	**Valdosta Fixed Route Service:** Add new fixed route service pending additional service area analysis	2	1	2	1	1	1	8
	TEX-U-3	Transit Service Expansion (Urban)	**Integration with the Valdosta State University Shuttle System:** Integrate the VSU shuttle system with Valdosta On-Demand microtransit.	2	1		1	1	1	6
	TEX-U-4	Transit Service Expansion (Urban)	**Expand Valdosta On-Demand Service Area:** Serve urbanized areas outside of the City of Valdosta with microtransit service.	2	1	2	1	1	1	8
	TEX-U-5	Transit Service Expansion (Urban)	**Add Commuter Service:** Add Valdosta Commuter Route to Moddy Air Force Base.	2		2	1		1	6
	TEX-RU-1	Transit Service Expansion (Rural and Urban)	**Conduct Scoping and/or Planning Feasibility Studies:** Evaluate and plan for major investment options (shuttles, microtransit, and fixed route service).	2	1	2	1	1	1	8

Exhibit 3

SGRC SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION

Table 2: Transit Service Expansion Recommendation Scores

Category	ID	Sub-Category	Recommendation	Meets 1+ of the Top 3 Goals (2 pts)	Meets 1+ of the Other Goals (1 pt)	Identified as an Important Priority by the PST (2 pts)	High Scores from the PAC, Stakeholders, Community (1 pt)	Increases Service Capacity to Address Unmet Demand (1 pt)	Aligns with FTA AoPP Goals (1 pt)	Cumulative Score (Max 8 pts)
Transit Service Enhancement	TSE-R-1	Transit Enhancement (Rural)	**Expand service to include Saturday hours:** Saturdays from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM	2		2	1	1	1	7
	TSE-R-2	Transit Enhancement (Rural)	**Expand service to include Saturday hours:** Saturdays from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM.	2			1	1	1	5
	TSE-R-3	Transit Enhancement (Rural)	**Update the communication technology between rider, driver, and scheduling system:** Improve communication to prevent missed trips and efficient use of rider/driver/vehicle time.	2	1	2	1		1	7
	TSE-R-4	Transit Enhancement (Rural)	**Adapt the fleet of vehicle/fuel types to match trip occupancy and daily travel distance demand:** Adjust new vehicle purchases to align with trip occupancy distributions. Review daily vehicle travel distances to look at cost-efficient fuel-type options.	2	1					3
	TSE-R-5	Transit Enhancement (Rural)	**Implement fare restructuring for long distance travel for certain age groups and trip types:** Identify counties and different demographic populations that may be unduly impacted by fare policies.	2		2	1	1	1	7
	TSE-R-6	Transit Enhancement (Rural)	**Establish mobility hubs in one or more locations in rural areas to assist with long distance trips:** Align with SGRC TOD goals.	2	1	2	1	1	1	8
	TSE-U-1	Transit Enhancement (Urban)	**Extend Weekday Evening Service Hours:** Extend Monday-Friday evening service to midnight (or later) to accommodate shift work hours	2		2	1	1	1	7
	TSE-U-2	Transit Enhancement (Urban)	**Add Saturday service:** Add 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM service and then adapt service hours based on demand	2			1	1	1	5
	TSE-U-3	Transit Enhancement (Urban)	**Minimize the distance for riders to walk to onboarding locations:** Adjust the policy to minimize the distance required to meet a Valdosta On-Demand transit vehicle, particularly in certain weather conditions.	2	1	2	1	1	1	8
	TSE-U-4	Transit Enhancement (Urban)	**Maximize the use of mobility-hubs for centralized pick-up / drop-off locations:** Establish strategic meeting points in activity areas.	2	1	2	1		1	7
	TSE-RU-1	Transit Enhancement (Rural and Urban)	**Conduct Scoping and / or Pilot Studies:** Conduct a scoping and/or pilot studies to plan for and test out the enhancement recommendation before full implementation.	2	1	2	1	1	1	8

Exhibit 3

Table 3: Administrative Tools and Guidance Recommendation Scores

Category	ID	Sub-Category	Recommendation	Meets 1+ of the Top 3 Goals (2 pts)	Meets 1+ of the Other Goals (1 pt)	Identified as an Important Priority by the PST (2 pts)	High Scores from the PAC, Stakeholders, Community (1 pt)	Increases Service Capacity to Address Unmet Demand (1 pt)	Aligns with FTA AoPP Goals (1 pt)	Cumulative Score (Max 8 pts)
Administrative Tools and Guidance	AD-1	Administrative Tools and Guidance	**Develop a Transit Service Agreement Implementation Strategy:** For SGRC and the City of Valdosta, develop service agreement policies and procedures**.**							
	AD-2	Administrative Tools and Guidance	**Increase SGRC staff time focused on financial planning and grant requests:** Prioritize TFFP, TSPLOST, POS, etc. planning and pursuit.							
	AD-3	Administrative Tools and Guidance	**Create a Business Plan to ensure that POS funding covers the county local match**: Evaluate and monitor Purchase-of-Service (POS) contractsto ensure that local matches are covered. Changes to operations and marketing can increase ridership in lower performing areas.							
	AD-4	Administrative Tools and Guidance	**Evaluate a driver training program partnership with Wiregrass Technical College:** Leverage area training resources and help address driver shortage.							
	AD-5	Administrative Guidance and Policy Tools	**Transit staff training and retention:** Evaluate driver and staff training/onboarding procedures, pay scales, and benefits to increase employee retention							
	AD-6	Administrative Tools and Guidance	**Implement marketing campaign to the region:** Establish a marketing campaign at high use areas (shopping centers, hospitals, doctor's offices, employment centers)							
	AD-7	Administrative Tools and Guidance	**Outreach to rural organizations with transit capabilities:** Provide rural organizations with guidance on establishing private transit services for members (churches, senior centers, community centers).							
	AD-8	Administrative Tools and Guidance	**Coordinate the SGRC on-demand and Valdosta On-Demand microtransit service:** Establish procedures for communication between SGRC and Valdosta On-Demand operations to complete traveler itineraries							
	AD-9	Administrative Tools and Guidance	**Coordinate scheduling for GDOT public transit, DHS, and DCH:** Establish a single access points (phone, web, app) for scheduling SGRC on-demand trips							
	AD-10	Administrative Tools and Guidance	**Develop preparedness plan for supporting GEMA/FEMA emergencies:** Establish a plan of action and communication protocols for emergency operations in coordination with GEMA							
	AD-11	Administrative Tools and Guidance	**Study the feasibility of providing WiFi on transit vehicles (both SGRC and Valdosta On-Demand):** Support rider communication, coordination, and access to critical information on a typical and post distaster basis.							
	AD-12	Administrative Tools and Guidance	**Develop a notification protocol (e.g., use of transit app or other app) for transit agencies to support customers with basic needs following a natural disaster:** Establish a notificaton system to send messages to transit riders by county or across the region.							

Exhibit 3

SOUTHERN GEORGIA REGIONAL COMMISSION