

Southern Georgia Regional Transit Development Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Southern Georgia Regional Transit Development Plan (Regional TDP) provides a comprehensive guide for public transit decision-making and investment in the 18-county Southern Georgia Region. The plan focuses on priorities for year one and initiatives for the next five years while visioning out to 2050. Plan implementation, led by for Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC), will rely on strong inter-governmental and partner collaboration.

What's Inside

This Executive Summary highlights the planning process and key components of the plan, including existing conditions, vision, goals, transit needs, and recommendations. The following companion documents comprise the full Regional TDP.

BOOK 1: Existing Conditions Report

BOOK 2: Vision and Goals Statement

BOOK 3: Transit Recommendations Report



Defining Public Transit

The Regional TDP focuses on public transit, which is a transportation service that consists of shared vehicles that are open to all members of the public for any trip purpose. This is in keeping with the public transit definition from the Georgia Statewide Transit Plan.

Vision for Transit

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.



PLANNING CONTEXT & PROCESS

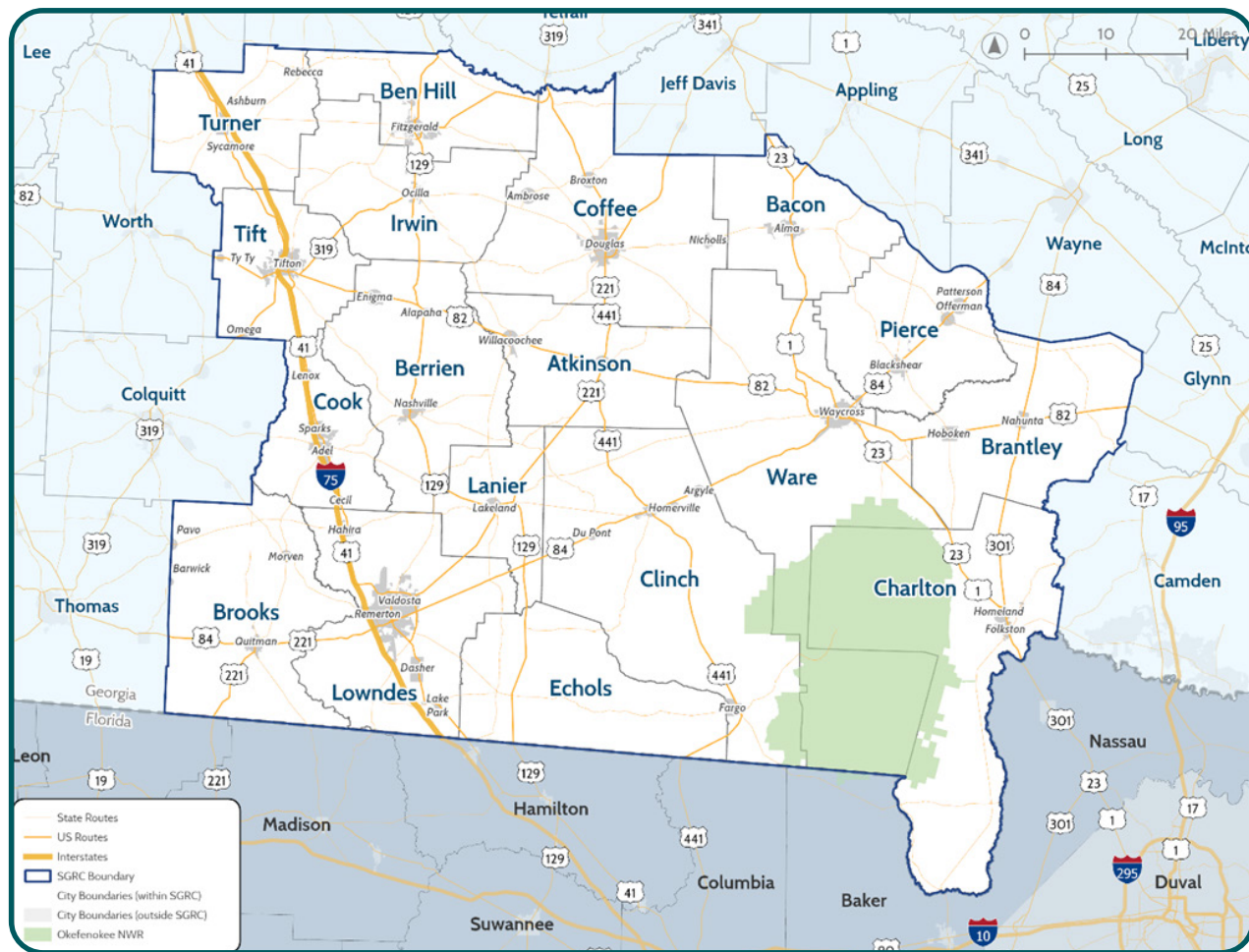
Region Overview

The Southern Georgia Region includes 18 counties in south, central Georgia and abuts the northern border of Florida. While the region mainly consists of rural areas, the City of Valdosta, located in Lowndes County, has a significant population that serves as the largest, urbanized center of the region. Other populous areas include Douglas (Coffee County), Fitzgerald (Ben Hill County), Tifton (Tift County), and Waycross (Ware County). The Decennial U.S. Census recorded the region's 2020 population at 416,874 residents. The Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget projects the region's population will increase by 9 percent to 454,475 residents by 2050.

Current Transit Services

Two public transit agencies operate within the Southern Georgia Region—a rural service (SGRC Transit) and an urban service (Valdosta On-Demand). All 18 counties of the region participate in SGRC Transit's service structure. Valdosta On-Demand provides microtransit service within the city limits of Valdosta.

This Regional TDP was funded by the Federal Transit Administration's Areas of Persistent Poverty Grant. A key focus of this program is improving mobility and access to jobs, healthcare, and educational opportunities.

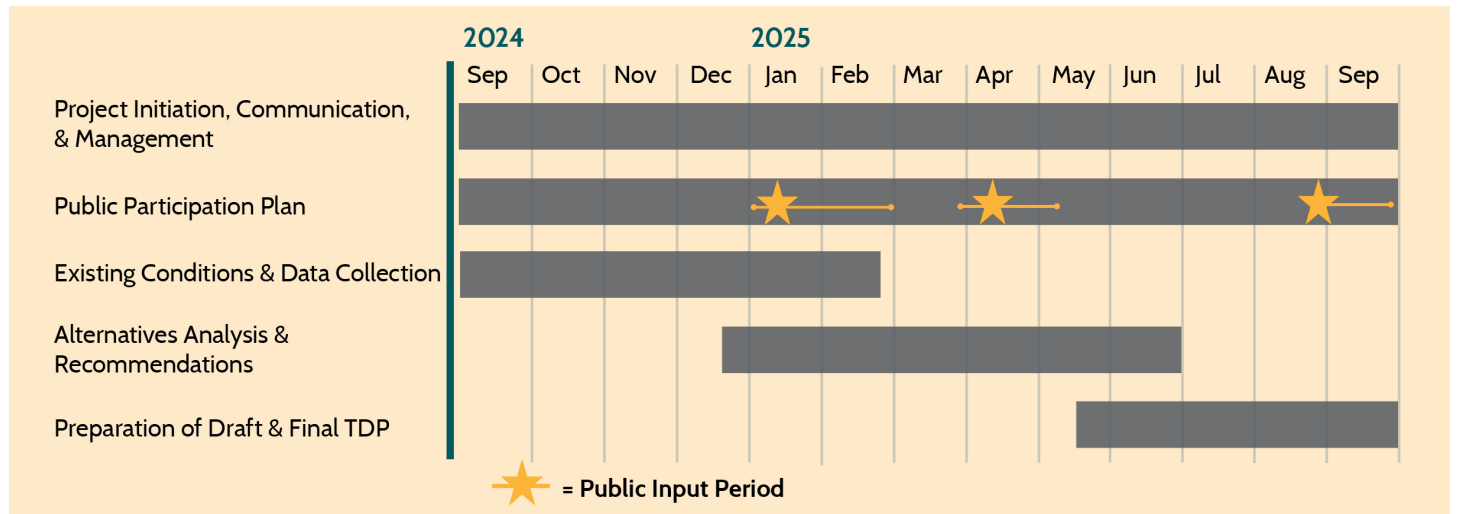


Planning Context

SGRC completed its first Regional TDP in 2019, resulting in regional consolidation of public transit service across 15 of the 18 counties in the region. This consolidated SGRC Transit service began in 2021. That same year, the City of Valdosta initiated its Valdosta On-Demand service. In July 2025, SGRC Transit expanded its operations to provide service in all 18 counties. This Regional TDP assesses opportunities to expand/enhance the region's transit services and builds upon the 2019 Regional TDP by identifying new initiatives and actions to help the region's transit services achieve increased efficiencies and better serve the needs of transit-dependent populations through 2050.

Planning Process

The Regional TDP planning effort spanned a 13-month period. Public and stakeholder engagement occurred throughout 2025 and played an important role in informing the plan's vision, goals, and recommendations. The first public input period coincided with the Existing Conditions phase, and the second input period coincided with the Alternatives Analysis and Recommendations Phase. **Book 2: Vision and Goals Statement** presents the culmination of the public engagement process, as well as summaries of all engagement activities.



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



The Project Study Team, comprised of SGRC, Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), City of Valdosta, RMS Inc., and the consultant team, met monthly to keep the planning process on track. Additionally, the SGRC Council was kept informed of the Regional TDP's progress and had multiple opportunities to weigh in.

EXISTING CONDITIONS HIGHLIGHTS

The first major document of the **Regional TDP, Book 1: Existing Conditions**, explores demographic and employment trends, travel patterns, transportation options, and land use and development for the Southern Georgia Region. It includes a performance review of the region's current transit providers, their funding, and a comparison of the region's transit services to those of peer transit systems. A sample of key trends are highlighted on this page.

Demographics & Socioeconomics

- Over the past 50 years, Brantley County, near the growing Brunswick Urbanized Area, has experienced the **most growth by percentage growth**.
- Lowndes County has experienced the **most growth by total number of people** in the past 50 years.
- The 2050 population projections anticipate that Lanier, Charlton, Pierce, Lowndes, and Berrien counties **will experience the most growth** among the region's counties.
- Turner, Irwin, Brooks, and Clinch counties are each projected to have a **declining population** by at least 10 percent.
- The Georgia Department of Labor forecasts an addition of over **18,000 jobs in the region in the next five years**.
- About **58 percent of the region's population lives in a census tract defined as an Area of Persistent Poverty**.



Transportation Patterns

- Seventy-eight percent of the trips in the region have origins and destinations within the same county, which suggests that **short trips will often meet transit riders' needs**.
- In counties with a higher rate of **inter-county travel (Atkinson, Cook, Echols, Irwin, and Lanier counties)**, the populations likely require access to neighboring counties for services not met in their residential county.
- The most popular inter-regional trip pattern is between **Lowndes County and Hamilton County, Florida**.
- Many daily trips occur between **Tift County and areas west of the region**, including Colquitt and Worth counties. On the eastern side of the region, there is a high rate of trips between **Brantley County and Glynn County**.
- To a lesser degree, **Charlton County and Nassau County, Florida** have a high number of **inter-state trips**.

Transit-Supportive Density and Transit Destinations

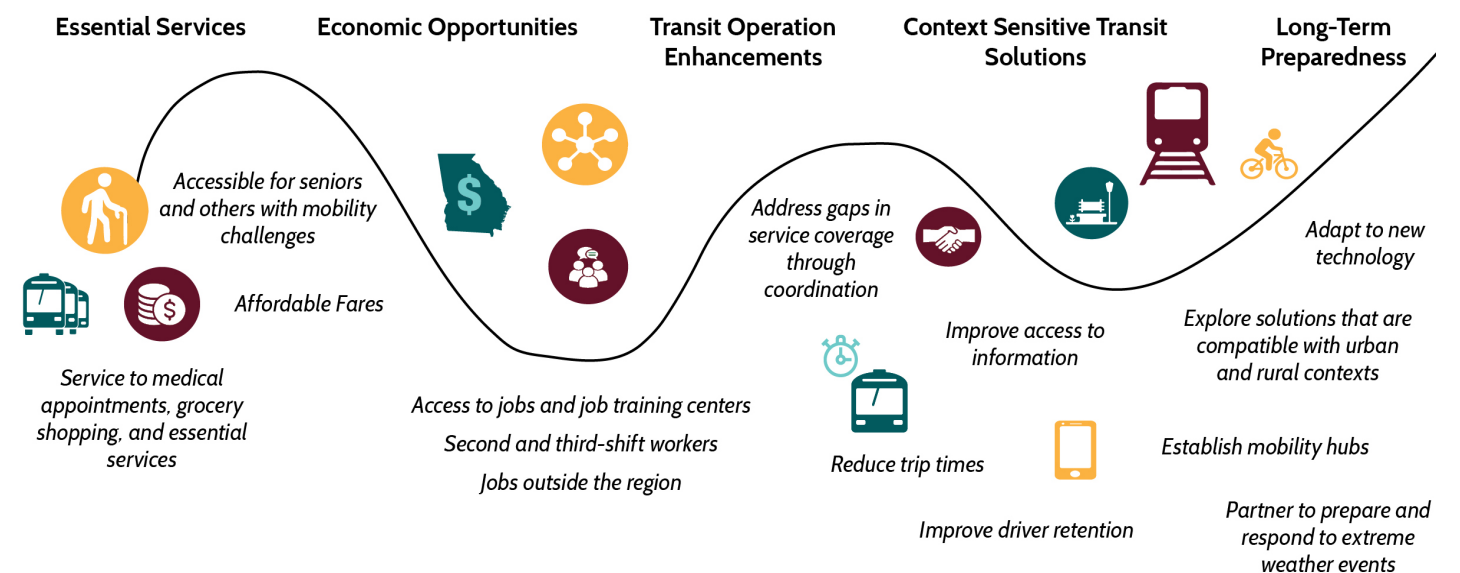
- Lowndes, Tift, and Ware counties have the **densest populations, as well as the greatest concentrations of key destinations** for transit, followed by Ben Hill, Coffee, and Cook counties.
- Valdosta State University is the region's **largest civilian employer, with over 1,500 employees**. VSU students and employees have travel needs that may be served by transit.
- The U.S. Military employs about **4,500 personnel** at Moody Airforce Base, located in northwest Lowndes County.
- Medical facilities are mainly **limited to the larger cities in the region**.

TRANSIT NEEDS

Key findings from the technical needs assessment include the following:

- Current transit services in the Southern Georgia Region, inclusive of SGRC Transit and Valdosta On-Demand, are **unable to meet the full demand for transit in the region now** and in the future without expansion and enhancement of current services.
- The relatively low residential density throughout most of the Southern Georgia Region is **most compatible with demand-response transit service**.
- High transit propensity scores identify areas with concentrated numbers of people that are likely reliant on transit to meet daily needs. The region's **highest transit propensity scores are found in Turner, Brooks, Atkinson, Clinch, and Charlton counties**. Lowndes County has the census tract with the highest transit propensity score.
- The **senior share of the region's total population is anticipated to increase significantly** by 2050. In some counties, the projected growth of the 65 and up cohort is anticipated to be upwards of 20 to 30 percent.
- Valdosta On-Demand provides transit service to the City of Valdosta, but not the full Valdosta-Lowndes County urbanized area.
- The City of 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 viable**.
- The cities of Douglas and Fitzgerald have **fewer areas that 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.

The Regional TDP identified several needs, which are organized under five overarching themes, shown below. These themes incorporate needs identified through community input and the quantitative needs assessment. A full list of needs can be found in **Book 3: Transit Recommendations Report**.



RECOMMENDATIONS & IMPLEMENTATION

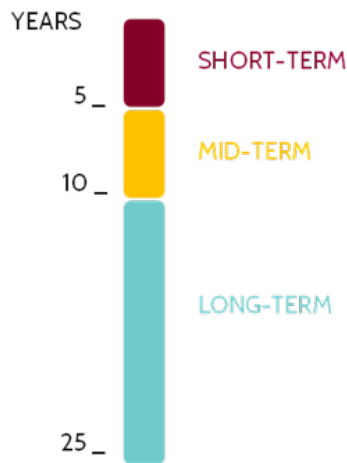
Implementation Strategy Overview

The plan organizes recommendations into three priority impact tiers. Within each tier, the recommendations are organized into short (0-5 years), mid (6-10 years), or long-term (10-25 year) timeframes. The recommendation tables (found in **Book 3: Transit Recommendations Report**) include recommendation ID numbers, strategy category (transit expansion, transit enhancement, or administrative tools and guidance), applicable area category (urban or rural), implementing agency, and cost details.

Recommendations

The Regional TDP recommendations are the result of existing conditions analysis, transit needs and propensity analysis, and community and stakeholder input. The recommendations focus on the following:

- 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; and
- Addressing resiliency and emergency preparedness concerns

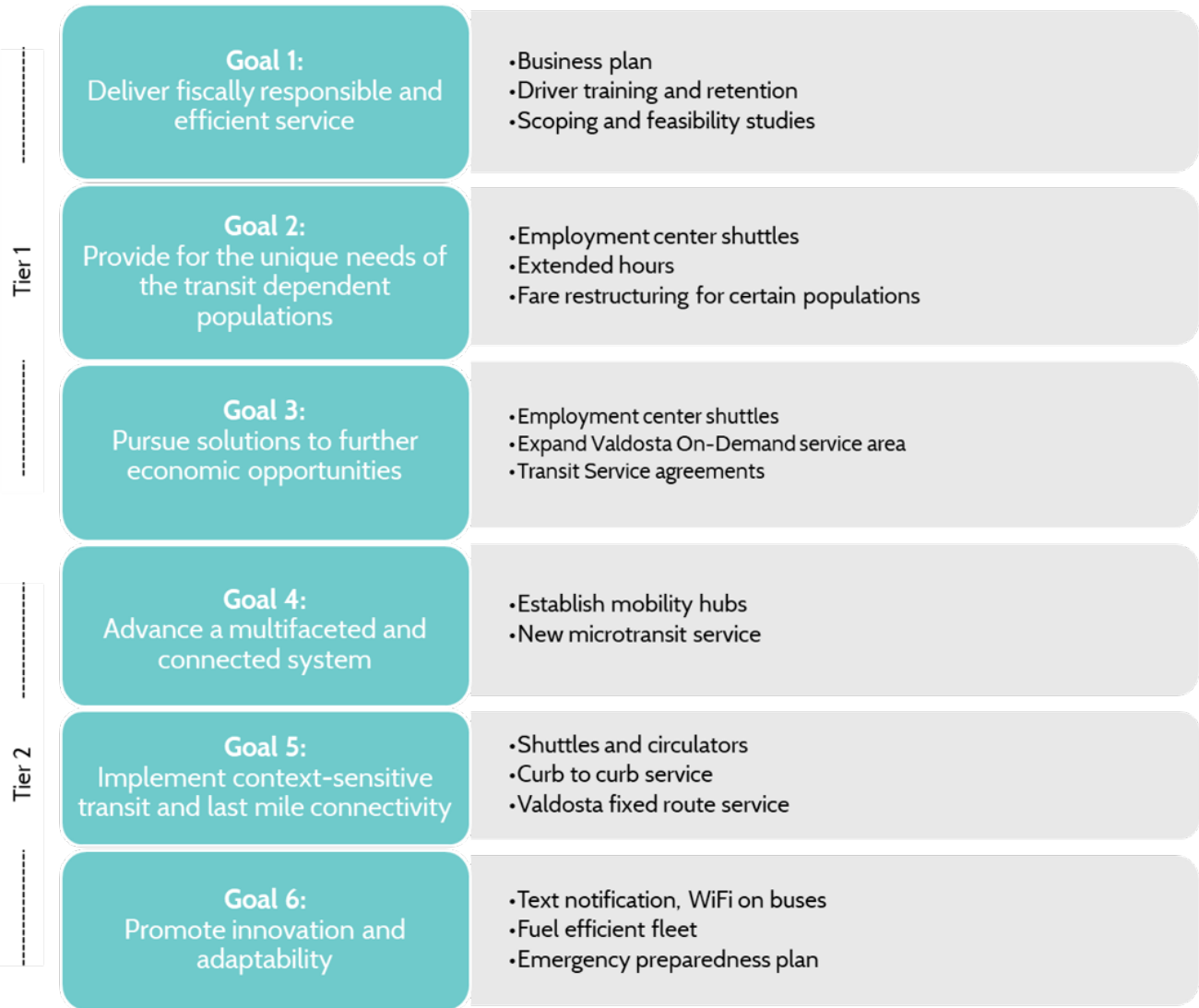


Implementation Tier	Total	Total Recommendations by Timeframe	
High Impact	17	Short	13
		Mid	3
		Long	1
Mid Impact	6	Short	2
		Mid	3
		Long	1
Fundamental	12	Short	9
		Mid	3
		Long	0

This table summarizes the total number of recommendations by timeframe.

- 17 high impact recommendations
 - 6 mid impact recommendations
 - 12 fundamental recommendations.
- The Recommendations Report includes a sub-category denoting if the recommendation applies to the rural transit service, urban transit service, or both.
- 12 rural-specific recommendations
 - 9 urban-specific recommendations
 - 14 recommendations applicable to both areas

Alignment of Regional TDP Goals and Key Recommendations



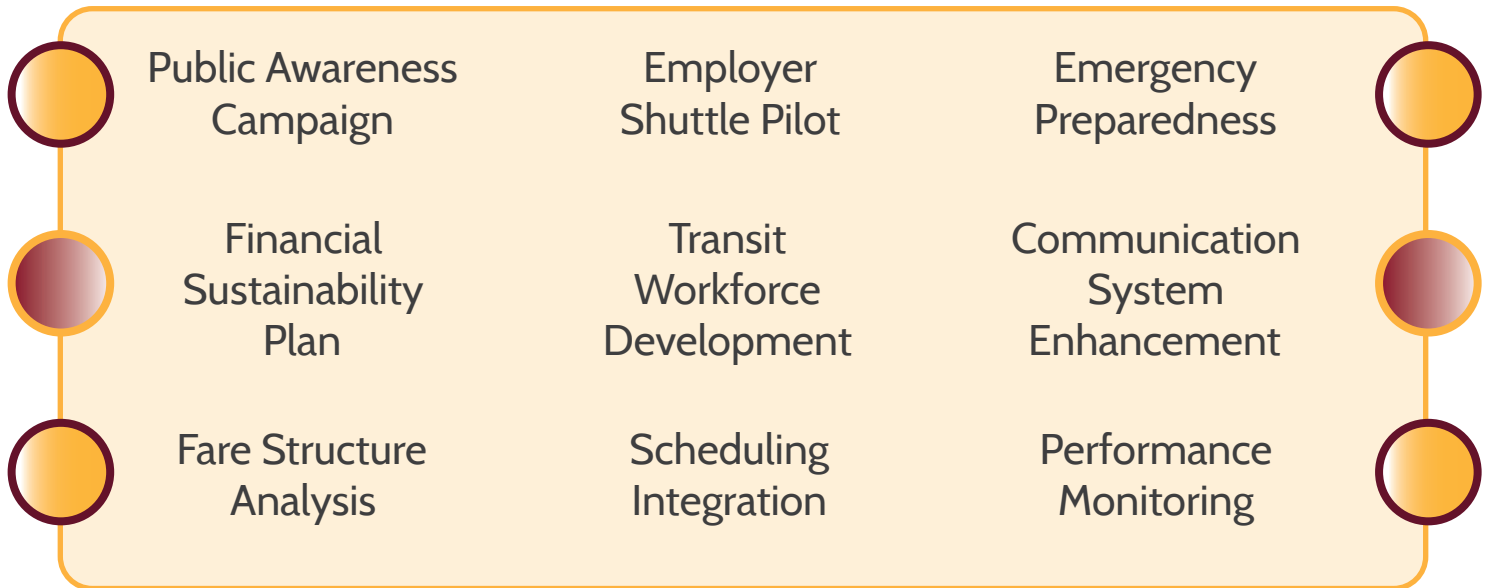
Key Recommendations

Below is a sample of the high impact tier recommendations included in the Regional TDP.

- Ensure that areas of the region with the highest transit needs are adequately serviced (adequate fleet, drivers, regional coordination/staffing, and public awareness in these areas).
- Work with employment centers to establish employer-specific shuttles.
- Explore microtransit service within the Cities of Tifton and Waycross.
- Plan for the strategic placement of mobility hubs to facilitate transfers across transit modes.
- Explore fixed-route transit service within the City of Valdosta.

YEAR 1 PRIORITIES

The Regional TDP serves as a guiding blueprint rather than a mandated implementation plan. 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.



In partnership with

