

# 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.







## 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

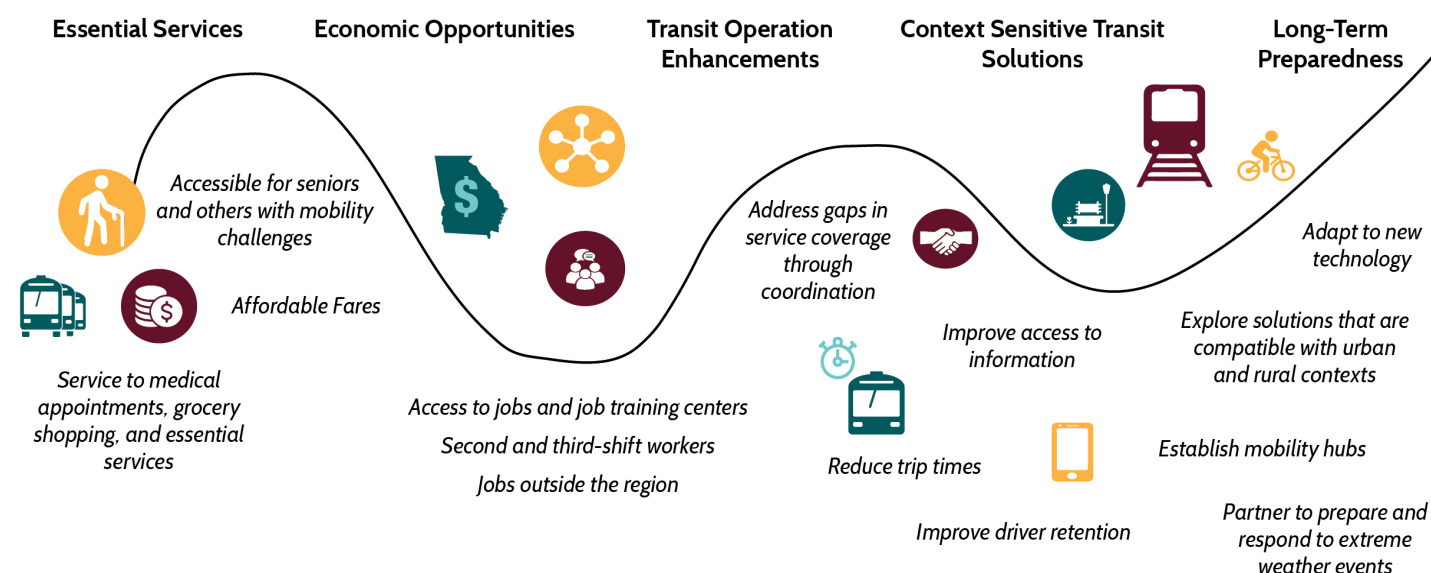
- Lowndes, Tift, and Ware counties have the **densest populations, as well as the greatest concentrations of key destinations** for transit, followed by Ben Hill, Coffee, and Cook counties.
- Valdosta State University is the region's **largest civilian employer, with over 1,500 employees**. VSU students 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

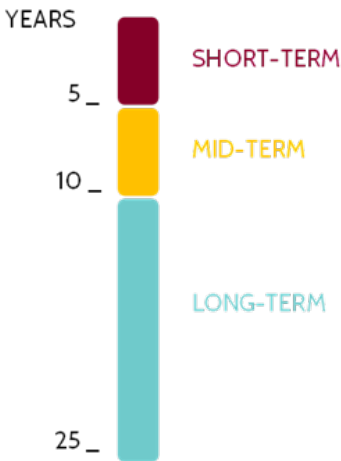
The Regional TDP recommendations are the result of existing conditions analysis, transit needs and propensity analysis, and community and stakeholder input. The recommendations focus on the following:

- 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

High Impact Tier

Mid Impact Tier

Fundamental Tier



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

Tier 1

Goal 1:  
Deliver fiscally responsible and efficient service

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

Tier 1

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

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

Tier 1

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

Tier 2

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

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

Tier 2

Goal 6:  
Promote innovation and adaptability

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

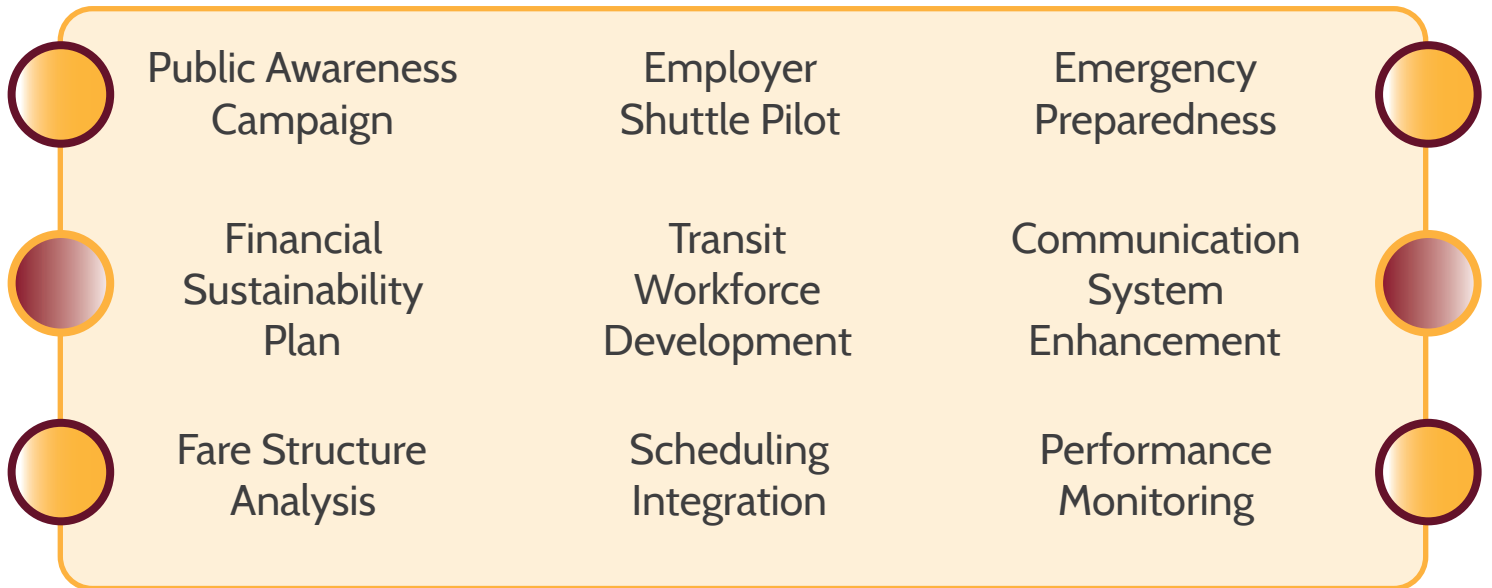
Key Recommendations

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*

