

Georgia 2050 Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan

Vision and Goals Technical Memorandum

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Vision and Goals Revision Log

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List of Acronyms

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
DCH	Georgia Department of Community Health
DHS	Georgia Department of Human Services
DHR	Georgia Department of Human Resources
GDOT	Georgia Department of Transportation
HST	Human Services Transportation
NEMT	Non-Emergency Medical Transportation
RC	Regional Commission
RHST	Rural and Human Services Transportation
SWTRP	Georgia Statewide Transit Plan
TAC	Technical Advisory Committee
TAG	Technical Advisory Group
TCG	Technical Coordinating Group

1.0 What is Rural and Human Services Transportation?

Rural and Human Services Transportation (RHST) is defined as mobility services provided for the benefit of disadvantaged populations, including persons with disabilities, older adults, and persons without a vehicle. RHST includes services provided by public transit operators, human service agencies, private providers, and private nonprofit agencies. RHST includes a broad range of service options designed to meet the varying needs of the transportation disadvantaged depending on their abilities, environment, and the transportation options available within their communities.

The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) is one of the three key state agencies involved in the delivery of RHST in Georgia. GDOT, the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS), and Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH), are each responsible for the administration of major federal RHST funding sources and oversight of transportation service delivery for RHST related programs statewide.

2.0 What RHST efforts have been accomplished in Georgia?

2.1 Previous GDOT RHST Planning

GDOT completed the Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan in 2007. In 2012, the Georgia RHST Plan 2.0 was created as an update to the Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan. The purpose of the RHST Plan 2.0 was to increase coordination among the public and human services transportation providers to achieve improved service delivery for the customers. Furthermore, increased coordination lends itself to improved cost-effectiveness and reduced redundancy in service provision.

2.2 Georgia Statewide Transit Plan

In 2020, GDOT completed the Georgia Statewide Transit Plan (SWTRP) which focuses on transit needs, recommendations, and investment strategies for the State of Georgia, primarily focusing on areas outside of the metropolitan Atlanta area. There were several goals and needs identified for RHST in the SWTRP that can provide a foundation for the Georgia 2050 RHST Plan. These goals and needs are reflected in Section 4.2.

2.3 Regional Commissions of Georgia

Since the last RHST update, Regional Commissions (RC) have endeavored to increase public and human services coordination. The current status of RHST, specifically regional coordination or Mobility Management, is outlined below:

- **Region 1: Northwest Georgia Regional Commission** does not have a Mobility Manager.
- **Region 2: Georgia Mountain Regional Commission** does not have a Mobility Manager.
- **Region 3: Atlanta Regional Commission** does not have a Mobility Manager.
- **Region 4: Three Rivers Regional Commission** has a Mobility Manager that is responsible for statewide RHST coordination efforts. The RC provides coordinated transit service across several counties within the region.
- **Region 5: Northeast Georgia Regional Commission** developed an RHST plan that provided an assessment of the existing available transit services throughout Northeast Georgia and of the region's unmet transit needs.
- **Region 6: Middle Georgia Regional Commission** has a Director of Public Administration who is responsible for statewide RHST coordination efforts.
- **Region 7: Central Savannah River Area Regional Commission** does not have information on the website of their statewide RHST efforts.
- **Region 8: River Valley Regional Commission** has a vacant Mobility Manager position available.
- **Region 9: Heart of Georgia Altamaha** has a contract with the Georgia Department of Human Resources (DHR) for all coordinated transportation services. These services are designed, coordinated, and monitored by the Regional Transportation Office and the Regional Commission.
- **Region 10: Southwest Georgia Regional Commission** has a Transit Coordinator that is responsible for promoting public and human services coordination.
- **Region 11: Southern Georgia Regional Commission** hired a Mobility Manager to continue statewide RHST efforts. In partnership with the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS), the Southern Georgia RC (SGRC) launched a "pilot shuttle" service in October of 2015. This pilot shuttle was a single-vehicle fixed-route service, using FTA Section 5316 Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) and 5317 "New Freedom" funding awarded the RC from DHS. This pilot shuttle operated through December 2016. SGRC recently launched regional RHST service in July 2021. The service is eligible for anyone within the participating 14 counties within the region.
- **Region 12: Coastal Regional Commission** has a Mobility Manager responsible for RHST coordination efforts. Coastal Regional Coaches provide coordinated transit services across all 10 counties in the region.

3.0 RHST Plan 2.0

3.1 Georgia RHST Plan 2.0 Vision and Goals

GDOT initiated the Georgia Human Services Transportation Plan 2.0 in 2010 to build upon concepts identified in the 2009 plan. The vision of the Georgia RHST Plan 2.0 was:

To produce an Enhanced Human Service Transportation Model for the State of Georgia that has and continues to increase coordination among public and human services transportation providers, expand capacity (i.e., more services for consumers), and improve system efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Further, this [plan] helped to inform the legislative requirements of [the 2010] House Bill 277, an evaluation of the existing RHST delivery structure in Georgia.

The goals of the Georgia RHST Plan 2.0 were established early in the study process and included:

- Assessing current coordinated RHST efforts within Georgia
- Identifying ways to inform transportation coordination for persons with special mobility needs
- Learning from best practices and model programs across the country
- Developing and evaluating regional RHST model alternatives
- Identifying pilot projects to test coordination strategies.

3.2 Recommendations from Last Update

There were several recommendations that came out of the RHST Plan 2.0, many of which were implemented. The following graphic outlines the Plan recommendations. All the recommendations were implemented with one still underway as noted with an asterisk (*):

RHST Plan 2.0 Recommendations

- Hire a State Mobility Manager to continue statewide RHST coordination efforts**
- Create and maintain a Technical Coordinating Group (TCG) made up of the three major state agencies (GDOT, DHS, DCH) to advise a statewide Mobility Manager**
- Develop a statewide One-Call Number to access RHST information***
- Run a regional pilot program with regional Mobility Managers in Middle Georgia Regional Commission (RC), River Valley RC, and Three Rivers RC**
- Create regional coordinated system pilot project**

4.0 Georgia Statewide Transit Plan

4.1 Georgia Statewide Transit Plan (SWTRP) Vision and Goals

The following vision statement was created by key stakeholders to guide development of the SWTRP and future transit investments:

“Improve the quality of life and economic opportunities for all Georgians by supporting an innovative, connected, reliable, and accessible multimodal public transportation network.”

Corresponding goals and supporting objectives were also developed based on input from key stakeholders and the SWTRP Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The goals and objectives of the SWTRP are below:

Goal 1: Provide a safe and sustainable public transit network

- Reduce transit-related safety incidents and injuries
- Support the deployment of innovative technologies and infrastructure upgrades that improve safety for transit users
- Ensure security for transit riders and system assets
- Support safety through asset management planning, agency safety planning, and emergency preparedness planning
- Support transit as a method to mitigate traffic congestion and related emissions in urban areas
- Deploy environmentally sustainable transit assets

Goal 2: Optimize public transit programs to best meet public transit systems’ and travelers’ needs

- Partner with public and private entities to further coordinate transit services at the regional and state level
- Facilitate partnerships with employers, schools, providers, and the private sector to expand the reach of transit
- Right-size vehicles and fleets to support efficient use of transit funding
- Support and maintain regional operations and assets to deliver transit efficiently
- Attract and retain a transit workforce equipped with the skills needed for an evolving transportation industry
- Leverage partnerships with local and regional planning agencies to coordinate trends, needs, and plans

Goal 3: Ensure public transit coverage across the state to support mobility and access for all

- Ensure public transit service is available to all of Georgia’s 159 counties by supporting regional and multi-jurisdictional coordination
- Ensure first-and-last mile connectivity through innovative strategies, partnerships, and technologies
- Ensure access to economic opportunity for all Georgians, including underserved and rural communities
- Ensure access to healthcare, human services, and quality of-life trips for all, including elderly and disabled populations
- Support regional and multi-jurisdictional coordination to address unmet needs
- Optimize scheduling and capacity for demand-response systems
- Optimize service hours to meet needs for all

Goal 4: Connect rural transit to regional and urban centers

- Ensure transit can meet travelers’ needs across jurisdictional boundaries
- Develop multimodal assets to facilitate transfers and partnerships among transit providers
- Connect intercity service with local public transit systems

- Increased public education and awareness of available rural transit services
- Enhanced pedestrian, bicycle, and multimodal transit accessibility
- Local transit planning assistance
- Funding and/or training for new software and technology that improves transit operations and rider experiences

Goal 5: Leverage technology and innovation to support public transit ridership and performance

- Provide transit users accurate and real-time service information and updates
- Implement strategies that improve transit performance, reliability, and convenience
- Increase awareness and visibility of public transit services that are available

4.2 Rural Transit Needs Identified in the SWTRP

The needs of rural transit systems were identified through feedback from the Transit Provider Questionnaire, local plans, and SWTRP TAC input. The rural transit needs identified include:

- Establishment of rural transit services in 37 counties currently without local public transit offerings
- Additional, sustainable, and diversified funding opportunities to mitigate currently limited resources and address unmet trip demand
- Transit service needs are regional and multi-jurisdictional
- Partnerships to optimize service to meet rider needs
- Enhanced administrative guidance, training, and technical assistance for rural transit systems

5.0 Georgia 2050 Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan

Because this is the third update to a rural and human services plan since 2007, the plan should be given a unique identifier to differentiate it from previous plans. This plan will be referred to as the Georgia 2050 Rural and Human Services Transportation Plan (Georgia 2050 RHST Plan). The year 2050 refers to the horizon year of the plan, recognizing that the plan should not only address needs for the immediate future but also be forward thinking in how to address needs 25+ years in the future with the tools available today.

The ultimate outcome of the Georgia 2050 RHST Plan is to identify programs and projects that the State of Georgia, through GDOT, DHS, and DCH can financially support and leverage state funding with other funding sources to implement. Further, these projects should be implementable within a reasonable timeline as they will be more competitive for the state funding.

A future outcome of the Georgia 2050 RHST Plan is to increase coordination of services. The plan will identify and develop strategies for better local, regional, and statewide coordination of rural and human services transportation.

The State of Georgia recently passed House Bill 511 which created a Transportation Trust Fund through rideshare fees collected annually. Public and human services transportation are eligible uses of these funds. Further, the State of Georgia from time to time authorizes State Bond Funding for transit across the state and most recently assisted in the purchase of vehicles for several transit systems.

5.1 Vision, Goals and Objectives for the Georgia 2050 RHST Plan

The SWTRP is the guiding transit document for the State of Georgia, and therefore, this plan should align closely with the vision and goals of that plan.

To build upon the vision statement of the SWTRP (*“Improve the quality of life and economic opportunities for all Georgians by supporting an innovative, connected, reliable, and accessible multimodal public transportation network.”*) the following provides a vision statement for the Georgia 2050 RHST Plan:

“Continue and grow statewide rural and human service transportation coordination to improve the quality of life, health, and economic opportunities for Georgians, specifically those in rural areas, those with disabilities, older adults, and persons without vehicles.”

The Georgia 2050 RHST Plan builds upon the five goals established in the SWTRP. Additionally, a new primary goal is introduced to ensure these objectives are focused on rural and human services:

Goal 1: Provide coordinated and efficient rural and human services transportation

- Identify strategies to further building upon regional operations and expand to other regions to deliver transportation efficiently
- Leverage partnerships with local and regional planning agencies to coordinate trends, needs, and plans
- Identify regions ready for coordinated service focusing on areas where rural service is not currently provided
- Remove any duplications of transportation services
- Identify strategies to reduce no-show trips

- Identify strategies to increase ADA compliance
- Develop a plan of coordinated efforts between the agencies to supply back-up transportation

Goal 2: Provide a safe and sustainable RHST network

- Identify transportation-related safety projects focusing on vehicle maintenance, environmentally sustainable vehicle replacement and operator training
- Identify ADA-related safety projects focusing on better accessibilities for persons with disabilities
- Identify innovative technologies that improve safety and sustainability for users
- Identify cybersecurity strategies to protect system assets
- Provide guidance regarding asset management planning, agency safety planning, and emergency preparedness planning
- Develop strategies to prepare for system disruptions such as labor shortages

Goal 3: Optimize RHST programs to best meet RHST systems' and travelers' needs

- Rename the Technical Coordinating Group (TCG) to Technical Advisory Group (TAG) and expand the TAG to include state and regional agencies and appropriate stakeholders to further coordinate transit services at the regional and state level
- Develop an outreach strategy to employers, schools, providers, and the private sector to educate them on RHST services
- Reassess ridership forecasts to right-size vehicles and fleets to support efficient use of funding
- Inventory vehicle fleets to ensure ADA compliance
- Identify strategies to attract and retain a workforce equipped with the skills needed for efficient RHST

- Identify strategies to meet pick-up and delivery performance standards
- Develop a plan to coordinate alternate methods of transportation upon HST or NEMP denials

Goal 4: Ensure RHST coverage across the state to support mobility and access for RHST users

- Identify opportunities for first-and-last mile connectivity such as bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure near transit and mobility on demand focusing on ADA accessibility
- Provide transportation services to all RHST passengers, while being able to manage costs of doing so

Goal 5: Connect rural transportation to regional and urban centers

- Identify strategies for RHST to cross jurisdictional boundaries
- Identify opportunities for regional multimodal transportation centers within regions to facilitate transfers and partnerships among transportation providers

Goal 6: Leverage technology and innovation to support RHST ridership and performance

- Identify technologies that can provide accurate and real-time service information and updates to users
- Develop an outreach strategy to raise awareness and visibility of RHST
- Identify opportunities to utilize mobile applications to allow for mobile reservations
- Identify opportunities to implement micromobility or microtransit
- Expand the GDOT Let's Ride application
- Develop an outreach strategy to raise awareness of rural, HST, and NEMT mobile applications