

Georgia Statewide Transit Plan

Improving Access and Mobility through 2050

Executive Summary

May 2020



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GDOT

Russell McMurray, PE – Commissioner

Meg Pirkle, PE – Chief Engineer

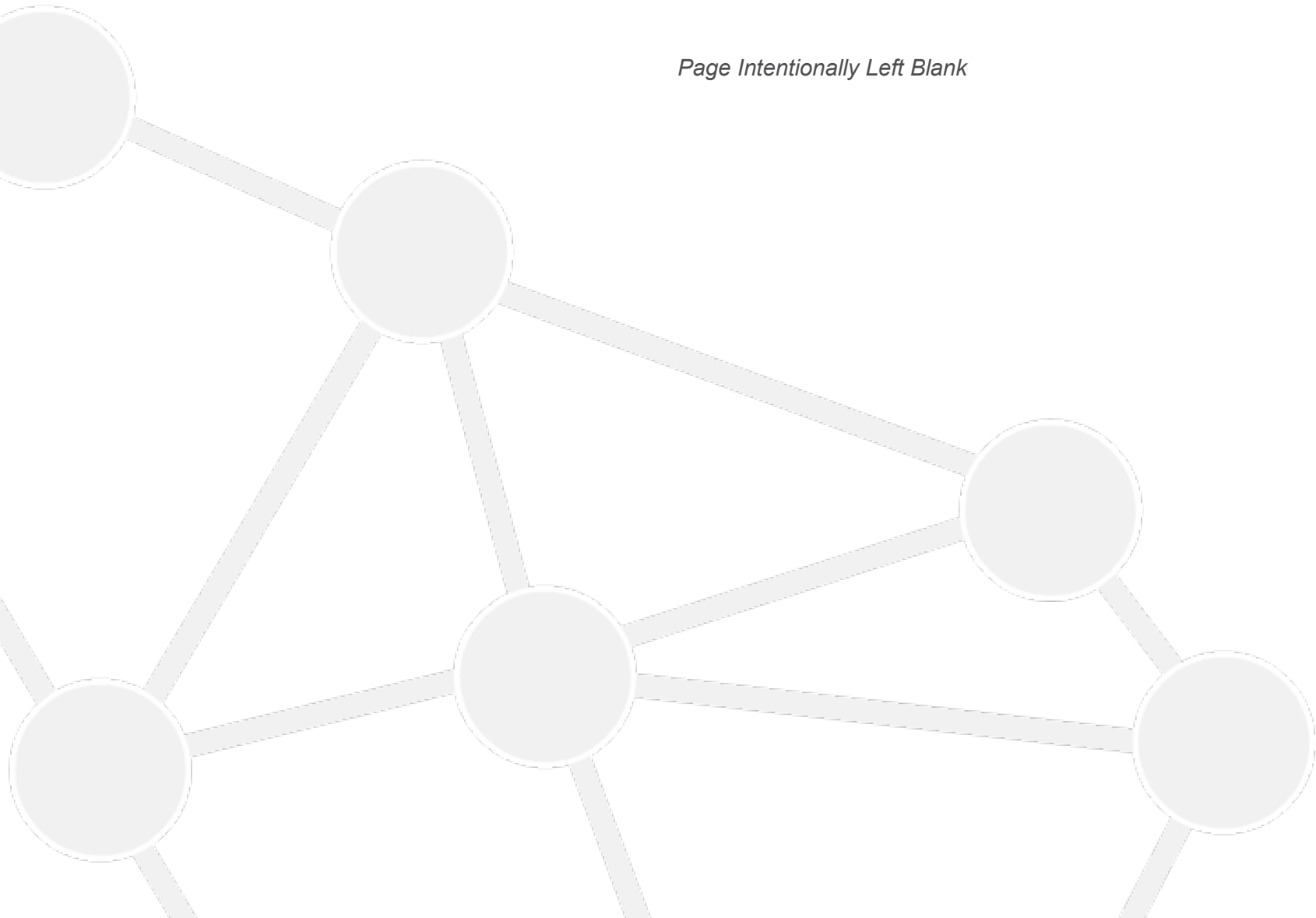
Carol Comer – Director, Intermodal Division

Leigh Ann Trainer – Transit Program Manager, Intermodal Division

Kaycee Mertz, AICP – Project Manager, Statewide Transit Plan

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1.0 Introduction

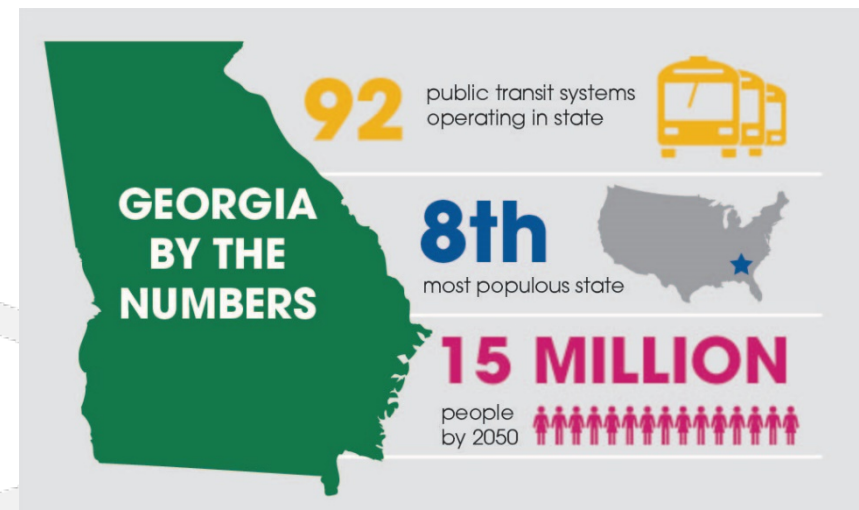
The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) is continuously working to boost Georgia's competitiveness via leadership in transportation, and to deliver a multimodal transportation system focused on innovation, safety, sustainability, and mobility. GDOT's Transit Program partners with local transit providers statewide to offer planning, financial, and educational training support. This Statewide Transit Plan (SWTRP) is a component of GDOT's multimodal approach to providing transportation throughout the State of Georgia.

Georgia's transit systems provide more than 144 million passenger trips throughout the state each year, supporting economic development by connecting Georgians to jobs, healthcare, and educational opportunities.

Transit is not one-size fits all. It comes in many different forms, serving diverse communities and rider needs across Georgia. Ninety-two (92) public transit systems currently operate across the state, providing service in rural and urban communities alike. These systems include rural demand response, vanpools, fixed route and express buses, paratransit, streetcar, ferry boat, and heavy rail transit services.

Together, Georgia's transit systems provide more than 144 million passenger trips throughout the state each year, supporting economic development by connecting Georgians to jobs, healthcare, and educational opportunities.

At over 10.6 million people, the U.S. Census Bureau ranks Georgia as the eighth-most populous state and it continues to grow, both in terms of population and employment. By 2050, the state's population is expected to increase to nearly 15 million people. Transit already plays a key role in supporting the state's economy, providing mobility for all Georgians by connecting them with jobs, education, and other opportunities. In the future, transit will play an increasingly important role in mitigating traffic congestion, supporting economic development, and connecting Georgians to healthcare, shopping, jobs, recreation, and education.



The SWTRP will chart the future direction of transit programs through 2050 and aims to improve access and connectivity, with a particular focus on rural and small urban communities. Georgia's demographic and economic trends highlight the needs and opportunities for improving and expanding transit service in these communities.

2.0 Public Transit in Georgia

Public transit in Georgia typically consist of two types of systems; urban systems that primarily provide fixed-route service, and rural systems that provide curb-to-curb demand-response transit. Demand-response systems are flexible, but typically rely on telephone booking, requiring reservations to be made in advance. Approximately 88.5% of Georgians live within the service area of at least one public transit system.ⁱ

The State of Georgia is currently served by 80 systems providing demand-response rural transit service. Service is available anywhere inside the system's coverage area, and most systems offer service to destinations in other jurisdictions, such as medical and economic centers. A majority of rural counties operate their own public transit systems, though there are five multi-county systems serving a total of 36 counties. Rural systems provided nearly 1.8 million trips for Georgians in 2017.ⁱⁱ

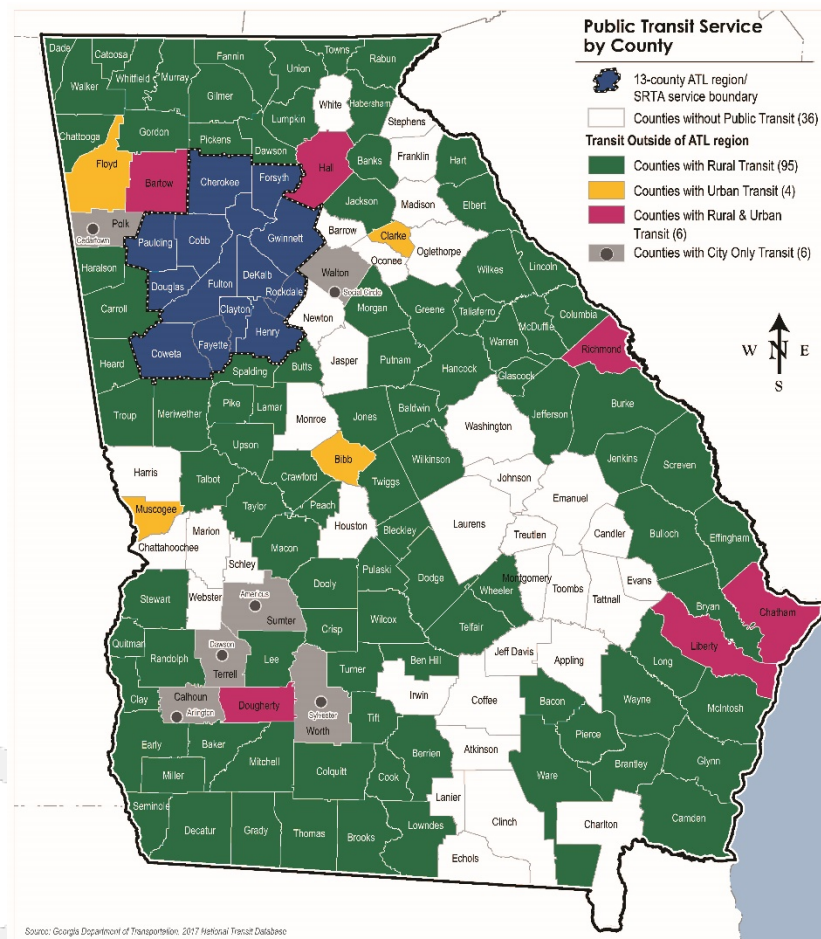
Urban fixed-route systems are fewer in number than the rural systems but provide a greater number of trips. Seventeen urban systems provided 142 million trips in 2017, mostly via local fixed-route bus, but also using heavy rail, express bus, vanpool, paratransit, streetcar, and ferry boats.

Table 1. Public Transit Operating Characteristics, 2017

| | Operating Expenses | Passenger Trips | Cost/ Trip | Number of Vehicles |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|------------|--------------------|
| Rural Transit Providers | \$33,993,539 | 1,797,212 | \$18.91 | 543 |
| Urban Transit Providers | \$677,544,510 | 142,661,187 | \$4.79 | 2,096 |
| Statewide Total | \$711,538,049 | 144,458,399 | \$4.92 | 2,639 |

Source: National Transit Database

Figure 1: Georgia Transit Service by Type



The Atlanta metropolitan area accounts for 91.75% of public transit trips in Georgia. The Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) is the state's largest public transit provider and supplied more than 126 million trips in 2017. The State's next largest provider, Chatham Area Transit, provided 3.9 million trips in the Savannah area.ⁱⁱⁱ

3.0 Plan Development Process

Developing the SWTRP involved the synthesis of numerous sources of data and stakeholder feedback. To help inform the SWTRP project scope, multiple early stakeholder engagement activities were held in late 2018. The project team commenced work in early 2019 to review existing planning documents from around the state and analyze existing conditions.

A Statewide Steering Committee (SSC) and a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) were formed to help set and refine the project vision and goals, shown in **Figure 2** and **Figure 3**. These goals then guided the future public involvement and planning processes.

Figure 2. Statewide Transit Plan Vision

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

.....

The review of existing planning documents provided the foundation of the SWTRP. Over 200 local, regional, and statewide plans were reviewed, with content and common needs or themes extracted to shape the larger SWTRP. Common themes identified are shown in **Figure 4** and include connecting to jobs and healthcare, coordinating regionally for greater connectivity, and improving access and mobility for elderly and unserved populations.

Figure 3. Statewide Transit Plan Goals

Provide a safe and sustainable transit network

Optimize public transit programs to best meet public transit systems' & travelers' needs

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

Connect rural transit to regional and urban centers

Leverage technology and innovation to support public transit ridership & performance

Throughout the summer and fall of 2019, GDOT and the project team conducted additional public and stakeholder outreach, used multiple data sources to identify transit needs and gaps, established a series of twenty performance measures, and developed a suite of recommendations and cost estimates. The vision and goals guided the planning process and influenced the development of recommendations.

Figure 4: Common Needs and Themes Identified in Planning Document Review



4.0 Public & Stakeholder Engagement

To provide GDOT's many constituents an opportunity to participate in the planning process, an extensive Stakeholder and Public Engagement Program was conducted with the goals of educating the public and stakeholders on the process and findings, soliciting input on transit needs and challenges, and creating opportunities for meaningful engagement and feedback.

Figure 5. Public and Stakeholder Engagement Activities



Figure 5 shows the various public and stakeholder engagement activities that informed the SWTRP. The SSC, along with the TAC and its focus groups, were asked about desired outcomes from the SWTRP process. Desired outcomes included:

- Improving coordination across municipalities and counties in both planning and operations;
- Providing enhanced transit planning guidance and encourage regional transit planning;
- Quantifying the transit need in each county and adding capacity to meet that need;
- Creating partnerships and better connections between transit providers and trip generators, such as major employers, medical facilities, and educational institutions;
- Reducing the administrative burden on transit providers by centralizing these tasks regionally;
- Documenting the benefits and range of available transit service statewide;
- Enhancing input of equity groups in the planning process;
- Increasing the availability and reliability of data, data security, and on-time service information; and
- Increasing the availability and diversity of funding sources.

In the summer of 2019, GDOT conducted a public survey, available in four languages, both online and in a paper format. Nearly 3,000 Georgians responded from all regions of the state. Key highlights of the survey responses include:

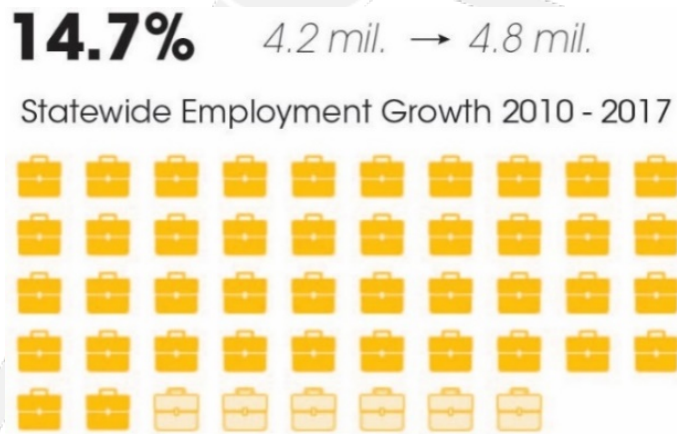
- Statewide, “Ensuring transit is safe” was identified as the most important consideration for transit improvements;
- Outside Metro Atlanta, 42.4% of respondents are interested in using transit and the most important reason to provide transit service was identified as improving access to employment and educational opportunities; and
- Inside Metro Atlanta, reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality was identified as the most important reason to provide transit.

5.0 State Profile

Georgia has grown rapidly in recent years, with the population increasing from 8.2 million in 2000 to a Census-estimated 10.2 million in 2017. While Georgia is growing overall, population trends vary at the local and regional levels. The Governor's Office of Planning and Budget projects these trends to continue, with as many as 14.7 million living in Georgia by 2050. 1.4 million of these people will live in areas not currently served by public transit. Georgia's elderly population (ages 60+) in particular is projected to grow by more than 175% through 2050.

Overall employment is also growing, with employment increasing two percent annually between 2010 and 2017. The Georgia Mountains and metro Atlanta regions, which saw the highest population growth, also experienced the largest increases in employment, with 23.4% and 18.7% respectively.

Figure 6. Employment Growth Since 2010



*Each dot represents 100K employed residents. Solid dots represent employed residents in 2010; hollow dots represent employment growth in 2017.

GDOT's statewide transportation model estimates that 35% of home-to-work trips cross county boundaries, with nine percent crossing into different regions. By 2050, the number of county-to-county home-to-work trips is projected to increase by 25%. As Georgia's population continues to grow, public transit can help meet this growing travel demand, while also expanding economic opportunities, especially in rural communities where transportation options may be more limited.

The most common destinations for rural transit trips in Georgia are senior centers, healthcare appointments, post-secondary educational institutions, and shopping locations.

In comparing current travel trends with projections for 2050, several primary trends emerge:

- Strong correlation between travel demand and location of the top employers;
- Continued growth in travel demand between the metro Atlanta area and adjacent counties;
- Increased demand for travel crossing regional boundaries, particularly among the Coastal Georgia, Heart of Georgia Altamaha, and Southern Georgia regions; and
- Significant growth in travel demand between urban areas and their neighboring counties without public transit, including: Athens-Clarke County, Macon-Bibb County, and Columbus.

6.0 Performance Measures

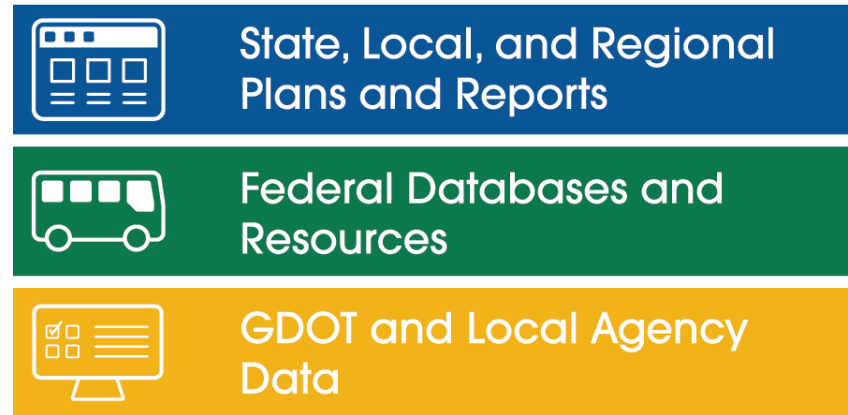
Performance measures are criteria or metrics used to evaluate progress towards achieving goals and objectives in the performance-based planning process.

The GDOT SWTRP process for selecting performance measures began with a thorough review of transit performance measures at the national, state, regional, and local levels. Potential performance measures were selected and adapted from the relevant plan review, and additional performance measures were added to align specifically with the SWTRP goals and objectives created in coordination with public and stakeholder input.

The performance measures established as part of the SWTRP serve as the baseline for future performance assessments to monitor progress toward meeting GDOT's transit vision, goals, and objectives.

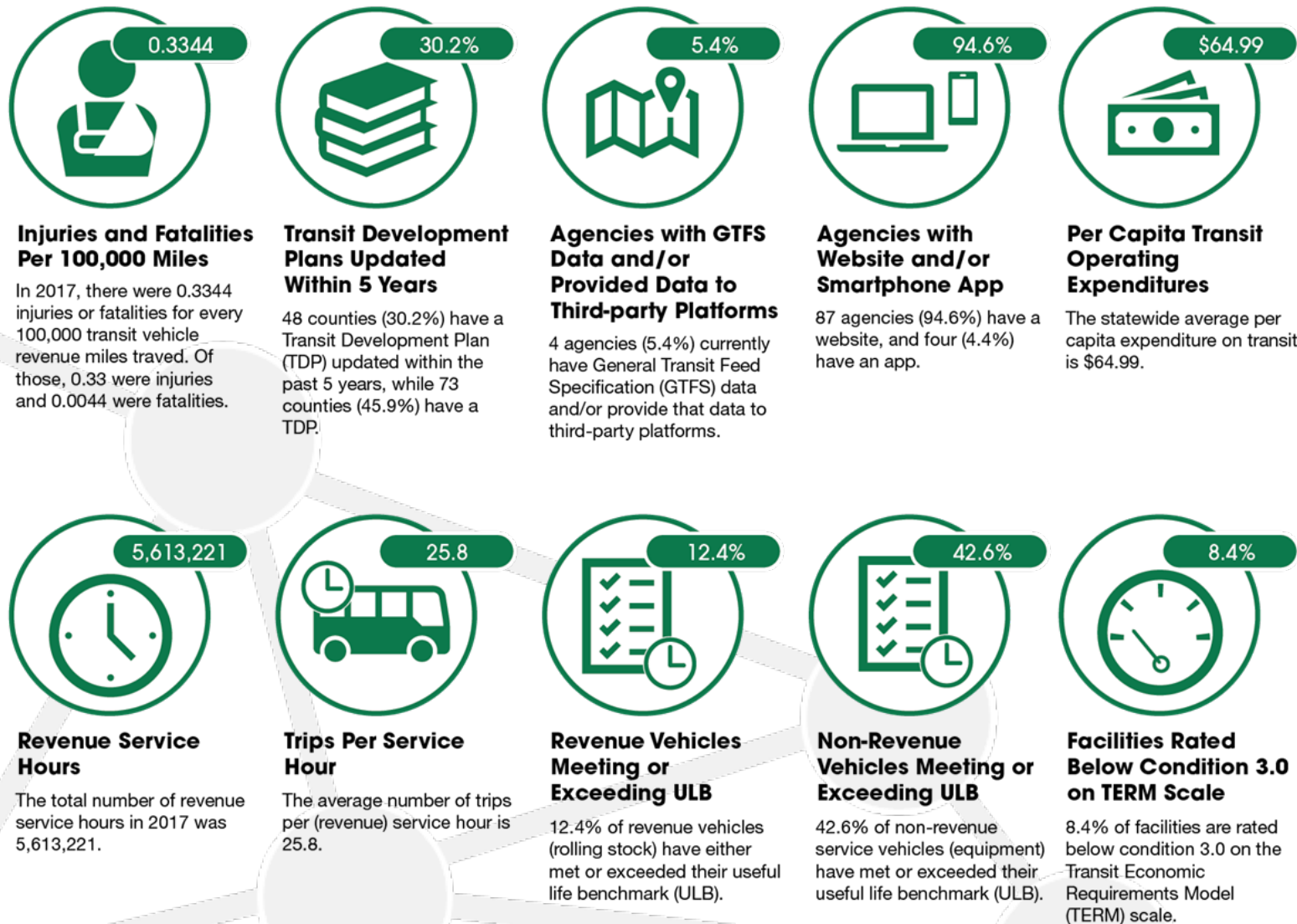
As shown in **Figure 7**, multiple data sources were used in the creation of these performance measures. Sources typically include state, local, and regional plans or reports, Federal databases such as the National Transit Database, or information resources that GDOT or individual transit agencies have compiled, such as Transit Asset Management plans or agency on-time performance reports.

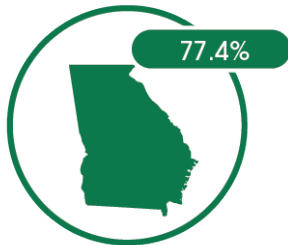
Figure 7. Performance Assessment Data Sources



Using these data sources, the SWTRP established a group of 20 performance measures assessing transit coverage, regional and intercity transportation capacity, emerging technology utilization and more. These performance measures, along with a summary of the most recently available or baseline performance data for each measure, are shown below in **Figure 8**.

Figure 8. SWTRP Performance Measures





Counties Served by Transit

123 of Georgia's 159 counties are served by transit.



Population Served by Transit

88.5% of Georgia's population is served by transit, including 87.1% of the elderly population and 86.4% of the disabled population.



Rural Regional or Multi-County Systems

38 counties (23.9%) and 565,673 (31.5%) trips are served by rural regional or multi-county systems annually. 176 assets (33%) are part of such systems.



DHS Coordinated Systems

78 counties (49.0%) are served by public transit and DHS coordinated systems, which provide 1,376,703 (76.6%) trips.



Rural Providers Crossing County Lines

68 rural transit providers cross service area boundaries.



Number of Multimodal Transit Centers

There are 57 multimodal centers in Georgia.



Park and Ride Lots and Capacity

There is a total capacity of 37,833, parking spaces in 120 park and ride lots in Georgia.



Intercity Stations Served by Local Transit

7 of the 27 (25.9%) intercity bus stops are co-located with local fixed-route bus transit. 17 intercity stations are served by rural demand response transit.



Managed Lane and Dedicated Transit Facility Miles

Georgia's transportation network includes 66.7 miles of managed lanes where transit buses operate, 48 miles of MARTA rail, and one mile of bus only lanes, for a total of 115.7 miles.



No Emission or Renewable Fuel Vehicle Fleet

No transit vehicles are currently no emission or utilize renewable fuel; however several agencies throughout the state have active procurement underway for electric buses.

7.0 Needs and Gaps Assessment

Transit needs can be defined in multiple ways. Needs can be assessed through quantifiable data, as well as input and feedback from transit providers, riders, and other stakeholder entities. For the SWTRP, transit needs were identified through a review of existing plans, a Transit Provider Questionnaire, a Public Survey, stakeholder feedback, quantitative assessments of rural transit needs and commuter transit demand, and geographic assessments overlaying transit propensity data with transit service areas and activity centers.

7.1 Rural Public Transit Needs

Utilizing demographic and population data, two independent methods were used to quantify rural transit trip demand, known as the Mobility Gap Method and the Non-Program Demand Method. Both are research based, and employed by providers across Georgia and nationally. Together they present a range of estimated rural trip needs.

As shown in **Table 2**, the higher range estimated statewide rural transit trip need is 7,635,729 annual trips, based on 2017 population data. Statewide, Georgia's 80 rural transit agencies provided a combined 1,797,212 trips in 2017 in the 112 counties with rural public transit services, resulting in an unmet rural trip need of 5,838,517 trips.

To address the current unmet rural trip needs both in counties with rural transit and counties without local public transit, an initial one-time capital investment of \$24.1 million is needed to expand the existing vehicle fleets by 444 vehicles, as well as \$115.6 million in additional annual operating funds to provide the service.

Sustaining the expanded fleet and meeting estimated trip needs will require sustained annual capital funding of \$10.6 million per year, and \$148.2 million per year in operating funding.

Table 2. Rural Transit Trip Need Estimates - Statewide

| | Existing (2017) | Future (2050) |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Existing Trips Provided | 1,797,212 | N/A |
| Rural Transit Need | | |
| Total Rural Trip Need | 3,341,761 – 7,635,729 | 4,859,827 – 8,613,553 |
| Counties with Rural Transit | 2,639,892 – 6,087,275 | 3,808,283 – 6,844,155 |
| Counties without Transit Service | 701,869 – 1,548,455 | 1,051,544 – 1,769,398 |
| Unmet Rural Trip Need | 1,544,549 – 5,838,517 | N/A |
| Additional Cost to Meet Rural Transit Need | | |
| Additional Vehicles – One-Time Fleet Expansion Purchase | \$12.8 M – \$24.1 M | N/A |
| Additional Operating Need beyond Current Operations | \$36.9 M – \$115.6 M | N/A |
| Total Cost to Meet Rural Transit Need | | |
| Total Annual Need | \$74.1 M – \$158.8 M | \$110.1 M – \$182.7 M |
| Capital Need | \$8.4 M – \$10.6 M | \$14.8 M – \$16.5 M |
| Operating Need | \$65.8 M – \$148.2 M | \$95.2 M – \$166.2 M |

These quantified needs, along with needs identified through feedback from the Transit Provider Questionnaire, local plans, and TAC input, led to the following assessment of Georgia's rural public transportation system:

- Establishment of rural transit services is needed in 37 counties currently without local public transit offerings.
- Transit service needs are regional and multi-jurisdictional.
- Assistance is needed for workforce recruitment and retention, especially in regards to drivers and mechanics.
- Partnerships are needed to optimize service to meet rider needs, including working with major employers and post-secondary educational institutions.
- Rural transit systems will benefit from enhanced training, administrative guidance, and technical assistance.
- Increased public awareness of available rural transit services is needed.
- Transit agencies need assistance in meeting State-of-Good-Repair targets.
- Local transit planning assistance is needed.
- Implementation and training is needed for technology that improves dispatching and scheduling, transit operations, and rider experiences.
- Additional, sustainable, and diversified funding opportunities are needed to mitigate currently limited resources and address unmet trip needs.

7.2 Urban Public Transit Needs

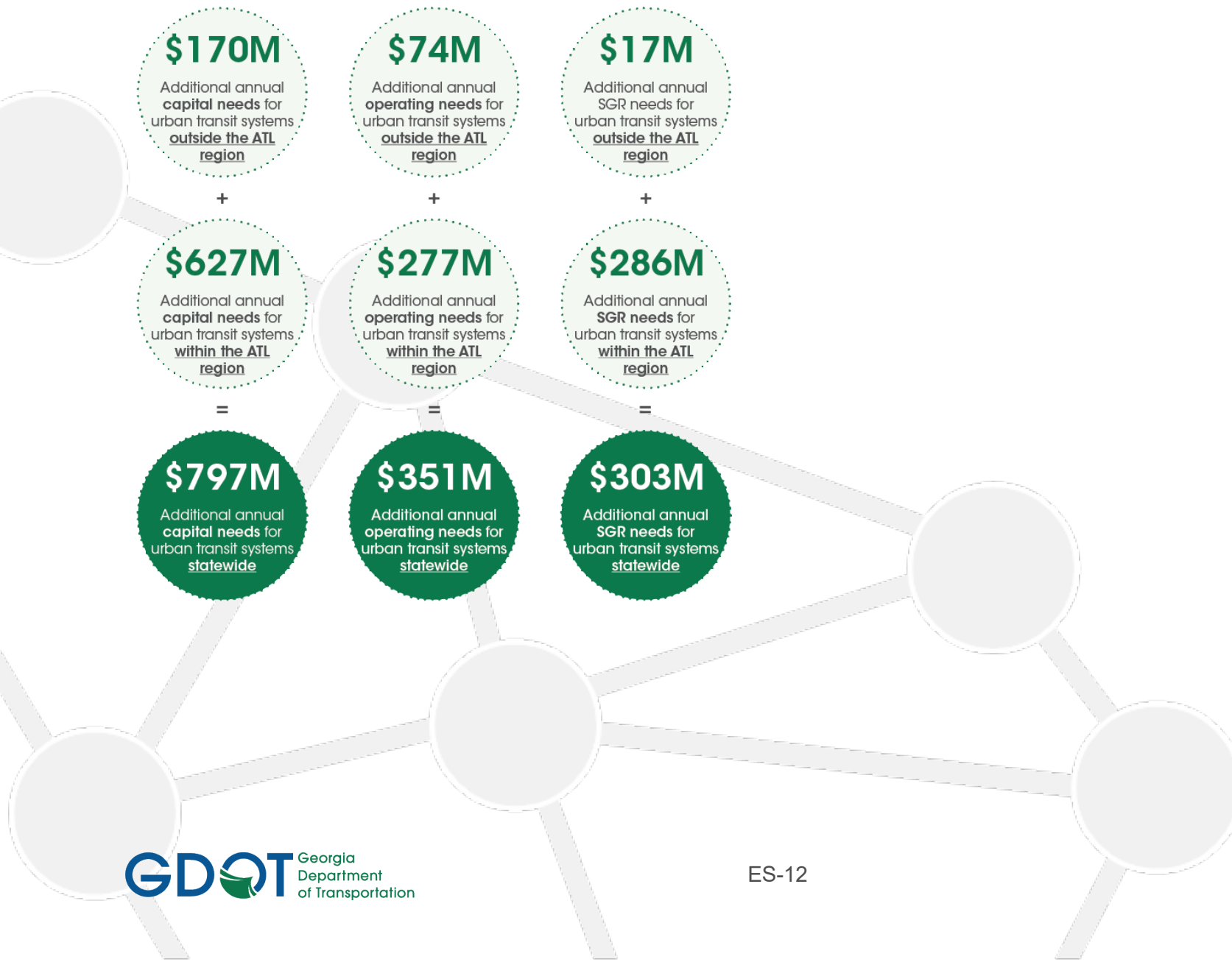
Urban public transit services are provided by 17 agencies in Georgia serving diverse urbanized areas throughout the state. Unlike rural demand response systems, urban transit service is typically provided via fixed-route services, including heavy rail, city buses, and commuter bus service.

Many urban agencies have published TDPs or other planning documents that outline proposed improvements to their respective systems. Review of these plans, along with stakeholder input, and additional analysis revealed the following trends among Georgia's urban transit providers:

- Urban providers are challenged with the need to expand services to new destinations, extend service hours, and improve the capacity or frequency of service in order to meet the travel needs in their communities.
- Regional transit service and strategic connections between systems are needed.
- Implementation of fixed-route service and commuter service is needed in several urbanized areas where urban service has not yet been established.
- There is a need for enhanced outreach and marketing efforts to increase awareness of urban transit services.
- Sustainable and diversified funding opportunities are needed to maintain and improve existing service levels, launch new urban systems, maintain a state of good repair, and retain a qualified transit workforce.
- Enhanced last-mile connectivity is needed, including pedestrian and bicycle accommodations.

The cost to implement all improvements identified in local urban transit plans are summarized in **Figure 9**.

Figure 9. Locally Identified Urban Public Transit Needs in Georgia



8.0 Transit Funding Options

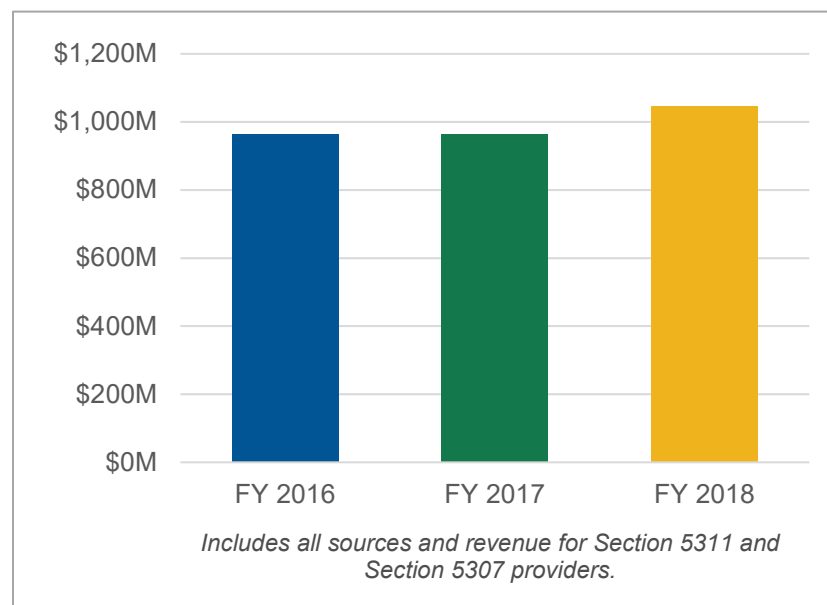
Public transit in Georgia is funded through federal, state, and local sources. Currently, systems use the following sources:

- Federal Transit Administration (FTA) competitive grants;
- FTA formula funds;
- Federal flexible funding formula programs;
- Other federal competitive grants;
- State funds; and
- Local and regional funds and programs, including local and regional sales taxes, fare box revenues, and marketing revenues.

Historically, transit systems in the State of Georgia have primarily relied on federal formula and competitive grants for funding, supplementing this with local contributions, taxes and fees, and fares and advertising sales. Cumulatively, these sources provide approximately \$1.05 billion annually for public transit services across the state, including \$936 million within the ATL region, \$111 million in urban areas outside the ATL region, and \$38.4 million for rural providers.

Transit funding in Georgia increased 8.6% from FY 2016 to FY 2018, as illustrated in **Figure 10**. Current and recent state funding sources for transit in Georgia include general funds and the \$75 million in General Obligation bond funds designated by the Georgia General Assembly for the Go! Transit Capital Program, administered by the State Road and Tollway Authority (SRTA).

Figure 10. Historical Transit Funding Levels in Georgia



Four regions have approved a ten-year, one percent transportation sales tax to fund regional transportation projects. The River Valley, Central Savannah River Area, and Heart of Georgia Altamaha regions have all utilized these Transportation Improvement Act funds to pay for transit projects. GDOT's annual state funding for transit is approximately \$3 million per year and comes from the State's general fund, rather than from a dedicated, transit-specific funding source.

A more detailed list of specific funding sources, including local tax options and Federal grant program, are included in **Figure 11**.

Figure 11. Potential Funding Opportunities for Transit in Georgia

Federal FTA Competitive Grants

- Access and Mobility Partnership Grants
- Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grants
- Capital Investment Grants – 5309
- Commuter Rail Positive Train Control Grants
- Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Program
- Human Trafficking Awareness and Public Safety Initiative
- Integrated Mobility Innovation (IMI)
- Low and No-Emission Component Assessment Program (LoNo-CAP)
- Low or No Emission Vehicle Program – 5339(c)
- Mobility on Demand (MOD) Sandbox Demonstration Program – 5312
- Passenger Ferry Grant Program – Section 5307
- Pilot Program for Expedited Project Delivery – 3005(b)
- Pilot Program for Transit-Oriented Development Planning – Section 20005(b)
- Public Transportation Innovation – 5312
- Public Transportation on Indian Reservations Program; Tribal Transit Program
- Rural Opportunities to Use Transportation for Economic Success (ROUTES)
- Safety Research and Demonstration (SRD) Program
- Transit Cooperative Research Program – 5312(i)
- Zero Emission Research Opportunity (ZERO)

Other Federal Competitive Grants

- Advanced Transportation and Congestion Management Technologies Deployment (ATCMTD) (FHWA)
- Accelerated Innovation Deployment (AID) Demonstration (FHWA)
- Automated Driving Systems (ADS) Grant (FHWA)
- Senior Corps RSVP Grants (Corp. for National & Community Service)

Potential Transit Funding Sources for Rural and/or Urban Systems



State

- General Fund
- Bonds (e.g., 2015 Go! Transit Capital Program)
- Hotel Fee (2015 TFA)
- Heavy Vehicle Fee (2015 TFA)

Federal FTA Formula Funds

- Appalachian Development Public Transportation Assistance Program (ADPTA)
- Enhanced Mobility of Seniors & Individuals with Disabilities – Section 5310;
- Formula Grants for Rural Areas – 5311
- Grants for Buses and Bus Facilities Formula Program – 5339(a);
- Human Resources & Training – 5314 (b);
- **Metropolitan & Statewide Planning and Non-Metropolitan Transportation Planning – 5303, 5304, 5305;**
- Public Transportation Emergency Relief Program – 5324;
- **Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP) – 5311(b)(3);**
- State of Good Repair Grants – 5337;
- Technical Assistance & Standards Development – 5314(a);
- Tribal Transit Formula Grants – 5311(c)(2)(B);
- **Urbanized Area Formula Grants – 5307**

Federal FHWA Formula Funds

- Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)
- National Highway Performance Program – 23 USC 119

Federal Flexible Funding Formula Programs

- Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program – 23 USC 149;
- Surface Transportation Block Grant Program – 23 USC 133
- Transportation Alternatives Program
- Transportation, Community, and System Preservation
- Toll or Transportation Development Credits

Local

- Sales Tax (e.g., TSPLOST)
- Gas Tax
- General Funds
- CIDs
- Hotel-Motel Excise Tax
- Private/Community Partnerships (ex. Hospitals, Farmers Markets)

9.0 Recommendations

The SWTRP presents a total of 35 recommendations in three overarching categories:

- Administrative Tools and Guidance,
- Transit Service Expansion, and
- Transit Service Enhancement.

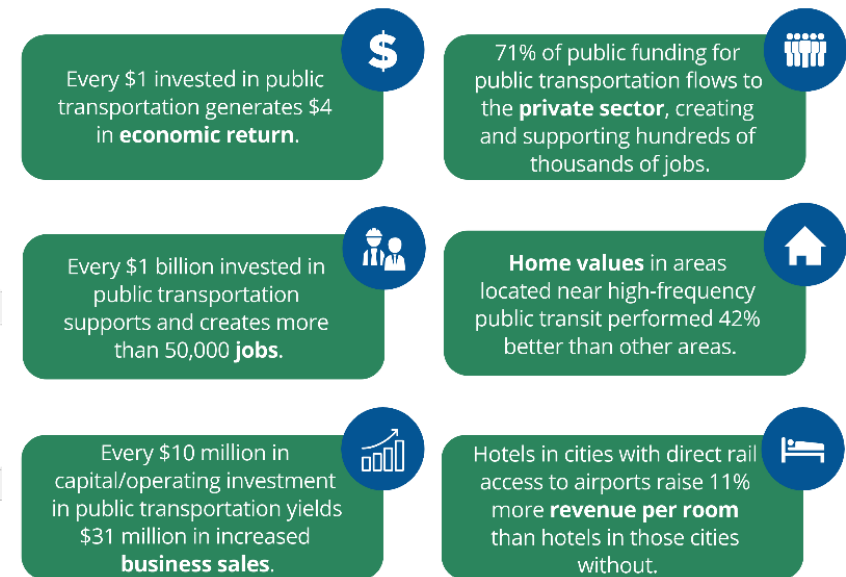
Common themes for improving transit span multiple overlapping categories and recommendations, including:

- The need for regionalization in planning and service delivery to enhance connections and efficiencies;
- The opportunity for coordination and mobility management to improve collaboration between public transit, human services transportation, healthcare providers, employers, and educational institutions;
- The importance of service efficiency in improving transit service and protecting our transit investment;
- The need for greater capacity to serve unmet trip demand, especially in rural areas, so Georgians can reach their destinations in a timely and convenient manner;
- The necessity of expanded service in the 37 counties and six cities currently lacking local public transit;
- The importance of maintaining State-of-Good-Repair to the safe and efficient operation of existing assets; and
- The growing significance of transit technologies and innovation in daily operations.

Implementation of these recommendations will achieve the SWTRP vision statement, to “improve quality of life and economic opportunities for all Georgians by supporting an innovative, connected, reliable, and accessible multimodal public transportation network.” Reaching these goals will require substantial public investment, but the collective economic benefits will far exceed any implementation costs.

The American Public Transit Association (APTA) calculates that every \$1 million invested in public transit generates \$4 million in economic return, including 50 jobs and \$3.1 million in increased local business sales.^{iv} APTA’s findings are summarized in **Figure 12**.

Figure 12. Return on Investment in Transit



9.1 Administrative Tools and Guidance Recommendations

Administrative Tools and Guidance recommendations are those that assist in planning, policies, marketing, employee training and retention, funding, data analysis, and providing guidance and assistance for specific transit technology integration such as General Transit Feed Specifications (GTFS) and on-board units for signal priority.

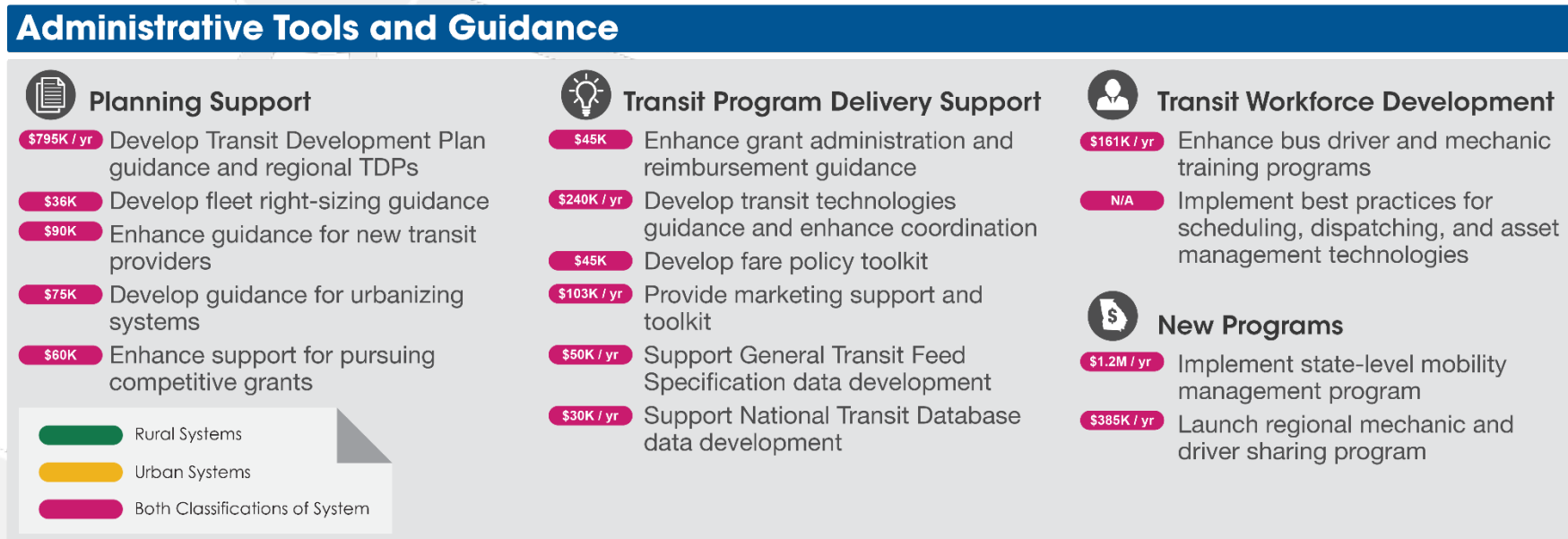
These 15 recommendations have a total annual cost of \$3.3 million, collectively accounting for under one percent of the total annual investment needed across all three recommendation categories. This low cost results in easier implementation, making each of these recommendations attainable in the short-term, providing immediate benefit to transit operators and the communities they serve.

It is anticipated that Administrative Tools and Guidance would be made available to all transit agencies across the state but would primarily be utilized by GDOT to assist counties with rural transit, small urbanized areas, and counties without public transit. Other agencies such as existing providers, regional commissions, and MPOs could assist in administering these recommendations, particularly for counties not currently served by public transit.

As shown in **Figure 13**, these 15 recommendations are categorized into the following four subsets:

- Planning Support;
- Program Delivery Support;
- Transit Workforce Development; and
- New Programs.

Figure 13. Administrative Tools and Guidance Recommendations



9.2 Transit Service Expansion Recommendations

Transit Service Expansion recommendations increase transit coverage through the implementation of new routes or services. These include adding additional routes, coordination between adjacent service, formation of regional systems, additional vehicles, expanded hours of service, and higher service frequencies. The expansion recommendations were developed through extensive stakeholder engagement, as well as a review of locally developed plans.

The cost to fully implement all of the nine recommendations identified is estimated at \$1.2 billion annually, including \$415.5 million outside the Atlanta metropolitan area. Rural transit expansions account for \$172.7 million of the statewide cost estimate.

In response to the SWTRP Provider Questionnaire, Georgia's transit providers indicated their expansion needs in order of priority as:

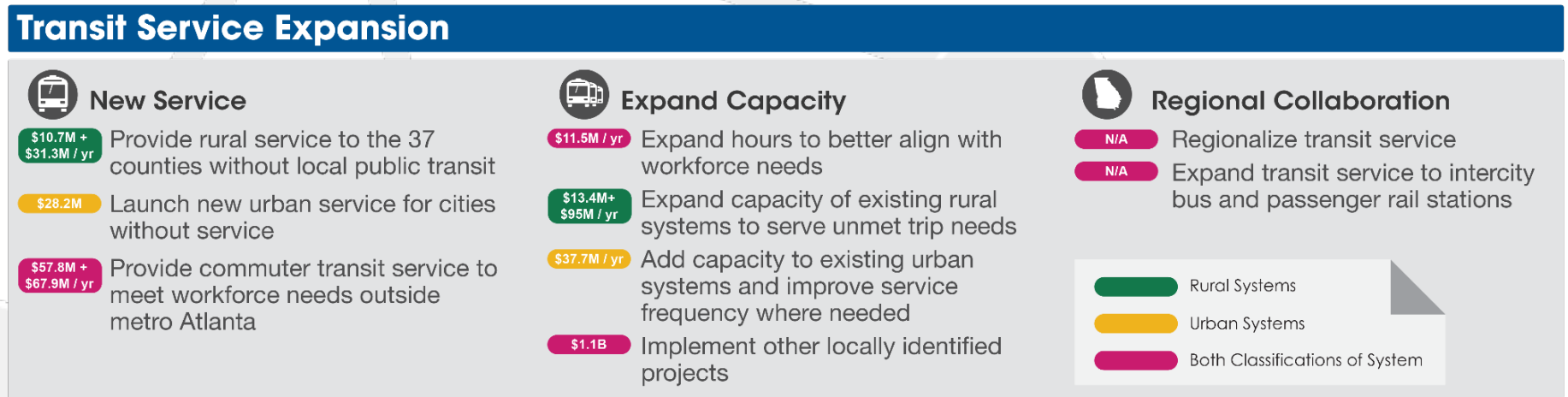
- Extended hours of service;
- Expanded geographic coverage; and
- Increased capacity.

Service expansion opportunities are listed alongside their estimated annual cost to implement in **Figure 14**.

Using metrics from APTA, the expected statewide economic impacts of investing \$1.2 billion in transit service expansion include \$4.7 billion in economic return, 58,934 jobs, and \$3.7 billion in increased business sales.

The proposed \$415.5 million investment outside of the Atlanta area and in the rural parts of the state would result in an expected impact of \$1.7 billion in economic returns, including the creation of 20,774 new jobs while generating \$1.3 billion in increased business sales.

Figure 14. Transit Expansion Recommendations



9.3 Transit Service Enhancement Recommendations

Transit service enhancements improve the rider experience by enhancing transit system safety, ease-of-use, efficiency and reliability, SGR, pedestrian and bicycle connections, and other improvements that are not explicitly expanding transit service. Recommendations providing these enhancements are detailed in **Figure 15**.

Many of these recommendations leverage emerging technologies, including real-time vehicle location, traffic signal connectivity, online trip planning, and mobile payment technologies. These improvements may share infrastructure and be mutually beneficial to other local and GDOT projects, such as connected-vehicle or smart corridor initiatives.

The Service Enhancement recommendations were developed through extensive stakeholder engagement, as well as a review of locally developed plans. The overall cost to fully implement the eleven Service Enhancement Recommendations is approximately \$515.5 million per year, including \$89.4 million outside the ATL region. Rural transit enhancements account for \$23.9 million of the statewide cost estimate.

Using metrics from APTA, the expected statewide economic impacts of fully implementing all Service Enhancement Recommendations include \$2.1 billion in economic return, 25,773 jobs, and \$1.6 billion in increased business sales. The expected return on investment for the \$89.4 million invested outside the ATL region would yield \$358 million in economic return, including 4,461 new jobs and \$227 million in increased business sales.

Figure 15. Transit Service Enhancement Recommendations



9.4 Recommendations Implementation

Currently, public transit systems in Georgia utilize a total of \$1.05 billion in annual funding, including \$936 million within the ATL region and \$111 million outside the ATL region. Rural providers combined utilize \$38.4 million. The breakdown of statewide funding by source is shown in **Table 3**. This funding supports transit service in 123 counties, providing nearly 145 million trips annually. It is estimated that the existing or baseline investment in transit services supports \$4.3 billion in economic returns, over 53,000 jobs, and \$3.3 billion in business sales annually.

Table 3: FY 2018 Funding of Public Transit in Georgia

| Funding Source | FY 2018 |
|--|-----------------------|
| Federal | \$180 million |
| State | \$27 million |
| Local | \$113 million |
| Taxes and Fees by Transit Agencies | \$505 million |
| Fares and Other Directly Generated Revenue | \$223 million |
| Total | \$1.05 billion |

If funding is held steady, inflation and related rising costs will decrease the value of current funding levels, eroding the ability of transit agencies to maintain their existing level of service.

The recommendations presented in this plan represent a variety of opportunities and strategies to enhance and expand Georgia's existing transit services, improving the quality of life and economic opportunities for all Georgians. Full implementation of all SWTRP recommendations will take time and a significant investment. Though many are lower cost, will have a high impact with regard to service improvements and needs address, and are actionable within the next five years.

Specifically, 10 are identified for near term implementation, including: a state Mobility Management Program, development of regional TDPs, GTFS data support, expanded hours to align with workforce needs, rural and urban service expansion to areas without service (beginning where local planning and support exist), expanded capacity for rural systems, implementing AVLs and APCs, developing a statewide trip planning app and website, and enhancing transit stops while ensuring ADA compliance.

These complementary recommendations will support expanded transit coverage, regional coordination, and transit technology deployment. Implementation of these near-term recommendations are scalable and can use a phased approach. Initial annual implementation costs are estimated at \$28.3 million annually, scaling up to \$171.6 million annually as new transit services are launched for statewide coverage and rural transit capacity is expanded to fully meet demand. The result will be significantly improved transit performance across Georgia, better meeting statewide needs.

"The total cost to maintain existing services and implement all recommendations is \$2.8B annually, or \$1.7B beyond current annual funding levels."

Implementation of all 35 recommendations will require that additional funding be generated for transit initiatives across the state. As shown in **Table 4**, the costs to implement recommendations include \$3.3 million for Administrative Tools and Guidance, \$515 million for Service Enhancements, \$172.7 million in Rural Expansion, and \$1 billion in Urban Expansion.

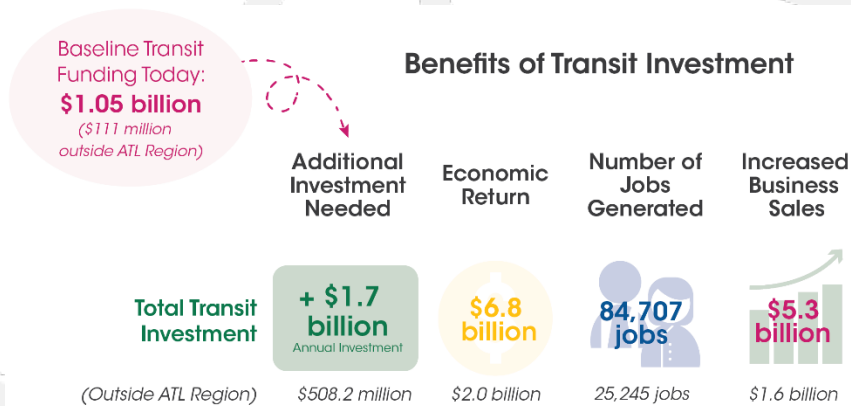
Table 4: Annual Cost to Implement Recommendations - Statewide

| Recommendation Category | Annual Cost to Implement |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Administrative Tools & Guidance | \$3.3M |
| Service Expansion - Rural | \$172.7M |
| Service Expansion - Urban | \$1B |
| Service Enhancement - Rural | \$23.9M |
| Service Enhancement - Urban | \$491.6M |
| Total | \$1.7B |

The direct economic benefits associated with this level of investment is estimated to include \$6.8 billion more in economic return, creating or supporting 84,707 jobs and \$5.3 billion in increased business sales.

The direct economic benefits anticipated from implementation are shown in **Figure 16** and include more than 25,000 jobs and \$2.0 billion in economic returns outside the Atlanta region.

Figure 16. Return on Investment - Full Recommendation Implementation



Full implementation of the recommendations will ensure that all 159 counties are served by transit, which is a significant increase from the 123 counties and 88% of the population served today.

The rural geographic service expansions paired with increased capacity to existing rural systems will ensure that the 5.8 million rural trips currently going unmet will be delivered. Similarly, adding capacity and increasing service frequency for urban systems will make transit a more viable transportation option for potential riders. Adding capacity with electric buses will lower emissions and operating costs while improving sustainability.

Additional multimodal facilities and coordination among providers will improve transit accessibility and make it easier for users to transfer between routes, systems, and intercity providers. The implementation of innovative transit technologies and the expansion of managed lanes will improve the efficiency and reliability of transit services and help to alleviate congestion.

The development and implementation of regional TDPs will result in enhanced regional coordination and can be a first step in developing regional service. Consolidation of single-county providers by regional providers can expand coverage, increase mobility options, and improve operating efficiencies.

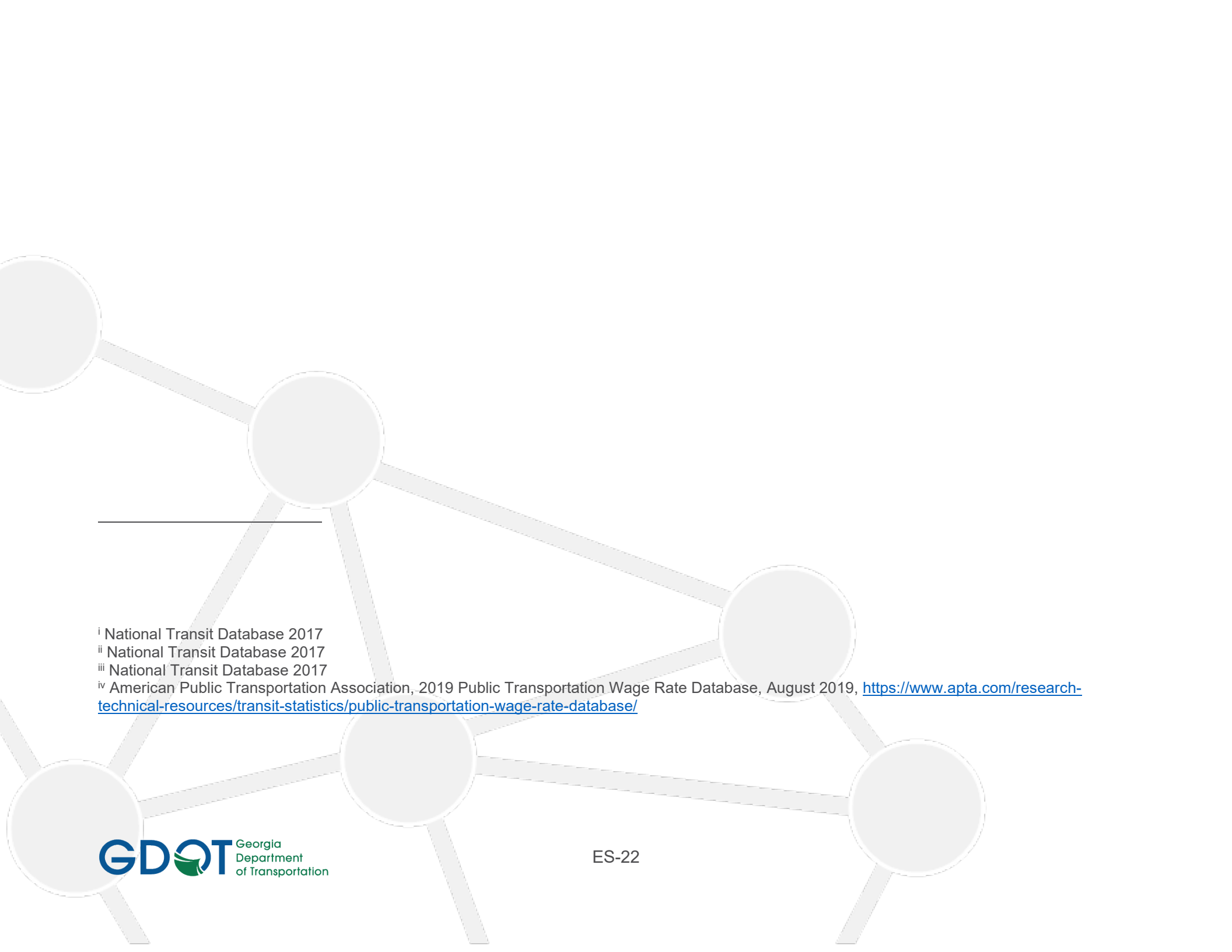
Incremental steps toward such regional service include coordination among stakeholders, shared fleets and dispatching, cross-jurisdictional connections between providers, and unifying fares and payment systems. Mobility Managers and regional commission planning staff will play an integral role in this.

Extended service hours and more providers crossing county or jurisdictional lines will similarly make transit a more viable option for working individuals, and it will better connect rural communities with healthcare and job centers, improving economic opportunities for rural and urban communities alike.

Websites, improved marketing, and communication for all providers statewide will better educate the public on transit services available in their communities and make it easier for riders to use transit for their everyday transportation needs.

Finally, investing in a more highly trained transit workforce, and fully meeting the State-of-Good-Repair will help to ensure safety, reduce injuries and fatalities, and enhance system reliability.

Today, Georgians across the state depend on transit to get to their jobs, access healthcare, and education, participate in the economy, and to get out and active in the community. More expansive and enhanced service is needed, as many still do not have access to these opportunities. Implementing the recommendations identified in this Statewide Transit Plan will close that gap. It will improve the quality of life and economic opportunities for all Georgians by supporting an innovative, connected, reliable, and accessible multimodal public transportation network.

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- i National Transit Database 2017
 - ii National Transit Database 2017
 - iii National Transit Database 2017

iv American Public Transportation Association, 2019 Public Transportation Wage Rate Database, August 2019, <https://www.apta.com/research-technical-resources/transit-statistics/public-transportation-wage-rate-database/>