

# Regional Transit Development Plan

## Central Savannah River Area Regional Commission

Alternatives Analysis and Recommendations Report

May 2025



**CSRA-RC**  
CENTRAL SAVANNAH RIVER AREA  
REGIONAL COMMISSION

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## List of Acronyms

<b>ACS</b>	American Community Survey
<b>ARTS</b>	Augusta Regional Transportation Study
<b>ATL</b>	Atlanta-Region Transit Link Authority
<b>CSRA</b>	Central Savannah River Area
<b>CSRA-RC</b>	CSRA Regional Commission
<b>DCH</b>	Department of Community Health
<b>DHS</b>	Department of Human Services
<b>EOA</b>	Economic Opportunity Authority
<b>FTA</b>	Federal Transit Administration
<b>GDOT</b>	Georgia Department of Transportation
<b>HST</b>	Human Services Transportation
<b>IIJA</b>	Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act
<b>MPO</b>	Metropolitan Planning Organization
<b>NTD</b>	National Transit Database
<b>OD</b>	Origin-Destination
<b>PAC</b>	Project Advisory Committee
<b>POS</b>	Purchase-of-Service
<b>RTAP</b>	Rural Transportation Assistance Program
<b>SGR</b>	State-of-Good-Repair
<b>SWTRP</b>	Statewide Transit Plan
<b>TCRP</b>	Transit Cooperative Research Program
<b>TDP</b>	Transit Development Plan
<b>TTFP</b>	Transit Trust Fund Program
<b>UZA</b>	Urbanized Area

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# 1.0 Introduction

This Alternatives Analysis and Recommendations Report provides a detailed assessment of where existing transit demand is not being met in the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA) Region and recommends potential service expansions and enhancements for better serving the region's transit riders. The report builds upon the **Existing Conditions Report**, which accomplished the following:

- Population and employment trends, as well as current and future land use plans, provide context for how the region is growing and changing.
- Statistics about the existing transit services, such as funding and schedules, show similarities and differences among the transit systems in the region.
- Performance measures compare CSRA's transit systems with other transit systems around the state.

This foundation fed directly into the transit needs and alternatives analysis, which ultimately led to the recommendations for future transit development in the region. A qualitative plan review was also conducted to highlight previous recommendations for employment-oriented transit services and commuter routes.

## 1.1 Transit Needs

The transit needs assessment, summarized in **Section 2.0**, consisted of a review of stakeholder and public feedback to date, as well as several quantitative analyses. Unmet transit demand was calculated for the 13-county region.

## 1.2 Implementation Considerations

**Section 3.0** provides a high-level overview of implementation tools that will play a role in addressing transit gaps and expanding transit service in the CSRA Region. These tools include funding opportunities, staff resources, and partnerships, among other things.

## 1.3 Transit Alternatives Development

Based on identified transit needs and implementation considerations, the Project Team developed numerous transit alternatives for demand-response and vanpool services. These alternatives fall into the following three groups, which align with the **Statewide Transit Plan** (SWTRP) methodology:

1. Transit Service Expansion
2. Transit Service Enhancements
3. Administrative Tools and Guidance

The transit alternatives, discussed in **Section 4.0**, consider various aspects of transit performance, such as ridership, service areas, cost effectiveness, fares, and schedules. Existing transit service characteristics, unmet demand levels, and performance measure comparisons helped identify where improvements are needed.

The alternatives suggest different ways to make transit more convenient and accessible in order to boost ridership. Many of the alternatives consider new models for transit service delivery as well as innovative technologies that, in tandem, have the potential to make transit both more efficient and more effective.

## 1.4 Translating Alternatives into Recommendations

The alternatives were presented to the CSRA Regional Commission (CSRA-RC) and Project Advisory Committee (PAC) members in February 2025. The alternatives were presented to the general public in the same month for feedback prior to the development of recommendations. The Project Team filtered alternatives through the following screening criteria in order to determine if they should advance as recommendations for the CSRA Region:

- Compatibility with the Regional Transit Development Plan (TDP) goals (**Section 5.0**) provides additional detail on how compatibility with each goal was assessed,
- Positive feedback from the Regional Commission and Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) staff,
- Positive feedback from the PAC, and
- Positive feedback from the public.

In addition, the expected project/program cost, implementing agency, and project timeframe are noted for consideration. The cost is provided as the total capital investment and total annual operations and maintenance (O&M) estimates, as well as the local share for each. **Section 5.0** expands on this process and presents the recommendations.

## 2.0 Transit Needs

This section begins with a qualitative summary of transit needs, based on input provided by key stakeholders and the public throughout the planning process. Several quantitative analyses are also presented in this section to complement the stakeholder input and further refine the identification of areas with the greatest transit needs. The quantitative transit needs analyses include:

- **Population Density Threshold Analysis:** Mapped representation of residential densities throughout the region that portray where transit-supportive densities exist;
- **Transit Propensity Analysis:** Mapped representation of the share of potential transit riders per census tract; and
- **Unmet Rural Transit Demand:** Calculations that identify current and future (2040) rural transit demand estimates for each county and how much of the demand is unmet based on current ridership.

A qualitative summary of commuter transit service needs, based upon a review of recent local transit plans, follows the quantitative analyses.

### 2.1 Existing Conditions Takeaways

The Existing Conditions Report provides a technical analysis of demographic, employment, and travel trends. It also documents characteristics of the current transportation network and available transit services. The need for increased transit service is underscored by the following takeaways from the report:

- In the last decade, CSRA experienced modest yet consistent population growth. Between 2011 and 2016, the region's population increased by 1.8 percent, followed by 2.4 percent growth from 2016 to 2021.
- This growth is forecasted to continue, with an estimated 66,770 people added by 2040. By 2060, the region's population is expected to grow to 612,190, reflecting an increase of 21.1% from the 2020 population.
- When compared to state averages, the region is home to several demographic populations that are more likely to rely on public transit for their mobility needs. These demographic cohorts include:
  - 17.7 percent of residents are experiencing poverty,
  - 22.1 percent of residents are over the age of 60,
  - 7.3 percent of the population are between the ages of 15 and 19,
  - 7.1 percent of households do not have access to a vehicle, and
  - 15.1 percent of residents have a disability.
- 47.0 percent of CSRA's land area and 42.0 percent of its residents fall within census tracts that the US Census Bureau has designated as historically disadvantaged. Much of the region's population growth has been a product of increased employment opportunities in the region. CSRA is projected to see large increases in the healthcare sector, largely driven by increases in the number of those employed in the Ambulatory Health Care Services subsector. Food Manufacturing is projected to add 780 new jobs in the region by 2030.

## 2.2 Review of Vision and Goals

The Project Team engaged in a collaborative visioning process with CSRA’s transit leaders and community members to build consensus around a desired future state of transit service in the region. First, the Project Team consulted the SWTRP to determine the applicability of its vision and goals to the specific regional context. All five goals of the SWTRP were deemed applicable to CSRA:

- Provide a safe and sustainable public transit network.
- Optimize public transit programs to best meet the needs of public transit systems and riders.
- 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 and performance.

Through collaboration with the PAC, area transit providers, and CSRA-RC staff, the Project Team drafted a vision statement and series of project goals shown in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1: CSRA TDP Vision Statement and Goals



## 2.3 Population Density Threshold Analysis

Population densities serve as an important indicator for the viability of a particular transit mode. Higher densities have enough potential riders to support fixed-route transit like light rail or bus service, with denser areas able to support more frequent service. Areas with less density, such as suburban and rural areas, are better served through demand-response transit. Demand-response transit provides service at the request of individual riders or users rather than on a pre-set schedule. Suggested transit-supportive densities established by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) are shown in **Table 1** below. Peak headway speaks to the interval between stops at the same location.

CSRA is mostly rural in character, with most of the land area under the four households-per-acre threshold. This makes demand-response transit the recommended transit mode for much of the region (see **Figure 2**). Augusta-Richmond County is the only jurisdiction in CSRA with two block groups having greater than four households per acre. However, none of these block groups have densities above six households per acre.

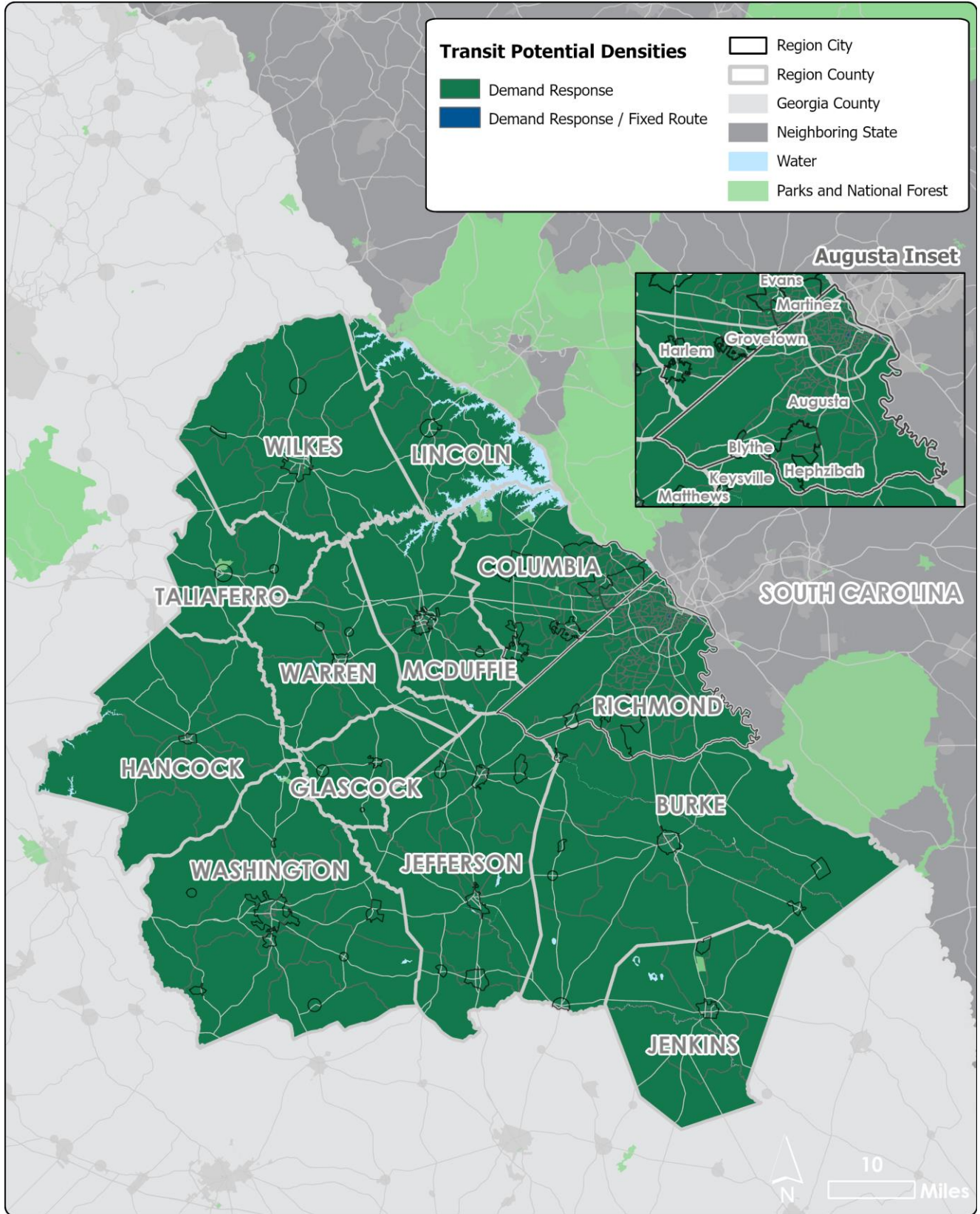
Areas within this range are context sensitive; areas with more traditional urban development patterns, such as a street grid, would better support fixed-route bus service when compared to suburban areas based around lower-connectivity subdivisions with loops and cul-de-sacs.

**Table 1: Suggested Transit-Supportive Densities**

Transit Service	Minimum Residential Density
Demand-Response	Up to 6 households/gross acre
Local bus, 60-minute peak headway	4 households/gross acre
Local bus, 20- to 30-minute peak headway	7 households/gross acre
Local bus, 10- to 15-minute peak headway	15 households/gross acre

Source: Federal Transit Administration

Figure 2: Transit-Supportive Densities in Central Savannah River Area



## 2.4 Rural Transit Need Analysis

The Transportation Research Board’s *Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) Report 161: Methods for Forecasting Demand and Quantifying Need for Rural Passenger Transportation* presents a method for estimating trip demand for rural public transit services, known as the Non-Program Demand Method. This method is designed specifically to estimate the demand for general public transit trips in rural areas, *not* trips for various Human Services Transportation (HST) programs, which are often coordinated with rural transit providers.

The Non-Program Demand Method estimates trip demand by weighting three specific demographic factors that are strong indicators of transit demand. These demographic factors, which are sourced from the U.S. Census’s American Community Survey (ACS), are:

- Population age 60+,
- Mobility-limited population age 18-64, and
- Residents of households without vehicle access.

After extracting the relevant ACS data, these data points are applied to the Non-Program Demand formula:

$$\text{Non-Program Demand (trips per year)} = (2.20 \times \text{Population Age 60+}) + (5.21 \times \text{Mobility-Limited Population Age 18-64}) + (1.52 \times \text{Residents of Households Without Vehicle Access})$$

This plan estimates Non-Program Demand for a base year of 2020, along with a plan horizon year of 2040. Mobility-limited populations and residents of households without vehicle access are assumed to grow based on the general population growth rates. The 2040 population over age 60 is estimated using the age-specific growth rate. Both growth rates are taken from the Georgia Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget’s county-specific population projections. The formula for 2040 Non-Program Demand is:

$$\text{Future Demand (trips per year)} = (2.20 \times \text{Population Age 60+}) \times (1 + \text{Age 60+ Population Growth Rate [2020 – 2040]}) + [(5.21 \times \text{Mobility-Limited Population Age 18-64}) + (1.52 \times \text{Residents of Households Without Vehicle Access})] \times (1 + \text{Overall Population Growth Rate [2020 – 2040]})$$

Rural transit demand has been estimated for the CSRA Region for 2022 and 2040, shown in **Figure 3** and **Figure 4**, respectively. Values for the region’s Non-Program Demand can be found in **Section 2.5**.

Figure 3: Non-Program Public Transit Trip Demand, 2022

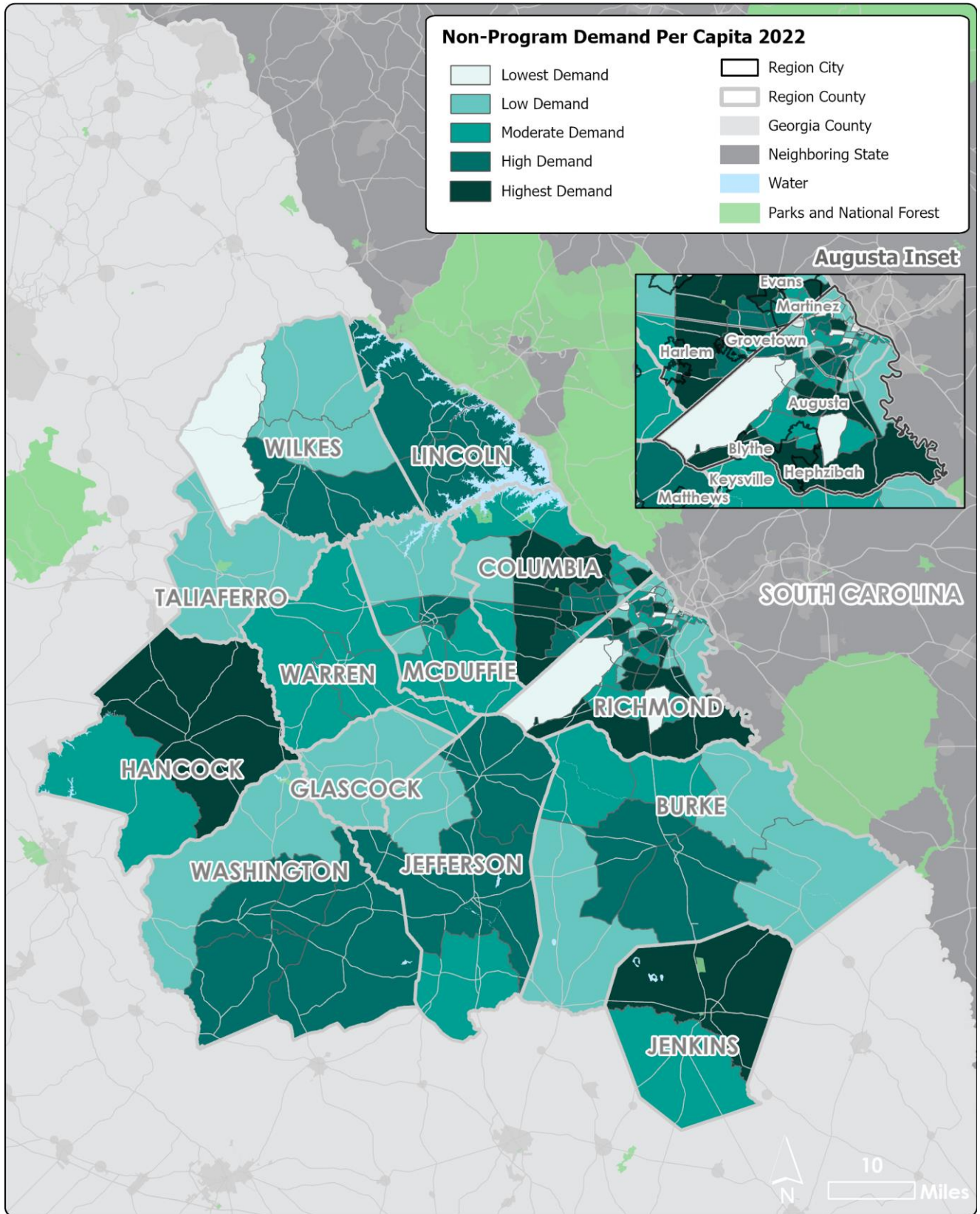
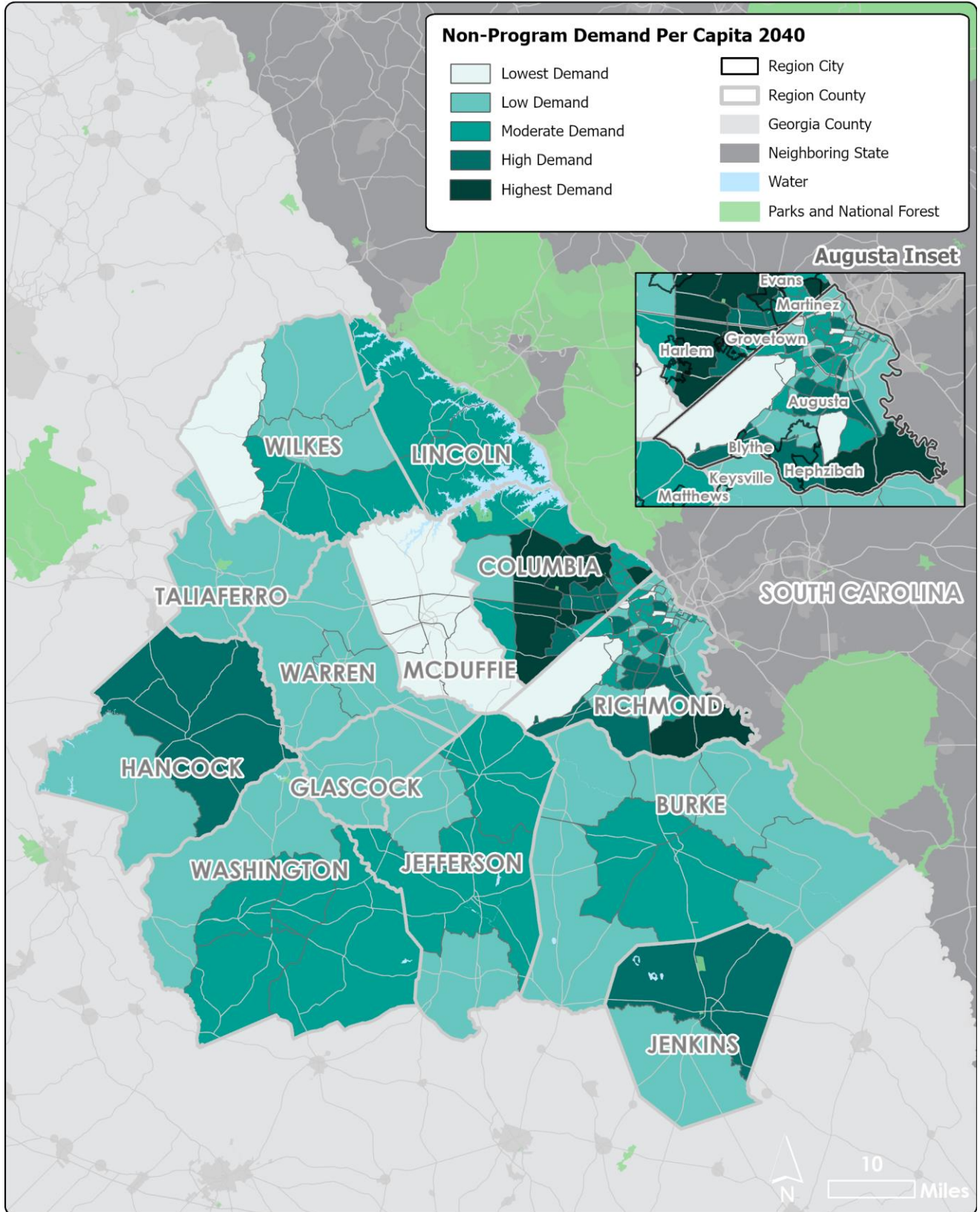


Figure 4: Non-Program Public Transit Trip Demand, 2040



## 2.5 Transit Propensity Analysis

The transit propensity method builds upon the Non-Program Demand Method provided in *TCRP Report 161* by adding additional demographics to identify transit-dependent populations. Carried over from the Non-Program Demand Method are three demographic categories to calculate estimated transit trip demand:

- Population age 60+,
- Mobility-limited population age 18-64, and
- Residents of households without vehicle access.

Transit propensity then considers four additional categories:

- Low-income population,
- Minority population,
- Limited English proficiency population, and
- Youth population (age 15-19).

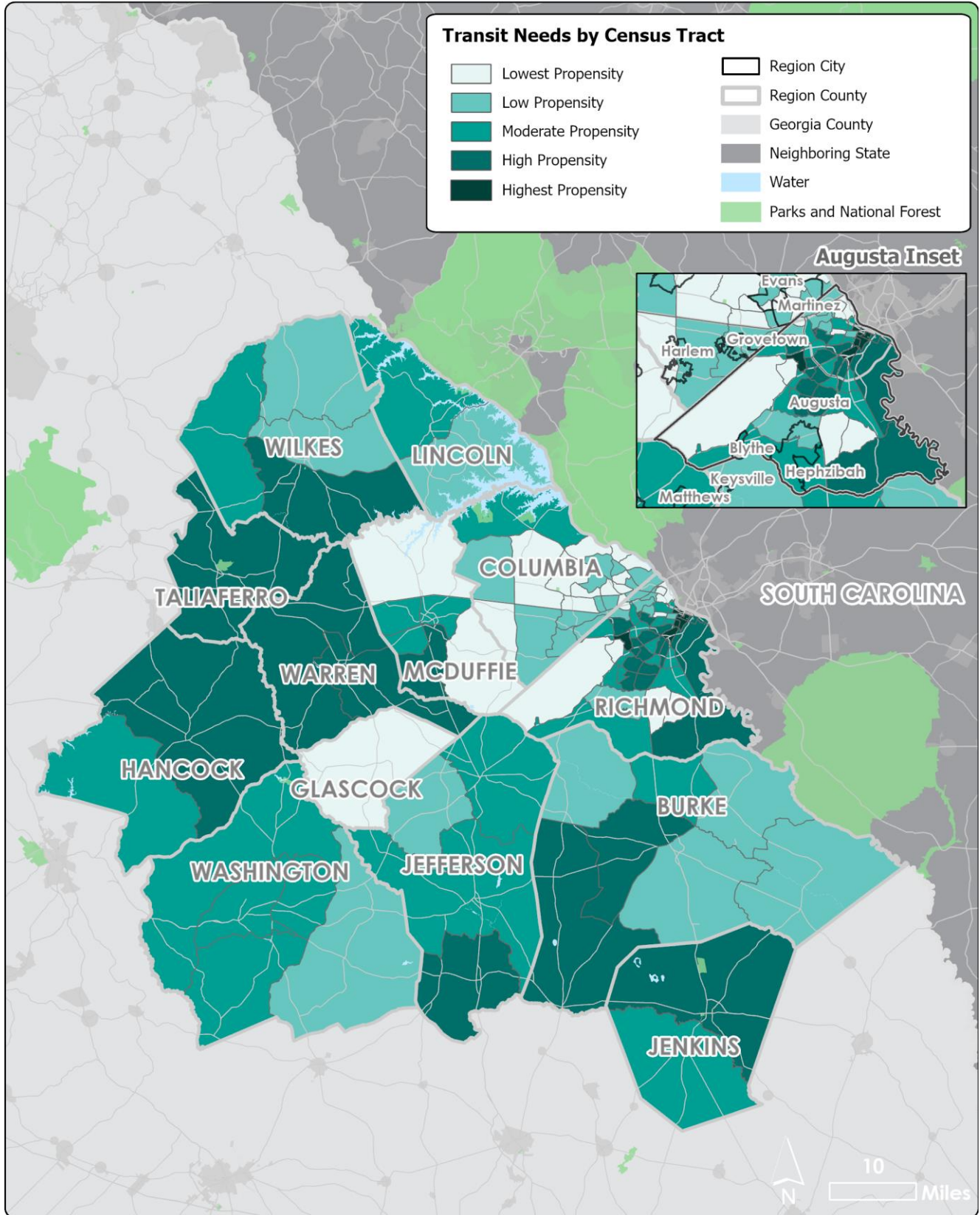
Current ACS 5-year data was collected for each of the demographic categories by census tract for the following formula:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Non-Program Demand (trips per year)} &= (2.2 \times \text{Population Age 60+}) \\
 &+ (5.2 \times \text{Mobility-Limited Population Age 18-64}) + (1.5 \times \text{Residents} \\
 &\quad \text{of Households Without Vehicle Access}) \\
 &\quad \text{Plus} \\
 \text{Additional Demographics} &= (1 \times \text{Minority Population}) + (1 \times \text{Low-} \\
 &\text{Income Population}) + (1 \times \text{Limited English Proficiency Population}) + \\
 &\quad (1 \times \text{Youth Population})
 \end{aligned}$$

The sum of the formula was then divided by the population of each census tract to calculate the transit propensity for that census tract and others in the county or transit service area. These census tracts are mapped according to the level of transit propensity, with the darker census tracts are home to relatively higher transit need populations. Activity centers such as schools, hospitals, and top regional employers are also shown on this map to display possible local trip generators. A map is shown below of the transit propensity in the CSRA Region in **Figure 5**. Subsequent sections discuss the transit propensity within the service areas of the region’s twelve transit systems.

Current transit systems operating in the region are Augusta Transit, Burke Transit, Columbia County Transit, Glascock County Transit, Hancock County Transit, Jefferson Transit, Jenkins County Transit, Lincoln County Transit, McDuffie County Transit System, Taliaferro County Transit, Warren County Transit, and Wilkes County Transit. Compared to the whole region, the highest areas of transit need are located in eastern areas of Augusta-Richmond County (particularly in Augusta and Hephzibah), followed by high needs in central and northeast Hancock County, south Wilkes County, and across Warren and Taliaferro counties.

Figure 5: Transit Propensity in Central Savannah River Area



## 2.5.1 Service Area Analysis

The 13 counties that comprise the CSRA Region have different levels of transit demand and propensity, which are explained in the sections that follow. For each county, a transit propensity map is presented, along with a table that includes Non-Program Demand for 2022 and 2040. These transit system propensity maps show Non-Program Demand on a per-capita basis and are individualized to each geographic service area. County-level transit propensity maps are scaled differently than the regional map shown in **Figure 5** to facilitate readability.

The Non-Program Demand tables subtract the relevant transit system's unlinked passenger trips from the current-year transit demand to determine the county's unmet rural trip demand. Unlinked passenger trips are defined as the number of passengers who board public transportation vehicles. Passengers are counted each time they board a vehicle as they travel from origin to destination. This analysis uses 2022 ridership data from the National Transit Database (NTD).

### 2.5.1.1 Central Savannah River Area Regional Transit

The CSRA-RC does not directly operate transit services in the region. Instead, transit is provided by 12 separate systems across the region's counties. Augusta Transit, operated by the Augusta-Richmond County consolidated government, is the only urban provider with nine fixed routes serving Richmond County. The remaining 11 systems are all county-based rural providers which primarily offer demand-response service within their counties and to neighboring counties.

The CSRA Region encompasses 13 counties with a population of 489,055 in 2022. This population is projected to grow to 541,249 by 2040, representing a 10.7 percent increase. As shown in **Figure 6**, the highest transit needs are concentrated in central and northeast Richmond County, primarily within the City of Augusta. These high-need areas coincide with major activity centers including regional employers, hospitals, and schools. The map also reveals moderate to high transit needs in parts of Taliaferro, Warren, Hancock, Jenkins, and Burke counties. Washington County (shown in white on the map) is the only county in the region without transit service.

Figure 6: Central Savannah River Area Transit Propensity

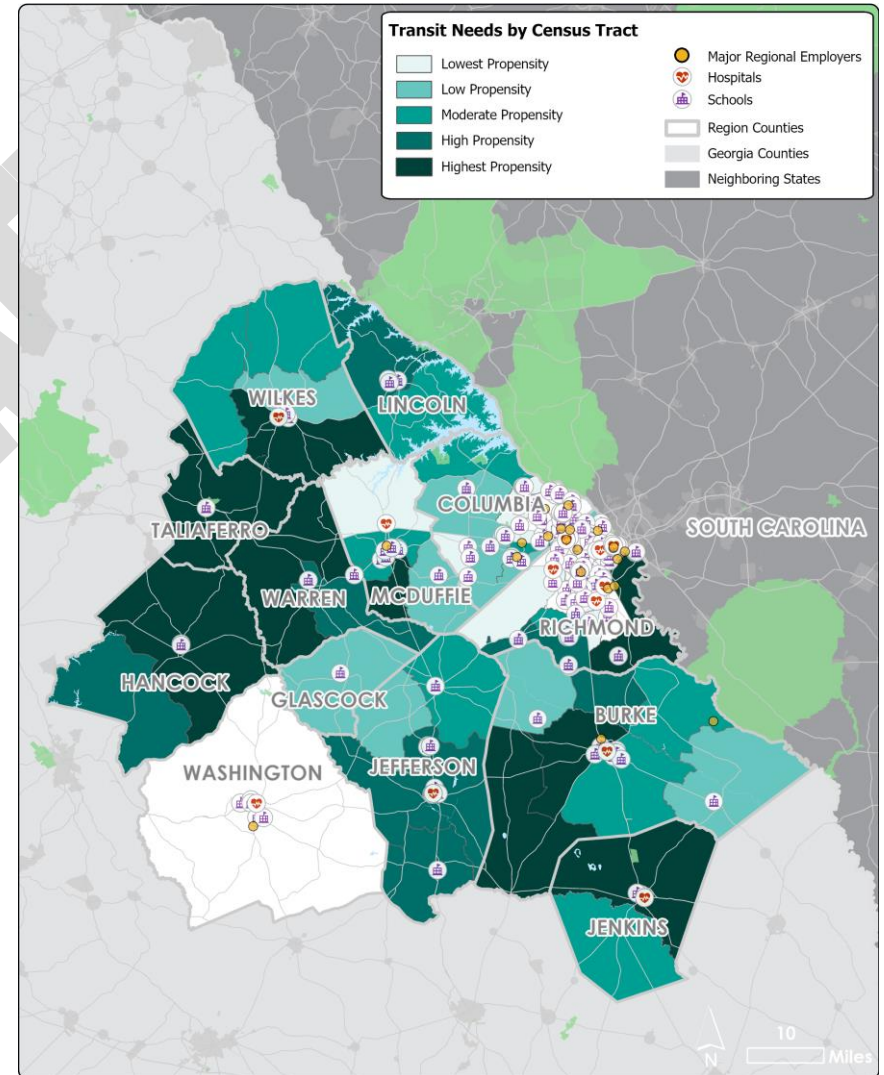


Table 2: CSRA Transit Demand

	Existing (2022)	Future (2040)
Population	489,055	541,249
Existing Trips Provided (2022)	0	N/A
<b>Rural Transit Demand</b>		
Total Rural Trip Demand	167,887	205,147
Unmet Rural Trip Demand	167,887	N/A

• Source: FTA 2022 NTD, U.S. Census Bureau 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget 2024 Population Projections

### 2.5.1.2 Augusta Transit

Augusta-Richmond County is located in the eastern portion of the CSRA Region, bordered by Columbia, McDuffie, Burke, and Jefferson counties, with South Carolina to the east along the Savannah River. As the most populous county in the region, it had an estimated population of 206,153 in 2022, with projected growth to 215,847 residents by 2040 (4.7 percent increase).

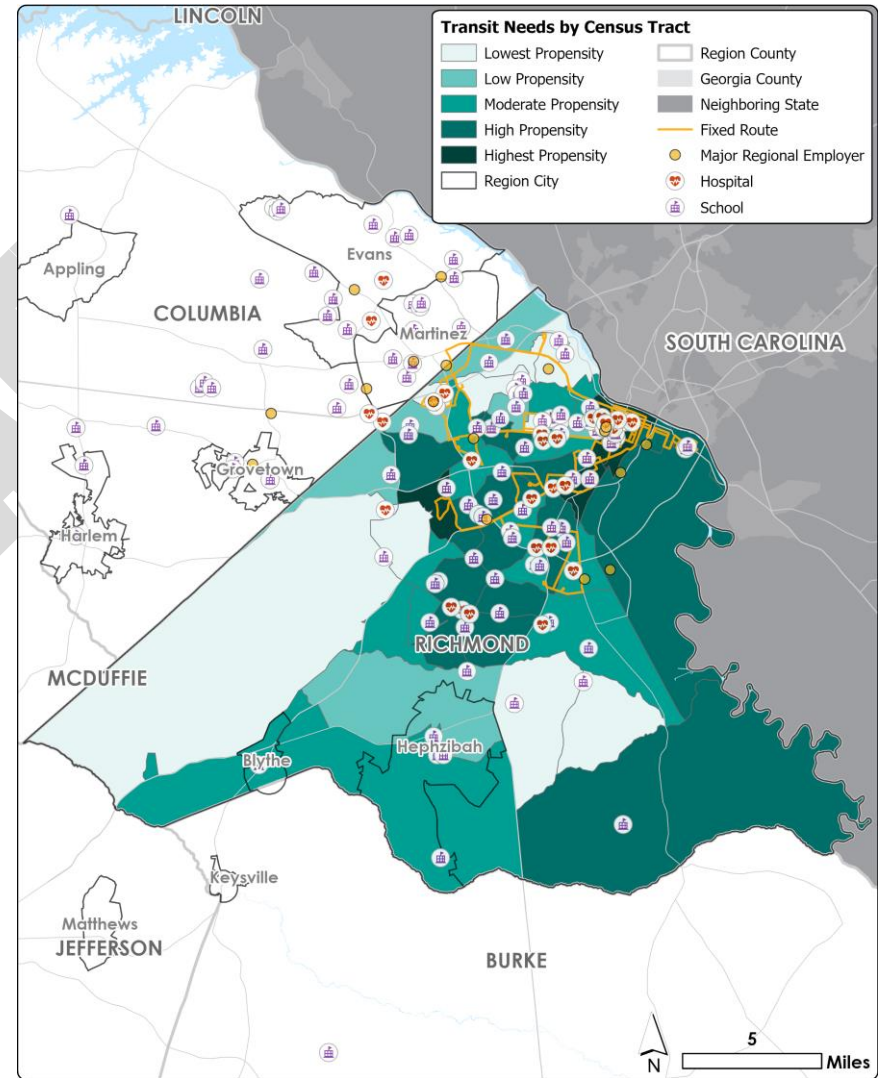
Augusta Transit provides public transit services to residents throughout both urbanized and rural portions of the county. The system operates nine fixed routes with buses running Monday through Saturday between 6:30 AM and 7:00 PM. In 2022, the system provided 20,907 demand-response trips, exceeding the non-program rural demand of 19,088.

Figure 7 shows the central and northeastern areas of the county have the greatest transit needs, which are currently served by fixed routes. These routes connect residents to major activity centers primarily clustered in the central and northern parts of the county. The county’s rural southern and southeastern areas display moderate to high needs but have limited fixed-route service coverage. In these areas, demand-response services are more effective for connecting residents to essential services.

Table 3: Augusta-Richmond County Transit Demand

	Existing (2022)	Future (2040)
Population	206,153	215,847
Existing Trips Provided (2022)	20,907	N/A
<b>Rural Transit Demand</b>		
Total Rural Trip Demand	19,088	21,583
Unmet Rural Trip Demand	0	N/A

Figure 7: Augusta-Richmond County Transit Propensity



• Source: FTA 2022 NTD, U.S. Census Bureau 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Georgia Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget 2024 Population Projections

### 2.5.1.3 Burke County Transit System

Burke County, located in the eastern area of the CSRA Region, operates a single-county demand-response system. The county had an estimated population of 24,337 in 2022, with projected growth to 25,852 residents by 2040 (6.2 percent increase).

Burke Transit provides demand-response service operating weekdays between 7:00 AM and 6:00 PM. In 2022, the system provided 12,758 trips, meeting about 69 percent of the total rural trip demand of 18,563 and leaving 5,805 trips unmet.

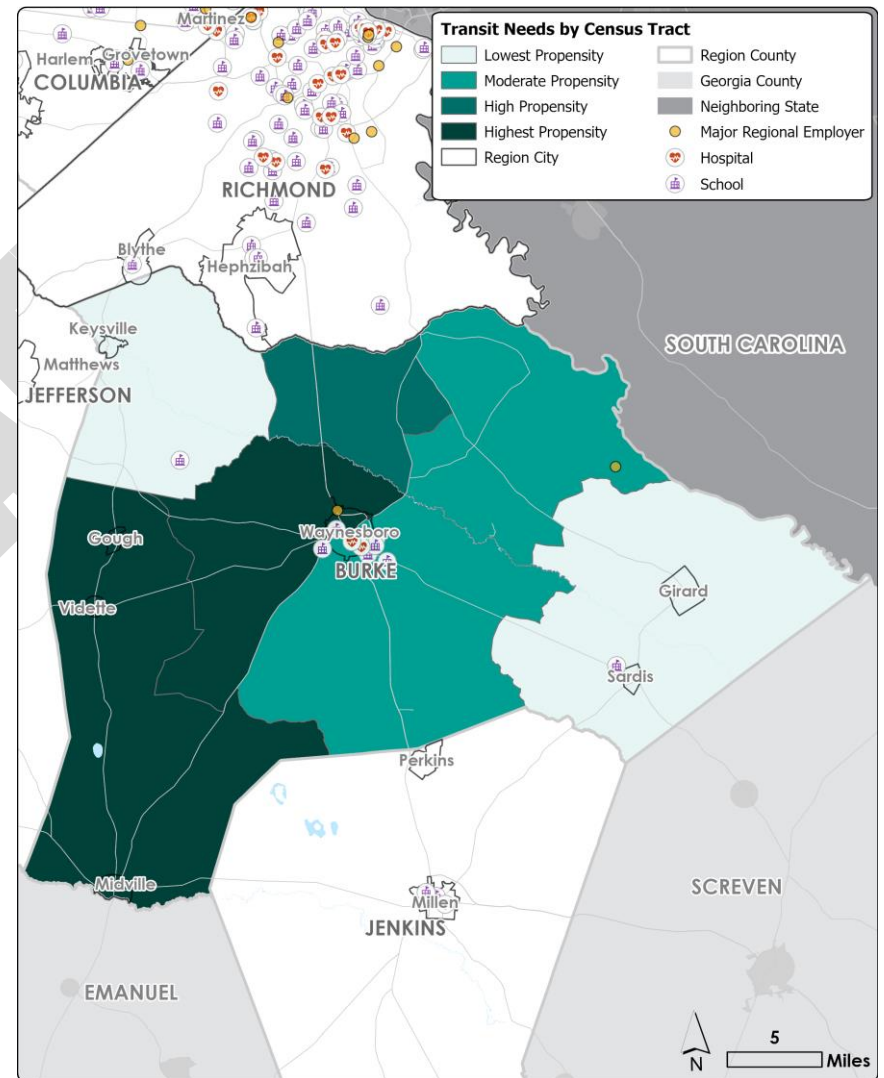
As shown in **Figure 8**, the western and southwestern portions of Burke County show the highest transit needs, particularly around Gough, Vidette, Midville and north of Waynesboro. Most activity centers are clustered within Waynesboro, the county seat in the center of the county. This creates a geographic mismatch between highest transit needs and key destinations, presenting a challenge for the demand-response system.

**Table 4: Burke County Transit Demand**

	Existing (2022)	Future (2040)
Population	24,337	25,852
Existing Trips Provided (2022)	12,758	N/A
<b>Rural Transit Demand</b>		
Total Rural Trip Demand	18,563	22,949
Unmet Rural Trip Demand	5,805	N/A

- Source: FTA 2022 NTD, U.S. Census Bureau 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget 2024 Population Projections

**Figure 8: Burke County Transit Propensity**



### 2.5.1.4 Columbia County Transit System

Columbia County, the second most populous county in the region, is located at the northeastern area of the CSRA Region. It shares borders with Richmond, McDuffie, and Lincoln counties, with South Carolina to the northeast. The county had an estimated population of 156,921 in 2022, with substantial projected growth to 199,243 residents by 2040 (27 percent increase).

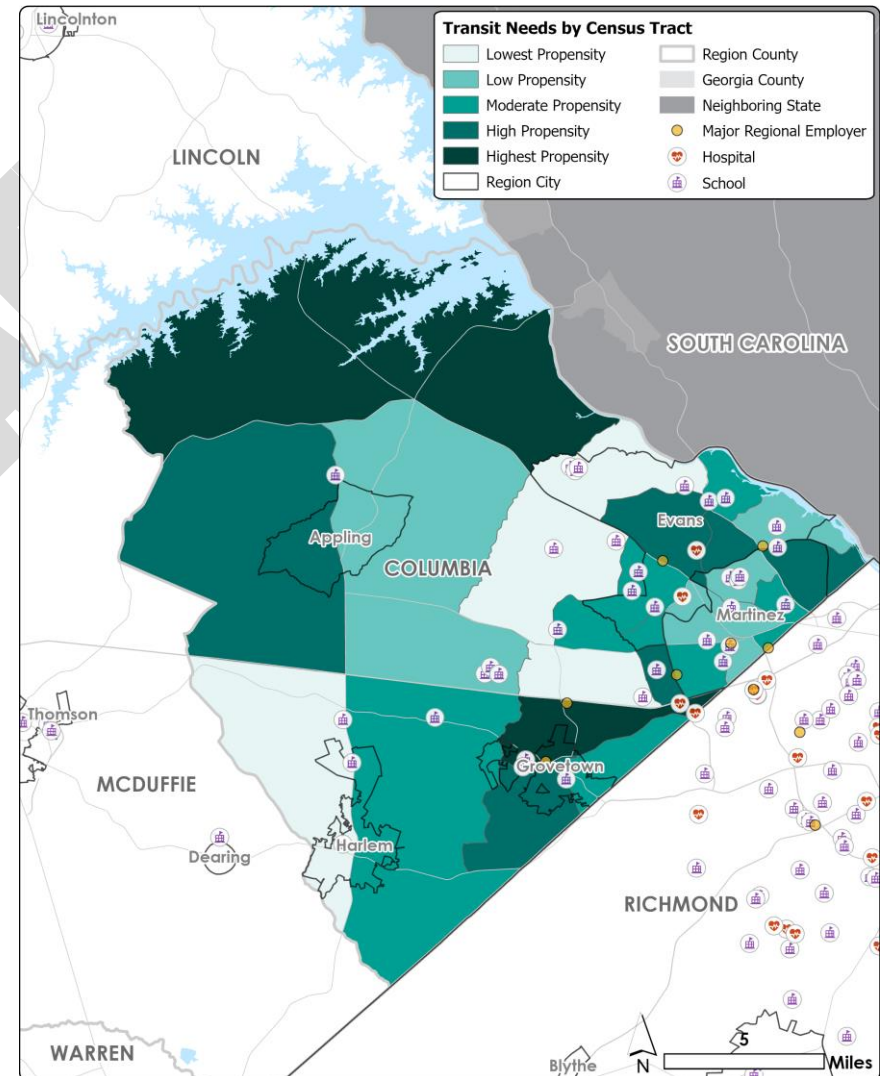
Columbia County Transit provides weekday demand-response service from 10:00 AM to 3:30 PM, serving locations within the county and parts of Augusta-Richmond County. In 2022, the system provided 14,643 trips, meeting only about 33 percent of the total rural trip demand of 44,227 and leaving 29,584 trips unmet.

As shown in **Figure 9**, the highest transit needs are concentrated in the northern portion of the county and the southeastern part of the county around Grovetown. The Evans area shows moderate to high transit needs. These high-need areas mostly align with population centers and major activity destinations, though the northern high-need area appears less connected to major destinations. The central parts of Columbia County show notably lower transit needs.

**Table 5: Columbia County Transit Demand**

	Existing (2022)	Future (2040)
Population	156,921	199,243
Existing Trips Provided (2022)	14,643	N/A
<b>Rural Transit Demand</b>		
Total Rural Trip Demand	44,227	69,886
Unmet Rural Trip Demand	29,584	N/A

**Figure 9: Transit Propensity in Columbia County**



• Source: FTA 2022 NTD, U.S. Census Bureau 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Georgia Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget 2024 Population Projections

### 2.5.1.5 Glascock County Transit System

Glascock County is at the center of the CSRA Region, bordered by Warren County to the north, Jefferson County to the east, Washington County to the south, and Hancock County to the west. As one of the smaller and more rural counties in the region, Glascock had an estimated population of 2,903 in 2022, with minimal growth of 0.8 percent to 2,927 residents by 2040.

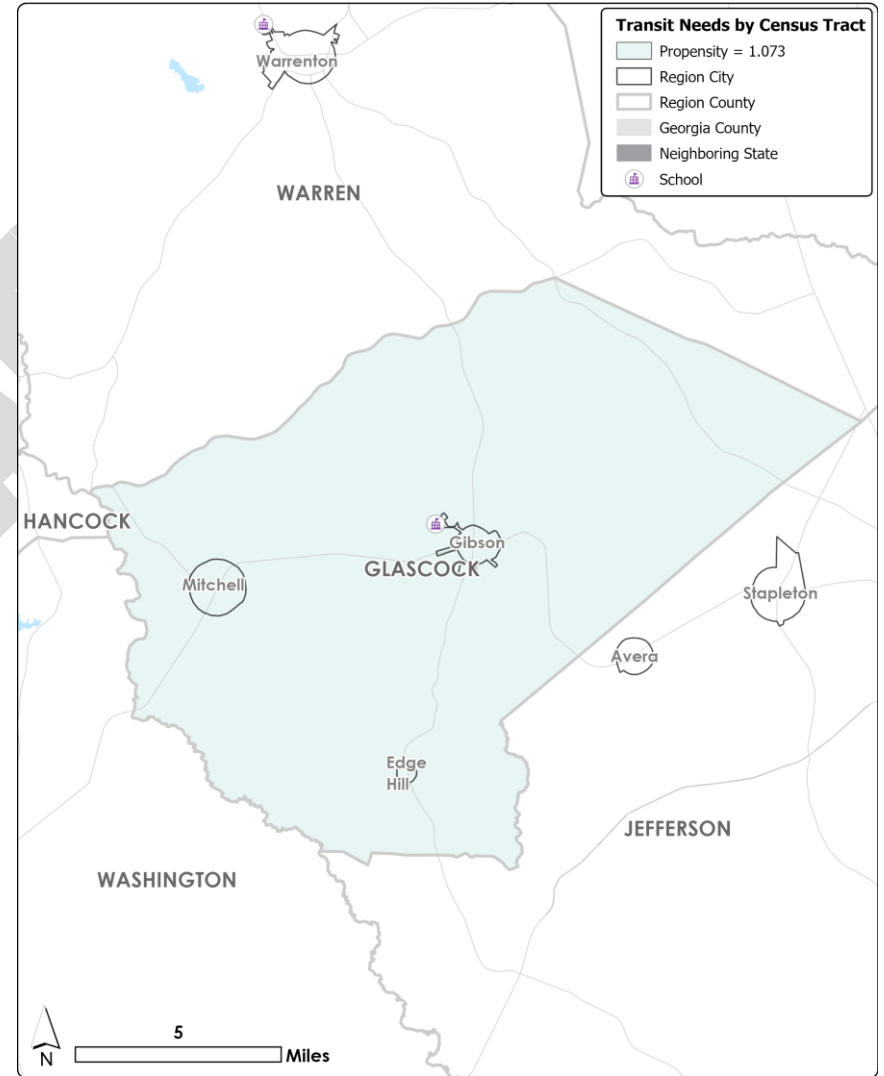
Glascock County Transit provides rural demand-response services across the county and to most surrounding counties. Service operates weekdays between 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM, except Wednesdays when buses run from 8:00 AM to noon only. In 2022, the system provided 3,083 trips, exceeding the total rural trip demand of 2,065, indicating the system is adequately meeting current transit needs.

**Figure 10** shows that Glascock County has a uniform, relatively low transit propensity throughout its territory. The map identifies Gibson as the primary community with a school facility. The county's low population density and rural character create typical rural transportation challenges where demand-response service is the most appropriate transit option for connecting residents to essential services both within the county and in neighboring jurisdictions.

**Table 6: Glascock County Transit Demand**

	Existing (2022)	Future (2040)
Population	2,903	2,927
Existing Trips Provided (2022)	3,083	N/A
<b>Rural Transit Demand</b>		
Total Rural Trip Demand	2,065	2,703
Unmet Rural Trip Demand	0	N/A

**Figure 10: Transit Propensity in Glascock County**



• Source: FTA 2022 NTD, U.S. Census Bureau 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget 2024 Population Projections

### 2.5.1.6 Hancock County Transit System

Hancock County is at the west end of the CSRA Region, bordered by Warren, Glascock, Washington, Baldwin, and Putnam counties. With a 2022 population of 8,588 residents, the county is projected to experience a slight 1.7 percent decline to 8,443 residents by 2040.

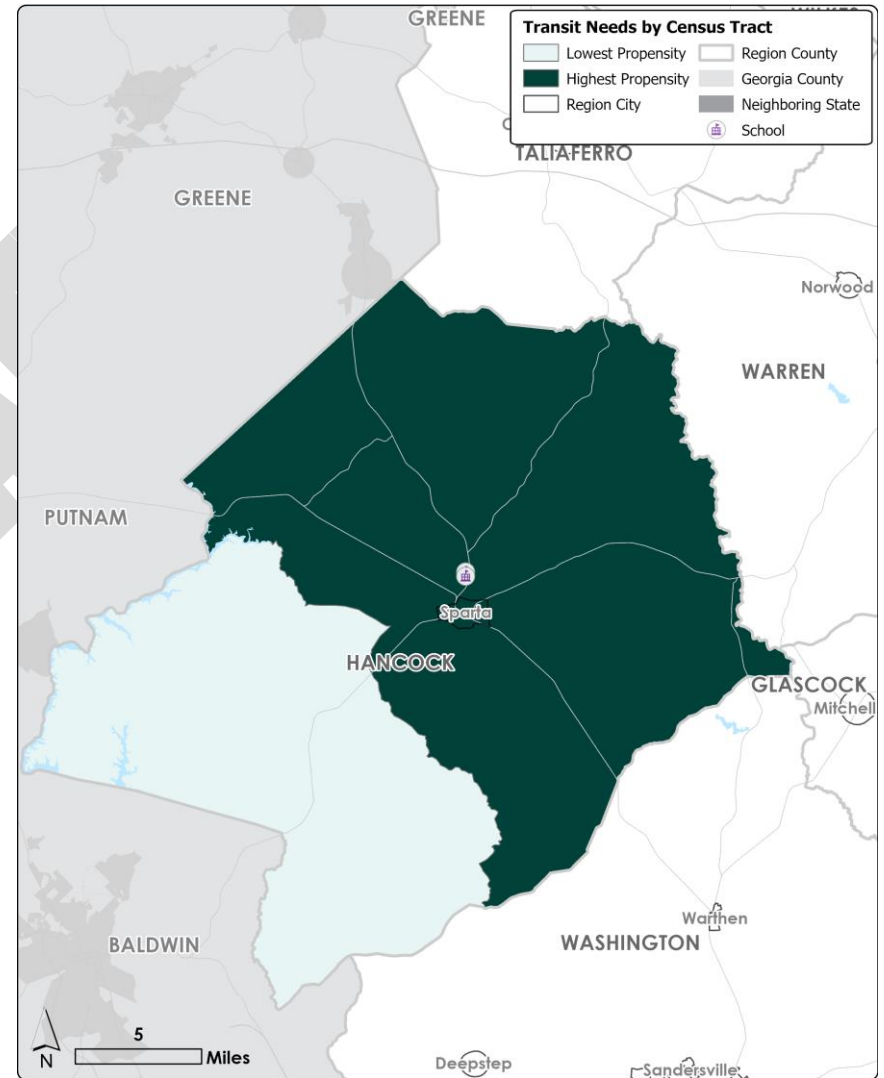
Hancock County Transit serves as the rural transit provider for Sparta and surrounding areas, offering demand-response service between 4:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday through Saturday. Service is available throughout the county, with connections to neighboring counties available for additional fares. In 2022, the system provided 9,192 trips, fully meeting the total rural trip demand of 9,054.

**Figure 11** reveals a geographic divide in transit needs within the county, with the northeastern areas showing higher transit needs than the southwestern areas. Sparta, the county seat and central hub, is positioned near the center where these two distinct zones of transit need meet. Several schools are clustered around Sparta. This geographic split necessitates strategic service planning to effectively connect all residents to vital services concentrated in Sparta.

**Table 7: Hancock County Transit Demand**

	Existing (2022)	Future (2040)
Population	8,588	8,443
Existing Trips Provided (2022)	9,192	N/A
<b>Rural Transit Demand</b>		
Total Rural Trip Demand	9,054	10,285
Unmet Rural Trip Demand	0	N/A

**Figure 11: Transit Propensity in Hancock County**



• Source: FTA 2022 NTD, U.S. Census Bureau 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget 2024 Population Projections

### 2.5.1.7 Jefferson County Transit System

Jefferson County sits at the southern end of the CSRA Region, bordered by Glascock, Warren, Burke, and Washington counties within the region, and Emanuel County outside the region. The county had an estimated population of 15,591 in 2022, with projections showing a 9.8 percent decline to 14,056 residents by 2040.

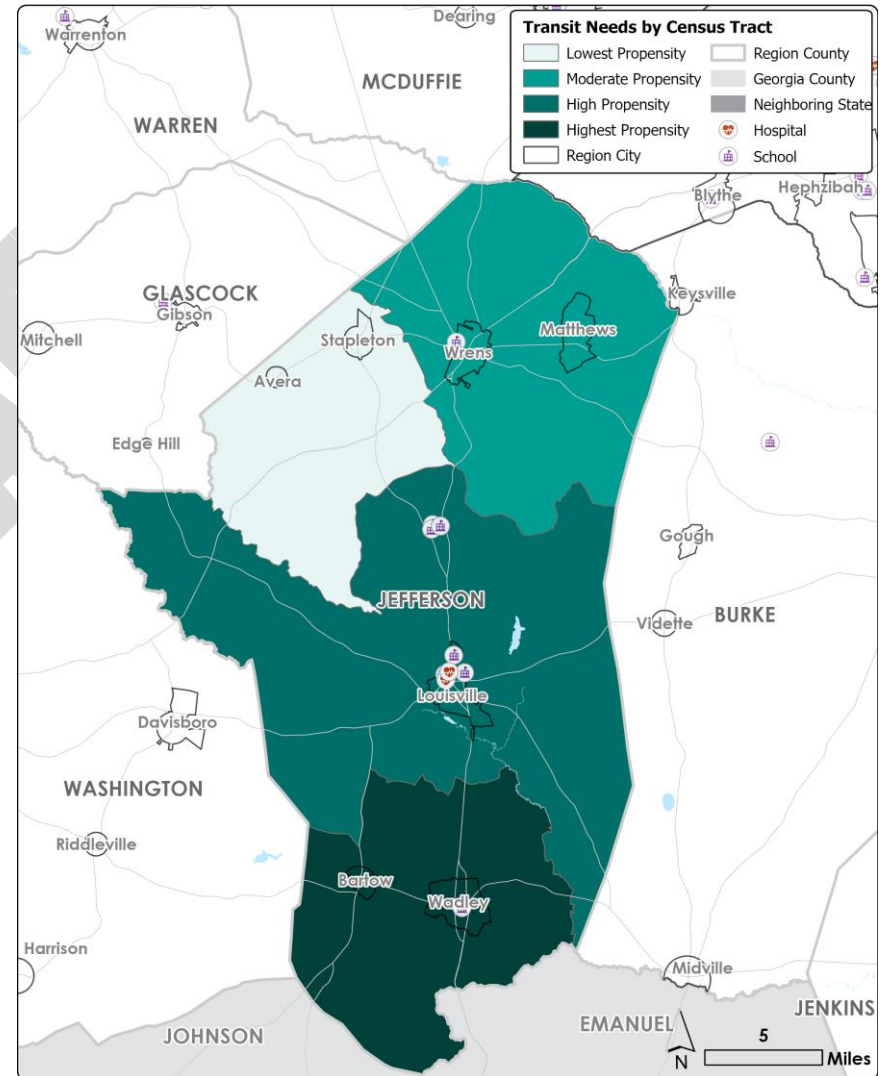
Jefferson Transit provides rural demand-response services throughout the county, with trips to Augusta available for an additional fare. Rides are available between 6:00 AM and 5:00 PM on weekdays with a 24-hour reservation window. In 2022, the system provided 24,919 trips, which is more than double the total rural trip demand of 11,826.

Figure 12 shows different levels of transit needs across Jefferson County. The southern areas around Wadley and Bartow show the highest needs due to the concentration of transit-dependent populations. The central areas around Louisville show moderate to high needs. The northwestern portion near Stapleton exhibits the lowest transit needs. The county's key facilities, including hospitals and schools, are located in the county seat of Louisville and in Wrens to the north.

Table 8: Jefferson County Transit Demand

	Existing (2022)	Future (2040)
Population	15,591	14,056
Existing Trips Provided (2022)	24,919	N/A
<b>Rural Transit Demand</b>		
Total Rural Trip Demand	11,826	12,154
Unmet Rural Trip Demand	0	N/A

Figure 12: Transit Propensity in Jefferson County



- Source: FTA 2022 NTD, U.S. Census Bureau 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget 2024 Population Projections

### 2.5.1.8 Jenkins County Transit System

Jenkins County is located in the southeastern end of the CSRA Region, bordered by Burke County to the north, Screven County to the east, Bulloch County to the south, and Emanuel County to the west. The county had an estimated population of 8,704 in 2022, with minimal 1.4 percent projected growth to 8,824 residents by 2040.

Jenkins County Transit offers demand-response transportation for all county residents within its boundaries. Service operates weekdays from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM. In 2022, the system provided only 904 trips, meeting just 9.6 percent of the total rural trip demand of 9,374 and leaving 8,470 trips unmet.

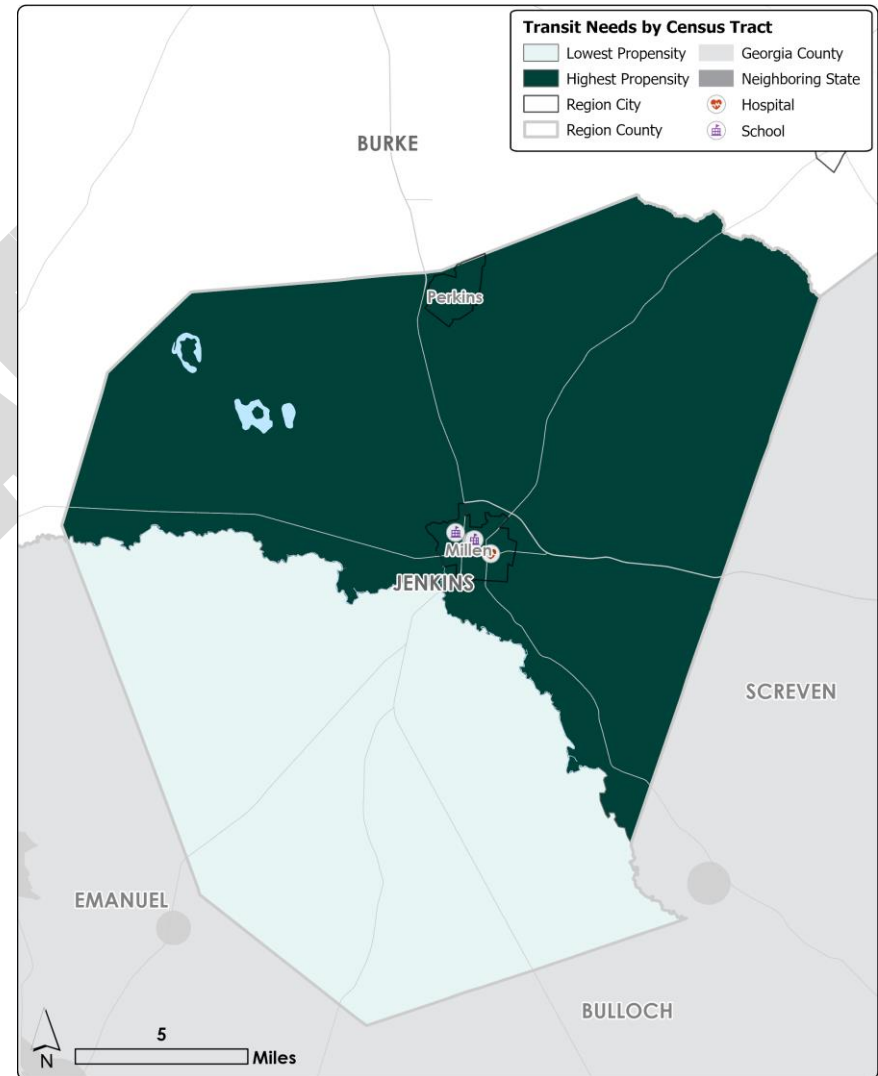
As shown in **Figure 13**, Jenkins County displays a stark contrast in transit needs. The northern portion of the county shows the highest propensity for transit, including the Millen area where the county's hospital and school are located. The southern portion of Jenkins County exhibits lower transit needs.

**Table 9: Jenkins County Transit Demand**

	Existing (2022)	Future (2040)
Population	8,704	8,824
Existing Trips Provided (2022)	904	N/A
<b>Rural Transit Demand</b>		
Total Rural Trip Demand	9,374	7,726
Unmet Rural Trip Demand	8,470	N/A

• Source: FTA 2022 NTD, U.S. Census Bureau 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget 2024 Population Projections

**Figure 13: Transit Propensity in Jenkins County**



### 2.5.1.9 Lincoln County Transit System

Lincoln County sits at the northernmost part of the CSRA Region, bordered by Wilkes County to the west, Elbert County to the northwest, Columbia County to the south, and South Carolina to the east along the Savannah River. The county had an estimated population of 7,726 in 2022, with projected growth to 8,058 residents by 2040 (4.3 percent increase).

Lincoln County Transit provides demand-response transportation services within the county and to neighboring counties on weekdays between 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM. In 2022, the system provided 4,339 trips, meeting approximately 61 percent of the total rural trip demand of 7,076 and leaving 2,737 trips unmet.

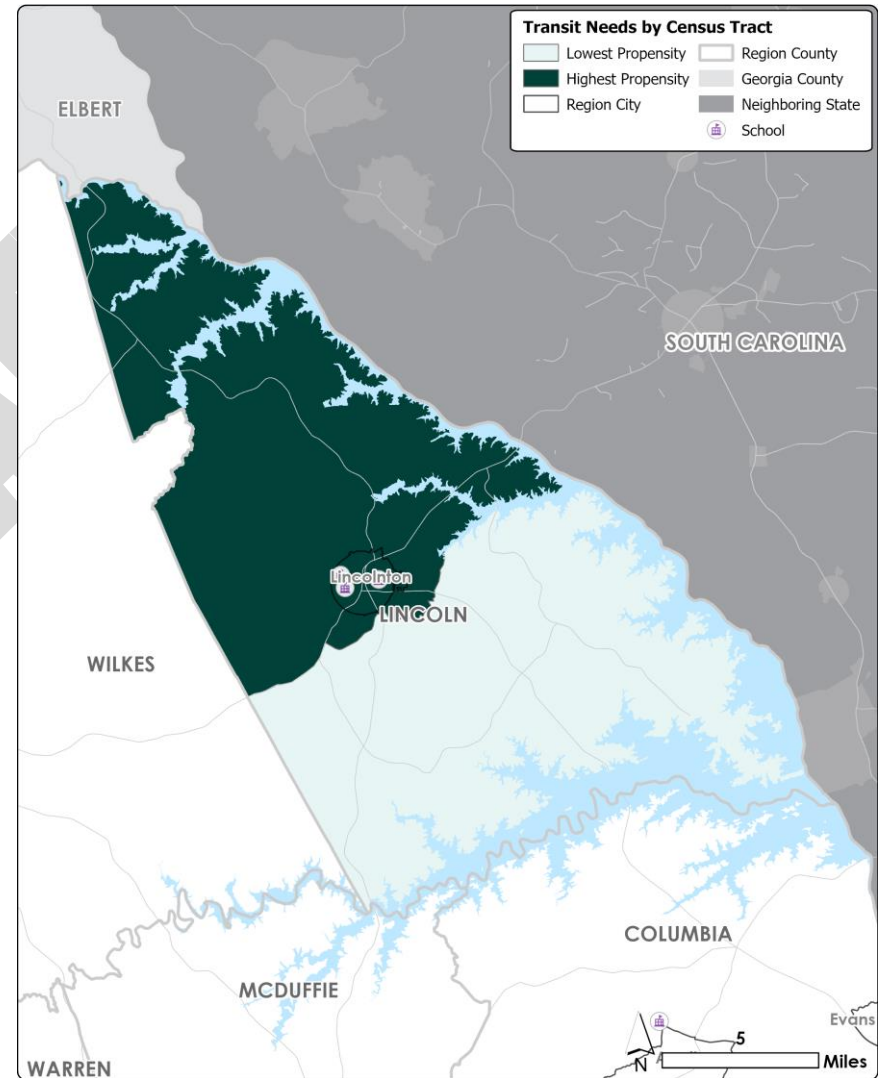
As shown in **Figure 14**, Lincoln County displays a geographic divide in transit needs. The northern and western portions of the county show the highest propensity for transit, while the southern and eastern areas along the Savannah River (J. Strom Thurmond Lake) exhibit the lowest transit needs. The county seat of Lincolnton, where the schools are located, sits at the transition between these high- and low-need areas.

**Table 10: Lincoln County Transit Demand**

	Existing (2022)	Future (2040)
Population	7,726	8,058
Existing Trips Provided (2022)	4,339	N/A
<b>Rural Transit Demand</b>		
Total Rural Trip Demand	7,076	7,670
Unmet Rural Trip Demand	2,737	N/A

• Source: FTA 2022 NTD, U.S. Census Bureau 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Georgia Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget 2024 Population Projections

**Figure 14: Transit Propensity in Lincoln County**



### 2.5.1.10 McDuffie County Transit System

McDuffie County is located in the east-central part of the CSRA Region, bordered by Columbia County to the east, Richmond County to the southeast, Warren County to the west, and Wilkes County to the north. The county had an estimated population of 21,715 in 2022, with projected growth to 23,090 residents by 2040 (6.3 percent increase).

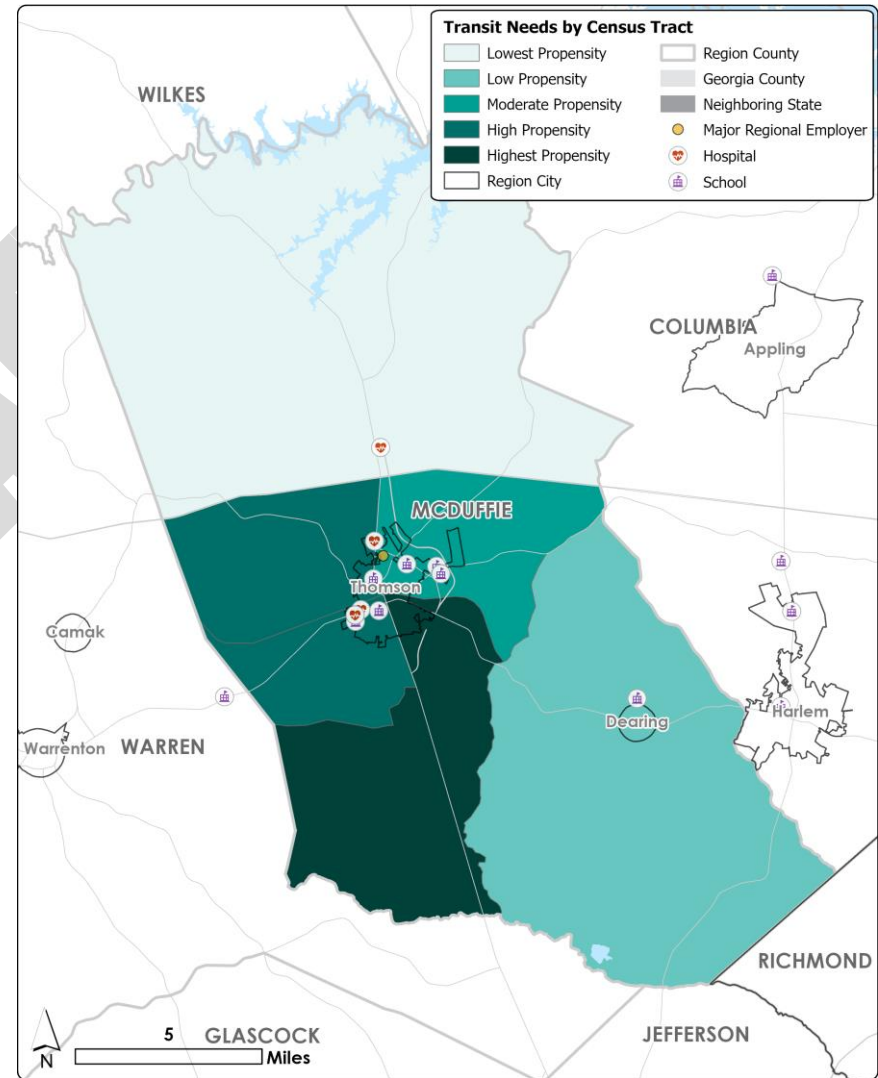
McDuffie County Transit System, also known as McDuffie County Rural Transportation System, provides demand-response service within McDuffie County and to Richmond and Warren counties. Service operates on weekdays from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM. In 2022, the system provided 16,261 trips, fully meeting the total rural trip demand of 15,542.

As shown in the **Figure 15**, the southern area of the county shows the highest transit needs, particularly in and around Thomson, the county seat. The central area of the county shows high to moderate needs, while the northern area has the lowest transit needs. This pattern aligns well with the location of key destinations, as most activity centers including hospitals, schools, and major employers are concentrated in Thomson.

**Table 11: McDuffie County Transit Demand**

	Existing (2022)	Future (2040)
Population	21,715	23,090
Existing Trips Provided (2022)	16,261	N/A
<b>Rural Transit Demand</b>		
Total Rural Trip Demand	15,542	18,674
Unmet Rural Trip Demand	0	N/A

**Figure 15: Transit Propensity in McDuffie County**



• Source: FTA 2022 NTD, U.S. Census Bureau 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Georgia Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget 2024 Population Projections

### 2.5.1.11 Taliaferro County Transit System

Taliaferro County is in the northwestern portion of the CSRA Region and is bordered by Greene, Wilkes, Warren, and Hancock counties. As the smallest and one of the more rural counties in the region, Taliaferro County had an estimated population of 1,635 in 2022, with a projected 8.6 percent decline to 1,494 residents by 2040.

Taliaferro County Transit provides rural demand-response service across the county. Service operates four days per week, Tuesday through Friday, between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM. There is no service provided on Mondays. In 2022, the system provided 1,428 trips, covering 81 percent of the rural trip demand of 2,065 and leaving 329 trips unmet.

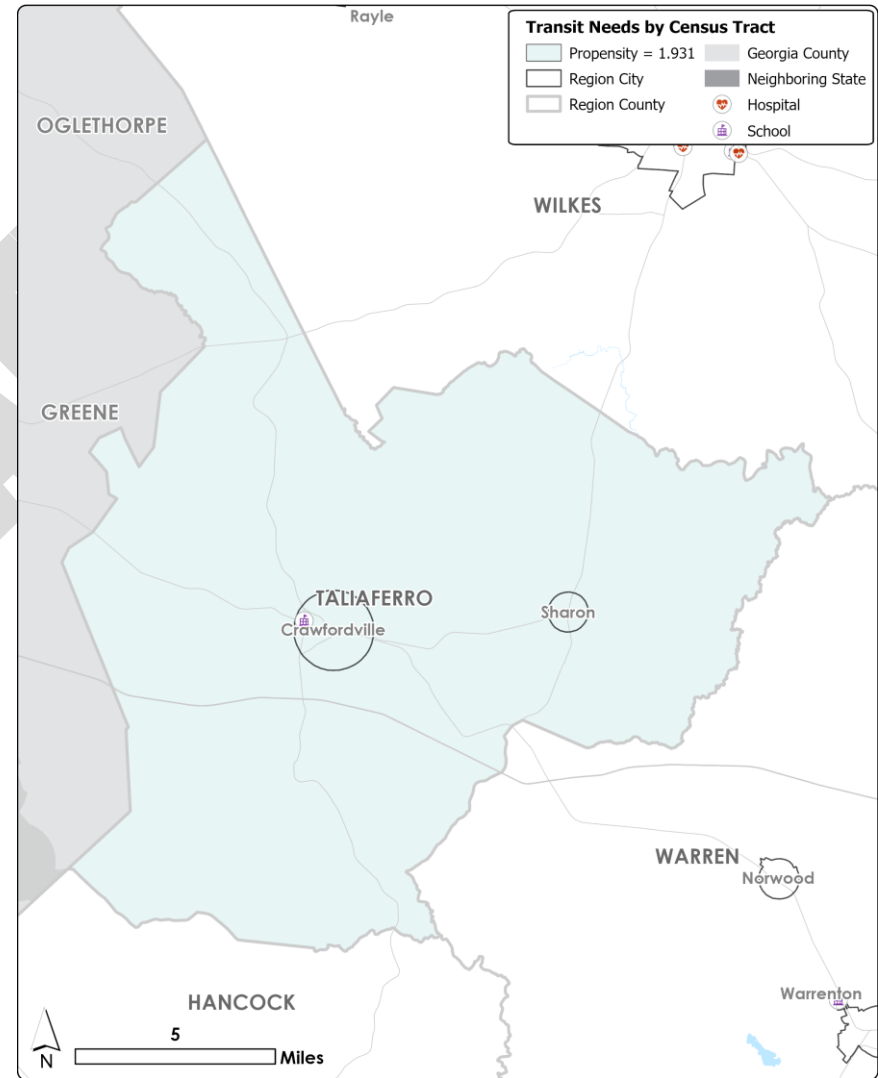
**Figure 16** shows that Taliaferro County has a uniform, relatively moderate transit need throughout its territory. The map identifies Crawfordville as the primary community in the county, which includes a school. The county's low population density and rural character create typical rural transportation challenges where demand-response service is the most appropriate transit option for connecting residents to essential services both within the county and in neighboring jurisdictions.

**Table 12: Taliaferro County Transit Demand**

	Existing (2022)	Future (2040)
Population	1,635	1,494
Existing Trips Provided (2022)	1,428	N/A
<b>Rural Transit Demand</b>		
Total Rural Trip Demand	1,757	1,753
Unmet Rural Trip Demand	329	N/A

- Source: FTA 2022 NTD, U.S. Census Bureau 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget 2024 Population Projections

**Figure 16: Transit Propensity in Taliaferro County**



### 2.5.1.12 Warren County Transit System

Warren County sits at the north-central part of the CSRA Region, bordered by McDuffie, Glascock, Hancock, and Taliaferro counties. The county had an estimated population of 5,197 in 2022, with a projected 8.8 percent decline to 4,742 residents by 2040.

Warren County Transit, also known as Warren County Commission Transit, operates demand-response service on weekdays between the hours of 4:00 AM and 3:00 PM. In 2022, the system provided 2,118 trips, meeting approximately 40 percent of the total rural trip demand of 5,292 and leaving 3,174 trips unmet.

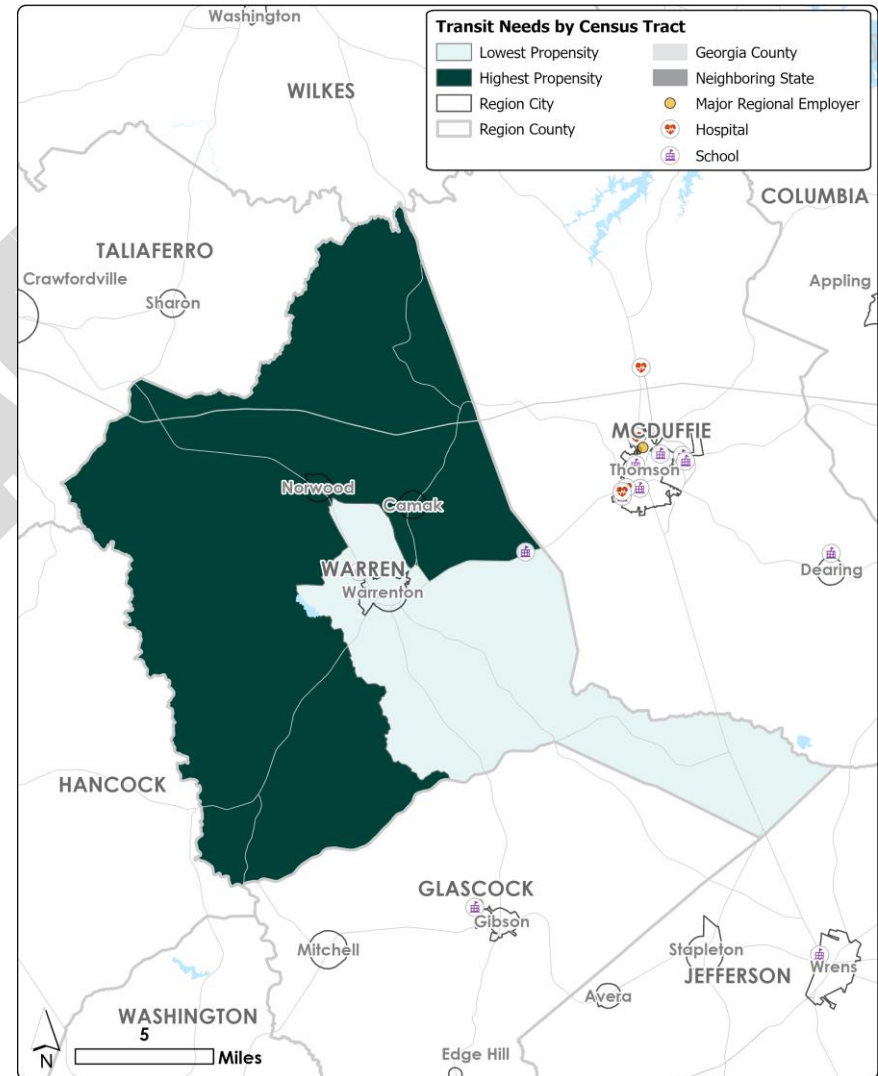
As shown in **Figure 17**, transit-dependent populations live mainly in the western part of Warren County, while the eastern side, where the county seat, Warrenton, is located, has lower transit needs. Warrenton is an important destination because it has the county's only school.

**Table 13: Warren County Transit Demand**

	Existing (2022)	Future (2040)
Population	5,197	4,742
Existing Trips Provided (2022)	2,118	N/A
<b>Rural Transit Demand</b>		
Total Rural Trip Demand	5,292	4,965
Unmet Rural Trip Demand	3,174	N/A

- Source: FTA 2022 NTD, U.S. Census Bureau 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget 2024 Population Projections

**Figure 17: Transit Propensity in Warren County**



### 2.5.1.13 Washington County

Washington County sits in the southwestern end of the CSRA Region, bordered by Hancock, Glascock, Jefferson, Johnson, and Wilkinson counties. The county had an estimated population of 19,975 in 2022, with projections showing a 3.3 percent decline to 19,311 residents by 2040.

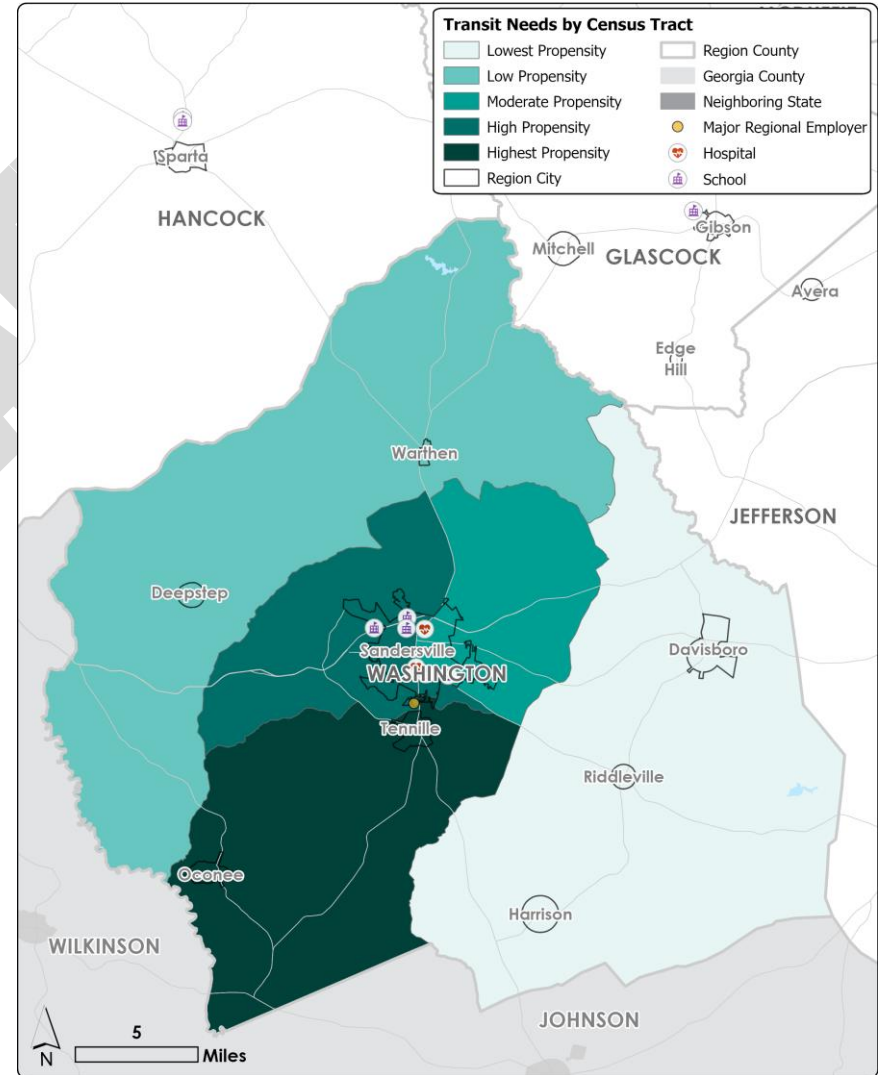
Washington County currently does not have a rural transit system. As a result, there were an estimated 15,742 unmet rural transit trips in the county in 2022. By 2040, this unmet need is projected to grow to 16,331 trips.

Figure 18 reveals a mix of transit needs across Washington County. The southern and central areas, especially around Sandersville and Tennille, show high transit needs. Sandersville, the county seat, also has several key destinations like hospitals, schools, and regional employers. The eastern part of the county shows the lowest transit needs, while the western and northern areas have moderate needs. Establishing a new rural transit system in Washington County would help address the unmet transit needs, particularly in connecting residents from the outlying high-propensity areas to essential services in Sandersville. A demand-response model could effectively serve the dispersed transit needs across the county's rural landscape.

Table 14: Washington County Transit Demand

	Existing (2022)	Future (2040)
Population	19,975	19,311
Existing Trips Provided (2022)	0	N/A
<b>Rural Transit Demand</b>		
Total Rural Trip Demand	15,742	16,331
Unmet Rural Trip Demand	15,742	N/A

Figure 18: Transit Propensity in Washington County



Source: FTA 2022 NTD, U.S. Census Bureau 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget 2024 Population Projections

### 2.5.1.14 Wilkes County Transit System

Wilkes County is located at the northwestern edge of the CSRA Region, bordered by Oglethorpe, Elbert, Lincoln, McDuffie, and Taliaferro counties. The county had an estimated population of 9,610 in 2022, projected to decline 2.6 percent to 9,362 residents by 2040.

Wilkes County Transit provides demand-response service from Mondays through Thursdays between the hours of 7:30 AM and 5:00 PM and on Fridays from 7:30 AM to 12:00 PM. In 2022, the system provided 9,650 trips, fully meeting the total rural trip demand of 8,283 trips.

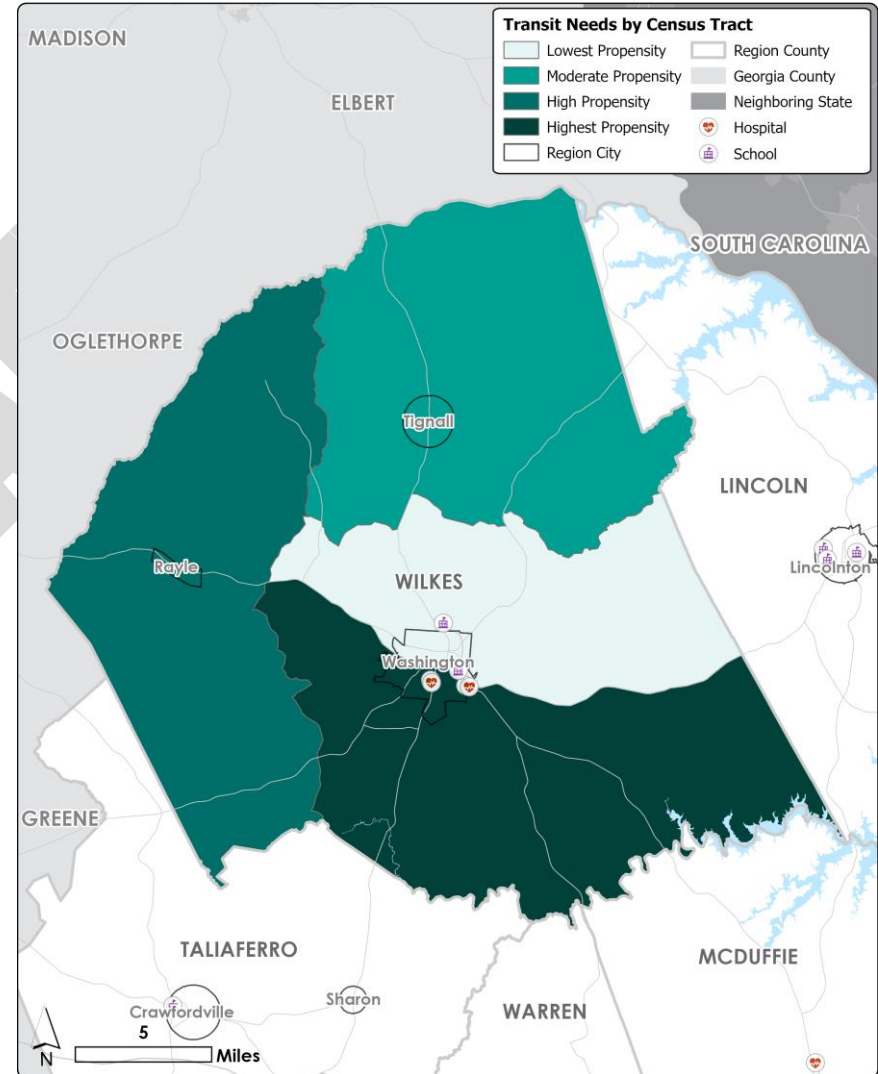
**Figure 19** reveals a mix of transit needs across Wilkes County. The southwestern areas of the county, especially around the county seat, Washington, show the highest transit needs. Washington is also a central hub in the county, providing medical and educational services. The central and eastern portions of the county exhibit the lowest transit needs.

**Table 15: Wilkes County Transit Demand**

	Existing (2022)	Future (2040)
Population	9,610	9,362
Existing Trips Provided (2022)	9,650	N/A
<b>Rural Transit Demand</b>		
Total Rural Trip Demand	8,283	8,469
Unmet Rural Trip Demand	0	N/A

- Source: FTA 2022 NTD, U.S. Census Bureau 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Georgia Governor's Office of Planning and Budget 2024 Population Projections

**Figure 19: Transit Propensity in Wilkes County**



## 2.6 Commuter Service Demand

The highest concentrations of jobs are found in Richmond, Columbia, and Burke counties, with significant employment activity also present in the region's cities. As the primary employment hubs of the region, the job clusters around Augusta and Martinez experience substantial commuter demand. Additionally, other major job clusters in the region's cities indicate a potential need for regional commuter-focused transit services. The Project Team reviewed existing transit plans and county comprehensive plans to identify recommendations for enhancing commuter and employment-centered transit options. There was one goal in the Augusta Regional Transportation Study (ARTS) 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (2020) to support regional connectivity and ridesharing through investment in intercity bus service, intercity bus facilities, and commuter vanpool.

The rise in popularity of remote work and other post-pandemic employment trends have significantly impacted ridership on traditional suburban-to-urban commuter bus routes. While these changing patterns influence typical commuter services, commuting services can be aligned with the region's unique, decentralized employment landscape. They can prioritize transporting employees to key job centers located outside the conventional central business districts. This includes helping military personnel and staff access jobs at Fort Eisenhower or providing connections to higher education institutions like Augusta University and Paine College and industrial centers.

## 2.7 Takeaways and Conclusions

Below are key takeaways from the qualitative and quantitative analyses presented in the preceding sections:

- The counties with the highest transit demand per capita include Augusta-Richmond, Taliaferro, Burke, and Washington counties. While Augusta-Richmond County has an urban transit environment, Taliaferro and Washington counties show significant transit needs despite their smaller populations, with Burke County also demonstrating notable transit demand as the third most populous county in the region.
- The highest total annual unmet rural trip demand is in Columbia County, with 29,584 trips, followed by Washington County, with 15,742 unmet trips.
- Areas with the highest transit propensity include eastern and central Augusta-Richmond County (particularly in Augusta and Hephzibah), central and northeast Hancock County, south Wilkes County, and across Warren and Taliaferro counties.
- The highest concentrations of jobs are found in Augusta-Richmond, Columbia, and Burke counties, with Augusta serving as the primary employment hub for the region.
- Commuter services are recommended in multiple plans for various counties, including intercounty connections between Augusta-Richmond, Columbia, and the surrounding counties, direct services to Fort Eisenhower military base, transit links to higher education institutions like Augusta University, and strategic routes connecting workers to major employment centers across the Central Savannah River Area.
- There is opportunity for new transit service in Washington County, which currently has no rural transit system despite having a high estimate of unmet rural transit trips.

- Enhanced connections are needed between high-propensity rural areas and regional employment centers, particularly linking the transit-dependent populations in counties like Hancock, Warren, and Taliaferro to job opportunities in Augusta-Richmond and Columbia counties.

### 2.7.1 Transit Needs Derived from Existing Conditions Analysis and Stakeholder Insights

The following findings on transit needs came from the **Existing Conditions Analysis** and from meetings held with stakeholders:

- Key destinations and essential services that can support transit are more commonly found in Burke, Columbia, Jefferson, Jenkins, McDuffie, Richmond, Washington, and Wilkes counties.
- Rural transit service is available in all counties in the region except Washington County. Most transit agencies in the region provide service to surrounding counties in the region and Augusta. Jenkins, Taliaferro, and Wilkes counties' transit agencies provide within-county trips only.
- Most trips in the Central Savannah River Area start and end within the same county (79 percent). Inter-county trips are also common, with Richmond, Columbia, and Burke counties as the top destinations.
- Regional connectivity and cross-county trips are critical, as many people must travel outside of the county in which they reside for employment, appointments, education, grocery shopping, and other errands.
- Microtransit and commuter services were suggested as modes that would support the needs of the region.

## 3.0 Implementation Considerations

### 3.1 Overview

Advancing the Regional TDP vision and goals will depend on the implementation resources, especially funding, that are available to support recommended transit strategies. This section provides brief background information about transit funding sources and related implementation strategies. This information provides important context for reviewing the transit alternatives and recommendations, along with implementation details, that are covered in **Sections 4.0** and **5.0**.

### 3.2 Changing Landscape of Urban Areas

In 2020, the U.S. Census Bureau introduced significant changes to the methodology that defines these urbanized areas (UZAs). This has led to a shift in the size and spread of Census-designated UZAs in the region. Though the boundaries of the Augusta-Richmond County UZA has shifted, no significant changes occurred in the region and no additional UZAs were created.

**Table 16** shows historical population growth for the Augusta-Richmond County UZA. With a population well over the 200,000-person cutoff, the Augusta-Richmond UZA is eligible for FTA’s Section 5307 Large Urban program.

**Table 16: CSRA UZA Population**

UZA	2000	2010	2020
Augusta-Richmond County	335,630	386,787	431,480

### 3.3 Summary of Potential Funding Sources

#### 3.3.1 Federal Funding Sources

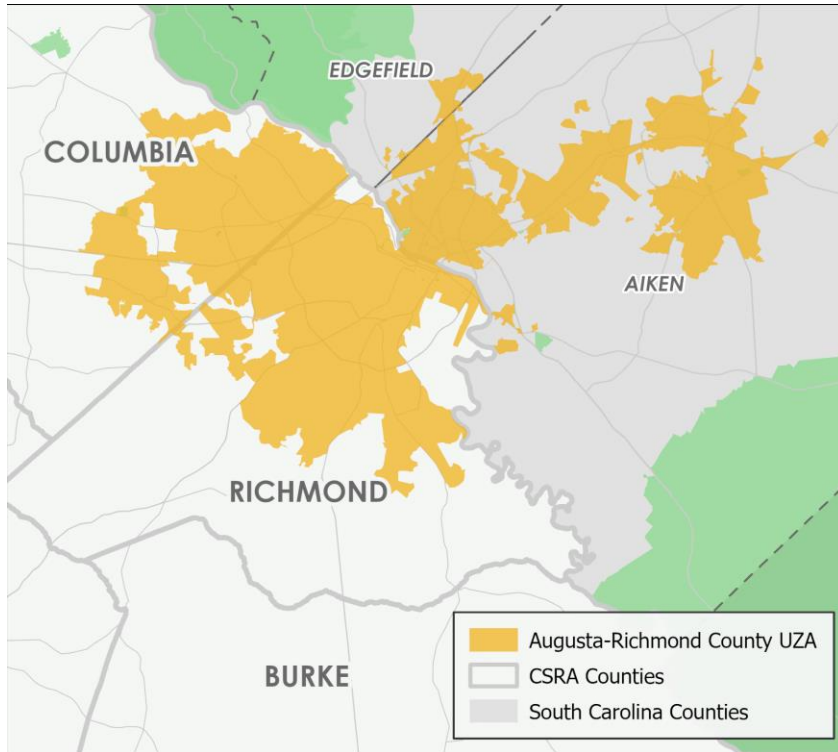
Contributions from the federal government make up the largest single source of funding for most transit agencies. Federal subsidies support urban and rural transit across the nation through programs authorized through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), the nation’s most recent transportation appropriations bill. The major formula funding programs have been carried over from previous appropriations bills, albeit with increased levels of available funds.

##### 3.3.1.1 FTA Section 5307 Urbanized Areas Formula Grants

For UZAs, Section 5307 provides formula funds for planning, operations, and capital expenses. Capital projects under Section 5307 are eligible for an 80 percent federal maximum cost share. Under the current Section 5307 regulations, urban areas with populations below 200,000 may use Section 5307 to fund up to 50 percent of operating budgets. Agencies in large urban areas

may also be eligible to use these funds for operating costs if they operate fewer than 100 buses.

**Figure 20: Augusta-Richmond County Urbanized Area (UZA)**



The Augusta-Richmond County UZA includes much of Richmond County, as well as a portion of Columbia County (See **Figure 20**). The UZA also extends into South Carolina, including parts of Edgefield and Aiken counties.

The Augusta-Richmond UZA covers approximately 33.6 percent of Richmond County and 23.9 percent of Columbia County. In total, 66.9 percent of the UZA sits within Georgia. As a large urban area, the UZA receives its funding directly from FTA, with

Augusta Transit serving as the designated recipient for the area. **Table 17** shows the amounts of FTA 5307 funding awarded to Augusta Transit over a five-year period from 2019 to 2023. Error! Reference source not found. highlights the counties within the region that are eligible for 5307 funding.

**Table 17: Recent Section 5307 Funding Awarded to CSRA Transit Systems**

Funding Recipient	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Augusta Transit	\$5.66M	\$2.73M	\$4.65M	\$2.82M	\$4.40M

Source: GDOT

**Table 18: Georgia Counties Eligible for Section 5307 Funding**

Counties Eligible for Section 5307 Funding	Applicable UZA	Potential Funding Implications
Augusta-Richmond County	Augusta-Richmond County	About 33.6 percent of Augusta-Richmond County lies within the UZA. As a large, urbanized area, Section 5307 funds for this area are distributed directly to Augusta Transit. Rural areas in the southern portion of the county remain eligible for Section 5311 funding.
Columbia County	Augusta-Richmond County	The UZA covers about 74 square miles of Columbia County, around 23.9 percent of the county's total area. The urbanized portion is in the southeast part of the county that borders Augusta-Richmond County. This area would be eligible for Section 5307 funding through coordination with Augusta Transit and the ARTS MPO.

### 3.3.1.2 FTA Section 5311 Funding for Rural Areas

Supporting mobility for rural residents has remained a major priority for both the state and federal departments of transportation. For areas defined as rural by the U.S. Census Bureau, FTA’s Section 5311 program provides formula funding assistance for both operating and capital expenses. In the State of Georgia, all Section 5311 funds are appropriated to GDOT, who then distributes these funds to rural transit providers through subrecipient agreements. **Table 19** provides the recent Section 5311 funding awarded to the 12 rural transit operators in the Central Savannah River Area.

Section 5311 funds may be used by rural transit agencies to fund operational expenses such as driver and dispatcher salaries, licenses, and insurance and fuel costs. Up to 50 percent of operational costs may be derived from federal sources. Capital expenses, such as costs related to the acquisition of transit vehicles, may use up to 80 percent of federal funds.

**Table 19: Recent Section 5311 Funding Awarded in CSRA**

Funding Recipient	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Augusta Transit	\$220K	\$2.1M	\$3.0M	\$2.4M	\$2.6M
Burke Transit	\$234K	\$122K	\$143K	\$100K	\$175K
Columbia County Transit	\$519K	\$235K	\$256K	\$258K	\$266K
Glascocock County Transit	\$89K	\$46K	\$48K	\$50K	\$55K
Hancock County Transit	\$167K	\$78K	\$138K	\$197K	\$214K
Jefferson Transit	\$377K	\$215K	\$272K	\$212K	\$188K
Jenkins County Transit	\$59K	\$31K	\$41K	\$41K	\$39K
Lincoln County Transit	\$180K	\$88K	\$46K	\$60K	\$60K
McDuffie County Transit System	\$110K	\$131K	\$212K	\$138K	\$140K
Taliaferro County Transit	\$110K	\$32K	\$32K	\$79K	\$45K
Warren County Transit	\$104K	\$54K	\$54K	\$144K	\$87K
Wilkes County Transit	\$237K	\$99K	\$146K	\$103K	\$107K

Source: GDOT

### 3.3.1.3 Discretionary Funding Programs

Federal grant funding is also provided through discretionary or competitive grant programs. Transit agencies complete grant applications for each funding program, with funds awarded to select agencies through a defined set of selection criteria. Guidelines for eligible expenses are defined in each grant application, though most grant programs tend to focus on providing support for capital projects. Major discretionary grant programs administered by FTA include the Capital Investment Grant Program, Section 5339(a) Grants for Bus and Bus Facilities Program, and Section 5339(c) Grants for Low- or No-Emission Vehicle Program.

### 3.3.2 State Transit Funding

In addition to its role in administering federal transit funds, the State of Georgia provides funding for several transit initiatives. For the purpose of calculating federal share, state contributions count toward any required local match. GDOT historically provides 10 percent of capital funds for the acquisition of rural transit vehicles under the Section 5311 program, reducing the local contribution for rural transit vehicles to 10 percent.

#### 3.3.2.1 Georgia Transit Trust Fund Program

The Georgia Transit Trust Fund Program (TTFP) is a funding program administered by GDOT that uses a population-based formula to distribute state funds to Georgia’s counties that have existing transit services. The TTFP is funded through a tax levied on rideshare services and other for-hire ground transportation, as passed by the Georgia General Assembly in 2020.

The TTFP Guidelines on GDOT’s website provide specifics about how this funding source is closely aligned with the requirements of the federal transit funding programs (Section 5307 and Section 5311). More information about the TTFP can be found at <http://www.dot.ga.gov/GDOT/Pages/TTFP.aspx>.

For fiscal year 2024, GDOT distributed \$979,853 in TTFP funds for transit providers in the Central Savannah River Area. **Table 20** shows a breakdown of these funds by transit provider. GDOT’s allocation guidelines provide more TTFP dollars for regionalized systems compared to single-county rural transit providers, so the creation of a regionalized rural system within the Central Savannah River Area would result in additional TTFP funds in future years.

Table 20: 2024 Georgia Transit Trust Fund Distributions

Funding Recipient	2024 TTFP Funding Distribution
Augusta Transit	\$277,535
Burke Transit	\$33,040
Columbia County Transit	\$209,568
Glascocock County Transit	\$3,874
Hancock County Transit	\$61,735
Jefferson Transit	\$71,104
Jenkins County Transit	\$61,654
Lincoln County Transit	\$10,330
McDuffie County Transit System	\$79,060
Taliaferro County Transit	\$52,096
Warren County Transit	\$57,007
Wilkes County Transit	\$62,850
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$979,853</b>

Source: GDOT

### 3.3.3 Local Transit Funding

As discussed in the sections above, federal support is contingent on the presence of a local funding match for transit service. This local funding can come from a number of sources, including local general funds, special transportation taxes, fares, advertising revenue, or purchase-of-service (POS) income from other transportation programs.

#### 3.3.3.1 Purchase-of-Service Contracts

Section 5311 programs benefit from POS contracts when used in coordination with HST programs, such as Medicaid’s Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Program or the Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility for Seniors program administered by the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS). Funds derived from these programs are considered program income and thus count as a local match, providing crucial revenues and allowing the use of federal funds over the standard local match requirements.

Several of Georgia’s regional rural transit providers have successfully leveraged these programs to provide close to half of their operational funds, nearly negating the need for local contributions from general funds or local sales taxes. The percentage of an agency’s operating budget provided by POS contracts is defined as the POS ratio. **Table 21** shows 2022 POS income amounts for regional rural providers in the state.

**Table 21: Regional Rural Transit Systems’ Operating Budgets, 2022**

	Regional Rural Transit Systems			
	Coastal Regional Coaches	Southwest Georgia Transit	Three Rivers Transit	Mountain Area Transportation System
<b>Total O&amp;M Costs</b>	\$4,743,004	\$5,563,582	\$1,840,356	\$1,510,216
<b>POS Income</b>	\$1,612,314	\$2,631,435	\$781,197	\$192,531
<b>POS Ratio</b>	34%	47%	42%	13%

### 3.4 Coordination and Partnership Strategies

Advancing the transit vision and goals for the Central Savannah River Area will be reliant on both funding and implementation infrastructure. Administrative capacity, local government endorsement, and strategic cross-jurisdiction and cross-agency collaboration will be critical to advancing alternatives. While advancing many of this Regional TDP's recommendations will rely on additional funding (as detailed in **Section 5.0**), these recommendations will be challenging to get off the ground without capacity building and political will.

The following short- and long-term resources and partnerships are essential coordination pieces for advancing TDP implementation:

- Creating a staff position at CSRA-RC for a regional mobility manager to help refine and advance recommendations into viable, county-supported solutions and do the day-to-day work to advance and keep alive each of the transit recommendations.
- Additional engagement and coordination with the region's urban and rural transit agencies to advance TDP goals and recommendations.
- Regular group meetings with key stakeholders to maintain Regional TDP momentum and advance recommendations.
- Regular collaboration with GDOT, DHS, and the Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH) to identify and pursue available funding and leverage state resources, best practices, and knowledge.
- Meetings with other regional commissions that have regional transit.

- Education within the region among the general public and elected officials about what transit means for the region and why it is needed, highlighting access to essential services and jobs and other items covered in the Transit Needs Assessment in **Section 2.0**.

Several of these items are discussed in greater detail in **Sections 4.0** and **5.0**. They are introduced here as fundamental pieces important to the successful implementation of a unified regional approach to transit development.

## 4.0 Alternatives

The Transit Needs Assessment calculated the latent demand for transit that is not being met by existing transit services. **Section 4.1** provides a brief description of the types of transit services that are explored in this Regional TDP. The remainder of **Section 4.0** introduces and discusses transit service alternatives that would help advance the regional transit vision and goals and address transit needs documented in **Section 2.0**.

### 4.1 Service Modes

Public transit service can be provided across a variety of service modes, each of which addresses specific needs. The selection of a mode that best serves a given area is primarily dependent on the projected amount of demand for transit in the area. This demand is correlated with the residential and employment density of the area. Other factors, such as street grid connectivity and demographic makeup, may also be significant factors in mode selection. The service modes most relevant to this plan are detailed below.

#### 4.1.1 Demand-Response Service

Demand-response 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 reservation, although some providers can provide same-day service on a case-by-case basis. Service providers will often work with the customer to schedule the ride based on other origin-destination pairings to maximize the number of riders per trip. Demand-response services are ideal for suburban to rural areas where population and employment densities are low.

Figure 21: Augusta Transit Demand-Response Vehicle



According to the Population Density Threshold Analysis, demand response is generally the ideal transit service type for the CSRA Region, with exceptions for small portions of downtown Augusta which currently support fixed-route transit. Currently, Augusta Transit offers demand-response services throughout Augusta and Richmond County using cutaway vehicles like the one shown in **Figure 21**. Cutaway vehicles typically seat 15 passengers and can come equipped with wheelchair lifts.

#### 4.1.2 Commuter Service

Commuting refers to a person's travel between a residence and a place of employment, education, and/or training that occurs regularly. By connecting residential areas with job centers, commuter service can provide greater employment opportunities, particularly for those without access to a personal vehicle. Commuter service can be provided by different size vehicles depending on the service area and population and employment levels.

### 4.1.2.1 Commuter Bus Service

In large urban and metropolitan areas, commuter bus service may be provided with larger vehicles such as full-size buses or over-the-road coaches like the one shown in Error! Reference source not found.. In these larger areas, the commuter buses typically operate on fixed routes and schedules based on a typical Monday-Friday professional working schedule. Some schedules provide earlier and later services to provide flexibility for riders. Commuter bus service typically operates in one direction, “into town” in the mornings and “out of town” after work. Pick-up locations are typically at bus transfer centers or park-and-ride locations, and drop-offs are in centrally located areas of employment. Riders typically pay a bus fare, and payment methods and frequency vary by service provider.

Figure 22: Atlanta-Regional Transit Link Authority (ATL) Xpress Commuter Bus



### 4.1.2.2 Vanpool Service

A more flexible commuter service is vanpool, which is like carpooling, but on a larger scale, with slightly larger vehicles. A group of people (typically five or more) with similar origins and destinations meet at a common location of their choosing, where a commuter vehicle such as a van is available for them to ride to work. Alternatively, a vanpool service system could be provided by third-party operators with drivers that pick up riders and drop them off at their destination. Fares vary based on the vanpool system. By saving commuters money on gas, parking, insurance, and wear and tear associated with driving personal vehicles, vanpooling presents an affordable alternative. It can also reduce the stress associated with traveling to and from work.

Vanpool programs can be an effective solution in areas where major employers may not be located in traditional downtowns, or facilities that operate multiple shifts throughout the day. Large-scale manufacturing facilities, logistical hubs, or major agricultural processing plants are all employers that may benefit from vanpool in comparison to traditional commuter bus service.

### 4.1.3 Fixed-Route Service

Fixed-route public transit services follow a specified route and pick 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. Fares vary by provider but are typically required for riders to enter the vehicle. Schedules also vary by service provider and route, but in larger urban areas, service hours are typically early morning to late evening. Paratransit is sometimes offered by fixed-route service providers as a supplement which provides vehicles that can accommodate people with disabilities who cannot board standard buses or trains. Currently, one fixed-route system operates in CSRA: Augusta Transit. **Figure 23** shows the type of vehicle used to provide this service.

**Figure 23: Augusta Transit Bus**



### 4.1.4 Flex-Route Service

Flex-route service, also called deviated fixed route, provides additional flexibility compared to bus service, allowing vehicles to depart from the typical route to make pick-ups and drop-offs. This benefits customers that cannot access the designated stop, such as elderly or disabled riders. The maximum distance deviation is usually minimal (e.g., less than one-quarter mile from a fixed route) so that it does not disrupt the schedule and other customers' experience. In Georgia, Statesboro Area Transit currently offers deviated fixed-route service.

### 4.1.5 Microtransit

Microtransit is an emerging transit mode that is experiencing growing popularity due to the flexibility it can offer in areas where fixed-route transit may not be well suited. 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. Rides may be shared, with vehicles stopping to pick up additional riders during the trip.

Microtransit works best when limited to small zones centered around activity centers, such as smaller cities or suburban neighborhood clusters. Microtransit zones can also be used to offer first-and-last-mile connectivity for fixed-route transit services. As zones get larger, hailing times for vehicles can increase to unacceptable levels, so microtransit may not provide reliable service in rural areas.

## 4.2 SWTRP Framework for Alternatives and Recommendations

The SWTRP introduced three overarching strategy categories as the framework for its alternatives and recommendations discussion. These categories are:

1. Transit Service Expansion,
2. Transit Service Enhancement, and
3. Administrative Tools and Guidance.

This Central Savannah River Area TDP carries this framework forward for consistency, with alternatives and recommendations assigned to the most applicable strategy bucket. The methodology for developing cost estimates for the following recommendations can be found in **Appendix C**.

**Transit Service Expansion** alternatives aim to meet GDOT's goal of providing public transit service statewide. Service expansion alternatives take the form of capacity improvements and the creation of a fully regionalized rural transit service.

**Transit Service Enhancement** alternatives are geared toward increasing the efficiency, reliability, ease-of-use, and safety of public transit service. Alternatives include expanding the span of service, creating additional fare options and subsidies, and implementing online and mobile booking options.

**Administrative Tools and Guidance** alternatives include marketing and technology tools such as a regional mobility manager, a website overhaul, a toolkit for the Let's Ride App, and grant administration technical assistance.

### 4.3 Transit Service Expansion Alternatives

The initial set of alternatives prioritizes expanding public transit to unserved areas and enhancing existing services to meet the demands of the region’s aging population more effectively. For information on specific transit market demographics, see **Section 2.4** within the **Existing Conditions Report**.

#### 4.3.1 Commuter Service

Commuter services are designed to offer efficient, reliable, and convenient options for daily travel, particularly during peak commuting hours. Eight commuter service-related alternatives are proposed for the region’s transit agencies and are described in **Table 22** below.

Table 22: Commuter Service Alternatives

Transit Service Expansion Alternatives	Alternative Description
Transit Service Expansion Alternatives: Commuter Service	Ex-1) Organize a vanpool program by partnering with statewide providers, large employers, or non-profits (regional)
	Ex-2) Organize a vanpool program by partnering with statewide providers, large employers, or non-profits (Lincoln County)
	Ex-3) Organize a vanpool program by partnering with statewide providers, large employers, or non-profits (Hancock County)
	Ex-4) Organize a vanpool program by partnering with statewide providers, large employers, or non-profits (Jenkins County)

Transit Service Expansion Alternatives	Alternative Description
	Ex-5) County partners with statewide options to start a vanpool program in the county, while utilizing park-and-ride lots (Washington County)
	Ex-6) County partners with statewide options to start a vanpool program in the county, while utilizing park-and-ride lots (Jefferson County)
	Ex-7) County forms a public-private partnership with large employers to offer employer-specific shuttles (Burke County)
	Ex-8) County forms a public-private partnership with large employers to offer employer-specific shuttles (Columbia County)

**Ex-1-Ex-8: Organize a vanpool program by partnering with statewide providers, large employers, or non-profits**

CSRA-RC should organize a vanpool program by partnering with stakeholders at the local, regional, and statewide levels. Individual counties can also organize vanpool systems for additional commuter services. Vanpooling offers several benefits that may be of interest to the region’s transit agencies, including cost efficiency, reduced traffic congestion within the region, positive environmental impact, and enhanced mobility:

- **Cost Efficiency:** By implementing a vanpool service in collaboration with statewide providers, large employers, or non-profits, the agencies can enable multiple riders to share the same vehicles. This approach effectively reduces the overall cost of transportation for both the region’s transit agencies and individual riders.

- **Reduced Traffic Congestion:** Promoting the use of vanpooling rather than single-occupancy vehicles may reduce the total number of vehicles on the regional roadway network, thereby alleviating traffic congestion.
- **Positive Environmental Impact:** Promoting a mode shift from single-occupancy vehicles to vanpooling supports the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, which in turn contributes to cleaner air.
- **Enhanced Mobility:** By promoting vanpooling, agencies can enhance mobility options for rural and traditionally underserved communities.

Potential cost estimates for a regional vanpool in CSRA are located in **Table 23**.

**Table 23: Cost Estimates for Regional Vanpool**

	Vanpool Assumptions and Costs
<b>Days</b>	Mon-Fri
<b>Hours</b>	5:30 – 8:00 AM, 4:00 – 7:00 PM
<b>Vehicles</b>	26
<b>Annual Vehicles Hours</b>	25,811
<b>Annual Vehicle Miles</b>	952,435
<b>Annual O&amp;M Costs</b>	\$559,278

### 4.3.2 Local Service

Five local service alternatives are described in **Table 24**. Each alternative suggests initiating either a zone-based microtransit service or limited fixed-route service within several key locations within across the CSRA Region.

**Table 24: Local Service Alternatives**

Transit Service Expansion Alternatives	Alternative Description
Transit Service Expansion Alternatives: Local Service	Ex-9) Augusta Transit creates a microtransit program to serve more remote areas, including cross-jurisdictional locations
	Ex-10) Burke County initiates a zone-based microtransit service pilot in Waynesboro
	Ex-11) Washington County initiates a zone-based microtransit service pilot in Sandersville and Tennille
	Ex-12) Lincoln County initiates a zone-based microtransit service pilot in Lincolnton
	Ex-13) Explore an express bus to serve South Augusta

**Ex-9-Ex-13: Initiate a zone-based microtransit service or limited fixed-route service in South Augusta, Waynesboro, Sandersville, Tennille, and Lincolnton**

A zone-based microtransit service would enhance mobility, support tourism, and contribute to the overall well-being of residents and visitors in the region. Microtransit could enhance the visitor experience by offering quick and convenient transportation between key destinations and tourist attractions, hotels, and nearby dining experiences. In addition, microtransit could support first- and last-mile trips for residents, workers, and tourists traveling home or to major transit hubs in these areas. CSRA-RC, Augusta Transit, Burke County, Washington County, and Lincoln County would be responsible for implementation.

Zone-based microtransit is supported in the Augusta Transit Climate Action Plan and Envision Augusta Plans. Additionally, Augusta Transit (stakeholder interview finding) has expressed interest in microtransit and limited-fixed route service. Stakeholders from Waynesboro, Sandersville, and Lincolnton also expressed interest in microtransit during their interviews.

**4.3.3 Mobility Gap**

One demand-response transit service alternative (see **Table 25**) is recommended to bridge mobility gaps in the CSRA Region.

**Table 25: Mobility Gap Alternative**

Transit Service Expansion Alternative	Alternative Description
Transit Service Expansion Alternative: Mobility Gap	Ex-14) Explore a countywide demand-response transit service (Washington County)

**Ex-14: Explore a countywide demand-response transit service for Washington County**

Demand-response transit is a flexible form of service that does not adhere to fixed routes or timetables. Rather, demand-response transit provides curb-to-curb or door-to-door pickups and drop-offs upon eligible riders' request. Oftentimes, passengers may set up rides through a mobile app or telephone. Riders typically go through an eligibility process that helps determine if they qualify for the service. This type of service is common in rural areas of low passenger demand and would be beneficial to Washington County.

**4.3.4 Regionalization**

One span of service-related alternative is recommended for the region and includes regionalizing and consolidating transit resources (see **Table 26**).

**Table 26: Regionalization Alternatives**

Transit Service Expansion Alternatives	Alternative Description
Transit Service Expansion Alternatives: Regionalization	Ex-15) Fully regionalized transit service/ consolidate existing rural transit providers
	Ex-16) Richmond, Columbia, McDuffie, Jefferson, and Burke counties incorporate rural systems into a multi-county system

**Ex-8: Fully regionalized transit service/consolidate existing rural transit providers**

CSRA-RC, in coordination with multiple counties within the region, should fully regionalize and/or consolidate its existing rural transit providers to simplify governance and decision making, reduce costs, and improve service coverage. By consolidating services, smaller providers may combine resources which may help with shared maintenance responsibilities, facilities, and vehicles. Consolidating service across multiple providers may make it easier for passengers to travel across the region by offering connections between different locations. Suggested counties for consolidation are Richmond, Columbia, McDuffie, Jefferson, and Burke counties.

**4.3.5 Span of Service**

Two service-related alternatives are proposed for the CSRA Region and are described in **Table 27**. Both alternatives propose six-month trials to improve and reassess transit services across the CSRA Region.

**Table 27: Span of Service Alternatives**

Transit Service Expansion Alternatives	Alternative Description
Transit Service Expansion Alternatives: Span of Service	Ex-17) Conduct a six-month trial of limited Sunday service (Augusta Transit)
	Ex-18) Conduct a six-month trial of expanded service hours to better serve nontraditional work hours

Service span refers to when transit services are operational (e.g., days of the week and hours per day). The transit agencies were scored to measure existing span scores, to determine the amount of extra service hours.

**Table 28** expands upon how the score was calculated.

The scoring criteria are based on the Demand-Response Transit Service Span section of *TCRP Report 165: Transit Capacity and Quality of Service Manual-3rd Edition*.

**Table 28: Days and Hours of Service Scoring References**

Days of Service	Days of Service Score	Hours of Service	Hours of Service Score
7 days/ week	5	>16.0 hour/day	5
6 days/ week	4	12.0 – 15.9 hour/day	4
5 days/ week	3	9.0 – 11.9 hour/day	3
Less than 5 days/ week	2	5.0 – 8.9 hour/day	2
Less than weekly	1	<5.0 hour/day	1

Day ranges are sourced from *TCRP Report 165: Transit Capacity and Quality of Service Manual – 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*

Table 29 lists current service spans for each transit provider in the region, along with a corresponding score.

Table 29: Service Span Score for CSRA Transit Agencies<sup>1</sup>

	Augusta Transit	Burke Transit	Columbia County Transit	Glascocock County Transit	Hancock County Transit	Jefferson Transit	Jenkins County Transit	Lincoln County Transit	McDuffie County Transit System	Taliaferro County Transit	Warren County Transit	Wilkes County Transit
Days of Service	Weekdays and Saturday	Weekdays	Weekdays	Weekdays	Weekdays and Saturday	Weekdays	Weekdays	Weekdays	Weekdays	Tuesday-Friday	Weekdays	Weekdays
Days of Service Score	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	2	3	3
Hours of Service	12.5 (6:30 AM - 7:00 PM)	11 (7:00 AM - 6:00 PM)	5.5 (10:00 AM - 3:30 PM)	8 Mon-Fri (8:00 AM - 4:00 PM) Wed (8:00 AM - 12:00 PM)	13 (4:00 AM - 5:00 PM)	11 (6:00 AM - 5:00 PM)	8 (8:30 AM - 4:30 PM)	8 (9:00 AM - 5:00 PM)	8 (8:00 AM - 4:00 PM)	9 (8:00 AM - 5:00 PM)	11 (4:00 AM - 3:00 PM)	9.5 Mon-Thurs (7:30 AM - 5:00 PM) Fri (7:30 AM - 12:00 PM)
Hours of Service Score	4	3	2	2	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Aggregate Score	8	6	5	5	8	6	6	6	6	5	6	6

<sup>1</sup> Previous editions of *TCRP Report 165: Transit Capacity and Quality of Service Manual* assigned Levels of Service (LOS) for service span. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition removed LOS ratings, but the ranges are still used for comparison purposes.

Rural transit providers in the region provide at least an 8-hour operating service span for most weekdays. Between Augusta Transit’s combined weekday and weekend service, the agency provides at least 12.5 total hours per day of service to its riders.

To improve upon their service span scores, rural transit providers should consider either expanding their weekday hours and/or offering weekend service. Potential schedule modification alternatives are provided for the transit providers with lower scores. It is recommended that each agency conducts transit rider surveys to better understand their community’s needs.

**Ex-17: Conduct a six-month trial of limited Sunday service**

To determine whether additional service would be financially viable, Augusta Transit could consider offering a six-month trial period for Sunday service, coinciding with a public marketing campaign of the service and the new hours. After six months, an analysis of the trial period could help determine if the expanded service should continue. Such a trial period would begin with a reduced number of vehicles in service, but the number of vehicles could be increased in the case of high demand.

The following table provides cost estimates for Augusta Transit to conduct a six-month trial period for Sunday service (**Table 30**).

**Table 30: Cost Estimates for Augusta Transit Sunday Service Six-Month Pilot**

	Augusta Transit
Additional Hours of Operation	10 (9:00 AM-7:00 PM)
Vehicles in Operation	4
Additional Trial Period Vehicle Hours	1,040
Additional Trial Period Vehicle Miles	7,366
Additional Trial Period O&M Costs	\$122,608

**Ex-18: Conduct a six-month trial of expanded service hours to better serve non-traditional work hours**

All rural transit providers should consider conducting a six-month trial of expanded service hours to serve employees with non-traditional work hours. In order to reach a wider audience, including people with irregular schedules, late shifts, or early mornings, agencies may find it more accessible to extend their service hours. A six-month trial period is non-binding and allows agencies enough time to see if the shift in service is beneficial. **Table 31** provides the cost estimates for the extended service hours six-month pilot period.

**Table 31: Cost Estimates for Extended Hours Service Six-Month Pilot**

	Burke Transit	Columbia County Transit	Glascok County Transit	Hancock County Transit	Jefferson Transit	Jenkins County Transit	Lincoln County Transit	McDuffie County Transit System	Taliaferro County Transit	Warren County Transit	Wilkes County Transit
<b>Additional Hours of Operation</b>	6 (5:00 AM - 10:00 PM)	11.5 (5:00 AM - 10:00 PM)	9 (5:00 AM - 10:00 PM)	5 (4:00 AM - 10:00 PM)	6 (5:00 AM - 10:00 PM)	9 (5:00 AM - 10:00 PM)	9 (5:00 AM - 10:00 PM)	9 (5:00 AM - 10:00 PM)	8 (5:00 AM - 10:00 PM)	7 (4:00 AM - 10:00 PM)	7.5 (5:00 AM - 10:00 PM)
<b>Vehicles in Operation</b>	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Additional Trial Period Vehicle Hours</b>	12	23	18	15	12	18	18	18	16	14	15
<b>Additional Trial Period Vehicle Miles</b>	521	203	1,542	563	1,017	452	964	903	714	1,059	2,144
<b>Additional Trial Period O&amp;M Costs</b>	\$4,363	\$16,101	\$1,671	\$4,425	\$2,332	\$2,124	\$2,026	\$5,135	\$1,652	\$2,075	\$2,556

### 4.3.6 Shuttle Service

Two shuttle-related services are proposed within the CSRA Region and are listed below in **Table 32**.

**Table 32: Shuttle Service Alternatives**

Transit Service Expansion Alternatives	Alternative Description
Transit Service Expansion Alternatives: Shuttle Service	Ex-19) Explore a shuttle service between Augusta and Fort Eisenhower, with a stop at Augusta Mall
	Ex-20) Explore a shuttle service between Augusta and Augusta Regional Airport

***Ex-19: Explore a shuttle service between Augusta and Fort Eisenhower, with a stop at Augusta Mall***

A new shuttle service would greatly benefit Augusta and Fort Eisenhower by providing a convenient and cost-effective way for travelers to move between the destinations. This service is supported by the ARTS 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan. CSRA-RC and Augusta Transit would be responsible for the implementation of this service.

***Ex-20: Explore a shuttle service between Augusta and Augusta Regional Airport***

Similar to alternative Ex-19, Ex-20 promotes the exploration of a shuttle service but between Augusta and the Augusta Regional Airport. Such a service would facilitate convenient travel for both residents and visitors seeking access to the Augusta Regional Airport. This may help alleviate any challenges associated with parking at the airport. This service is also supported by the ARTS 2050 Metropolitan Transportation Plan. CSRA-RC and Augusta Transit would be responsible for the implementation of this service.

Cost estimates for shuttle services are provided in

**Table 33** (next page).

**Table 33: Cost Estimates to Invest in Shuttle Service**

	<b>Augusta to Airport</b>	<b>Augusta to Fort Eisenhower</b>
<b>Vehicles</b>	3	2
<b>Annual Vehicle Hours</b>	776,912	776,912
<b>Annual Vehicle Miles</b>	42,586	42,586
<b>Annual Ridership</b>	60,485	60,485
<b>Annual O&amp;M Costs*</b>	\$2,479,708	\$2,479,708
<i>Fares</i>	\$180,000	\$180,000
<i>Federal Share</i>	\$1,250,000	\$1,240,000
<i>Purchase of Service</i>	\$125,000	\$120,000
<i>Local Share</i>	\$1,010,000	\$1,020,000
<b>One-Time Capital Costs</b>	\$345,000	\$230,000
<i>Federal Share</i>	\$276,000	\$184,000
<i>State Share</i>	\$34,500	\$23,000
<i>Local Share</i>	\$34,500	\$23,000

\*Calculations use each Transit Provider's 2022 Fare Recovery Rates to Estimate Portion of O&M Costs Recovered Through Fares

### 4.3.8 Cross-County Partnerships

Five cross-county partnership alternatives are proposed within the CSRA Region and are listed below in **Table 34**.

**Table 34: Cross-County Partnerships Alternatives**

Transit Service Expansion Alternatives	Alternative Description
Transit Service Expansion Alternatives: Cross-County Partnerships	Ex-21) Jefferson County and Columbia County to partner for medical appointments
	Ex-22) Augusta Transit and Columbia County to partner for cross-county trips
	Ex-23) County partnership with Baldwin County for service to Milledgeville (Hancock and Washington counties)
	Ex-24) Jenkins County partnership with Bulloch County for service to Statesboro
	Ex-25) Richmond, Columbia, McDuffie, Jefferson, and Burke counties partner to allow cross-county trips

#### ***Ex-21-Ex-25: Initiate partnerships between various counties for cross-county trips***

Multiple counties in CSRA could benefit from allowing cross-county trips. These partnerships should include counties inside the region and outside, like Baldwin and Bullock counties. Origin and destination (OD) data supports these partnerships, as these alternatives are based on the highest pairings of OD data.

Transit agencies would need to coordinate to develop memorandums of understanding to cross county lines.

## 4.4 Transit Service Enhancement Alternatives

Transit service enhancement refers to operational improvements that would make transit more accessible and effective for the region. Examples include improvements in the performance areas of ease-of-use, efficiency, reliability, and SGR. The following subsections explore several transit service enhancement ideas for CSRA.

### 4.4.1 Asset Management

One asset management alternative is proposed and applies to GDOT and all rural transit service providers (see **Table 35**).

**Table 35: Asset Management Alternative**

Transit Service Enhancement Alternative	Alternative Description
Transit Service Enhancement Alternative: Asset Management	En-1) Invest in new vehicles to maintain SGR

**En-1: Invest in new vehicles to maintain SGR**

To keep vehicles in a SGR, GDOT and the region’s rural transit service providers should buy new ones for several reasons. Enhanced dependability is the first. New vehicles are less likely to have malfunctions and have problems during operation. They enhance customer happiness and lessen service interruptions, which add to a dependable system. Second, because they have less wear and tear, newer vehicles might pose fewer safety risks. Finally, compared to older vehicles, newer ones require less frequent and expensive maintenance.

Cost estimates to invest in new vehicles are outlined in **Table 36**.

**Table 36: Cost Estimates to Invest in New Vehicles**

	CSRA Region
<b>Vehicles</b>	59
<b>Annual Vehicle Hours</b>	69,542
<b>Annual Vehicle Miles</b>	1,030,450
<b>Annual Ridership</b>	145,957
<b>Annual O&amp;M Costs</b>	\$3,840,445
<i>Fares</i>	\$181,238
<i>Federal Share</i>	\$1,920,222
<i>Purchase of Service</i>	\$4,929
<i>Local Share</i>	\$1,734,056
<b>One-Time Capital Costs</b>	\$8,143,106
<i>Federal Share</i>	\$6,514,485
<i>State Share</i>	\$814,311
<i>Local Share</i>	\$814,311

### 4.4.2 Fares

All of CSRA’s rural transit service providers should evaluate fare structure and payment modifications to ensure their services are equitable and accessible for all members within the community, no matter their background. Potential fare adjustments are outlined in **Table 37**.

**Table 37: Fare Alternatives**

Transit Service Enhancement Alternative	Alternative Description
Transit Service Enhancement Alternatives: Fares	En-2) Offer senior discounts (25-50%)
	En-3) Implement regional fare integration
	En-4) Implement fare integration with Best Friend Express in South Carolina
	En-5) Transition to digital payment (app, credit/bank card, stored-value fare card)

***En-2: Offer senior discounts (25-50%)***

Many transit agencies across the state offer discounts to specific populations, such as seniors, disabled persons, and frequent riders. With the rising aging population across the CSRA Region, senior discounts can help ensure that transit is accessible to this population. This alternative should be implemented by all rural transit service providers in the CSRA Region except for Wilkinson County, which already offers senior discounts.

***En-3 and En-4: Implement regional fare integration and implement fare integration with Best Friend Express in South Carolina***

If all transit service providers in the CSRA Region were to consolidate their payment systems into a single unified system, fare collection across various transit services would be streamlined, making it easier for passengers to transfer between different transit options within the region. Various pass levels and associated pricing could be developed to cater to the diverse needs of riders in the region (e.g., single ride or monthly). Augusta Transit and Best Friend Express, in South Carolina, could also work together to consolidate their payment systems into a single unified system to allow for easier transfers for passengers. Both transit agencies would be responsible for the implementation of this alternative.

***En-5: Transition to digital payment (app, credit/bank card, stored-value fare card)***

All rural transit service providers in the CSRA Region should consider transitioning to a digital payment system. Agencies may be able to lower expenses for riders and increase overall system efficiency by making the switch to digital payment methods. Providing riders with a quick and easy method to pay for services by permitting contactless card payments may help reduce idle time. The cost of gathering and processing adds to the expense of handling cash.

To avoid payment challenges for unbanked riders, agencies could allow riders to use prepaid cards to purchase rides digitally at transit centers, kiosks, or local pharmacies such as CVS or Walgreens.

### 4.4.3 Scheduling

Two schedule-related alternatives are proposed for all rural transit providers within the CSRA Region and are described below in **Table 38**.

**Table 38: Schedule Alternatives**

Transit Service Enhancement Alternative	Alternative Description
Transit Service Enhancement Alternatives: Schedule	En-6) Partner with GDOT to implement the Let's Ride application for scheduling and payment
	En-7) Allow for recurring reservations and offer discounts through a subscription option

***En-6: Partner with GDOT to implement the Let's Ride application for scheduling and payment***

Scheduling and paying for trips can often be a barrier which may be overcome by a user-friendly smartphone application interface. Some rural transit providers in Georgia have already partnered with GDOT to ease scheduling through a smartphone application called Let's Ride. This alternative is supported in the 2020 GDOT SWTRP.

***En-7: Allow for recurring reservations and offer discounts through a subscription option***

While smartphone applications can facilitate transit use for some groups, they may pose challenges for seniors who are not comfortable navigating smartphone applications.

To address this, a subscription option for recurring reservations could be created, allowing elderly individuals to get assistance from friends or family members with booking recurring reservations in advance. Staff at senior centers and libraries could also be trained to assist elderly individuals with booking trips. Transit agencies should keep a phone number as an alternative option in case potential riders do not have the ability to use a smartphone. Discounts through the subscription could be offered to promote use of transit services as well.

## 4.5 Administrative Tools and Guidance

The following section provides administrative tools and guidance strategies aimed at assisting the regional commission and transit agencies with planning, funding, and other administrative needs.

A more targeted technical assistance strategy is needed for counties in the CSRA Region that currently lack rural public transit. Since a major goal of this plan is to bring transit service to all the counties in the region, GDOT should hold one-on-one workshops with the 13 counties that make up CSRA. These workshops could focus on educating decision-makers on different transit models and available funding sources to help offset both operational and capital expenditures. Counties with existing transit services could provide lessons learned, share resources, and promote regional connections during these meetings as well.

With four counties (Columbia, Burke, Richmond, and McDuffie) expected to increase in population over the next 40 years, more emphasis should be put on understanding the opportunities and challenges of administering transit programs jointly funded by the FTA Section 5307 urban transit program and Section 5311 rural transit program. It is recommended that GDOT and CSRA-RC jointly host focused technical assistance meetings with local governments and their respective MPOs.

Another administrative challenge in this region is the need to determine the best model for a transit service to meet workforce demand. A training and workforce development alternative is discussed in **Section 4.5.4**.

### 4.5.1 Marketing & Awareness

As part of this TDP, a six-month educational campaign is proposed as the primary marketing and awareness strategy to increase awareness of transit services throughout the region (**Table 39**).

**Table 39: Marketing & Awareness Alternative**

Marketing & Awareness Alternative	Alternative Description
Administrative Tools & Guidance Alternative: Marketing & Awareness	Ad-1) Partner with GDOT on a six-month educational campaign to raise awareness about transit offerings across the region

***Ad-1: Partner with GDOT on a six-month educational campaign to raise awareness about transit offerings across the region***

Employment of a marketing campaign to transit-dependent populations would raise awareness and thereby increase access to transit. Better leveraging technology to market existing transit options is one low-cost solution to improve awareness. Improved website information along with social media and QR code marketing campaigns are simple tools that can be used to increase awareness about transit information. Social media ads or boosts can help push the information to those areas of the CSRA Region that have high concentrations of transit-

dependent populations. Print materials should supplement web-based information in areas where broadband is limited, or transit dependent populations are less likely to utilize online resources. CSRA-RC and GDOT could utilize resources through the GDOT Let's Ride toolkit and the National Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP) resource library.

### 4.5.2 Planning

Three planning-related alternatives are described in **Table 40**. These alternatives offer potential hiring strategies, as well as plan guidance.

**Table 40: Planning Alternatives**

Planning Alternatives	Alternative Description
Administrative Tools & Guidance Alternatives: Planning	Ad-2) Hire a regional mobility manager to help with transit planning across the region, such as convening conferences/trainings and facilitating discussions between transit providers and area employers
	Ad-3) Hire a staff transportation planner to support transit planning in the region
	Ad-4) Explore governance options for agencies that may have capacity challenges in providing transit services

**Ad-2: Hire a Regional Mobility Manager to help with transit planning across the region, such as convening conferences/trainings and facilitating discussions between transit providers and area employers**

The SWTRP recommended the creation of a regional mobility manager position at each regional commission across the state. The person serving in this role would help with transit planning across the region, coordinate training events and conferences, and provide specific resources to senior centers and other locations with a high likelihood of having transit riders. By facilitating discussions with organizations such as universities, hospitals, and employers, the regional mobility manager could also help move forward key initiatives that are identified through collaborative planning processes. Within the CSRA Region, such a position could also help track population trends, identify creative solutions to meet transit service gaps, and take a leadership role in implementing TDP recommendations such as a regional microtransit program.

It would cost CSRA-RC \$110,000 per year to hire a regional mobility manager. This amount would fully fund a staff position, including covering the cost of salary, benefits, and other employment expenses. This alternative is supported by the 2020 GDOT SWTRP.

**Ad-3: Hire a staff transportation planner to support transit planning in the region**

By hiring staff transportation planners, CSRA-RC may analyze data, optimize routes, and promote public transit across the region. The staff planner may also be a mobility manager as described in Ad-2.

**Ad-4: Explore governance options for agencies that may have capacity challenges in providing transit services**

Fragmented governance responsibilities may hinder regional strategies for service integration. CSRA-RC may assume governance responsibilities for agencies that lack staffing to provide sufficient transit services. In return, this may streamline decision-making, resource allocation, and service planning across the region. Individual agencies may also be able to pool resources to secure grant funding through a regionalized governance approach.

**4.5.3 Technology**

Potential technology-related recommendations for enhancing transit service are covered below in **Table 41**.

**Table 41: Technology Alternatives**

Technology Alternatives	Alternative Description
Administrative Tools & Guidance Alternatives: Technology	Ad-5) Provide regionalized call center/central phone number for booking
	Ad-6) Update transit directory webpage with regional transit map, offering features like trip planning assistance and online booking through QRyde

**Ad-6: Provide regionalized call center/central phone number for booking**

CSRA-RC and all rural transit service providers should consider implementing a regionalized call center/central phone number for booking purposes. A central phone number would provide a single point of contact for ride booking. This number would route callers through a phone tree to the appropriate dispatch office of transit providers.

**Ad-7: Update transit directory webpage with regional transit map, offering features like trip planning assistance and online booking through QRyde**

CSRA-RC and all rural transit service providers should consider updating their transit directory web pages with a regional transit map. This may allow riders to see where they can make connections between services provided across the CSRA Region. Additionally, offering features like trip planning assistance and online booking through QRyde may enhance the rider experience, making it easier to book, view, and cancel trips. Overall, this may encourage ridership, save the agency time and resources on manual booking, and help agencies gain insights into passenger preferences through the booking system.

**4.5.4 Training & Workforce Development**

Another administrative challenge in this region is the need to determine the best model for a transit service to meet workforce demand. Two alternatives are provided in **Table 42**.

**Table 42: Training & Workforce Development Alternatives**

Training & Workforce Development Alternative	Alternative Description
Administrative Tools & Guidance	Ad-7) Partner with area technical colleges to provide training and certification programs for drivers and mechanics

Training & Workforce Development Alternative	Alternative Description
Alternatives: Training & Workforce Development	Ad-8) Partner with CSRA Economic Opportunity Authority (EOA) to initiate a driver hiring/retention marketing campaign and program

**Ad-7 and Ad-8: Partner with area technical colleges and CSRA EOA to provide training and certification programs for drivers and mechanics with a hiring/retention marketing campaign.**

In the CSRA Region, Augusta Technical College and Miller-Motte College may be influential in supporting technical education and job development. Hence, in order to give students real-world experience and possibilities for training that would prepare them for careers in transportation, GDOT, CSRA-RC, and/or Augusta Transit should look into partnering with higher education institutions.

## 4.6 Alternatives Feedback Survey Results

The second CSRA TDP survey was open from February 10 to March 7, 2025. Participants were asked to provide input on alternative proposals for transit service expansion and enhancement. 63 individuals completed the survey. Key takeaways are listed below:

- All respondents (100 percent) drive alone as their primary form of transportation.
- Almost all respondents (90.5 percent) agreed with the draft vision statement. Six respondents disagreed.
- When asked about the level of need for the proposed transit alternatives, respondents expressed the greatest need for discount programs, allowing for cross-county trips, and a multi-county or regional transit system. **Figure 24** provides additional details.

Additional information about the public survey results and other public and stakeholder involvement activities can be found in **Appendix A**.

Figure 24: Alternatives Ranking from Second Public Survey

### Survey Feedback and Alternatives Rankings (Weighted Average - Maximum of 5.0)

- 4.5 Develop discount programs for targeted audiences.
- 4.3 Richmond, Columbia, McDuffie, Jefferson, and Burke Counties partner to allow cross-county trips.
- 4.3 Richmond, Columbia, McDuffie, Jefferson, and Burke Counties incorporate rural systems into a multi-county system.
- 4.3 Incorporation of all rural systems into a single regional system.
- 4.3 Update website with regional transit map and offer features like trip planning assistance and online booking.
- 4.3 Lead 6-month marketing campaign to raise awareness about existing transit services across the region.
- 4.2 GDOT partners with technical colleges to provide training and certification programs for drivers and mechanics.
- 4.2 All rural providers allow for recurring reservations and offer discounts through a subscription option.
- 4.2 Organize a vanpool program by partnering with statewide providers, large employers, or nonprofits.
- 4.2 Invest in new vehicles to maintain State-of-Good-Repair.

## 5.0 Recommendations

### 5.1 Framework and Criteria

The transit alternatives reviewed in **Section 4.0** resulted from the Project Team's analysis of existing conditions, transit needs, and community vision for additional transit services. The Project Team determined that all alternatives, with a few exceptions, should be advanced as recommendations. These recommendations should either 1) be implemented upon solidification of the right mix of implementation resources or 2) be further evaluated as the CSRA Region advances TDP implementation.

Recommendations focus on increasing access to public transit service in CSRA areas with the following characteristics:

- Counties that do not currently have GDOT-administered public transit service,
- Areas with high transit propensity and/or unmet demand, and/or
- Counties with the greatest number of regionally significant destinations, including medical facilities and large employers.

#### 5.1.1 Scoring Methodology

The Project Team developed a scoring methodology to help prioritize recommendations based on qualitative criteria in addition to the project costs identified in the previous section. **Figure 25** summarizes the scoring methodology. Each transit recommendation received a composite score, which is the total score across the six categories. The maximum composite score is six, and the strategies and actions have been grouped into recommendation tiers based on their composite scores.

Figure 25: Evaluation Methodology

**Goal 1: Enhancing Accessibility and Connectivity (max score of 1)**

- Does the recommendation provide connections to essential services and daily needs (employment, education, healthcare, and other vital services) within the region? **(0.40)**
- Does the recommendation provide connections to essential services and daily needs (outside the region)? **(0.20)**
- Does the recommendation increase service to rural areas without service? **(0.20)**
- Does the recommendation expand provider service areas to accommodate cross-county trips? **(0.20)**

**Goal 2: Facilitating Regional Collaboration (max score of 1)**

- Does the recommendation help transit providers gain administrative and/or operational efficiencies? **(0.50)**
- Does the recommendation increase cooperation among local governments, transit providers, regional planning agencies, and/or local employers? **(0.50)**

**Goal 3: Promoting Marketing and Advertising (max score of 1)**

- Does the recommendation provide tools for marketing and outreach? **(0.50)**
- Does the recommendation make riding transit more convenient and/or reliable? **(0.50)**

**Goal 4: Promoting Inclusivity, Equity, and Accessibility (max score of 1)**

- Does the recommendation increase transit service hours? **(0.50)**
- Does the recommendation help ensure equitable access for all groups? **(0.50)**

**Goal 5: Identifying Sustainable Funding (max score of 1)**

- Does the recommendation leverage existing resources to support transit services? **(0.50)**
- Does the recommendation encourage support from federal, state, or local governance or funding sources? **(0.50)**

**Feedback (max score of 1)**

- Is the recommendation a top priority of GDOT staff? **(0.33)**
- Was the recommendation positively received by the Project Advisory Committee? **(0.33)**
- Was the recommendation positively received by the public? **(0.33)**

### 5.1.2 Tiers

The Project Team established three recommendation tiers (**Figure 26**). The high impact tier recommendations are most likely to improve transit service efficiencies while fostering greater regional collaboration.

**High Impact Tier:** These recommendations received a composite score between 4 and 6, have a regional or multi-county coordination component, and received support from stakeholders and community members. These alternatives have been advanced as the top priorities. High impact tier recommendations are shown in **Table 43**.

**Mid Impact Tier:** These recommendations scored between 2 and 4, only achieved some of the Regional TDP goal criteria, or did not receive broad stakeholder and public support. These recommendations are grouped as mid impact tier recommendations and are listed in **Table 44**.

The mid impact tier recommendations are important for advancing transit service across the region, but they may not affect as many riders as high impact tier recommendations due to their smaller service area or a specific target population. In some cases, these recommendations may be easier and faster to implement than those listed in **Table 43** as they are smaller in scale.

**Fundamental Tier:** These recommendations are critical for implementation of the Regional TDP. Since they are not projects like the other two categories, these recommendations were not scored. The fundamental tier recommendations are listed in **Table 45**.

Figure 26: Recommendation Tiers



**High Impact Recommendations Tier:** These recommendations received a composite score between 4 and 6, meaning they were highly prioritized by the public/stakeholders. They have a regional or multi-county benefit.

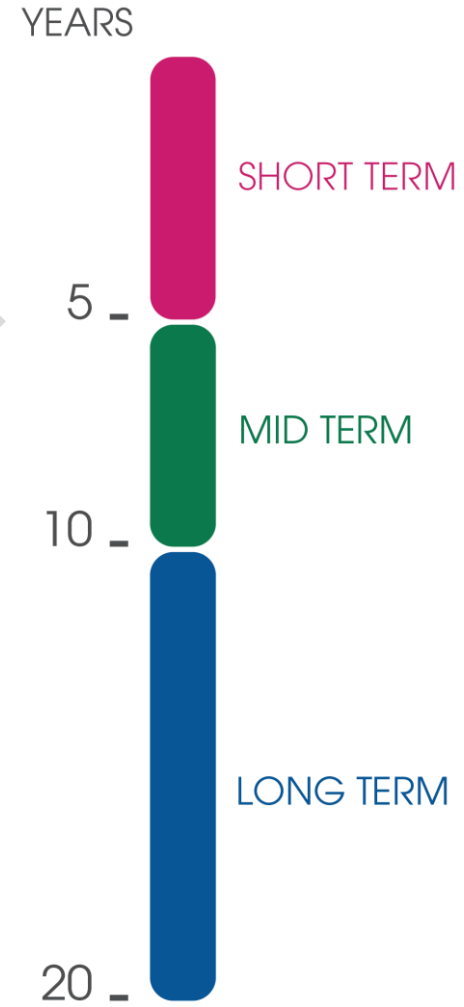
**Mid Impact Recommendations Tier:** These recommendations received a composite score between 2 and 4, meaning they were not as widely received by the public/stakeholders, or they achieved fewer of the CSRA TDP goal criteria.

**Fundamental Recommendations Tier:** These recommendations include policies, programs, and administrative strategies that are not directly comparable with the projects in the high impact and mid impact tiers.

## 5.2 Implementation Details

In addition to being categorized into a recommendation tier, each recommendation has a project ID (same as the alternative ID), a cost estimate, a recommended implementation timeframe, and implementing agency information (such as GDOT, CSRA-RC, local government, or transit agency). Within each tier, the projects and/or initiatives are organized into short (0 to 5 years), mid (6 to 10 years), or long term (11 to 20 year) implementation timeframes.

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## 5.3 Recommendations

The recommendations are the heart of the TDP. The scoring table can be found in **Appendix C** and illustrates how the recommendations contribute to achieving the TDP goals.

### 5.3.1 High Impact Tier

Table 43: High Impact Tier Recommendations by Timeframe

Project ID	Recommendation	Timeframe	Implementing Agency	Total Capital Cost	Capital Local Share	Total Annual O&M Cost	Annual O&M Local Share
Ex-1	Organize a regional vanpool program by partnering with statewide providers, large employers, or non-profits	Short	CSRA-RC/ Multiple Counties	No additional capital expense	Depends on employers	\$559,278	N/A
Ex-15	Fully regionalize transit service/ consolidate existing rural transit providers	Long	CSRA-RC	\$200,000	N/A	\$6,700,000	\$850,000
Ex-16	Richmond, Columbia, McDuffie, Jefferson, and Burke counties incorporate rural systems into a multi-county system	Mid	Multiple Counties	No additional capital expense	No additional capital expense	\$5,800,000	\$700,000

### 5.3.2 Mid Impact Tier

Table 44: Mid Impact Tier Recommendations by Timeframe

Project ID	Recommendation	Timeframe	Implementing Agency	Total Capital Cost	Capital Local Share	Total Annual O&M Cost	Annual O&M Local Share
En-3	Implement regional fare integration	Short	All rural transit service providers	No cost estimate – requires additional coordination	N/A	N/A	N/A
En-4	Implement fare integration with Best Friend Express in South Carolina	Short	Augusta Transit	No cost estimate – requires additional coordination	N/A	N/A	N/A
En-6	Partner with GDOT to implement the Let's Ride application for scheduling and payment	Short	All rural transit service providers, GDOT	No cost estimate – requires additional coordination	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ex-3	Organize a vanpool program by partnering with statewide providers, large employers, or non-profits (Hancock County)	Short	Hancock County	No additional capital expense	Depends on employers	\$9,821	N/A
Ex-5	County partners with statewide options to start a vanpool program in the county, while utilizing park-and-ride lots (Washington County)	Short	Washington County	\$270,000	Depends on employers	\$22,843	N/A
Ex-9	Augusta Transit creates a microtransit program to serve more remote areas, including cross-jurisdictional locations	Short	Augusta Transit	\$360,000	\$36,000	\$950,000	\$370,000
Ex-10	Burke County initiates a zone-based microtransit service pilot in Waynesboro	Short	Burke County	\$180,000	\$18,000	\$60,000	\$60,000

Project ID	Recommendation	Timeframe	Implementing Agency	Total Capital Cost	Capital Local Share	Total Annual O&M Cost	Annual O&M Local Share
Ex-11	Washington County initiates a zone-based microtransit service pilot in Sandersville and Tennille	Short	Washington County	\$180,000	\$18,000	\$70,000	\$70,000
Ex-12	Lincoln County initiates a zone-based microtransit service pilot in Lincolnton	Short	Lincoln County	\$180,000	\$18,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
Ex-13	Explore an express bus to serve South Augusta	Short	Augusta Transit	\$180,000	\$18,000	\$2,020,000	\$820,000
Ex-14	Explore a countywide demand-response transit service in Washington County	Short	Washington County	\$1,268,894	\$126,889	\$502,732	\$227,663
Ex-17	Conduct a 6-month trial of expanded service hours	Short	All rural transit service providers	No additional capital expense	N/A	Varies by provider	Varies by provider
Ex-18	Conduct a 6-month trial of limited Sunday service	Short	Augusta Transit	No additional capital expense	N/A	\$122,608	N/A
Ex-19	Explore a shuttle service between Augusta and Fort Eisenhower, with a stop at Augusta Mall	Short	Augusta Transit	\$230,000	\$23,000	\$2,480,000	\$1,010,000
Ex-20	Explore a shuttle service between Augusta and Augusta Regional Airport	Mid	Augusta Transit	\$345,000	\$34,500	\$2,480,000	\$990,000

Project ID	Recommendation	Timeframe	Implementing Agency	Total Capital Cost	Capital Local Share	Total Annual O&M Cost	Annual O&M Local Share
Ex-21	Jefferson County and Columbia County to partner for medical appointments	Short	Jefferson County/ Columbia County	No cost estimate – requires additional coordination	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ex-22	Augusta Transit and Columbia County to partner for cross-county trips	Short	Augusta Transit/ Columbia County	No cost estimate – requires additional coordination	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ex-23	County partnership with Baldwin County for service to Milledgeville (Hancock and Washington counties)	Short	Hancock County/ Washington County/ Baldwin County	No cost estimate – requires additional coordination	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ex-24	Jenkins County partnership with Bulloch County for service to Statesboro	Short	Jenkins County/ Bulloch County	No cost estimate – requires additional coordination	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ex-25	Richmond, Columbia, McDuffie, Jefferson, and Burke counties partner to allow cross-county trips	Short	Multiple Counties	No cost estimate – requires additional coordination	N/A	N/A	N/A

### 5.3.3 Fundamental Tier

Table 45: Fundamental Tier Recommendations by Timeframe

Project ID	Recommendation	Timeframe	Implementing Agency	Total Cost
Ad-1	Partner with GDOT on a six-month educational campaign to raise awareness about transit offerings across the region	Short	GDOT/CSRA-RC	Staff hours
Ad-2	Hire a Regional Mobility Manager to help with transit planning across the region, such as convening conferences/trainings and facilitating discussions between transit providers and area employers	Short	CSRA-RC	\$110,000
Ad-5	Provide regionalized call center/central phone number for booking	Short	CSRA-RC, all rural transit service providers	Staff hours
Ad-6	Update transit directory webpage with regional transit map, offering features like trip planning assistance and online booking through QRyde	Short	CSRA-RC	Staff hours
Ad-7	Partner with area technical colleges to provide training and certification programs for drivers and mechanics	Short	GDOT/CSRA-RC	Staff hours

### 5.3.4 Six-Month Action Plan

The Regional TDP provides a framework for the CSRA Region to advance its regional transit vision and goals. It is not a mandated “work plan,” nor are recommendations currently funded. As a result, furthering the recommendations will require ongoing coordination among stakeholders, including GDOT, CSRA-RC, and transit agencies within the CSRA Region. Taking steps to advance the following actions should be a priority for TDP stakeholders for the first six months after Regional TDP adoption:

- Hire a regional mobility manager to continue coordination activities and serve as the implementation champion for the recommendations in the TDP.
- Develop workshops and marketing materials to raise awareness of the current (and future) transit options in the region, leveraging the Let’s Ride resources where applicable and helpful.
- Deploy a limited pilot project to provide extended-hours service for the area’s rural residents.
- Deploy a limited pilot project to provide Sunday service for Augusta residents.
- Continue working toward establishing partnerships between agencies and with employers to advance services such as regional vanpool that help area residents get to work.
- Continue to educate community members, elected officials, and administrative partners about regional transit needs and opportunities.

Future iterations of this Regional TDP should monitor and keep track of the status of these initiatives. This is a living document, so CSRA-RC should continue the process of engaging with local transit agencies and partners and further refining the recommendations as needed. GDOT is committed to being a resource and a partner for moving initiatives forward.