

## Regional Mobility Framework Technical Memorandum #2



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NEXT RIGHT



April 2010

# Regional Mobility Framework Technical Memorandum #2



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# **Chapter 1:**

## **Introduction**

## Chapter 1: Introduction

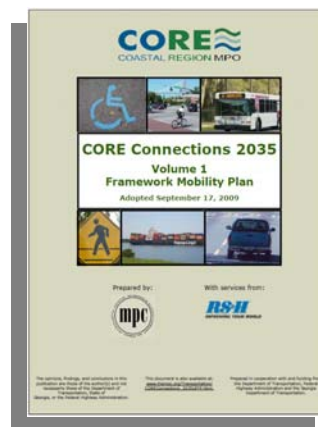
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This second Technical Memorandum builds from the Existing Condition Technical Memorandum submitted in March 2010. That report discussed the existing land use, socio-demographic data, travel patterns, and development activities for the Savannah region. The report also summarized the available transit services in the region, which includes Chatham County and the surrounding areas within Georgia, as well as the Low Country area in South Carolina. Each of these components will fundamentally influence the public transportation vision and planning for the region. This Technical Memorandum describes feedback from key stakeholders and local staff for developing the regional strategic transit vision and includes several ideas and concepts for the next steps.

Several initial observations for the Savannah region are that the multiple transit agencies are providing services over an extensive geographic area, including fixed-route services offered by CAT in Savannah, rural services provided by CRC in the outlying areas of Georgia and the Palmetto Express services to Hilton Head. In addition, the urban and rural transit agencies have similar transit challenges; but also have very distinct differences in meeting the needs of residents in the community. Building from the data collected from the baseline report, the regional transit vision will address the future needs Savannah.

One of the key considerations in this planning process is to consider and incorporate the goals that were developed as part of the existing 2035 Long Range Transportation plan, as a starting point for formulating the public transportation vision for the region. A number of the Plan's goals address public transportation for the region, and are listed below:

- **Goal 2: Safety – Performance Measure:**
  - Implementation of transit and other safety projects
- **Goal 4: Accessibility, Mobility, and Connectivity; Objective:**
  - Minimize delays in corridors served by transit



- Encourage use of transit and non-motorized modes, focusing on areas with low rates of automobile ownership or high population of elderly and/or disabled populations
- **Goal 4: Accessibility, Mobility, and Connectivity; Performance Measure:**
  - Percent of population within ½-mile of transit route or facility connecting to regional activity center(s)
  - Operational performance of transit system (buses arriving/departing on schedule)
  - Transit ridership
- **Goal 6: System Management and Maintenance; Performance Measure:**
  - Transit user satisfaction (such as reliability)

The WSA team will incorporate these adopted LRTP goals from the plan along with stakeholder discussions into the development of the overall vision. This report includes:

- A discussion of regional mobility and a summary of the stakeholder meetings; and
- Preliminary goals and objectives for discussion
- Potential next steps

In summary, a regional strategic vision for public transportation serving Chatham County sets a framework for public transportation decision-making for the future. It is the result of an intensive planning process involving business persons, government officials, community leaders, and transportation agencies.



## **Chapter 2:**

# **Stakeholder Summary**

## Chapter 2: Stakeholder Summary

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Residents and leaders throughout the region have been actively involved in the development of this regional transit vision for Savannah, contributing a wide range of insights and ideas that will be incorporated into the overall vision process. A series of meetings and interviews were undertaken with stakeholders and key members of the community beginning in December 2009. The information received during these meetings will be used to shape the overall direction of the Transit Mobility Vision Plan by indicating the opportunities as well as the challenges for developing a public transportation plan for the region. Appendix A provides a list of the stakeholders who have provided feedback, thus far, in the study process.

***What is our vision for public transportation in our region?***

***How can we reach that vision?***

The potential exists for the Savannah CORE MPO and its regional partners to be mobility leaders, providing transportation choices and a sustainable future that meets the needs of its diverse communities. The recently adopted 2035 LRTP shows the dedication of the community to set policies supporting all modes of travel and developing the Total Mobility Plan for the future.

Making transportation investments and providing services that maximize travel options will enable people to make sustainable choices about where they live and work, how they move and how the region and its components will evolve from perspectives such as livability and sustainability. Influencing individual behavior, which on a collective scale can affect fuel/energy consumption, pollution, other impacts of congestion and quality of life is an essential role to achieve future success for the region.

Developing a shared vision for regional transit has become increasingly important. Working together, regional partners in coordination with the CORE MPO have a unique opportunity to chart a new direction for more effective, efficient and sustainable land use and environment, and provide for significant regional mobility improvements necessary to support the future of the Savannah region. This regional transit vision can serve as a catalyst for citizens, transit agencies, and local and state governments to work cooperatively in creating a coordinated program that maximizes the utilization of economic, transportation, and land resources. The regional public transit vision could then set a course to

preserve and leverage existing transportation and land use programs and processes while encouraging future investment decisions that enhance the quality of life and economic viability of the Savannah region.

### **Broad Themes**

The broad themes/questions discussed during the stakeholder meetings included:



- What are the key issues and challenges facing the long range vision for public transportation in the region and is there more that can/should be done than is already planned?
- What are the views on the *2035 Long Range Transportation Plan* and how will transit be affected?
- Are there any specific projects, services or changes that are essential to the success, or failure, of transit in the region's future?
- How should we address the need for additional sustainable capital and operating funding for transit in the region?
- How will this regional transit vision fit within other regional and local studies in the region?

Understanding the context of information from the numerous interviews and meetings was part of the overall summary process for exploring different alternatives for the vision.

This section provides an overview of the public outreach process and a summary of the key themes that can influence the development of the regional vision for public transportation in the Savannah region. Highlights include:

- People want more travel choices to enhance connectivity among housing, employment, and basic needs of daily life, and to serve the broadest possible range of people. People from across the region emphasized the need for transit connections to downtown Savannah and to local activity centers.
- The vision should be ambitious and provide direction for transit in the region: The vision should be more than a "transit-only" plan, but must address land use issues in the growing surrounding areas. Public transportation decision-making and land use should be strongly linked.
- Public transportation should be viewed as a contributor to the vitality of the region's economy, particularly connecting people to jobs, and revitalizing neighborhoods. However, the perception today is that transit ridership is limited to those without other abilities to travel.

- It is likely that no one solution will work for all communities, so the vision will require a range of strategies to address all needs.
- Make future alternative transportation frequent, reliable, fast, comfortable, clean, and safe.
- Strengthen transit connections from all parts of the region.
- Use investment in public transportation to encourage the concentration of new and in-fill development. Smart Growth in Savannah will be limited without a viable transit network. The low-density, suburban form of the region's existing land-use can be a hindrance to transit investment; however, the trends for growth in population, housing and employment are viewed as major opportunities. The diversity of employment locations, targeted high development locations, and the need for transit connections was also highlighted. To be successful, the vision must join relevant partners/agencies together to ensure that Smart Growth ambitions are realized.
- Many of CAT's services are provided as a social service ("lifeline" services) and for CAT to go to the next level, they need to grow their market share and attract new users (choice riders). There was a realization that trends in gas prices, congestion, air quality and other factors all point to the need for transit to be developed as a real transportation choice.
- There is a need to raise the profile and image of transit: The vision should address the need to improve the quality and standards of the transit service, including marketing, fares and ticketing, transfers between modes and operators and generally making the service user-friendly. Transit must be seamless, easy, relevant and convenient.
- Transit funding for capital and operations is a major challenge: a consistent theme raised at all the interviews was the need to address funding both for capital investment and for transit operations. The vision should provide the case for increased financial investment, explaining the need for funding increases if the desired outcomes (improved services, higher ridership, greater operating efficiencies, better integrated land use and transit, transit as a real transportation choice) are to be realized in the short, medium and long-term.



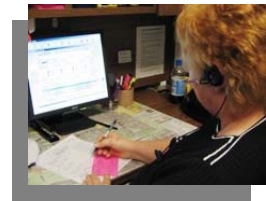
- Thus, in general, all interviewees understood the need for expansion of services in the longer term, but many had difficulty believing that the necessary resources would be available particularly in the short term.

## **Potential Solutions**

Many of the ideas and concepts were further presented and discussed at a Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting in March 2010. Below is a synopsis of short-term and long-term future ideas for improving public transportation in the Savannah region that were developed during that meeting.

### **Short-term**

- Increase communication about transit programs, projects, and activities.
  - No existing formal communication network exists, but there are lines of communication through the MPC and LCPC. The outlying counties, in general, are not well-connected on public transportation issues.
  - Information technology options, such as RouteMatch dispatch and scheduling software, could be used for agency communication as well as client databases, agency information, etc. The customer information should also include web and social networking options.
    - Social networking options for communicating with customers should be an options considered, as should technology such as next bus, etc.
  - Improvements in communication could then lead to opportunities for coordination.
    - Transit services are provided in multiple areas and some modifications are being implemented. For example, more services have been added to the family of services provided by CRC and new service will be starting in July 2010 for Liberty County. Additional ideas are to share ideas, resources, even program connections.
- Consider a multi-state submittal for the next round of federal TIGER grants or other funding opportunities related to livability, sustainability initiatives.
- Explore and target common client groups.
  - These may include the military, universities, major employers, shopping centers, and medical agencies/entities.
    - There was a discussion that military personnel or those working on military bases travel a long distance. In addition, many Gulf Stream executives live in South Carolina, as examples of potential new markets.



- Savannah is hub for many activities, including tourism and entertainment, which may attract some longer distance travel potential.
- Also outlying areas, such as Richmond Hill, have many commuters working elsewhere. What transit could be offered to attract those people to transit?
- Demand management options, such as carpools and vanpools, should also be part of the family of services.
- What are the steps needed to get those communities not in attendance to participate?
  - There is a missing link as not all communities in the district actively participate in regional studies, including, as of yet, this current process.
  - There are a number of suburban communities that have increasing housing development, but not an increase in employment locations. Thus, people are traveling longer distances in the region for work purposes. This provides a potential market to consider for commuter services.
  - Perhaps communities who are actively participating in this process could assist in asking peer communities to participate in this regional conversation.
  - Also, there is little to no representatives from employers or other transportation-related modes, such as the airport or port.
    - Freight transportation should be included in discussions, as well as truck traffic, which significantly impacts congestion in the region.
    - Water transportation options should also be considered.
- Recognize limitations as well as system integration.
  - Most trips will always be made by auto. Convincing people to try public transportation options will be difficult. Those options must be viable – frequent, safe, convenient were mentioned as key attributes to attract new riders.
  - Other factors which could influence transit demand include ideas, such as parking fees and availability, price of fuel, congestion and delays (offering alternatives to long commutes). Also ideas of community planning and development, such as complete streets, improved access, etc. could influence demand.



Other discussion ideas included:

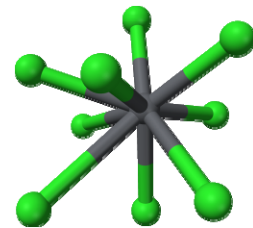
- Service connections and needs. What data do we have to support existing connections and patterns? Should the data be consistently developed or

- could an amalgamation of data from each affected groups and entities be effective in the short-term.
- Data should include mobility needs for intercommunity, inter-county and interstate patterns. A needs assessment would be required to move forward with concrete programs and solutions.
  - A survey of employers was done for regional efforts previously; this should be reviewed and updated if necessary. It could potentially be completed through web based resources.
- All ideas require funding to complete or implement. Thus, funding options, alternatives, and ideas should be an item for further discussion throughout this planning process.
  - A future stakeholder group meeting would be a positive method to move forward. The other stakeholder parties would also be invited and debriefed on previous information discussed.

### **Long-term**

A summary of the long-term opportunities is discussed below.

- Educate local legislative delegation.
  - The State Legislative delegation targeted 2012 as a potential time to discuss how the state might consider different options and mechanisms to create more sustainable revenue sources for transportation. It is important to begin the education process now for the delegation to understand needs and opportunities that public transportation brings to the Savannah region.
- Develop a network of express buses and bus priority corridors which match needs identified.
- Develop a mechanism to enhance CAT's ability to expand outside of its current service district, such as through a contract authority.
- Develop a roadway network which provides additional distribution networks along I-16, I-95, and connections between Georgia, South Carolina, and around Effingham.



### ***Planning Activities***

A number of short-term and long-term ideas were gathered from the local staff and stakeholders and discussed in the previous pages. The WSA team developed some potential planning activities which may be eligible for Federal Transit Administration planning funds from Section 5303. The list of activities is

meant to generate additional discussion for the next Stakeholder meeting in May 2010.

1. **Coordination with Total Mobility Plan** - The Transit Mobility Vision Plan is part of a larger effort by the MPC to view a range of alternative modes which will enhance mobility within the region. An initial meeting is in the planning stages for spring 2010. The results of the TMVP will become part of this larger plan. Additional planning efforts will be necessary to coordinate TMVP actions as a part of that broader planning effort.
2. **Incorporation of Livability and Sustainability Initiatives with TMVP Recommendations** - Commenced at the federal level during summer 2009, livability and sustainability initiatives have been developed through the partnership with the Department of Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and the Environmental Protection Agency. The agencies developed six principles for incorporation into future programs. To date, the DOT has incorporated the six principles adopted by the Departments into the TIGER grant programs, "Urban Circulator" and "Bus Livability" programs, and has indicated they will be continued as an emphasis area in future federal funding programs.

Similarly, HUD has circulated a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for its Sustainable Communities Program, intended to further incorporate principles such as livable communities, affordable housing, transit oriented development, etc. More opportunities regarding coordinated and integrated planning efforts for comprehensive projects will be in the near future. Thus, incorporating the ideas from the TMVP, plus the mobility plans referenced above should be considered with regard to potential funding, partnering, and community development processes.



3. **Prioritization of Short-term Recommendations** – The TMVP recommendations will have a phased implementation plan. It is recognized that an important component of any long range strategic effort is to maintain momentum with the participants and affected agencies. The projects that are readily implementable can provide the basis for the regional plan to evolve. Therefore it is important to identify and prioritize a family of projects and programs to be implemented.
4. **Development and Implementation of Demonstration Projects** - At the stakeholder advisory committee meeting there was considerable discussion regarding types of services, groups of potential riders, which could be candidates for demonstration projects. For example, in the area

of Information Technology, many areas are using software packages such as Trapeze and RouteMatch that facilitate availability of data information relative to services, client bases, etc. In addition, the USDOT has been developing a pilot project for 'one call centers,' including one for the Lower Savannah Council of Governments which will accommodate multiple providers and partners. Within the transit industry there is a growing emphasis to incorporate social networking capabilities that provide real time information and offer a variety of mobility options. For example in San Francisco, residents are able to use their handheld devices to consider a number of factors for making mobile choices including bicycle, pedestrian, traffic, etc.

Another example project is to focus on target markets. For example, there are many long distance commute trips being taken in the region with more housing being developed in the periphery while many employment growth areas, and thus work trips are focused on downtown Savannah, the port area, military bases, and other destinations. Commuters are one potential market. College students are another target group to consider for coordinated services.

5. **Preparation of Grant Application for Next Phase of TIGER/Urban Circulator /Sustainability Funding for Broader Multistate Program-** The grant application process requires considerable planning and information gathering, as well as developing support from a diverse group of affected parties and partners. The Low Country COG completed a TIGER application for the first round of federal funding and was not successful. There is potential for developing a future grant application for a multistate project.
6. **Regional Needs Assessment** – To effectively develop the foundation for a regional system, it is essential to establish consistent principles and processes to collect information and data, which then could be used to support investments in various modes. A consistent process would be especially beneficial due to the multiple jurisdictions, including two states located within the region. The stakeholders discussed at length the current data gathered to measure the demand of services were based primarily on a combination of logic and demographic trends, along with anecdotal perspectives. A formal measurable method should be established for the region.



- 7. Interregional Integrated Transit Services Plan, Connecting CAT, Palmetto Breeze, CRC, Liberty County** – Currently, a number of public transportation services operate in the region, which include demand responsive operations in rural areas, fixed-route services within Savannah, carpool and vanpool applications to various destinations, a new service to be implemented in Liberty County, as well as interregional services such as Greyhound, Amtrak, and future high speed rail.

The potential for an inter-regional integration should begin by sharing information on how and where each of these services is currently provided. Once the agencies fully understood all services and the lines of communication are established, there would be opportunities for program connections. For example, one option is rural general public services connecting with extended fixed-route services.

- 8. Exploration of Regional Mobility Council and Associated Management Functions-** The concept of mobility management has been successfully implemented in a number of areas around the country. The concept of mobility management varies from a focus on coordinating human service transportation, to a broader perspective of considering framing services from the customer, not the operator, perspective. Developing a framework or structure for consistent communication, local and regional education, development of projects, and pursuing ideas such as dedicated and sustainable funding sources would be part of this exploration.

There are a number of opportunities in the above TMVP planning activities that would benefit CAT in developing various system components, including policy, planning, IT, operations, and financing. Examples include:

- Operations planning-** CAT reported they will conduct a Comprehensive Operations Analysis which will focus on current use of the system, which also logically has potential opportunities for expansion. The detailed level of analysis of the current system will assist with route modifications and service expansion potential. These recommended would be included in the TMVP.
- Financing-** As indicated above, future federal programs will contain emphasis on livability and sustainability; thus, in order for CAT to effectively respond to these new policy directions, CAT needs to be a well connected participant in the planning process. This participation would increase potential for future funding opportunities from a federal perspective, and also create more partnering potential through collaboration with the agencies in the region.



There also has been considerable debate at the state level regarding state funding or flexibility to develop local funding options (e.g. Clayton County). Being part of a regional collaboration effort to make the case for more dedicated and sustainable funding would be a significant positive for CAT.

- **Regional Coordination-** Savannah is the hub of the region, and CAT is the operator of public transportation services in the County. As other alternatives for increased public transportation investment are developed, it is in CAT's best interest to participate as a leader in those planning activities. Other modes may be streetcar, BRT, transit centers or Transit-oriented Development.



## **Chapter 3:**

# **Preliminary Mobility Goals**

## Chapter 3: Preliminary Mobility Goals

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Chapter 3 takes the findings from the prior sections and suggests how they can be incorporated into setting some preliminary goals for the TMVP process.

Prior to communicating the goals for the TMVP, however, it is beneficial to consider the applicability of the new federal principles regarding livability and sustainability since these principles would appear to be the basis for the development of new federal policy and planning programs as well as influencing federal funding decisions. Considering these principles, the TMVP will contain the current thinking and also some ideas with regard to how to measure programs that contain these principles. Also, the intended outcome of these principles to develop and sustain livable communities offers an important potential for public transportation to become a key component of those communities bringing additional partners and complementary services into the total public transportation network.

The following are the Livability Principles and also some examples of how their affect could be measured within the community. Considerable discussion is taking place regarding how then to utilize these Principles in the development and distribution of the programs and dollars. Recognizing that there are always concerns regarding measuring performance, however, there is a need to communicate the value added to communities when projects, development and investments are considered more holistically. The concept is to encourage communities to think of an entire mobility system, rather than each mode on its own, including land use decisions, etc.

- **Provide more transportation choices:** Develop safe, reliable, and economical transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, reduce our nation's dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote public health.
  - Performance Measures:
    - Increase in transit, walk, bike share of trips
    - Change in vehicle miles traveled per capita
    - Percent of new homes built within a ½-mile of transit service
- **Promote equitable, affordable housing:** Expand location- and energy-efficient housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, races, and

ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.

- Performance Measures:
  - Increased supply of affordable homes and rental units within a ½-mile of transit service
  - Decrease in household transportation costs
  - Percent of low income households within a 30-minute transit commute of major employment centers
- **Enhance economic competitiveness:** Improve economic competitiveness through reliable and timely access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services and other basic needs by workers, as well as expanded business access to markets.
  - Performance Measures:
    - Percent of employment within a ¼-mile of transit services
    - Increase in residential units within or close to major employment centers
- **Support existing communities:** Target federal funding toward existing communities—through strategies like transit oriented, mixed-use development, and land recycling—to increase community revitalization and the efficiency of public works investments and safeguard rural landscapes.
  - Performance Measures:
    - Share of new residential and commercial construction on previously developed parcels
    - Decrease in impervious surface per capita
- **Coordinate and leverage federal policies and investment:** Align federal policies and funding to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding, and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth, including making smart energy choices such as locally generated renewable energy.
  - Performance Measures:
    - Shared elements in regional transportation, housing, water, and air quality plans tied to local comprehensive land use or capital improvement plans
    - Dollars of private sector investment within ½-mile of transit service



- **Value communities and neighborhoods:** Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods—rural, urban, or suburban.
  - Performance Measures:
    - Decrease in transportation related CO<sub>2</sub>, PM, NO<sub>x</sub> and VOC emissions per capita
    - Increase in acres of public recreation and park land per capita

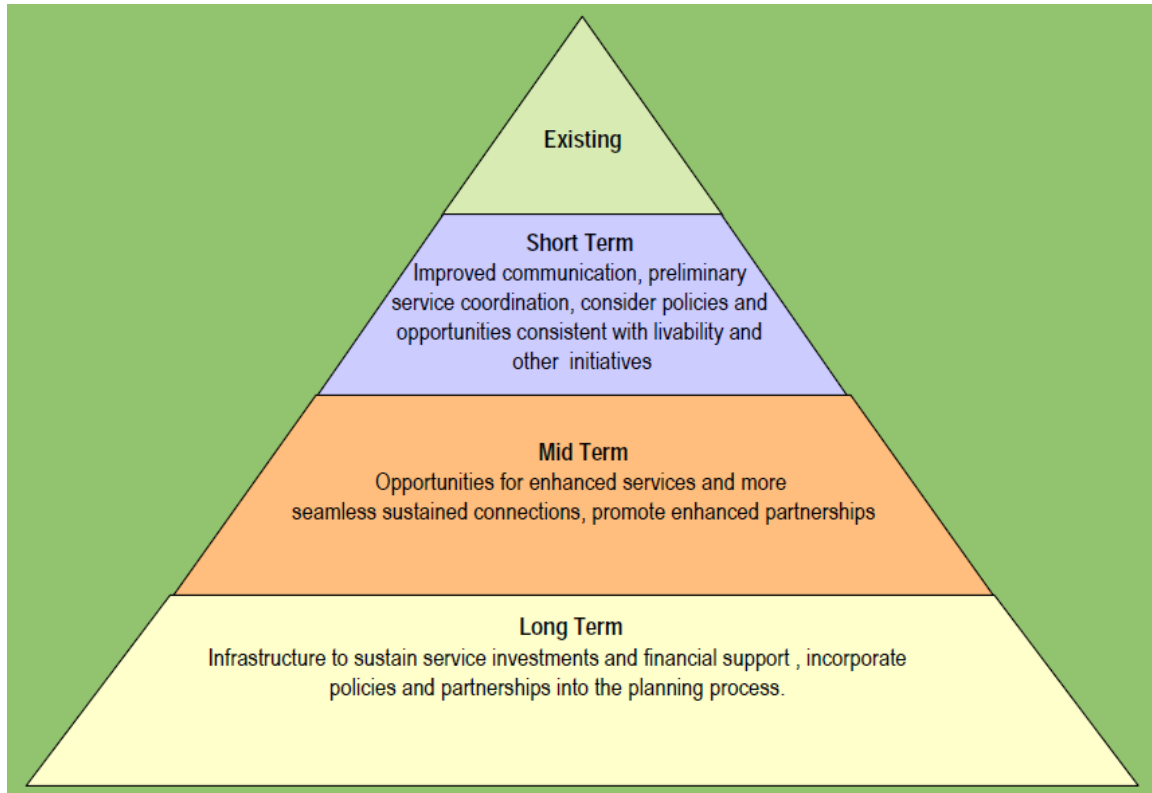
## **Mobility Goals**

Considering the input we have received to date, plus the evolving national discussion regarding mobility, and the future of public transportation, the following are initial mobility goals for the Savannah region which can frame the conversation and move forward the development of the Total Mobility Vision Plan.

- **Provide information on the variety of modes of transportation available to the user and maximize awareness of transportation options.**
- **Develop services to meet the demand of specific target groups such as students, commuters, military personnel, etc.**
- **Integrate land use and transportation policies and programs to effectively meet the mobility needs of the region.**
- **Create and expand alliances and partnerships with other community groups and affected agencies, a vital factor for improving transit access and creating a sustainable transit environment.**
- **Develop a family of services which effectively meets diverse needs and increases the connections to a more customer focused service network that in turn changes the current perception regarding services and users.**
- **Develop the public transportation network that responds to changing demographics, economic trends and other livability features.**
- **Achieve long-term financial stability to provide the levels of investment that meet the growing demand for mobility options.**
- **Develop the Transit Mobility Vision Plan in a manner that is consistent with the Total Mobility Plan for the region.**

## Next Steps

As discussed previously, the TMVP will be a phased implementation strategy comprised of three sections, short, mid and long term recommendations, as shown below. The next steps will include discussions that differentiate potential opportunities in those categories for consideration that are also consistent with the above goals. As a result, the TMVP can draw from the broader long term vision to inform on shorter term plans and potential programs.





## **Appendix A: Stakeholders**

Savannah Transit Vision Plan	
Stakeholders	
Name	Organization Name
Ginny Kozak	Low County Council of Government
Sean Brandon	City of Savannah
Thomas Couch	Bulloch County
Phillip Claxton	City of Port Wentworth
Barbara Foster	Coastal Georgia Regional Development Center
Brian Johnson	City of Garden City
Pat Monahan	Chatham County
Michael Phillips	City of Rincon
Bob Scanlon	City of Savannah
Pat Shay	Chatham County
Lisa Sundrla	SDRA
Bob Thomson	Town of Thunderbolt
Sonny Timmerman	Hinesville MPO
Tripp Tollison	Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce
Rick Winger	SEDA
Charles Odimgbe	CAT
Beth Thulin	CAT
McArthur Jarrett	Citizens Advisory Committee
Bob Scanlon	City of Savannah