



Section 2 – Study Overview and Goals

As discussed in Section 1, the City of Easley Transit Feasibility Study consisted of the following major tasks:

- Task 1: Identify Community Goals and Objectives
- Task 2: Needs Analysis and Feasibility
- Task 3: Develop and Evaluate Alternatives
- Task 4: Transit Development Plan

This section will examine the study process and discuss some of the findings involved in each of the major tasks.

Task 1: Identify Community Goals and Objectives

This first major task of the feasibility study created the foundation on which the remainder of the study was based. This task included several meetings with the Transportation Committee and a review of the existing plans and information that would influence the study. The City's demographic information will be discussed in detail in Section 3 of the plan.

Task 1 started with a “kick-off” meeting with the Transportation Committee in January. This meeting included a brief presentation outlining the feasibility study process and the committee's involvement in the process. The committee also discussed their expectations and the basic parameters of the study.

Following the initial meeting with the committee, existing data was collected and analyzed and relevant plans were reviewed. In addition to existing demographic and GIS data, the data collection included a “windshield survey” of the City of Easley. This survey provided the consultant team with a better understanding of the City's road network, land use pattern and destinations and attractions. The consultant team also was able to review existing transit plans provided by the Greenville-Pickens Area Transportation Study (GPATS) MPO staff and Greenville Transit Authority. These plans enabled the team to understand the agencies' future transit plans involving Easley and the Pickens area.

Additionally, the consultant team met with representatives from the Clemson Area Transit (CAT) agency to discuss their future plans. CAT has experienced incredible success over the last 10 years. This system currently serves Clemson University students and faculty and residents in Anderson, Pickens and Oconee Counties. While Easley is not in CAT's current plans for expansion, the CAT representatives were more than willing to discuss the topic with City of Easley officials. Details of the CAT meeting will be discussed in the recommendations portion of Section 5.



On March 15, 2007, the Transportation Committee held a transit workshop to learn more about transit planning and to discuss the information collected by the consultant team.

The agenda for the workshop included an analysis of demographic data, alternative types of transit, destinations and attractions and public meeting format. The committee members were very active in the topic discussions and significantly expanded their transit knowledge during the 3 hour workshop.

Task 2: Needs Analysis and Feasibility

The main goal of this task was to collect information about potential trip generators and destinations that would be critical to the development of service alternatives and in measuring the feasibility for service in general. In addition to data collected during the “windshield survey”, the consultant team was able to collect additional data from the GPATS MPO staff. The GPATS MPO was in the process of completing their long-range plan, which includes a transit element. The Transportation Committee also provided unique insight into potential generators and destinations within the City limits.

Although the identification of major destinations is somewhat obvious in the City of Easley, the ranking of the destinations and the identification of major trip generators required more information from the general public. Therefore, the first round of public information meetings was held during this task to ascertain the public’s opinions and input. The consultant team also developed a public opinion survey to gauge the level of interest in transit and to identify and rank trip generators and destinations. The consultant team distributed over 800 surveys to churches, community groups and the general public. The team received 181 completed surveys during the study. The following observations came from the survey results:

- 37% of the respondents identified themselves as retired;
- 14% of the surveyed residents do not own a vehicle;
- 85% of the respondents would consider riding transit;
- 55% of the surveyed residents would pay at least \$1 for a ride on a transit bus;
- The majority of the respondents would ride Monday through Saturday from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.;
- Although 27% of the respondents did not want to consider any public funds for transit, 24% would be willing to consider sales tax as an option; and
- The highest ranking transit destinations were grocery stores, Wal Mart, Greenville, church, post office and medical appointments.

The complete results of the public opinion survey can be found in **Appendix A**.

Task 3: Develop and Evaluate Alternatives

The alternatives developed and evaluated during this task included both transit system and organization options. The consultant team discussed with the committee and at public information meetings how both types of alternatives have an effect on the



preferred transit system. The following discussion outlines the process to select a preferred alternative. The preferred alternative for both system and organization are detailed in the recommendations portion of Section 5 of the plan.

A number of system alternatives were developed based on the following parameters:

- Origin/Destination Analysis – establish potential routes based on major destinations and residential areas with higher propensity for transit;
- Required Level of Service – develop a menu of transit services (fixed route, flex route, demand response, etc.) and define potential expansion opportunities;
- Cost and Cost Effectiveness – define alternatives that will generate reasonable return and fit within the region’s financial capacity;
- Potential Benefits/Negative impacts – develop alternatives that will enhance the community; and
- Menu of Service Provision – Local routes, express routes and coordination with other transit providers.

Once a number of alternatives were developed, a series of evaluation criteria based on the study goals and objectives were developed. Each alternative system configuration then was tested against the criteria. The evaluation criteria were designed to reflect the broad range of benefits and impacts that may be realized by the proposed transit system and to determine how the proposed alternatives performed in meeting the project needs of the study area and region. The criteria used for this process include:

- Transit accessibility – populations within walking distance of transit system;
- Projected farebox recovery;
- Support of local economic development efforts;
- Amount of employment accessible to transit system; and
- Destination ranking from survey results.

The next step in the process involved the determination of appropriate organizational alternatives for the proposed transit system. Each alternative was evaluated for potential barriers to implementation based on jurisdictional issues, whether they are regulatory or political in nature. Once in place, the transit system will require consistent commitment from a responsible agency. That commitment includes the annual need for operating revenue and local match requirements for the system’s capital program. Obviously, the performance of these basic administrative duties, on an annual basis, will require the financial capacity, coordination and cooperation among State, regional and local agencies. The implementation of the optimal organizational alternative, as well as the financial needs, will be outlined in Section 6 of the plan.

This task was completed with the final round of public information meetings. The public meetings were designed to present the findings of the study and the recommended alternatives. For the most part, the public accepted the recommendations and supported the overall transit system.



Task 4: Transit Development Plan

The feasibility study culminates with the development of the final document in this task. A complete summary of the requirements for implementing the preferred transit system and their associated costs are presented in this document. Based on the preferred system, the final plan includes the following information:

- A phased 5- to 10-year operations plan;
- Route design and service frequency – the objective is to include cost-effective routing that serves the greatest number of passengers;
- Fleet type and size necessary to operate the system – based on community preference and budget considerations;
- Fare structure – the fare must be set at a level that optimizes ridership and farebox recovery rate;
- Bus stop locations and amenities – includes the need for sidewalk construction;
- Operating schedule, including labor force estimates; and
- Revenue and cost projections.

The details for each of these items are located in Sections 5 and 6 of the plan. The plan describes the protocols necessary for the successful start-up of the preferred transit system alternative.

Study Goals

Early in the planning process, the Transportation Committee, with assistance from the consultant team, outlined the goals of the feasibility study and the potential transit system. The goals were intended to serve as a guide in the planning process and in the development of the preferred system. The goals for the study are as follows:

- Transit service should be provided in the City of Easley with emphasis on jobs, education, recreation, shopping and health facilities;
- Transit service should be provided between the City of Easley and Clemson University and the City of Greenville;
- Transit service formation should maximize Federal transit funding and other outside funding assistance, including private entities;
- Transit service should strive to assist with mitigating traffic congestion and improving the overall quality of life;
- Transit service should maximize the opportunity for senior citizens and persons with disabilities to be active in the community;
- Transit service should support the local economic development efforts; and
- Transit service should be frequent, dependable, cost-effective, efficient, accessible and safe.

Throughout the planning process, these goals were presented to the public for their review. Although some of the goals may not be achievable in the first phase of implementation, they continue to serve as a guide for future transit decisions made by the City of Easley leaders.