



Douglas County Transportation Services Study Update Presentation

Board of Commissioners - Work Session

August 17, 2015

On August 17, 2015 the GS&P project team working on the Douglas County Transportation Services Study gave a presentation to the County Board of Commissioners during a Work Session. Mr. Gary Watson, Director of the Rideshare Division and the County's Project Manager, began the presentation by thanking the Commissioners for the opportunity to present and introducing the project team doing the study, Gresham, Smith and Partners. He explained that the project has been under way for just over four months and that this presentation was being done in keeping with commitments made at the outset of the project to get lots of citizen input and to keep the County up-to-date.

Ms. Jamie Cochran, AICP (with Gresham, Smith and Partners), the Consultant Project Manager, then began the presentation, accompanied by slides (see appendix). She started with a recap of the initial goals and key components of the project, namely to collect information about existing services, to gather input and feedback from citizens of Douglas County about their needs with regard to transportation, and to identify opportunities for new services, ways to access those services. Showing a project timeline, Ms. Cochran reiterated that the project has been under way for four months and summarized what has been accomplished during that time. She noted that the team has been out and about in the Douglas County community in an attempt to reach a variety of residents, attending events such as the Hydrangea Festival and Senior Picnic, and has launched a project survey that has received more than 1,000 responses to-date.

Ms. Cochran then briefly reviewed some of the activities and sources of data and information used in conducting the existing conditions analysis. The team examined demographics and characteristics of the Douglas County population – including groups such as senior citizens, people with disabilities, and part-time workers who may have special needs when it comes to using transportation services. They have also analyzed existing transportation services available to Douglas County residents, including those provided by the County as well as regional services and those provided by adjacent communities. The team also looked back over prior plans and studies from Douglas County, the Cities in Douglas County, and regional plans, such as those prepared by the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) and the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC).

Next, Ms. Cochran gave a brief overview of the three communities selected as peers for case studies as part of the alternative analysis phase of the study. She explained some of the factors taken into consideration when selecting the peers, such as size, geography, and position within a metropolitan area, as well as the types of transportation services offered. The group looked for services that are both similar to what is already available in Douglas County as well as services that the County might like to learn from or consider in the future, such as connectivity to regional services. The three peers chosen are Cherokee County, Georgia; Volusia County, Florida (Daytona Beach area); and Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill, North Carolina.



Finally, Ms. Cochran reviewed the next steps in the study process and activities that will be taking place throughout the end of summer and into the fall. Building upon the analysis of potential alternatives that was initiated with the peer review, the team will continue to identify gaps and opportunities within the Douglas County transportation network and to gather input from the community at large and from Douglas County government agencies and departments. Ms. Cochran gave a few examples of some of the potential options the team is currently exploring, which include, but are not limited to: volunteer programs, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, technology or smartphone-enabled services, and flexible zone-based service – perhaps similar to the “FLEX” service offered by Cobb Community Transit (CCT) in neighboring Cobb County.

A second survey will launch later this summer as a way of getting input from community members about their support for potential service options, and the team will organize other opportunities to meet with and get input from the public, including meetings in Commission Districts, and “pop-up” events at community gatherings or popular locations. Following review and analysis of community and County feedback on the preliminary potential options, the team will refine those options and identify cost estimates and potential funding options and prepare a series of recommendations and a plan with action steps for implementing those recommendations.

Following the presentation, the Commissioners asked questions and offered comments about the study and the presentation. Comments and questions and answers are summarized below.

- Commissioner Mulcare suggested that as part of the public involvement component of the project, the team should consider attending one of the September Saturdays events taking place at the end of next month.
- Commissioner Mulcare noted that there were several references to bicycle and pedestrian facilities or transportation options in the presentation, and commented that it is important to remember that it is not always all about motorized transportation, especially when considering the needs of those who are unable drive, such as older adults or people with certain disabilities. He added that in this sense, the Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill area is a great case study as Raleigh-Durham has a 98-mile trail network and such trails present a great opportunity to facilitate connections to transportation facilities.
- Commissioner Robinson asked about the timeline for the draft and/or final findings.
 - Ms. Cochran responded that the goal is to have a draft of the study findings and recommendations by Thanksgiving for the Commission to consider and that recognizing how busy the holiday season gets, the plan is to do a formal presentation of the study findings after the first of the year and submit the final study for adoption in January or February 2016.
- Commissioner Robinson commented that it is important to align this study as much as possible with the County’s budgetary process, which is getting under way now and inquired about the possibility of compressing the timeline so that the County could use the study findings in planning for the 2016 budget.
 - Ms. Cochran replied by noting that Mr. Watson and his team is already working with the consultant team to prepare items for consideration in next year’s budget. She noted that this had been discussed at a recent meeting and some draft materials had been prepared for discussion between Rideshare, the Department of Transportation, and the consultant team.

- Commissioner Robinson then commented that some very important observations have been made about transportation in Douglas County as part of the study, and asked Ms. Cochran to describe any “Ah ha” moments or discoveries that have come out of it so far.
 - Two “Ah-has” include the County’s ability to communicate with and get the word out to residents, particularly through Wes Tallon and the Department of Communications and Community Relations. Ms. Cochran noted how helpful this has been to the study process and getting broad community input, through the survey, for example. The second “Ah-ha” Ms. Cochran described is the need to help senior citizens and older adults think about their likely future transportation needs more. She described that in many of the team’s interactions with and input from seniors, they appear to tend to think only about their current situation and are not looking forward, taking into consideration what might happen over the next year, two, or five. For example, many seniors have indicated that they think the transportation study is a good idea, but declined to provide input because they currently do not need such services. So, one goal of the study will be to encourage people to think beyond their current needs with regard to transportation and ensure that people are aware of their options, whatever they might be.
- Commissioner Mitchell noted that the presentation touched upon the importance of the regional perspective in transportation and inquired about the extent to which the study is considering regional connections and possible or potential service options or arrangements.
 - Ms. Cochran explained that while serving Douglas County within the County boundaries is the primary objective, connection to regional services is also an important goal for Rideshare and the DOT in the future. As such, the study is looking at opportunities to tap into or connect with services provided in and around the region, including in Cobb and Fulton Counties, and options for getting people to and from the airport. She described the Flex service that is now being offered by CCT and said the study is looking at possibly collaborating with Cobb to expand upon or enhance service for Douglas residents.
- Commissioner Mitchell also noted the importance of consideration for part-time workers and people who may be holding more than one job and those who may or may not have vehicles available but need to get to work. Building upon those comments, Ms. Cochran explained that the study is paying close attention to these types of issues and needs, looking at where people live, where they need to get to – which often includes locations outside of Douglas County - and thinking about what types of services can fill those gaps. She indicated the ability of a flexible zone-based system to help get people not only to and from a central transportation hub (like the Multi-Modal Center) but also to other key locations throughout the county, including park-and-ride lots and job centers. The disconnect between the locations where people need services and existing options, like park-and-ride lots, for example, was noted, and it was acknowledged that the study is looking at this disconnect.
- In closing, Chairman Worthan commented on the importance of such options as flexible bus service and bus rapid transit to help fill the gaps and the need to consider special populations like aging adults, and that the intent behind the study is to identify options that will help people get around.

A copy of the slide presentation is included as an appendix.

Douglas County Transportation Services Study

Project Update

August 17, 2015



A Project Sponsored by the Douglas County Board of Commissioners

Project Goals

Inventory the services and facilities currently available to Douglas County residents and whether they are sufficient

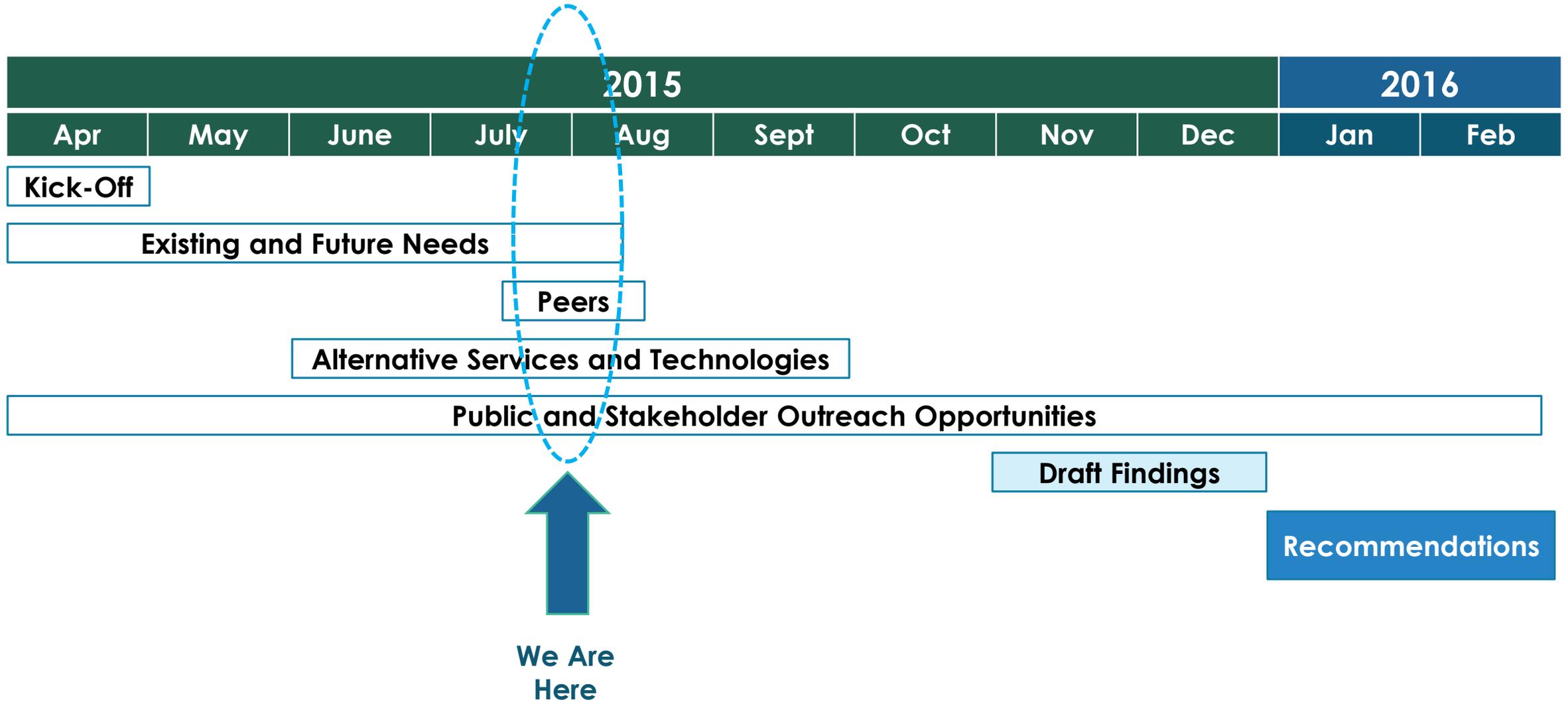
Obtain opinion data from current riders and citizens

Identify the services that are working well and which ones need improvement

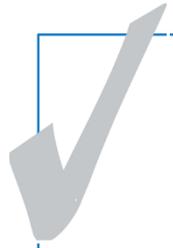
Explore opportunities for new services, new approaches to service delivery, and/or new technology

Find out what types of services citizens want and need and what they are willing to financially support

Project Schedule



Accomplishments To-Date



Project Kick-Off
April 2015



Commission District 2 Meeting
April 2015



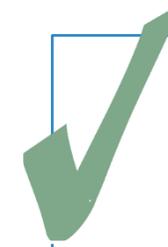
Agency Meetings
May 2015
Senior Services
Accountability Courts



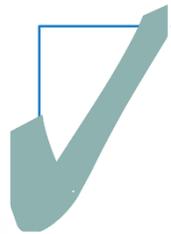
Project Survey
Ongoing
Paper & Online Versions
1,031 responses to-date



Project Information to SRTA
July 2015
Overview & Service Ideas for
Potential Bond Funding



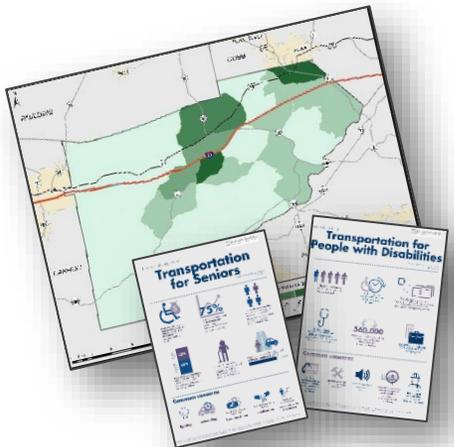
Pop-up Events
May/June 2015
Senior Picnic
Hydrangea Festival



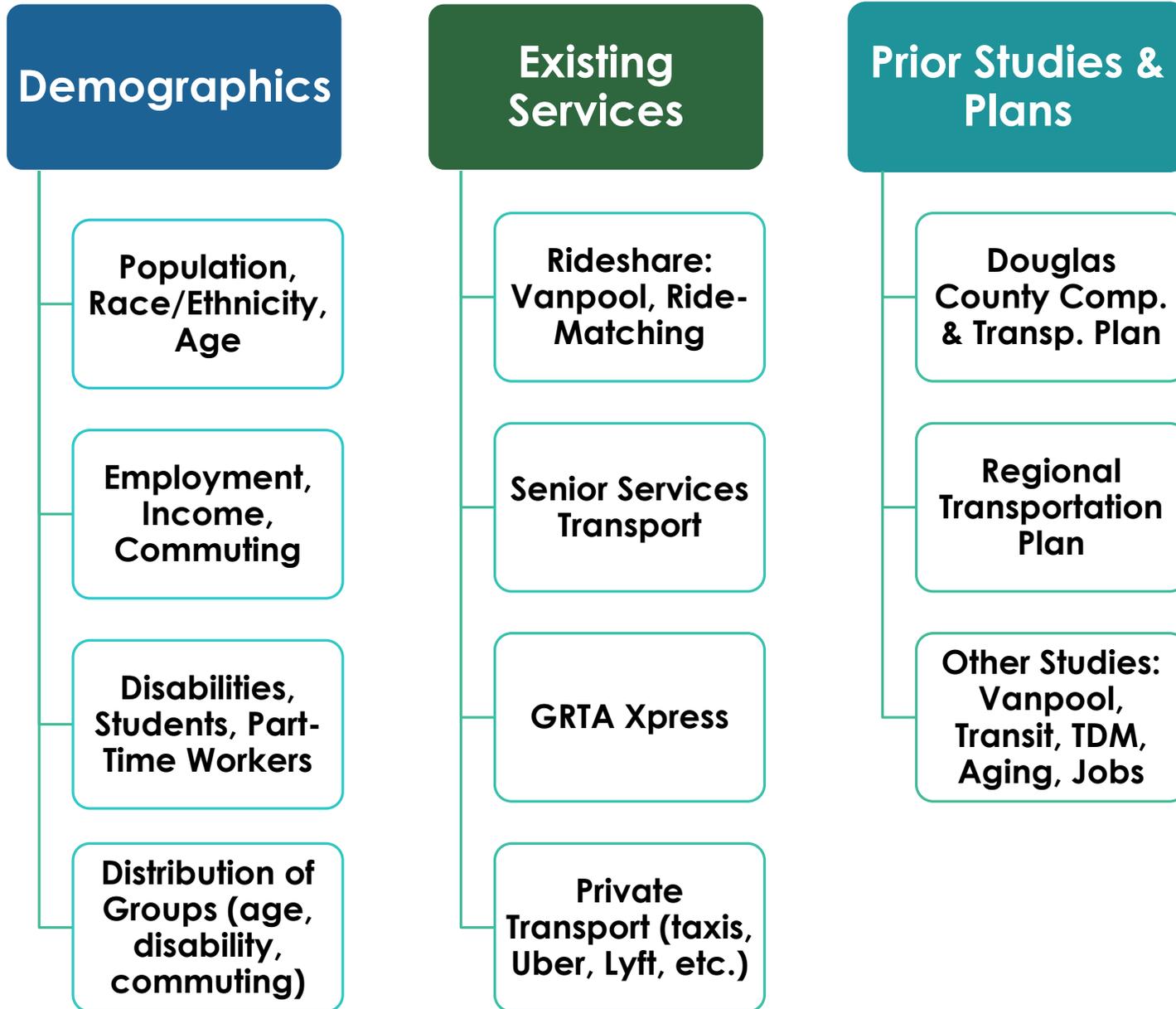
Educational Information
July 2015
Infographics & Maps
on County Website



Existing Conditions Analysis
Drafted; Pending Review
Existing Services; Prior Studies &
Plans; Demographics

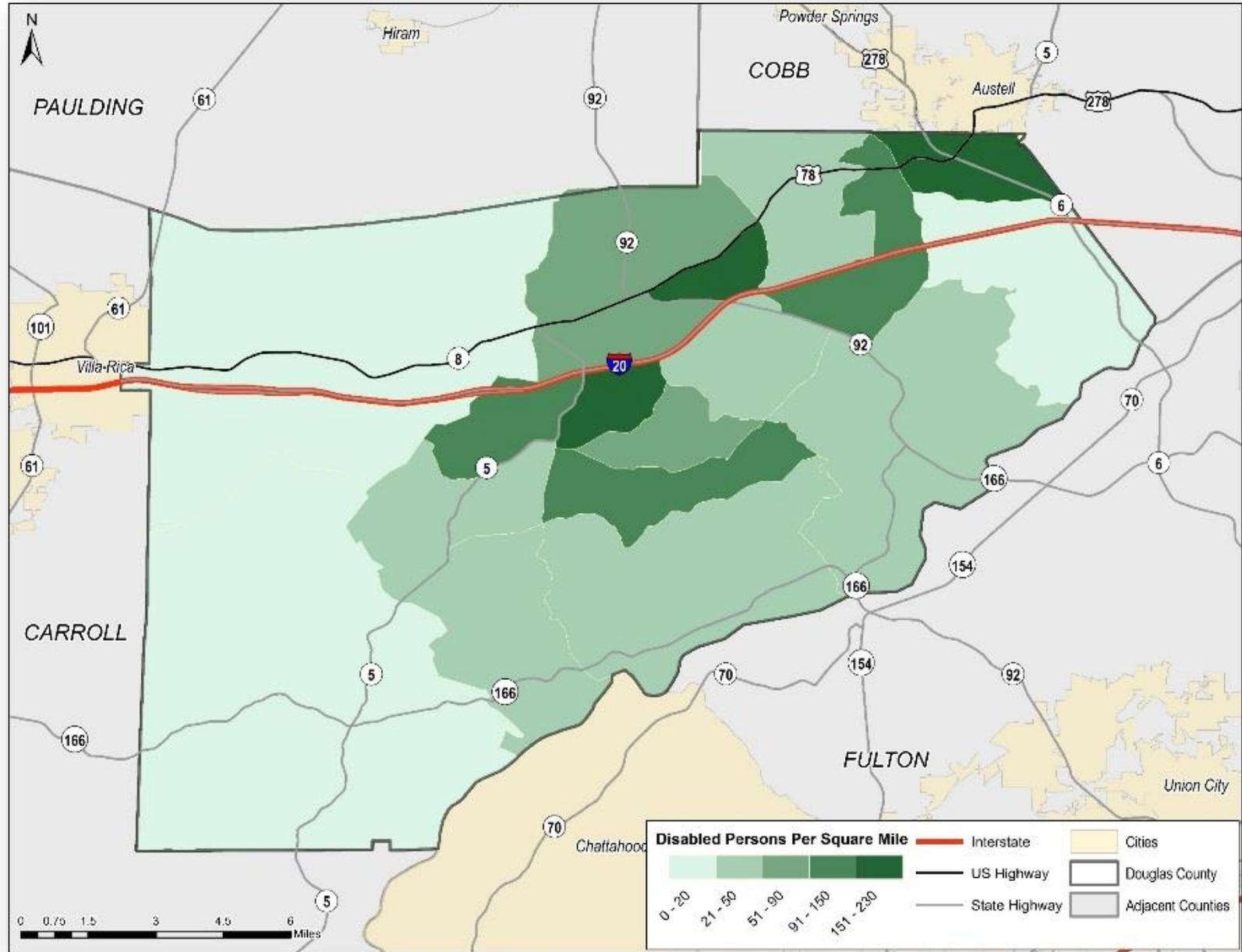


Existing Conditions



Existing Conditions: *Disabled Persons*

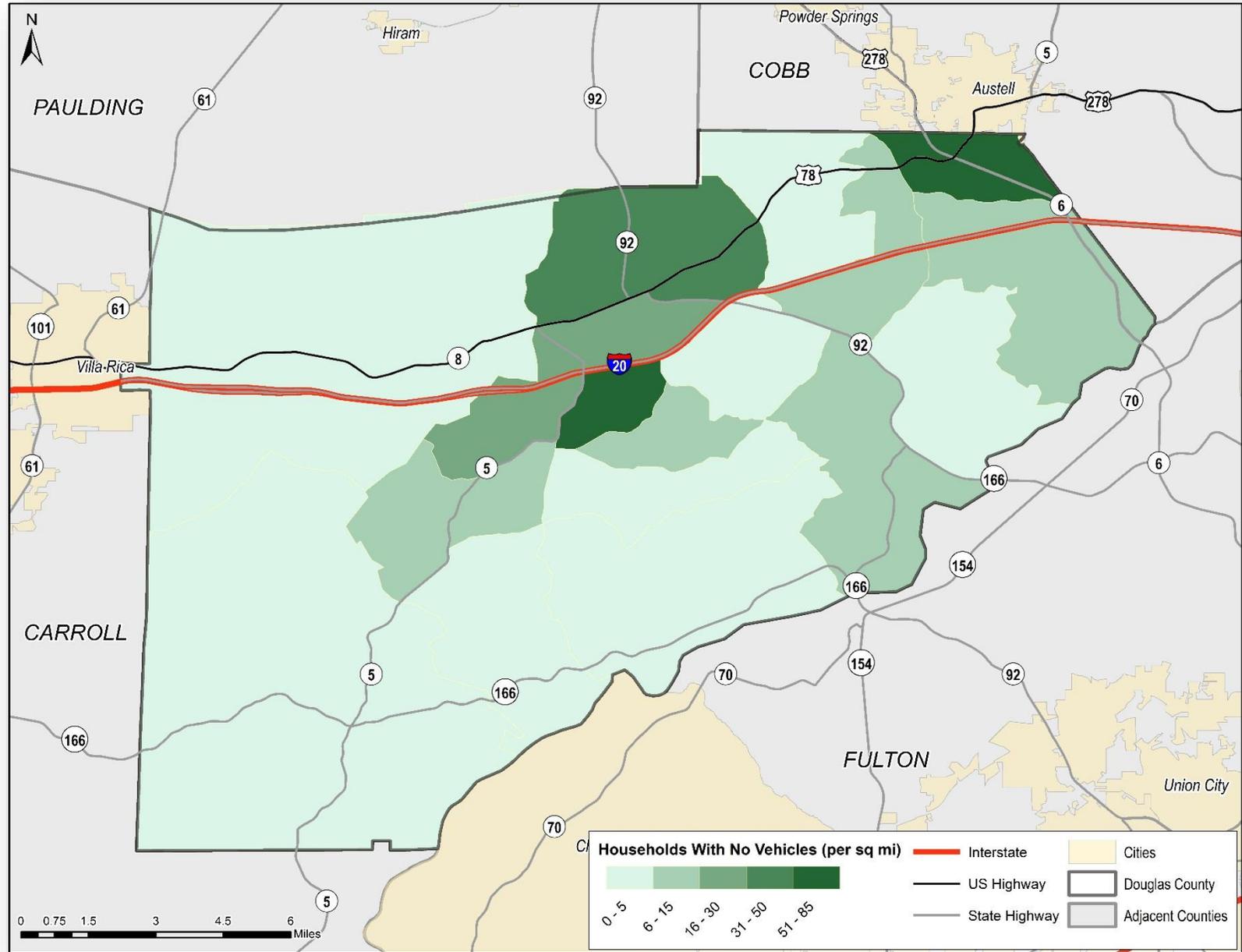
**Disabled
Persons
Per Square
Mile**



**Source: 2009-2013
American Community
Survey 5-year Estimates**

Existing Conditions: *Households with No Vehicle*

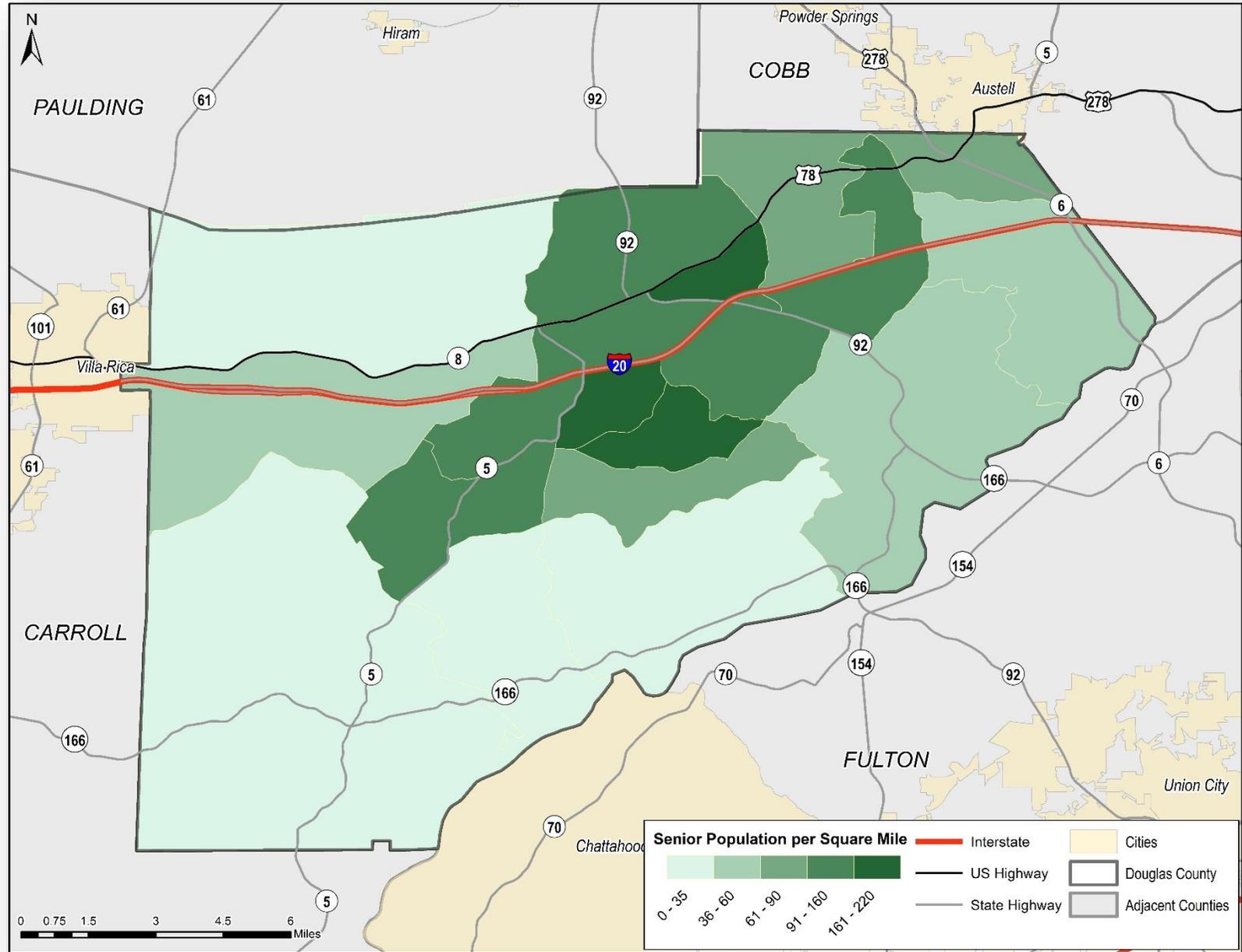
**Households
with No
Vehicle
Per Square
Mile**



**Source: 2009-2013
American Community
Survey 5-year Estimates**

Existing Conditions: Senior Population

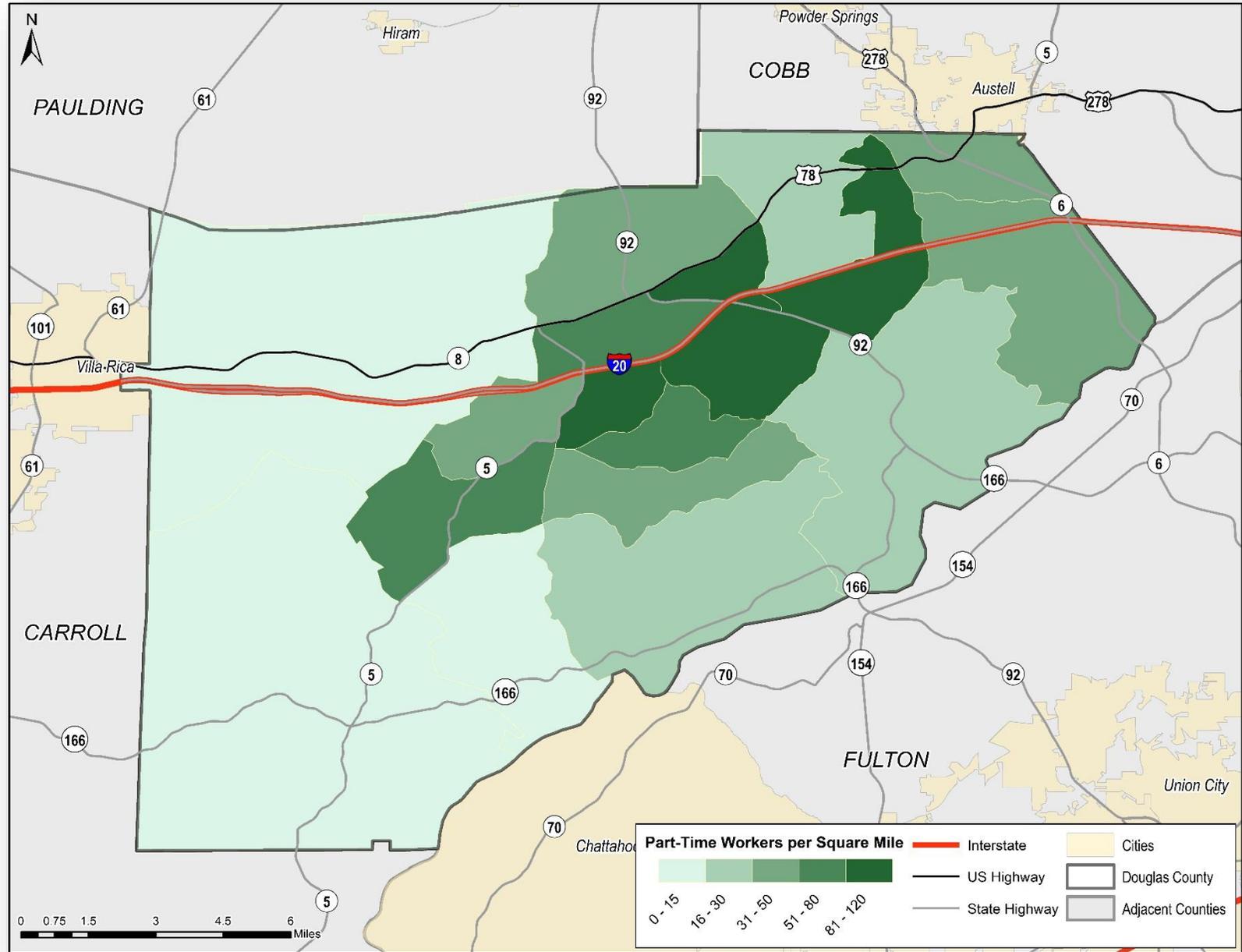
**Seniors Age
65+
Per Square
Mile**



**Source: 2009-2013
American Community
Survey 5-year Estimates**

Existing Conditions: *Part-Time Workers (<35 hours/week)*

Part-Time Workers
 (all people 16+ who usually worked 1-34 hours per week for 50-52 weeks)
Per Square Mile



Source: 2009-2013 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

Alternatives Analysis: Peer Review

Cherokee County, GA

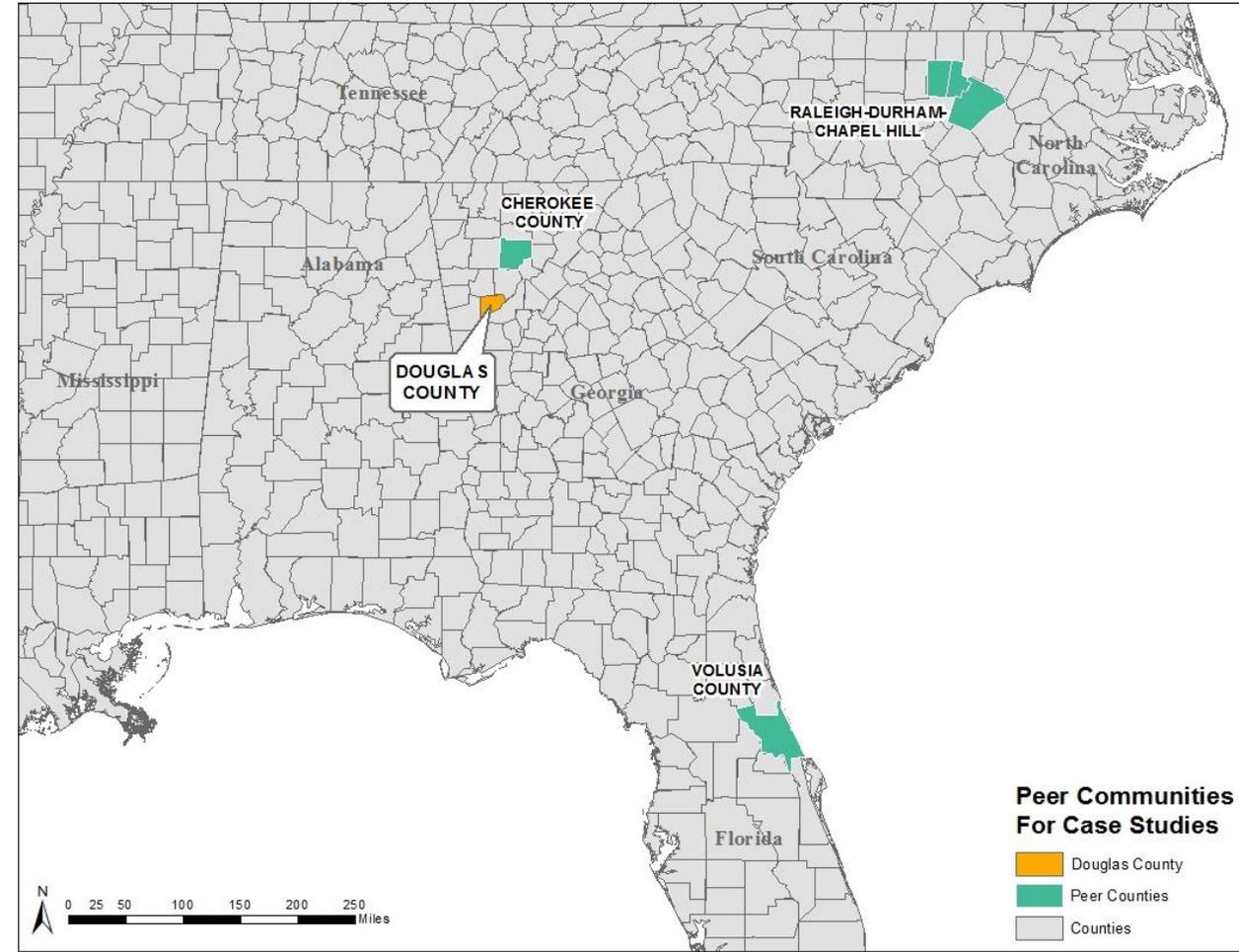
- Carpool Matching Service
- Vanpool Operation
- Paratransit / Demand Response
- Fixed Local Route
- Express Bus

Volusia County, FL (Daytona Beach area)

- Carpool Matching
- Vanpool Operations
- Paratransit / Demand Response
- Fixed Local Route
- Commuter Rail
- Connections to Regional Transit

Raleigh / Durham / Chapel Hill, NC

- Carpool Matching
- Regional Vanpool Operations
- Paratransit / Demand Response
- Fixed Route Local Bus
- Connections to Regional Transit



Next Steps



Identify Transportation Services Gaps

- Opportunities for Enhanced, Expanded, & New Services



Public Involvement & Stakeholder Input

- Pop-up event
- Commission District Meetings
- Survey on potential options

Douglas County Input

- Rideshare
- DOT
- Other Departments



Leadership Input

- Community Leader Interviews



Potential Options May Include:

- *Connected Vehicles*
- *Volunteer or Faith-Based Services*
- *Connections to Regional Service*
- *Flexible Zone Bus Circulator*
- *Dynamic Vanpools*
- *“Call Ahead” Demand Service*
- *Bike and Pedestrian Facilities*
- *Smartphone -Enabled Service*
- *New Park-and-Ride Lots*
- *Expanded Car-Sharing*
- *Expanded Ride-Sharing*



Service Implementation Program

Next Steps

Alternatives Analysis

**Identify Service Gaps
and Opportunities**

**Community Leader
Interviews (x15)**

**Definition and
Evaluation of Potential
Service Options**

Public Involvement

**Commission District
Meetings (x3)**

**New Survey on
Potential Options**

Pop-Up Meeting

Implementation Plan

“Best” Service Options

Operating Plans

Cost Estimates

**Potential Funding
Sources**

Implementation Steps

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