



# **Alternative Transportation Choice Assessment**

## **Douglas County Comprehensive Transportation Plan**

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## INTRODUCTION

Travel demand management (TDM) strategies represent a broad range of mobility options that may improve overall transportation efficiency. Often a TDM plan combines multiple strategies to effectively address transportation issues such as congestion, air quality and accessibility. This document addresses TDM strategies that are aimed at improving person throughput via special facilities, programs or public transportation choices. Other TDM strategies such as Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), bicycle and pedestrian facilities, freight movement and access management are addressed in other Comprehensive Transportation Plan technical memoranda. This document is a review of existing and planned/programmed options and provides project, policy and marketing recommendations.

## EXISTING SERVICES

### DOUGLAS COUNTY RIDESHARE

The Douglas County Rideshare Program provides a commuter vanpool service as an alternative means of transportation. The program began in 1986 and is a department of Douglas County. There are currently 41 routes operated through a fleet of 57 vans. The vanpools travel between the county and various metro Atlanta destinations such as Downtown Atlanta, Decatur, Midtown Atlanta, Buckhead, Emory University, Perimeter Center, Chamblee-Tucker, Marietta, and the SR 400 corridor. There are approximately 400 daily patrons on Rideshare routes, equating to about 115,000 one-way trips annually.

### COMMUTER FACILITIES

During the mid 1990s, Douglas County determined there was a need to develop a transportation center to adequately support the Rideshare Program, Georgia Regional Transportation Authority's (GRTA) Xpress bus service and future public transportation services. Working through local, regional, state, and federal planning partners, funding was secured to develop the Douglas County Transportation Center.



Douglas County acquired property on Dorris Road that is adjacent to the proposed I-20/Fairburn Road managed lane interchange. The Transportation Center was developed in phases:

- Phase I Administrative/Terminal Building and 300 parking spaces-Opened in early 2003
- Phase II Bus platform with canopy-Completed in late 2005
- Phase III 350 additional parking spaces-Completed in late 2006

The facility contains a combination administration/terminal building, a bus platform with bays and canopy, and parking for over 600 vehicles. The total cost was

approximately \$5 million. Average daily occupancy for parking ranges between 50 and 75 percent of capacity.

Three park-and-ride lots are currently operated by Douglas County in the northeast quadrant of three I-20 interchange areas:

- Lee Road: This facility contains 145 spaces and average daily occupancy typically ranges between 50 and 75 percent of capacity.
- Thornton Road: This facility contains 116 parking spaces and is accessed from Blair Bridge Road north of I-20. Average daily occupancy typically ranges between 25 and 50 percent of capacity.
- Post Road: This facility contains 78 spaces and average daily occupancy typically ranges between 70 and 90 percent of capacity.

Other parking lots where Rideshare vanpoolers currently convene include the K-Mart store on SR 5, the Target store on Chapel Hill Road, First Presbyterian Church on Campbellton Street, the Courtyard by Marriott off Thornton Road, and the Chevron service station off Liberty Road in Villa Rica.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

GRTA launched the Xpress bus program in June 2004 to provide regional express bus service in major travel corridors. The GRTA Xpress bus routes serving Douglas County are Route 460 – Douglasville/ Downtown Atlanta, inaugurated in July 2004 and Route 461-Douglasville/Midtown Atlanta, inaugurated in January 2006. Routes 460 and 461 originate at the Douglas County Transportation Center located on Dorris Road in Douglasville and travel via I-20 to Downtown and Midtown Atlanta respectively. Two daily reverse commute trips are provided on these routes during each peak travel period. The following table displays ridership information on these routes:

GRTA Route	Average Daily Ridership			
	2004*	2005	2006	2007**
<b>460 (Arbor Place-Douglasville- Downtown Atlanta)</b>	170.5	307.5	335.1	404.9
<b>461 (Douglasville – Midtown Atlanta)</b>			183.8	210.0
<i>*Service beginning July 2004</i>				
<i>**Services through May 2007</i>				

In June 2005, GRTA inaugurated Route 467-Douglasville/Cumberland which was the first Xpress service operating between suburban locations; however, this service was discontinued in March 2006 due to very low ridership.

Route 470, inaugurated in January 2005, is an express service operated by Cobb Community Transit (CCT) that originates at the Movies 278 Theater park-and-ride facility on U.S. Highway 278 in the City of Hiram (Paulding County), continuing east to Powder Springs in Cobb County. Buses stop at the Thornton Road park-and-ride

lot in Douglas County before traveling via I-20 to Downtown Atlanta. A single trip in the opposite direction, designated Route 47, is provided for reverse commuters.

## **PLANNED OR PROGRAMMED SERVICES AND IMPROVEMENTS**

Several sources were used to identify the planned and programmed improvements for transportation demand management and public transportation including Douglas County budget, Atlanta Regional Commission's Envision 6 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and 2008-2013 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), GRTA's Regional Transit Action Plan (RTAP) and interviews with the Douglas County Rideshare Director and other county staff.

### **DOUGLAS COUNTY RIDESHARE**

The Douglas County Rideshare program is partially funded using Section 5307 grant funds from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Section 5307 may be used to fund up to 80 percent of capital and planning project costs and up to 50 percent for operating costs. The grants are distributed using a formula based on population, population density, and other service and ridership data. The Section 5307 funds to be distributed to Douglas County are included in the current 2008-2013 TIP, which allocates approximately \$5 million for the six year coverage. The federal grant program provides just over \$4 million with local matching funds of approximately \$1 million. Between 2008-2013 the rideshare program anticipates that new low-emission vans will be acquired to upgrade the existing fleet, two new park-and-ride facilities will be constructed, the Douglas County Transportation Center will be upgraded and renovated, signage upgrades will be placed at existing park-and-ride facilities, and technology improvements that bolster the program's revenue collection and customer interface capacities will be implemented.

### **COMMUTER FACILITIES**

As part of its Arterial Improvements Program, GRTA is sponsoring an extension of Duralee Lane to Dorris Road, currently in the TIP for construction in 2008. The extension will allow for improved access between the Transportation Center and Fairburn Road near the I-20 interchange.

Douglas County is planning to design a park-and-ride lot on Thornton Road south of I-20, near Riverside Parkway and the New Manchester community during 2010. A park-and-ride lot on Douglas Boulevard near Bright Star Road is sponsored by GRTA, programmed in the 2008-2013 TIP, and estimated to be constructed in 2009. It will be located near the future I-20/Bright Star Road managed lane interchange. On a nine-acre site, the facility will be built in two phases and have accommodations for buses and ultimately over 500 parking spaces. The total projected construction cost of this facility is approximately \$3.6 million.

An additional park-and-ride lot will be constructed in the vicinity of the future I-20/Thornton Road managed lane interchange at Blairs Bridge Road. The new 11-acre facility will replace the existing Thornton Road park-and-ride, and will have accommodations for buses and approximately 500 parking spaces. The projected cost is approximately \$5 million and completion is anticipated in 2013.

Envision6 adopted the managed lane concept for the Atlanta metropolitan region as a tool for maintaining mobility and providing more travel options. Managed lanes combine pricing, vehicle eligibility, and access control strategies to maximize roadway capacity. One or more of these options may be used at a time and may change through the course of a day depending on traffic conditions.

- Pricing is used in an effort to manage demand and make use of under utilized or over utilized capacity. Users are charged a fee to access the system.
- Vehicle Eligibility is used to manage demand based on the number of passengers. Vehicle eligibility may vary by time of day, day of week, or be converted over the life span of a facility.
- Access Control is used to control the number of users by limiting access to the facility. Facilities may limit access by having fewer exit and entrance ramps, using grade-separated interchanges/intersections, or have barriers in place.

Managed lanes may be used by vanpools and buses and improve the efficiency of transit operations. Managed lanes are planned for I-20 in Douglas County to Bright Star Road. The portion of I-20 from Bright Star Road to the western border of the county has been identified as an unfunded need in the Envision 6 RTP.

## **PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION**

As a part of GRTA's RTAP Regional Express Bus Service Plan, future Xpress routes in Douglas County include Route 462 from the new park-and-ride lot at I-20 and Bright Star Road to the MARTA Hamilton E. Holmes Station and Route 465 from the Transportation Center via I-20 and Thornton Road/Camp Creek Parkway to the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. Additional intermediate-range plans include Xpress Routes 463 and 466 from the Bright Star Road and Thornton Road park-and-ride lots, respectively, to Midtown Atlanta.

Douglas County is interested in expanding public transportation in the county and coordinating with regional partners to make Douglas County more accessible and mobile through TDM strategies and public transportation services. A bus feasibility study is being planned for 2010 to determine the feasibility of bus transit service in Douglas County. An institutional framework for the implementation of transit is discussed in more detail later in this document.

## **RELATED TRANSPORTATION PLANS AND STUDIES**

The following sections describes other transportation plans and studies beyond the ARC's RTP and TIP that impact the planning efforts of the Douglas County CTP. Adjacent counties and many other regional entities are facing the same transportation issues as Douglas County in terms of alternative transportation choices. These efforts have been coordinated between the multiple jurisdictions.

### **COBB COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

The January 2008 draft of the Cobb County CTP included 17 transit service recommendations. Those projects recommended for the southwest quadrant, adjacent to Douglas County follow:

- Limited Stop Bus Service to HE Holmes parallel to CCT Route 30, Marietta Transfer Center to HE Holmes via I-20.
- Express Bus Service on Veterans Memorial Parkway from the Downtown Austell park-and-ride to HE Holmes.
- Circulator Shuttle in Austell.
- Limited Stop Bus Service on CH James Parkway-Florence Road from the Silver Comet park-and-ride to HE Holmes MARTA Station.

## PAULDING COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The March 2008 draft of the Paulding County CTP Recommendations and Strategies Report included 18 transit recommendations. Projects related to Douglas County follow:

- Development of Paulding County Vanpool program. Analyze potential for series of pick-up locations within Paulding County terminating at regional activity centers (Cumberland, Town Center, Atlanta central business district and Midtown Atlanta, and Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport).
- Development of Cobb County-Paulding County Vanpool Program.
- Connection to Route 485 – GRTA Xpress bus from West Cobb to Downtown Atlanta via I-285.
- Arterial Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) /HOV, or truck preferred lanes – SR 6 /US 278 into Cobb County.

## CARROLL COUNTY

While there are no immediate plans to implement fixed-route transit service within Carroll County, the City of Carrollton is planning to assess future transit feasibility in 2008. Also, the 2007 Comprehensive Plan for the City of Villa Rica notes that the city's residents in 1990 and 2000 were less likely to drive alone to work (69.1 percent) than residents of Douglas County (79.0 percent) and Carroll County (81.6 percent). The percentage of Villa Rica residents driving alone declined from 1990 (72.6 percent). Among Villa Rica residents in 2000, alternative modes included ridesharing (21.8 percent) and public transportation (1.5 percent), prior to the implementation of GRTA Xpress services.

## COMMUTER RAIL

The cities of Austell, Douglasville, and Villa Rica are potential stops, along a 52-mile alignment of the Norfolk Southern Railroad, for a commuter rail line that would extend to the city of Bremen in Haralson County from Downtown Atlanta. One of seven potential commuter rail routes identified by GDOT in its Georgia Rail Passenger Program and its current Statewide Transportation Plan, the \$295.2 million Bremen route has no funding commitments and is considered a long-term (25-30 years) funding priority in the ARC Envision 6 Aspirations Plan component of the RTP.

## TRANSIT PLANNING BOARD

The Transit Planning Board (TPB) identifies itself as *“a partnership that will establish and maintain a seamless, integrated transit network for the Atlanta region. Created by a joint resolution of the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC), Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) and the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA), the TPB will:*



- *Conduct an initial planning phase of at least two years during which it will develop a regional transit plan including a comprehensive financial plan;*
- *Work to improve regional service coordination, including integrating fares, marketing and customer information;*
- *Measure system performance; and,*
- *Advocate for increased federal funding for regional transit.”*

The efforts of the TPB resulted in the December 2007 Concept 3 Regional Transit Vision. The projects identified within Douglas County include the aforementioned commuter rail line as well as the development of BRT services along I-20 between the Douglasville/Arbor Place area in Douglas County and the Covington/Oxford area of Newton County, via downtown Atlanta, in concert with the development of managed lanes within the corridor. The BRT service is not in Envision6, although the managed lane project for Douglas County to Bright Star Road is and is scheduled for completion by 2020.

### UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM

A Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is federally mandated for metropolitan regions with more than 50,000 people. The intent is to bring together regional and state representatives and operators of public transit to coordinate planning efforts to provide the regional and local perspective to public transportation issues.

*“The Atlanta Regional Commission, in cooperation with the State and operators of public transportation, is required to develop a unified planning work program that:*

- *Includes a discussion of the planning priorities facing the metropolitan transportation planning area.*
- *Identifies work proposed for the next one- or two-year period by major activity and task (including activities that address the planning factors in § 450.306(a)), in sufficient detail to indicate who will perform the work, the schedule for completing the work, the resulting products, the proposed funding by activity/task, and a summary of the total amounts and sources of Federal and matching funds.”*

The 2008 Goals and Objectives for Douglas County Rideshare Program identified in the UPWP are:

- Develop a transit-oriented marketing and promotional identity and brand/trademark/logo.
- Work with GRTA to initiate shuttle service from the Douglas County Transportation Center to Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport.
- Work with GRTA to develop regional route mapping, signage and other commuter aids for the Douglas County Transportation Center and bus platform.
- Construct Phase One of Bright Star/West Douglas park-and-ride lot.
- Continue safety, security and cosmetic upgrades to Transportation Center.
- Update the vanpool fleet. Replace all vans with more than 100,000 miles or five years of service.
- Update office financial procedures by identifying and purchasing software.



## DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

### POPULATION, HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT

Douglas County demographic data was used as a preliminary screening to determine the potential for fixed-route bus service. Population density is often used as a measure to determine transit feasibility. Higher population/housing densities often correlate with greater public transportation use. The type of employment and location of employment in the County can direct transit development. Highly dense employment centers are excellent locations for transit service. However, the need for public transportation often exists in any corridor that is highly congested, and transit may be used in specific corridors to meet highly traveled corridors from dense nodes of activities.

#### Population and Housing Density

The 2000 population density within the City of Douglasville (1.47 persons per acre) was the lowest among the 14 cities with a population greater than 20,000 in ARC's ten-county planning area. According to census tract data collected by ARC, residential densities in 2006 were highest in central Douglasville (1.2 dwelling units per acre) and the Arbor Place/Northern Chapel Hill area (1.1 dwelling units per acre). These figures remain well below industry standards (3 or more dwelling units per gross acre) supporting hourly fixed-route services in urban areas. From 2000 to 2006, multifamily housing growth slightly outpaced the growth in single-family housing. Census Bureau data obtained by ARC indicates there were no multifamily permits issued in 2006 by Douglas County, one of only two counties in the Atlanta urbanized area that did not issue permits during this year. Nonetheless, several areas of Douglas County experienced significant growth in multifamily housing units between 2000 and 2006. Based on census tract data from ARC, notable areas of multifamily housing growth include the Bright Star area (increase from 7 to 305 units), the West Lithia Springs/County Line Road area (increase from 68 to 610 units) and central Douglasville (increase from 611 to 1,202 units). Multifamily housing units within the entire City of Douglasville grew by 78.8 percent during this period, the highest rate among twelve cities in the ARC planning area with more than 3,000 multifamily units. Meanwhile, the 2004-2025 Comprehensive Plan reports a high proportion of three-bedroom apartments, approximately 40 percent of all rental units, within the unincorporated area. Normalized by household income, residents of multifamily housing conventionally have a higher propensity for choosing available transit modes than residents of single-family housing.

#### Employment Characteristics

The Douglas County workforce remains predominantly in blue-collar goods production and service sectors. The ARC-estimated net gain of 436 manufacturing jobs in Douglas County between 2000 and 2005 was the highest among the 20 counties in Atlanta's urbanized area. Douglas County was among only four counties during this period to experience employment growth in this sector. The labor force analysis provided in the 2004-2025 Douglas County Comprehensive Plan suggests a future need will exist for public transportation and other mobility options for workers in production industries. Production industry jobs typically follow shift work, which

defines specific times for transit services. Routes that serve the manufacturing centers may run less frequently and be available during shift changes.

Further, ARC notes that through 2005 Douglas County had the highest estimated percentage of retail employment (30 percent) in Atlanta's 20-county urbanized area. This is largely due to the preponderance of retail jobs within the Arbor Place/North Chapel Hill and Bright Star census tracts. Average wages in the retail trade are typically lower than in other labor sectors. Improving mobility options in the face of rising commute-related costs can benefit both cost-burdened employees and their employers within the county. The retail centers are prime locations for transit services because it not only serves employees of the area, but it is a major destination for county residents.

## AGE

About 16.2 percent of the Douglas County population is aged 55 years and above, similar to the 16.5 percent of the population for the ten core counties in the ARC planning area (which includes Douglas County). ARC estimates also indicate the 2000-2005 percentage growth rate among older adults for Douglas County (26.3 percent) lags behind that of the ten-county ARC planning area (30.6 percent). However, ARC projects that persons age 55 and older in Douglas County will increase by 235 percent between 2000 and 2030, compared to a projected growth of 127 percent for the ten-county ARC planning area. Over time, many older county residents, particularly those with mobility limitations, will seek accessible transportation options beyond single-occupant travel. According to a 2006 study conducted for ARC by the Carl Vinson Institute of the University of Georgia, six percent of county residents intend to use public transportation once they are no longer capable of driving. Comparatively, without the ability to drive, 21 percent of older adults in the County did not know how they will get around, 63 percent intend to be driven around by other persons, and ten percent plan to find some other means for mobility.

According to the 2006 ARC-Carl Vinson Institute survey, 41 percent of Douglas County's older adults (age 55 and above) are currently employed, the highest proportion within the ten-county ARC planning area, including 27 percent employed full-time. Among this working population, at least 49 percent of those surveyed intend to continue working at least part-time, while only 41 percent have near-term plans for retirement. The survey also revealed that three percent of the county's older adults currently use public transportation, compared to four percent within the ten-county ARC planning area. Workers aged 60 years and above conventionally have a higher propensity to choose available transit modes for work trips than adults aged 30-59.

## INCOME

Income may sometimes be an indicator of transit use; because lower income persons may have less access to a vehicle and would be more dependent on transit service. However, there are many reasons that individuals choose transit, including longer travel times. The success of the Douglas County vanpool and the GRTA Xpress bus service to the county demonstrates that public transportation can be an attractive choice for long distance commutes. The median household income for Douglas

County was \$50,108 in 1999 exceeding the national median household income of \$41,994, but below the Atlanta metropolitan statistical area (MSA) income of \$51,948 for the same year. Just under eight percent of the population is living below the poverty level according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Compared to over nine percent for the Atlanta MSA and 12 percent for the U.S., income may not be a factor in a riders' choice to use transit.

## VEHICLE AVAILABILITY

Approximately five percent of households in Douglas County had no vehicle available in 2000 according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census. Additionally, over 26 percent of households have only one vehicle available. The average household is more than two people; therefore one vehicle may not be enough to serve the travel needs of one household. Vehicle availability may indicate the need for public transportation services because individuals with no access or limited access to a vehicle may have restricted options because of a lack of other transportation alternatives.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### DOUGLAS COUNTY RIDESHARE

With the continuing expansion of the Atlanta urbanized area, emerging regional employment markets can generate demand for new Douglas County vanpool routes. Feasibility for establishing new commuter vanpool routes will increase as the regional network of managed lanes supporting high-occupancy vehicle travel increases. Based on the existing vanpool route schedule, the following areas may be future employment markets to target for potential service expansion:

- Atlanta/Midtown – Atlantic Station
- Atlanta/Midtown – Georgia Tech/Coca-Cola
- Atlanta/Southwest – Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport
- Atlanta/Buckhead – Lenox Mall/Phipps Plaza
- Cobb County – Kennesaw State University
- DeKalb County – Stonecrest Mall
- Fulton County – North Point Mall
- Gwinnett County – Mall of Georgia

Currently served markets which may experience service growth include the Perimeter (I-285 northern quadrant) and the Emory University/Clifton Road corridors.

Future enhancements may expand the customer services currently available to Douglas County Rideshare participants, such as the Guaranteed Ride Home program. This emergency taxi service is offered up to three times annually to each patron in the event an early return or a late departure from the workplace is needed.

The “Breeze” system has been implemented by MARTA and adopted by other regional transit providers to allow for seamless fare collection between the different providers. Users of the Douglas County vanpool or Xpress bus may continue their journey on another transit system. By becoming part of the “Breeze” system, Douglas

County could provide passengers with better customer service through ease of transfer.

Douglas County Rideshare can continue building partnerships with employers and employee groups through transportation management associations (TMAs) and similar employer support organizations, including the Clean Air Campaign, Atlantic Station Access plus Mobility Program (ASAP+), Buckhead Area TMA, Commuter Club of Cobb County, CobbRides, Downtown TMA, Hartsfield Area TMA, and Midtown Transportation Solutions. Outreach can also be promoted through Community Improvement Districts (CIDs) located throughout the Atlanta region. With assistance from organizations such as the Association for Commuter Transportation (ACT), new training and technical capacity resources may be provided for Douglas County Rideshare personnel to further support their preparation for the continued expansion of the program.

### COMMUTER FACILITIES

Within Douglas County, carpooling and vanpooling can be encouraged at major activity center venues with substantial parking areas, such as Arbor Place Mall (6,500 spaces), the Douglas County Courthouse (585 spaces), and the Douglas County Transportation Center. Additionally, the County could encourage or provide incentives for the placement of reserved ridesharing spaces in commuter parking areas as close as possible to employment destinations.

Parking facilities at major commercial and mixed-use activity centers in Douglas County can also be considered as potential sites for carsharing programs. One carsharing program has been developing recently in Atlanta, through a partnership between a national carsharing company (Flexcar, recently acquired by Zipcar) and an Atlanta-based parking and transportation management company. Used for both work-related and other purposes, Flexcars are currently found in the cities of Atlanta and Decatur and at major employment centers in central DeKalb County.

The current and additional forthcoming park-and-ride facilities and managed lanes are anticipated to support growing demand for ridesharing activities into the foreseeable future. Any future considerations for park-and-ride lots near I-20 exits (such as Mirror Lake Boulevard/Liberty Road in Villa Rica) should be based on estimates of residential population within a 2.5-mile radius of a site. This zone typically represents the source of 50 percent of typical park-and-ride demand. A zone representing an additional 35 percent of estimated demand extends parabolically to a point ten miles from the prospective site, directed away from Atlanta, six miles to the north and south of the line of travel.

### PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Given the aforementioned demographic factors, a bus transit feasibility study would be appropriate to evaluate the need for a fixed-route shuttle with limited stops connecting transportation centers (including the Douglas County Transportation Center and other park-and-ride facilities) with regional activity centers (such as Arbor Place Mall and Wellstar Douglas Hospital) government centers (including the City of Douglasville and the Douglas County Courthouse), and public or private social service providers. It is anticipated the Section 5307 funds allocated through the TIP

would be used for a Bus Feasibility Study in 2010 according to the Douglas County Rideshare Director.

The proposed Bus Feasibility Study may identify new services which can be implemented by Douglas County and/or the City of Douglasville to enhance mobility. It is premature to recommend alignment specific routes in the CTP prior to the completion of the bus feasibility study. Consideration of a transit division at the County-level, building on the Rideshare Program, may better prepare the county in the event that future local transit services are identified and coordination activities with existing regional providers need to be pursued.

In the interim, opportunities to prioritize pedestrian or bicycle transportation facilities that connect higher-density residential and mixed-use venues with major activity centers can be pursued. These facilities can support a walkable and bikeable environment in the vicinity of feasible transit stops. Also in the interim, policies promoting more transit-supportive densities, as part of a transit-oriented development strategy by municipal governments, can improve the future feasibility of fixed-route services. Recommendations for specific bicycle and pedestrian facilities are available in a separate technical document.

Coupled with strategic pedestrian improvements, a limited number of Douglas County stops along routes proposed in the draft Cobb County CTP can benefit industrial and commercial employment in the Thornton Road commerce center area. Providing feeder services from strategic locations at county borders, such as the Mirror Lake section of Villa Rica, or beyond Douglas County limits may increase patronage of the Douglas County Transportation Center and park-and-ride lots near the planned I-20 managed lanes, without the necessity of adding parking capacity.

Any future plans for the provision of local fixed-route transit in Douglas County must also assume the provision of a complementary demand-response paratransit service. For compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), such a service must be made available to passengers within at least 0.75 miles of any local route alignment. Coordination with human service agencies such as Douglas Senior Services and the Douglas County Community Services Board and related stakeholders are necessary components of transit feasibility and implementation planning. Additional public financial support and/or private partnerships may help subsidize the cost of additional reverse commute trips into Douglas County via GRTA Xpress routes.

Once the Atlanta-Bremen commuter rail project moves beyond conceptual planning stages to project development, transit-oriented development strategies applied to potential station areas can support successful implementation of the commuter rail service. For commuter rail station areas in a suburban setting, transit-oriented development policies can make more efficient use of available parking, improve accessibility and road connectivity, promote development at an appropriate density and scale, and support a mix of compatible uses within a reasonable distance from stations.

## ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

An Institutional Peer Review was conducted as part of the Douglas County CTP to make recommendations on changes to the structure of the Douglas County DOT to make the organization more efficient in maintaining, operating, and improving transportation in the county. The current institutional structure of the Douglas County DOT does not include the Rideshare program; it is a separate operation. A recommendation of the Peer Review is to incorporate the Rideshare program into the Douglas County DOT under a Transit/TDM Division. The Rideshare Director would become the head of the new division under the Director of the Douglas County DOT. The incorporation of a transit/TDM division in the Douglas County DOT would not only streamline management and planning but would position the county DOT as a multi-modal agency. The strength of one agency will be able to better leverage funds and to plan for seamless integration of transportation services throughout the county.

It is recommended that the Rideshare Program be re-branded as Douglas County Connect. This new program would be an umbrella agency for all transit and TDM strategies in the county. The current rideshare and vanpool activities would be part of the Douglas County Connect as well as the GRTA Xpress buses serving Douglas County and any other future transit services in the area. Douglas County Connect would also include the park-and-ride facilities that support carpooling, vanpooling and bus service, and may also include some or all components of the proposed intelligent transportation system (ITS) infrastructure for the county. A separate technical document recommends potential ITS solutions, which includes a traffic control center (TCC) to house the ITS support infrastructure. This backbone of the ITS plan is similar to the statewide Georgia Navigator at the county level and could become part of the Douglas County Connect division. The following logo is suggested to promote and provide an image for the Douglas County Connect.



The concept behind the Douglas County Connect brand and the logo is to focus on connections and how transportation modes and facilities are connected. Users of the system can be connected in many ways and when these modes and management strategies are integrated; everyone participates in the overall efficiency of the system.



## TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT/PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION MARKETING STRATEGIES

Marketing strategies for Travel Demand Management programs and potential future transit services in Douglas County can encompass a range of activities including:

- Targeting growing and underserved regional employee travel markets for continued expansion and outreach of information regarding Douglas County Rideshare services. A sample of markets previously identified in this section include in the Midtown, Buckhead and southwest sections of the City of Atlanta, as well as Kennesaw State University and commercial centers in DeKalb, Fulton, and Gwinnett County.
- Targeting regional employee travel markets currently served by Douglas County Rideshare which may experience growth in demand for vanpool services. Example markets previously identified in this section include the Perimeter (I-285 northern quadrant) and the Clifton Corridor (Emory University) in DeKalb County.
- Continued establishment of partnerships between Douglas County and employers and employee groups. Similar to what is currently being done by Douglas County Rideshare with regional transportation management associations, as well as regional community improvement districts to share promotional materials and strategies. Organizations cited previously in this section include the Clean Air Campaign, ASAP+, Buckhead Area TMA, Commuter Club of Cobb County, CobbRides, Downtown TMA, Hartsfield TMA, and Midtown Transportation Solutions. One example of a toolkit of marketing materials for metropolitan Atlanta employers is provided by the Clean Air Campaign via their website. Similar efforts should be undertaken to collaborate with regional transit agencies for best practices in promotional activities by the Douglas County agency responsible for implementing new transit services, if transit is determined to be feasible.
- Identify opportunities to encourage Douglas County employers to develop "preferred parking" strategies, incentivizing the placement of ridesharing spaces in commuter parking areas as close as possible to employment destinations, and advancing awareness of the program. Major activity venues with substantial parking areas, such as Arbor Place Mall and the Douglas County Courthouse, should be the focus of initial preferred parking promotional efforts. Examples of municipal/regional preferred parking programs include Rochester, New York and St. Paul, Minnesota.
- Continue to gather resources and supportive marketing materials from the Association for Commuter Transportation (ACT), specifically providing training and technical capacity resources that further support the continued expansion of the rideshare program.

Assuming a transit service is determined to be feasible resulting from the planned Bus Transit Feasibility Study, the following transit-specific marketing activities can be pursued during implementation:



- Conduct outreach, surveys and research of employee needs in areas of highly concentrated employment activity, such as the retail centers in the Arbor Place/North Chapel Hill and Bright Star communities, as well as industrial and commercial employment in the Thornton Road employment area. Identify ideal bus stop locations in commercial areas that can occur through this outreach effort, which will also produce an initial pool of potential revenue-generating local advertisers.
- Provide public information about existing, new, and proposed transit services via the strategic placement of kiosks at local shopping centers and government buildings. In addition, use government media outlets such as the "dctv 23" government-access channel and the Douglas County "Happenings" e-mail bulletin to promote awareness of existing GRTA and Douglas County Rideshare services and provide information regarding future transit services.
- Coordinate with Douglas County members of the Atlanta Apartment Association, and with other managers and builders of multifamily housing units in the county, to advise regarding implementation progress and identify needs for multimodal accessibility to proposed transit stops.
- Consult representative agencies for traditionally underserved minority groups in Douglas County to identify mobility challenges for residents while partnering for promotional outreach regarding new and potential services.
- Consult representatives of transit, pedestrian and bicycle transportation, and active-living advocacy groups in metropolitan Atlanta to identify connectivity needs while partnering for promotional outreach regarding new and potential services.
- Apply market segmentation techniques to identify the needs and interests of other groups, in addition to those previously noted, relating to local bus transit. Market segments may be based on interests or activities (e.g., Xpress riders, non-transit riders, developers, tourists) and have responses to marketing strategies that are distinctive from other market segments. A market segmentation handbook produced by the Transportation Research Board is currently available online.
- Consult representatives of seniors and persons with disabilities, including both human service and advocacy groups, to identify connectivity and accessibility needs while partnering for promotional outreach regarding new and potential services.
- Consider materials provided in the Promotional Materials Clearinghouse, and other resources prepared by the Marketing Institute of Florida State University for transit and TDM professionals.
- Consider award-winning marketing efforts identified by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) as part of its annual AdWheel awards

program. APTA's AdWheel award recognizes best practices in the development of print and electronic media, campaigns, and special-event materials. The most recent list of award winners and links to related promotional materials is provided on the APTA website.

- Consider resources coalesced by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Strategies to initiate and build ridership are currently provided via their website.
- Consult peer agencies providing new fixed-route transit services to identify lessons learned in generating support and ridership for public transit at the local level. Included among communities recently introducing such services are Hall County, Georgia (Red Rabbit) and Cherokee County, Georgia (CATS). Both of these counties have similar characteristics to Douglas and may provide insight into developing transit in lower density areas.
- Upon implementation, consider promoting free-fare opportunities to initiate new riders through direct mail and other municipal agency activities. An example of a Wisconsin direct mail campaign promoting transit service with free fares as an incentive is currently on the APTA website, while the organization's annual "Dump the Pump Day" initiative merging transit promotion with environmental concerns is also available via their website.



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