

# TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

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## MERIWETHER COUNTY

6/30/2010

FUNDED IN PART THROUGH A PLANNING GRANT FROM THE GEORGIA  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Three Rivers Regional Commission (TRRC) has undertaken this Transit Development Program planning initiative under the on-going and annually negotiated Purchase of Service (POS) contract between its predecessor organization (Chattahoochee-Flint Regional CFRDC) and the Georgia Department of Transportation. Pursuant to previous submissions, the plan has been developed a plan that is regional in nature though is proceeding in what is essentially a county-by-county basis. Each subarea of the Region has unique transit needs and will have a unique transit development profile even given the fact that the goals and objectives are regional.

Meriwether County was been selected as the fourth County analyzed and the first county analyzed since the merger between the former Chattahoochee-Flint Regional Development Center and the former McIntosh Trail Regional Development Center. Coincidentally, there is more intra-county travel in Meriwether County to the counties that made up the former McIntosh Trail Regional Development Center since the county borders three counties: Spalding, Pike and Upson.

Meriwether County presents unique transit parameters in that the County, located in west central Georgia, lies within what is termed the “Golden Triangle” in the State. The Golden Triangle refers to the triangle created by three of the State’s largest cities: Atlanta, Macon and Columbus. Meriwether County is located 35 miles from Atlanta’s Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, 40 miles to Columbus and 60 miles from Macon. These urban parameters aside, 64% of Meriwether County residents live in the rural countryside and the largest town, Manchester is 3900 residents. Only Manchester, Greenville (1500) and Woodbury (1073) are larger than 1000 residents. The net result is a county population that travels mostly by private automobile, avails itself of job and service opportunities with numerous directional pulls and those opportunities are often involve a destination outside of the County. The County is the largest county in the TRRC region in land area at 505.4 square miles and is well connected to surrounding counties by its highway system. This further complicates transit operations.

Special trip needs are experienced by those with medical conditions and those who must seek employment outside of Meriwether County. As is the case of most towns under 1000 residents, shopping and medical needs/choices also force residents to drive to larger areas outside of the County (Golden Triangle cities as well as Peachtree City, Newnan, LaGrange. Manchester, the largest city, though in the County is geographically situated at its southern border and is less convenient to many of the other Meriwether County communities. This multi-directional pull has been exacerbated by the current economic conditions as well as the growth in jobs in Newnan and employers serving and including the new KIA plant in West Point, Troup County.

Absent a system by which Meriwether County could define service subareas wherein the County could purchase services from its neighboring counties’ 5311 Rural Transit Services, the best option would be for the county to develop its own dial-a-ride service. A dial-a-ride service that would provide trips to surrounding counties would be prohibitively expensive for the County. However, within the five year time frame the County could easily enter into a pooled agreement with an existing provider to provide service within the County. The County would also be able to leverage its Purchase of Service (POS) trips to offset the costs.

Meriwether County is the only county in the Three Rivers region that does not have or is not planning for a 5311 Rural Transportation Program. Lamar, Heard and Pike counties, though

smaller than Meriwether and arguably more rural in character, have instituted Section 5311 service. The state Department of Human Resources currently operates 5 buses in the county. The County can offset the costs of providing the 5311 services through procuring the capacity for these trips and using the revenue as income or simply as revenue.

The business community in Meriwether County has also shown interest and support in facilitating transportation options for employers and employees in the County. Therefore, the recommendation is that Meriwether County work towards offering a dial-a-ride service for its citizenry and towards facilitating vanpools, carpools and possibly subscription van service to area employers through a business-driven development of a Transportation Management Association (TDM). The business community should be actively involved in this process and relationships with employers in surrounding counties, particularly Troup and Coweta and the development of this non-profit Transportation Management Association could be beneficial.

The County, through accepting these recommendations does not incur an obligation to the Georgia Department of Transportation, Three Rivers Regional Commission or any other entity, either public or private. Three Rivers does not offer transit services under this analysis, nor can another transit provider be held responsible for the estimates contained herein.

## DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Meriwether County is situated between three urban areas in the State of Georgia, Atlanta, Macon and Columbus. This area has been referred to as the Golden Triangle. Meriwether County has a population that is estimated to reach in 2010 (Governor's Office of Planning and Budget). The largest City in the County is Manchester with a population of 3900. Meriwether County is ranked as 72nd in population size (Source: Georgia Info) in the State of Georgia though in geographical size it ranks as 28<sup>th</sup> and is the largest county in the TRRC region. This disparity results in a low population density overall at 45 persons per square mile

Meriwether County is not what is generally considered supportive of typical transit service. Early studies by B.S. Pushkarev and J.M. Zupan showed a 0.75 correlation between transit use and density. Transit virtually trumps the automobile where densities exceed 7800 per square mile. However, the typical density in Meriwether County traditionally supports a mode split of 2 to 3 percent with higher splits would be possible in the cities of Manchester, Woodbury and Greenville though there are an insufficient number of destinations in all but Manchester for a traditional fixed route service.

Similarly, the employment growth depicted above tends to be in manufacturing, an economic sector not traditionally transit supportive. One of the detriments to transit resistance is site characteristic that do not support transit (i.e. industrial parks with large parking lots and no surrounding amenities). Some detriments are also based on socio-economic conditioning, particularly in areas where transit has no tradition. This does not mean that a well-conceived and executed transit system cannot flourish in the County. Many small and disperse communities have created very successful transit systems. See [www.bikesatwork.com](http://www.bikesatwork.com).

The unemployment rate in Meriwether County increased from approximately 8 percent at the onset of this study in 2008 to a high of 14% in March 2010. The current unemployment rate in the TRRC region increased by 3.5 percent during roughly this same period (Georgia Department of Labor). This increase is tempered by the fact that much of Meriwether County is proximal to the KIA plant and its suppliers that started hiring in 2008. Meriwether County obtained a KIA supplier to its Industrial site near Lone Oak.

Recent studies have also shown a positive correlation between transit accessibility and a reduction of time spent on welfare. These factors suggest the need for the community to take a proactive stance toward public transportation that will convince the population that the benefits of transit truly outweigh the negative stereotypes that seem to historically dominate the public discussion of transit in many communities in the TRRC region. This, coupled with the \$1.50 plus increase in the per gallon cost of gasoline experienced in 2007 has prompted many in the region to think that transit could be a needed amenity in their communities.

As the following table exemplifies, Meriwether residents find employment both within the county and outside of the county. The average commute for the county is 33.2 minutes as of the 2000 census. This commute will likely increase due to plant closings within the county (resulting in negative job growth -9.4%) coupled with increased congestion on regional and superregional routes. The directional areas most prevalent are to Coweta and to Fayette/Clayton.

MAJOR EMPLOYERS FOR MERIWETHER RESIDENTS		
EMPLOYER	TOTAL EMPLOYMENT	COUNTY LOCATION
<i>CRAWFORD GRADING</i>	60	LUTHERSVILLE
<i>CROWN TECHNOLOGY</i>	55	WOODBURY
<i>DOBCO</i>	70	MANCHESTER
<i>DONGWON AUTO TECH</i>	85	LONE OAK
FLINT RIVER ACADEMY	50	MANCHESTER
GEORGIA REHABILITATION-IMAGING	500	WARM SPRINGS
GEORGIA-PACIFIC WOOD PRODUCTS	335	WARM SPRINGS
HERITAGE HEALTHCARE OF GREENVILLE	28	GREENVILLE
<i>JO BARBER</i>	65	LUTHERSVILLE
MCCOY GRADING INC.	90	GREENVILLE
<i>RL BISHOP</i>	36	MANCHESTER
<i>SIMS BARK</i>	57	WOODBURY
<i>SPURLIN</i>	42	WOODBURY
OUTSIDE OF COUNTY AREA EMPLOYER		MERIWETHER
YAMAHA MOTOR MFG CORPOF AMERICA	1063	COWETA
PIEDMONT NEWNAN HOSPITAL	800	COWETA
YOKOGAWA CORP OF AMERICA	550	COWETA
CALLAWAY GARDENS RESORT	1000	HARRIS
AMI GRIFFIN-SPLADING HOSPITAL	1100	SPALDING
<i>KIA Motors</i>	1800	TROUP
HOMENURSE INC	1100-1400	SPALDING
WAL-MART	1500	TROUP
LAGRANGE-TROUP COUNTY HOSPITAL	910	TROUP
INTERFACE FLOORING SYSTEMS INC	520	TROUP
INTERCALL, INC	400	TROUP

COMMUTING PATTERNS (SOURCE: CENSUS)					
COUNTY WHERE EMPLOYED	NUMBER	PERCENT OF TOTAL	COUNTY OF RESIDENCE	NUMBER	PERCENT OF TOTAL
MERIWETHER	4,114	46.3	MERIWETHER	4,114	63.1
COWETA	1,149	12.9	TALBOT	719	11.0
TROUP	956	10.8	HARRIS	416	6.4
FAYETTE	891	10.0	TROUP	272	4.2
FULTON	500	5.6	COWETA	219	3.4
HARRIS	267	3.0	UPSON	179	2.7
MUSCOGEE	206	2.3	MUSCOGEE	137	2.1
CLAYTON	196	2.2	PIKE	72	1.1
OTHER	614	6.9	OTHER	390	6.0
TOTAL	8,893	100	TOTAL	6,518	100

Meriwether is one of the more economically depressed counties in the Three Rivers Region. Communities in the County have high concentrations of economically distressed groups, including concentrations of ethnic minorities, elderly and handicapped and unemployed. From these concentrations, transit dependent populations are more likely. For example, three of the largest concentrations of ethnic minorities in the TRRC east of the Flint River are in Meriwether County.

<b>TRRC CONCENTRATIONS OF ETHNIC MINORITIES</b>	
<b>PERCENTAGE OF BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN</b>	
<b>COMMUNITY / COUNTY</b>	<b>2000 PERCENTAGE</b>
<b>GREENVILLE IN MERIWETHER COUNTY</b>	73.2%
<b>WEST POINT IN TROUP COUNTY</b>	57.8%
<b>LUTHERSVILLE IN MERIWETHER COUNTY</b>	51.9%
<b>LAGRANGE IN TROUP COUNTY</b>	47.5%
<b>HOGANSVILLE IN TROUP COUNTY</b>	43.2%
<b>MANCHESTER IN MERIWETHER COUNTY</b>	42.2%
<b>NEWNAN IN COWETA COUNTY</b>	42.1%
<b>CARROLLTON IN CARROLL COUNTY</b>	31.2%
<b>GRANTVILLE IN COWETA COUNTY</b>	28.5%
<b>BOWDON IN CARROLLCOUNTY</b>	25.2%
<b>CF: CITY OF ATLANTA</b>	61.4%
<b>CF: CITY OF COLUMBUS</b>	43.0%

Meriwether County residents in the age sixty-five and higher demographic is 14.5% of the population compared with 10.1% in the State of Georgia as a whole. Another critical demographic is that persons with a disability comprise 24.4% of the population in Meriwether County compared with 14.8% of the State's population. Spread throughout the region, the elderly are the single group most in need of transportation services given the attributes below:

ELDERLY POPULATION ATTRIBUTE (2000 CENSUS)	TRRC REGION	MERIWETHER COUNTY
<b>Population Aged 60+(Source: special outline summary 200)</b>	60,357	4,113
<b>Low Income Minority 65+</b>	2,149	206
<b>Limited Mobility 65+</b>	8,913	678
<b>Rural 60+</b>	32,379	3,409
<b>Low Income 65+</b>	5,602	491
<b>Limited English 65+</b>	170	0

Similarly, persons with disabilities in the age groups under 65 are 3.8% higher in Meriwether County than in the State overall. Meriwether County, with 37.7 percent of its population from 5 to 64 living with a disability, is the highest in the TRRC region, with Coweta the lowest at 23.5%. The number of elderly is growing slightly faster as a percentage of Meriwether population.

The economically disadvantaged in Meriwether County, also are spread throughout the county. The weekly wages in the county are depressed by wage and by employment type. The following depict the labor breakdown in the county:

**MERIWETHER COUNTY: INDUSTRY MIX 2008**

**(NOTE: INDUSTRIES SELECTED FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES AND WILL NOT TOTAL)**

CATEGORY	LOCATION QUOTIENT GEORGIA	LOCATION QUOTIENT MERIWETHER	NUMBER OF FIRMS	MERIWETHER EMPLOYMENT %	WEEKLY WAGE
<b>GOODS PRODUCING</b>			82	19.1	691
AGRICULTURE	0.72	5.08	16	2.3	615
CONSTRUCTION	0.97	1.80	50	6.7	725
MANUFACTURING	1.03	1.39	16	10.2	686
NONMETAL	1.39	NC			
FABRICATED METAL	0.60	ND	2		NA
TRANSPORT. EQUIP	0.86	ND	1		NA
<b>SERVICE PROVIDING</b>			239	41.7	459
WHOLESALE TRADE		0.37	6	2.1	648
RETAIL TRADE	1.03	1.40	80	11.8	386
FINANCE AND INS.	0.91	1.04	21	3	676
REAL ESTATE	1.00	0.30	6	0.3	236
PROF. AND TECH	0.99	0.10	9	0.4	456
ADMIN./WASTE SERV	1.17	0.26	10	1.3	458
HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	0.83	ND	24	10.2	522
ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD SERVICES	1.04	1.03	28	6.6	497
OTHER SERVICES			26	2.3	497
<b>TOTAL GOVERNMENT</b>			52	39	560
<b>ALL INDUSTRIES</b>			381	100	543

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

**POPULATION PROJECTION – 2008 TRRC ESTIMATE**

POPULATION PROJECTIONS	THREE RIVERS			MERIWETHER	MALE	FEMALE
				TOTAL		
2000 CENSUS		2008 ESTIMATE	% CHANGE			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>403,944</b>	<b>485,596</b>	<b>20.2%</b>			
0 TO 10	121,525	141,104	16.1%			
20 TO 64	238,013	289,829	21.8%			
65 AND OLDER	44,406	54,663	23.1%			
COHORT GROUP	485,596			22,840	10,915	11,925
UNDER 5 YEARS	36,090			1,544	793	751
5 TO 9 YEARS	35,840			1,544	761	783
10 TO 14 YEARS	34,791			1,525	795	730
15 TO 19 YEARS	38,383			1,588	815	773
20 TO 24 YEARS	30,658			1,289	699	590
25 TO 29 YEARS	40,500			1,742	809	933
30 TO 34 YEARS	33,665			1,429	731	698
35 TO 39	33,665			1,352	637	715
40 TO 44	34,339			1,529	755	774
45 TO 49	34,230			1,675	836	
50 TO 54	31,041			1,598	748	850
55 TO 59	26,903			1,382	650	732
60 TO 64	22,795			1,340	581	759
65 TO 69	17,851			1,056	488	568
70 TO 74	13,134			749	303	446
75 TO 79	9,805			608	206	402
80 TO 84	6,991			437	170	267
85 AND OVER	6,882			453	138	315
0 TO 19	85,135				3,164	3,037
20 TO 64	174,772				6,446	6,890
65 AND OLDER	29,604				1,305	1,998

The transportation mode choice of Meriwether residents is influenced by three factors: the high employment in manufacturing (historically low transit usage: partially due to choice and partially due to location of manufacturing facilities and shift hours), the low density and high number of miles travelled to work and the lack of public transportation and scarcity of taxicabs operating in the County.

<b>WORKERS, BY TRANSPORTATION MERIWETHER TOTAL</b>	
<b>WORKERS, BY TRANSPORTATION</b>	<b>PARAMETER</b>
WORKERS MODE, BASE	4600
WORK AT HOME	35
DRIVE CAR/TRUCK/VAN ALONE	2005
CARPOOLED CAR/TRUCK/VAN ALONE	
BUS/TROLLEY BUS	16
STREET CAR/TROLLEY CAR	NA
SUBWAY/ELEVATED	NA
RAILROAD	0
FERRYBOAT	0
TAXI CAB	0
OTHER	20
MOTORCYCLE	
BICYCLE	
WALKED	31
OTHER MEANS	
MEAN TRAVEL TIME TO WORK	24.9

Census Variable: Transportation Mode **Warm Springs Residents 2000**

<b>WORKERS, BY TRANSPORTATION MODE WARM SPRINGS</b>	
WORKERS, BY TRANSPORTATION	PARAMETER
WORKER MODE, BASE	1293
WORK AT HOME	64
DRIVE CAR/TRUCK/VAN ALONE	960
CARPOOLED CAR/TRUCK/VAN ALONE	218
STREET CAR/TROLLEY CAR	NA
SUBWAY/ELEVATED	NA
RAILROAD	NA
FERRYBOAT	NA
TAXICAB	NA
OTHER	17
MOTORCYCLE	0
BICYCLE	0
WALKED	32
OTHER MEANS	0
MEAN TRAVEL TIME TO WORK	26.6

Census Variable: Transportation Mode **Greenville Residents 2000**

<b>WORKERS, BY TRANSPORTATION</b>	
WORKERS, BY TRANSPORTATION	PARAMETER
WORK MODE, BASE	342
WORK AT HOME	10
DRIVE CARE/TRUCK/VAN ALONE	239
CARPOOLED CAR/TRUCK/VAN ALONE	74
BUS/TROLLEY BUS	2
STREET CAR/TROLLEY CAR	NA
SUBWAY/ELEVATED	NA
RAILROAD	NA
FERRYBOAT	NA
OTHER	0
MOTORCYCLE	0
BICYCLE	NA
WALKED	17
OTHER MEANS	NA
MEAN TRAVEL TIME TO WORK	29.4

Public Transit is most achievable in urban concentrations. In Meriwether County there are six areas where residents are concentrated. All of the communities have less than 5,000 residents.

POPULATION CHANGE BY CITY	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000 CENSUS
GAY	132	133	136	137	139	142	146	146	149
GREENVILLE	924	923	943	950	964	909	937	943	946
LONE OAK	97	96	97	97	98	99	102	102	104
LUTHERSVILLE	821	826	836	842	829	843	834	808	783
MANCHESTER	3,794	3,806	3,864	3,886	3,933	3,993	4,104	4,112	3,988
WARM SPRINGS	477	480	483	486	483	490	492	478	485
WOODBURY	1,073	1,077	1,097	1,102	1,116	1,135	1,169	1,177	1,184
MERWIETHER COUNTY	22,280	22,741	22,963	22,812	22,805	22,740	22,864	22,589	22,534
GROWTH RATE, 2000 TO 2008	1.4%								

Manchester is the largest city and offers the most potential for traditional transit service. However, the community is still more suitable for a dial-a-ride service application because of its location in the geography of the county, the pull to and from surrounding counties and the tendency of its residents to travel outside of the county for jobs and services.

MANCHESTER DEMOGRAPHICS	
POPULATION	3,988
MALE	1,900
FEMALE	2,188
MARRIED	3,154
SINGLE	862
SEPARATED	150
WIDOWED	368
DIVORCED	411
NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS	1,659

AVG HOUSEHOLD SIZE	2.45
AVG FAMILY SIZE	3.09
MEDIAN AGE	36.60
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME	25,842
AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME	1,728
PER CAPITA INCOME	14,339
WHITE COLLAR JOBS	922
BLUE COLLAR JOBS	1,972
EMPLOYED	1,485
UNEMPLOYED	200
POPULATION % 0-19 YEARS	23.5

Greenville is centrally located in the geographic region, though Greenville residents also find employment throughout the county and outside of it.

<b>GREENVILLE DEMOGRAPHICS</b>	
POPULATION	923
MALE	433
FEMALE	513
MARRIED	217
SINGLE	308
SEPARATED	26
WIDOWED	104
DIVORCED	44
NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS	354
AVERAGE HOUSHOLD SIZE	2.67

AVERAGE FAMILY SIZE	3.35
MEDIAN AGE	34.1
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME	25,114
AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME	1,728
PER CAPTIA INCOME	25,114
WHITE COLLAR JOBS	217
BLUE COLLAR JOBS	420
EMPLOYED	358
UNEMPLOYED	30
POPULATION % 0-19 YEARS	296

Woodbury residents are most likely to travel to Spalding County for services as compared to other communities in the County.

<b>WOODBURY DEMOGRAPHICS</b>	
POPULATION	1,184
MALE	550
FEMALE	634
MARRIED	993
SINGLE	337
SEPARATED	29
WIDOWED	116
DIVORCED	87
NUMBER OF HOUSHOULD S	454
AVERAGE HOUSHOULD SIZE	1.61
AVERAGE FAMILY SIZE	3.31

MEDIAN AGE	38.30
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME	26,339
AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME	455
PER CAPITA INCOME	12,162
WHITE COLLAR JOBS	215
BLUE COLLAR JOBS	559
EMPLOYED	399
UNEMPLOYED	59
POPULATION % 0-19 YEARS	27.4

Luthersville residents are most likely to travel to Newnan and Coweta County for jobs and services, though Hogansville is a popular destination and residents are finding jobs in LaGrange and West Point.

<b>LUTHERSVILLE DEMOGRAPHICS</b>	
POPULATION	783
MALE	365
FEMALE	418
MARRIED	528
SINGLE	166
SEPARATED	17
WIDOWED	36
DEIVORCED	69
NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS	273
AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SIZE	2.87
AVERAGE FAMILY SIZE	3.31

MEDIAN AGE	30.80
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME	28,906
AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME	248
PER CAPITA INCOME	11,033
WHITE COLLAR JOBS	140
BLUE COLLAR JOBS	321
EMPLOYED	298
UNEMPLOYED	21
POPULATION % 0-19 YEARS	42.8

## STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK – GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The strategic framework for this analysis is based upon National, State, regional (TRRC) and Local goals as delineated in the following section regarding the purpose of Transit Development Planning.

### PURPOSE OF TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

On August 10, 2005, President Bush signed into law (PL 109-59) the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Safety Act, a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) reauthorizing federal surface transportation programs through 2009. The legislation revised and expands ISTEA and its prodigy's statement of purpose to reflect the linkages between statewide and metropolitan planning and includes specific references to pedestrian walkways and bicycle facilities. Also included in SAFETEA-LU is increased emphasis on economic development and growth. The rules also require the development of a coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan for FTA's Elderly and Persons with Disabilities, Job Access and Reverse Commute, and New Freedom programs including increased rural transportation planning. Meriwether County is currently one of eighteen counties included in an on-going analysis of coordinated human services transportation being undertaken by the Atlanta Regional Commission. Following this, funding for rural transit has been significantly increased in SAFETEA-LU growing from \$240 million in FFY (federal fiscal year) 2004 to \$465 million in FFY 2009. Even though this TDP is not mandated to discuss all these factors, the spirit of SAFETEA-LU has been incorporated into the goals and objectives of this plan. Following are the eight points SAFETEA-LU legislation mandates be considered in transportation planning.

- Support the economic vitality of the area
- Increase the safety of the transportation system for both motorized and non-motorized uses
- Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized uses.
- Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight.
- Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and state and local planned growth and economic development patterns.
- Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system across and between modes, for people and freight.
- Promote efficient system management and operation.
- Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system

As part of its planning contract with the Regional Development Centers, The Georgia Department of Transportation asked that the Centers develop Transit Development Programs for each county in their respective service delivery areas that includes the following:

## Goals and Objectives,

- Evaluation of Existing Service,
- Demand Estimation and
- Transit Needs Assessment,
- Transit Alternatives and Recommendations,
- A suggested Capital Improvements Program and Financial Plan
- An Implementation Strategy.

These points have guided the approach taken in the analysis of transit needs in the Region:

- Identify Service Needs County by County
- Locate Service Constraints County by County
- Assess Issues and Opportunities for Each County
- Recognize the importance of proactive citizen involvement to implement transit options.
- Identify affected and interested potential transit users with special efforts to communicate with and serve target populations.
- Recognize the unique characteristics of each of the five counties within the Chattahoochee-Flint Region and create a Transit Development Program for each.
- Identify areas appropriate within each county for sub area study.
- Identify transit and private car single occupancy alternatives for each County and sub area.
- Recognize the relationship between transit planning and land use/land use planning.
- Recognize potential for Regional Opportunities

## VISION FOR TRRC REGIONAL TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The overall vision for a regional transportation system/regional transit system is:

- Transit System that best serves needs of entire TRRC region
- Connections within the region
- Connections to adjoining activity centers
- Development of transit service that will meet all trip needs
- Goals and objectives establish a framework for developing and evaluating service alternatives.
- Best use of State, Regional and Sub regional transportation resources
- Best land use practices to support current and future transit needs
- Stresses accessibility to jobs from distressed neighborhoods

In developing service alternatives this program specifically seeks to:

- Recognize potential for Expanded Coordination Social Service Programs Operating in the Area (often referred to as “Unified” Transportation Services.
- Serve as a strategic guide for public transportation and a useful tool for local decision-makers
- Look at five year and beyond (*Five Plus*) horizon in light of long term transit needs
- Emphasize the relationship between economic development (i.e. possible reverse commute, matching service with employee base) and transit
- Emphasize the relationship between jobs, jobs training, childcare and transit (i.e. focuses on entry level employment locations)
- Gives special consideration to people with disabilities
- Gives special consideration to the elderly population
- Values the preservation of existing transit operators and systems through service coordination and connectivity

## PREVIOUS PLANS AND STUDIES

Meriwether County is the only county in the ten county TRRC region that is not offering or planning to offer rural transportation services that are open to the general public. When approached early in this process regarding a desire for this service, the County through its former County Manager demurred. Funding limitations were the reason given for the decision.

The desirability of transit is referenced in the Meriwether County 2008-2028 Comprehensive Plan undertaken by the Collaborative Firm, LLC and Carter-Burgess for the county and its cities. The assessment in that plan basically was that Meriwether County currently has no public transportation because the population densities necessary to generate appropriate ridership numbers do not exist. The plan states that future service could be of the demand-responsive type which usually operates door-to-door service using vans or minibuses. The service described envisions a call in service and pick-up for destinations such as doctors' offices, government buildings, and grocery stores.

The plan also includes a park and ride lot around Luthersville with a cost of 506,533 to be funded by the Federal Transit Administration. The plan cites but does not apply costs to GRTA Express Park and ride lot to downtown Atlanta that would be funded through GRTA by the FTA. GRTA currently has no plans to expand into Meriwether County. The Demand Responsive service in the plan is also not priced out. The plan lists as an "Opportunity" the promotion of a rural transit program offering the door-to-door service and to work with transit authorities to provide express service to Atlanta and Columbus. The communities are tasked with the objective of finding alternatives to the private automobile including mass transit, bicycle routes and pedestrian facilities. The Plan also recognizes areas within the cities of Gay, Greenville, Lone Oak, Luthersville, Manchester, Warm Springs and Woodbury that resemble traditional suburban areas and those that are "City Residential". This classification is characterized by small lots, modest homes, high standard for pedestrian connectivity, possible access to transit options and proximity to retail options and civic buildings. Assisted living facilities, multiple family developments and neighborhood retail centers can be found within this classification. The goals are:

Preserve rural heritage and community values

- Accommodate diversity of housing options
- Promote expansion and upgrade of full urban services (using the term "notable infrastructure")
- Multiple family developments that are small in scale and integrated into the neighborhood, and
- Ensure pedestrian connectivity and possible option to reduce automobile trips

The Georgia Department of Transportation has not conducted an overall transportation plan for Meriwether County though the other counties in TRRC region have had a planning activity that reviews all modes.

# RESULTING MERIWETHER TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

## MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### OVERVIEW AND DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF THE REGION

#### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR TRANSIT

#### DEMAND ESTIMATION AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

#### TRANSIT ALTERNATIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDING A FIVE-YEAR CAPITAL AND OPERATING PLAN

The recommendations reflect an analysis driven by regional goals and objectives. The plan does not mandate the recommended transit improvements nor does it prohibit locally initiated transit service options different from those included in the Plan. The Three Rivers Regional Commission is supportive of all local activities that support transit usage.

### ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED

Throughout the past several months, various community leaders and residents have been interviewed to ascertain their positions regarding the following issues:

- How the public need can best be supported by the local governments/operating entities
- How to assure that transit investments improve the economic vitality of the county
- Gauge implementation scenarios (four to five year horizon)
- What service concepts meet the goals and objectives of the community
- How can these concepts and first steps be accelerated if high gasoline prices threaten the community

The assessment proceeded to a work session with the County Board of Commissioners held early in July.

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## ROLE OF PUBLIC

The positions of the general public have been sought at various community centers and at an advertised public meeting held in Manchester (the largest community) on April 20, 2010.

- Inform of Unserved Trip Needs
- Identify Desired Service Types
- Critique Existing Services
- Identify Barriers to Transit Usage

Members of the public were interviewed at community/senior citizen centers. Anecdotal information was obtained. Additionally, a public meeting to discuss transit was held on April 20<sup>th</sup> at the President Theater in Manchester.

## EVALUATION OF EXISTING SERVICE

The only service available to residents of Meriwether County is Purchase of Service trips via the coordinated human services process. In 2009, 9774 trips were made by residents of Meriwether County.

PURCHASER	NUMBER OF TRIPS
<b>Greenville Senior Center</b>	1464
<b>Manchester Senior Center</b>	2299
<b>Department of Family and Children Services</b>	574
<b>Department of Behavioral Health and Development Disabilities</b>	5437
<b>Total Trips</b>	9774

While Meriwether County offers the full array of community services, medical facilities are limited or non-existent and residents seek medical services in LaGrange and in Newnan. There are also some medical trip destinations in Fayette and Spalding Counties. Manchester residents do sometimes travel to the greater Columbus area for their medical services.

For shopping trips, Luthersville residents travel to Hogansville in Troup County and to Newnan in Coweta County. Gay residents travel to Newnan, Griffin and to Fayette County. Manchester residents travel to LaGrange in Troup County and to the Greater Columbus area.

The objectives of unification of transit service for the general population with services offered by the Department of Human Resources (DHR) and other social service entities (*i.e.* Department of Labor and Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities) has been to present the transit services as a *general* public service while increasing efficiency and providing an enhanced mechanism to expand and improve the vehicle fleet. The Georgia Department of Labor (DOL) assists disabled individuals with transportation to work. The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities provides non-emergency medical transportation to Medicaid recipients (older adults, disabled, pregnant). The Department of Human Resources (DHR) contracts with private operators and counties to provide transportation to older adults, disabled and TANF (formerly known as welfare) recipients. In Meriwether County these services are provided by Three Rivers Regional Commission

## OTHER TRANSIT SERVICES:

**MARTA**, The Metropolitan Atlanta Regional Transit Authority is the largest transit provider in the State of Georgia. The closest MARTA service is 40 miles north of Meriwether County serving Fairburn/Palmetto in Coweta County. The closest MARTA rail service is at Atlanta Hartsfield Jackson Airport that is five miles further.

	PEAK HEADWAY	OFF PEAK & EVENING	HOURS OF OPERATION	ACCESSIBILITY	MARTA STATION	SATURADY & SUNDAY SERVICE	HOLIDAY SERVICE
BUS	40 MINUTES	40 MINUTES	TO MIDNIGHT & BEYOND	EQUIPPED AND COMPLEMENTARY SERVICE AVAILABLE	AIRPORT	YES	YES
RAIL	10	15-20			AIRPORT	YES	YES

## GRTA SERVICE

Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (**GRTA**) service is located closer to the Meriwether County communities. GRTA service utilizes comfortable over-the-road type coaches that are more comfortable for commuters. The GRTA vehicles have plenty of legroom, reclining seats, luggage racks, electrical outlets in some seats and reading lamps. GRTA has an hourly cost of \$79 (2004 dollars) per service hour system-wide or a cost of over \$4.00 per trip with discounts available. GRTA traditionally has required that the local county pay a ten percent share of the operating and capital acquisition costs for the service. The one-way fare is \$3.00 or 5.00 round trip. The costs of GRTA service are negotiated on a case-by-case basis and are not included as part of this Transit Development Study. GRTA operates services in what it terms its South Corridor via Interstates 75 south and 85 South. Routes serve McDonough to Downtown/Midtown Atlanta. Route #431 serves Stockbridge to Midtown Atlanta, Route #432 serves Stockbridge to downtown Atlanta, Route # 440 serves Hampton-Jonesboro to Downtown Atlanta, Route #441 serves Jonesboro to Midtown Atlanta, Route #442 serves Riverdale to Atlanta and Route # 450 serves Newnan to Downtown Atlanta. GRTA provides a commuter-only service. For example, from the Coweta County the service departs from a temporary Park and Ride lot located at Exit 47 on Interstate 85, (Hogansville is located at Exit 28) this lot is 29.1 miles from Greenville during the morning and afternoon rush hours. GRTA does not have plans to expand to Meriwether County. Closest service in the Interstate 75 Corridor would be the Atlanta Motor Speedway Park and Ride (42.8 miles), Riverdale (Lamar Hutcheson Park and Ride) (42.2 miles).

### CLOSEST GRTA SERVICE AM SERVICE

	LEAVE NEWNAN PARK & RIDE	ARRIVE FIVE POINTS MARTA	ARRIVE W. PEACHTREE @ CIVIC CENTER MARTA STATION	ARRIVE ARTS CENTER MARTA STATION	ARRIVE SPRING STREET @ 5 <sup>TH</sup> STREET
ROUTE 450	5:30 AM	6:20 AM	6:30 AM	>	>
	6:00 AM	6:50 AM	7:00 AM	7:10 AM	7:20 AM
	6:15 AM	7:05 AM	7:15 AM	7:25 AM	7:35 AM
	6:30 AM	7:30 AM	7:40 AM	>	>
	7:00 AM	8:00 AM	8:10 AM	8:20 AM	8:30 AM
	7:30 AM	8:30 AM	8:40 AM	8:50 AM	9:00 AM

➤ Means Xpress does not serve this stop during this particular run

	LEAVE MCDONOUGH PARK & RIDE	ARRIVE FIVE POINTS MARTA	ARRIVE w PEACHTREE @ CIVIC CENTER MARTA STATION	ARRIVE W. PEACHTREE @CIVIC CENTER MARTA (MB)	ARRIVE W. PEACHTREE STREET @ ARTS CENTER MARTA STATION	ARRIVE SPRING STREET @ 5 <sup>TH</sup> STREET
<b>ROUTE 430</b>	5:45 AM	6:25 AM	6:35 AM	>	>	>
	6:00 AM	6:40 AM	>	6:50 AM	7:00 AM	7:15 AM
	6:15 AM	6:55 AM	7:05 AM	>	>	>
	6:30 AM	7:10 AM	>	7:20 AM	7:30 AM	7:40AM
	6:45 AM	7:35 AM	7:45 AM	>	>	>
	7:00 AM	7:50 AM	>	8:00 AM	8:10 AM	8:20 AM
	7:15 AM	8:15 AM	8:25 AM	>	>	>
	7:45 AM	8:45 AM	8:55 AM	>	>	>

<b>CLOSEST GRTA SERVICE PM SERVICE</b>					
	LEAVE W. PEACHTREE @ CIVIC CENTER MARTA	LEAVE ARTS CENTER MARTA	LEAVE CIVIC CENTER MARTA	LEAVE PRYOR STREET @ UPPER ALABAMA STREET	ARRIVE NEWNAN PARK & RIDE
<b>ROUTE 450</b>	>	>	3:05 PM	3:15 PM	4:00 PM
	>	>	3:49 PM	3:59 PM	4:50 PM
	3:57 PM	4:07 PM	4:19 PM	4:29 PM	5:20 PM
	>	>	4:05 PM	4:15 PM	5:05 PM
	4:26 PM	4:36 PM	4:52 PM	5:02 PM	5:50 PM
	4:40 PM	4:50 PM	5:21 PM	5:31 PM	6:20 PM
	>	>	6:01 PM	6:11 PM	7:00 PM

	LEAVE W.PEACHTREE @ CIVIC CENTER MARTA	LEAVE ARTS CENTER MARTA	LEAVE CIVIC CENTER MARTA	LEAVE PRYOR STREET @ UPPER ALABAMA STREET	ARRIVE ATLANTA MOTOR SPEEDWAY
<b>ROUTE 440</b>	>	>	3:05 PM	3:15 PM	4:00 PM
	>	>	3:49 PM	3:59 PM	4:50 PM
	3:57 PM	4:07 PM	4:19 PM	4:29 PM	5:20 PM
	>	>	4:05 PM	4:15 PM	5:05 PM
	4:26 PM	4:36 PM	4:52 PM	5:02 PM	5:50 PM
	4:40 PM	4:50 PM	5:21 PM	5:31 PM	6:20 PM
	>	>	6:01 PM	6:11 PM	7:00 PM

	AM REVERSE COMMUTE MARTA	LEAVE ARTS CNETER MARTA	LEAVE CIVIC CENTER MARTA	LEAVE PRYOR STREET @ UPPER ALABAMA STREET	ARRIVE MCDONOUGH PARK & RIDE
<b>ROUTE 430</b>	>	>	3:05 PM	3:15 PM	4:00 PM
	>	>	3:49 PM	3:59 PM	4:50 PM
	3:57 PM	4:07 PM	4:19 PM	4:29 PM	5:20 PM
	>	>	4:05 PM	4:15 PM	5:05 PM
	4:26 PM	4:36 PM	4:52 PM	5:02 PM	5:50 PM
	4:40 PM	4:5- PM	5:21 PM	5:31 PM	6:20 PM
	>	>	6:01 PM	6:11 PM	7:00 PM

**CLOSEST GRTA SERVICE REVERSE COMMUTE**

<b>REVERSE COMMUTE</b>	<b>CIVIC CENTER MARTA</b>	<b>NEWNAN</b>	<b>LEAVE NEWNANPARK &amp; RIDE</b>	<b>ARRIVE @ CIVIC CENTER MARTA</b>
<b>ROUTE 450</b>	6:30 AM	7:25 PM	4:00 PM	4:40 PM
	>	>	4:50 PM	6:01 PM

<b>REVERSE COMMUTE</b>	<b>CIVIC CENTER MARTA</b>	<b>NEWNAN</b>	<b>LEAVE ATLANTA MOTOR SPEEDWAY</b>	<b>ARRIVE @ CIVIC CENTER MARTA</b>
<b>ROUTE 440</b>	6:30 AM	7:25 PM	4:00 PM	4:40 PM
	>	>	4:50 PM	6:01 PM

<b>REVERSE COMMUTE</b>	<b>W. PEACHTREE STREET @ CIVIC CENTER MARTA SB</b>	<b>MCDONOUGH PARK &amp; RIDE</b>	<b>LEAVE MCDONOUGH PARK &amp; RIDE</b>	<b>ARRIVE @ CIVIC CENTER MARTA</b>
<b>ROUTE 430</b>	6:30 AM	7:25 PM	4:00 PM	4:40 PM
	>	>	4:50 PM	6:01 PM

## METRA

**METRA** currently operates 17 buses on 9 routes in the Columbus area, Monday through Saturday, excluding holidays. METRA also provides ADA Complementary Paratransit Service to eligible persons with disabilities who are, because of their disability, unable to board, ride or disembark from the METRA regular buses which are accessible.

The Warm Springs Road (Number 6) and the Rosehill/Columbus Park Crossing Closest Metra Service (Number 9) routes serve the Northwest Quadrant of the City and are most easily accessible from the direction of Manchester Georgia. The complementary paratransit by law will extend an additional  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile from the end of the route.

Though part of the Columbus region, Harris County currently does not have any type of Public Transportation. At some future date the County would like to link to the METRA in the US 27 and Ga85 corridors.

### CLOSEST METRA SERVICE

<b>COLUMBUS METRA SERVICE</b>	<b>PEAK HEADWAY</b>	<b>OFF-PEAK &amp; EVENING HEADWAY</b>	<b>HOURS OF OPERATION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<b>SATURDAY SERVICE</b>	<b>SUNDAY SERVICE</b>
<b>ROUTE #6</b>	30 MINUTES	90 MINUTES	5:20 - 8:00	YES	YES	NO
<b>ROUTE #9</b>	30 MINUTES	60 MINUTES	5:30 - 7:30	YES	YES	NO
<b>* A &amp; C</b>						

**PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE:** There is no passenger rail service in Meriwether County though there are historic trains. Two studies undertaken by the State have affected passenger rail service plans in Georgia. The first, *The Georgia Rail Passenger Program* is a joint program of Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), Georgia Rail Passenger Authority (GPRA) and Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA). The adopted program promotes both commuter rail development and intercity rail service. The aim of the joint program is to revive rail passenger service in Georgia using, to the maximum extent possible, existing rail corridors. In 1993 GDOT conducted a commuter rail feasibility study that analyzed:

- Existing commuter patterns
- Population and employment trends
- The need and demand for commuter rail
- The cost of creating a system (designing and building stations, capital acquisition and track and signal expansion/modification)
- Operating costs

Seven lines between Atlanta and the following locations (rail right of ways) evolved:

- Athens (CSX)
- Lovejoy-Macon (NS)
- Gainesville (NS)
- Madison (CSX)
- Bremen (NS)
- Senoia (CSX)
- Canton (CSX)

Connection of Columbus to Atlanta was considered less feasible and the effort has instead focused on connecting Columbus to Macon as an eventual connection to the Lovejoy-Macon (NS) line. Many attending community meetings during this and other recent studies have contended that the joint authority should revisit its analysis based upon KIA and BRAC. Others argue that the interstate corridor to Gulf Coast/Louisiana should be given more emphasis in terms of commuter and high-speed rail connections. GRPP does stress connections to Gulf Coast High-Speed Rail Corridor and South-East High-Speed Rail Corridor though more attention is given to connections between the two largest travel markets: Chattanooga and Greenville.

Under the adopted plan, the closest commuter service is proposed from Senoia to Atlanta. The Athens to Atlanta and the Macon to Atlanta corridors have been designated as the priority, Phase I services. Alternatives Analysis has been completed with a FONSI finding for each of these two lines. GDOT has stated publicly that its priority for Commuter rail is the service from Griffin in Spaulding County through Lovejoy then to Atlanta. Expansion of the proposed Lovejoy route to Griffin is estimated to cost \$170,000,000.

A 2005 Harris Poll showed that 44% of Americans would like to see an increasing portion of travel go by rail in the future. The Senoia line and the Lovejoy line are good examples of a rail option that truly would offer an alternative to the automobile

**INTERCITY BUS:** Greyhound Bus Lines operates through Manchester Daily.

**UNIVERSITY SERVICE:** There is no University service in Meriwether County.

**AIR TRANSPORT:** The nearest commercial air service is 60 miles north of Meriwether County on I-85. The nearest public Airport is the Warm Springs Callaway Airport with its 56,000 foot and its 5,000 foot lighted bituminous runways with all facilities and services. General passenger service is not offered at this airport.

**FREIGHT SERVICE:** Rail freight and truck freight operate on Meriwether County rail lines and highways respectively.

## DEMAND ESTIMATION AND TRANSIT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Need can be evidenced in various ways: too much demand for existing services, too little utilization of existing services, public requests for new services as well as proposals by various groups (i.e. governmental entities and business groups). Any transit system, whether it is suburban or inner city must compete with the private automobile. People (wrongly) perceive the automobile to be convenient and inexpensive. Demand is a function of the perceived needs as well as actual needs evidenced by demographic factors. In addition to need and demand is an analysis of what generally works insofar as transit. These issues are addressed in this section.

In America, *idyllic* transit is:

- A service that offers flexibility with short headways and well-designed routes
- A service that anticipates the transit user's needs in trip origins and destinations
- A service with comfortable, climate controlled vehicles
- A service where routes are located within ¼ mile of the user's origin or destination
- A service that is low cost with ease of payment
- A service that meets the needs of transit dependent
- A service that provides economic opportunity to the user and the community

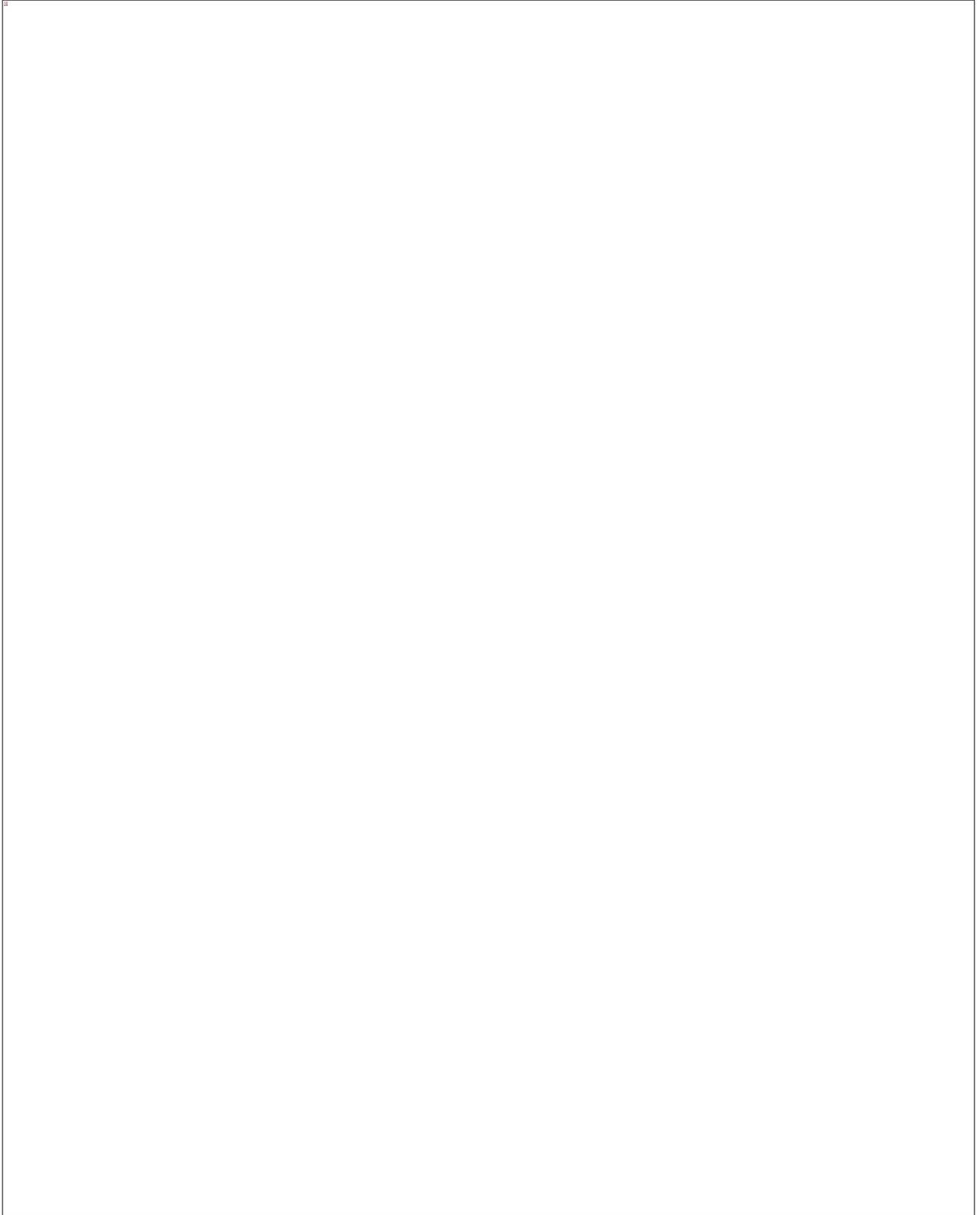
The demographic data suggest a number of Meriwether residents who would benefit from better access to jobs and services. Additionally, although transit is not intended to accommodate each person's trip needs. However, it is in the public interest to make transit services available as an alternative to single occupancy vehicles, as a component to a clean air strategy, and to counter continual need for new roads (the regional studies focus chiefly on this factor). Another important factor to transit is providing travel opportunities for people who do not have access to an automobile. Recent studies, such as one done in Broward County (see citations) are showing a positive correlation between the provision of transit and the speed in which welfare recipients return to work. Furthermore, the economic impact of transit has been extensively documented in recent studies across the nation. Overall, according to the American Public Transit Association (APTA), every dollar the public invests in public transportation will generate six dollars or more in economic return.

To develop to transit potential there needs to be land development policies that are transit friendly. *Ideal* transit oriented development is generally found where there is higher residential densities; i.e. 4,481 to 7,800 per square mile. Areas with 3/4 – 1 mile of continuous development on either side of the route are also preferred. Also preferred are neighborhoods with a grid pattern of roads. Services that focus on the more dense tracts with the greatest need will have the greatest potential for success these factors coalesce in Meriwether County in the areas shown small areas of Manchester and Greenville. Woodbury and Luthersville are too small with few destinations and Lone Oak has few origins though it is an area of rapid industrialization with its proximity to I-85, Hogansville, LaGrange and KIA.

The demand for services is low. Public meetings were not well attended though many stakeholders interviewed did express service needs on the behalf of the economically

disadvantaged. The need for automobile access is paramount to Meriwether County residents. Recent studies have shown that reliable automobile access is one of the greatest impediments to employment in poorer rural areas such as much of Meriwether County. An automobile that can handle daily travel to West Point, the location of most of the KIA suppliers and KIA is a desired commodity in Meriwether County.

Compounding the lack of affordable transportation and transit options in Meriwether County is the commuting patterns that exist within the County. As the demographics indicated and the map following depicts, the flow moves out of Meriwether County in virtually every direction:



During the TDP study process, government and social service stakeholders expressed different needs for different communities in the County. While Luthersville, Alvaton and Gay exhibited a strong connection to Newnan and to Atlanta, other communities (particularly Manchester) were oriented more to Columbus. Warm Springs and Luthersville also showed a strong connection to LaGrange in Troup County. This anecdotal preference is bolstered by data about the commuters who have sought assistance from the Clean Air Campaign for carpool matching services.

HOME CITY	WORK CITY	DISTANCE	EMPLOYER
Alvaton	Hapeville	50	Delta
Alvaton	Hapeville	55	Aviation
Alvaton	Hapeville	55	Aviation
Gay	Fairburn	40	Oil Company
Gay	Morrow	40	Clayton St.
Gay	Newnan	40	Yokogawa
Gay	Peachtree City	30	Nursing Home
Gay	Riverdale	36	Southern Regional Medical Center
Gay	Peachtree City	20	Panasonic
Gay	Peachtree City	20	Panasonic
Gay	Atlanta	68	Law firm
Gay	Atlanta	50	Law Firm
Gay	Atlanta	65	Norfolk Southern
Gay	Atlanta	45	Delta
Gay	Atlanta	45	Delta
Gay	Atlanta	65	Government
Gay	College Park	50	Woodward Academy

Gay	Atlanta	52	Airport Hotel
Greenville	Fayetteville	30	Hospital
Greenville	Atlanta	62	Government
Greenville	Atlanta	45	EarthLink
Greenville	Columbus	62	Tsys
Greenville	Atlanta	67	Art Institute
LAGRANGE	WARM SPRINGS	23	GOVERNMENT
Luthersville	Decatur	53	Government
Luthersville	Morrow	50	Private
Luthersville	Newnan	22	Yokogawa
Luthersville	Newnan	15	Private
Luthersville	Newnan	15	Service Industry
Luthersville	Union City	35	Education
Luthersville	Atlanta	30	Govt
Luthersville	Atlanta	50	Banking
Luthersville	Atlanta	55	Private
Luthersville	Atlanta	40	Government
Luthersville	College Park	45	Aero Industry
Luthersville	Atlanta	55	Aero Industry
Luthersville	Atlanta	57	Delta
Luthersville	Atlanta	55	Delta
Woodbury	Lithia Springs	50	Government

Woodbury	Atlanta	50	Delta
Woodbury	Atlanta	50	Delta
Manchester	Greenville	17	Medical/Government
Manchester	Columbus	45	Tsys
Manchester	Columbus	36	Government
Manchester	Columbus	40	Aflac
Manchester	Columbus	35	Aflac
Manchester	Columbus	37	Aflac
Warm Springs	LaGrange	24	Government
Warm Springs	Atlanta	60	Government
Columbus	Warm Springs	40	Medical
Columbus	Warm Springs	45	Medical
Opelika	Warm Springs	59	Government

The Clean Air data show that the census data and the anecdotal testimony of the directions of travel are borne out. Development of transit alternatives should take into account the need to travel outside of the county for shopping, medical and work purposes. Transit service to Newnan where GRTA to MARTA service is available would be beneficial to a number of commuters. Similarly, an organized outreach program with large employers such as Yokigawa might benefit the community.

## OTHER FACTORS

Other factors to take into consideration are the roads. Ideally the roads will fall in to what is considered a “grid road pattern” with sidewalks and origins (housing) and destinations in the area ¼ mile from the road. Route when transit service is operated the responsible unit of government should also consider adding:

- An extra road base and width for heavy bus operations and at major bus stops regardless of the bus type

- Sidewalks to bus route
- Reserve future right of way along arterials for passenger waiter amenities (shelters, lights, etc.
- Entrances to destination buildings should not be set back behind parking. This should be true of apartments and town homes as well,

A Transit Oriented Development (TOD) offers a compact, walk able development centered around or located near transit stations or transit route alignments. Community planners and developers should consult the Three Rivers Regional Commission's Developer's Toolbox for concepts that will make residential and mixed-use developments more pedestrian, bicycle and transit-friendly. Contact Three Rivers Regional Development Center for a copy of the Toolbox. Generally speaking, for a person to *choose* to use public transit the following conditions apply:

- Service connects user's origins with desired destination
- Stops must be accessible at both ends of the trip
- Service must operate at the needed times
- User must know how to use the system
- User must be able to get on and off of the vehicle
- User must feel safe and secure

In the largest cities, New York, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia and Washington, DC transit users reflect the demographics of the city. In other large cities, transit users can be primarily the poorer or women. Much of this has to do with system design. However, when transit is operated in smaller cities, transit users have greater portions of women, young, old, immigrant, low income or ethnic minorities than the general population. The transit services also show more usage for non-work destinations. *Source: Great Cities Consortium.*



## BUS TRANSIT ALTERNATIVES

### CAPITAL EQUIPMENT

All public services will utilize buses ranging from a standard van (costs less 30,000) to full sized 40' buses though there are larger buses (i.e. articulated or double decker) and rail and trolley vehicles. In this discussion, no options more costly than a traditional, lift-equipped 40' bus are assessed. The following chart depicts vehicle costs per unit of each type of vehicle and what can be typically obtained through Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding. FTA and Georgia Department of Transportation funding is determined annually or more often.

	Unit Cost in 2010	Federal Share @ 80%	Local Share @ 10%	State Share @ 10%	Local Share @ 20%	Discussion
Standard Van	39,600	31,680	3,960	3,960	7,920	
	27,000 40,000 36,000+)	– (ADA 32,000	– 2,700 and up	2,700 and up	5,400 and up	
Conversion Van/Lift	41,800	33,400	4,180	4,180	8,360	
	43,300	34,640	4,330	4,330	8,660	Cutaway buses do not hold up well to the grind of over the road transit
Shuttle Van/Lift	46,700	37,300	4,670	4,670	9,340	
	47,300	37,840	4,730	4,730	9,460	
Shuttle Bus/Lift	53,200	42,560	5,320	5,320	10,640	
	2,000	1,600	200	200	400	
Base Station	7,000	5,600	700	700	1,400	
	4,000	3,200	400	400	800	

Computer and Dispatch Software	21,500	17,200	2,150	2,150	4,300	
	NA					Fare boxes can be rudimentary in DAR operations
Market Detailing	DOS					Estimate 500-1000

### DIAL A RIDE (ALSO REFERRED TO AS DEMAND RESPONSIVE)

Characterized as door-to-door service scheduled by a dispatcher demand responsive transportation is the most flexible for the service provider. A 24-hour advance reservation for service is usually required though some immediate request may be filled as time permits. There are some services that dispatch vehicles in a real time environment much like taxi service. The Three Rivers Regional Commission operates a dial a ride service in four rural counties adjacent to Meriwether to the east as well as monitoring the program in Coweta to Meriwether's west. Van routes and capacity are checked relative to the time of day of the trip and new passengers are added if there is capacity to accommodate the trip. Ridership on demand-responsive services is substantially lower than traditional fixed-route services since, as discussed earlier; it is less convenient for riders to use. To maximize productivity, vehicles are generally dispatched to make several pickups in a residential area before traveling to the destinations being served. There is also a tendency for these services to "book up" with regular passengers, which discourages some first time users. Where unified transportation services are offered, these trips traditionally usurp seventy-five percent of capacity.

### FIXED ROUTE/FIXED SCHEDULE

Fixed Route service is the type of service most often applied in urban areas. Buses operate on a fixed route and on a fixed schedule. Frequencies vary from every couple of minutes to every couple of hours with higher frequencies usually during the peak morning and afternoon period. Bus riders dislike waiting – frequency is crucial. Also, constant frequency (every 10, 15, 20, 30 minutes or every hour) is the easiest for consumers to understand.

Another important consideration is the directness of the route. Where mode choice is available, people will compare travel time with automobile. People will also give unfair advantage to the automobile, not giving adequate weight to the true costs of auto use and the time it takes to park and walk when using their own vehicles. Fixed route has the optimal ease of use: People do not like to plan ahead. A bus that is always there, at its regularly scheduled intervals, provides comfort, predictability, security and sameness. Even though fixed routes are becoming more accessible there will always be those who cannot use the fixed route and thus the ADA complementary paratransit requirement will be triggered. If the Dial-A-Ride and fixed route are operated together the requirement is met. Fixed route with vehicles smaller than 40' (what is

what is traditionally used in urban settings) would probably be the preferred alternative in Meriwether County. These buses would be more expensive than those envisioned in the Dial-a-Ride Scenario in that they would need to accommodate standees and sustain a more grueling service life.

## FIXED ROUTE DIAL A RIDE HYBRIDS

Services that fall between the traditional fixed route and paratransit or Dial-A-Ride are considered hybrid or flex service options. Among these options are 1) Route deviation, 2) Checkpoint Deviation and 3) Request Stops.

### ROUTE DEVIATION (NOTE: WOULD POSSIBLY ADD DISPATCH COSTS)

A form of public transit service that is being used more frequently is referred to as route-deviation service. In route deviation the buses deviate from an established fixed route in order to accommodate demand-response trips. Riders request these deviations and either would schedule them via telephone at some point in advance or in real time. Usually the route deviation is more costly than the fixed route fare. The bus returns to the route but the driver must take care not to be early and not to be ten minutes late even though a more flexible definition of “on time” must be used. . The great advantage of a route deviation-operating plan is that it is not necessary to have a complementary ADA service (see below).

### CHECKPOINT SERVICE (NOTE: WOULD POSSIBLY ADD DISPATCH COSTS)

Buses make periodic, scheduled stops at specific activity center. Like all hybrid services, checkpoint also requires a skilled dispatcher. To provide reasonable flexibility the service could require that the bus be at the checkpoints/stops within a ten-minute window. This window would necessarily limit the demand-response requests. However, with the advantage of there being no designated route, the number of these demand requests could be created. Additionally a premium, i.e. .50-cent fare for each deviation from the checkpoint could be charged.

Checkpoint service offers the advantage that there is no specified route for the vehicle to use. The service also has the advantage of not requiring a complementary service. Service between checkpoints would not require an advance reservation.

### REQUEST STOP (NOTE: WOULD ADD DISPATCH COSTS, PROBABLY REQUIRE ADA COMPLEMENTARY SERVICE)

Buses operate in conventional fixed route but also serve a limited number of defined stops off-route (but close to the route) on demand or schedule. They have the disadvantage of fixed route in that they usually do not negate the need for complementary ADA service.

## ADDITIONAL COST FACTORS

### ADA SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) created a requirement for complementary paratransit service for all public transit agencies that provide fixed-route service. Complementary service is for individuals who, because of their disabilities, are unable to use the fixed-route transit system. Eligibility is locally determined.

The ADA requires this paratransit as a complement to fixed-route service. It considers route deviation modes to be demand responsive. However, Request Stop service falls into a regulatory gray area in this regard.

### HYBRID AND ALTERNATIVE FUEL TECHNOLOGY

#### ALTERNATIVE FUEL COSTS

	DIESEL	METHANOL	ETHANOL	BIODIESEL 20	NATURAL GAS	HYDROGEN
<b>OPERATING COST PER MILE IN 2005 DOLLARS</b>	.74	.91 (LNG)	1.17	.78	.97	2.52 – 4.81
<b>OTHER COSTS</b>	NONE	FUEL AVAILABILITY	FUEL AVAILABILITY	FUEL AVAILABILITY	OBS	

Source: The Transit Bus Niche Market for Alternative Fuels. TIAX LLC

**Methanol:** An alcohol produced primarily from natural gas. Because it can also be derived from biomass or coal, the domestic resource base for methanol is vast. Methanol buses run on 100% methanol.

**Ethanol** An alcohol derived from biomass (corn, sugar cane, grasses, trees and agricultural waste). Usually buses have run on 93% ethanol, 5% methanol, and 2% kerosene) or in the alternative E95 which refers to 95% ethanol and 5% unleaded gasoline).

**Biodiesel**-highest operating costs because of high fuel prices can be produced from any plant or animal-derived oil product. A standard of current is 20% biodiesel (from soybeans) and 80% diesel.

**Natural Gas** – Operating costs are lowest for the CNG buses, which are approximately equal to diesel bus operating costs. Composed primarily of methane. Can be stored on the vehicle as either a compressed gas or a cryogenic liquid.

## OTHER TRAVEL DEMAND MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

### OTHER TRANSIT-RELATED IMPROVEMENTS

#### PARK AND RIDE

The County-wide Comprehensive Plan referenced the development of a park and Ride in Luthersville. Given the current funding climate, it is unlikely that a regional transit service will be available in Luthersville anytime in 5-year horizon. At this point the only users would be rideshare/van share services. These locations will crop up on their own. In Coweta County, VSP vans have made an agreement to park at the Publix on Glenda Trace. Other carpools form informally at populated parking lots. Consideration should be given to a Park and Ride outside of Meriwether County in the vicinity of Waverly Hall in the same horizon.

#### TRAVEL DEMAND MANAGEMENT (TDM)

Conventional transportation planning practices tend to devote most resources to road construction and maintenance. The automobiles, in turn, tend to “squeeze out” other modes of transportation, including transit. To be transit-friendly, roads and developments must be pedestrian-friendly and bicycle-friendly. Walkability (zoning and development practices) and safety (parking requirements and development practices) are all impacted by site layout and location of seas of asphalt. Also, in the Atlanta/Columbus regions more than a third of the traffic volume occurs in the peak four hours of the day. Activities that flatten this peak (flextime) or reduce volumes (vanpool and telecommute) are also transit friendly activities. All of the following travel demand management and land development techniques can benefit transit in the community and are rated insofar as how they impact the both the amount of travel and transit usage:

**TRAVEL DEMAND MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES: RATING FROM 1 (LITTLE IMPACT) TO 10 (VERY BENEFICIAL)**

Type of TDM	RATING AS TRAVEL IMPACT	RATING AS TRANSIT IMPACT	TOP EIGHT PARTICULARLY APPROPRIATE FOR MERIWETHER COUNTY	BEST ENTITY
Access Management	6	9		GDOT
Signal Synchronization	7	6		GDOT, Cities
Car-free Planning (stroll, car	3	10		GDOT, Cities
*Context Sensitive Design	6	9	#3	City/County
Freight Vehicle Lanes	5	4		GDOT/County
Vanpool/carpool matching	7	10	#1(tie)	Citizens/TMA
Telecommuting and Flextime	8	6	#4	Employers/TMA
HOV Priority	7	10		GDOT/TMA
Bus Rapid Transit	8	10		MARTA/GRTA/TMA
**New Urbanism	4	7		
Private shuttles and car sharing	10	10	#2	TMA
Employer Incentives and TMAS	10	10	#1(tie)	Employers/TMA
Parking Management	4	7		
Pedestrian Improvements	5	10	#5	City/County
Public Awareness and Marketing	6	9	#7	Providers/TMA
Sidewalk Management	7	9	#6	City/County
Speed Reductions	6	6		GDOT/County/cities
Taxi Stands	2	6		Cities
Traffic Calming	4	6		County/Cities
Universal Design and Signage	3	7		Cities/Meriwether-
Vehicle Use Restrictions	6	8		Cities
Tourist Transport Management	NA	NA		DDA/COC/Welcome
Subsidized Taxi Fare	3	6		County/Cities

Bike Racks on Buses	3	6	Transit Authority
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\*\* Context sensitive solutions (CSS) is a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that involves all stakeholders to develop a transportation facility that fits its physical setting and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic and environmental resources, while maintaining safety and mobility. Many CSS solutions are depicted elsewhere in chart.

\*\*New Urbanist street designs—ceding road space from parking and automobiles to accommodate pedestrian/non-motorized needs such as retail activities, benches, sidewalk cafes etc. Many New Urbanism solutions are depicted elsewhere on chart.

\*\*Smart Growth – tie affordable housing to new commercial and office development, impact fees and tax-sharing, limiting growth, sliding impact fees, penalize car-dependent patterns of urbanization. Location-efficient mortgages, density bonuses for mixed use developments. DRI process.

\*\*Livable Centers Initiative promotes residential development, mixed uses, greater connectivity and expanding transportation options within the regions towns and activity centers (currently Coweta and Spalding in the TRRC and expanding to include the emerging centers in Carroll in the 2030 RTP of ARC.

## TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION (TMA)

A Transportation Management Association (TMA) can best manage many of the TDM techniques shown in the previous section. A TMA is an organized group that applies carefully selected approaches to facilitating the movement of people and goods within a geographical area. TMAs are often legally constituted and are frequently led by the private sector in partnership with the public sector to advocate for services and to provide a forum for consensus-building and education. The organization can provide direct services (i.e. rideshare matching), advocate for policies and services, act as an information clearinghouse and provide a forum for consensus building and education. In Meriwether County a TMA could:

- Work with local employers on rideshare needs (carpooling, vanpooling and shuttle buses)
- Work to protect I-85 access and I-85/I-185 at Lone Oak as a Regional Economic Asset
- Work with the TRRC and greater area on solving transportation issues such as freight access for manufacturers in the region
- Work with surrounding counties on transportation issues
- Provide as a clearinghouse for literature, etc. on commuting options for Meriwether citizens (including bus schedules, maps and IRS rules regarding commuter incentives and compensation)
- Advocate for regional bus and train service

Because of the role it plays in Meriwether County and the relationships it has already built in surrounding counties, establishment of a TMA as an adjunct to the Chamber of Commerce or Meriwether Development Authority could be beneficial. The initial costs of a TMA would range from, \$12,000 to \$100,000 depending upon the breadth of activities and the need for separate office space and equipment. Of the costs it is assumed that \$1000 to \$2500 would be required for start-up legal costs of incorporation of the nonprofit entity.

## MERIWETHER TRANSIT RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary area of concern should be the trips that meet the basic needs of the community. Both the Comprehensive Plan and this planning activity have come to the conclusion that a dial-a-ride service using less than a full sized transit vehicle best serves the needs and the physical geography of Meriwether County and its communities.

A dial-a-ride service like neighboring Coweta County has developed under the rural transportation Section 5311 of the Federal Transit Administration would meet a number of the trip needs. However, Coweta County has developed a program that does not serve destinations outside of the county. The one exception is service to the MARTA station a short distance outside of the county. The trip information derived from the census, carpool matching service and anecdotal evidence indicate that a program that could provide trips outside of the county would be more beneficial to Meriwether County but would cost two to three times as much.

Heard County, also provides dial-a-ride service under the 5311 program, and allows trips outside of the county. However, given the geographical size of Meriwether County and the multi-directional pull, a stricter “outside of the county” parameter would have to be applied. Initially, it would be preferable to limit the trips to destinations within the county. In the future, interagency agreements with Coweta and other providers could reduce trip distances through passenger transfers and/or judicious out-of-county destinations could be added.

The transit service provider that currently provides both the DHR and 5311 service in Coweta also is the DHR provider in Meriwether County. Additional efficiencies could be captured from a coordinated approach to service development within the county and perhaps between the two counties. The service costs shown in this report, try to capture efficiencies where they can be assessed. Particularly, the estimates are based upon the county using purchase of service of DHR trips to offset the costs of providing the public trips.

Additional consideration is given to the development of an economic development-driven transportation management association and transit-friendly land use concepts and controls. These activities would provide benefits to the community as a whole and in supporting local employers as well as employees.

## TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT FINANCIAL PROGRAM

The over-riding purpose of the Transit Development Program is to create a short-term blue print of how the County can move towards providing transit and transit-supportive services. Though some of the steps are not driven by budget and cost considerations most are. In short, the TDP becomes a “how can we get there from here” exercise. The Department of Transportation looks at the five year horizon. Year One in this assessment is CY 2011 (Calendar Year) which begins on January 1, 2011 and runs through December 31, 2011.

## OPERATING COSTS

Operating cost parameters fluctuate based upon the operating model selected by the County. Should the County elect to provide the service with dispatchers, managers and drivers employed by the county the cost would be based on county-actual wages and indirect and overhead costs not assessed here. Services in the region have an average cost per hour from 25.00 per hour to 75.00 per hour. Hourly costs include wages in dead-head and idle beyond the service hours that are assumed to be 6am to 6pm. Additional costs of for administration (director, Supervisor Other, Bookkeeper, Secretary) and dispatcher costs

The most cost-effective service strategy would be to contract with one of the private/public operators currently working in the TRRC region and to limit the destinations to those within the county. As imperfect as this proposal would be, it could easily meet up to forty percent of the trips that are not currently being served at all.

EXPENDITURE ESTIMATE	ESTIMATE OF COSTS	COMMENTS
Shared Administrative Expenses	22,000	A non-share service would require at least 1.5 FTE @ 25.00 per hour.
Training	included	
Marketing	included	
Telephone, office supplies, computer software maintenance,	included	4,000 if stand-alone
Facilities/Rental	included	8000 if stand alone
Administrative Subtotal	22,000	75,000 – 150,000
Pooled Operational Expenses	88,000	
Driver Salary	Included	3.0 FTE @ 12.00/hour \$74,880, or more
Dispatcher Salary	Included	.5 - .75 FTE 18,000
Mechanical Services	Included	(Assumes per vehicle cost not salary) 6000
Fuel	Included	38,500
Drug and Alcohol testing	Included	1,250
Other	Included	7000
Expense Total Pooled	110,000	

	Cost Estimates based on operating expenses:  110,000	Comments:
Less Purchase of Service Revenue (Fully Allocated Cost estimate)	84,000 (estimated at 10.00 FAC)	FAC total of trips (usually 75% of trips) divided into the total operational costs. TRRC average 8.41 per trip in 2010. Can be used as local match.
Net Operating Expense (NOE)	26,000	10% required fare revenue, actual fares 3/revenue hour (difference will become part of local deficit)
<LESS FARE REVENUE>	2,600	REQUIRED 10% of NEO
NET OPERATING DEFICIT (NOD)	23,400	
MERIWETHER COUNTY SHARE OF LOCAL MATCH (50% OF NOD)	5,850	50% FTA Section 5311  25% GDOT  25% Meriwether County

## CAPITAL ACQUISITIONS

An incremental (shared) service strategy would allow County to opt in for the local share of two transit vehicles. If those vehicles were (1) Shuttle Van and the other a Shuttle Van / lift the total cost for vehicles would be \$90,000 and the Meriwether share would be \$9,000.

Commuter Van – Manchester to Columbus, Greenville to Newnan/College Park MARTA, Meriwether County to LaGrange/West Point/KIA. \$25,000 to 40,000 per each van depending upon specifications. Add a spare vehicle and overhead expenses.

Action Step	Year One FFY 2011	Year Two FFY 2012	Year Three FFY 2013	Year Four FFY 2014	Year Four <i>Plus</i>
<b>Memorandum of Understanding with Georgia Department of Transportation</b>	Personnel costs	Personnel costs			
<b>Acquire Vehicles for Third Party Operator</b>		90,000 (Local Share 9,000)			
<b>Start Operation of Transit Service through Third Party Operator</b>		110,000 (Local share of Operating Deficit 5,850)		Local Match of 25,000 depending on provider and POS revenue and public (non POS) ridership	
<b>Memorandum of Understanding with TMA Provider</b>			Legal fees up to \$5,000		
<b>TMA enters into</b>					TMA share: 7,500 – 12,000

<b>agreement for purchase of vehicles</b>		depending upon specification
<b>Incidental Capital Costs</b>	1,200	
<b>Vehicle Replacement</b>		Vehicles to be replaced in two years
<b>Other</b>		Beyond Year 5: Park and Rides, Vehicles to accommodate ridership increases,