



# ARTS Newsletter

February 2009

## IN THIS ISSUE

Lower Savannah Council of Governments Grant	1
Air Quality Initiatives	2
Augusta Transit Public Hearings	2
Freight Study Update	2
Transitions	2
Fort Gordon News	3
Augusta Canal National Heritage Area Update	3
North Augusta's New Brick Pond Park	3
Aiken County News	3
Upcoming ARTS Meetings	4
ARTS Contacts	4

This newsletter is part of an ongoing effort of the Augusta Regional Transportation Study (ARTS) to share information about transportation issues and activities with the citizens of the metropolitan area.

## Graham Announces \$680,000 for Lower Savannah Council of Governments

**WASHINGTON-** U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham (R-South Carolina) today announced the Lower Savannah Council of Governments will receive a \$680,000 grant to provide a one-stop, customer-based travel information and trip planning service in its six county region. The region includes Aiken, Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Calhoun, and Orangeburg counties.

“This is welcome news for residents in the Lower Savannah region, particularly those who take advantage of public transportation,” said Graham. “These funds will help leverage technology to improve transportation services and provide additional access to employment, health care, education and other activities. By working together regionally, we can be more competitive and efficient in a time of tight budgets.”

The Lower Savannah Council of Governments was one of only three entities nationwide to receive this grant.

The funds will be used to enhance transportation access, minimize duplication of services and facilitate the most appropriate, cost-effective transportation for older adults, people with disabilities and low-income populations.



“The Lower Savannah Council works to expand existing transit services and create new services in an effort to reduce duplication and make efficient transportation opportunities available to all citizens in the region,” COG Chairperson Kathy Rawls said. “We are enhancing citizen access to vital health services and employment opportunities. At present, many of the system’s riders do not have access to cars or even a driver’s license.”

The grant was awarded by the U.S. Department of Transportation under the Mobility Services for All Americans initiative. It will benefit a number of coordinating, partnering transit providers serving the Lower Savannah Region. In particular, the Best Friend Express busses will be equipped with new mobile equipment that will enable real-time vehicle location, and will help to provide better customer service, service tracking and information on the location of the busses in real time to customers. Vehicles used in the Dial-a-Ride program will receive mobile data computers and automated vehicle location. New telephone equipment will enable reminder calls for service, rapid response automated reminder calls, cancellations and weather information to customers served by both systems in Aiken County. Mobility managers at the Lower Savannah COG’s Travel Management and Coordination Center, once implemented, will also provide assistance to individuals seeking transportation information and link them to transit services available in the area. ~Press Release - Lynnda Bassham, LSCOG

## FREQUENTLY CALLED NUMBERS:

**GDOT Area Office—Augusta**  
(706) 855-3466

**GDOT District 2 —Tennille**  
(478)-552-4601

**Augusta Engineering Department** (706) 796-5040

**Augusta Traffic Engineering Division** (706) 821-1841

**Columbia County Road Construction Department**  
(706) 447-7600

**Columbia County Traffic Engineering Department**  
(706) 868-4223

**Augusta Public Transit**  
(706) 821-1721

**Aiken County Transit (Best Friend Express)** (803) 648-6493

**Economic & Community Development (North Augusta)**  
(803) 441-4221

## Air Quality Initiatives

The CSRA Air Quality Alliance held a meeting on October 15, 2008 at the Misty Lake Recreation Area in North Augusta. 45 stakeholders attended the meeting. Representatives from the Georgia Environmental Protection Division and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control gave updates on ozone concentrations in the Aiken – Augusta area.

Readings from area monitors indicate that ozone levels exceed the federal standards and that designation as a non-attainment area is likely to occur in March 2010. The boundaries of the non-attainment area are not known at present, but the two states must submit recommendations to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in March of this year. Stakeholders discussed the impact of such designations and the various air quality improvement initiatives underway throughout the region.

The CSRA Air Quality Alliance has developed a new website with useful and timely information related to air quality and links to other websites. Please check our website at: <http://www.csra-airquality-alliance.com/>

### Related Air Quality Links:

[Clean Air Campaign](http://www.cleanaircampaign.com/) – link to <http://www.cleanaircampaign.com/>

[Georgia Environmental Protection Division \(EPD\)](http://www.gaepd.org/Documents/index_air.html) - link to [http://www.gaepd.org/Documents/index\\_air.html](http://www.gaepd.org/Documents/index_air.html)

Georgia Department of Natural Resource Air Protection Branch—link to <http://www.georgiaair.org>

[South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control](http://www.scdhec.net/environment/baq/pm.aspx) – link to <http://www.scdhec.net/environment/baq/pm.aspx>

[U. S. Environmental Protection Agency](http://www.epa.gov/air/particles/index.html) – link to <http://www.epa.gov/air/particles/index.html>

## Augusta Public Transit Public Hearings



On December 18, 2008 the Augusta Public Transit Department held a public hearing on proposed service changes at 4: 00 p.m. at May Park Gymnasium. The proposed changes were to eliminate Saturday service, eliminate transfers, increase base fare and to increase monthly passes. The purpose of these recommendations was due to a \$1.5 million budget shortfall in the Transit Department. There were 225 people in attendance. During the time allotted, approximately 30 speakers had the opportunity to voice their opinion. The general consensus

of the attendees and the speakers was not to make any increases or elimination of services, but instead, to extend routes and service hours. Mr. Heyward Johnson, APT Director, reviewed the public comments and, on January 12, 2009, presented several proposals to the Public Service Committee. One of the proposals, to increase base fare from \$1.00 to \$1.25 and increase transfers from 35 cents to 50 cents, was approved by the committee. The full Commission will vote on this proposal January 22, 2009.

## Freight Study Update



Work on the ARTS Regional Freight Study continued during the late summer and fall. The regional freight profile and freight needs and deficiencies were finalized. A list of freight improvement projects was developed based on a review of the Long Range Transportation Plan, field work by the consultants and public input. The projects are designed to enhance the safe and efficient movement of freight, reduce conflicts between freight and passenger car traffic and improve at-grade railroad crossings. Criteria identified to prioritize the projects include congestion, safety, connectivity and economic development.

The Project Advisory Committee met on two more occasions, September 15 and November 20, 2008, to review progress and provide feedback to the project consultants. A second public meeting on October 16<sup>th</sup> gave the public an opportunity to learn about the progress on the project and make comments about dangerous locations involving freight traffic, the poor condition of some rail crossings and the location of proposed truck routes throughout the region. Consultants have started writing the final report and the project will be completed in late January or early February.

## Transitions

- Special thanks to Mr. Jim Bartley for his service as Chairman from 2005-2008 on the ARTS Citizen Advisory Committee. He will be missed.
- Welcome Ms. Marya Moultrie, Transportation Planner for the Augusta-Richmond County Planning Commission.
- Welcome Mr. Mark Ivey of Ivey Residential, LLC, Mr. Mark Herbert of Herbert Homes, Inc., and Mr. Walter Lamb of Aiken for their appointments to the ARTS Citizens Advisory Committee.

## Fort Gordon News



### Commuter Rewards Program Update

Fort Gordon is partnering with the Clean Air Campaign to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality. Since September 2008 Fort Gordon commuters have been signing up to participate in the Commuter Rewards Program. Commuter Rewards is a program that gives commuters cash and prizes for using alternative forms of transportation, such as carpooling, biking or walking to work. Interested Fort Gordon workers can register online at [www.logyourcommute.com/FortGordon](http://www.logyourcommute.com/FortGordon).

Commuter Rewards is just one of several programs that The Clean Air Campaign offers to communities, schools and employers in Georgia. To learn more or to bring the free Commuter Rewards Program to your work site, contact Ms. Tanika Mason, Employer Program for the Augusta area at (706) 373-8362 or [Tmason@cleanaircampaign.com](mailto:Tmason@cleanaircampaign.com). Ms. Mason is based in Augusta. More information is available at [www.cleanaircampaign.com](http://www.cleanaircampaign.com).

## Augusta Canal National Heritage Area News



### Georgia Recreational Trails Grant to Fund Canal Assessment /Management Plan

The Augusta Canal Authority has received a Georgia Recreational Trails Grant of

approximately \$45,000 to fund a comprehensive trail assessment and management /maintenance plan. The project will be a systematic study of all existing trails within the Augusta Canal National Heritage Area. The study will identify maintenance needs, propose trail amenities, such as restroom facilities, and areas for more intensive study. In addition, opportunities for additional land and water trail development will be identified in the report. This will be the first overall study of the Canal's trail system progress since the Canal Master Plan of 1993.

### Waterworks Project to Temporarily Limit Access

The Augusta Canal will be de-watered beginning in late January for approximately two months to allow contractors for the Augusta Utilities Department to install new water main pipelines, and other utility conduits, underneath the canal at the Raw Water Pumping Station.

During this period, the canal's towpath will be blocked off at the pumping station construction site. Recreational users will have access to the upper towpath at the Headgate/Savannah Rapids Park and the lower path up to the

Augusta Canal Continued- pumping station parking areas, but through-access from Savannah Rapids to downtown via the towpath will not be possible beginning Mid-January. The portable restroom facilities will be temporarily removed. ~Rebecca Rodgers- Augusta Canal Authority

## North Augusta's New Brick Pond Park



North Augusta is not known for its ecological diversity but that is about to change. With the grand opening of its Brick Pond Park, North Augusta is set to become a tourism hot spot along the Savannah River. The first park of its kind in South Carolina near the Savannah River shoals, it will be an exciting place for all ages to enjoy and learn about plants and wildlife that live and thrive in our area. Brick Pond Park will be connected to North Augusta's prestigious and award winning North Augusta Greenway Trail. The trail that is now nearing 10 miles long, winds throughout the city over creeks, streams, meadows, and forests along an abandoned railway line. One of the newest additions to the trail is the riverfront section, where visitors can walk, jog, or bike along the edge of the Savannah River. While enjoying the trail it is common to see turtles basking on logs, deer nibbling on vegetation, and birds, birds, birds. The trail travels through the city's Riverview Park where baseball, basketball, racquetball, soccer and other first class amenities are available. Brick Pond Park is connected to the trail at the riverfront and will be a sought after destination for citizens and travelers that want to learn about wildlife in our area. ~Excerpt from Press Release, City of NA

## Aiken County News

- In November 2008, Aiken County Planning and Development staff member Wilbur Smith Associates interviewed the County's Transportation Planner as a stakeholder representing Aiken County, for Augusta's Transit Development Plan.
- In December 2008, Aiken County Planning and Development submitted a list of 19 projects (17 surface and 2 operational improvements) to SCDOT to be considered for any transportation funding that may come from the economic stimulus plan that President-elect Barack Obama wants to enact after he takes office.
- Aiken County held their first 2009 TCC meeting (for the SC side) in January.
- In March 2009, Aiken County will conduct the annual travel time surveys along major travel corridors in the Aiken County ARTS area for the Congestion Management Process 2009 Report.



**Augusta-Richmond County Planning Commission**  
**525 Telfair Street**  
**Augusta, GA 30901**

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### **UPCOMING ARTS MEETINGS**

#### **January 2009**

CAC/TCC- No Meeting  
Policy Committee-No Meeting

#### **February 2009**

CAC/TCC- 02/11/09 @ 10:00 AM  
Policy Committee- No Meeting

#### **March 2009**

CAC/TCC- 03/11/09 @ 10:00 AM  
Policy Committee-03/05/09 @  
11:00 AM

ARTS Committee Meetings are usually held on the 8th Floor of the Municipal Building at 530 Greene Street, Augusta, GA. Please call the ARCPC (706)821-1796 to verify time and place.

### **The ARTS Staff**

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