



ARTS Newsletter

September 2010

IN THIS ISSUE

Georgia Transportation Act of 2010 1

New Aging, Disability and Transportation Resource Center 2

Augusta Air Quality Update 3

Aiken County Update 3

Augusta Canal Authority Trail Assessment 1

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

Planning and Economic Development (North Augusta) (803) 441-4221

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.

Georgia Transportation Act of 2010 (HB 277)



The recently enacted Transportation Investment Act of 2010 gives Georgia cities and counties another potential source of funding for transportation projects. Also known as House Bill 277, the law establishes 12 special tax districts in the state that coincide with the boundaries of the regional commissions. Upon approval by voters, each district can levy a 1% sales tax for 10 years to finance eligible transportation projects in the district.

Regional Transportation Roundtables are to be established in each district. Individual counties cannot opt out of participating. Each roundtable consists of two elected officials from each county in the district, the board of commission chair and a mayor elected by the mayors in a county. Each Roundtable selects five members to serve on an Executive Committee. Each Executive Committee works with Georgia DOT's Planning Director to develop a list of projects to be fund with the tax proceeds. The final project list for a district must be approved by the applicable Roundtable.

According to the bill, Roundtables are to have their first meeting after November 15, 2010 and their final meeting after August 15, 2011. Roundtables must submit an approved project list to the GDOT Planning Director on or before October 15, 2011. If a final project list is not approved by a Roundtable, then a "special district gridlock" is declared. A gridlocked district cannot call for a vote on the tax for 24 months.

A vote on the 1% transportation sales tax would be held in each district with an approved project list during the general primary on August 21, 2012. A majority of the voters must approve the ballot question in order for the tax to become effective. Proceeds from the tax would begin flowing to cities and counties in a district in the first quarter of 2013. If district voters reject the tax, then the levy cannot be on a ballot again for at least 24 months.

The CSRA Regional Commission is facilitating the development of the Regional Transportation Roundtable for a 13-county area in East Central Georgia that includes Richmond and Columbia counties. To view and download the text of the Transportation Investment Act of 2010 (HB 277) go to the following web site - http://www.legis.ga.gov/legis/2009_10/sum/hb277.htm.

Augusta Canal Authority Trail Assessment



The Augusta Canal Authority will undertake a comprehensive assessment of the Canal's land and water trails this fall. Trail Dynamics, LLC, of Cedar Mountain, NC, has been contracted to conduct the assessment and produce a master plan for trail maintenance and future trail development. As part of its work, Trail Dynamics will conduct a free workshop on trail maintenance for interested groups and individuals (date to be announced.) This project is funded by a grant from Georgia State Parks. For more information or to sign up for the workshop contact Margaret Harrison, 706-823-0440 x 6 or mharrison@augustacanal.com.

New Aging, Disability and Transportation Resource Center



On August 17, 2010 national, state, and local citizens and dignitaries gathered to celebrate the ribbon-cutting for the Lower Savannah Council of Government's (LSCOG) new Aging, Disability & Transportation Resource Center (ADTRC).

The \$2.9 million center was funded through grants from the U.S. Department of Transportation's United We Ride/Mobility Services for All Americans, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, through the Lt. Governor's Office on Aging, the Federal Transit Administration, the South Carolina Department of Transportation and most recently, a federal stimulus allocation from USDOT. That funding allowed the LSCOG to expand its own facility to accommodate the new services and rename its previous center to include the new coordinated transportation component. Customers throughout the region are now benefiting from:

- Reservations, Scheduling and Dispatch System provided by RouteMatch Software, Inc. These tools provide a common, fully integrated, coordinated transportation system provided by the five public transit agencies serving the area. This system also allows LSCOG and partner agencies to coordinate beyond the region to popular out-of-area destinations.
- Fixed Route Computer Assisted Dispatch/Automatic Vehicle Location System (CAD/AVL) provided by RouteMatch Software, Inc. The system provides real time schedule adherence and fixed-route service monitoring. The fixed route technology is fully integrated with the demand response system for the purposes of increasing ridership on fixed routes. It allows the ADTRC to provide customers with precise information about when the next bus will come to a specific location.
- Automatic Vehicle Location/Mobile Data Computers (AVL/MDC) provided by Mentor Engineering, Inc. This system provides a fully automated, real time, paperless communication system between the vehicles and the agencies' operations and dispatch center. Drivers can streamline their efforts in noting pickups and drop-offs.
- Voice Communications provided by Motorola. 800 MHz radios on vehicles and in the center enable communications in areas with no data signal and provide a link to statewide emergency management and law enforcement.
- Coordination Module provided by RouteMatch Software, Inc. Agencies can now share, offer, and coordinate transportation in and outside the region using the LSCOG as the leader for coordinating trips. It is anticipated that additional capacity to meet currently unmet transit needs can emerge from better coordination of resources.
- Mobility Managers can assist customers in finding the best resource available as well as tell a waiting customer when the next bus will reach their stop. Mobility Managers also advocate for passengers when service does not meet their needs. The Mobility Managers provide travel training, determination of eligibility for various specialized programs and coordinated trips, and provide information for regional transportation planning.
- Interactive Voice Response System (IVR) provided by Swampfox, and Outbound Notification Module provided by RouteMatch Software, Inc. Fully integrated into the demand response system, the IVR service provides reminders to customers allowing them to confirm or cancel on a trip-by-trip basis. The system also alerts customers just prior to the arrival of the vehicle, and can inform them of changes in schedules and provide alerts about potential service disruptions.
- Web Portal provided by RouteMatch Software, Inc. provides human service, health facility workers, and the public another tool to use when reserving transportation services. Fully integrated into the demand response system, it allows mobility managers to organize and coordinate transportation services via the Internet. Private and Not for Profit transportation providers who join the network will have access to the Provider Web Portal to receive and submit trip requests.
- Web Site provided by PowerServe International. In addition to accessing trip information and reservations, the web site serves as an additional access point for human service information and it links to SC Access, South Carolina's website for aging and disability resource information.

F. Wayne Rogers, Executive Director of the LSCOG noted that "The ADTRC is the culmination of years of planning and hard work by the LSCOG staff, our many stakeholders and partners. Our common goal has been to improve transportation service and enhance access to independent and healthy living for the people in our region, which we can now do in the new ADTRC."

Augusta Air Quality Update



The 2010 smog season in the Augusta region has seen two violations for ground-level ozone through August, resulting in a pair of Code Orange smog alerts being issued for the CSRA on July 9 and July 28. On these days, concentrations of ground-level ozone were deemed unhealthy for sensitive groups including children, the elderly and anyone with respiratory conditions. By comparison, there were no ozone violations in Augusta during the 2009 smog season and four (4) violations in 2008.

While Georgia has made strides in improving air quality over the last several decades, new challenges are emerging, affecting the CSRA and other areas of the state.

Air quality standards slated to change this fall.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced that it will revise National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for ground-level ozone, the principal component of smog. EPA is proposing to make this standard stricter, reducing it from 0.075 parts per million (ppm) to a value in the range of 0.060 ppm to 0.070 ppm, most likely 0.065 ppm or 0.070 ppm. This change is based on EPA's assessment that public health is adversely impacted at lower concentration levels than previously understood. (**Note: The EPA is scheduled to publish the new NAAQS standards at the end of October 2010.**) **Simple actions can put the CSRA in the best position to adapt to these changes.**

The Clean Air Campaign has been working in coordination with Augusta communities since 2008 to encourage the use of alternatives to driving alone, as 37% of smog-forming emissions in Augusta come from the tailpipes of cars and trucks.

- Employers across the region can receive free consulting services from The Clean Air Campaign to establish custom commute options programs for employees.
- Commuters can receive financial incentives and assistance to increase their use of carpool, vanpool, telework and bike/walk commuting.
- Area schools can enroll in the Clean Air Schools program to teach students, parents and faculty about air quality.
- Citizens in the CSRA can register to receive Smog Alerts to protect public health sent via e-mail on days when air quality is forecasted to be unhealthy.

For more information on these programs, contact R.K. Thweatt, senior employer program manager for The Clean Air Campaign, at 678-244-7723 or rkthweatt@cleanaircampaign.org.

Aiken County News

ROADS:

- Aiken County has hired a consultant for the US 1/78 Corridor study. The project limits are from the Savannah River to Hitchcock Parkway. A notice-to-proceed is anticipated in September 2010.
- SCDOT is moving forward with the final design for the widening of Silver Bluff Road from Indian Creek Trail to Richardson's Lake Drive. However, the ARTS S.C. Policy Subcommittee still has to approve two intersection designs on Hartwell Drive and Richardson Lake Drive. This will occur once safety issues and residents' concerns are addressed. Construction is scheduled to begin in Fall 2012.
- The City of Aiken is continuing to work closely with the consultant conducting the North Side Road Network Study. The study is expected to be completed in October 2010.
- The ARTS S.C. Policy Subcommittee has adopted the Aiken County Project Prioritization Tool that was developed by a consultant with input from local technical committee members. "Livability" is being used as one of the criteria to help rank projects in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP). In April 2010, the part of the tool that focuses on "Livability" was presented at a Livability Workshop in Columbia, SC. Since then, the tool has gained national exposure through the FHWA.

ARRA:

- Resurfacing / maintenance of several streets throughout Aiken County have been completed or is underway. These projects are funded under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

BIKE/PED:

- Aiken County is gearing up to release an RFP in the Fall for a bicycle / pedestrian plan for the urbanized areas of Aiken County. They will be conferring with the Lower Savannah Council of Governments which intends to complete a plan for the outlying areas of the County.

AIR:

- The City of Aiken submitted comments to the SCDHEC on the recommended Nonattainment Boundary for the Aiken MPO area, in the event the area is declared Nonattainment by the US EPA. Local technical committee members plan to attend a Transportation Conformity Training Session on September 14, 2010 in Columbia, SC, hosted by the SCDHEC.
- The Town of Burnetown has adopted an ordinance that bans outdoor burning during several months of the year.



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

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UPCOMING ARTS MEETINGS

November 2010

TCC and CAC Meeting - November 10, 2010 10:00 A.M.

December 2010

TCC and CAC Meeting - December 8, 2010 10:00 AM

Policy Committee Meeting - December 2, 2010 11:00 A.M.

ARTS committee meetings are 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.

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