

ARTS Newsletter

Issue: Spring 2016

FORWARD MOVEMENT: ARTS Highlights 2015



2015 Highlights

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Public Input: Critical to Transportation Vision 2040

With projected growth in 2040 to include over 200,000 residents added to the population and close to 100,000 more jobs in ARTS planning area, almost 2,000 people had their chance to express concerns about critical transportation issues, needs and priorities.

Working together with the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and its partners, the region is estimated to receive over \$1.8 billion in federal, state and local funds for transportation infrastructure over the next 20 years. Over \$1.5 billion is designated for transportation improvements including highways/roads, traffic safety and maintenance, traffic signal operations, bridge, freight and railroad, public transit, pedestrian and bike paths.

The importance of public participation in producing Transportation Vision 2040 was enormous, due to the mobility needs of communities to connect people to places, goods and services through a shared vision, validated and with prioritized goals, objectives and ultimately performance measures.

With updating the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), Augusta Regional Transportation Study (ARTS), the Augusta Planning and Development Department (APDD) provided the 4-county region including: Richmond and Columbia Counties in Georgia, Aiken and Edgefield Counties in South Carolina opportunities to be involved in the regional transportation planning process – Transportation Vision 2040.

(See page 2, Plan Summary)

ARTS MPO Partners:

- ▶ Richmond County, GA
- ▶ Columbia County, GA
- ▶ City of Blythe, GA
- ▶ City of Grovetown, GA
- ▶ City of Hephzibah, GA
- ▶ Fort Gordon
- ▶ Augusta Public Transit
- ▶ GA Dept. of Transportation,
- ▶ Aiken County, SC
- ▶ Edgefield County, SC
- ▶ City of Aiken, SC
- ▶ City of North Augusta, SC
- ▶ Town of Burnetown, SC
- ▶ Lower Savannah Council of Governments
- ▶ SC Dept. of Transportation
- ▶ U.S. Dept. of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration,
- ▶ Federal Transit Administration



Patrick G. Stephens
Director, Augusta Public Transit

On His Way: Spotlight on New Augusta Public Transit Director

Patrick G. Stephens is the new Transit Director for Augusta, Richmond County. He was selected by Augusta Commissioners in early 2015 because of his obvious leadership abilities and his vast experience in public transit.

Stephens, who moved to Augusta from Columbus, Ohio, earned several promotions after starting as a bus operator within public transit before securing his Vice President of

Operations position for the Central Ohio Transit Authority.

Mobility and freedom are quality of life benefits he and staff are working on in Augusta. Stephens indicated that “Public transit plays a significant role in finding solutions to a lot of challenges people face today.”

Stephens and the “Transit Team” as he describes those that directly and indirectly work to improve transit operations have provided a vision of

quality for all residents and patrons of Augusta Public Transit (APT) to enjoy. In June of 2015, the Federal Transit Authority conducted its Triennial Review of APT’s service operations, grant compliance and planning/programming. APT achieved compliance in 14 of 17 performance areas. This was a significant improvement since 2012, when FTA identified 12 deficiencies out of 24 rating. Stephens credits improvements

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Plan Summary: Transportation Vision 2040, ARTS Long Range Multimodal Plan

1 Long Range Transportation Plan: Transportation Vision

Vision: Sustain regional economic growth through a transportation system that reduces congestion, improves traffic safety; and provides road maintenance, public transit, sidewalks, bike and pedestrian paths linking jobs, education, healthcare, and recreational facilities for all citizens and tourists in the ARTS region.

2 Transportation System Existing 2040 Conditions Report

Safer Streets Through Complete Streets Policy



Reynolds Street Now



Reynolds Street 2040

3 Public Participation and Community Meeting Report

In 2015, ARTS staff facilitated a speaker's bureau presentation at the civic league meetings, conducted on-board transit surveys, and hosted community meetings. The public was engaged through social media, wireless polling, online surveys, an interactive online map public forum, and public notices in multiple languages and a variety of media outlets. ARTS leadership conducted news and radio interviews and is always exploring new ways to capture the public's attention and involvement in the planning process.

4 Transportation System Needs Assessment Report

This report highlights issues and needs on the regional transportation network for each mode. Key strategies identified are: addressing public transit, safety, freight, multimodal, congestion, and regional mobility. Unique resources presented including complete streets, access management, bike/pedestrian facilities with regional connections, regional express bus corridors, park-and-ride facilities, ride share program and a possibility for a high occupancy vehicle.

How Would You Like Public Transit To Improve?

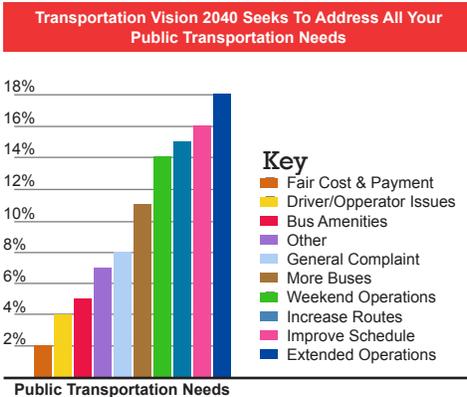


New Transit Provider in Aiken County

On July 1, 2015 Generations Unlimited took over the new operational contract for the Best Friend Express fixed route service and ADA complementary paratransit service on behalf of the Lower Savannah Council of Governments, the managing agency and federal grantee for this public transportation service. A new Best Friend Express office was opened at 153 Pendleton NW next to the Southeastern Stages bus stop. With the new location passengers have access to restrooms, drinking foundations and advance ticket sales. The Best Friend Express travels over 120,000 miles a year when combining the mileage of all 3 routes serving Aiken County.

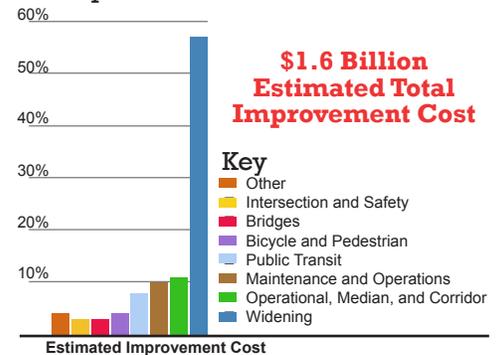
5 Public Transit Survey Report

ARTS planners conducted an on-board transit survey.



6 Financial Plan Report

This report ensures sufficient funds are available for all recommended projects, a federal requirement for all transportation plans.



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to the "Transit Team" within city departments.

He is excited about their momentum to change its image with new technology improvements. With 11 new transit

vehicles by summer 2016 and the possibility of new real-time scheduling technology, he is well on his way.

Protecting Your Civil Rights through Title VI

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects the public from racial and ethnic discrimination while participating in and benefiting from any program receiving federal funds. ARTS Title VI Program ensures all transportation plans, programs, and projects meet federal requirements and ensure all burdens and benefits are distributed evenly across the region's diverse populations.

Georgia Department of Transportation approved the ARTS Title VI Program on January 13, 2016. ARTS staff issued Title VI notices in multiple languages to Augusta Public Transit, which posted them on every bus and facility. Lower Savannah Council of Government's Title VI Program notices were posted on every Best Friends Express bus and facility.

This governing policy and procedures encompass the administration, operations, and implementation of metropolitan transportation planning, public transportation service, projects,

plans, programs and construction of transportation infrastructure funded in part or wholly funded with federal funds undertaken within and/or by Augusta, Georgia through the departments of Augusta Planning and Development, Augusta Public Transit, and Augusta Engineering.

ARTS Title VI safeguards quality of services under any program receiving federal funds, and are provided without regard to race, color, or national origin. It identifies and addresses disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, of programs and activities on minority and low-income populations.

ARTS Title VI program also upholds Environmental Justice for minority, low-income, elderly, people without vehicles and limited English proficiency (LEP) while ensuring meaningful access to all transportation programs and activities.

This notice and complete contents of this program are available at the following locations:

- ▶ Augusta Richmond County Administrator's Office Website
- ▶ Augusta Planning and Development Department
- ▶ Augusta Public Transit Department Website
- ▶ The Augusta Human Resources Department
- ▶ Office of Equal Employment Opportunity Augusta, Georgia
- ▶ Aiken County Website and Planning Department
- ▶ Lower Savannah Council of Governments

Title VI program and complaint form is online at:

<http://www.augustaga.gov/2105/Title-VI-Program>

Any complaints or questions regarding Augusta, Georgia's Title VI Program should be directed to:

Administrator's Office
535 Telfair Street, Suite 910
Augusta, GA 30901
Phone: (706) 821-2400

2040 LRTP Implementation

ARTS has gone to the public with noteworthy transportation project amendments twice since the September 2015 adoption of the ARTS Transportation Vision 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and FY 2015-2018 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Amending the LRTP and TIP is required when the project scope, termini, and project cost exceed \$2 million. These amendments enhanced existing TIP projects to include multimodal improvements for

bike and pedestrian facilities which was identified by the public during the public meetings last July – August 2015.

South Carolina has dedicated State Infrastructure Bank (SIB) funding for Preliminary Engineering in FY 2016 on an I-20 widening project from Savannah River to US 25 (Edgefield Road). Secondly, Richmond County has amended three projects to include more extensive multimodal considerations. These include extending the Wheeler Road

Multimodal Corridor Improvements from I-20 Eastbound ramp to Walton Way Extension and lengthening the 15th Street Multimodal Corridor Improvements from the Augusta Canal to Wrightsboro Road Bridge. Also scheduled is a corridor study for Peach Orchard Road that will include pedestrian and bicycle considerations. The corridor study was brought about as an alternative to a widening project that was determined to be unnecessary on this roadway.

Status of Highway/Bike and Pedestrian Projects

Below is a list of completed projects in 2015 and projects currently under construction. These projects are either currently programmed or were programmed with federal transportation dollars. Many of the Georgia projects are now funded through the Transportation Investment Act (TIA).

Completed Projects

Richmond

- ▶ Wrightsboro Road – widen to 4 lanes from Jimmie Dyess Parkway to I-520 Southbound Ramp. Completed 11/20/2015.
- ▶ Augusta Canal Multiuse Trail Phase IV – extend the multi-use trail from 12th St. to 7th St along the Third Level Canal. Completed 12/31/2015.

Columbia

- ▶ SR 232/Columbia Rd – widen to 4 lanes from Old Belair Rd (CR 221) to Belair Rd (SR 383) (PI#231440). Open to traffic 5/31/2015 (not 100% complete).

Aiken

- ▶ North Augusta Greenway Extension – extend North Augusta Greenway trail from Bergen Road north into the Woodstone Development. Completed February 2015.

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Under Construction

Richmond

- ▶ Windsor Spring @ NS Railroad (PI#245325) [TIA] – widen to four through lanes Expected Completion 7/31/2020.
- ▶ Windsor Spring Road – Phase V (PI#245320) [TIA] – widen to four through lanes from SR 88 to Willis Foreman Rd. Expected Completion 7/31/2020.
- ▶ Windsor Spring Road – Phase IV (PI#250610) [TIA] – widen to four through lanes from Willis Foreman Rd to Tobacco Rd. Expected Completion 4/30/2017.
- ▶ I-20 @ SR 104 (PI#0011699) [TIA]-turn lane reconstruction/intersection improvement – Awarded 12/4/2015. Expected Completion 11/30/2016.
- ▶ SR 104/Riverwatch Parkway (PI#232020) [TIA] – construct median, drainage, and lighting improvements from River Shoals Parkway to Jones Street. Expected Completion 7/31/2016.
- ▶ SR 56 / Mike Padgett Hwy Road



(PI#0006431) – widening to four through lanes from CR 17/Bennock Mill Rd to CR 1516/Old Waynesboro Rd. Expected Completion 9/24/2016.

Columbia

- ▶ Riverwatch Parkway Extension (Old Petersburg/Old Evans Rd) (PI#250470) [TIA] – widen to four through lanes with bike lanes. Expected Completion April 2017.
- ▶ Washington Road (PI#262080) [Now a local project] widening from Gibbs Road to William Few Parkway. Expected Completion Summer 2018.

Aiken

- ▶ SC 302 (Silver Bluff Road) Corridor Improvements – intersection and

corridor improvements from Indian Creek Trail to Richardson Lake Rd. Construction anticipated to begin March/April 2016. Estimated completion of Fall 2017.

- ▶ Whiskey Road South (SC 19) Corridor Study: A corridor study is beginning on Whiskey Road from South Boundary Avenue to US 278 (Williston Road) in New Ellenton. Focus areas include: existing & future traffic volume and capacity, flow/congestion, safety, access management, stormwater drainage, and multimodal facilities. Solicitation for bids expected March 2016 with awarding around June 2016. Expected completion of study is July 2017.

Upcoming Meetings

Please call (706) 821-1796 to verify the time and location.

- ▶ Technical Coordinating Committee: Meets quarterly. **April 14, 2016, 10:30 AM**, 535 Telfair Street, Augusta GA 30901, 3rd Floor Room 391
- ▶ SC ARTS Subcommittee: Meets quarterly, **May 5, 2016, 4:00 PM**, 1930 University Pkwy, Aiken, SC 29801, Sandlapper Room
- ▶ Citizens Advisory Committee: **May 11, 2016, 11:00 AM** 535 Telfair Street, Augusta GA 30901, 3rd Floor Room 391
- ▶ Policy Committee: **June 2, 2016, 11:00 AM**, 535 Telfair Street, Augusta GA 30901, 1st Floor Linda Beazley Room
- ▶ Augusta Public Transit Citizen Advisory Committee: Meets monthly on the **4th Thursday, 4:00 PM**, 1535 Fenwick Street, Augusta, GA 30904

Augusta Regional Transportation Study Contacts

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