

# In the REGION

## SGRC Transportation and Environmental Services Announces Regional Public Transit Coming July 1

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission, in partnership with the Georgia Department of Transportation and MIDS Transportation, Inc., will begin offering regional public transit on July 1, 2021.

The opportunity for public ridership will now be available to the general public; riders will be able to schedule trips for any purpose within the participating regional counties including: Atkinson, Bacon, Berrien, Brantley, Brooks, Charlton, Coffee, Cook, Irwin, Lowndes, Pierce, Tift, Turner, and Ware.

Regional transit creates vital connections between people, jobs, shopping, healthcare, social opportunities, and community services. This is an exciting venture for the region and the SGRC Transportation and Environmental Division staff are proud to share information that is relevant to the roll-out of public transit.

Updates will be posted on the SGRC website at:



[www.sgrc.us/public-transit-services.html](http://www.sgrc.us/public-transit-services.html) and on the SGRC Facebook Page at: [www.facebook.com/SouthernGeorgiaRC/](https://www.facebook.com/SouthernGeorgiaRC/). As of July 1, 2021, trips may be booked by passengers, with at least 24-

*Continued on the next page*

*The Southern Georgia Regional Commission proudly serves Atkinson, Bacon, Ben Hill, Berrien, Brantley, Brooks, Charlton, Clinch, Coffee, Cook, Echols, Irwin, Lanier, Lowndes, Pierce, Tift, Turner, and Ware Counties.*

# Transportation and Environmental

## SGRC Announces Regional Public Transit Coming July 1 (continued)

hours advance notice, by calling the following tollfree number: 1-855-360-7475 .

The SGRC looks forward to continuing the great success that individual counties built to provide affordable and accessible mobility to residents of the region. The SGRC plans to work with GDOT to allow riders to order trips from the “Let’s Ride” app on smart phones later this summer. GDOT is also developing a contactless fare payment system that will be available to the SGRC soon.

The SGRC will continue to provide coordinated human services transportation to seniors and behavioral health clients at no cost to the clients or the counties in all 18 counties as a part of this regional transit program. For more information about the transition to SGRC Regional Public Transit please contact Megan Fowler, Transit/Mobility Coordinator at (229) 333-5277 or [mfowler@sgrc.us](mailto:mfowler@sgrc.us).

## Geographic Information Services

### SGRC-GIS Welcomes New Staff Member

The SGRC Geographic Information Services (GIS) welcomes its newest team member, Ben Singletary. Singletary recently completed a Bachelor’s Degree in Environmental Geosciences at Valdosta State University. He studied Geographic Information Systems, climate and weather patterns, and the geology of Earth. Under the supervision of faculty, Singletary reported that he conducted research titled “Analysis of Spatial Equity of Pharmacies in Georgia.” The project focused on persons not within reasonable range of getting adequate pharmaceutical

care. Also, it studied the impacts COVID-19 had on consumers and the pharmacies themselves. Singletary said, “I love collecting rocks, ask to see and I’ll be glad to show anyone, and I do astrophotography- when weather and time permits.” Welcome, Ben!



***Ben Singletary***

# Information Technology (IT)

## Prepare Today for Tomorrow's Ransomware Attack

Some opportunistic cybercriminals have taken advantage of the pandemic environment to breach both consumer and organizational data. These cybercriminals are using COVID-19-themed emails as an opportunity to unleash ransomware attacks on organizations and consumers. Ransomware is a form of malware that encrypts the victim's files. Once files are encrypted, the attacker then demands a ransom from the victim to restore access to the data upon payment. Targeted organizations often believe that paying the ransom is the most cost-effective way to get back their data and, unfortunately, this may be true.



The problem is that every business that pays to recover its files is directly funding the development of the next generation of this cyber threat. As a result, it continues to evolve, with more sophisticated variants and more specific targeted cyber-attacks. The costs continue to rise as well. Recent research from Cybersecurity Ventures predicts that these attacks will cost the global economy \$6 trillion in 2021! This makes defending an organization's data more critical than ever.

Businesses and organizations can take the following steps to protect data and networks:

- **Back up computers:** Perform frequent backups of the system and other important files, and verify the backups regularly. If a computer becomes infected with ransomware, it is possible to restore the system to its previous state using backups.
- **Store backups separately:** Best practice is to store backups on a separate device that cannot be accessed from a network, such as on an external hard drive. Once the backup is completed, disconnect the external hard drive, or separate device from the network or computer.
- **Train the organization:** Organizations should provide cybersecurity awareness training to personnel. Ideally, organizations should have regular, mandatory cybersecurity awareness training sessions to ensure personnel are informed about current cybersecurity threats and threat actor techniques. To improve workforce awareness, organizations can test personnel with phishing assessments that simulate real-world phishing emails.

Government authorities and security experts anticipate that the problem will get worse before it gets better. For more information on how to protect data and a network from Ransomware, please contact Larry Adams (229) 333-5277.

# Community and Economic Development

## SGRC Assists Turner County with Street Paving and Drainage Improvements

The SGRC's Community & Economic Development Division assisted Turner County in obtaining \$415,265 in 2018 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to construct much needed street paving and drainage improvements on Legg Road. The total project cost for the improvements was \$555,265. Statewide Engineering, Inc. of Douglas provided design, engineering, and construction oversight services. The construction contractor was East Coast Asphalt of Douglas. Completion of this project in July will provide a safe, paved road with adequate drainage for the residents of this neighborhood.



**Legg Road Before and After**



# Community and Economic Development

## SGRC Community & Economic Development Director Completes Georgia Certified Economic Developer Program

SGRC Community and Economic Development Director Kimberly Hobbs was one of 16 economic development professionals recently celebrated by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government on their completion of the Georgia Certified Economic Developer (GCED) Program.

These officials, who represent a variety of different communities from around the state, completed the 60 hours of coursework and final capstone project necessary to receive their certification in the past year. Courses to complete certification include economic development landscapes, attracting and growing businesses, workforce development, branding and marketing strategies, and financing economic development. In addition to the required courses, participants can choose several elective topics to further study as they relate to their communities.

The GCED Program is one of the education programs offered through the Institute and was created in partnership with the Georgia Economic Developers Association. For more information about this certificate program and the most recent certifications, visit: <https://cviog.uga.edu/training-and-education/economic-development-training/gced-graduates.html>



**Kimberly Hobbs**

### Environmental Services Reports:



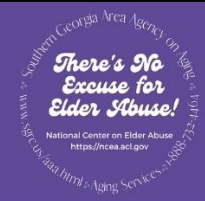
**The Ocmulgee River Water Trail Partnership Website is live!**

*A great resource to plan a trip on the longest continuous water trail in the State of Georgia!*

<https://garivers.org/water-trails-and-paddling/ocmulgee-river-water-trail/>



# Area Agency on Aging (AAA)



The SGRC-AAA is grateful to everyone who helped make the 2021 World Elder Abuse Awareness campaign a great success.

*Thank you for taking a stand with us against elder abuse!*





# Area Agency on Aging (AAA)





# Local Government Services

## Planning For Tiny House Development

Tiny Houses are becoming a popular and affordable alternative to conventional housing. Tiny Houses are generally smaller than 400 square feet and may include a loft. They are less expensive to build than traditional housing with the average price of a tiny home in Georgia estimated at \$45,000. As with any home, the more luxurious the house, the higher the price. Some people choose to live in a Tiny House for simplicity and to focus less of their income on traditional housing upkeep and utility costs. These homes can be placed on a single lot or within a tiny house community.



Some communities in Georgia have decided to focus more on Tiny House Communities. The City of Savannah has completed Phase 1 of a tiny home community for homeless military veterans. The development currently has 23 tiny houses and a clubhouse. The community also includes all utilities and a medical clinic. The Tiny House residents are also taught life-building skills. The residents pay rent and are expected to meet their daily needs with their income. Phase II of the City of Savannah's tiny home community will include adding 24 new homes and a second clubhouse. After the success of the Savannah Project, other communities are planning tiny house projects to assist homeless veterans.

A Tiny House Ordinance can be adopted to meet a local government's needs. Before adopting the ordinance, the following factors should be considered: Is there a mechanism in place to effectively enforce the ordinance? Who will implement the ordinance? (Code Enforcement, Zoning Administrator, etc.) Who will be responsible for reviewing and approving the application? (Zoning Administrator, planning staff) Who will be responsible for performing inspections?

The Department of Community Affairs has adopted guidelines for Tiny Houses, which can be found at [www.dca.ga.gov/node/4138](http://www.dca.ga.gov/node/4138). Regulations vary, and the Georgia State Building Codes only apply to tiny homes that are modular or site-built. Also, a model Tiny House Ordinance is available on the SGRC website at [www.sgrc.us](http://www.sgrc.us) or contact the Planning Staff at (229) 333-5277 for further information.



# Local Government Services



## Lanier County Receives StormReady Recognition from National Weather Service

It was announced at the June 14th Lanier County Commissioner's meeting that Lanier County obtained StormReady! recognition. The announcement came via letter from the National Weather Service (NWS) Tallahassee, Florida, on behalf of the Georgia StormReady Advisory Board.

Kelly G. Godsey, Senior Service Hydrologist/Meteorologist for the NWS Tallahassee wrote, "On behalf of the Georgia StormReady Advisory Board, I would like to congratulate you on the recognition of Lanier County as StormReady! This recognition is clearly a result of your vision, leadership, hard work, and commitment to the people that you serve every day. Residents of Lanier County and your staff should take great pride and comfort in knowing that you have worked to achieve this StormReady status for Lanier County. I am also appreciative of the partnership that has been established between Lanier County and NWS Tallahassee. Working together, we have helped prepare residents for all severe weather hazards in South Georgia."

Congratulations to Lanier County on becoming StormReady! For more information, please visit the StormReady website at [www.weather.gov/stormready](http://www.weather.gov/stormready). For more information on SGRC Local Government or Planning services go to [www.sgrc.us](http://www.sgrc.us) or contact staff at (229) 333-5277.

# Small Business Lending

## SGRC Small Business Lending Wraps Up Processing Second Round of PPP Loans

As the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) came to a close on May 31, 2021, the Small Business Lending Department busily assisted local small businesses and lending partners with processing these much-needed loans.

As part of the Economic Aid Act, a second round of PPP loans were allocated. This allowed for NEW first round applicants as well as second round applicants who had already received forgiveness for the first round. To be eligible for a second round PPP loan, the applicant must have had a 25% revenue reduction from one quarter in 2020 compared to 2019. Eligible applicants received a loan in the amount of 2.5x average monthly payroll and those in the accommodation and food services industry were eligible for 3.5x.

The program was implemented through banks acting as SBA Lenders. As a Lender Service Provider (LSP) for many banks in the Southern Georgia region, the SGRC Small Business Lending Department assisted several banks in the processing of these loans. Lending staff processed nearly 100 applications for participating banks totaling just under \$3.5 million dollars in approved loans.

For more information on Lending programs or opportunities for small businesses please contact the SGRC Lending Department today at [rdorsey@sgrc.us](mailto:rdorsey@sgrc.us).





# Workforce Development

## WorkSource Staff Experience Micro-Transit System

Valdosta On-Demand travels to and from Wiregrass Technical College to help students get to and from class. Recently, members of the Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA) department were able to gain firsthand experience on how the transit system works as they traveled from City Hall to the Wiregrass campus.

Valdosta On-Demand is a public, on-demand transit service and service hours are from Monday to Friday from 6am until 9pm. The price for a ride is \$2 per trip for one rider plus \$1 for each extra passenger. For more information or to create an account to access Valdosta On-Demand, go to [www.valdostacity.com/public-works/valdosta-demand](http://www.valdostacity.com/public-works/valdosta-demand) or call (229) 441-2940.

For more information on Workforce Development, call Amy Jones at (912)285-6097.



*Pictured above (top) WIOA staff at Wiregrass Technical College and (bottom) WIOA staff at Valdosta City Hall*

# Contact the SGRC

## SGRC Council 2021 Meeting Schedule Meeting Locations TBD

**July - No Meeting**

August 26, 2021 – 11:00 am

September 23, 2021 – 11:00 am

**October - No Meeting**

October 28, 2021 -

Area Officials Appreciation Dinner  
(subject to change)

**November – No meeting**

(combined with December meeting)

December 9, 2021 – 11:00 am

(subject to change)



**SOUTHERN GEORGIA  
REGIONAL COMMISSION**

## Valdosta Office

1937 Carlton Adams Drive  
Valdosta, GA 31601

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**(229) 333-5277**

You can reach us by fax:  
**(229) 333-5312**



## Waycross Office

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Waycross, GA 31503

You can reach us by phone:  
**(912) 285-6097**

You can reach us by fax:  
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Email:

**[sgrc@sgrc.us](mailto:sgrc@sgrc.us)**

Web Address:

**[www.sgrc.us](http://www.sgrc.us)**

Facebook:

**[https://www.facebook.com/  
SouthernGeorgiaRC](https://www.facebook.com/SouthernGeorgiaRC)**

## Congratulations Michael Jacobs!



25 Years of Employment  
with the SGRC