

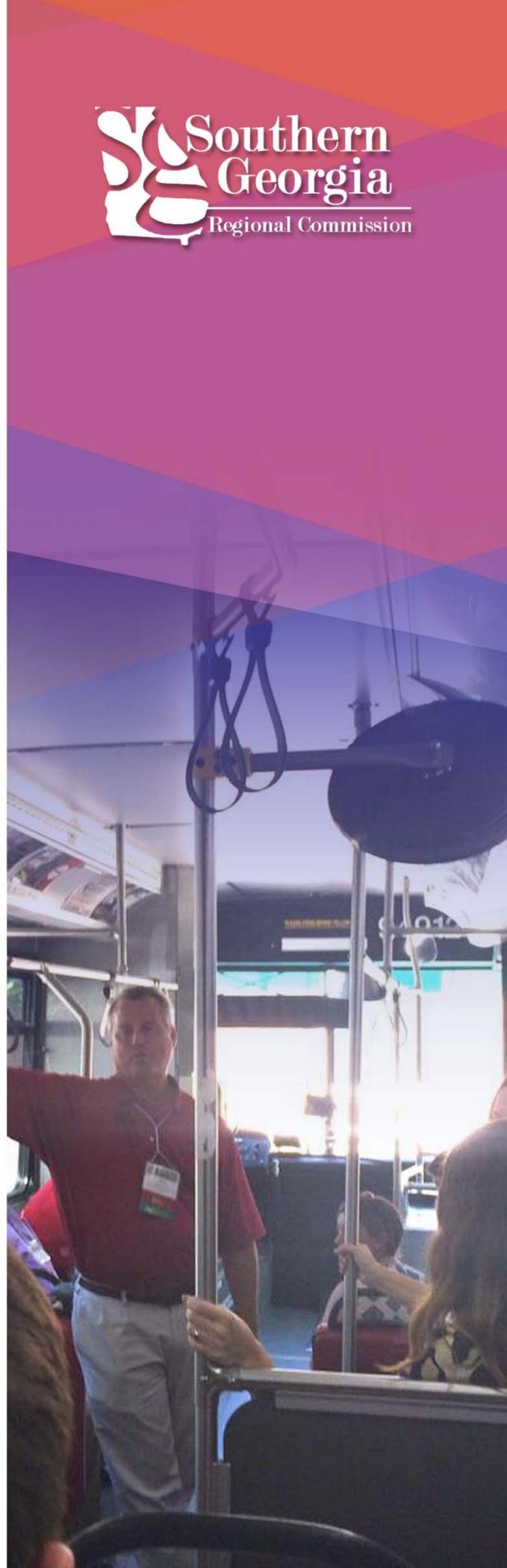
APPENDIX A: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

January 14, 2016

Prepared for



Prepared by



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PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

Introduction

The Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization (VLMPO) recognizes that the success of any community improvement plan is dependent upon meaningful community involvement during the development of the plan. The VLMPO is committed to conducting a proactive stakeholder and community involvement program during the development of the *Valdosta Urbanized Area Transit Implementation Study*. The study team is committed to providing broad-based and continuous opportunities for stakeholder and community involvement throughout the implementation plan development process. The program will focus on both education and soliciting local stakeholder and community interaction throughout the study process. The process is designed to be responsive to citizen participants and is committed to utilizing the knowledge and understanding of stakeholders and citizens to address important issues. The outreach plan offers multiple opportunities for engagement at varying levels of involvement. There are three main goals for stakeholder engagement for this study:

1. Confirm public input received during prior studies is still relevant today.
2. Strategically educate and gather input from stakeholders and the general community.
3. Assist with dissemination of collected information to assist the study team and local staff and officials responsible for implementation.

The value of implementing a strong stakeholder and community involvement effort is to ensure that the needs of the community are identified and to develop public awareness of and support for the study. Documentation of all stakeholder and community input and responses to the input will be included in the *Valdosta Urbanized Area Transit Implementation Study*.

Engagement Tools

The following sections outline the various tools to be utilized during the outreach process. The effectiveness of each tool will be monitored and adjusted as needed to maximize the success in raising awareness and understanding about this project and obtaining meaningful input from stakeholders and the community.

Stakeholder Involvement

A committee of stakeholders who represent the community at-large and various groups that will benefit from the implementation of a transit system plus representatives of organizations with a role in the implementation of the system itself will be invited to serve on a stakeholder committee for the duration of the implementation plan development process. A list of potential stakeholders is included in Appendix A. The stakeholder group will have a variety of responsibilities:

1. Provide data and input as needed to assist the VLMPO staff and study team in the plan development.
2. Collaborate with the study team to explore public transit implementation alternatives.
3. Distribute information regarding the study process and online community survey through their various outreach outlets.

4. Participate in one-on-one or small group interviews to provide relevant information to the VLMPO staff and study team.

Stakeholder Interviews

Together with the VLMPO, the study team will identify appropriate individuals or small groups of stakeholders to interview. Interviews will be conducted to identify local needs, goals, desires, attitudes and concerns pertaining to transit and related facilities and programs within the potential service area. The interviews will be conducted in person or via telephone as an alternative. Up to five (5) stakeholder interviews will be conducted including one with a representative of the traditionally underrepresented population. The study team will prepare interview questions to be approved by VLMPO staff prior to the interviews. VLMPO staff will contact the stakeholders and arrange for the interviews. Input from the interview process will be used to guide the study team and will be documented in the final implementation plan.

Stakeholder Interviews are scheduled to be completed by the end of January, 2016.

Presentations

The study team will prepare for and make up to two (2) presentations during the study to such groups as the VLMPO Policy Committee, Technical Coordinating Committee, and Citizens Advisory Committee. The timing of these meetings is to be determined at a later date based on discussions with VLMPO staff. Input received during these presentations from both committee members and the public will be incorporated into the analysis/recommendations, as appropriate. The public will be invited to attend and provide input at each of these presentations. The presentations will be formatted in a clear manner with visual elements to ensure ease of understanding for all members of the community.

Study Website, Social Media, and E-Mail Database Outreach

The study team will provide informational materials to be placed on the VLMPO website during the course of the study. The website materials will include educational information about the planning process, an online survey, and information about opportunities to participate in the study process. The website will provide the general community with the opportunity to gain knowledge and share comments. VLMPO staff will be responsible for updating and maintaining the website. The study team will be responsible for regularly providing website material.

The study team will provide material for release through established social media and e-mail database vehicles established by VLMPO and other stakeholders. The social media outreach will be focused on community awareness and education and will include timely information about opportunities for public participation, such as the online survey or upcoming public meetings.

Website updates and social media/e-mail outreach will occur throughout the study process.

Online Survey

The study team will develop an online survey to gather input from community members regarding their attitude toward and the need for transit in the region. The survey will include 15-20 questions formatted in a very clear manner for inclusive participation. The study team will also ask the stakeholder committee and others, as appropriate, to include a link to the survey on their respective websites and other public outlets. VLMPO staff will assist by publishing a link to the survey on the study website. A hard copy of the survey will be available at the VLMPO offices for distribution to individuals without internet access. The results of the survey will assist in guiding the VLMPO staff, stakeholders, and the study team in the plan development and decision-making process.

To ensure comprehensive participation in the survey, each respondent will be asked to provide his/her home ZIP code. Before the completion of the survey period, ZIP codes will be analyzed to gauge participation levels throughout the study area. The study team will use the previously identified underrepresented geographic areas and will discuss with VLMPO staff possible options for ensuring that project educational and input opportunities are maximized within these areas.

The online survey is anticipated to be launched by mid-February 2016 and will be closed by the end of March 2016, allowing six weeks of participation.

Press Releases

Press releases will be prepared as needed by the study team and distributed by the VLMPO staff for release prior to key project milestones and opportunities for participation such as the online survey launch and public presentations. The press releases may be supplied to local newspapers, television, and radio media at the discretion of the VLMPO staff.

Press releases will be prepared throughout the study process on an as-needed basis.

Evaluation of Public Involvement Efforts

Evaluating the effectiveness of public involvement efforts is a key aspect of developing a stakeholder and community involvement plan. Spurred by federal guidance, regional planning organizations and other agencies are encouraged to evaluate the effectiveness of various public outreach tools. Evaluation indicators are also important in documenting the level of public involvement achieved. Table 1 outlines the major tasks and key performance indicators that will be used to evaluate community engagement.

Based on plan performance, existing communication and outreach techniques will be modified and new techniques will be added to ensure plan success. An overview of the success of the stakeholder and community engagement program will be presented in the final public involvement report, in addition to supporting documentation.

Table 1 – Stakeholder and Community Engagement Performance Indicators

Technique	Performance Indicator
Stakeholder Involvement	Comprehensiveness of the identification of stakeholders Participation in community outreach How comments are addressed by staff and study team
Stakeholder Interviews	Number of stakeholders reached Usefulness of feedback received How the information is used in the planning process
Presentations	Number of participants attending meetings Number of presentation materials distributed to interested persons Usefulness of feedback received
Study Website, Social Media, and E-mail Database Outreach	Number of electronic updates Number of people reached Number of comments received Types of comments received
Online survey	Number of surveys completed Outreach to underserved populations Usefulness of input received
Media Partnerships/Press Releases	Amount of media coverage Accurate information was delivered to citizens Accessibility of public to the variety of media outlets

APPENDIX A: STAKEHOLDERS

Table A-1 – Project Stakeholders

Member Name	Organization
Corey Hull	VLMPPO
Ray Sable	Valdosta State University, VLMPPO Citizens Advisory Committee
Jill Ferrell	Valdosta State University Transportation Director
Larry Hanson	City of Valdosta Manager
John Gayle	City of Valdosta Mayor
Myrna Ballard	Chamber of Commerce
Andrea Schruijer	Development Authority
Mike Fletcher	Lowndes County Engineer
Bill Slaughter	Lowndes County Chairman
Jason Davenport	Lowndes County Planner
Joe Pritchard	Lowndes County Manager
	Underserved Population Representative
	Valdosta City School District
	Lowndes County Schools
	Moody Air Force Base
	South Georgia Medical Center
	Valdosta Technical College
	Georgia Military College

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APPENDIX B: STAKEHOLDER SUMMARIES

Stakeholder Questions

Vision:

1. What is your perception of transit's role in the community?
2. Are you aware of the current on-demand public transit system (MIDS) and its services? Are you aware of the pilot shuttle operating since October 2015?
3. How much awareness of and support for transit is there in the community? Have the levels of awareness and support changed in the last few years? If so, what do you think caused this change?
4. Are you aware of the decrease in funding for the rural on-demand transit that will go into effect July 1, 2016?
5. What do you think are the potential impacts of not having a transit system?
6. What should transit priorities be for the next 10 years?

System Inventory:

1. Considering this list of identified destinations in the Valdosta Urbanized Area, can you identify any additional destinations that should be considered when determining transit routes? (see map and list)
2. Please identify areas of the community where you perceive concentrations of transit oriented riders to be present. These populations include students, low income populations, elderly, households without vehicles, etc.
3. Are there any areas currently planned to be developed that may be desirable transit origins or destinations?
4. What are the major destinations outside of the Valdosta community people are traveling to or from?
5. Considering the proposed route alignments, would you make any changes before implementation? (see map)

Transit Funding:

1. What existing or new local funding source(s) do you believe are appropriate to help fund public transportation? *Examples: Private partnerships, ad valorem taxes, advertising revenues, sales taxes, motor fuel taxes, etc.*
2. Do you believe that there is a willingness in the City and County to consider additional local funding sources for transit? If not, do you have suggestions as to how such support can be generated?

3. Do you believe public transportation can be sustained to meet current and future needs without a dedicated funding source?
4. Do you know of any public or private organizations that may be willing to provide funding for an expanded transit system?

Public Outreach:

1. We are creating a community survey for this project. Would you be willing to share information about the study process with members of your organization?
2. Do you know what type of outreach vehicles (e-mail lists, website, social media, organization newsletter or blog) your organization uses?
3. Who is the best contact in your organization to take care of this type of outreach?
4. For the university, can you provide us a list of the addresses of students, faculty and staff so that we can better understand where they live?
5. Who is our champion? Who do we need to talk to?
6. Residential ZIP code.

Valdosta State University (VSU) Stakeholder Meeting February 2, 2016

Attendees:

Arian Bryant, VSU
Shannon, VSU
Ray Sable, VSU
Philip Allen, VSU
Corey Hull, VLMPPO
JD Dillard, SGRC
Mary Huffstetler, MPH and Associates, Inc.

Meeting Notes:

Corey Hull opened the meeting by discussing the agenda and reminding the group about the urbanized area boundaries. Mary Huffstetler continued the meeting by asking a series of questions about the vision of transit in the community, system inventory, funding, and public outreach.

The group was asked to give their perception of the role of transit in the community.

VSU has a dedicated route to the Mall and Walmart on Thursdays. There is not enough current ridership to support this route.

Transit is only possible in the core of the city. Outside of the core, it will not be used because people have access to transportation. There is not a large student population who is transit dependent. A lot of the large apartment complexes offer a shuttle. Students do not want to wait for transportation and they do not want to pay for the transportation.

While VSU freshmen can have private vehicles, parents are reluctant to send cars. Parents frequently ask about the availability for public transportation. Reliable transit could reduce car usage.

Busses are very expensive to operate and to repair.

Students feel safer on a VSU van during hours when the bus is not running.

People/students expect the technology associated with their public transportation such as a GPS route and schedule information.

VSU pushes for cultural engagement from downtown vendors. It is desirable to have students spend time in downtown Valdosta.

Young Moody AFB Airmen without cars want to come into Valdosta to socialize on the weekends. They would desire frequent runs back to the base.

The City of Remerton's views on students and rule enforcement is strict. Students would like alternatives.

VSU staff and students would likely use the service if there were an express ride during peak hours to and from campus.

There is concern for VSU student safety regarding riding the VSU shuttle versus public ridership.

Savannah State Transit System operates with the City. The University pays \$35 per semester to access Chatham Area Transit (CAT) public system. This is an optional fee structure for students at Savannah State. VSU is very sensitive about keeping additional student fees low.

VSU students have been asking for the Gotcha Ride program similar to FSU, GA Tech, Clemson, the University of Alabama, and other universities. The Gotcha Ride system uses electric cars in 4-5 mile radius with drivers working for tips. There is a push to innovate technology with door-to-door operations.

Vanderbilt has a golf cart service from a local entrepreneur. Perhaps a tram vehicle with local stops could work.

Tipsy Transit, a local private provider, has increased ridership between VSU campus and the City of Remerton.

Technology is key. GPS rider information has cut complaints.

The group was asked about additional destinations for transit: Possible Downtown Route/Mall Route/Bay Tree/City of Remerton/Inner Perimeter.

The following potential expansions in need of additional transit service were presented: Ashley Cinemas/baseball fields/Possible Dance/Theater studio location;

The group was asked about funding. The Gotcha Ride Program is underwritten by advertisement, student drivers work for tips.

The VSU Transportation Student Fee is the lowest in the state and they would like to keep this low.

Could VSU benefit from a partner system? Student enrollment is low right now. Perhaps VSU would be in a better position once enrollment increases by 400-500 students. There are 1,400 freshmen now. They are aiming for 1,800 in the next 3-5 years. In-state tuition is available for Florida students now. This part of the student body likely has more familiarity and an expectation for transit.

VSU is happy to assist in outreach regarding the community survey. They could include weekly news articles, social media, e-mail, street signs, and student affairs communications. Contact Jessica Pope – Communications at VSU. VSU has information of student addresses and is capable of sharing. They would enjoy having a map of the locations of their students in return for sharing the information.

Lowndes County Stakeholder Meeting

February 2, 2016

Attendees:

Joe Pritchard, Lowndes County Manager
Jason Davenport, Lowndes County Planner
Bill Slaughter, Lowndes County Commissioner
Corey Hull, VLMPO
JD Dillard, SGRC
Mary Huffstetler, MPH and Associates, Inc.

Meeting Notes:

Corey Hull opened the meeting by discussing the agenda and reminding the group about the urbanized area boundaries. Mary Huffstetler continued the meeting by asking a series of questions about the vision of transit in the community, system inventory, funding, and public outreach.

The group was asked to give their perception of the role of transit in the community.

The need and scope of the system is perceived to be within the Valdosta City limits. There is a difference in need between rural Lowndes and metro Valdosta. The initial (circa 2001) “fixed route” system was not getting any ridership and the “on-demand/on-call” seemed to work much better.

The cost estimates for the terminal, maintenance, capital investments of buses, etc. set forth in the 2009 study were astronomical and this made it unfeasible at the time.

The demand does not seem to be there in the County and the funding is not there. This is the common response when elected officials discuss the topic.

JP and JD explored routes similar to today’s Pilot Shuttle program. They feel a system serving VSU, SGMC, Wiregrass Technical College, and Industrial Parks seems to be a reasonable way to begin. The funding is still a challenge.

Wiregrass students suffer from transportation, usually on a temporary basis and not a permanent need.

Wild Adventures would hire teenagers during the summer, but they had no transportation, even working with MIDS. The cost was prohibitive as their earnings would be eaten up in transportation fees. MIDS could not guarantee that they could meet the times needed to get workers to Wild Adventures for work.

The Community feels “we’re big enough to need it, but nobody is willing to pay for it.” It is not hard to determine there is a need. It is hard to justify the extreme expense associated with implementation of a transit system.

The change in 5311 and 5307 is forthcoming, but how much Urban to Urban trips will cost is still undetermined. MIDS has assured the County that they are aware and are capable of handling the change.

Previous studies haven't addressed how to effectively partner and leverage current systems. Partnerships with MIDS, VSU, Development Authority, hospital, and school systems should be considered. The biggest champions would likely be VSU and/or MIDS.

The meeting participants were shown a map of popular destinations to review and comment on. They were also asked to identify areas where citizens needing transit may live or need to begin a trip from.

The lack of population density in the county is the biggest difficulty in identifying potential origins.

The Hahira Area/Business Park/Soccer park is a future area that might require transit, but unlikely to ride.

Clyattville or Naylor Communities have older residents that might need an occasional ride into the city for medical appointments, but there are not many residents in these areas, though.

The shopping area on the way to Moody Air Force Base could be a popular destination.

The industrial Park on US 84 across from the Civic Center (ADM) could benefit, but most of the workers there are paid pretty well were they can afford their own vehicle.

The City's industrial parks and distribution centers are not paying as much so employees could possibly benefit.

The attendees were asked if it were financially feasible. Where would the money come from?

It would have to be a millage increase. Not able to be shifted in current budget.

How would a TSPLOST or tax increase be received? The political climate is not favorable for any increase or passage in a T-SPLOST, especially if it included transit. The County is 50/50 rural/urban. The rural half would be much less served than the urban half.

The study team asked about local organizations to partner with. Every organization is asking for more money, many of which are paid with millage. Wiregrass and VSU have a need, but enrollment issues directly impact money.

A City/VSU partnership is the best possible first step. They could be a reporter to the National Transit Database.

The team explained the public outreach/survey aspect that is a part of the study.

The meeting attendees suggested adding a question asking how much of a subsidy are people willing to pay so that the riders can afford to actually ride?

The meeting attendees feel that the majority of the people using the service likely do not own property and do not pay tax. Businesses do not want to be taxed.

The County Commissioners retreat will address promoting the public outreach survey through Council members.

Contact Paige Dukes to have a survey link placed on the website. She can be reached at 229-671-2400.

Economic Development Stakeholder Meeting

February 2, 2016

Attendees:

Penelope Schmidt, Wiregrass Georgia Technical College
Bill Tillman, Wiregrass Georgia Technical College
Bill Bryan, Moody Air Force Base
Laura Love, South Georgia Medical Center
Stan Crance, Valdosta-Lowndes County Development Authority
Corey Hull, VLMPO
JD Dillard, SGRC
Mary Huffstetler, MPH and Associates, Inc.

Meeting Notes:

Corey Hull opened the meeting by discussing the agenda and reminding the group about the urbanized area boundaries. Mary Huffstetler continued the meeting by asking a series of questions about the vision of transit in the community, system inventory, funding, and public outreach.

The group was asked to give their perception of the role of transit in the community.

The Wiregrass community definitely feels there is a need for public transportation in the Valdosta area. There is a need to get students from Valdosta to the campus across the interstate.

The medical center knows that several workers carpool, others bicycle. Some people with need for routine medical care call 911 instead of driving. Public transit could serve regular medical care needs but is not ideal for emergencies. Patients who leave SGMC often wait for friends and family because they do not have other transportation alternatives. Initial visits often occur at SGMC main campus, but follow-ups are at private practices throughout the city. Some clients use MIDS and some are simply unwilling to spend money for any kind of transportation.

The development authority has not seen lack of transportation to be a barrier to incoming Industries. Workers are ridesharing with other employees or have reliable transportation. However, it is a requirement by many employers that people must have reliable transportation in order to gain employment. This requirement may preclude some people from even applying for employment. Public transportation could open up additional options to attract businesses. Current utilization is non-existent but future need is a likely possibility.

Moody Air Force Base employees currently use carpools, tele-work, or taxi services as their primary means of transportation. Security to get onto the base is working to make it easier for alternative means of transportation to enter the base. They have looked into Uber with no success yet. There are lots of contractors coming from various origins to do work on the base. Eighty percent of the people working on base commute from off base on a daily basis. Military spouses would like to get to

BX/Commissary, Base Child Care, and youth recreation areas (all on Base). A high percentage of employees come from Bemiss Rd Corridor/Hahira communities. MIDS is unwilling to schedule daily service or handicap service to Moody through the 5311 program.

Feedback regarding the current Pilot Shuttle Program: Clumsy access to shuttle, registration and access needs to be better communicated to the community, keep pushing information out. Better marketing efforts should be made to communicate shuttle ease of accessibility.

Is there an increased awareness of transit? Increase of need? Wiregrass expressed a definite increase in need for transportation alternatives to get students to class. The long wait for MIDS service is a negative aspect of the current public transportation.

The group at large was unaware of change in MIDS 5311 funding cuts and how the status change of 5307 impacts it. They did express potential impacts of reduced public transportation service as follows: People will have a hard time getting to work, hard time getting to school, accessing recurring medical appointments, effects to the employer or school with missing employees or students. Consider writing an article on this topic for public education purposes.

The group would be interested in seeing numbers of ridership.

It would be great to see younger citizens get an education and get a car and gain freedom.

It is nice to see more taxi services available in the community recently.

The group was asked to review the popular destination maps, and asked for other areas of interest. The shopping area near destination #54 (SAMS area) is a large and popular shopping district. Approximately 15,000 military retirees are spread locally and come to Commissary/BX on Moody Air Force Base to shop. Azalea Towers and the Connell Road area has a high population of elderly with limited mobility.

Future developments with potential for public transit needs are: Senior living center on Tara Drive, new high school area, Moody Housing up Val-Del Road, Assisted Living near Stone Creek/Valwood off Bemiss Road, and new hotel in downtown.

The group was asked about existing or new potential funding sources. The new Commander for Moody AFB expressed positive interest in helping to fund transportation on weekends. If quality service is provided, people would be willing to pay.

It was suggested that VSU do contract services when their buses are not in service for their current routes.

Moody Air Force Base explained the P4 (Public, Public, Public, Private) Partnership in place to fund other coordinated utilities. As there is a structure/process in place, it is possible that could be expanded.

The group was asked if there is a community willingness to fund public transportation services. Churches could take a pulse of congregations to gauge interest. T-SPLOST is an option. There would have to be an extensive marketing campaign to gain broad support, explain all the projects that it would fund. It would need to be a mix of projects to benefit the whole community.

Bus service on a fixed route is antiquated. Perhaps smaller vehicles would better serve the community. There is a negative connotation to public transportation in general.

Variations of Uber and non-traditional vehicles such as mini-vans could be an alternative.

The group was willing to assist with outreach to promote the community survey. Everyone at the meeting can be contacted directly for assistance. An additional contact at Wiregrass is Lydia Hulbert: lydiahulbert@wiregrass.edu. The Chamber of Commerce should be contacted as well.

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Community Stakeholder Meeting

February 2, 2016

Attendees:

Gretchen Quarterman, Lowndes Area Knowledge Exchange
Vanassa Flucas, Neighborhood Development Director, City of Valdosta
Mark Stalbin, Housing Authority Director
Sandra Tuley, Citizen Advocate, Valdosta City Council
Vivian Miller-Cody, Valdosta City Council
Corey Hull, VLMPO
JD Dillard, SGRC
Mary Huffstetler, MPH and Associates, Inc.

Meeting Notes:

Corey Hull opened the meeting by discussing the agenda and reminding the group about the urbanized area boundaries. Mary Huffstetler continued the meeting by asking a series of questions about the vision of transit in the community, system inventory, funding, and public outreach.

The group was asked to give their perception of the role of transit in the community.

Transit is a source of connection for the community. The community is currently segmented because of a lack of transit.

Lack of transit creates food deserts, health concerns, services deserts (lack of access to banking, education, food).

Transit creates an opportunity to fully participate in society (work, food, education, health).

The absence of transit creates a burden on family and friends of people without access to a vehicle. Certain errands and needs cannot be met on a bicycle.

A transit system creates an opportunity for progress and advancement

Transit provides an ability to avoid driving in bad weather.

The group was asked about their thoughts on current services, 5311 and Pilot Shuttle.

Community awareness of the pilot shuttle is on the rise and people are excited about it.

People are not generally pleased with the MIDS 5311 service. The process is inefficient. People are using it primarily for medical trips.

Using the MIDS service, people are left waiting for extended periods. MIDS service has good aspects, but it is over-burdened. The system for 24-hour advanced ordering service will be an inconvenient if plans change. This system seems outdated.

It would be desirable for the Shuttle service to have extended hours (earlier, later, and on weekends).

Add Bike racks to shuttle in the future.

The group was asked to talk about what transit should look like in ten years.

It would be desirable for Wiregrass Technical College, Georgia Military College/Forest Street Corridor, Lake Park Industrial Park, St. Augustine Shopping, various apartment complexes and the hospital to be accessible via transit.

A large loop encompassing most of the city and Wiregrass with multiple buses or multiple routes with multiple buses would be desirable.

A partnership with Greyhound and the Airport that has stops with a central hub downtown would be desirable.

Bemiss Road has bus stop pull outs built in. They should be used in conjunction with routes.

Add Moody AFB to Hahira routes.

Service 24 hours per day 7 days a week to religious destinations and soup kitchens/food pantry would be desirable.

The future system should include small shuttles as feeders to and from a reliable outer loop.

The frequency and reliability of a transit system are the most important elements.

The group was asked to look at destinations on the maps provided to identify any additional areas.

Update Library location and new Valdosta High School location.

Add Post Offices.

Bemiss Road Park n Ride, Lake Park Park n Ride, Hahira Truck stops.

The following major community centers should be added: Mildred Hunter Center, Prague Center, Boys N Girls Clubs, Toombs/Oak and Lake Laurie locations, Southside Rec Center, Senior Center on Park Ave., Fresh Beginnings, Convergys, and E-Lead1.

Students need to get from Ora Lee Housing and Mildred Hunter Center to Wiregrass Technical College.

People need to be able to get to/from Valdosta to Florida, Homerville, Lakeland, Quitman.

Wild Adventures employs teenagers. They are planning to hire 300 new employees. The roads accessing the site are dangerous for young drivers. Transportation, in general, to Wild Adventures is difficult.

The group was asked about ways to fund public transportation.

T-SPLOST

Advertising

Zoned Fares (increase fare as distance increase)

Millage increases are fair if the money stays within the community

Private Sector Partnerships (look at list of top ten local employers)

Private companies operate the 'little spokes' of a larger public system

The group offered several ideas regarding an innovative transit system.

Need to increase safety so we can increase walking.

Door to door is too expensive.

Uber. Gotcha Program. (subsidized rates across the board to maintain affordability)

Elderly, disabled have to have door to door

The group was receptive in helping to promote transit education and in promoting the community survey.

Video/blog audience – Lowndes Area Knowledge Exchange (contact Gretchen Quarterman)

Property Managers Association - Housing Authority (contact Mark Stalbin)

Georgia Initiative for Community Housing – GICH Program with UGA students will be underway soon (contact Vanessa Flucas)

Channel Metro 17, E-News (contact Vanessa Flucas)

City Council and Bulletin Boards

City Festivals – Azalea Festival March 12-13

Churches/congregations

Employees of Major Employers

City Council E-mail Lists

Valdosta City Schools

Community Centers

Senior Center

City Council Newsletter (contact Vanessa Flucas)

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City of Valdosta Stakeholder Meeting

February 2, 2016

Attendees:

Larry Hanson, Valdosta City Manager
John Gayle, Valdosta Mayor
Corey Hull, VLMPO
JD Dillard, SGRC
Mary Huffstetler, MPH and Associates

Meeting Notes:

Corey Hull opened the meeting by discussing the agenda and reminding the group about the urbanized area boundaries. Mary Huffstetler continued the meeting by asking a series of questions about the vision of transit in the community, system inventory, funding, and public outreach.

The group was asked to give their perception of the role of transit in the community.

Transit could alleviate traffic problems.

Transit would provide access to jobs, economic development, and services.

Access to public transportation is key to job development as some multi-million dollar developments have been prevented from moving here because there is no public transportation.

The younger generation has an interest in minimizing vehicle usage, smaller homes, and downtown living. Valdosta would like to meet these expectations to draw more young people into the community.

Marketing is needed to overcome negative perceptions regarding why transit is needed.

Transportation is important to education and access to higher earnings. The City hears regularly about the need for better transportation to Wiregrass Technical College.

Valdosta does not like to hear that they are the only community of their size in Georgia without a public transportation system. It is having a negative impact on the community.

The City was asked if they are aware of current transportation options. They feel that MIDS 5311, is mainly used for medical services and that there is MTG, a MediCare/Logisticare contractor.

The City feels that a decrease in provision of urban to urban trips would leave a segment of the population without needed transportation service.

When asked what transit should look like in 10 years, it was stated that the focus should move away from jurisdictional boundaries as it is needed for the populations that cross jurisdictional boundaries. (Community issue, not City/County).

Valdosta is growing by 1,000 people per year and they understand the City will feel pressure to provide transit more strongly than other jurisdictions and organizations. They would like to be able to grow into

a progressive city of the future. Valdosta does not want to be labelled as the “Only Metro area in the state without transit.”

While the City and other entities are getting a firm plan in place, they would like to see private organizations continue to expand to fill the transportation gaps (VSU, operations similar to Gotcha Ride, private providers, etc.)

The City was asked to review the map of identified destinations in the City and County for inclusion.

Be sure to include Freedom Park (high demand for tournaments), Vallotton Park, MacKey Park, Scott Park, Woodlawn Senior Center, Blanton Commons, The Grove. Remove Olympic Park

Add Northwinds Apartments (Bemiss Corridor x Oak St) and other large apartment complexes

Add hotels along exit 16/18 and new hotel coming to downtown.

North Valdosta Rd/Bemiss Rd/St. Augustine towards Moultrie could benefit from a Park and Ride option. Twenty percent or more of the workforce is commuting into Valdosta along St. Augustine Road from the Moultrie direction.

Moody AFB employees live in City of Valdosta and need options for transportation.

Valdosta Airport is becoming scarce. There is no long-term parking fee and the airport is attracting air travelers from Jacksonville and Tallahassee.

The new high school is being built in East Valdosta causing an impact on Inner Perimeter and 122.

The Career Center (near the Olympic Park marker on the destination map) should be included. These offices serve as Department of Labor and Department of Human Services type services.

There is also concern for students parking across busy highways and trying to make it onto campus. One student was recently killed.

The City was asked for ideas for funding for a transit system.

It is clear that a dedicated source of funding must be identified.

Fresh Beginnings is a possible private partner.

VSU could be a possible private partner.

Wiregrass Technical College could be a possible partner.

Large Distribution Centers with low wage jobs could be partners.

The revenue sources should be County-wide in order to share the burden on the locals.

A 1 mil ad valorem tax could be used to fund transit. Chatham County (Savannah) put a Community - wide 1 mil ad valorem dedicated taxed in place to fund their transit.

Selling the idea of a TSPLOST could be a viable option. The problem with the last SPLOST was that Lowndes County would be a donor county for improvements outside of the County. The TSPLOST

should have multiple focuses with an overall positive benefit for the community as a whole. This seems like the best option.

Public transportation would serve as a positive recruiting tool for Valdosta State University students.

Explore options of multiple private third-party operators. Topsy Transit may want to expand.

The City expressed interest in helping with outreach to promote the completion of the community survey.

Samantha Matthews, Public Information Officer smatthews@valdostacity.com is the best contact

Suggested questions to add to the survey include: How much are you willing to pay? Who should pay for it? Would you support a County Wide Sales Tax? T-SPLOST? Millage rate increase?

Suggested outreach mechanisms: survey link on water bill; public television announcements.

Be sure to follow up with Myrna at the Chamber of Commerce.

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APPENDIX C: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SURVEY

Valdosta Urbanized Area Transit Implementation Study Community Survey Questions

The Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization (VLMPO) is exploring options for implementation of public transit in the Valdosta Urbanized Area. Please answer the following questions to help us best meet the needs of the community!

1. If reliable public transportation service were available within the Valdosta area, would you use the service?
Yes, No If “No”, please skip to Question 8
2. If bus service were available, I would use it to get to (select all that apply)
Work, Shopping, School, Medical Appointments, Social or Recreational Outings, Other (specify) _____
3. Destinations I would like to be able to get to include (select all that apply)
INCLUDE LIST AND MAP
4. How often would you likely use the bus?
5 days per week, 3 to 4 days per week, 1 to 2 days per week, Less than once per week
5. When would you likely use the bus? (select all that apply)
Weekdays, Saturdays, Sundays
6. How would you likely get to the bus stop?
Walking, Bicycle, Wheelchair, Personal Vehicle, Drop-off by someone else’s vehicle
7. Would want to be able to bring any of these items on the bus?
Bicycle, Wheelchair, Neither Item
8. Do you own or have access to a personal vehicle?
Yes, No
9. Gender
Male, Female
10. Age
Less than 16, 16-20, 21-25, 26-30, 31-35, 36-45, 46-55, 56-65, Over 65
11. To determine best fare for bus trips, please provide a range of your personal yearly income
Less than \$15,000, \$15,001-20,000, \$20,001-25,000, \$25,001-30,000, \$30,001-35,000, \$35,001-36,000, \$36,001-40,000, \$40,001-45,000, More than \$45,000
12. My primary occupation is
Student, Industrial/Factory, Retail, Service Provider, Professional/Office, Retired, I do not work outside of the home
13. What is your home zip code?

PROVIDE LIST TO SELECT FROM

14. What is your work zip code?

PROVIDE LIST TO SELECT FROM

15. To assist us in mapping community needs, please provide your home address or the closest intersection to where you live (optional). For example, 105 Main Street or Main Street and First Street. _____

Thank you for your input into the Valdosta Urbanized Area Transit Implementation Study!

APPENDIX D: VALDOSTA COMMUNITY TRANSIT SURVEY RESULTS

Introduction

To enhance the information gathered through stakeholder engagement activities, general outreach to the public was undertaken. The primary instrument for gathering public feedback was an electronic survey. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix C.

The survey was developed in consultation with the Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) staff. To aid in the accuracy of data collection and reduce survey fatigue, the survey questions branched based on the responses given. Due to the branching, participants answered between 14 and 21 questions each.

The survey link was posted on the MPO webpage, included in a press release which resulted in newspaper and television coverage, and sent to stakeholders with a request to redistribute. As a result of these efforts, a total of 512 surveys were completed by the public between February 1 and April 5, 2016.

Due to the branching nature of the survey, the number of respondents to each question varies. Respondents were also able to skip questions so that can also affect the number of respondents per question. Table D-1 displays the number of respondents answering each question.

The results of the surveys are provided in the remainder of this appendix.

Conclusions

The survey results provided the following conclusions.

- The majority of survey respondents were not currently transit users.
- The overwhelming majority of respondents recognized a need for transit in the Valdosta-Lowndes community.
- When asked why they would use transit, the most popular response was to get to work.
- The Valdosta Mall area/Norman Drive and downtown Valdosta were the two most popular destinations selected.
- Almost 80 percent of respondents indicated that they definitely or somewhat supported spending local money on public transit.

Table D-1 – Respondents per Question

Question	Number of Respondents
Have you used the MIDS, Inc. public transportation in the Valdosta area?	459
Have you used the Valdosta Pilot Shuttle Program?	458
Do you feel there is a need for public transit service in the Valdosta Area?	459
If reliable public transportation service were available within the Valdosta area, would you consider using the service?	512
How often would you likely use public transit?	373
When would you likely use public transit?	373
If public transit were available, I would use it to get to...	379
Which of the following destinations would you like to be able to get to using public transit?	381
How would you likely get to the transit stop?	375
Would you want to be able to bring your bicycle on the transit vehicle?	367
Do you use a wheelchair, electric scooter, or have trouble climbing stairs and would need an electric lift to board the transit vehicle?	371
Would you support spending local money on public transit?	457
How should public transit be funded?	453
Do you own or have access to a personal vehicle?	458
What is your gender?	455
My primary occupation is...	454
Age	458
Please provide the best range that reflects your individual yearly income	453
What is your home ZIP code?	442
What is your work ZIP code?	397
To assist us in mapping community needs, please provide your home address or the closest intersection to where you live (optional).	310

Transit Use

The following section provides information on participant’s current transit use and their attitudes toward financially supporting a transit system.

Figures D-1 and D-2 asked if respondents use the current transit options in the Valdosta area. Figure D-1 shows that 18 percent of respondents have used the MIDS, Inc., option, and Figure D-2 shows that nearly 11 percent have used the pilot shuttle option. The majority of the survey respondents are not regular transit users.

Figure D-1 Have you used the MIDS, Inc. public transportation in the Valdosta area?

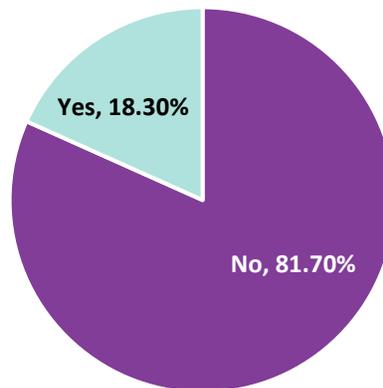
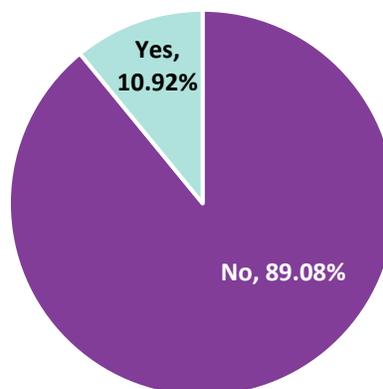


Figure D-2 Have you used the Valdosta Pilot Shuttle Program?



Respondents were asked if they feel there is a need for public transit in the Valdosta area. Figure D-3 shows 75 percent of respondents said there is definitely a need with an additional 10 percent indicating there was somewhat of a need. Respondents were also asked if they would use a public transportation service if it were available. Figure D-4 shows 78 percent said they would use the transportation service, while 19 percent said they would not use it.

Figure D-3 Do you feel there is a need for public transit service in the Valdosta Area?

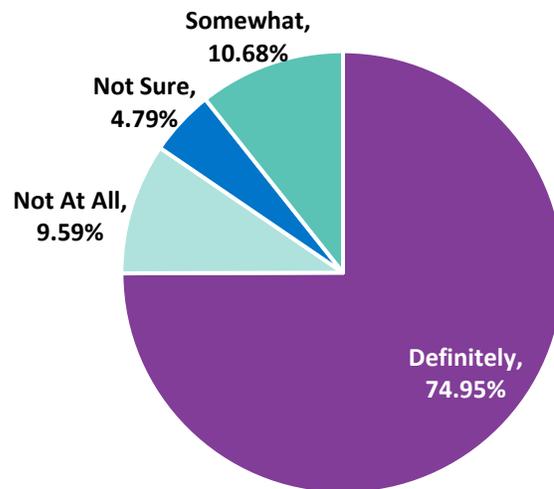
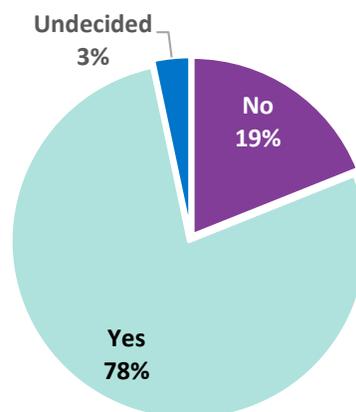


Figure D-4 If reliable public transportation service were available within the Valdosta area, would you consider using the service?



Respondents were asked how often they would use transit and what days of the week they are most likely to use it. According to Figure D-5, 72 percent of respondents said they would use transit at least three days a week. Figure D-6 shows respondents are most likely to use public transit on week days (Monday – Friday), but a significant amount also said they would use transit on Saturdays.

Figure D-5 How often would you likely use public transit?

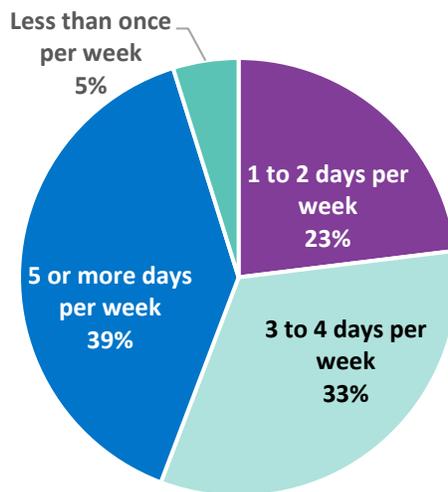
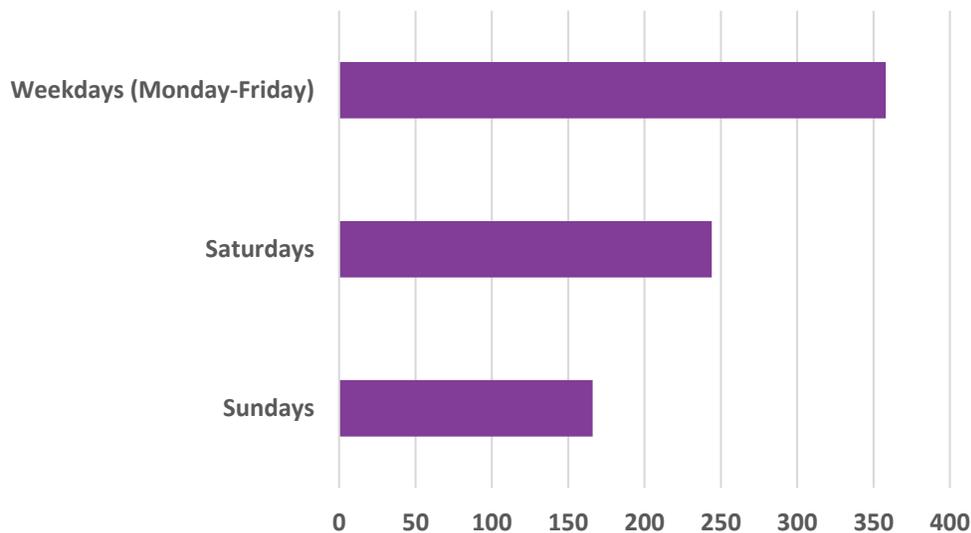


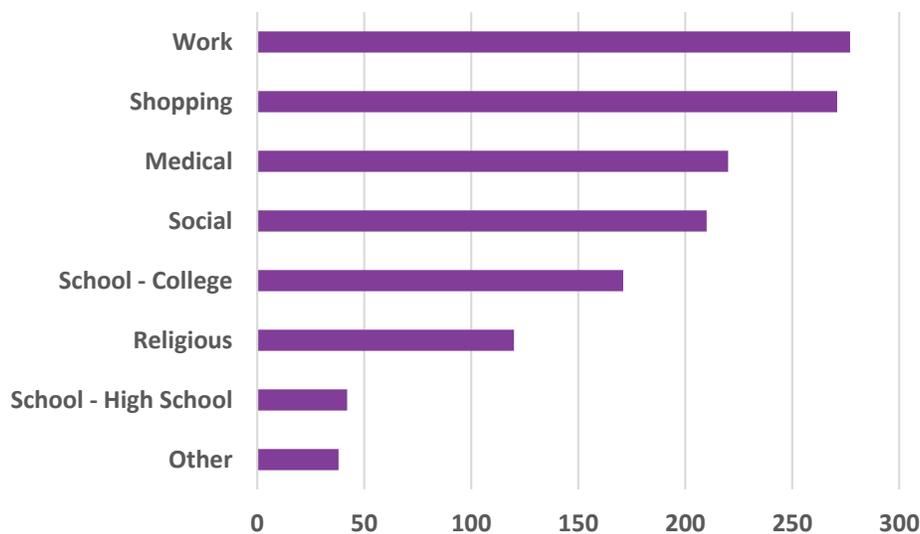
Figure D-6 When would you likely use public transit? (Select all that apply)



Destinations

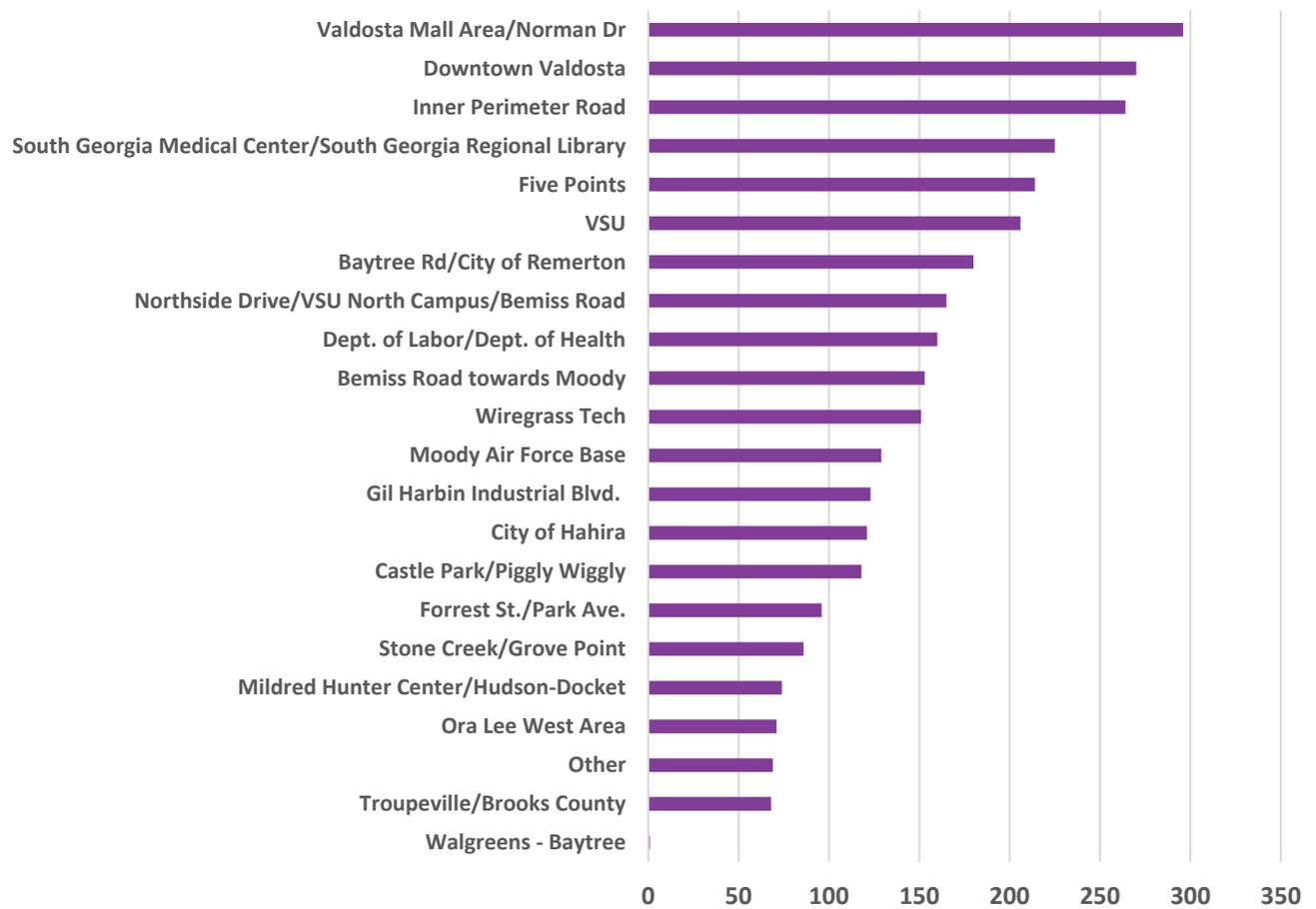
Figure D-7 provides insight into what types of destinations respondents would like to travel to. The number one response was to provide service to work while second place went to shopping.

Figure D-7 If public transit were available, I would use it to get to... (select all that apply)



A follow up question of the survey gives a more detailed selection of destinations in order to determine exactly where respondents would like to take transit. The top answers for this question were the Valdosta Mall/Norman Drive area and Downtown Valdosta. For those who indicated “Other” as a response, the two most popular answers by far were Fresh Beginnings and Lake Park. The results to this question are summarized in Figure D-8.

Figure D-8 Which of the following destinations would you like to be able to get to using public transit? (Select all that apply)



Transit Accessibility

When asked how they would likely get to the transit stop, a majority of respondents said they would walk (Figure D-9). Even though only roughly 100 respondents said they would use a bicycle to get to the transit stop, nearly 60 percent of respondents said they would like the option to bring bicycles on the vehicle (Figure D-10).

Figure D-9 How would you likely get to the transit stop? (Select all that apply)

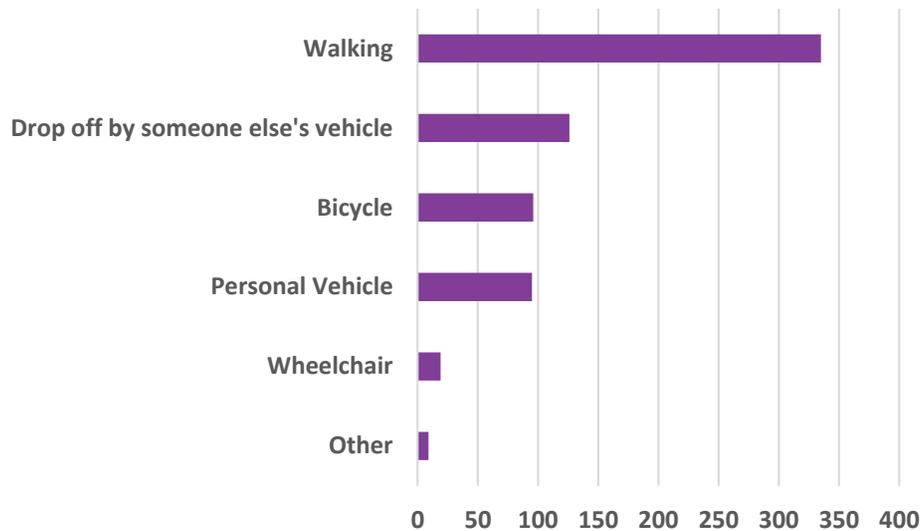


Figure D-10 Would you want to be able to bring your bicycle on the transit vehicle?

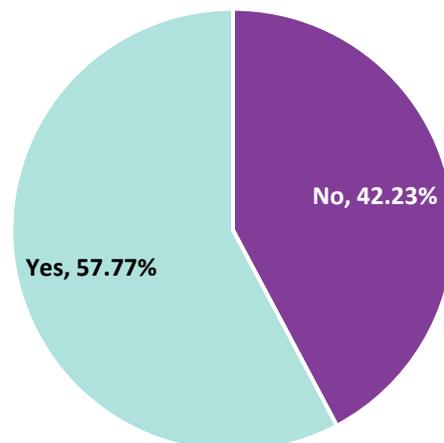
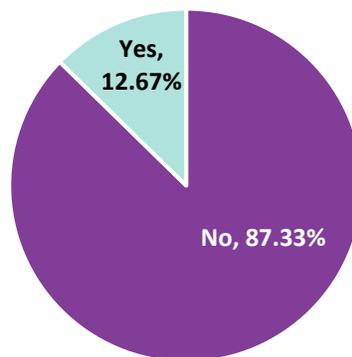


Figure D-11 asks how many respondents would need an electric lift to board the transit vehicle. A majority of respondents answered with “No,” however, nearly 13 percent answered “Yes.”

Figure D-11 Do you use a wheelchair, electric scooter, or have trouble climbing stairs and would need an electric lift to board the transit vehicle?



Transit Funding

Respondents were asked if they would support spending local money on public transit and how they think it should be funded. Figure D-12 shows that 63 percent would definitely support and another 17 percent would somewhat support spending local money on public transit, while only 15 percent say they would not support it at all. However, Figure D-13 shows a majority of respondents think public transit should be funded through rider user fees or advertising revenues.

Figure D-12 Would you support spending local money on public transit?

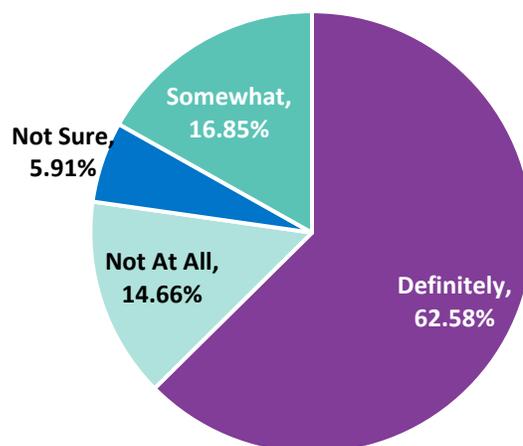
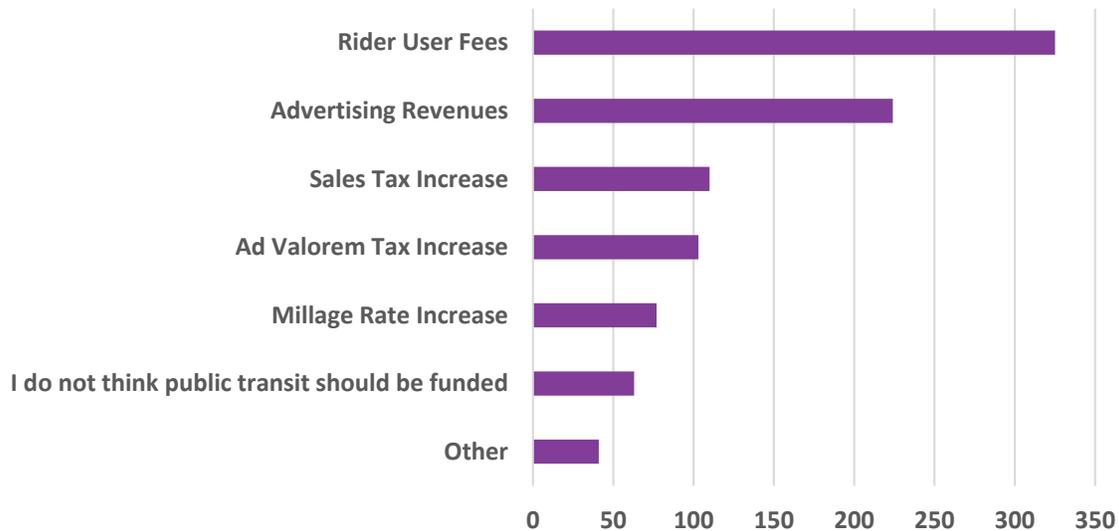


Figure D-13 How should public transit be funded? (Select all that apply)



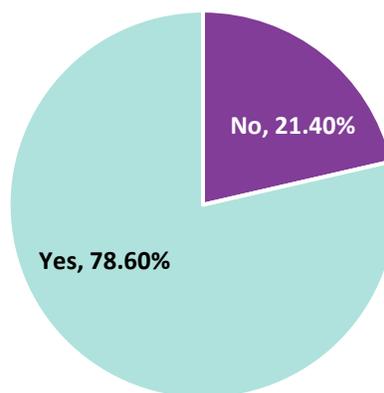
Demographic Information

The remainder of this report provides demographic information for those taking the survey.

Household Vehicles

As shown in Figure D-14, over 20 percent of respondents do not have access to a personal vehicle. Over ¾ of the respondents said they do have access to a personal vehicle.

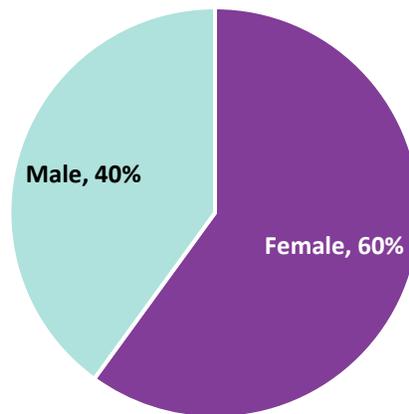
Figure D-14 Do you own or have access to a personal vehicle?



Gender

As shown in Figure D-15, more than half of the respondents were female.

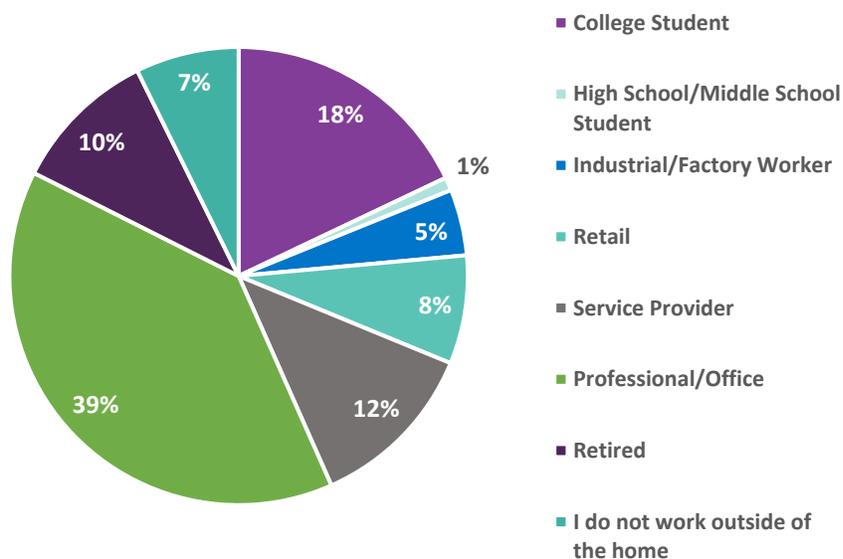
Figure D-15 What is your gender?



Occupation

Figure D-16 shows that a majority of respondents (39%) work in a professional/office environment. The second highest occupation was College Student with 18 percent.

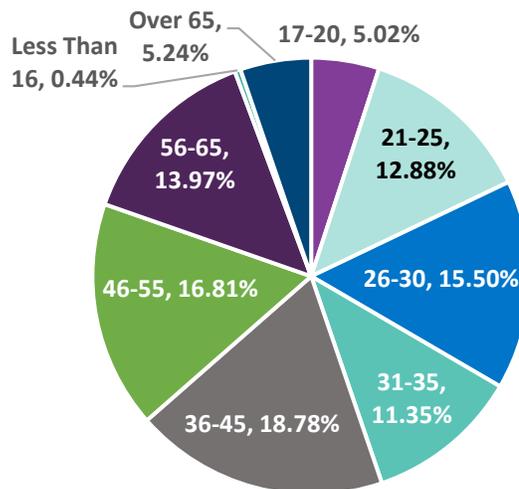
Figure D-16 Primary Occupation



Age

Respondents by age group are provided in Figure D-17. The largest cohort is between 36 and 45 years old.

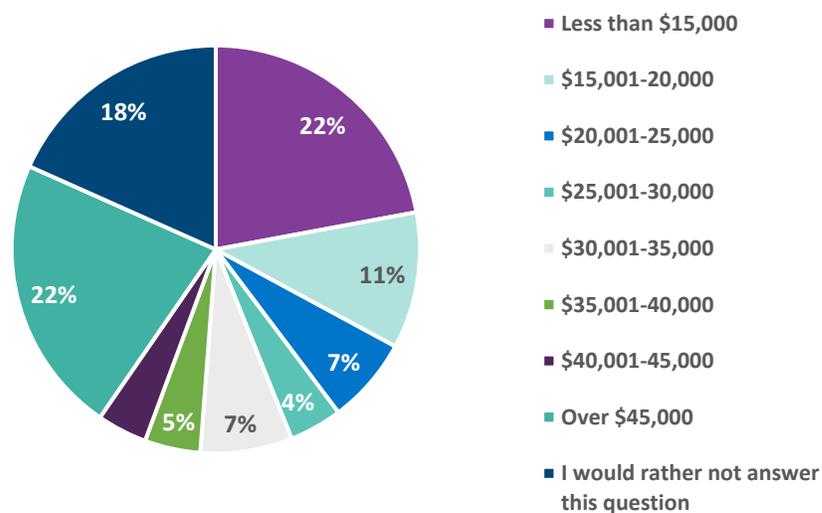
Figure D-17 Age



Yearly Income

Figure D-18 displays the income levels of respondents. The income groups with the largest group of respondents are the “Less than \$15,000” group and the “Over \$45,000” group, both with 22 percent.

Figure D-18 Please provide the best range that reflects your individual yearly income



Environmental Justice

In order to determine a broad distribution of respondents across the community, survey respondents were asked to provide their residential ZIP codes. Approximately halfway through the survey timeframe, an evaluation of the distribution of respondents by residential ZIP codes were undertaken to determine which areas of the county were lower than average on responses. In mid-March, five ZIP codes were identified as having lower response rates and added effort to get the surveys out in those areas was undertaken.

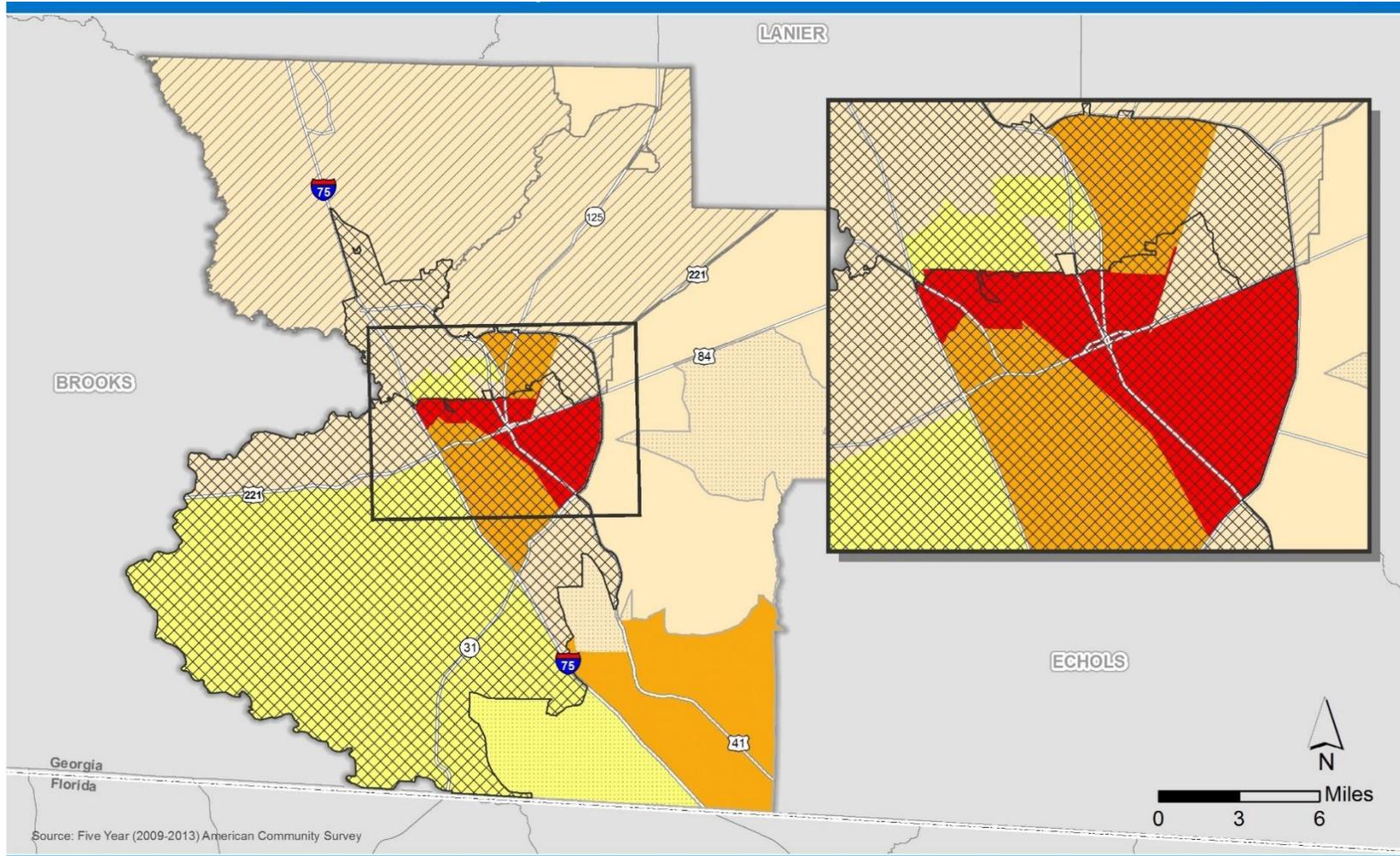
In addition to reviewing general coverage of the county with survey response, a review of the responses versus areas with environmental justice concerns was also undertaken. To determine the Environmental Justice (EJ) areas within Lowndes County, five (5) socioeconomic variables from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS) were analyzed:

- Percent of minority population: percentage of the population that does not identify as Caucasian.
- Percent of households without vehicle access: percentage of households that do not have access to a vehicle.
- Percent of population below the poverty line: percentage of population determined by the U.S. Census Bureau based on the analysis of income accrued over a 12-month period.
- Percent of population age 65 and over: percentage of population age 65 or older.
- Percent of population that does not speak English: percentage of population who identified as speaking English "Less than very well".

If a Census tract where these characteristics had a percentage higher than the county average, it was identified as an EJ tract. The tracts were then further analyzed to see how many overlapping EJ indicators were present. Census tracts with multiple overlapping EJ indicators were considered areas of high concern and were separately tracked to ensure public involvement. Environmental Justice requires that EJ populations are engaged to obtain their feedback on the need for new or expanded transit services.

Map D-1 shows how many people per ZIP code took the survey in relation to the EJ tracts. Survey respondents were located throughout Lowndes County and response rates were generally good in EJ areas.

Map D-1 Environmental Justice Survey Coverage



Source: Five Year (2009-2013) American Community Survey

Legend

- | | | |
|-------------------|--|--|
| County Boundaries | Survey Respondents per ZIP Code | Number of Overlapping EJ Indicators |
| Main Roads | 6 - 25 | ≤ 1 |
| State Boundary | 26 - 95 | 2 |
| | 96 + | 3 |
| | | 4 |

APPENDIX E: FIXED ROUTE TURN-BY-TURN DIRECTIONS

Ashley St Route

Drive 11 mi, 30 minutes

Start: E Valley St & N Ashley St

Head north on N Ashley St toward E Magnolia St
3.10 mi

Slight right onto N Oak Street Extension
0.467 mi

Turn right onto US-41 S/Perimeter Rd
1.08 mi

Turn right at the 1st cross street onto GA-125 S/Bemiss Rd
0.492 mi

Turn right onto Blue Pool Dr
0.438 mi

Turn left onto Tara Dr
1,266 ft

Turn left onto Connell Rd
0.339 mi

Turn right onto Bemiss Rd
1.11 mi

Turn left onto Lakeland Ave
0.887 mi

Turn right onto N Forrest St
328 ft

Turn right at the 1st cross street onto E Park Ave
0.884 mi

Turn left onto N Ashley St
1.52 mi

N Ashley St turns right and becomes E Magnolia St
476 ft

Turn left onto N Patterson St
587 ft

Turn left onto E Valley St
289 ft

End: E Valley St & N Ashley St

Mildred Hunter Route

Drive 7 mi, 18 minutes

Start: N Patterson St & W Central Ave

Head southeast on N Patterson St toward W Hill Ave
892 ft

Keep left to continue on W Crane Ave
325 ft

Continue onto S Ashley St/Jm Beck Overpass/Continue to follow Jm Beck Overpass
0.334 mi

Continue onto S Ashley St
367 ft

Continue onto S Patterson St
636 ft

Continue straight to stay on S Patterson St
732 ft

Slight left onto Griffin Ave
0.769 mi

Turn left onto Ulmer Ave
0.278 mi

Continue onto Lake Park Rd
0.417 mi

Turn right onto S Fry St
0.732 mi

Turn right onto N Forrest St
1.20 mi

Turn left onto Woodlawn Dr
0.490 mi

Continue onto N Troup St
646 ft

Turn right onto Vallotton Dr
899 ft

Turn left onto N Lee St
0.590 mi

Turn left onto E Gordon St
791 ft

Turn right at the 1st cross street onto N Troup St
0.504 mi

Turn right onto E Central Ave
0.272 mi

End: N Patterson St & W Central Ave

Wiregrass Route

Drive 17 mi, 37 minutes

Start: E Valley St & N Ashley St

Head north on N Ashley St

463 ft

Turn left onto E Magnolia St

545 ft

Turn right at the 1st cross street onto N Patterson St

2.85 mi

Turn right onto Briggs St/Brookfield Rd

161 ft

Turn left at the 1st cross street onto N Ashley St

1,004 ft

Continue onto N Valdosta Rd

4.47 mi

Continue onto Shiloh Rd

1,286 ft

Turn left onto Val Tech Rd

0.690 mi

Turn right into Wiregrass Tech campus

479 ft

Exit Wiregrass Tech Parking Lot

Head northeast toward Val Tech Rd

479 ft

Turn left onto Val Tech Rd

0.669 mi

Turn right onto Shiloh Rd

0.251 mi

Continue onto US-41 S/N Valdosta Rd

4.11 mi

Continue straight onto US-41 BUS S/N Valdosta Rd/Continue to follow US-41 BUS S

0.449 mi

Slight right onto N Patterson St

3.05 mi

Turn left onto E Valley St

289 ft

End: E Valley St & N Ashley St

Valdosta State Route

Drive 8 mi, 25 minutes

Start: E Valley St & N Ashley St

4.59 mi, 13 minutes

Head north on N Ashley St

463 ft

Turn left onto E Magnolia St

545 ft

Turn right at the 1st cross street onto N Patterson St

0.257 mi

Turn left onto W North St

912 ft

Turn right at the 2nd cross street onto N Oak St

1.11 mi

Turn left onto Georgia Ave

0.746 mi

Turn left onto Gornto Rd

2.11 mi

Head east on Baytree Rd toward Norman Dr

0.757 mi

Turn right onto W Gordon St

1.54 mi

Turn right onto West St

0.265 mi

Turn left onto W Magnolia St

0.496 mi

Turn right onto N Toombs St

663 ft

Turn left onto W Valley St

774 ft

End: E Valley St & N Ashley St

Shopping Route

Drive 12 mi, 40 minutes

Start: S Fry St & E Savannah Ave

Head north on S Fry St
354 ft

Turn left at the 1st cross street onto E Hill Ave
994 ft

Continue onto E Central Ave
0.541 mi

Turn right onto N Oak St
135 ft

Turn left onto River St
1.61 mi

Turn right onto GA-133 N/St Augustine Rd
1.04 mi

Turn right onto Norman Dr
0.368 mi

Turn left into Valdosta Mall at south entrance and go clockwise around mall

Exit mall and turn right onto Norman Dr
0.959 mi

Turn right onto River St
328 ft

Make a loop around Walmart parking lot and turn right onto River St
Turn left onto Norman Dr
1.23 mi

Turn left into Valdosta Mall at south entrance and go clockwise around mall

Exit mall and turn right onto Norman Dr

Turn left onto GA-133/St Augustine Rd
1.04 mi

Turn left onto River St
1.54 mi

Turn right onto N Oak St
863 ft

Turn left at the 2nd cross street onto W Hill Ave
0.636 mi

Turn right onto S Forrest St
377 ft

Turn left onto E Savannah Ave
453 ft

End: S Fry St & E Savannah Ave

Modified Shopping Route (Alternative 5)

Drive 13 mi, 39 minutes

Start: E Central Ave & S Troup St

Head west on E Central Ave
0.458 mi

Turn right onto N Oak St
135 ft

Turn left onto River St
1.61 mi

Turn right onto GA-133 N/St Augustine Rd
1.04 mi

Turn right onto Norman Dr
0.368 mi

Turn left into Valdosta Mall at south entrance and go clockwise around mall

Exit mall and turn right onto Norman Dr
0.959 mi

Turn right onto River St
328 ft

Make a loop around Walmart parking lot and turn right onto River St

Turn left onto Norman Dr
0.864 mi

Turn left into Valdosta Mall at south entrance and go clockwise around mall

Exit mall and turn right onto Norman Dr
0.959 mi

Turn left onto GA-133/St Augustine Rd
1.04 mi

Turn left onto River St
1.54 mi

Turn right onto N Oak St
863 ft

Turn left at the 2nd cross street onto W Hill Ave
0.636 mi

Turn left onto S Fry St
354 ft

Turn right onto N Forrest St
1.28 mi

Turn left onto Woodlawn Dr
0.490 mi

Continue onto N Troup
1.19 mi

Turn right onto Vallotton Dr
900 ft

Turn left onto N Lee St
0.568 mi

Turn Left onto E Gordon St
800 ft

Turn right onto N Troup St
0.492 mi

End: E Central Ave & S Troup St

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