



VALDOSTA-LOWNDES METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

2020 Strategic Plan



SOUTHERN GEORGIA
REGIONAL COMMISSION

REGIONAL SERVICES • COMMUNITY FOCUSED

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This document is prepared in cooperation with the Georgia Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration.

The public involvement process for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is used to satisfy the Georgia Department of Transportation public participation process for the Program of Projects (POP).

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Adoption Resolution Goes Here

Introduction

In 2014, the Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization (VLMPO or MPO) adopted the Common Community Vision for Greater Lowndes County. This document outlined 18 topical goals for the community to work to achieve; these goals were made a part of the 2040 Transportation Vision Plan and the 2016 Greater Lowndes Comprehensive Plan. In 2019, staff recommended that the VLMPO develop a strategic plan to help identify ways to improve upon the Common Community Vision and to improve transportation project implementation ahead of the development of the 2045 Transportation Plan for Valdosta and Lowndes County.

“A resilient [transportation system and] community where partnerships and coordination promote regional success in economic development, education, infrastructure, and a high quality of life.” –Common Community Vision

It is the Mission of the Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization to encourage reliable funding of a safe and efficient, regional transportation system that includes public transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, highways, railroads, and airports for the movement of goods and people.

While federal and state statutes for all MPOs set the purpose and core operations, they each develop their own ways to implement those requirements in their communities. This strategic planning effort helps to set the vision for transportation policies, projects, and programs for the 2045 Transportation Plan, future Unified Planning Work Programs (UPWPs), and other reports and studies the community desires to be done.

Process

The Citizen’s and Technical Advisory and the Policy Committee of the VLMPO met on September 4, 2019 in a joint session to conduct a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) Analysis of the VLMPO. This session was facilitated by a non-transportation Planner with the Southern Georgia Regional Commission (SGRC). After the SWOT Analysis, the transportation staff of the SGRC compiled the comments, and provided recommendations and timelines to achieve those recommendations within for comments back to the committee members. After comments were received the final strategic plan was presented to the MPO committees for adoption in March 2020.

Strengths with ideas to Build on Strengths from Staff

- Staff is accessible and responsive; provides data for decision making; and keeps GDOT/local officials informed
- Staff and Committee members are passionate about transportation in the community
- Staff is well-qualified
 - Continue conference attendance and participation in state/national organizations; include participation/attendance in quarterly and annual reports.
- Citizen Advisory Committee is a good cross-section of the community

- Ensure new committee appointments represent community interests and make-up; staff will report on racial and ethnic committee make-up in annual report.
- Staff provides program/funding opportunities/updates
 - Continue to provide new ideas for funding/grants
- Local elected leaders coordinate their transportation decisions
 - Continue to inform elected leaders about transportation planning process; staff will continue to offer new member orientation and other opportunities for other members and local elected officials
- VLMPO staff/committees are informed and progressive
 - Continue to bring forth new ideas for planning and capital projects; staff will present ideas as a part of the UPWP Five Year Business Plan

Weakness with ideas to Address Weaknesses from Staff

- The Southern Georgia Regional Commission has limited resources to fulfill the needs of local governments
 - Identify and expand the technical capacity of SGRC staff to meet the specific needs of local governments; Staff will survey local elected officials and TAC members to determine what types of skills or analysis they desire of staff
 - Survey the VLMPO members on what they want the MPO staff to be doing; staff will complete this survey ahead of preparation of the annual UPWP in October
- The SGRC needs to communicate better the services they offer
 - Expand the overall communications of SGRC services; staff participates in SGRC 101 activities, staff will work to inform members of reports completed by staff regularly
- Difficulty in communicating with citizens, need to explain acronyms
 - Develop a communications plan that communicates the transportation planning process in plain English for the public to understand; staff will distribute the VLMPO Committee Handbook and FHWA Citizen Guide to Transportation Decision Making
 - Make available an acronym dictionary; staff will make this available on our website and common terms available in key documents.
 - Work with staff to not talk in acronyms
- Difficulty with public involvement (survey responses)
 - Consider a pilot a program in partnership with the SGRC, Lowndes County and Valdosta to use services like MetroQuest or Publicinput.com; staff will continue to interview vendors for potential services

- Lack of VLMPO presence/exposure in the community
 - Staff should actively participate in community activities like civic groups, public events like the Azalea Festival, etc.; staff will survey VLMPO members to determine which organizations we should be a part of by June 30, 2020
- Improve timeliness of notifications when communicating information to stakeholders
 - Staff will utilize the Asana project management tool to ensure better timing of communication
- Technology – surveys etc. don't always work right
 - Develop internal review mechanisms to test products before they leave the staff level; staff will document this in the Asana project management tool
 - Evaluate staff capacity to focus on specific issues (communications, administrative, technical, etc.)
- Need Better attendance from VLMPO committee members
 - Determine from individual committee members what it would take to remind them to attend meetings; staff will survey the VLMPO committee members before the June 2020 meetings and at each orientation thereafter for best practices
 - Survey committee members why they do not attend - make the meetings more meaningful; staff will survey the VLMPO committee members before the June 2020 meetings to find new ways to make the meetings more meaningful to members
 - Consider offering food at committee meetings (likely will require a sponsor or local government payment); staff will discuss this with SGRC leadership and local governments before September 2020

Opportunities with ideas to Support Opportunities from Staff

- More intergovernmental collaboration with other counties
 - Consider hosting a regional transportation champions event to highlight local/regional successes and future plans; Staff will research this and present ideas to local officials for an event in summer 2021
- Update Common Community Vision (CCV)
 - Continue to produce the CCV Annual Report to highlight the successes and challenges to achieving these goals
- Businesses, especially start-ups, often have transportation challenges
 - The VLMPO can develop partnerships with the Chamber, and Valdosta-Lowndes Development Authority to work with businesses to minimize transportation

challenges; staff will survey community partners to identify transportation challenges facing local economic development efforts by December 2020

- Autonomous Vehicles (AVs) are coming and we should be prepared for them
 - The VLMPO can prepare ordinances to prepare the local infrastructure to be ready for AVs; staff will work with local governments and other partners to complete a Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Assessment by June 30, 2021; based on the assessment prepare model ordinances by June 30, 2022
- There are more electric vehicles on the road and in the community
 - The VLMPO can prepare ordinances to require EV charging stations for new/renovated buildings; staff will work with local governments to prepare model ordinances by June 30, 2022
- More alternative fuel corridors like I-75
 - The VLMPO can work to promote alternative fuels in the community; staff will work with local partners and governments to determine what is needed to promote alternative fuels
- Public Transportation or other alternatives are needed
 - The VLMPO can apply for or work with local governments to apply for transit implementation funds
- The TIA (regional sales tax) initiative should be implemented again in the coming years
 - The SGRC and VLMPO should take a leading role in developing a regional transportation improvement plan; staff will continue to discuss this with local leaders
 - The SGRC and VLMPO should lead the discussion of a regional TIA and work to identify a local champion for this effort; staff will continue to discuss this with local leaders
- Better communicate the benefits of projects to the public
 - Develop talking points for each project to highlight project benefits - use social media to get this information out; staff will develop project data sheets for each project in the 2045 Transportation Plan
 - Develop 'street signs' for each 2045 MTP/TIP project like the city/county do for zoning cases; staff will develop these project street signs for each project in the 2045 Transportation Plan
- Develop better collaboration with Valdosta State University
 - Work with Darrell Moore at Center for South Georgia Regional Impact to identify ways the VLMPO can partner with VSU; staff will meet with Darrell Moore by September 2020 to identify projects to partner on

- Collaborate with the university on the development of transit system, utilizing their existing system; staff will continue to work with local governments and the University to include them as transit implementation progresses
- Micro-mobility devices like scooter and bike-share programs are becoming more popular in other cities, especially college towns
 - The VLMPO can identify if there is a need for micro-mobility (shared bikes/scooters); staff will work with potential vendors and local stakeholders to determine if there is a need for these devices in the community
 - If need identified encourage city to adopt local ordinances based on best practices for safety/access; staff will review state laws and other best practices to recommend changes for local governments
 - Develop RFP for companies to install bike share/scooters in Valdosta; staff will work with potential vendors and local stakeholders to determine if there is a need for these devices in the community, then develop an RFP when appropriate
- The VLMPO should be more involved with community organizations like Valdosta-Lowndes Parks and Recreation Authority
 - Identify key organizations staff should be a part of; staff will survey Committee Members to identify community organizations staff should be more involved in by October 2020
 - Develop formal mechanisms for staff to participation in other organizations; when appropriate develop formal partnerships for participation of staff in these organizations identified previously
- Offer food at meetings and open-houses
 - Evaluate the cost to the RC to provide this service. Alternatively consider requiring the cities/counties to pay for food at meetings and open-houses; staff will discuss this with SGRC leadership and local governments before September 2020

Threats with ideas to Meet Threats from Staff

- If we don't embrace/invest in newer technology we will be behind (block chain, micro-grids, broadband)
 - Utilize the resources of the SGRC Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Department and other new data (RITIS/NPMRDS) and technology
 - Consider developing a regional Intelligent Transportation Systems or similar plan; staff will engage GDOT and TAC members in this discussion by June 2020
- Paradigm shift in retail (from stores to online shopping) will lead to changes in the freight system

- Does the VLMPO need to study a shift in retail from local stores to deliveries, how does this change freight in the community; staff will develop a statement of work on identifying a study topic in this area by December 2020
- Truck Traffic hazards, logistics problems, increasing truck volumes, and lack of truck rest areas
 - Is there a role for the VLMPO to work with GDOT and others to look at some of these issues like truck parking; staff will engage GDOT on this topic and work to develop any statements of work on this study topic by December 2020
- Out of town private companies could disrupt this community
 - Identify transportation risks in the community that could lead to poor economic development outcomes or lack of achievement of performance measures; staff will survey local economic development partners to identify these risks by June 2021; staff will then develop statements of work to identify projects to mitigate these risks based on feedback from MPO committee members
- Lowndes High School bus traffic safety concerns
 - Educate local officials on how signal preemption can be used for school buses and well as emergency vehicles
- Need more well-rounded, open-minded participants, less focused on single issues; Lack of clear vision of mission/ values
 - The VLMPO can continue to promote the Common Community Vision report; Continue to produce the CCV Annual Report to highlight the successes and challenges to achieving these goals
 - The VLMPO can implement this strategic plan; staff will utilize the UPWP and internal project tracking tools to ensure implementation of this strategic plan
- Aging population
 - VLMPO should evaluate how transportation policies impact the local population. Implement changes to local policies to embrace the aging population; staff will work with the SGRC Area Agency on Aging to survey local policies, ordinances, etc. to recommend changes by June 2022
- Need bigger fonts
 - All VLMPO materials will be published in 12 point font when appropriate