

Program Overview

Transportation needs in the Upper Savannah region are as varied as the communities represented. The small urban centers of Greenwood and Laurens are challenged to improve quality of life while providing needed mobility services to their citizens. Rural Edgefield County is rapidly becoming a bedroom community for the Aiken/Augusta area and is attempting to deal with the associated growth pressures. Small towns such as Calhoun Falls and Saluda seek assistance in funding sidewalks and addressing safety issues at intersections. Each of these issues is directly associated with transportation planning, and Upper Savannah Council of Governments has been actively involved with these projects.

Upper Savannah's transportation planning program involves consideration of the following principles:

- Ensure the safe and efficient movement of people and their vehicles in the region
- Involve the public and their elected representatives in the planning process
- Improve the efficient management of limited transportation resources
- Encourage responsible environmental stewardship in all projects

Financial assistance from the South Carolina Department of Transportation supports these activities at Upper Savannah Council of Governments (USCOG).

As the designated planning agency, USCOG is responsible for maintaining and creating plans for the entire region, maintaining financials records of the support funds, and sending recommendations to SC DOT. The USCOG Board of Directors is made up of representatives from each county and serves as the transportation policy advisory committee for the region. Most board members are elected officials in their communities, but some members are lay citizens. Each county council nominates a certain number of representatives to the USCOG Board based on population.

There is no designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in the region due to the lack of a concentrated area of population. USCOG serves as the planning entity for all transportation activities in the counties of Abbeville, Edgefield, Greenwood, Laurens, McCormick, and Saluda. Census 2000 recorded the population for the entire region at 215,739.

Regional Overview

Population – 2010

		% Change <u>1990 – 2010</u>
Abbeville County	25,417	7%
Edgefield County	26,985	47%
Greenwood County	69,661	17%
Laurens County	66,537	15%
McCormick County	10,233	15%
Saluda County	<u>19,875</u>	<u>22%</u>
Upper Savannah Region	218,708	18%

Regional Guideshare Projects Underway

US Highway 25	Edgefield County
US Highway 221 N	Laurens County

Regional Transportation Improvement Needs (not ranked)

US Highway 25	Edgefield County
Northside Drive	Greenwood County
SC Highway 246	Greenwood County
SC Highway 225	Greenwood County
US Highway 221	Laurens County
SC Highway 56	Laurens County
SC Highway 14	Laurens County
US Highway 121 and 378	Saluda County
US Highway 221 (safety)	McCormick County
US Highway 25 Connector	Abbeville County

Potential Air Quality Non-Attainment Counties: Abbeville

Public Transit Providers: Edgefield County Senior Center, McCormick County Senior Center

Work Element I: Administration

Purpose: To provide transportation and transit related planning assistance to all local governments in the Upper Savannah region

Project History: Upper Savannah Council of Government has partnered with South Carolina Department of Transportation to build regional traffic models, the regional Transportation Improvement Plan, a transit coordination study, and the completion of various enhancement grants.

Task: Continue to serve as a clearinghouse for transportation related information in the Upper Savannah region of South Carolina. Maintain and build partnerships with the SC DOT and work to assist them in projects on the regional level.

Outcome: USCOG staff will continue to act as a regional resource for staff at SC DOT. At the same time, USCOG staff will continue to draw upon the experience and expertise of the SC DOT staff to respond to transportation issues.

<u>Budget:</u>	<u>SC DOT</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>% of Total RPWP</u>
	\$5,000	\$1,200	7%

Work Element II: Freight Planning and Transearch Data

Purpose: Planning for the efficient movement of goods across and into the region is an important facet of the overall transportation plan for the region. Freight planning does not have to be accomplished in a separate plan, but should be part of the overall transportation plan.

Project History: Upper Savannah Council of Governments and the South Carolina Department of Transportation partnered to create a long range transportation plan in 2005. We are now progressing to include the needs of the freight movement community within the existing planning framework.

Task: Initiate freight planning activities in the region to include consideration of Transearch data in analyzing freight patters and forecasts.

Outcome: This process should allow USCOG and SCDOT to identify needs and set priorities for implementing regional freight planning needs. Completing this task in the work program will allow USCOG to continue to integrate the needs of freight planning in with the ongoing programs of highway planning, public transit, and enhancements.

<u>Budget:</u>	<u>SC DOT</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>% of Total RPWP</u>
	\$10,000	\$2,500	13%

Work Element III: Transportation Improvement Priorities

Purpose: Based on the findings of the regional traffic model, work with SC DOT staff to define and prioritize transportation improvement needs in the Upper Savannah region based on safety and security needs.

Project History: Upper Savannah Council of Governments and the South Carolina Department of Transportation have worked together for many years to review traffic model information and conduct site visits to roads to determine areas in need of improvement.

Task: Based on the update of the long range plan and the traffic model, review roads in need of improvement. If necessary, visit these sites and provide further data to SC DOT staff as necessary. Develop a list of potential projects, estimated costs, and project completion time for use by the Upper Savannah Board of Directors as they review recommendations for regional road improvements to be sent to SC DOT commissioners.

Outcome: With up-to-date information backed up by the scientific analysis of the traffic model and the expertise of the SC DOT staff, the Upper Savannah COG Board of Directors will be able to make educated and informed recommendations for road improvements in the region. The priority list developed from this process will be used during board meetings, public hearings, or other gatherings as needed.

<u>Budget:</u>	<u>SC DOT</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>% of Total RPWP</u>
	\$10,000	\$2,500	13%

Work Element IV: Coordination and Training for Nonattainment Counties

Purpose: At least two counties in the Upper Savannah region are potentially on the list for nonattainment in air quality standards. Because these are rural counties and they have never dealt with these issues before, we would like to assist the counties in addressing these potential requirements.

Project History: No county in the Upper Savannah region has ever been declared in violation of air quality standards. Addressing the requirements will be new to us and to the counties involved.

Task: The work in this area is focused on two approaches. First, rural communities generally have fewer resources to draw from in order to plan or suggest potential enhancement projects. Professional help is needed hearing ideas, putting them in a proposal for public input, then selecting the best alternative. Once the best alternative has been chosen, assistance is often needed to put together a proposal and submit that to the proper authorities for review and consideration.

Outcome: Rural communities need help in planning for and meeting federal requirements on a variety of issues. USCOG continues to provide this service which involves working in areas such as planning, grant writing, mapping, and budgeting. Without this service, rural air quality plans would either not be submitted, would be submitted incomplete, or would cost cash-strapped local governments for consultant services.

<u>Budget:</u>	<u>SC DOT</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>% of Total RPWP</u>
	\$10,000	\$2,500	13%

Work Element V: Consultation with local elected officials

Purpose: To gather local input on needs and priorities on the transportation system in the Upper Savannah region in order to create a safe and efficient multi-modal travel network.

Project History: Upper Savannah Council of Governments was created to encourage local governments to work together in pursuing common regional goals. The USCOG board is made of up elected and non-elected representatives from each county. Staff members rely on these board members to give input on projects, but also to recommend other citizens to speak with, to suggest locations for public hearings, and to a general local contact in each county.

Task: Continuing the on-going efforts to consult local elected officials on a regular basis concerning transportation improvements is crucial to the overall transportation planning program effort at Upper Savannah. Meetings are held with local elected officials in their counties on a regular basis. Informal discussions are also held very frequently to discuss transportation needs. Keeping elected officials informed and responding to their requests for information make the entire planning process go more smoothly.

Outcome: Emphasizing communication and connection to local elected officials has been an important part of the USCOG planning program at all levels. By meeting with county officials on a regular basis, you learn their concerns and also share information that they can take back to their constituents. Local officials recommend other important community leaders, the best time or place to hold public hearings, and provide basic but crucial support to the regional planning program.

<u>Budget:</u>	<u>SC DOT</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>% of Total RPWP</u>
	\$10,000	\$2,500	13%

Work Element VI: Livability/Sustainability Planning Process Evaluation

Purpose: New federal requirements and grant opportunities will require local and state governments to document and move towards creating plans to promote more cost efficient and environmentally responsible development patterns.

Project History: Legislation is currently pending in Congress, but many communities are taking it upon themselves to plan for more cost efficient and effective development that requires less long-term financial support.

Task: Evaluate current planning processes in anticipation of reauthorization and new planning considerations such as livability, sustainability, climate change, and goods movement.

Outcome: As livability and sustainability are still terms in development, we will monitor how the terms are defined and research grant opportunities that will be available for our region. At the end of this fiscal year we should have a better understanding on what the federal government will require for potential grants and we will begin putting plans in place to ensure the region meets those basic qualifications.

<u>Budget:</u>	<u>SC DOT</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>% of Total RPWP</u>
	\$10,000	\$2,500	13%

Work Element VII: Public Involvement

Purpose: Continue to work on the development a public involvement plan covering actions related to the long-range plan and the Transportation Improvement Plan.

Project History: As federal requirements require opportunities for public input, USCOG and SC DOT have partnered in the past to host public hearings in affected communities.

Task: A plan will be created that will guide the public involvement process in planning for transportation projects in the Upper Savannah region. Special attention will be given to groups not usually participating in the transportation planning process.

Outcome: By using the resources from current staff at USCOG and SC DOT, along with the potential for using a consultant as a back-up, our transportation program will continue to work to insure that the public has every opportunity to comment on proposed projects.

<u>Budget:</u>	<u>SC DOT</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>% of Total RPWP</u>
	\$10,000	\$2,500	14%

Work Element VIII: Long Range Plan Update

Purpose: Begin the process of developing a timetable and schedule for updating the regional Long Range Plan to coincide with the update of the statewide Long Range Plan in 2013.

Project History: USCOG and SCDOT last worked together to create the Long Range Plan in 2006. Due to fiscal constraints, no new funding is available so the update to the Long Range Plan will be developed to coincide with the update to the statewide Long Range Plan.

Task: In conjunction with SCDOT, a timeline and schedule will be developed to begin the process of updating the regional Long Range Plan according to the latest guidelines from the state and federal governments.

Outcome: By using the resources from current staff at USCOG and SC DOT, a timeframe for updating the Long Range Plan will be developed and plan updates will begin.

<u>Budget:</u>	<u>SC DOT</u>	<u>Local</u>	<u>% of Total RPWP</u>
	\$10,000	\$2,500	14%

Budget Summary

	<u>SCDOT</u>	<u>Local Match</u>	<u>% of Total RPWP</u>
Program I – Administration	\$ 5,000	\$1,250	7%
Program II – Freight Planning/ Transearch	\$10,000	\$2,500	13%
Program III – TIP Maintenance	\$10,000	\$2,500	13%
Program IV – Nonattainment Training	\$10,000	\$2,500	13%
Program V – Local Officials Consultation	\$10,000	\$2,500	13%
Program VI – Livability/ Sustainability Process Evaluation	\$10,000	\$2,500	13%
Program VII – Public Involvement	\$10,000	\$ 2,500	14%
Program VIII- Long Range Plan Update	<u>\$10,000</u>	<u>\$2,500</u>	14%
Totals	\$75,000	\$18,750	