

## *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 Troy and Trenton 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 – 2000**

		<b>% Change <u>1990 – 2000</u></b>
Abbeville County	26,167	10%
Edgefield County	24,595	34%
Greenwood County	66,271	11%
Laurens County	69,567	20%
McCormick County	9,958	12%
Saluda County	<u>19,181</u>	<u>17%</u>
Upper Savannah Region	215,739	17%

### **Regional Guideshare Projects Underway**

US Highway 25	Edgefield County
SC Highway 14	Laurens County
Stagecoach Road (Phase II)	Laurens County

### **Regional Transportation Improvement Needs (not ranked)**

US Highway 25	Edgefield County
Northside Drive	Greenwood County
SC Highway 246	Greenwood County
US Highway 221 N	Laurens County
SC Highway 56	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.

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

## ***Work Element II: Long Range Plan Update***

**Purpose:** After the completion of the projects listed in the federal stimulus package, it is time to review and update the regional long range plan.

**Project History:** Upper Savannah Council of Governments and the South Carolina Department of Transportation partnered to create a long range plan for the region in 2005.

**Task:** Remove the completed projects from the current long range plan and update the listing by county. Work with our regional partners to prioritize projects with the limited amount of funding available.

**Outcome:** This plan should allow USCOG and SCDOT to identify needs, set priorities, and establish funding time frames for implementing regional project coordination. Completing this task in the work program will allow USCOG to continue to monitor a broad range of transportation planning needs.

<b><u>Budget:</u></b>	<b><u>SC DOT</u></b>	<b><u>Local</u></b>	<b><u>% of Total RPWP</u></b>
	\$13,300	\$3,192	18%

### ***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.

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

## ***Work Element IV: Transportation Enhancement Projects***

**Purpose:** Transportation enhancement grant funds offered through the TEA-21 program are an opportunity for local governments to address transportation related activities that may not be fundable under any other grant program.

**Project History:** Upper Savannah Council of Governments has served as a resource in advising on and creating grants for TEA-21 and other related grants since the inception of the program.

**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 state DOT office for review and consideration.

**Outcome:** Rural communities need help in planning for and producing enhancement projects. USCOG continues to provide this service which involves working in areas such as planning, grant writing, mapping, and budgeting. Without this service, rural enhancement projects would either not be submitted, would be submitted incomplete, or would cost cash-strapped local governments for consultant services.

<b><u>Budget:</u></b>	<b><u>SC DOT</u></b>	<b><u>Local</u></b>	<b><u>% of Total RPWP</u></b>
	\$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.

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

***Work Element VI: Traffic Analysis Zone Update for Census 2010***

**Purpose:** Continue to provide staff assistance in developing Traffic Analysis Zone (TAZ) boundaries in advance of the 2010 Census.

**Project History:** As a regional clearinghouse for Census information, Upper Savannah COG has worked with local governments in the past to encourage public participation in the Census.

**Task:** Upper Savannah COG staff will continue to work with SC DOT staff to coordinate the review of current TAZ boundaries and recommend any adjustments in those boundaries. Changes would be the result of new population growth or shifts in demographics.

**Outcome:** The TAZ boundaries will more accurately reflect changes in growth, including new housing or industry, to be used in conjunction with the data provided by Census 2010. These updated boundaries will be the basis for planning new road projects in the future.

<b><u>Budget:</u></b>	<b><u>SC DOT</u></b>	<b><u>Local</u></b>	<b><u>% of Total RPWP</u></b>
	\$12,700	\$3,358	17%

## *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.

<b><u>Budget:</u></b>	<b><u>SC DOT</u></b>	<b><u>Local</u></b>	<b><u>% of Total RPWP</u></b>
	\$14,000	\$3,500	19%

***Budget Summary***

	<b><u>SCDOT</u></b>	<b><u>Local Match</u></b>	<b><u>% of Total RPWP</u></b>
Program I – Administration	\$ 5,000	\$1,200	7%
Program II – Long Range Plan Update	\$13,300	\$3,192	18%
Program III – TIP Update	\$10,000	\$2,500	13%
Program IV – Enhancements	\$10,000	\$2,500	13%
Program V – Local Officials	\$10,000	\$2,500	13%
Program VI – Census/ TAZ Update	\$12,700	\$3,358	17%
Program VII – Public Involvement	<u>\$14,000</u>	<u>\$ 3,500</u>	19%
Totals	\$75,000	\$18,750	