

# Rural Planning Work Program

2025-2027

## Upper Savannah Council of Governments

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## ***Program Purpose and Requirement***

The **Rural Planning Work Program (RPWP)** is a strategic planning document developed by rural transportation planning organizations to guide transportation planning efforts in non-urbanized areas. Its main purpose is to ensure that rural transportation needs are addressed in a structured, coordinated, and forward-looking manner. Here's a breakdown of its core purposes:

- ◆ **1. Prioritize Rural Transportation Needs**

It helps identify and prioritize transportation issues unique to rural areas—such as aging infrastructure, limited transit options, long distances, and connectivity to regional hubs.

- ◆ **2. Support Funding and Project Development**

The RPWP provides a foundation for applying for state and federal transportation funding. It ensures that rural projects are eligible for inclusion in larger statewide or regional transportation improvement plans (TIPs and STIPs).

- ◆ **3. Guide Data Collection and Analysis**

It outlines the types of data to be collected to support informed decision-making for future improvements and safety measures.

- ◆ **4. Facilitate Stakeholder Engagement**

The program sets a schedule and strategy for involving local governments, transit providers, community organizations, and residents in shaping rural transportation policy and planning.

- ◆ **5. Coordinating with State and Regional Plans**

The RPWP ensures rural needs are aligned and integrated with broader transportation plans, helping bridge the urban-rural planning gap and improving regional connectivity.

- ◆ **6. Improve Mobility and Access**

Ultimately, the RPWP aims to enhance access to jobs, healthcare, education, and other essential services for rural residents, especially for populations with limited mobility options (like seniors, low-income individuals, and people with disabilities).

## *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 SCDOT. 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.

Since there is no designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in the region due to the lack of a concentrated area of population, SCDOT has designated each COG as the official planning entity for rural transportation planning services. USCOG serves as the planning entity for all transportation activities in the counties of Abbeville, Edgefield, Greenwood, Laurens, McCormick, and Saluda. Census 2020 recorded the population for the entire region at 215,948.

## *Towards Performance-Based Transportation Planning at the Federal Level*

In 2012, Congress passed the **Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (MAP-21) Act**. MAP-21 introduced a new emphasis in the MPO transportation planning process, towards measurable performance and outcome-based metrics in the evaluation of projects and programs receiving federal support. MAP-21 focuses on 7 performance goal areas:

- Safety
- Infrastructure Condition
- Congestion Reduction
- System Reliability
- Freight Movement and Economic Vitality
- Environmental Sustainability
- Reduced Project Delivery Delays

## **Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act)**

On December 4, 2015, President Obama signed the **Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act** into law—the first federal law in over a decade to provide long-term funding certainty for surface transportation infrastructure planning and investment. The FAST Act authorizes \$305 billion nationwide, between 2016-2020, for roadway construction, highway and motor vehicle safety, public transportation, motor carrier safety, hazardous materials safety, rail, research, technology, and statistics programs. The FAST Act maintains the Federal Highway Authority's (FHWA) focus on safety, keeps intact the established structure of the various highway-related programs managed by FHWA, continues efforts to streamline project delivery, and, for the first time, provides a dedicated source of federal dollars for freight projects.

In addition, the FAST Act continues the emphasis raised in MAP-21 on performance-based outcomes, requiring that the metropolitan transportation planning process “*shall be continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive, and provide for consideration and implementation of projects, strategies, and services that will address the following factors:*”

- *Support the economic vitality of the region, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;*
- *Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;*
- *Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;*
- *Increase accessibility and mobility of people and for freight;*
- *Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns;*
- *Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;*
- *Promote efficient system management and operation;*
- *Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system;*
- *Improve the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system and reduce or mitigate stormwater impacts of surface transportation; and*
- *Enhance travel and tourism.” [23 USC 450.306]*

The FAST Act also requires federally funded transportation projects to support national goals for the nation’s transportation system by focusing on projects that:

- Achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads.
- Maintain the highway infrastructure asset system in a state of good repair.
- Achieve a significant reduction in congestion on the National Highway System.
- Improve the efficiency of the surface transportation system.
- Improve the national freight network, strengthen the ability of rural communities to access national and international trade markets, and support regional economic development.
- Enhance the performance of the transportation system while protecting and enhancing the natural environment.
- Reduce project costs, promote jobs and the economy, and expedite the movement of people and goods by accelerating project completion through eliminating delays in the project development and delivery process, including reducing regulatory burdens and improving agencies’ work practices. [23 U.S. Code § 150]

### **INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND JOBS ACT (IIJA)**

On November 15, 2021, President Biden signed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), a \$1.2 trillion investment in transportation and other types of infrastructure (including energy, water, and broadband). This represents a \$550 billion increase in federal government spending above baseline funding levels. The foundation of the IIJA is a new five-year authorization of the federal Surface Transportation Program to replace the recently expired Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. The IIJA authorizes \$567 billion in spending authority for all transportation programs over five years, an increase of \$274 billion (more than 48 percent) above FAST Act baseline spending levels. In addition, the bill broadens eligibility criteria for many existing programs and establishes within the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) alone at least two dozen new formula and discretionary (competitive) grant programs targeting key priorities, including but not limited to, resiliency, sustainability, equity, and safety. The dramatic expansion of discretionary funding represents a significant shift from the past two transportation authorization bills. The 2012 law, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century, had taken the opposite approach, consolidating various targeted funds into large core formula programs with broad eligibility and flexibility for states to prioritize individual needs. The 2015 FAST Act largely preserved that approach.

The Summary of Planning Factors Matrix below takes the focus areas from the FAST Act and IIJA and combines them with the on-going planning activities proposed at the local level. This chart shows how activities can overlap among planning factors and how the local planning entity is working to achieve IIJA goals and objectives.

### Summary of Planning Factors Matrix

Planning Factors	Task 1 Transit Coordination	Task 2 TIP	Task 3 Consultation	Task 4 & 5 IIJA & Performance Strategies	Task 6 Public Involvement	Task 7 LRP
Economic Vitality	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
System Safety		✓		✓	✓	✓
System Security		✓		✓	✓	✓
Mobility Promotion	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Land Use Impact	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Connectivity	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
System Management & Operations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
System Preservation	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
System Stabilization	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Travel & Tourism	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓



## *Regional Overview*

### **Population – 2023**

Abbeville County	24,434
Edgefield County	27,607
Greenwood County	69,460
Laurens County	68,873
McCormick County	9,941
Saluda County	<u>19,123</u>
Upper Savannah Region	219,438

### **Regional Transportation Improvement Needs – Intersections**

1	US-25 EDGEFIELD ROAD & S-494 SHORT CUT ROAD	EDGEFIELD
2	SC-14 & SC-HWY 101	LAURENS
3	US-25 BYPASS 25 SE & S-101 SWEETWATER ROAD	GREENWOOD
4	US-25 AUGUSTA ROAD & S-10 BAUSKETT ST	EDGEFIELD
5	SC-121 LEE ST & S-41 EDISTO ST	EDGEFIELD
6	SC-72 BUS CAMBRIDGE AVE W & S-108 MATHIS ROAD	GREENWOOD
7	SC-121 JOHNSTON HWY & S-21 FRUIT HILL ROAD	SALUDA
8	US- 221 S & S-49 LISBON RD	LAURENS
9	SC-49 & SC-308 HWY308	LAURENS
10	SC-121 JOHNSTON HWY & S-37 ROCKY CREEK RD	SALUDA
11	S-178 MURRAH ROAD & S-339 SPRINGHAVEN DRIVE	EDGEFIELD
12	US-76W & S-312 WILSONTOWN ROAD	LAURENS
13	SC14 & OWINGS PARKWAY (COUNTY RD)	LAURENS
14	SC-20 & SC-201	ABBEVILLE
15	SC-28 N & SC-10	MCCORMICK
16	SC-418 GULLIVER ST & S-67 DURBIN ROAD	LAURENS
17	US-221 SOUTH OF BRADLEY & SC-10 MCCORMICK HWY	GREENWOOD
18	SC-20 SOUTH OF DUE WEST & SC-185	ABBEVILLE
19	S-136 IVORY KEY RD & SALUDA MD SCHOOL DR	SALUDA
20	SC-252 & SC-184	ABBEVILLE
21	SC-20 NORTH OF DUE WEST & SC-185	ABBEVILLE
22	SC-28N S-25 & S-37 RICHEY RD & FOSTER RD	MCCORMICK

**REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT NEEDS  
WIDENING PROJECTS**

1	SC 246 FROM SC 72/U5 221 TO SC 702	GREENWOOD
2	US 25 BYPASS FROM US 178 TO BUS S-29 E CAMBRIDGE	GREENWOOD
3	SC 121 FROM S-104 MCQUEEN ST TO SC 191	EDGEFIELD
4	SC14 FROM S-183 TO S-24 LYNN AVE	LAURENS
5	SC 56 FROM SPRINGDALE DR TO S-98 BARREL STAVE RD	LAURENS
6	EMERALD RD PHASE II FROM S-100 TO SC 246	GREENWOOD
7	US 178 FROM SC 121 TO SC 39 RIDGE SPRING RD	SALUDA
8	SC 121 FROM S-140 WHEELER CIRCLE TO S-51 BUTLER RD TURN LANE AT DSS	SALUDA
9	SC 28 BYPASS FROM SC72 TO S-32 OLD CALHOUN FALLS RD	ABBEVILLE
10	SC 101 FROM I-385 TO SC 14	LAURENS
11	SC 28 5-401 CEDAR RD STATE PARK RD (HAMILTON BRANCH ST PK)	MCCORMICK
12	5-37 BETTIS ACADEMY RD FROM US 25 TO AIKEN COUNTY LINE	EDGEFIELD

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

## ***Work Element I: Transit Planning & Coordination***

**Purpose:** To provide transportation and transit related planning assistance to all local governments in the Upper Savannah region and to strengthen the regional partnership with SCDOT

**Project History:** Upper Savannah Council of Government has partnered with South Carolina Department of Transportation to build and maintain 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 and transit related information in the Upper Savannah region of South Carolina. Maintain and build partnerships with the SCDOT and work to assist them in projects on the regional level. Continue to provide assistance to the Office of Public Transit in rating and ranking 5310 applications for van purchase or operating assistance and with SCDOT's Transportation Alternative Program (TAP). Update the Regional Transit and Coordination Plan with guidance from SCDOT Office of Public Transit.

**Outcome:** USCOG staff will continue to act as a regional resource for staff at SCDOT. At the same time, USCOG staff will continue to draw upon the experience and expertise of the SCDOT staff to respond to transportation issues. Transit planning will be integrated into all regional planning activities. Assistance will continue to be given to the SCDOT Office of Public Transit in rating and ranking 5310 applications for van purchase or operating assistance, and with completion of TAP application upon request.

<b><u>Budget:</u></b>	<b><u>SCDOT</u></b>	<b><u>Local</u></b>	<b><u>% of Total RPWP</u></b>
	\$25,000	\$8,125	10%

***Work Element II: Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)***

**Purpose:** Based on the findings of the regional traffic model, work with SCDOT staff to define and prioritize transportation improvement needs in the Upper Savannah region based on safety, security needs, and available funding for FY 2024-2033.

**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 within the fiscal restraints of available DOT funding.

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

**Outcome:** With up-to-date information backed up by the scientific analysis of the traffic model and the expertise of the SCDOT staff, the Upper Savannah COG Board of Directors will be able to make educated and informed recommendations for intersection and 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>SCDOT</u></b>	<b><u>Local</u></b>	<b><u>% of Total RPWP</u></b>
	\$50,000	\$10,000	20%

### ***Work Element III: 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, USCOG can 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>SCDOT</u></b>	<b><u>Local</u></b>	<b><u>% of Total RPWP</u></b>
	\$50,000	\$10,000	20%

### ***Work Element IV: IJA Implementation***

**Purpose:** 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:** 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 related to the IJA (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act) and planning considerations such as economic development and goods movement. Coordinate efforts to develop performance management strategies related to safety and target specific areas with the most needed safety improvements.

**Outcome:** As supported programs and priorities have developed and evolved, USCOG continues to monitor and research grant opportunities that will be available for our region. Lessons learned include the continued need for transportation improvement programs of all types geared toward rural areas, the need to advocate for reduced match requirements and the simplification of grant administration processes for rural and small metro areas.

<b><u>Budget:</u></b>	<b><u>SCDOT</u></b>	<b><u>Local</u></b>	<b><u>% of Total RPWP</u></b>
	\$25,000	\$8,125	20%

## ***Work Element V: Performance Management Strategies***

**Purpose:** Process, data collection, coordination, and education of the USCOG Board and the public as it relates to performance management.

**Project History:** The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is requiring state DOTs and MPOs (and by extension the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) is requiring COGs) to monitor the transportation system using specific performance measures. These measures are associated with the national goal areas prescribed in MAP-21 and the FAST Act. The following System Performance Report describes these national goal areas, rulemakings, performance areas, and prescribed measures. Performance measures have been identified for highway systems, including a set of measures to assess progress toward achieving the goals of the Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) Program.

**Task:** Guide the education process in explaining the outcomes and issues behind performance management strategies in the Upper Savannah region.

**Outcome:** By using the resources from current staff at USCOG and SCDOT, along with the potential for using a consultant as a back-up, the transportation program will continue to work towards the goal of achieving the important safety markers set out in the Performance Management Strategy. Annual review and adoption of State Safety Management Targets will be accomplished.

<b><u>Budget:</u></b>	<b><u>SCDOT</u></b>	<b><u>Local</u></b>	<b><u>% of Total RPWP</u></b>
	\$25,000	\$8,125	10%

***Work Element VI: Public Involvement***

**Purpose:** Continue to involve the public in activity related to the Long Range Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Plan.

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

**Task:** Guide the public involvement process in planning for transportation projects in the Upper Savannah region. Special attention will be given to new ways of involving the public in the transportation planning process. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 states that “No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.” Reporting on and observance of Title VI is a major component of this program.

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

<b><u>Budget:</u></b>	<b><u>SCDOT</u></b>	<b><u>Local</u></b>	<b><u>% of Total RPWP</u></b>
	\$25,000	\$8,125	10%



***Work Element VII: Long Range Transportation Plan Maintenance***

**Purpose:** Continue the process of reviewing the regional Long Range Transportation Plan to coincide with the update of the statewide Long Range Transportation Plan.

**Project History:** Update and maintain the Long Range Transportation Plan to coincide with the update and maintenance of the statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan.

**Task:** In conjunction with SCDOT, review and evaluate the regional Long Range Transportation Plan according to the latest guidelines from the state and federal governments.

**Outcome:** By using the resources from current staff at USCOG and SCDOT, review and maintenance of the Long Range Transportation Plan will be evaluated and completed.

<b><u>Budget:</u></b>	<b><u>SCDOT</u></b>	<b><u>Local</u></b>	<b><u>% of Total RPWP</u></b>
	\$50,000	\$10,000	20%

***Budget Summary***  
**FY 25/26 and 26/27 Combined**

	<u>SCDOT</u>	<u>Local Match</u>	<u>% of Total RPWP</u>
Program I – Transit Planning & Coordination	\$25,000	\$8,125	10%
Program II – TIP Maintenance	\$50,000	\$10,000	20%
Program III– Local Officials Consultation	\$50,000	\$10,000	20%
Program IV – IIJA Implementation	\$25,000	\$8,125	10%
Program V – Performance Strategies	\$25,000	\$8,125	10%
Program VI – Public Involvement	\$25,000	\$8,125	10%
Program VII- Long Range Transportation Plan	<u>\$50,000</u>	<u>\$10,000</u>	20%
Totals	\$250,000	\$62,500	