

Ware County

Transit Development Plan

Prepared by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission



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Valdosta, Georgia 31602

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The contents in this publication reflect the views of the author(s), who is (are) responsible for the facts and accuracy of the data presented herein. The opinions, findings, and conclusions in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Transportation, State of Georgia, the Federal Highway Administration, or the Federal Transit Administration. This publication does not constitute a standard, specification or regulation.

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

Introduction

This Transit Development Plan has been developed by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission to be a guidebook for Ware County elected officials and staff to answer basic questions about rural public transit in Ware County. This TDP will also be shared with the Georgia Department of Transportation to inform them of the rural public transit characteristics in the community.

Ware County, GDOT and the TPO (third party operator) should use this report to guide the development of rural public transit to deliver the best service possible for the residents of the community.

Demographic Analysis

Ware County, Georgia is a largely rural county in Southern Georgia, occupying 892 square miles that include large tracts of the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. The 2014 Census American Community Survey (ACS) lists the population for Ware County to be 35,915 persons, though it only has a population density of 40.7 persons per square mile. Approximately 46% of all workers aged 16 and older, or 16,524 Ware County residents, work within the county.



Ware County Post Office and Courthouse Building.
Source: Michael Rivera

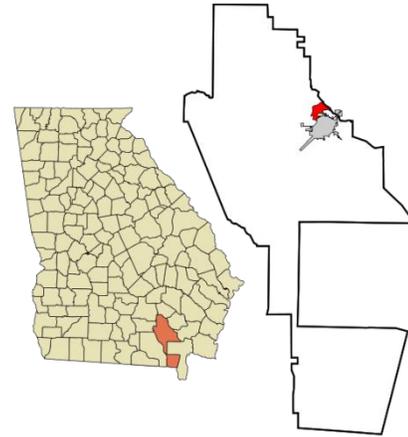


Figure 1 Ware County, Georgia.

Income is often an indication of the need for public transit in a community, either urban or rural. Residents in Ware have a Median Household Income of \$35,247, which closely correlates with the Median Household Income for the SGRC Public Use Microdata Area (PUMA). Of the peer communities of Tift and Coffee Counties, and neighboring community of Pierce, Ware County ranks second in highest median income.

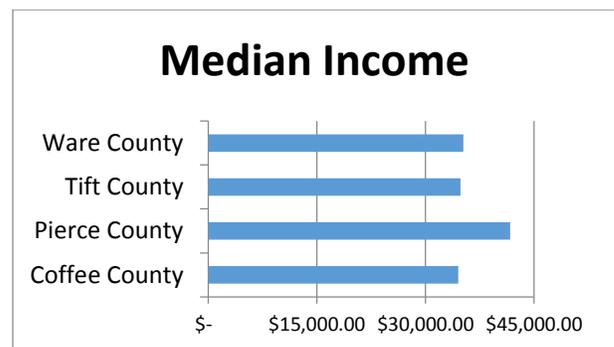


Figure 2 Median Income (2014) in Ware County.

As was noted earlier, of the all workers 16 years of age and older in the county, approximately 16,028, or about 93% commute for work. This large number of commuters suggests that this segment of the population is less likely to need public transit services as a primary means of transportation.



Preparing to assist a Ware County rider.

Poverty status is often an indication of the need for and greater reliance on public transit services. In Ware County, an estimated 9,410 people are below the federal poverty level. This means that about 26.2% of the county's residents are in poverty under the federal definition.

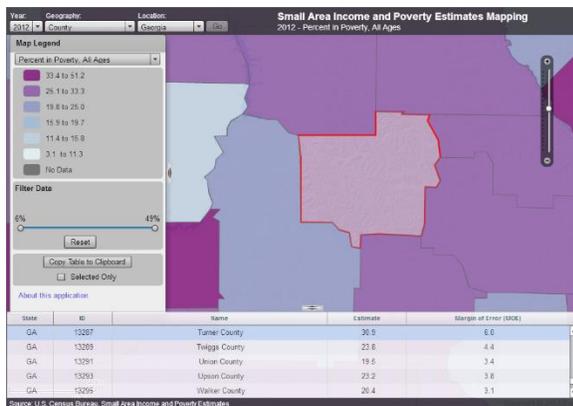


Figure 3 Percent in Poverty, Ware County, GA.

Transportation can be a large part of any families' budget, but it has a significant impact on those families that are living in poverty. Of the approximately 16,524 workers 16 years of age and older, approximately 10,905 persons have 1 or 2 vehicles available to use (2014 ACS Estimate). This indicates that while transportation is likely a higher portion of an individuals' outlays, they are still finding a way

to pay for a car, gasoline and maintenance costs, or asking friends for transportation to work, appointments, and other trips which require a vehicle. While there is no direct connection between transit ridership and access to vehicles in Ware County, it may be inferred that if a public transit system is affordable and accessible to all residents that it may offset some of the costs of transportation for individuals at or below the federal poverty level.

In Ware County, about 82% of workers commute to work via a single-occupancy car or truck, and about 11% commuted in a carpool of at least two persons. The ACS data indicates that only 1% of persons used public transit, but that 3% (estimated 1080 people) walked or traveled by other modes of transportation in Ware County. The nature of the large number of persons commuting to work correlates well with the number of drivers carpooling and driving alone to work as indicated by the data.

For the approximately 16,524 workers 16 years of age and older, the mean travel time to work is 19 minutes. This correlates to the fact that about 82% of the workers in Ware County commute into the denser urban areas for work each day.

Age can be a significant determining factor for ridership in rural public transit systems. Older residents are more likely to need transportation to and from medical appointments, shopping and other daily activities. Nearly 16% of the population of Ware County is over the age of 65, indicating a significant potential ridership base for a rural public transit system.



MIDs vehicles in use

Title VI and LEP Analysis

As a recipient of federal funds, Ware County must adhere to all federal laws and regulations regarding the delivery of public transit services. As part of this, any public transit service may not discriminate against a rider on the basis of race, color, sex, or limited ability to speak the English language, among other traits, according to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Executive Orders covering Environmental Justice and Limited English-proficiency. In Ware County the population breakdown in these categories is as follows. This information along with other factors can be helpful when estimating the demand for a public transit system.

FACTOR	POPULATION
TOTAL POPULATION	35,915
RACE	
WHITE	23,233
AFRICAN AMERICAN	10,873
OTHER	106
HISPANIC	1,269
# IN POVERTY	9,410

Four factors are used to determine if a public transit system must provide services to persons who have limited English-proficiency. The four factors are outlined here from Ware County.

1. The number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by the public transit service.

The US Census Bureau estimates that of the persons 5 years old and older in Ware County, 1,189 persons are linguistically isolated. The next largest language spoken at home in Ware County is Spanish. It is estimated that there is a total of 1,189 persons, or 5.6% of the total population that speaks Spanish. This is significantly lower than the national 20.9% of persons that speak Spanish at home.

Estimate	1,189
Margin of Error	+/- 135
Ware County %	5.6%
United States %	20.9%

2. The frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with the transit service.

Ware County Transit does not have a history of LEP individuals who could not use the system. It is recommended that if needed Ware County utilize the website of the Southern Georgia Regional Commission where a Google Translator is available for potential riders to learn more about the system.

3. The nature and importance of the transit service provided by Ware County to the LEP community.

Ware County Transit is provided as a service to riders in the county to access basic, non-emergency public transit services.

4. The resources available to Ware County and overall costs.

To provide materials in other languages for the potential riders of Ware County Transit, based on the information provided here, there does not appear to be a great need at this time that would justify the overall costs of providing

Ware County Transit Development Plan

these services to residents. As noted previously, it is recommended that potential riders utilize the SGRC website at www.sgrc.us, where a Google Translator can provide for basic information on the service to LEP individuals.

ADA Analysis

Oftentimes rural public transit services like the one in Ware County provides meaningful transportation for those with ambulatory disabilities. In Ware County 2,106 persons have

an ambulatory difficulty, meaning they have difficulty moving about under their own power. The population above age 65 accounts for 38% of those individuals with an ambulatory difficulty. The Ware County transit service is fully ADA accessible, providing vans with lifts and courteous drivers trained and willing to help riders get on and off the buses.



Railroad Crossing in Ware County, GA

Source: Michael Rivera

Evaluation of Existing Services

Ware County Transit is similar to that of other counties in the region. This section will examine how Ware County Transit compares to other communities of similar size. This section will look at the last five years (2009-2013) of

available data on the operations of the Ware County Transit service. This data will allow us to look at trends and the future growth of the transit service.

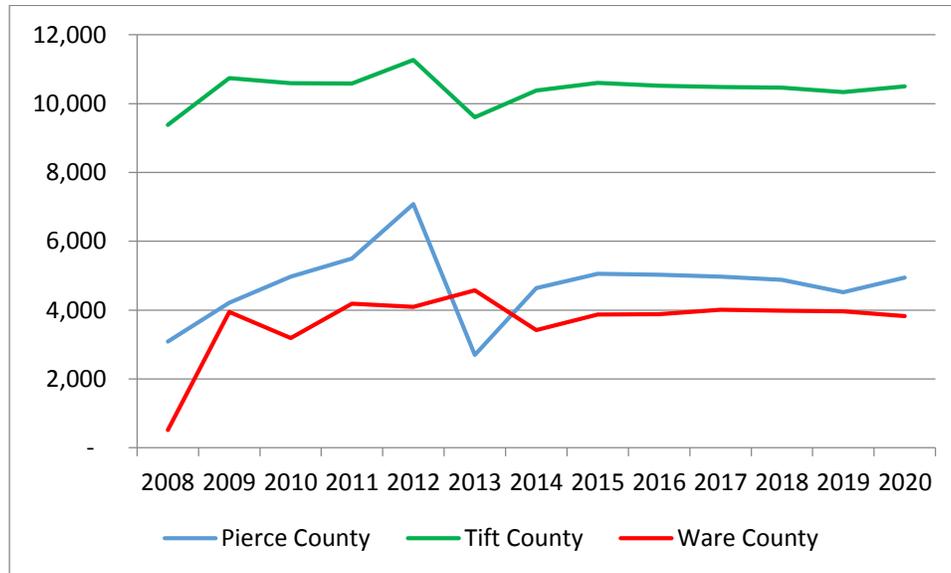


Figure 4 Trend of Public Ridership in Region Transit Systems.

Many of the transit systems in the region use purchase of service contracts (POS) to supplement the ridership and utilization of the public transit systems. This is no different in Ware County, where over the past five years, coordinated transportation (POS) has accounted for, on average, 78% of all trips annually.

Ware County currently provides an annual average of 18,035 trips over the last five years using 6, ADA accessible vans. Below are several charts that highlight the usage of vehicle fleets in transit systems throughout the region. Tift County has a fleet of 2 vehicles, and Pierce County has a fleet of 7 vehicles.

When looking at all of the vehicle-based data as a whole, Ware County is actually doing very well

at providing public and coordinated transportation trips to residents. One way to look at how well utilized the vehicles are, is how much time is remaining at the end of the year based on the operating hours of service. In Ware, County, there is actually a surplus of hours of service (32 hours annually, over 5 year average), meaning that trips are taking place during the normal operating hours of 7:30-5:30 Monday through Friday. This is only one metric, though, and other data and information must be considered before taking action to expand the service.

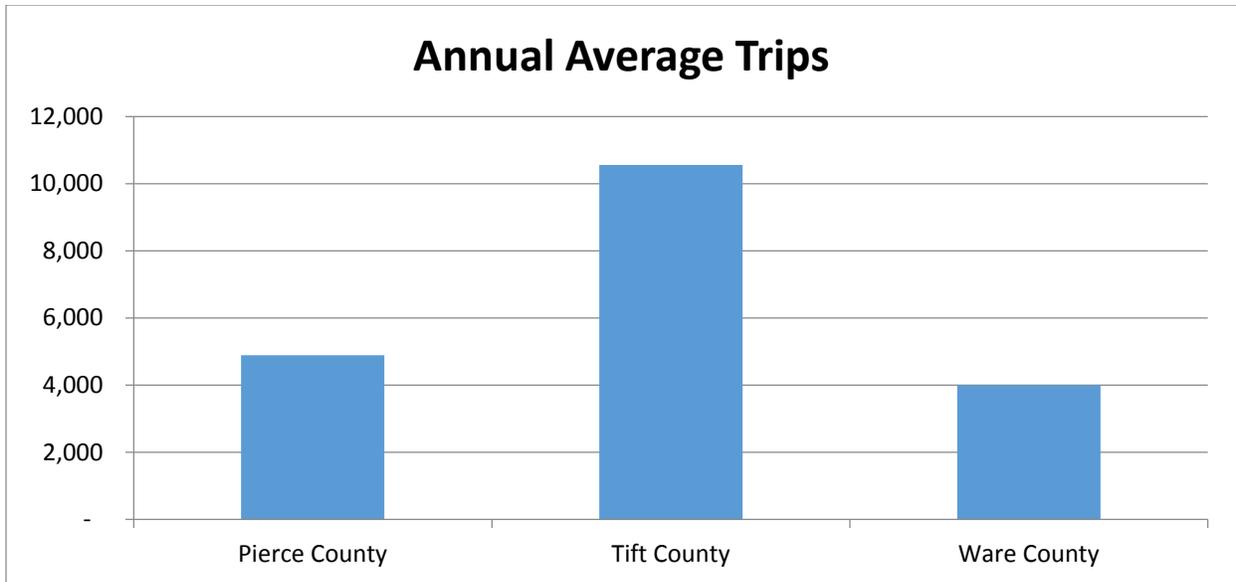


Figure 5 Annual Average Trips (5 years). While having fewer annual average trips than similar counties in the region, Ware County is well within the average for other counties in the region.

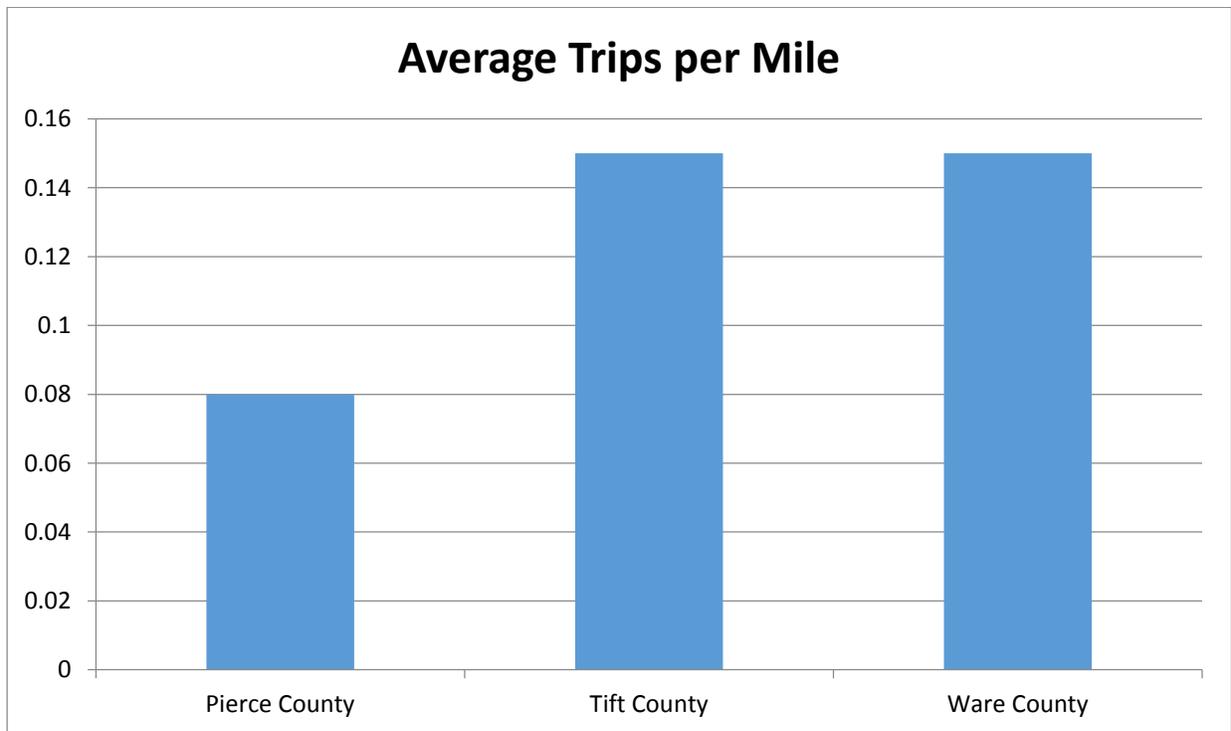


Figure 6 Annual Average Trips per Mile (5 years). Mileage in rural transit trips tends to be quite high, due to the low density characteristics of the rural landscape. In Southern Georgia, Ware County is tied with Tift, averaging 0.15 trips/mile over the 2009-2013 5 year period.

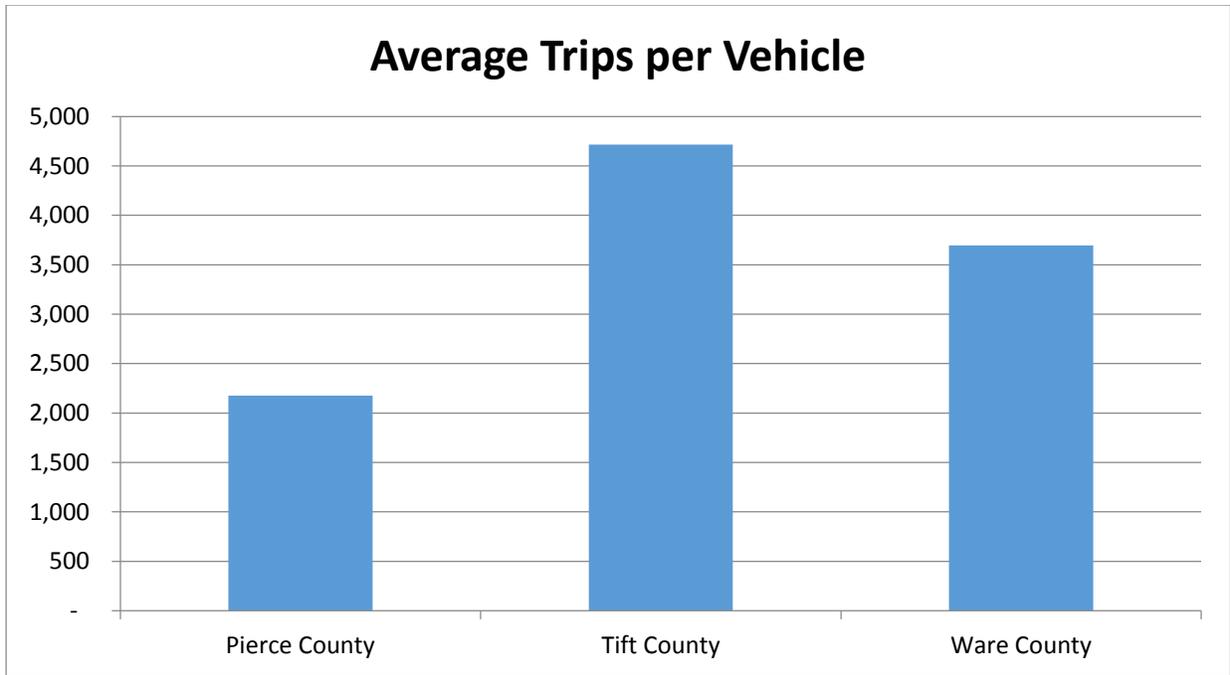


Figure 7 Annual Average Trips per Vehicle (5 years). Ware County is in the middle of the average compared to other counties for annual average trips per vehicle.

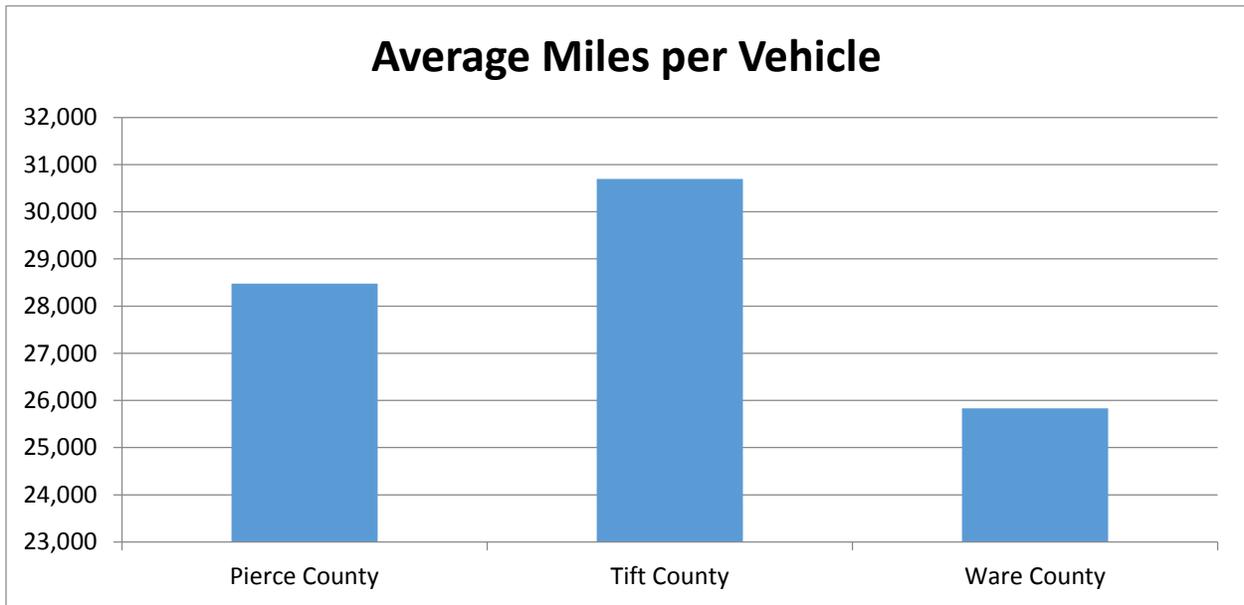


Figure 8 Annual Average Miles per Vehicle (5 years). Ware County is slightly lower than the comparative counties for the number of miles each vehicle drives annually.

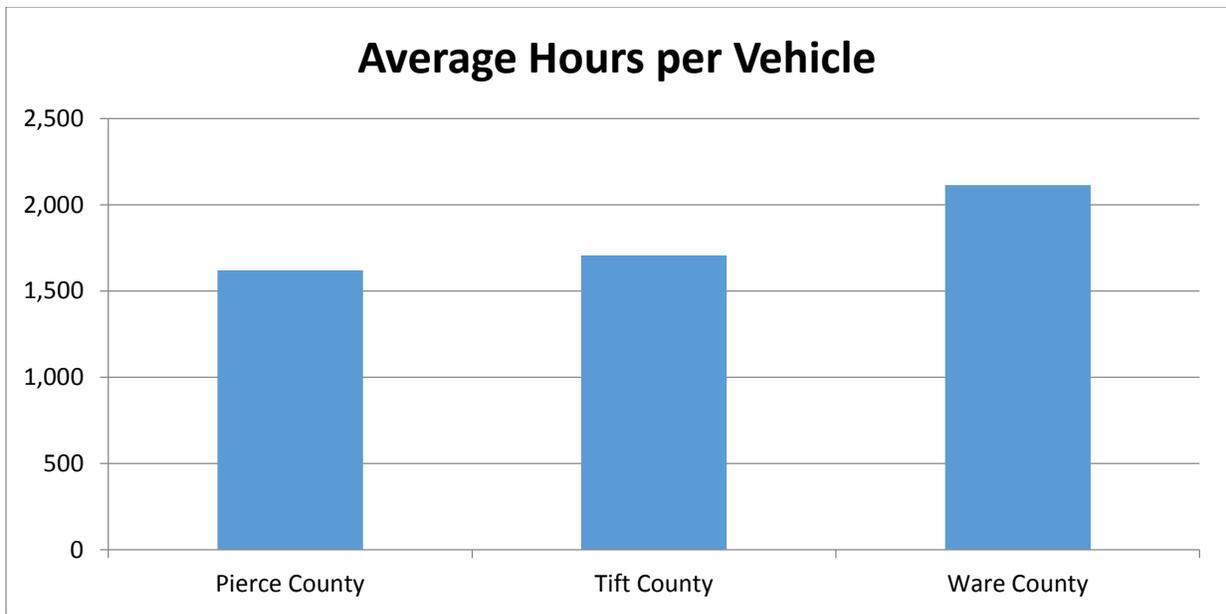


Figure 93 Annual Average Hours per Vehicle (5 years). The rural, low density development in Ware County means that transit trips are typically longer and more time is spent per vehicle and per trip travel to each destination.

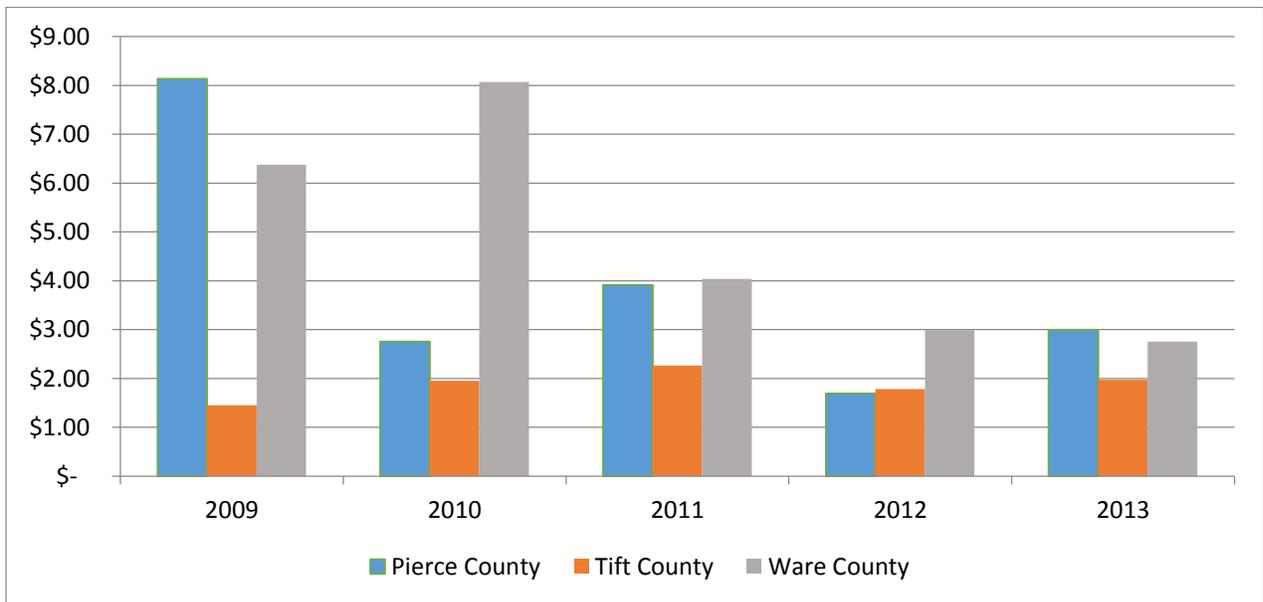


Figure 10 Average Paid by Public Riders per Trip. In Ware County data from the National Transit Database indicates a much higher variation in cost from 2009-2013 than might be expected. Since 2010, the Average Price Paid by Public Rider per Trip has decreased and is comparable to other counties.

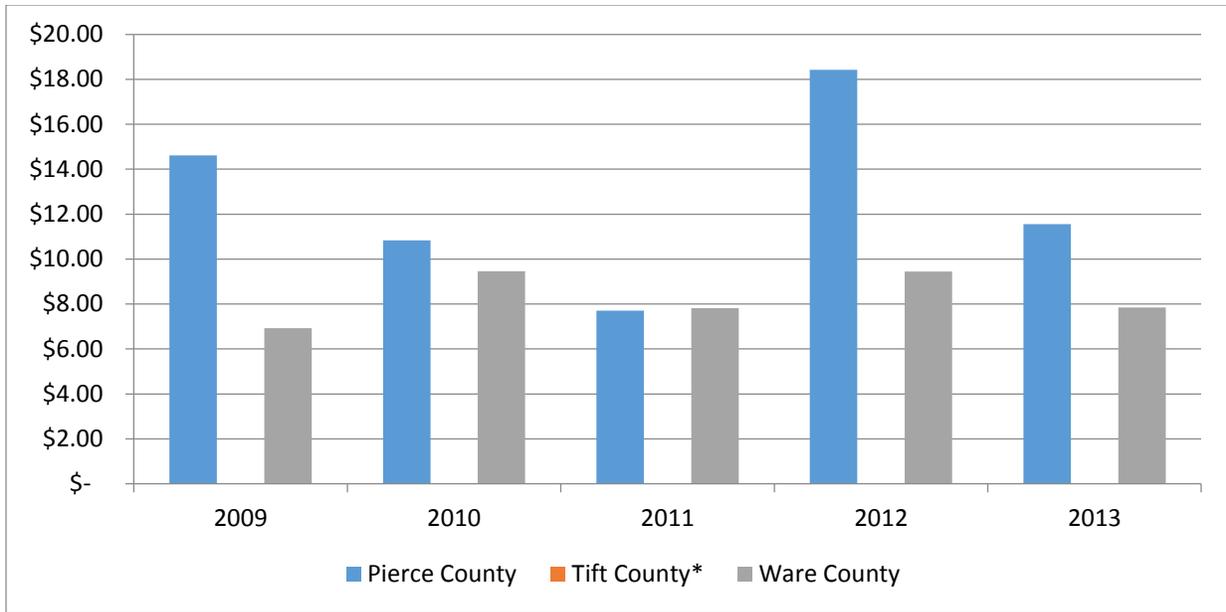


Figure 41 Average POS Cost Per Trip. Ware County supplements its local match of federal funds with POS or Purchase of Service Contracts from local human service agencies and other partners. This results in the county typically having no local expenditures.

*Tift County does not use POS trips to supplement its local match, and is therefore not represented on this chart.

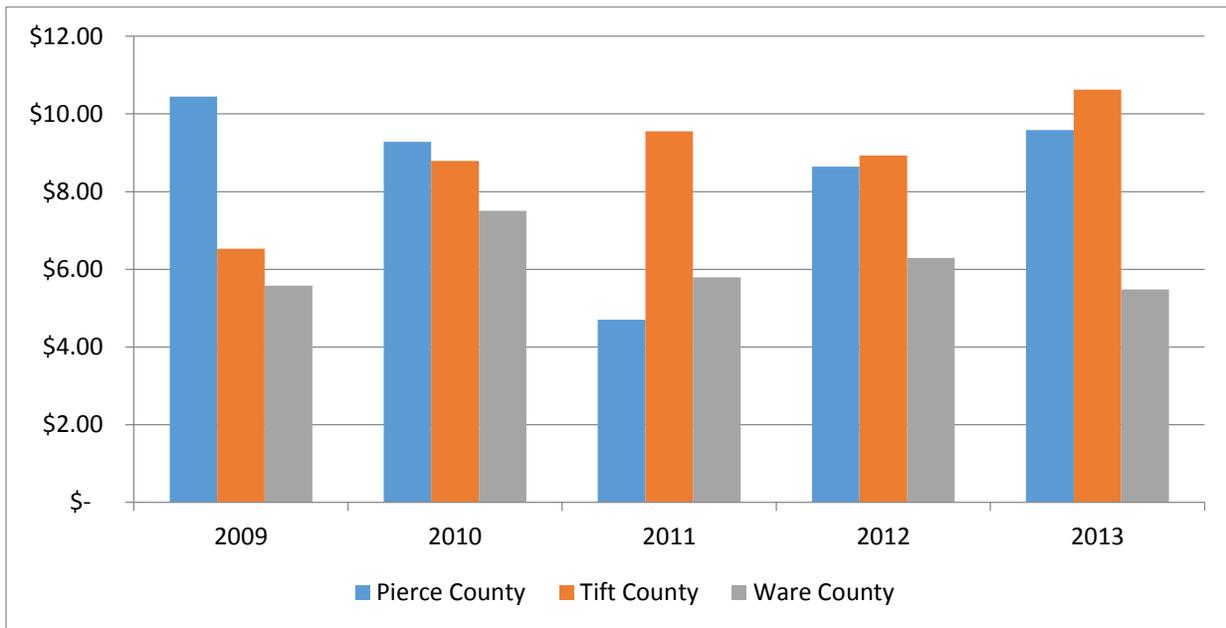


Figure 52 Average Federal Cost Per Trip. Under the 5311 Rural Transit Program the Federal Transit Administration pays up to 50% of the net operating deficit after fare box revenue.

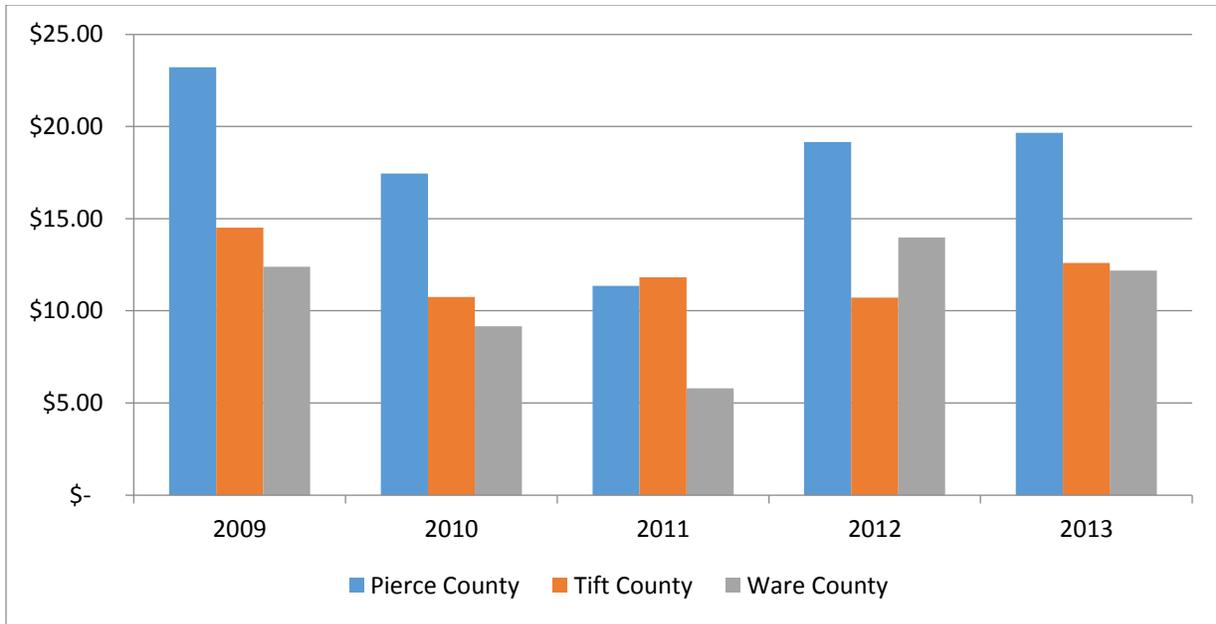


Figure 63 Average Cost Per Trip (Public & POS). The five-year average cost of a trip for all riders and all funding sources on the Ware County Transit service is \$10.70 per trip.

Goals and Objectives for Transit

GDOT lays out several goals and objectives for rural public transit in Georgia. Many of them are straight forward and are discussed here. The SGRC have additional goals that impact rural public transit in Ware County. The Ware County Comprehensive Plan does not include any goals for public transit. In this section the goals and objectives will be discussed as well as how Ware County Transit is currently meeting them.

1. Basic Mobility to Serve All Georgians

In Ware County the transit service is open to all residents. Many of the current riders are seniors who have some personal mobility issues. The Georgia Department of Transportation contracts with the Southern Georgia Regional Commission to provide coordinated human service transportation for seniors and other clients on a daily basis for trip destinations such as jobs, medical appointments and shopping trips for Ware County residents.

2. Program Implementation

Ware County administers the 5311 rural public transit program through coordination with GDOT and its TPO, MIDS Transportation, Inc., meeting or exceeding the FTA program requirements. As is demonstrated through the performance criteria noted before, the Ware County Transit Service meets or exceeds most of these criteria on a daily basis.

The SGRC works with Ware County and GDOT to provide technical assistance and analysis of the transit service delivery to better inform local and state officials.

3. Efficiency and Effectiveness

The Ware County Transit System is operated in an efficient and effective manner by the county

and it's TPO. Utilizing POS contracts, the TPO is able to utilize these funds to match the federal funds used to supplement the public riders. The TPO and Ware County effectively work with GDOT to provide an efficient transit system for the residents of the county.

4. Safe, Secure Quality Service

The Ware County Transit System is safe and secure, utilizing a proven training program for drivers and dispatchers. Ware County and its TPO maintain safety and driver records that provide for a safe and secure environment for the riders.

5. Accessible Service—Usable by Persons with Disabilities

Ware County Transit is committed to meet the needs of all users of the system. All vehicles are lift equipped to assist riders in wheelchairs. All drivers have been trained how to operate the lifts, assist riders and make sure each rider is safely secured aboard the vehicles.



MIDS transit vehicle in use.

Working with MIDS, Inc. and the SGRC Ware County Transit provides coordinated transit services for human service agency clients throughout the community, recovering the fully allocated costs of these trips and assisting in meeting the federal match requirements for the rural public transit program.

Ware County Transit Development Plan

The SGRC Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy or (CEDS) includes a goal that seeks to 'Ensure that the region's transportation systems are intact to facilitate growth.' The CEDS covers a broad region of 18-counties, and encourages each local government to address transportation concerns at a local level, including the establishment of public transit systems.

The SGRC also produces a Regional Comprehensive Plan, similar to local, county-level Comprehensive Planning efforts. A goal in

this plan includes the need to determine the transportation needs of seniors and an aging population. This impacts the mobility of the regional population and how communities develop and implement their land use policies.

Overall, Ware County is meeting the goals and objectives set out by GDOT and other entities. Ware County should work to include public transportation in its next comprehensive plan update and continue to actively participate in regional transportation and land use planning efforts with the SGRC.



Entrance to Okefenokee Swamp in Waycross County, GA

Source: Michael Rivera

Transit Need and Demand

Using the Transportation Research Board's *TCRP Report 161: Methods for Forecasting Demand and Quantifying Need for Rural Passenger Transportation: Final Workbook and Final Spreadsheet Tool*, the SGRC was able to produce the following estimates of rural public transit needs and demand for Ware County.

Overall, there is a need for 351,000 trips annually for riders in Ware County based on the estimated mobility gap. The analysis shows that there is an estimated demand for 28,000 public rider trips annually (not including POS trips). Currently Ware County provides about 4,572 public trips annually, indicating an unmet demand for rural public transit trips of nearly 23,428 trips per year.

Further analysis shows that there is an estimated demand of 65,500 POS trips that

could be ordered by the six Human Service Providers (HSPs) operating in Ware County. These HSPs currently provide around 13,000 trips per year.

There is a combined estimated demand of 93,500 trips annually between the public riders and POS trips.

This data shows a combined estimated unmet demand of 75,928 trips, but it does not necessarily indicate an immediate demand for rural public transportation, because many of these potential riders find alternatives for transportation, like getting a ride with friends or family, walking, riding a bicycle, etc.

However, this along with other data (such as hours of service availability) should be used before determining whether or not to invest in capital or operational improvements to the transit system (i.e. more buses, or extended hours of service).



Blue Star Highway Memorial in Ware County, Ga.

Source: Michael Rivera

Peer Data Worksheet									
Input Data from Peer Transit Systems or Existing Transit Service									
Name of Peer System		Tift County	Coffee County	Pierce County					
Population of Area		40,721	42,947	18,758					
Size of Area Served (Square Miles)		269	603	316					
Annual Vehicle-Miles of Service Provided		58,856		191,720					
Annual Vehicle-Hours of Service Provided		3,524		10,681					
Route-Deviation, Demand-Response)		Demand-Response	Demand-Response	Demand-Response					
Number of One-Way Trips Served per Year		11,719		15,013					
Other Carriers (Low, Medium, High)		Low	Low	Low					

Results of Peer Data Comparison		Annual Vehicle-		Annual
		Population	miles	vehicles-hours
Input Data for My System:		18,758	191,720	3,524
Observed Trip Rates		Demand Estimate Based On:		
Peer Values		Population	Annual Vehicle-	Annual
			miles	vehicles-hours
Trips per Capita				
Maximum	0.8	15,006		
Average	0.5	9,379		
Median	0.5	9,379		
Minimum	0.3	5,627		
Trips per Vehicle-Mile				
Maximum	0.2		38,344	
Average	0.1		19,172	
Median	0.1		19,172	
Minimum	0.1		19,172	
Trips per Vehicle-Hour				
Maximum	3.3			11,629
Average	2.4			8,458
Median	2.4			8,458
Minimum	1.4			4,934
Values expected for my system				
Maximum		15,006	38,344	11,629.0
Average		9,379	19,172	8,458.0
Median		9,379	19,172	8,458.0
Minimum		5,627	19,172	4,934.0

Figure 96 Peer Community Comparison from Rural Transit Demand Tool

Transit Recommendation

Based on the research in this report it is the recommendation of the Southern Georgia Regional Commission that Ware County continue to operate and, in the future, expand transit services to accommodate more riders and trips as needed. The demographic and transit demand analysis show there is a gap in unmet demand and need in Ware County, and with expanded marketing and outreach Ware

County Transit could help meet the needs of residents better.

In cooperation with other local governments which provide transit and the SGRC, Ware County should work to develop regional flyers and brochures that better inform the public, social service agencies, etc. of the availability and affordability of Ware County Transit.

5-year Capital and Operating Plan

Included in this section are the capital and operating budget plans for a five-year period, FY2017-FY2022. These should only be used as guidance. By FY2020, this plan estimates that one additional vehicle will be purchased for Ware County Transit.

FY2017-2018		
Net Operating Summary		
Administrative Total / Ratio	\$ 46,850.00	17%
Operating Total / Ratio	\$ 231,825.00	83%
Total Operating Budget	\$ 278,675.00	
LESS: POS Revenue	\$ -	
LESS: Non-5311 Expenses	\$ -	
Public Transportation Budget	\$ 278,675.00	
LESS: 10% Fare Revenue	\$ 27,867.50	
Net Operating Total	\$ 250,807.50	

Vehicles	6
Average Trips Per Vehicle	188
Total Trips Projected	22,285
Percentage of Public Trips	23.72%
POS Trips	17,277
POS Amount	\$ 135,508.00
Rate Per Trip	\$ 7.84
POS Fully Allocated Costs	\$ 14.52
Total Public Trips	5,007
Subsidized Revenue Per Public Trip	\$ 25.05
Expected Farebox Per Trip	\$ 5.57

Budget Summary	Totals	Federal	State	Local
Operating Budget Total	\$ 250,807.50	\$ 125,403.75	\$ -	\$ 125,403.75
POS Local Funds	\$ 125,403.75	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 125,403.75
Excess POS Local Funds	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Capital Budget Total	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Budget Grand Total	\$ 125,403.75	\$ 125,403.75	\$ -	\$ -

Ware County Transit Development Plan

FY2021-2022																																												
Net Operating Summary																																												
Administrative Total / Ratio	\$ 51,351.33		17%																																									
Operating Total / Ratio	\$ 254,098.67		83%																																									
Total Operating Budget	\$ 305,450.00																																											
LESS: POS Revenue	\$ -																																											
LESS: Non-5311 Expenses	\$ -																																											
Public Transportation Budget	\$ 305,450.00																																											
LESS: 10% Fare Revenue	\$ 30,545.00																																											
Net Operating Total	\$ 274,905.00																																											
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