Valdosta-Lowndes MPO
Transit Feasibility Study

December 2006

URS

South Georgia
Regional Development Center

REPORT

VALDOSTA-LOWNDES MPO

TRANSIT FEASIBILITY STUDY

URS Corporation
1625 Summit Lake Drive
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December 2006

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In 2002 the Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) was created for the purpose of providing comprehensive planning services that result in plans and programs that will support economic vitality, increase safety and security, and enhance mobility and accessibility of motorized and nonmotorized users of regional transportation systems for residents in the greater Lowndes County area. This significant event occurred because the urbanized area of Valdosta has exceeded 50,000 residents, surpassing the population threshold to become an MPO. With the area continuing to grow, the problems associated with that growth are being planned for now by the MPO. Also in 2002, the South Georgia Regional Development Center was designated as the MPO for the Valdosta-Lowndes Urbanized Area. To further the MPO's goals and objectives, in February 2006, the Valdosta-Lowndes MPO hired URS Corporation to conduct a transit feasibility study for the greater Lowndes County area.

The overall goal of this feasibility study is to determine the need and demand for transit, provide service alternatives, and calculate start-up costs, thereby providing recommendations from which the MPO and area leaders can make informed decisions concerning the future of transit service in the greater Lowndes area.

To determine the need for public transportation services, the existing conditions were evaluated. This included current transportation services, community demographics, and potential transit attractions. A number of transit service options were developed and evaluated. To assist and direct the study, a steering committee composed of area leaders was formed. The URS consultant team met with the steering committee to kick off the study and at several milestone dates to review new material and survey results before presentation to the public.

2.0 TRANSIT GOALS

The URS consultant team working with the steering committee formulated goals for area transit, which were included in the ongoing comprehensive planning process by the MPO. The following transit goals were adopted by the comprehensive planning committee in March 2006.

2.1 SERVICE PLANNING OBJECTIVES

There are two major planning objectives in determining the feasibility of implementing transit services in the Valdosta/Lowndes County area:

- Maximize mobility within the Valdosta/Lowndes County metropolitan area by ensuring that public transit is provided in the right places, at the right times, to satisfy the changing travel needs within the community.
- Ensure that all future transit services operate as efficient and cost effective as possible and, are affordable to both the customers and local tax payers.

2.2 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goals and objectives of this study are based on the regional, county and city goals for transportation in Valdosta/Lowndes County.

Goal 1

Develop an effective public transit system that will meet the needs of a growing population.

Objective 1.1: Connect major activity centers with each other and with emerging activity centers, key corridors and key residential pockets.

- **Action** Develop key intermodal and or transfer centers.
- **Action** Integrate key county developments, such as Valdosta State University, Moody Air Force Base, Wild Adventures, Industrial Parks, and Regional Airport into transit service planning.

Objective 1.2: Understand and accommodate the transit needs of the transit dependent and choice riders.

- **Action** Communicate with potential riders to develop routes and enhancements that serve the greatest needs of the county.
- **Action** Understand forecasted population and employment growth.

Objective 1.3: Support local employers' transit needs for employees by evaluating service hours, frequency and connections.

- **Action** Engage local employers and the Chamber of Commerce in discussion of transit service planning.

Objective 1.4: Develop a system plan that is coordinated with the goals, objectives and policies of the local comprehensive plans, including desires for intermodal facilities.

Goal 2

Explore opportunities for institutional arrangements that maximize county and local resources.

Objective 2.1: Explore alternatives for providing transit and paratransit services with consideration of current service quality.

Objective 2.2: Continue to foster a collaborative culture between local jurisdictions through the development of a project advisory committee.

These goals were formulated for use in directing this transit feasibility study and have been at the forefront of any transit service discussions.

2.3 LONG RANGE GOALS

The long-term benefit of transit is the reduction in single occupant automobile travel and greater mobility for the general public. As the population in Lowndes County continues to grow, the congestion on roadways that serve the area will increase. It has been pointed out that in the United States we cannot build enough roads to keep up with the pace of congestion. Transit, carpooling, walking, biking, and other modes of transportation are going to play larger and larger parts in the reduction of congestion, auto emissions, and vehicle miles traveled as we reach the point where roads can no longer be feasibly widened, and right-of-way purchases become to cost prohibitive.

3.0 THE STEERING COMMITTEE

The steering committee was formed to assist and direct the transit study. The members of the steering committee were area residents and community leaders. Their assistance and direction has been essential in the completion of this study. The steering committee members are listed below:

- Joyce Evans, Past Lowndes County Commissioner
- Larry Hanson, Valdosta City Manager
- Dan McGee, Transportation Planning Coordinator – MPO
- Fred Davis, Valdosta City Schools Transportation Director
- Jill F. Rountree, Valdosta State University Parking and Transportation Director
- T. McDonald, Lowndes County Engineering Department
- T. Leggett Lovan, Southeast Freight – Chamber of Commerce
- Mike Powers, Lowndes County Schools Transportation Director

URS met with the Steering Committee on the following dates:

- February 8th, 2006 – Kick-off meeting.
- April 14th, 2006 – Members met with URS and the MPO to go over material to be presented at the first set of public meetings and to finalize the area wide survey.
- July 27, 2006 – Members met with URS and the MPO to go over material to be presented at the second set of public meetings and to preview findings from the area wide survey.

4.0 STUDY AREA

The primary urban area for the MPO is located in the city of Valdosta. **Figure 1** shows the limits of greater Lowndes County and the limits of the Valdosta urban area. Valdosta is located in South Georgia approximately 230 miles southeast of Atlanta, 90 miles southeast of Albany, 185 miles southwest of Savanna, and 80 miles northeast of Tallahassee, Florida. Cities and towns in the greater Lowndes County area include Hahira, Kinderlou, Lake Park, Dasher, Remerton, Twin Lakes, and Valdosta. The current population in Lowndes County is reported at over 97,000, of which over 45,000 reside in the Valdosta urban area. Population for the Valdosta MSA was reported at over 125,000 in 2005.

While transit service was explored throughout the region, as the study progressed it was determined the Valdosta urban area provided the best opportunity to support a transit system. Also, by looking at the feasibility of starting transit in the urban area, available funding opportunities through State programs could be accessed for use in the urban area. **Figure 2** shows the ultimate transit feasibility study area determined by the steering committee.

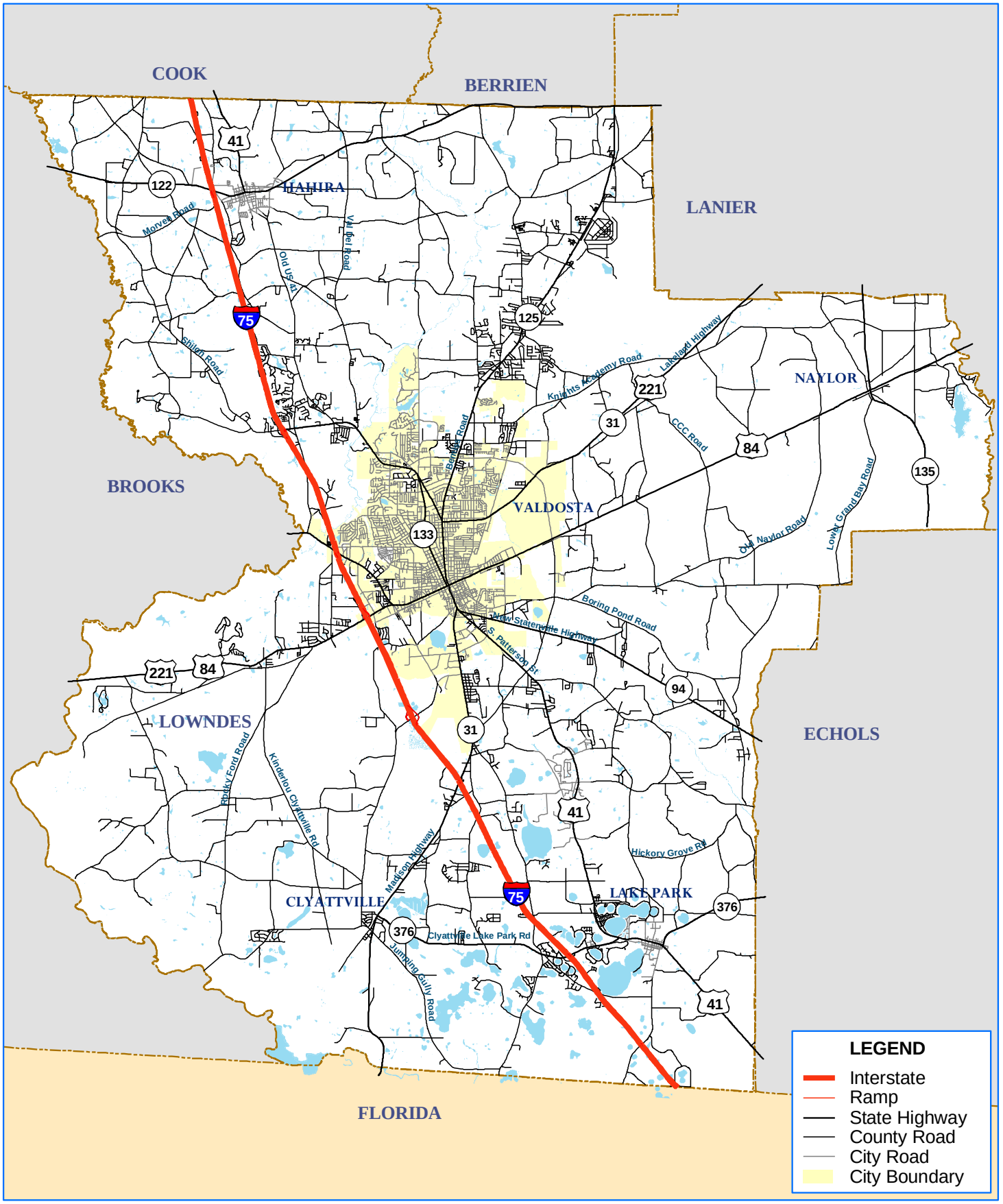
4.1 TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM OVERVIEW

Lowndes County is located along I-75, one of the nations busiest interstates moving over 40,000 vehicles a day. This interstate is a critical north/south freight route traversing from South Florida to Michigan. Interstate 75 is situated on the west side of downtown Valdosta and provides several interchange locations including GA 122 through Hahira, US 41 through Valdosta, US 84 and GA 94 in Valdosta, Old Clyatville Road just south of Valdosta, US 31 and GA 376. The interstate carries through traffic and serves the local area. Sections of this important artery are currently under construction to add capacity.

US 84 is an important east-west connector for South Georgia and carries through traffic while also serving the local area. This roadway acts as a connector to many communities in the South Georgia area. US 41, the original north-south through route previous to I-75, now performs as a local arterial with commercial nodes.

A perimeter road around the east side of Valdosta offers the potential for continued mobility as the area expands to accommodate new growth. This roadway was planned with a long-range view and will become more of an asset in the future. The cost of building the road today would have been highly prohibitive. It currently has commercial nodes along the northern portion, but is still largely undeveloped along the eastern section.

These roadways along with US 221 and GA125, act as major access routes into Valdosta, radiating out similar to the spokes on a wagon wheel. This configuration serves to bring traffic to the area, bringing with it economic benefit and increased traffic congestion. As the routes carry more through traffic, and the local area grows, congestion from automobiles and trucks will increase.



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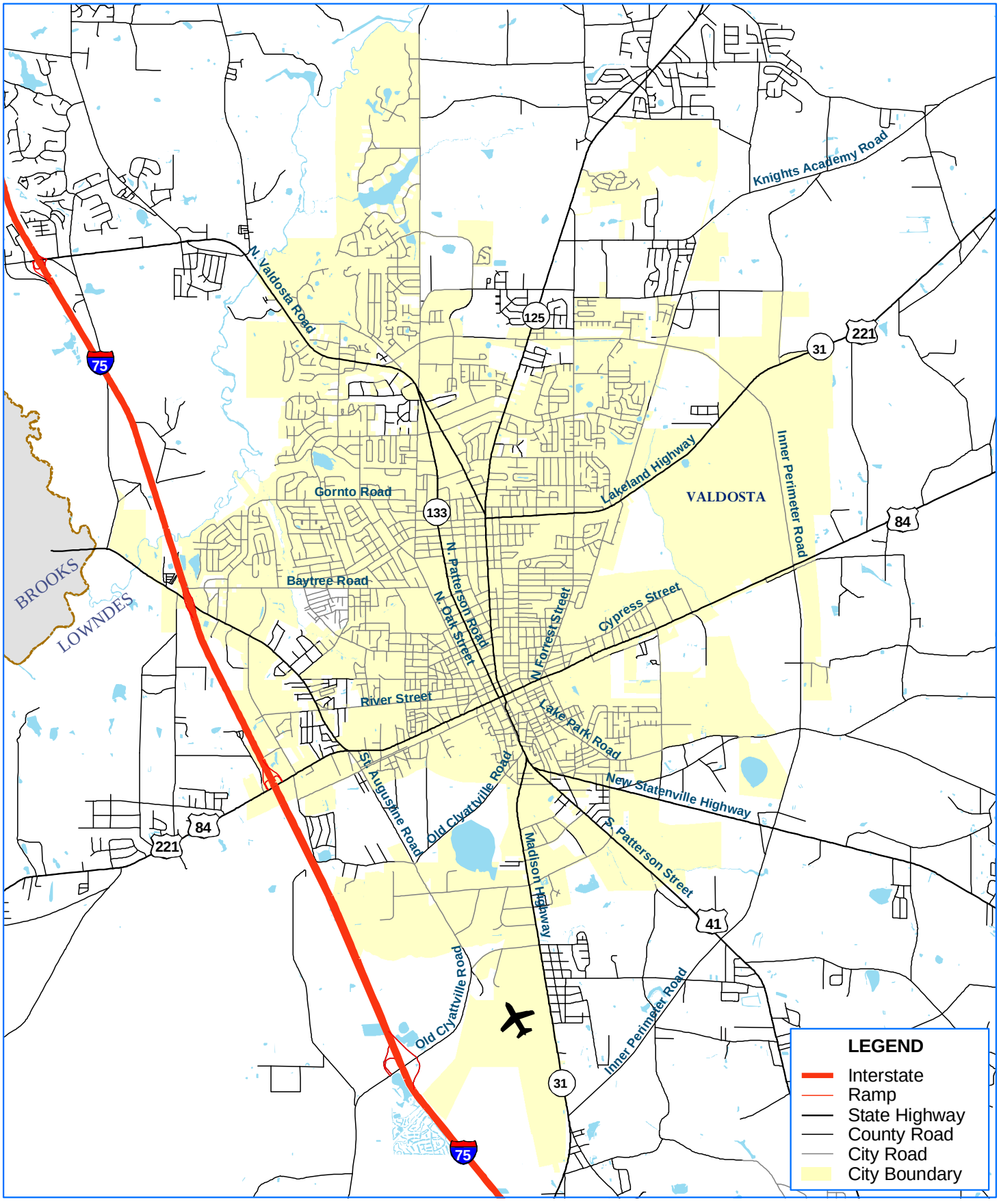
Source: VALOR-GIS
Projection: State Plane
Zone: West Datum: NAD83
Units: Feet

Figure 1

Lowndes County Study Area

0 2.5 5 7.5 10 Miles

N



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Projection: State Plane
Zone: West Datum: NAD83
Units: Feet

Figure 2

City of Valdosta Study Area

0 0.9 1.8 2.7 3.6 Miles

N

The area benefits from a network of freight rail lines that traverse the area north-south and east-west. From an economic point of view, rail is a good indicator of potential growth. From a transportation operations point of view, rail brings its own set of challenges. Rail crossing points must be considered for time delays when looking at any transit routes that cross them. There is currently no opportunity to use these rail lines for any local passenger type rail operations.

Valdosta also benefits from a regional airport that has future plans to expand operations to accommodate larger passenger carriers. Current trends in the aviation industry do not indicate an increase in expansion to smaller hubs, but this condition may change in the future.

The only transit offered in the area is a rural demand response system that is designed to serve special needs riders. Greyhound Bus does offer a regional system and maintains a station in Valdosta.

Bike and pedestrian transportation facilities are limited. There are currently two statewide designated bike routes through the area. The South Georgia Regional Development Center has recently developed and the local municipalities have adopted a regional bike and pedestrian plan and are currently planning for a local bike/pedestrian master plan. Any local transit in the area will require reinforcement in the form of better pedestrian access to the system.

The area is home to Valdosta State University with a student population of over 5,000 and would benefit from a coordinated transit service that would work with the existing campus transit service. Historically, university students tend to use transit, bike, and pedestrian facilities with more frequency.

In summary, the area has excellent vehicle access with the interstate and radial routes. The perimeter road offers increased mobility and commercial opportunity as the area expands. The downtown is experiencing increased congestion due to increased growth. The rail lines, while good economic engines, do present some mobility issues for any future transit. The airport has potential but is not expected to expand in the near future due to aviation trends. Pedestrian and bike facilities are currently in the planning stage of being expanded. Pedestrian connections to any future transit will require some investment to support a future transit system.

5.0 ESTABLISHING TRANSIT NEED AND RIDERSHIP DEMAND

A key step in determining transit feasibility is a careful analysis of the mobility needs of various segments of the population and the potential ridership of transit services. Transit need and demand analysis is the basic determination of the demand for public transportation in a given area. There are several factors that affect demand, not all of which can be forecast. Transit need and demand estimation makes use of the demographic data and trends and is important in determining the feasibility of any transit plan.

5.1 METHODOLOGY

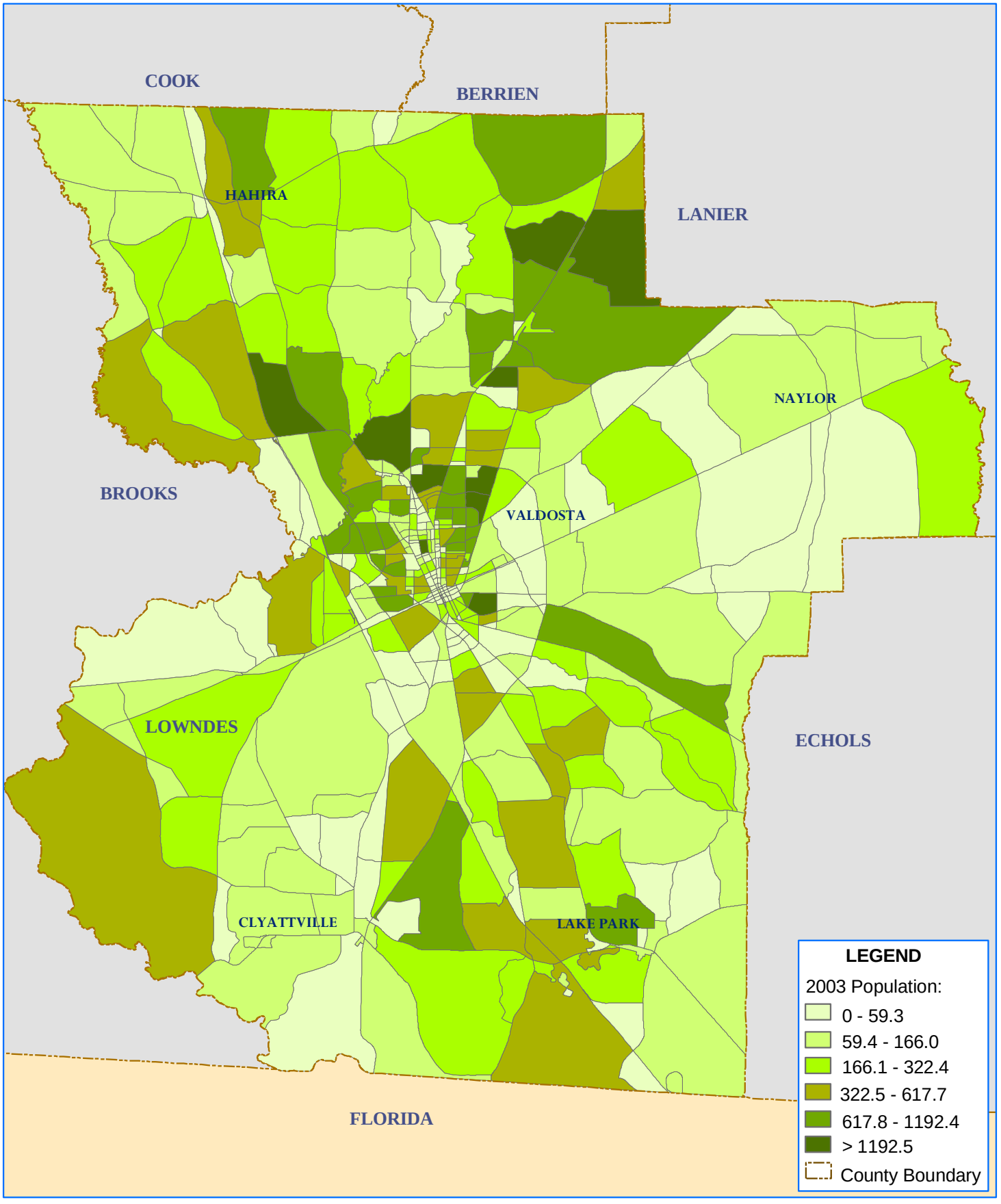
Demographic data were used to calculate the areas of greatest transit need and demand. The categories used for the analysis were population type, population income, employment, and zero-vehicle households. Using these categories, URS developed a "transit need and demand ranking index" to determine the areas of greatest transit need and demand. A detailed description of these categories and the ranking system is detailed in later sections. This analysis determined the location of high potential transit zones.

Once the index was created, it was overlayed with other data to illustrate spatial densities of each measure by traffic analysis zones (TAZs) in the study area. TAZ's are a geographical unit within the travel demand model and contain information regarding population, housing, employment, and student enrollment. The data was arrayed into ranges, then plotted with light to dark shades of color representing the range for a given variable or group of variables.

5.2 DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

To analyze the demographic composition of the study area and to establish the area wide demand for transit, demographic data based on the 2000 census and population projections utilized in the MPO travel demand model were used as the main sources of information. These were supplemented with field reviews, interviews, and public involvement. The major categories included in determining a transit demand and need index are listed below:

- ***Population Projections*** – The MPO has recently completed population projections and included these in the current transportation demand model.
- ***Population Density*** – Transit relies on higher population densities for demand. The population densities were determined via the 2000 Census and the MPO population projections. Transit requires a population density of 1,000 persons or greater per square mile to support traditional bus service. **Figures 3** and **4** displays the population densities for 2003 and 2030.
- ***Population Income*** – The population income categories were determined via the 2000 Census and the MPO population projections. Lower income households can be limited in transportation options. **Figure 5** displays the income ranges for 2003.
- ***Percent of Occupied Housing Units with No Vehicles (Limited Mobility)*** – Persons in these households must rely on modes of transportation other than the automobile, or rely on others with automobiles. Provision of public transportation services can greatly increase the mobility and opportunities of persons in these households. The percent of the population with limited mobility was determined via the 2000 Census and the MPO population projections. **Figure 6** displays the limited mobility ranges for 2003. These are displayed by Traffic Analysis Zone (TAZ) as the projections were taken from the MPO travel demand model.



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Source: VALOR-GIS
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Figure 3

Lowndes County 2003 Population
(by Traffic Analysis Zone)

0 2.5 5 7.5 10
Miles

N

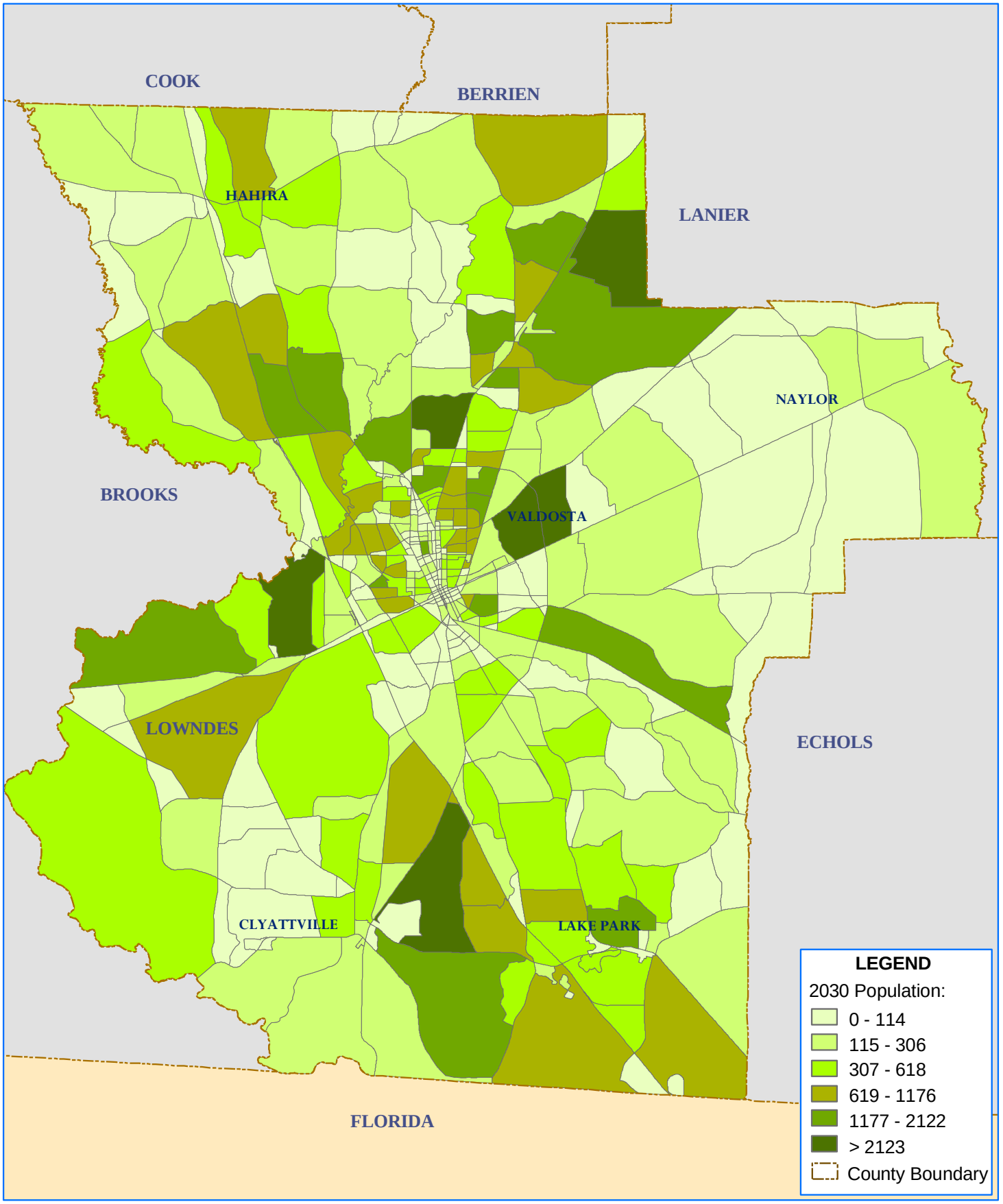

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Figure 4
Lowndes County 2030 Population
(by Traffic Analysis Zone)

0 2.5 5 7.5 10
Miles

N

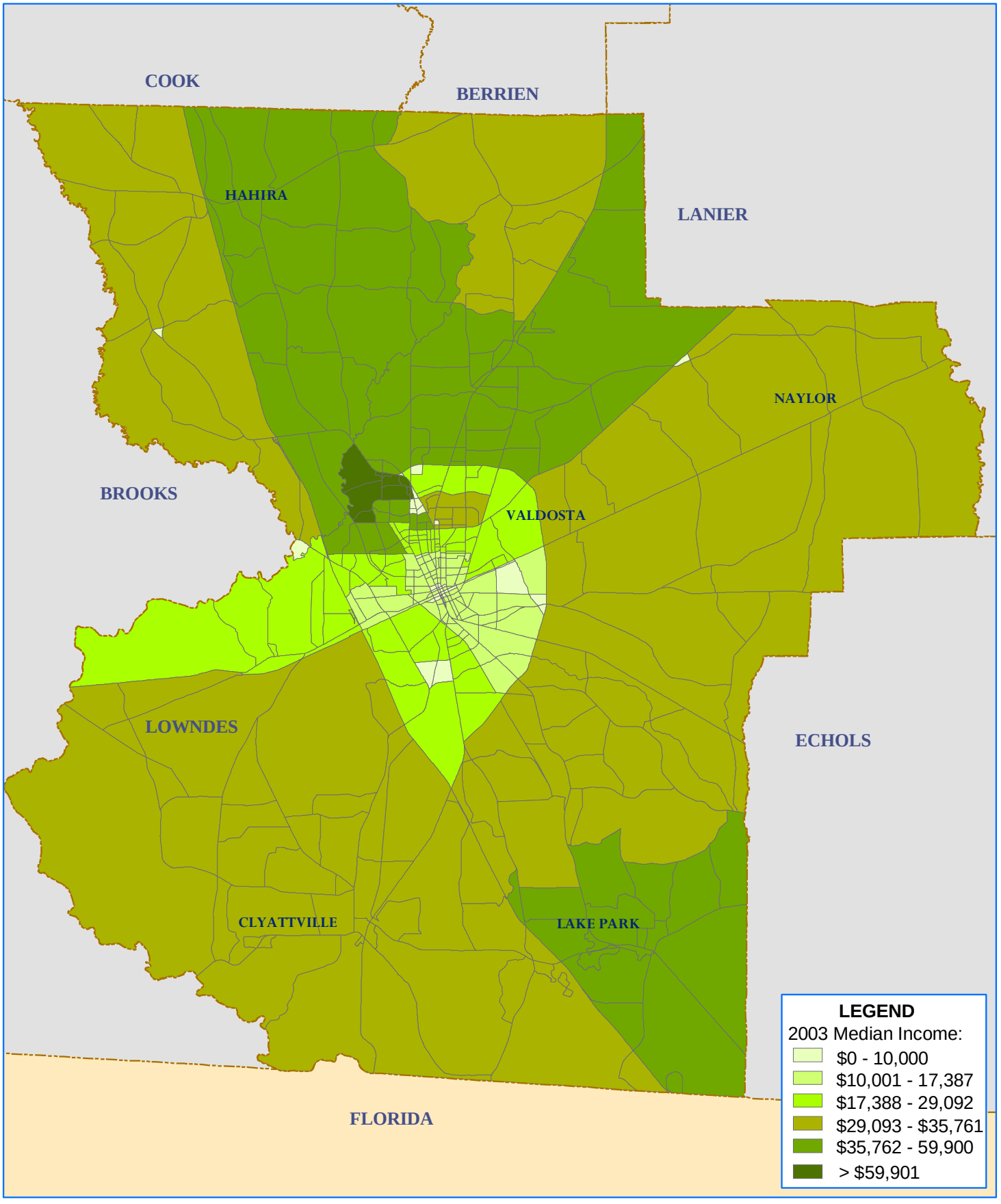

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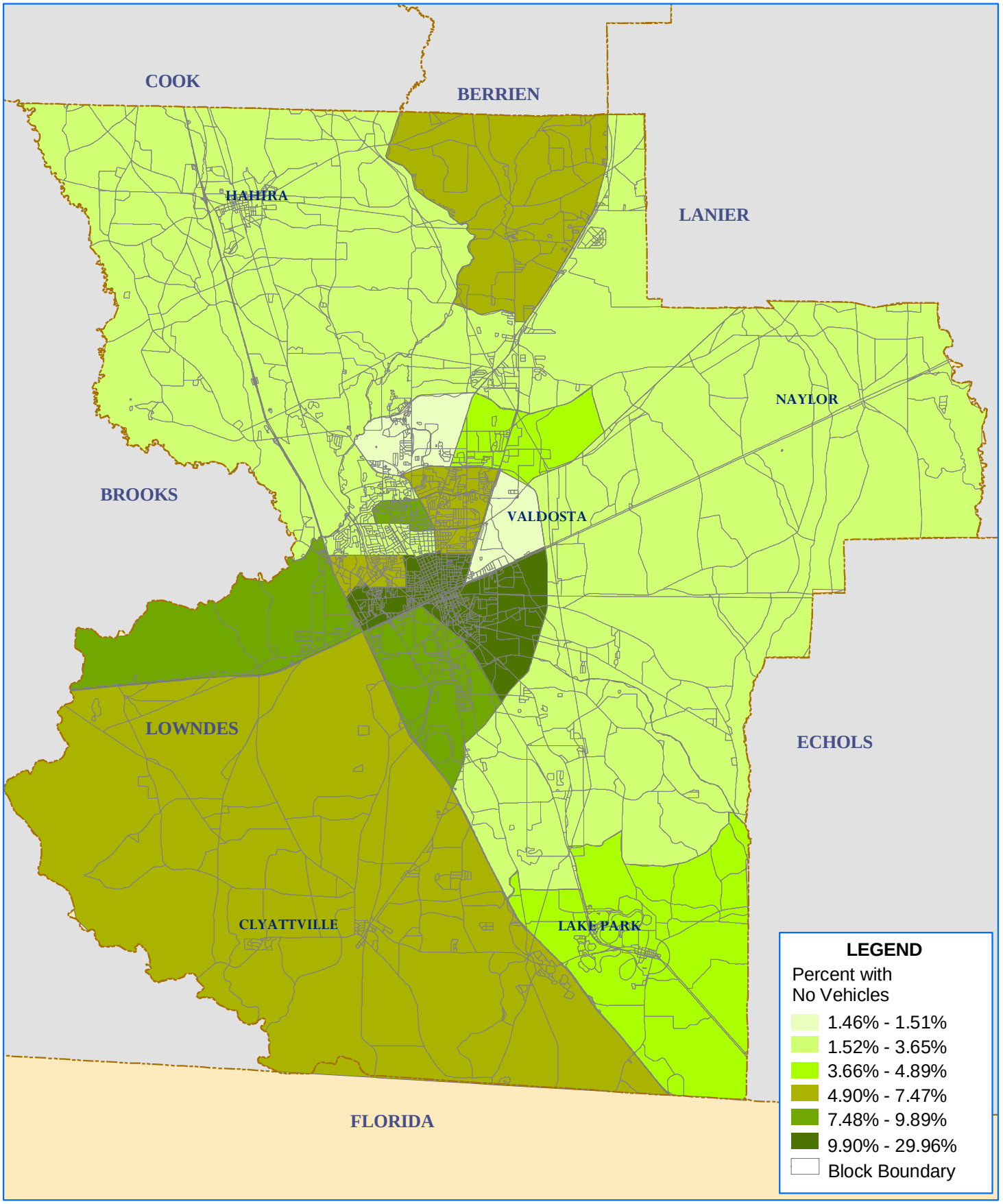
Figure 5
Lowndes County 2003 Income
(by Traffic Analysis Zone)

0 2.5 5 7.5 10 Miles

N



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Source: VALOR-GIS
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Figure 6

Lowndes County Percent of Occupied Housing Units with No Vehicle Available 2000 (by Census Block)

0 2.5 5 7.5 10 Miles

N

- ***Employment Clusters*** – An important transit destination or attractor, these clusters were determined via the 2000 Census and the MPO 2030 employment projections. Existing employment was also considered; the top 20 employers are shown in **Table 1**. These determinations were supplemented with field reviews and interviews. Subsequent field reviews and interviews helped determine were the existing clusters were and were future growth is expected. **Figures 7** and **8** display the employment densities for 2003 and 2030.

Table 1
Top 20 Employers

Company	Type of Business	Employees
Moody Air Force Base	Military (civilian)	4,448
South Georgia Medical Center	Hospital	2,300
Valdosta State University	Education	2,280
Lowndes County School System	Education	1,279
Valdosta City School System	Education	950
Convergys Corp.	Customer Service	733
City of Valdosta	Government	659
Lowndes County	Government	540
Packaging Corp. of America	Kraft Paper	350
Roadway Express	Transportation	450
Lowe's Distribution Center	Distribution	450
Langdale	Forest Products	390
Regal Marine	Yachts	120
SAFT America	Batteries	232
Southern Bag	Textile Bags	300
Dillard's Distribution Center	Clothing/Retail Center	275
Eller Industries	Fiberglass Tubs	200
Georgia Power Company	Utility	150
Griffin Corp.	Agricultural Chemicals	200

Source: Lowndes/Valdosta Chamber of Commerce

- ***Retail Clusters*** – An important trip destination or attractor, these clusters were determined via the 2000 Census and the MPO employment projections. These determinations were supplemented with field reviews and interviews. The field reviews and interviews helped determine were the existing clusters were and where future growth is expected.
- ***Special population groups*** – The senior population groups were analyzed as a limited mobility class. Also analyzed were the large student population attached to the Valdosta State University. This was accomplished via a student-housing database made available for this analysis.

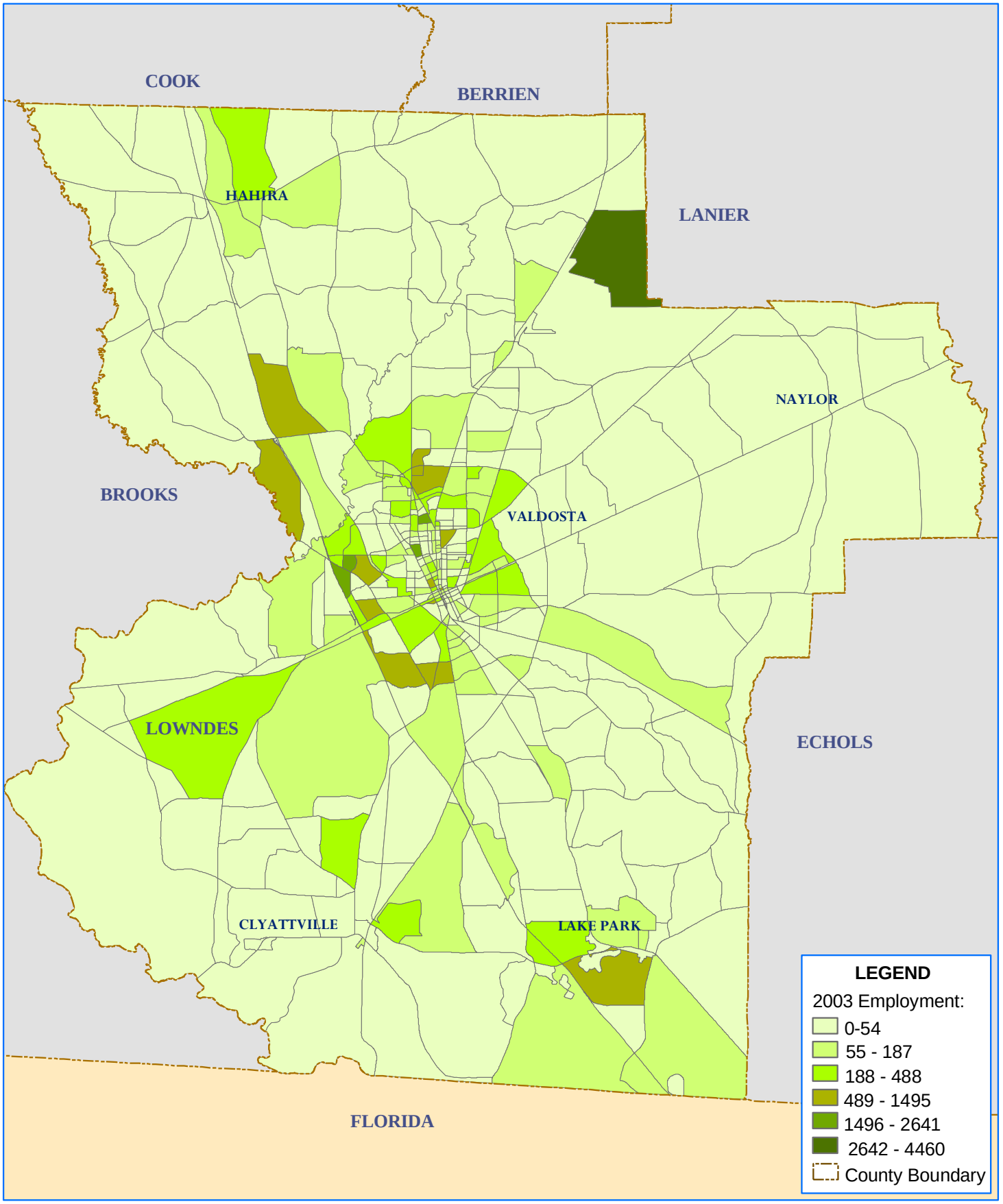

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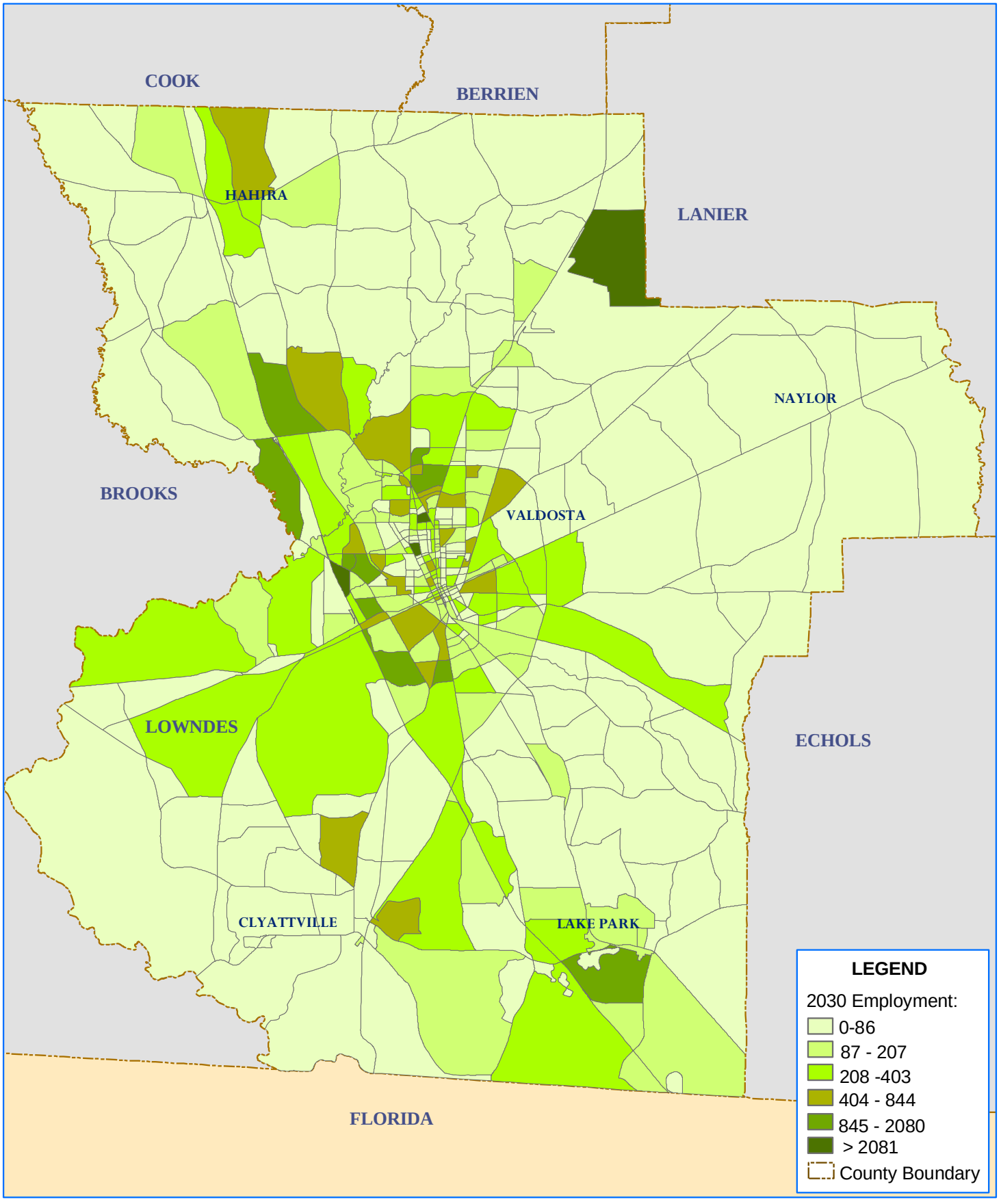
Figure 7

Lowndes County 2003 Employment (by Traffic Analysis Zone)

0 2.5 5 7.5 10 Miles

N



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Units: Feet

Figure 8

Lowndes County 2030 Employment (by Traffic Analysis Zone)

0 2.5 5 7.5 10 Miles

N

5.3 RANKING ANALYSIS

The population and employment categories were analyzed and the information ranked to determine high potential transit zones. This included population densities, employment densities, retail densities, income categories, and limited mobility indicators.

These categories were ranked in the following manner:

1. The High Potential Transit zones are based on the 2003 Valdosta-Lowndes County MPO model's traffic analysis zones and the percent of occupied housing units with no vehicles available by census tract, Census 2000 from the Census Bureau. The model contains population, employment, income, and retail information on each traffic analysis zone. The information of each of the categories was divided by the area of the traffic zone to weight the results. This was done because the larger traffic analysis zones would have more population, employment, income, and retail due to their size.
2. The median of each density was determined. For population, employment, and retail densities, any value below the median was given a score of one, at the median a score of two, and above the median a score of three. For income, any value below the median was given a score of three, at the median a score of two, and above the median, a score of one.
3. Using the 2000 Decennial Census, we located occupancy data for Lowndes County. Percents above the median received a score of three, percents at the median received a score of two, and percents below the median received a score of one.
4. The scores from the population, employment, income, and retail densities and the percent of occupied housing units with no vehicles available by census tract were added together for a total score.
5. The total score was reclassified as low (values one through five), medium (values six and seven), medium high (values eight and nine), and high (values ten through 12).

The resulting analysis yielded high potential transit zones shown in **Figure 9**. These zones, based on these categories, have the highest potential to produce demand for transit use.

After the potential transit zones were determined, consideration was given for the student population from Valdosta State University. The student population is expected to be a high user of transit especially if the university and/or local government enact policies that encourage its use (i.e. forbidding parking on campus by freshmen, including bus fare in tuition). A student-housing database that geographically located student address currently enrolled in Valdosta State University was used to plot those locations as an overlay onto the high potential transit zones. **Figure 10** shows the overlay with the high potential transit zones.

The MPOs travel demand model was used to plot the high use traffic corridors, based on Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) for the year 2003, the model base year. This information was checked and updated for the current available AADT traffic counts for 2004. An overlay of these plots on the high potential transit zones is displayed in **Figure 11**.

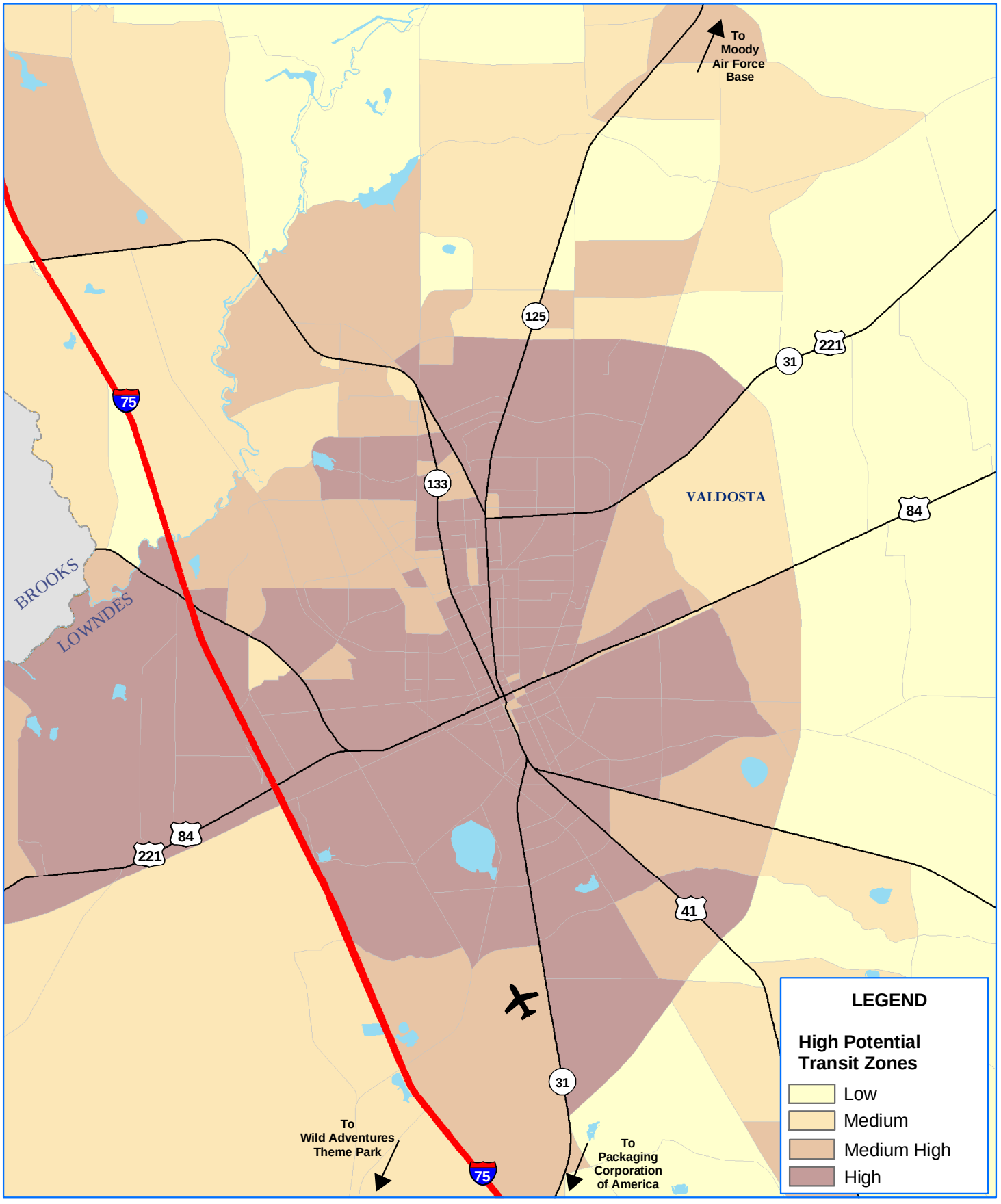

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Figure 9

City of Valdosta High Potential Transit Zones

0 0.9 1.8 2.7 3.6 Miles

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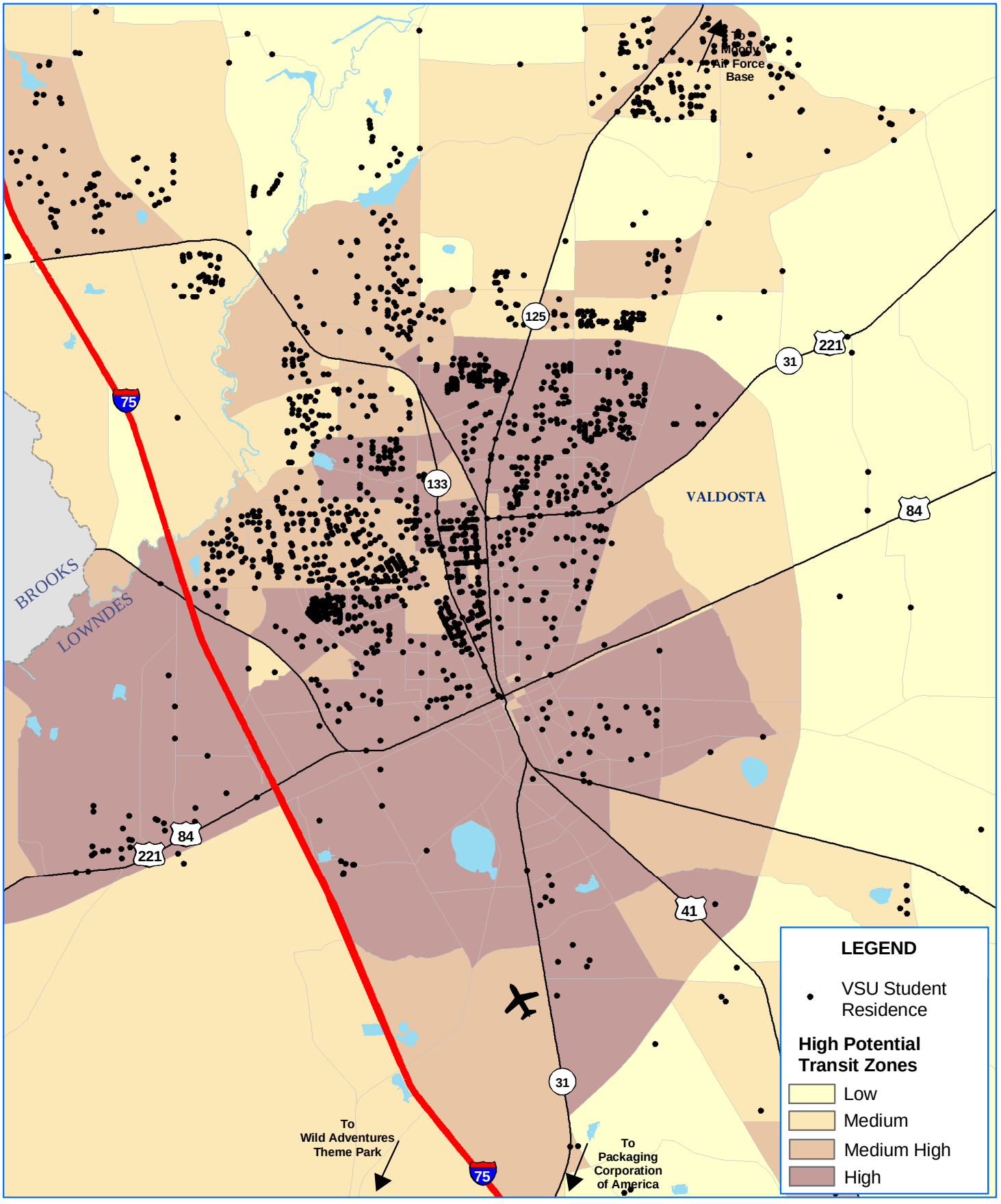

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Figure 10

City of Valdosta High Potential Transit Zones with VSU Student Residences

0 0.9 1.8 2.7 3.6 Miles

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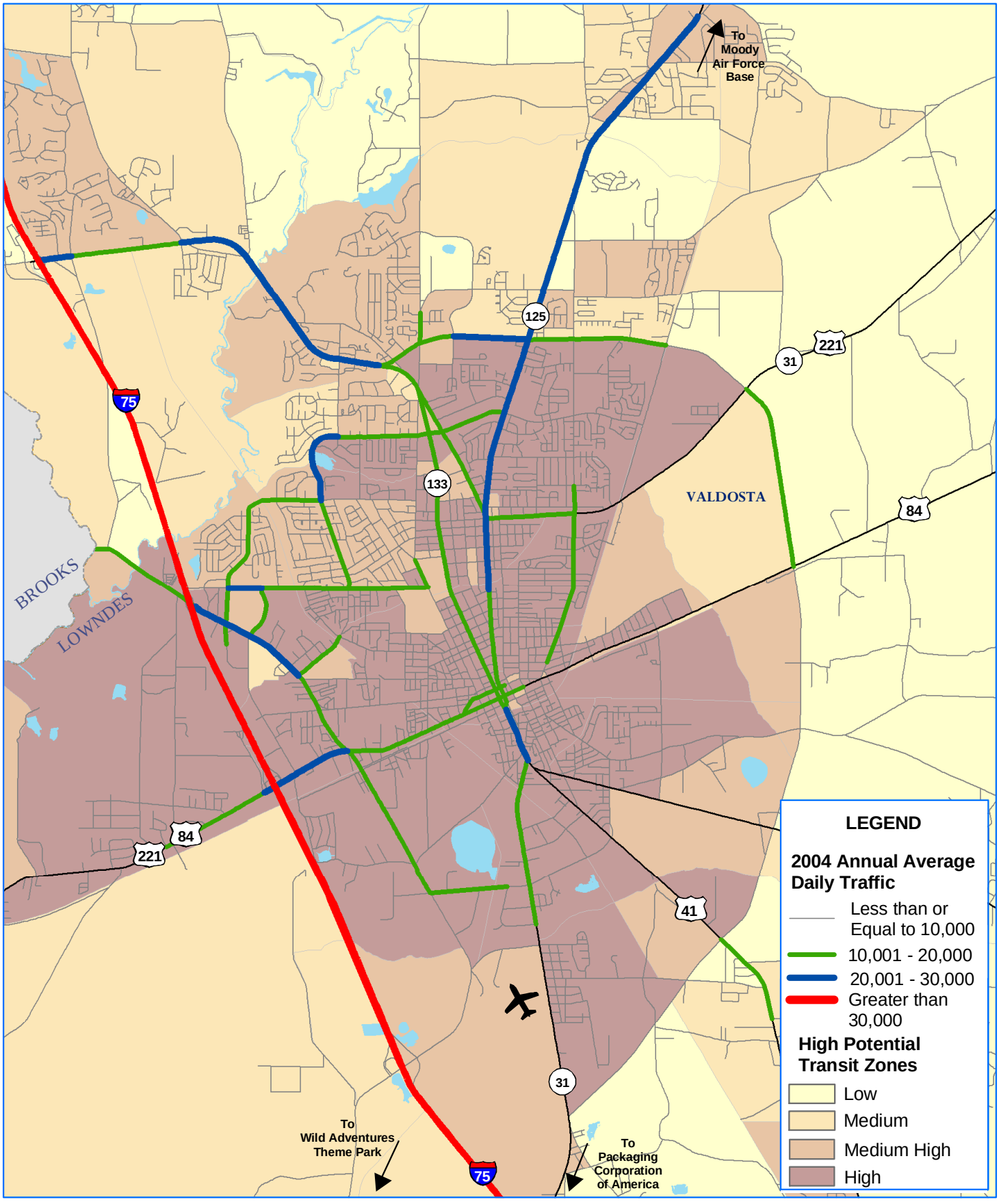

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Units: Feet

Figure 11

City of Valdosta High Potential Transit Zones with 2004 Annual Average Daily Traffic

0 0.9 1.8 2.7 3.6 Miles

N

The MPOs travel demand model was used to plot the high use traffic corridors, based on Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) projected for the year 2030, the model horizon year. As congestion from auto use becomes heavier in the future, it is these corridors that, if served by an alternate means of transportation, may yield transit users. An overlay of these plots on the high potential transit zones is displayed in **Figure 12**.

Figure 13 shows an overlay of all of the plotted elements together, the high potential transit zones, the student database, the 2004 AADT, the employment clusters, and other trip attractors. It is from this analysis that the concentrations of elements that will utilize transit and attract transit users that the transit potential can begin to be discerned.

5.4 RESULTS

Initial results of the needs and demand analysis show that while the Greater Lowndes County area may not have the densities to support a traditional transit system, the Valdosta urban area does have some moderate densities that could support transit use. There are also a number of population groups in the area that would benefit from transit including a large student population, low-income households, households with no vehicles, and the elderly.

Another strong indicator is the large number of employers and retail centers in and adjacent to the Valdosta urban area. Future growth in the area is forecasted to continue with employment growth directed at the established industrial parks. Corridors with projected growth are associated with the employment areas such as Moody Air Force Base. These corridors can form the backbone of high use routes for transit.

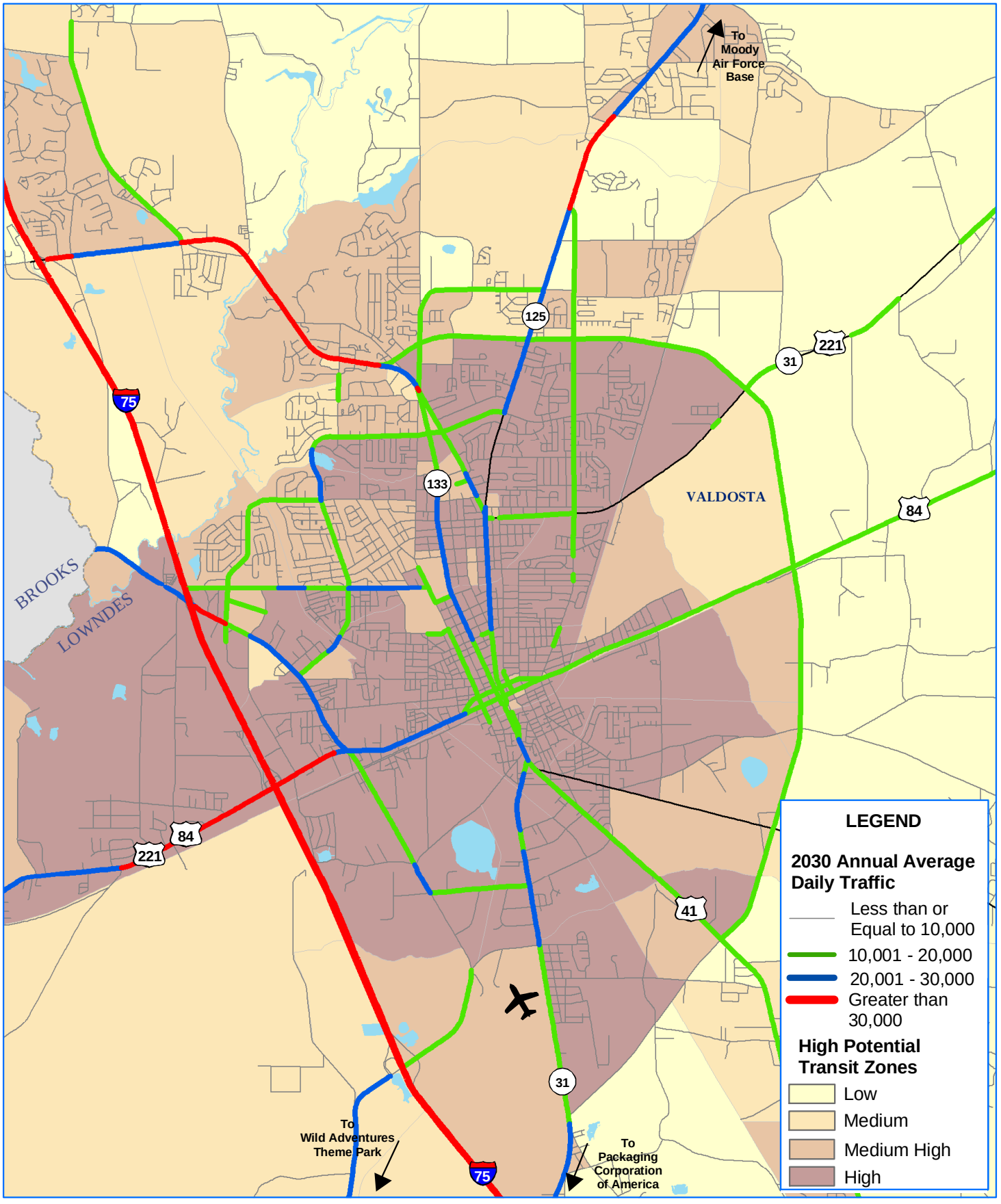

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Figure 12

City of Valdosta High Potential Transit Zones with 2030 Annual Average Daily Traffic

0 0.9 1.8 2.7 3.6 Miles

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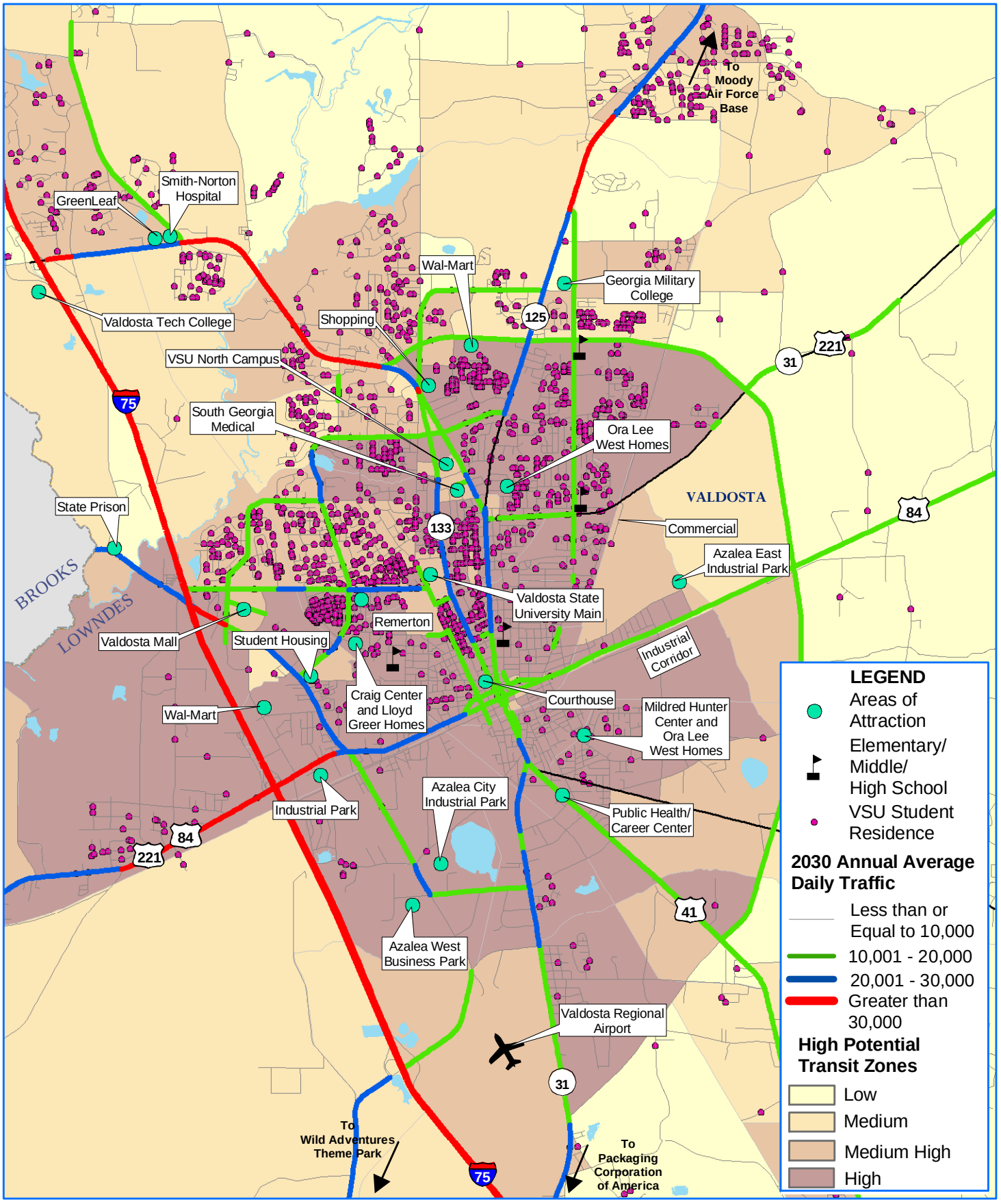

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Source: VALOR-GIS
Projection: State Plane
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Units: Feet

Figure 13
City of Valdosta High Potential Transit Zones with 2030 Annual Average Daily Traffic, VSU Student Residences, and Areas of Attractions

0 0.9 1.8 2.7 3.6
Miles

N

6.0 AREA WIDE SURVEY

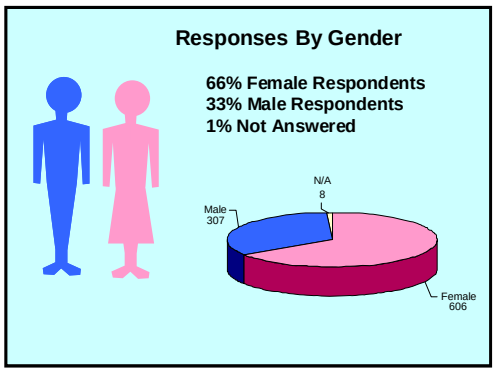
To obtain additional information on potential demand for transit, it's operating hours and likely destinations, a survey was conducted within the Valdosta urban area. URS met with the Steering Committee on February 8th, 2006 about the survey instrument and delivery methods that could be utilized for this study. It was determined that an area wide survey delivered by mail with the utility bills would offer a chance for involvement by a large number of stakeholders in the area. This served two purposes, one to gain transit related information from the public and to inform and perpetuate the public dialog about transit service in the area. It was pointed out that this survey would only reach those persons that paid a utility bill. It was determined that the survey would be made available at public meetings and through special outreach meetings held by the MPO to gain survey input from senior citizens and students.

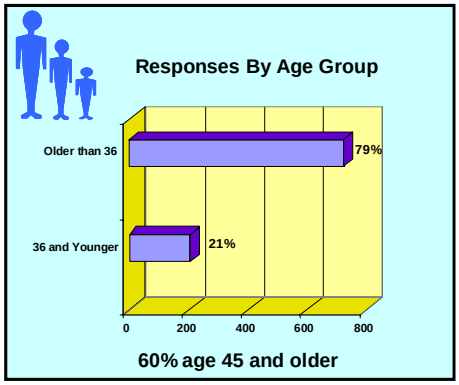
Approximately 16,100 surveys were made available, 16,000 of those were mailed with utility bills. Responses from the mailed out surveys and the public meetings yielded 921 returned surveys. These surveys were entered into a database for analysis. Scanned copies of the surveys and the survey database are included in **Appendix A** on the appendix CD included with this report.

Figure 14 displays the front and back of the two sided survey instrument that was developed with the Steering Committee.

6.1 SURVEY RESULTS ANALYSIS

The majority of the 921 survey respondents were female over the age of 36. Of the responses to age, 60 percent were older than 45, 79 percent were 37 or older, while 21 percent were 36 and younger.





Survey responses determined that transit service would be utilized on weekdays by 63 percent of respondents. Service for weekdays and weekends was deemed important by 27 percent of responses, while combinations including Saturdays and Sundays only represented 3 percent. Less than 1 percent listed a combination that included a Sunday service only or in combination with a Saturday, or in combination with a weekday service. It can also be inferred that the maximum potential response for a Saturday service in any combination was 37 percent.

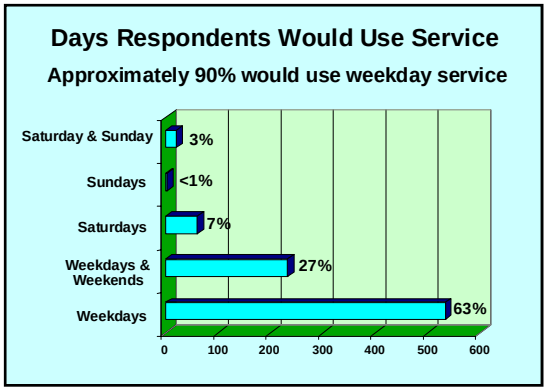


Figure 14
Transit Survey

Do you want bus service in your area? Please fill out this survey! The **Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization** wants to determine what routes residents will take and whether bus service is feasible.

Instructions: Fill out one survey per person. Please CIRCLE or write your appropriate responses.

1. If bus service were available, I would use it for (circle up to TWO (2) destinations)

Work	Shopping	School	Medical/Dental Appointment
Home	Social or Recreational	Other (please specify) _____	

2. My primary destinations would be (CIRCLE up to 5 destinations)

Airport	Georgia Military College	Remerton
Azalea City Industrial Park	Greenleaf Center (Hospital)	Shopping Center
Azalea West Business Park	High School_____	South Georgia Medical Center
Azalea East Industrial Park	Industrial Corridor	State Prison
Church_____	Middle School_____	Student Housing
Conference Center	Moody Air Force Base	Valdosta Mall
Convergys Corporation	Packaging Corporation of America	Valdosta State University
Courthouse	Public Health/Career Center	Valdosta Technical College
Downtown Valdosta	Ora Lee West/Hudson Dockett Community Center	Wal-Mart
Elementary School_____	Recreational Park_____	Wild Adventures

3. I would ride the bus

5 or more days per week	3 to 4 days per week	Less than 3 days per week

4. I would usually ride the bus on

Weekdays	Saturdays	Sundays

5. My normal arrival time (the time I need to reach my destination) is

Before 6:00 AM	6:00—7:00 AM	7:00—8:00 AM
8:00—9:00 AM	9:00—10:00 AM	10:00—11:00 AM
11:00—12:00 PM	Other (please specify) _____	

6. My departure time (the time I leave my destination) is

Before 3:00 PM	3:00 – 4:00 PM	4:00 – 5:00 PM
5:00 – 6:00 PM	6:00 – 7:00 PM	7:00 – 8:00 PM
8:00 – 9:00 PM	9:00 – 10:00 PM	10:00 – 11:00 PM
Other (please specify) _____		

7. The following things are most important to me (1 is least important and 5 is most important). Please circle the number.

Frequency of bus service Least important	1	2	3	4	5	Most important
Travel Time Least important	1	2	3	4	5	Most important
Cost Least important	1	2	3	4	5	Most important
Evening Service Least important	1	2	3	4	5	Most important
Cleanliness of Bus Stops Least important	1	2	3	4	5	Most important
Cleanliness of Buses Least important	1	2	3	4	5	Most important
Safety (Security) Least important	1	2	3	4	5	Most important
Emergency Ride Home Least important	1	2	3	4	5	Most important

8. I plan to take my bike with me when I ride the bus.

Yes No

9. Gender

Male Female

10. Age

Less than 16	16 to 20	21 to 25
26 to 30	31 to 35	36 to 45
46 to 55	56 to65	Over 65

11. What is your zip code? HOME_____ WORK_____

12. Please provide your HOME address or the closest intersection where you live. For example, *301 North Monroe Street* or *Monroe Street and Tennessee Street*

_____

13. Additional Comments

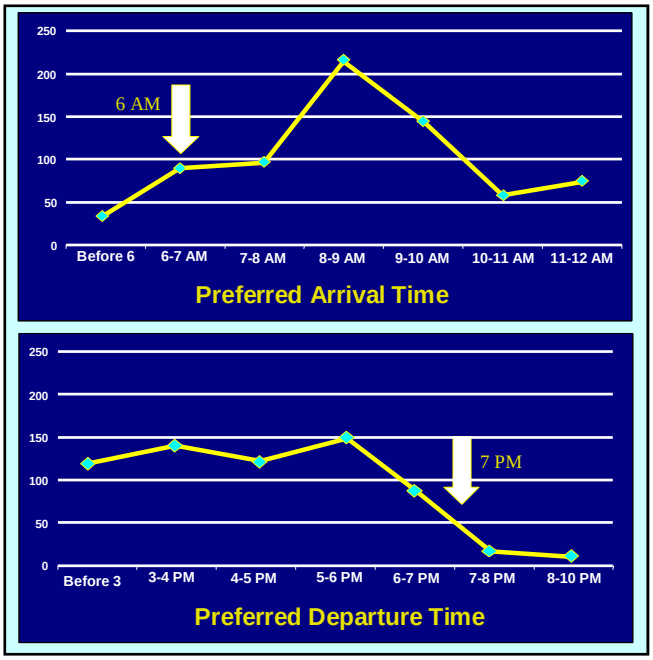
_____

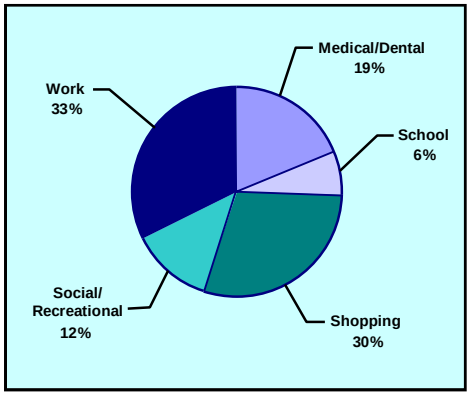
_____

_____

Thank you! Please Return Survey by July 1, 2006 with your utility bill or to: Dan McGee, South Georgia Regional Development Center, 327 West Savannah Avenue, Valdosta, Georgia 31603 at 229.333.5277.

Respondents surveyed rated early hours of operation more important than later hours of operation. Furthermore, residents conferred that the most important hours for transit service are between 8:00 and 9:00 AM, between 3:00 and 4:00 PM, and 5:00 and 6:00 PM. These times correspond closely to work hours and school hours. From the responses a general service time can be inferred. Most demand determined from these responses could be satisfied between 6:00 AM and 7:00 PM.



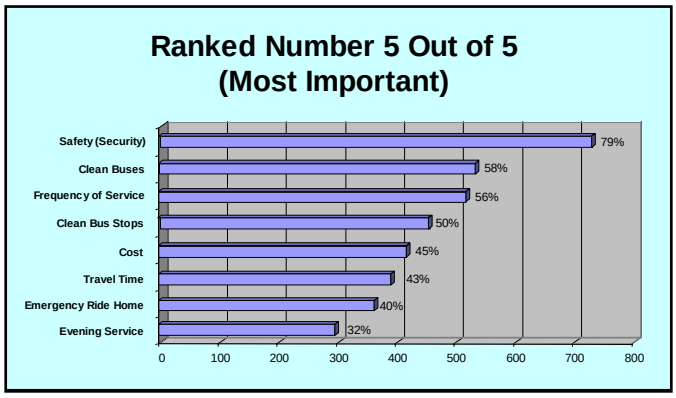


Trip purpose questions were in the form of type of trip and a listing of destinations. The overall trip purpose for respondents is work at 33 percent. Shopping was second at 30 percent. Medical and dental trip represented 19 percent, social and recreational trips were 12 percent, and school trips were 6 percent. The school purpose was underrepresented by this survey as it was targeted at residents who would pay a utility bill. Many of the VSU students would not have received the survey directly, although other opportunities were available for participating. Historically student populations tend to be more transient and more dependant on transit than other segments of the population.

Respondents were able to choose multiple destinations when asked where they would go. The top destination of choice was the Valdosta mall, selected by 62.7 percent. The second top selection was Wal-Mart at 50.2 percent, which has two locations in Valdosta. Downtown Valdosta, which can represent multiple locations and work, shopping, and social/recreational trips, was selected in 45.3 percent or responses. It is notable that while VSU students were underrepresented in the survey, VSU was selected in 21.3 percent of responses.

Top 15 Destinations	Response
Valdosta Mall	62.7%
Wal-Mart	50.2%
Downtown Valdosta	45.3%
Shopping Center	38.9%
South GA Medical Center	29.6%
Valdosta State Univ.	21.3%
Wild Adventures	20.0%
Airport	18.0%
Church	15.2%
Moody AFB	13.4%
Remerton	11.5%
Valdosta Tech College	10.4%
Public Health/Career Center	6.6%
Courthouse	4.5%
Conference Center	4.3%

A series of questions were asked to gage what qualities were important in a transit system. This information will be useful if the effort to market a new transit system to the public is undertaken. Respondents were asked to rank each quality of service indicator and could rank them all equally important. Respondents surveyed rated safety (security) as the most important quality and selected it in 79 percent of the surveys. Clean Buses were ranked high in 58 percent of the responses, while frequency of service was deemed almost equally important at 56 percent. The responses to this series of questions do reveal that safety (and the perception that riding the bus is safe), clean buses, and frequency of service should be primary goals for any transit service started in the area.



To assist in the future bike and pedestrian master planning effort, the question was asked if those who would use transit would also bring their bike. The majority of respondents did not express an interest in riding the bus and bringing their bikes. Only two responses indicated that they would like to bring their bike. Based on this survey it does not appear that including bike racks on buses would be particularly useful. However, as any implementation plan for transit is considered, it must also consider the preferences of the college students and the possibility that the ability to bring their bike would be important.

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide additional written comments. The majority of respondents gave at least one comment. Overall the comments were positive for the possibility of successful transit in the area. The majority of respondents would like a public transit system in the Valdosta/Lowndes Metropolitan Area.

7.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

7.1 PUBLIC MEETINGS

The goal of public involvement should be to produce an informed public that is interested, involved, and collaborative. Public involvement does not occur only at public meetings. Representatives from the MPO have fielded numerous phone calls for information about the transit study and attended civic group gatherings to solicit input and inform the public about the possibility of transit in the area. The goals for public involvement were to form a solid consensus with the publics input, to build public awareness of the transit initiative, to provide empowerment through public support, to educate stakeholders, and to reduce conflict from a lack of knowledge. A total of four formal public meetings were held on two separate days.

The first public meetings were held on May 4, 2006 at two different locations, at two different times. The intent was to offer more opportunity for the public to attend by offering different times and locations. The first meeting was held at the City Annex Building-Multi Purpose Room, 300 N. Lee Street, Valdosta from 2:30 to 5:30 PM. The second meeting was held at the Mildred M. Hunter Center, 509 S. Fry Street from 6:00 to 8:00 PM. These meetings were intended to inform the public about the transit study, to gain input via public comment and a transit survey, and also to begin the public dialog about transit service in the area.

The first set of public meetings were advertised in the local newspaper on a Wednesday and Sunday before the meeting date, and were included in the local free press. The advertisement for the meetings was also included in a mass mailing of utility bills. A copy of the advertisement, along with sign-in sheets for those participants who wanted to acknowledge their presence, a list of those who spoke at the meetings, and the presentation are located in **Appendix B** on the CD included with this report. Approximately 50 persons attended the two meetings.

The second set of public meetings occurred on August 3, 2006. The first meeting was held from 2:00 to 4:00 PM at Valdosta State University, and the second meeting was held from 5:00 to 7:00 PM at the Valdosta-Lowndes Senior Center. At these meetings, progress on the study, area wide survey results, and preliminary costing estimates were presented for public comment.

The second set of public meetings were advertised in the local newspaper on a Wednesday and Sunday before the meeting date, and were included in the local free press. A copy of the advertisement along with sign-in sheets for those participants who wanted to acknowledge their presence, and a list of those who spoke at the meetings, and the presentation is included in **Appendix B** on the CD included with this report. Approximately 50 persons attended the two meetings.

The Draft Report was made available for public comment by locating a copy at the South Georgia Regional Library, reference #388.409, for a period of approximately three months. The URS team met with the Valdosta City Council on October 19, 2006, during the City Council session to present the study and it's findings.

8.0 SERVICE OPTIONS

8.1 EXISTING SERVICE

The greater Lowndes County area currently benefits from a limited demand-response service. The service is run by MIDS, Inc. and provides demand service for residents individually or under contract to social services. Their primary service is to offer rural area residents transportation into the Valdosta urbanized area. The service is subsidized by the federal Non-Urbanized Area Formula Program (Section 5311). This funding provides federal funding for capital, operating and administrative uses to enhance the accessibility of persons in rural areas and those with disabilities to health care, employment, shopping, education, and public services.

In interviews with Mr. Danny Saturday, the MIDS Director, he listed the cost to operate his buses at approximately $3,500 a month, including the driver. These are small van type buses that do not require the driver to possess a higher class of license to operate the vehicle. MIDS currently charges $5 one-way for anything over 10 miles but within Lowndes. Under ten miles a one-way trip is $3. The average cost to MIDS to provide a trip is $7 with the difference made up under funding from the Section 5311 program. Mr. Saturday stated that MIDS and a transit system established in the area could complement each other and provide needed coverage for the area.

8.2 TYPES OF TRANSIT SERVICE

Transit service can be organized in a wide range of alternatives. Transit service has usually meant service vehicles operating on a fixed route, on a fixed schedule. There are a number of other transit configurations that offer flexible alternatives to a fixed route, fixed schedule transit system. The following describes those services, which should be considered in any transit system for the Valdosta Area.

Fixed Route System

A fixed-route transit service is the traditional description of a bus system. Vehicles operate on a predetermined route following a set schedule. Established, predetermined stops are typically identified for locations where passengers will be picked up and dropped off. Bus routes are laid out in either a radial or grid pattern with a central nexus point or multiple main nodes. In a radial route structure, all routes originate from a central nexus point and extend to outlying areas. This central location serves as a transfer point and is frequently located at a destination with the potential for high transit activity. In many communities, this is the central business district, downtown, or some type of multi-modal site such as a Greyhound Station. In a grid system, transfer points are identified where various routes intersect at main points of activity such as shopping malls (As shown in **Figure 15**).

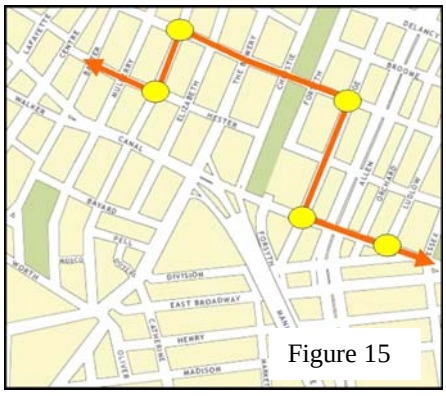


Figure 15

A fixed-route system is designed for passengers without mobility impairments. Research has shown that fixed-route passengers are willing to walk up to a quarter-mile to reach the bus stop. Those individuals with mobility impairments may have difficulty in accessing the fixed-route system. Fixed-route service in a corridor can effectively serve residents within one quarter-mile of the corridor to fixed destinations.

The advantages of a fixed route service are:

- It can be provided at a relatively low cost on a per-passenger-trip basis.
- Schedule reliability can be high, since buses do not deviate from the route.
- Cost can be determined with regularity and service can be expanded with an accurate cost determined.
- May be cost effective for outlying areas.
- Service does not require an advance reservation.

The disadvantages of a fixed route service are:

- Fixed-route transit service is seldom attractive for people with automobiles in smaller communities and rural areas.
- Fixed-route service is often slow to change with community use patterns.
- Fixed-route systems serve their routes even at times of low demand.
- Fixed-route service requires that a community provide complementary paratransit service under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The paratransit service must provide service characteristics similar to the fixed-route service. Paratransit service is typically much more costly to operate than fixed-route service because of the characteristics of the service. Fixed-routes are established to meet the highest demand travel patterns while paratransit service must serve many origins and destinations in a dispersed pattern.

Typically, minimum densities of seven dwelling units per acre, or population densities of 1000 persons per square mile are needed to make fixed-routes service feasible. Although there are areas within Valdosta that have this density, much of the community has lower densities and demand levels that may cause fixed-route service to be marginally cost effective for the near future. Forecasted growth will increase those densities over time.

Route Deviation

With route deviation, transit vehicles follow a specific route, but leave the route to serve demand-response origins and destinations. These extra origin and destination points can be determined from the passengers using the service at the time of use, or via feedback from the public at a central call in location. The vehicles are required to return to the designated route within one block of the point of deviation (As shown in **Figure 16**). This ensures that all intersections along the route are served and keeps the fixed-route characteristic of knowing a transit vehicle will be on a route within a time range.

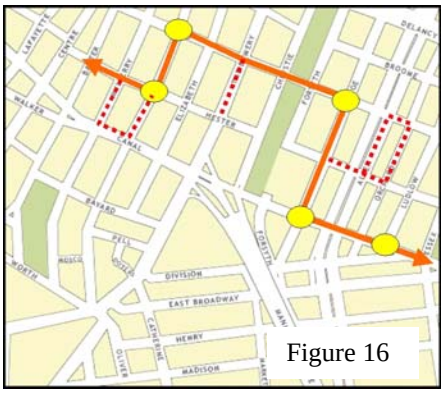


Figure 16

The advantages of the route deviation system are:

- Flexibility in routing.
- Passenger convenience.
- Retains some characteristics of fixed-route systems.
- The ADA-mandated complementary paratransit service is not necessary since the bus can deviate from the route to pick up disabled passengers.
- May elicit more transit use in lower denser areas.

The disadvantages of the Route Deviation System are:

- The passengers on the bus may have a longer travel time than for fixed-route service and the service reliability is lower.
- Cost not accounted for may rise.
- Specific stop times on the set route will be more of a range of time than a set time.

The route deviation system may be advantageous to the Valdosta area due to several factors; one being that this is a new system and any routes selected will have to be adjusted and this type of system will provide constant feedback. Two, the lower densities may make this a more successful service to the Valdosta area.

Checkpoint Routing

The checkpoint routing system requires that the vehicles make periodic scheduled stops at centers of activity (such as shopping areas, a central nexus point, senior centers, or other residential communities). The specific routes are not established between checkpoints, allowing the vehicles to provide demand-response type service (As shown in **Figure 17**). Users are picked up at the checkpoints and taken either to another checkpoint or to a demand-response specific destination. Service between the checkpoints does not require advance reservations. However, service from any other location on a demand-response basis requires an advance reservation so that the vehicles can be scheduled for pick-up and drop-off.

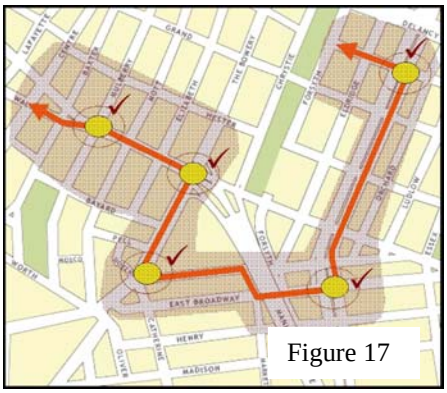


Figure 17

The advantages of checkpoint routing system are:

- Flexibility in routing.
- Passenger convenience.
- The ADA-mandated complementary paratransit service is not necessary since the bus can deviate from the route to pick up disabled passengers.
- May elicit more transit use in lower denser areas.

The disadvantages of checkpoint routing are:

- The passengers on the bus may have a longer travel time than for fixed-route service and service reliability is lower.
- Cost not accounted for may rise.
- No set time along routes for bus stops.

A checkpoint route system offers an advantage over route deviation because there is no specified route for the vehicles to use. Checkpoint service requires only that the vehicle arrive at the next checkpoint within the designated time window.

Demand Response

Demand-response transit service, frequently termed dial-a-ride, is characterized as door-to-door transit service scheduled by a dispatcher (as shown in **Figure 18**). With demand-response service, advance reservations are typically required, although some immediate requests may be filled if time permits and if the service is particularly needed.

This service is already offered in the greater Lowndes County area on a limited basis by the MIDS Company.

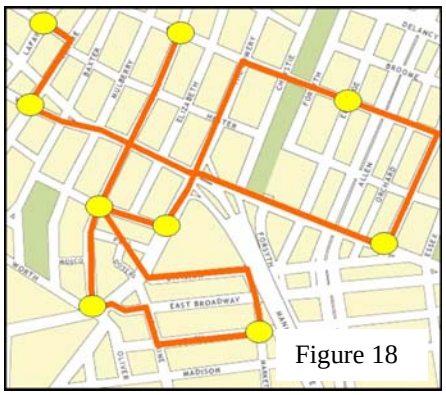


Figure 18

Ride Sharing/Van Pooling

Ridesharing is one of the most common and cost effective alternative transportation modes, particularly in areas that are not well served by public transit. Many commuters rideshare part-time, for example, twice a week. Ridematching is a common component of Commute Trip Reduction programs intended to reduce urban traffic problems. Ridesharing is also an important mobility option for non-drivers, particularly in small towns and rural areas, where notices are often posted on bulletin boards and travel needs are shared through informal networks. Transportation Management Associations, transit agencies and community transportation organizations often provide ridematching services.

Advantages of Ridesharing/Van pooling are:

- Ridesharing has minimal incremental costs because it makes use of vehicle seats that would otherwise be unoccupied.
- Ridesharing tends to have lower costs per vehicle-mile than public transit because it does not require a paid driver and avoids empty backhauls.
- Ridesharing can be implemented through public information campaigns and a dedicated organizer.

Disadvantages of Ridesharing/Van pooling are:

- Ridesharing is generally only suitable for trips with predictable schedules such as commuting or attending special events.
- Ridesharing usually requires vehicle ownership.

9.0 PEER COMMUNITY ANALYSIS

9.1 PEER COMMUNITIES

In determining the feasibility of a transit system for the area, an appropriate reference may lend some perspective to the task. Some basic estimation of the type of service, operating budget, and performance measures that need to be met based on "peer" systems in other communities can provide useful information for decision makers during the implementation of any transit plan. Data for the analysis were obtained from the following regionally located Communities:

- Albany, Georgia
- Athens, Georgia
- Augusta-Richmond County, Georgia – South Carolina
- Rome, Georgia

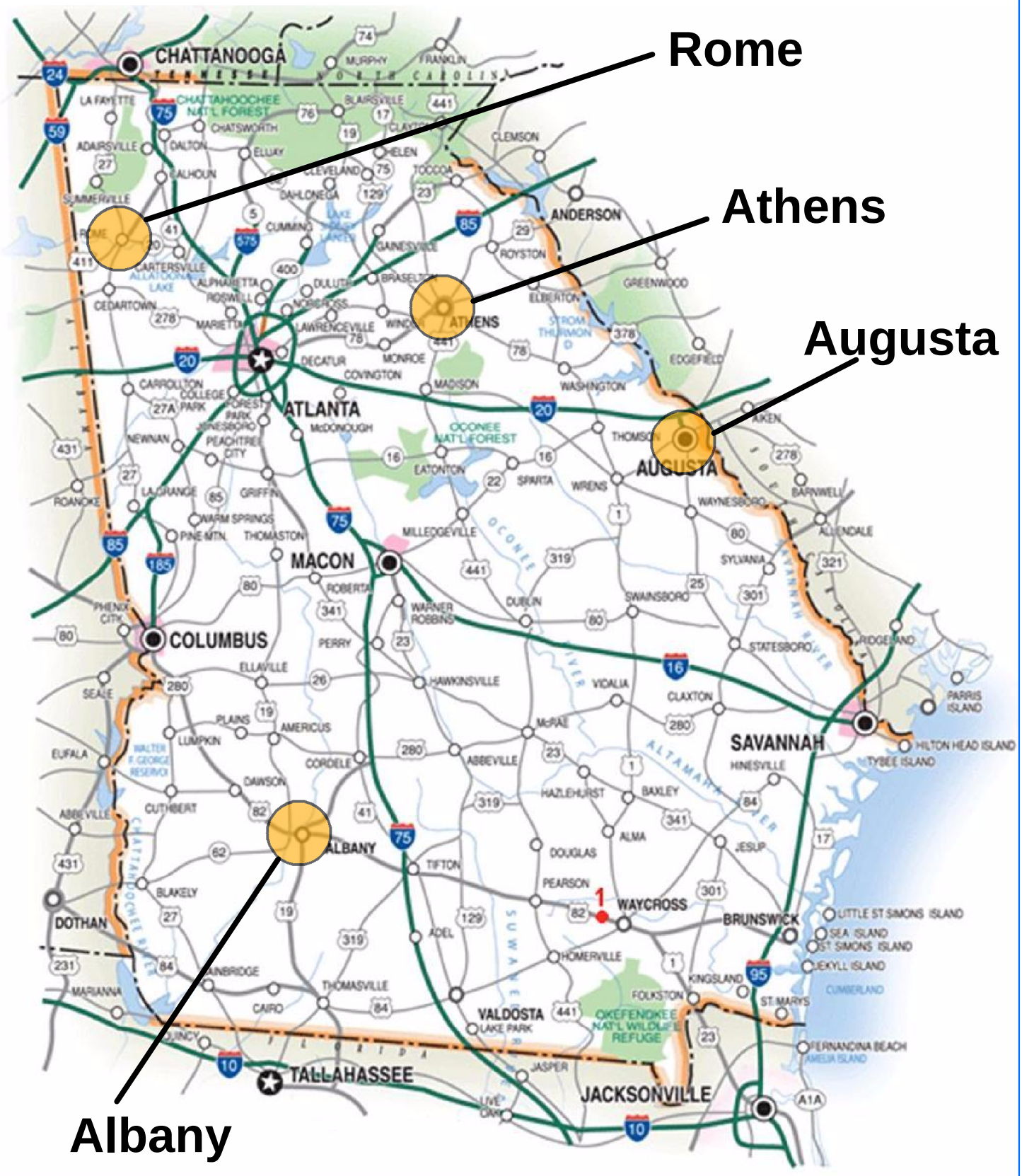
The above communities were selected based upon a set of general criteria. The characteristics that were considered in this selection were that they were in the state of Georgia, of comparable size, and may have characteristics similar to the study area.

Although every effort was made to find the closest matching peers, no two systems are ever exactly alike. Factors such as the type of service (modified fixed-route, demand-response, etc.), local fare policies, and quality of capital equipment can substantially impact the performance of the individual systems. This peer analysis, therefore, should only be viewed as a rough gauge of a representative sample of similar systems. **Figure 19** shows a map of these locations.

Peer Statistics

Albany, Georgia: Service in the City of Albany is supported by seven buses on ten fixed route systems with a 4-bus demand response component. The charge for a one-way trip to the average user is $1.00, with a monthly pass available for $36.00. With a population of approximately 96,400, Albany/Dougherty County compares closely to the Lowndes County population of 97,000. **Figure 20** shows the transit profile from the National Transit Database for Albany, GA. This information along with sources from the Albany transit service and the State of Georgia were used in the peer review.

Athens, Georgia: Service in the City of Athens is supported by 19 buses on a fixed route system with a 3-bus demand response component. The charge for a one-way trip to the average user is $1.25, with a monthly pass available for $48.75. The location of the University of Georgia in Athens and the influence of the student population on transit service compare with the Valdosta and the local Valdosta State University located in the urban area. Athens transit is linked closely with the university, as route maps show, and radiate from the central university location. The University of Georgia supports it's own bus system of 32 buses, which link into the city system. **Figure 21** shows the transit profile from the National Transit Database for Athens, GA. This information along with sources from the Athens transit service and the State of Georgia were used in the peer review.



URS

Source: VALOR-GIS
Projection: State Plane
Zone: West Datum: NAD83
Units: Feet

Figure 19

Peer Cities Reviewed

0 20 40 60 80 Miles

N

ID Number: 4021
www.albany.ga.us/ats_dept.htm
712 Flint Avenue
Albany, GA 31701

Albany Transit System (ATS)
Figure 20

City Manager: Ms. Janice Jackson
(229) 431-3234

General Information

Urbanized Area (UZA) Statistics - 2000 Census

Albany, GA	
Square Miles	66
Population	95,450
Population Ranking out of 465 UZAs	278
Other UZAs Served	

Service Area Statistics

Square Miles	17
Population	79,939

Service Consumption

Annual Passenger Miles	3,540,059
Annual Unlinked Trips	692,732
Average Weekday Unlinked Trips	2,318
Average Saturday Unlinked Trips	1,727
Average Sunday Unlinked Trips	355

Service Supplied

Annual Vehicle Revenue Miles	707,120 Q
Annual Vehicle Revenue Hours	45,436 Q
Vehicles Operated in Maximum Service	11
Vehicles Available for Maximum Service	16
Base Period Requirement	7

Financial Information

Fare Revenues Earned		$390,075
Sources of Operating Funds Expended		
Fare Revenues	(19%)	$390,075
Local Funds	(52%)	1,055,354
State Funds	(27%)	550,405
Federal Assistance	(0%)	0
Other Funds	(1%)	28,294
Total Operating Funds Expended		**$2,024,128**
Sources of Capital Funds Expended		
Local funds	(11%)	$64,411
State Funds	(10%)	57,943
Federal Assistance	(79%)	463,543
Other Funds	(0%)	0
Total Capital Funds Expended		**$585,897**

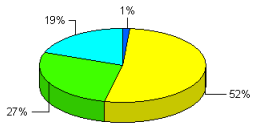
Summary of Operating Expenses

Salary, Wages and Benefits	$1,258,719
Materials and Supplies	210,222
Purchased Transportation	0
Other Operating Expenses	450,422
Total Operating Expenses	**$1,919,363**
Reconciling Cash Expenditures	$104,765

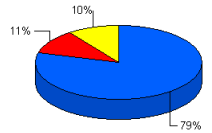
Vehicles Operated in Maximum Service and Uses of Capital Funds

	Directly Operated	Purchased Transportation[1]	Revenue Vehicles	Systems and Guideways	Facilities and Stations	Other	Total
Bus	7	0	$235,851	$31,794	$134,468	$37,310	**$439,423**
Demand Response	4	0	$78,616	$10,598	$44,823	$12,437	**$146,474**
Total	**11**	**0**	**$314,467**	**$42,392**	**$179,291**	**$49,747**	**$585,897**

Sources of Operating Funds Expended



Sources of Capital Funds Expended



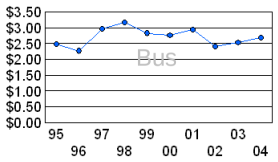
Modal Characteristics

	Operating Expenses[1]	Fare Revenues[1]	Uses of Capital Funds	Annual Passenger Miles	Annual Vehicle Revenue Miles	Annual Unlinked Trips	Annual Vehicle Revenue Hours	Fixed Guideway Directional Route Miles	Vehicles Available for Maximum Service	Average Fleet Age in Years	Vehicles Operated in Maximum Service	Peak to Base Ratio	Percent Spares
Bus	$1,439,956	$346,703	$439,423	3,406,869	536,440 Q	662,966	32,146 Q	0.0	11	6.8	7	1.00	57%
Demand Response	$479,407	$43,372	$146,474	133,190	170,680 Q	29,766	13,290 Q	N/A	5	2.4	4	N/A	25%

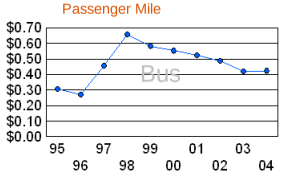
Performance Measures

	Service Efficiency: Operating Expense per Vehicle Revenue Mile	Service Efficiency: Operating Expense per Vehicle Revenue Hour	Cost Effectiveness: Operating Expense per Passenger Mile	Cost Effectiveness: Operating Expense per Unlinked Passenger Trip	Service Effectiveness: Unlinked Passenger Trips per Vehicle Revenue Mile	Service Effectiveness: Unlinked Passenger Trips per Vehicle Revenue Hour
Bus	$2.68 Q	$44.79 Q	$0.42	$2.17	1.24 Q	20.62 Q
Demand Response	$2.81 Q	$36.07 Q	$3.60	$16.11	0.17 Q	2.24 Q

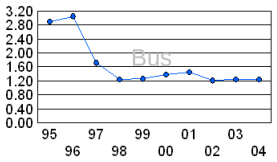
Operating Expenses per Vehicle Revenue Mile



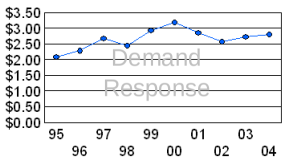
Operating Expenses per Passenger Mile



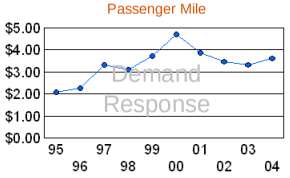
Unlinked Passenger Trips per Vehicle Revenue Mile



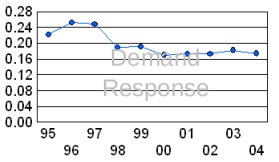
Operating Expenses per Vehicle Revenue Mile



Operating Expenses per Passenger Mile



Unlinked Passenger Trips per Vehicle Revenue Mile



1 Excludes data for purchased transportation reported separately

1/11/2006
Data Source: 2004 National Transit Database

ID Number: 4047
www.athenstransit.com
325 Pound Street
Athens, GA 30601

Athens Transit System (ATS)
Figure 21

Director of Public Transit: Mr. Butch McDuffie
(706) 613-3432

General Information

Urbanized Area (UZA) Statistics - 2000 Census

Athens-Clarke County, GA	
Square Miles	80
Population	106,482
Population Ranking out of 465 UZAs	254
Other UZAs Served	

Service Area Statistics

Square Miles	44
Population	101,000

Service Consumption

Annual Passenger Miles	4,957,154
Annual Unlinked Trips	1,488,888
Average Weekday Unlinked Trips	5,703
Average Saturday Unlinked Trips	912
Average Sunday Unlinked Trips	0

Service Supplied

Annual Vehicle Revenue Miles	809,758
Annual Vehicle Revenue Hours	61,587
Vehicles Operated in Maximum Service	22
Vehicles Available for Maximum Service	28
Base Period Requirement	15

Financial Information

Fare Revenues Earned		$648,697
Sources of Operating Funds Expended		
Fare Revenues	(23%)	$630,008
Local Funds	(60%)	1,685,380
State Funds	(0%)	0
Federal Assistance	(17%)	477,000
Other Funds	(0%)	0
Total Operating Funds Expended		**$2,792,388**
Sources of Capital Funds Expended		
Local funds	(10%)	$71,738
State Funds	(10%)	71,738
Federal Assistance	(80%)	573,905
Other Funds	(0%)	0
Total Capital Funds Expended		**$717,381**

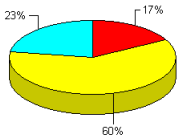
Summary of Operating Expenses

Salary, Wages and Benefits	$2,022,000
Materials and Supplies	269,442
Purchased Transportation	0
Other Operating Expenses	500,946
Total Operating Expenses	**$2,792,388**
Reconciling Cash Expenditures	$0

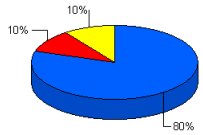
Vehicles Operated in Maximum Service and Uses of Capital Funds

	Directly Operated	Purchased Transportation[1]	Revenue Vehicles	Systems and Guideways	Facilities and Stations	Other	Total
Bus	19	0	$350,004	$161,097	$0	$119,280	**$630,381**
Demand Response	3	0	$0	$0	$0	$87,000	**$87,000**
Total	**22**	**0**	**$350,004**	**$161,097**	**$0**	**$206,280**	**$717,381**

Sources of Operating Funds Expended



Sources of Capital Funds Expended



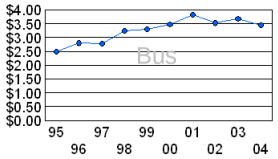
Modal Characteristics

	Operating Expenses[1]	Fare Revenues[1]	Uses of Capital Funds	Annual Passenger Miles	Annual Vehicle Revenue Miles	Annual Unlinked Trips	Annual Vehicle Revenue Hours	Fixed Guideway Directional Route Miles	Vehicles Available for Maximum Service	Average Fleet Age in Years	Vehicles Operated in Maximum Service	Peak to Base Ratio	Percent Spares
Bus	$2,548,884	$630,008	$630,381	4,901,046	739,780	1,478,805	55,824	0.0	24	5.4	19	1.27	26%
Demand Response	$243,504	$18,689	$87,000	56,108	69,978	10,083	5,763	N/A	4	3.3	3	N/A	33%

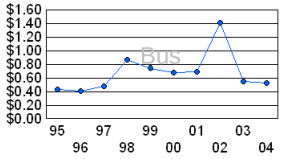
Performance Measures

	Service Efficiency: Operating Expense per Vehicle Revenue Mile	Service Efficiency: Operating Expense per Vehicle Revenue Hour	Cost Effectiveness: Operating Expense per Passenger Mile	Cost Effectiveness: Operating Expense per Unlinked Passenger Trip	Service Effectiveness: Unlinked Passenger Trips per Vehicle Revenue Mile	Service Effectiveness: Unlinked Passenger Trips per Vehicle Revenue Hour
Bus	$3.45	$45.66	$0.52	$1.72	2.00	26.49
Demand Response	$3.48	$42.25	$4.34	$24.15	0.14	1.75

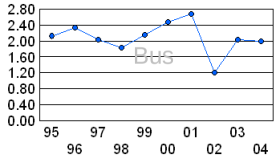
Operating Expenses per Vehicle Revenue Mile



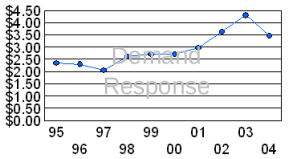
Operating Expenses per Passenger Mile



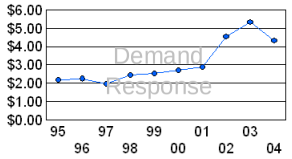
Unlinked Passenger Trips per Vehicle Revenue Mile



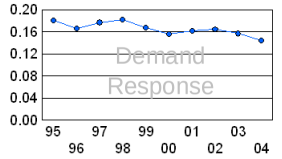
Operating Expenses per Vehicle Revenue Mile



Operating Expenses per Passenger Mile



Unlinked Passenger Trips per Vehicle Revenue Mile



1 Excludes data for purchased transportation reported separately

1/11/2006
Data Source: 2004 National Transit Database

Augusta-Richmond County, Georgia-South Carolina: Service in Augusta-Richmond County is supported by 22 buses on 15 fixed route systems with a 7-bus demand response component. The charge for a one-way trip to the average user is $1.00, with a monthly pass available for $50.00. With a service area population of approximately 210,000, the Augusta-Richmond County is approximately double the Lowndes County population of 97,000. **Figure 22** shows the transit profile from the National Transit Database for Augusta-Richmond County. This information along with sources from the Augusta-Richmond transit service and the State of Georgia were used in the peer review.

Rome, Georgia: Service in the City of Rome is supported by 22 buses on a 5 fixed route systems, with a 15-bus 'tripper' routes (supports Rome school system) and a 3-bus demand response component. The charge for a one-way trip to the average user is $1.00, with a monthly pass available for $45.00. With a population of approximately 58,247 and a service area population of 37,000 (Rome urban area), Rome compares closely to the Valdosta urban area population of 45,000. Rome was also selected due to the City's unusual practice of combining city transit with bus service for local schools. The City only offers this service to the schools in the urban area. **Figure 23** shows the transit profile from the National Transit Database for Rome, Georgia. This information along with sources from the Rome transit service and the State of Georgia were used in the peer review.

Peer Comparisons

The service areas of the peer review cities are compared in **Table 2**. These compare to the Valdosta urban area with a population of 45,000, Lowndes County population of 97,000, and the Metropolitan Service Area (MSA) population of 125,000.

Table 2
Population and Service Area Comparison

	Albany	Athens	Augusta	Rome
Population	96,405	106,482	335,660	58,247
Service Area (Square Miles)	18	44	25	24
Service Area Population	79,939	101,000	210,000	37,000

ID Number: 4023
www.augustaga.gov
1535 Fenwick Street
Augusta, GA 30904

Augusta Richmond County Transit Department (APT)

Figure 22

Transit Director: Mr. Heyward Johnsor
(706) 821-1721

General Information

Urbanized Area (UZA) Statistics - 2000 Census

Augusta-Richmond County, GA-SC	
Square Miles	232
Population	335,630
Population Ranking out of 465 UZAs	93
Other UZAs Served	

Service Area Statistics

Square Miles	25
Population	210,000

Service Consumption

Annual Passenger Miles	4,865,866
Annual Unlinked Trips	908,364
Average Weekday Unlinked Trips	2,955
Average Saturday Unlinked Trips	3,094
Average Sunday Unlinked Trips	0

Service Supplied

Annual Vehicle Revenue Miles	753,023
Annual Vehicle Revenue Hours	62,661
Vehicles Operated in Maximum Service	29
Vehicles Available for Maximum Service	29
Base Period Requirement	13

Financial Information

Fare Revenues Earned		$735,568
Sources of Operating Funds Expended		
Fare Revenues	(23%)	$735,568
Local Funds	(40%)	1,274,882
State Funds	(3%)	109,081
Federal Assistance	(33%)	1,058,101
Other Funds	(0%)	2,439
Total Operating Funds Expended		$3,180,071 Q
Sources of Capital Funds Expended		
Local funds	(2%)	$26,018
State Funds	(5%)	76,198
Federal Assistance	(92%)	1,431,171
Other Funds	(1%)	21,500
Total Capital Funds Expended		$1,554,887

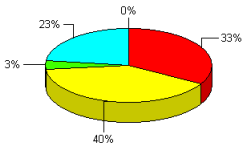
Summary of Operating Expenses

Salary, Wages and Benefits	$2,445,138
Materials and Supplies	454,602
Purchased Transportation	0
Other Operating Expenses	163,537
Total Operating Expenses	$3,063,277 Q
Reconciling Cash Expenditures	$0

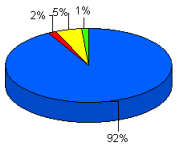
Vehicles Operated in Maximum Service and Uses of Capital Funds

	Directly Operated	Purchased Transportation[1]	Revenue Vehicles	Systems and Guideways	Facilities and Stations	Other	Total
Bus	22	0	$1,431,171	$0	$0	$123,716	$1,554,887
Demand Response	7	0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Total	29	0	$1,431,171	$0	$0	$123,716	$1,554,887

Sources of Operating Funds Expended



Sources of Capital Funds Expended



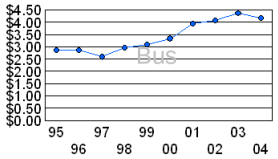
Modal Characteristics

	Operating Expenses[1]	Fare Revenues[1]	Uses of Capital Funds	Annual Passenger Miles	Annual Vehicle Revenue Miles	Annual Unlinked Trips	Annual Vehicle Revenue Hours	Fixed Guideway Directional Route Miles	Vehicles Available for Maximum Service	Average Fleet Age in Years	Vehicles Operated in Maximum Service	Peak to Base Ratio	Percent Spares
Bus	$2,760,839	$703,254	$1,554,887	4,802,651	662,884	893,933	51,228	0.0	22	4.8	22	1.23	0%
Demand Response	$302,438	$32,314	$0	63,215	90,139	14,431	11,433	N/A	7	2.1	7	N/A	0%

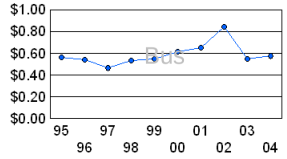
Performance Measures

	Service Efficiency: Operating Expense per Vehicle Revenue Mile	Service Efficiency: Operating Expense per Vehicle Revenue Hour	Cost Effectiveness: Operating Expense per Passenger Mile	Cost Effectiveness: Operating Expense per Unlinked Passenger Trip	Service Effectiveness: Unlinked Passenger Trips per Vehicle Revenue Mile	Service Effectiveness: Unlinked Passenger Trips per Vehicle Revenue Hour
Bus	$4.16	$53.89	$0.57	$3.09	1.35	17.45
Demand Response	$3.36	$26.45	$4.78	$20.96	0.16	1.26

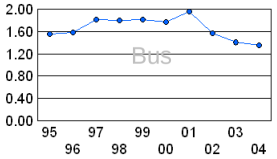
Operating Expenses per Vehicle Revenue Mile



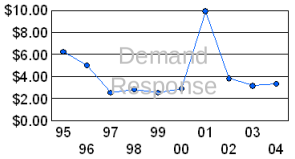
Operating Expenses per Passenger Mile



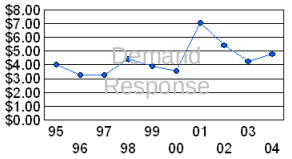
Unlinked Passenger Trips per Vehicle Revenue Mile



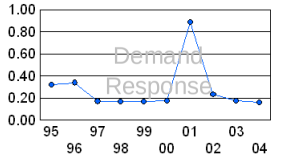
Operating Expenses per Vehicle Revenue Mile



Operating Expenses per Passenger Mile



Unlinked Passenger Trips per Vehicle Revenue Mile



1 Excludes data for purchased transportation reported separately

1/11/2006
Data Source: 2004 National Transit Databas

ID Number: 4058
www.romega.us
168 North Avenue, 1433
Rome, GA 30161-1433

City of Rome Transit Department (RTD)
Figure 23

City Manager: Mr. John Bennett
(706) 236-4400

General Information

Urbanized Area (UZA) Statistics - 2000 Census

Rome, GA	
Square Miles	41
Population	58,287
Population Ranking out of 465 UZAs	402
Other UZAs Served	

Service Area Statistics

Square Miles	24
Population	37,000

Service Consumption

Annual Passenger Miles	8,423,031
Annual Unlinked Trips	1,010,596
Average Weekday Unlinked Trips	3,932
Average Saturday Unlinked Trips	0
Average Sunday Unlinked Trips	995,342

Service Supplied

Annual Vehicle Revenue Miles	529,934 Q
Annual Vehicle Revenue Hours	30,815 Q
Vehicles Operated in Maximum Service	25
Vehicles Available for Maximum Service	31
Base Period Requirement	5

Financial Information

Fare Revenues Earned		$660,542
Sources of Operating Funds Expended		
Fare Revenues	(34%)	$660,542
Local Funds	(33%)	650,000
State Funds	(2%)	45,558
Federal Assistance	(29%)	573,440
Other Funds	(2%)	37,475
Total Operating Funds Expended		**$1,967,015**
Sources of Capital Funds Expended		
Local funds	(10%)	$5,402
State Funds	(10%)	5,402
Federal Assistance	(80%)	43,215
Other Funds	(0%)	0
Total Capital Funds Expended		**$54,019**

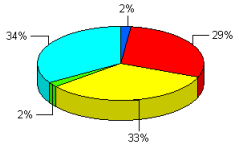
Summary of Operating Expenses

Salary, Wages and Benefits	$1,566,658
Materials and Supplies	219,815
Purchased Transportation	0
Other Operating Expenses	180,542
Total Operating Expenses	**$1,967,015**
Reconciling Cash Expenditures	$0

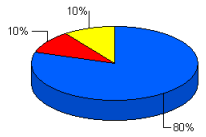
Vehicles Operated in Maximum Service and Uses of Capital Funds

	Directly Operated	Purchased Transportation[1]	Revenue Vehicles	Systems and Guideways	Facilities and Stations	Other	Total
Bus	22	0	$54,019	$0	$0	$0	$54,019
Demand Response	3	0	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Total	25	0	$54,019	$0	$0	$0	$54,019

Sources of Operating Funds Expended



Sources of Capital Funds Expended



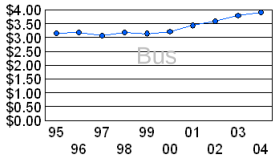
Modal Characteristics

	Operating Expenses[1]	Fare Revenues[1]	Uses of Capital Funds	Annual Passenger Miles	Annual Vehicle Revenue Miles	Annual Unlinked Trips	Annual Vehicle Revenue Hours	Fixed Guideway Directional Route Miles	Vehicles Available for Maximum Service	Average Fleet Age in Years	Vehicles Operated in Maximum Service	Peak to Base Ratio	Percent Spares
Bus	$1,820,022	$579,510	$54,019	8,356,194	464,142 Q	995,342	26,189 Q	0.0	27	6.8	22	4.40	23%
Demand Response	$146,993	$81,032	$0	66,837	65,792 Q	15,254	4,626 Q	N/A	4	9.5	3	N/A	33%

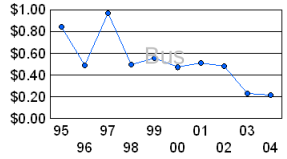
Performance Measures

	Service Efficiency: Operating Expense per Vehicle Revenue Mile	Service Efficiency: Operating Expense per Vehicle Revenue Hour	Cost Effectiveness: Operating Expense per Passenger Mile	Cost Effectiveness: Operating Expense per Unlinked Passenger Trip	Service Effectiveness: Unlinked Passenger Trips per Vehicle Revenue Mile	Service Effectiveness: Unlinked Passenger Trips per Vehicle Revenue Hour
Bus	$3.92 Q	$69.50 Q	$0.22	$1.83	2.14 Q	38.01 Q
Demand Response	$2.23 Q	$31.78 Q	$2.20	$9.64	0.23 Q	3.30 Q

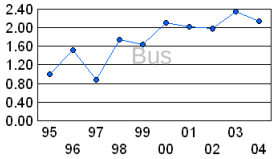
Operating Expenses per Vehicle Revenue Mile



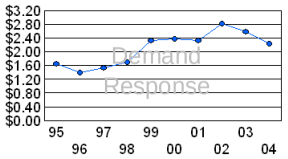
Operating Expenses per Passenger Mile



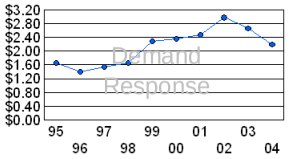
Unlinked Passenger Trips per Vehicle Revenue Mile



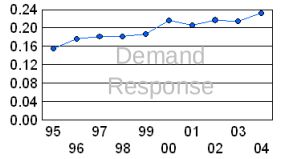
Operating Expenses per Vehicle Revenue Mile



Operating Expenses per Passenger Mile



Unlinked Passenger Trips per Vehicle Revenue Mile



1 Excludes data for purchased transportation reported separately

1/11/2006
Data Source: 2004 National Transit Database

The transit service times of the peer review cities are compared in **Table 3**. Three cities offer Saturday service and only one offers Sunday service. The average service times on the weekday are approximately 6:00 AM to 7:45 PM. The average service times on Saturday are approximately 7:00 AM to 7:45 PM.

Table 3
Service Times Comparison

	Albany	Athens	Augusta	Rome
Monday thru Friday	5:15 AM to 8:00 PM	6:15 AM to 7:15 PM	6:00 AM to 8:30 PM	6:00 AM to 6:30 PM
Saturday	6:00 AM to 8:00 PM	7:30 AM to 7:00 PM	6:30 AM to 7:30 PM	None
Sunday	8:00 AM to 6:00 PM	None	None	None

Table 4 shows the system sizes of each peer location.

Table 4
System Size Comparison

	Albany	Athens	Augusta	Rome
Buses	7	19	22	22
Demand Response Buses	4	3	7	3

The vehicle per revenue hour cost for each peer review city is shown in **Table 5**. An average of this cost factor was used in calculating approximate costs for the routes tested in this feasibility study. The average cost for a bus based on the peer information is $53.46 per revenue hour. The average cost for a demand response bus based on the peer information is $34.14 per revenue hour.

Table 5
Operating Cost Comparison

	Albany	Athens	Augusta	Rome	Average
Bus	$44.79	$45.66	$53.89	$69.50	53.46
Demand Response Buses	$36.07	$42.25	$26.45	$31.78	34.14
Total Operating Cost	**$2,024,128**	**$2,792,388**	**$3,063,277**	**$1,987,015**	

The funding sources for each of the peer locations was reviewed and compared. **Table 6** displays this comparison. The average of these funding percentages were used in the analysis of what the local government could expect to be responsible for based on the peer review information.

Table 6
Funding Source Comparison

	Albany	Athens	Augusta	Rome	Average
Federal	18%	20%	33%	29%	25%
State	28%	0%	3%	2%	8%
Local	40%	44%	41%	33%	43%
Fare box	10%	36%	23%	34%	26%
Other	4%	0%	0%	2%	2%

Note: Table 6 has been updated with current information from available sources.

9.2 PEER SUMMARY

Table 7 summarizes the selected information for each of the peer cities reviewed.

Table 7
Summarized Peer Cities Information

	Albany	Athens	Augusta	Rome	Average
Population	96,407	106,482	335,660	58,247	
Service Area (sq mi)	17	44	25	24	
Service Area Population	79,939	101,000	210,000	37,000	
Days of Operation					
Monday – Friday	5:15 AM – 8:00 PM	6:15 AM – 7:15 PM	6:00 AM – 6:30 PM	6:00 AM – 6:30 PM	6:00 AM – 7:45 PM
Saturday	6:00 AM – 8:00 PM	7:30 AM – 7:00 PM	6:30 AM – 7:30 PM	N/A	7:00 AM – 7:45 PM
Sunday	8:00 AM – 6:00 PM	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Peak Fleet					
Bus	7	19	22	22	
D/R	4	3	7	3	
Cost/veh revenue hour					
Bus	$44.79	$45.66	$53.89	$69.50	$53.46
D/R	$36.07	$42.25	$26.45	$31.78	$34.14

10.0 COST ESTIMATES

The costs for the development of transit services are divided into two areas; capital and operating. The capital cost includes the acquisition of transit vehicles, maintenance facilities, maintenance equipment, administrative offices and related equipment. Operating costs are those reoccurring costs that are related to the operations of a transit system; fuel, tires, maintenance services, salaries, benefits etc.

10.1 CAPITAL COSTS

The cost of vehicles ranges widely depending on the type of vehicle that is acquired to provide transit services. Below is a list of difference types of transit vehicle and their range of costs.

Medium Duty Transit Vehicle	**Cost Range**
31 ft vehicle on truck chassis, w/lift 24 passengers and 2 wheel spaces	$100,000 - $110,000
31 ft low floor vehicle on truck chassis, w/ramp 24 passengers and 2 wheel spaces	$140,000 - $150,000
Medium Duty Bus with 10 year life	$125,000 - $225,000
Regular Transit Bus	
Standard 45 passenger Transit Bus ADA equipped	$325,000 - $375,000
Demand Response Bus	
Standard 8 passengers, 2 wheel chairs with lift	$50,000 - $75,000
Alternative Fuel Bus	
Medium Duty Hybrid Electric Bus (diesel or gas fuel)	$140,000 – 200,000

Other capital costs could include a maintenance facility and a central transfer station. These elements can be located in the same area. A maintenance facility can vary significantly in cost depending on what type of structure is desired, its size, and the amount of equipment needed. A transit facility with six maintenance bays, maintenance equipment and administrative offices could cost in the range of $2 million not counting the land. The City does have an opportunity to utilize land it currently owns in the downtown area.

Spare parts are another expense that can be covered under capital depending on the category of the part. For example, a spare engine may be considered a capital item where spark plugs or brakes would not. Tires for federal funding purposes may be classified as a capital item.

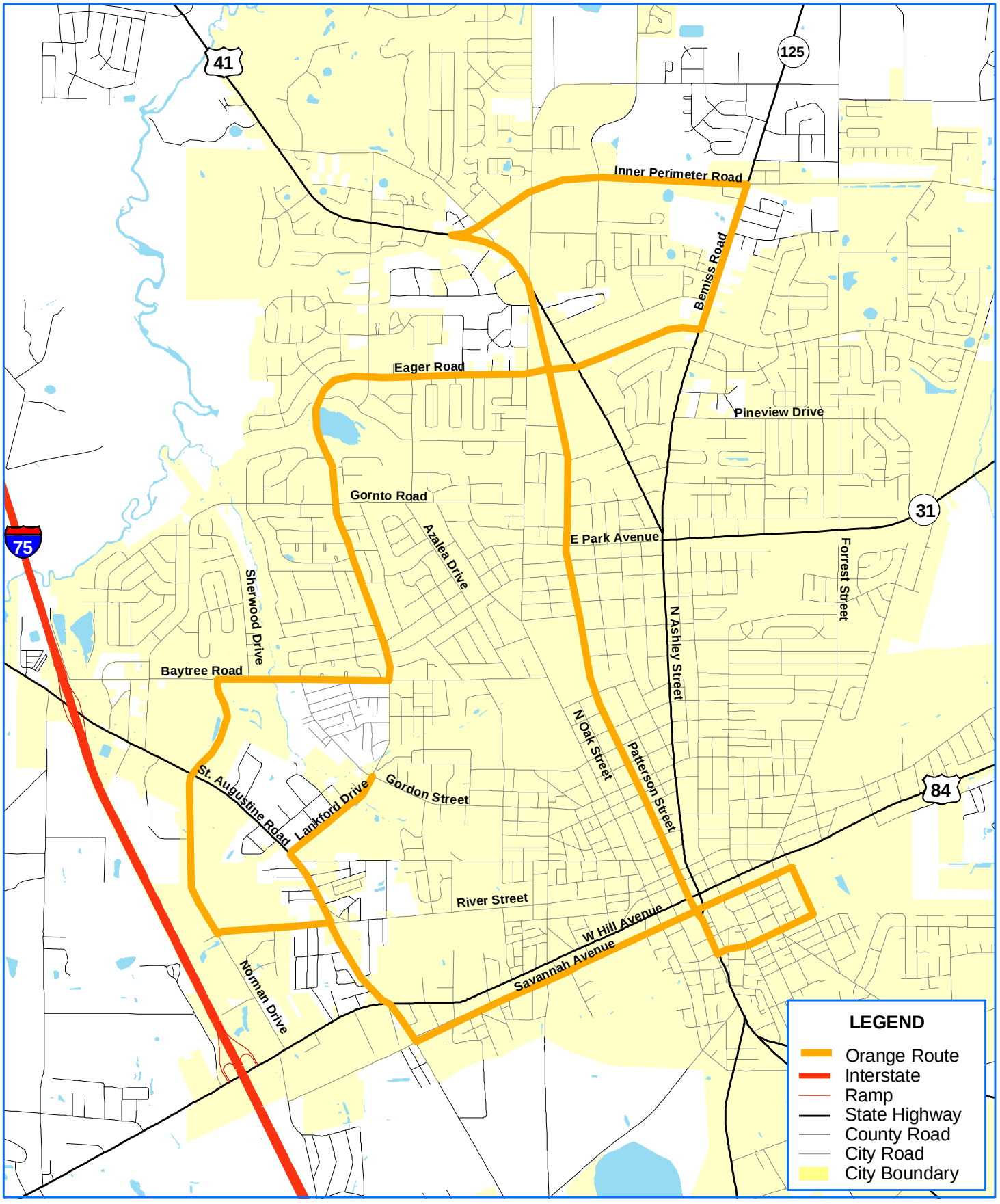
10.2 OPERATING COSTS

As stated previously, operating costs are those reoccurring costs that are related to the operations of the transit system; fuel, tires, maintenance services, salaries, benefits etc. For costing purposes, peer city costs were compiled and applied to a scenario system for Valdosta. The operating costs are based on peer cities in Georgia; Albany, Athens, Augusta, and Rome. These cities have similar characteristics to Valdosta.

To show how the peer cities review information might apply to potential transit service costs for Valdosta, two sample transit route scenarios were developed. The routes do not necessarily reflect the type or level of service that might be initiated in Valdosta. However, they provide a level of cost that might be anticipated if similar service was implemented. The first scenario route is a loop, the 'Orange Route', that has buses operating in opposite directions over the length of the route as shown in **Figure 24**. The purpose for this is to shorten the time for a return trip from the initial destination. If all the buses operated in the same direction, then passengers may be required to travel a significant distance for what would be a short trip if they could catch a bus in the opposite direction. This type of routing may require more vehicles to operate effectively as opposed to a more conventional route, which is more linear in design.

The 'Orange' route begins downtown near Patterson Street and Savannah Avenue and proceeds as follows:

- West on Savannah Avenue to St. Augustine,
- North on St. Augustine to Lankford Drive,
- East on Lankford Drive to Gordon Street,
- West on Lankford to St. Augustine Road,
- South on St. Augustine Road to River Street,
- West on River Street to Norman Drive,
- North on Norman Drive to Baytree Road,
- East on Baytree Road to Jerry Jones Drive,
- North on Jerry Jones Drive to EdgerRoad/Northside Drive,
- East on Eadger Road/Northside Drive to Bemiss Road,
- North on Bemiss Road to Inner Perimeter Road,
- West on Inner Perimeter road to Patterson Street,
- South on Patterson Street to Martin Luther King Drive,
- Martin Luther King Drive east to South Fry Street,
- East to South Fry Street,
- North on Fry Street to Savannah Avenue.



URS

Source: VALOR-GIS
Projection: State Plane
Zone: West Datum: NAD83
Units: Feet

Figure 24

"Orange" Sample Transit Route

0 0.4 0.8 1.2 1.6 Miles

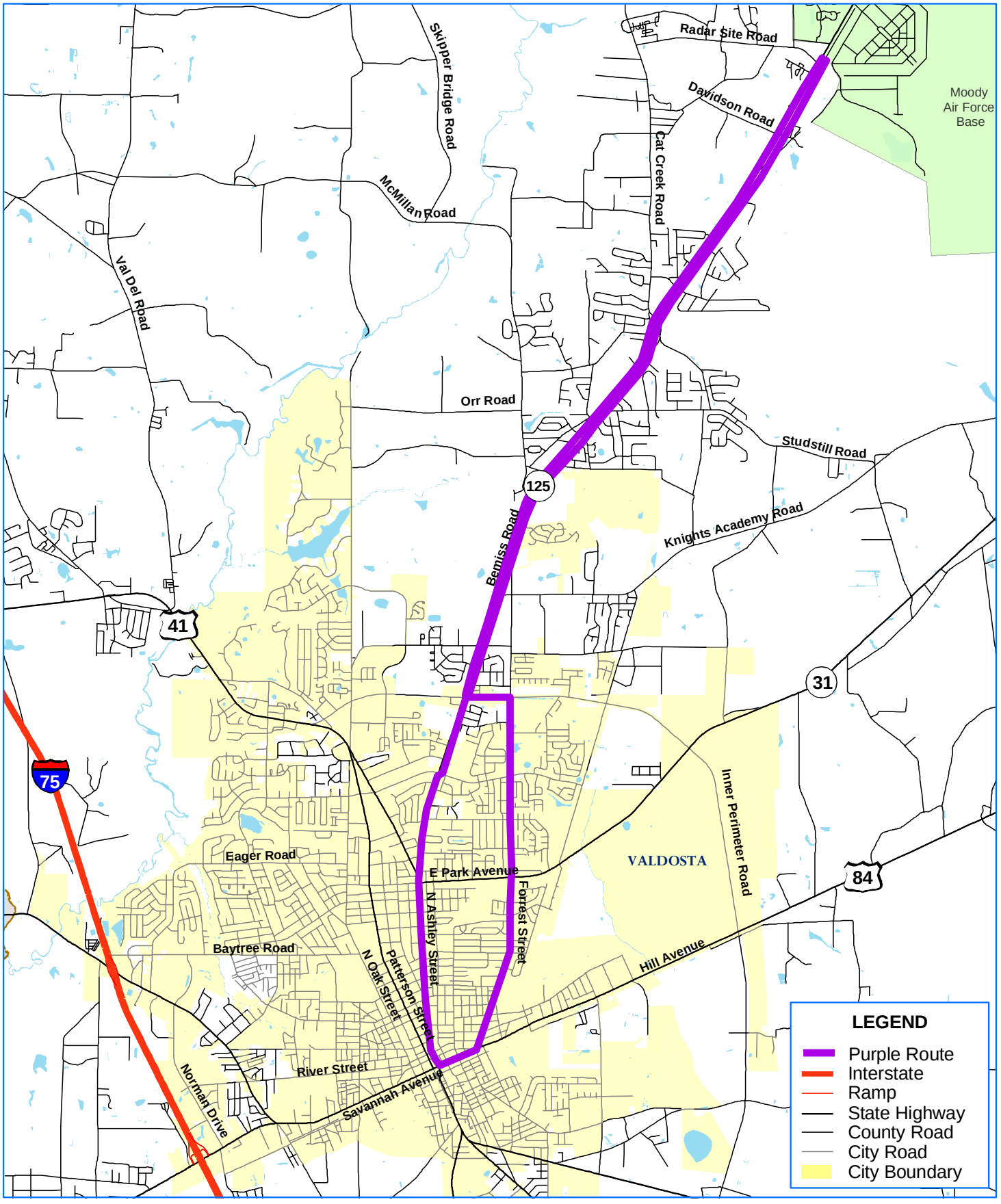
N

The second route scenario, the 'Purple Route', is a more traditional transit route where buses run up and down the same route. This scenario route uses one bus as opposed to the two used in the Orange Route example. The Purple Route is displayed in **Figure 25**. Both of the route scenarios run on one-hour headways and have the required complementary ADA service.

The 'Purple' route begins downtown near Ashley Street and Savannah Avenue and proceeds as follows:

- North on Ashley Street to Bemiss Road,
- North on Bemiss Road to Moody AFB,
- From Moody AFB south on Bemiss Road to Inner Perimeter Road,
- East on Inner Perimeter Road to Forrest Street,
- South on Forest Street to Hill Avenue,
- West on Hill Avenue to Ashley Street.

Figure 26 shows both routes with the main attractions, most of which represent many of the top 15 choices from the area wide survey.



URS

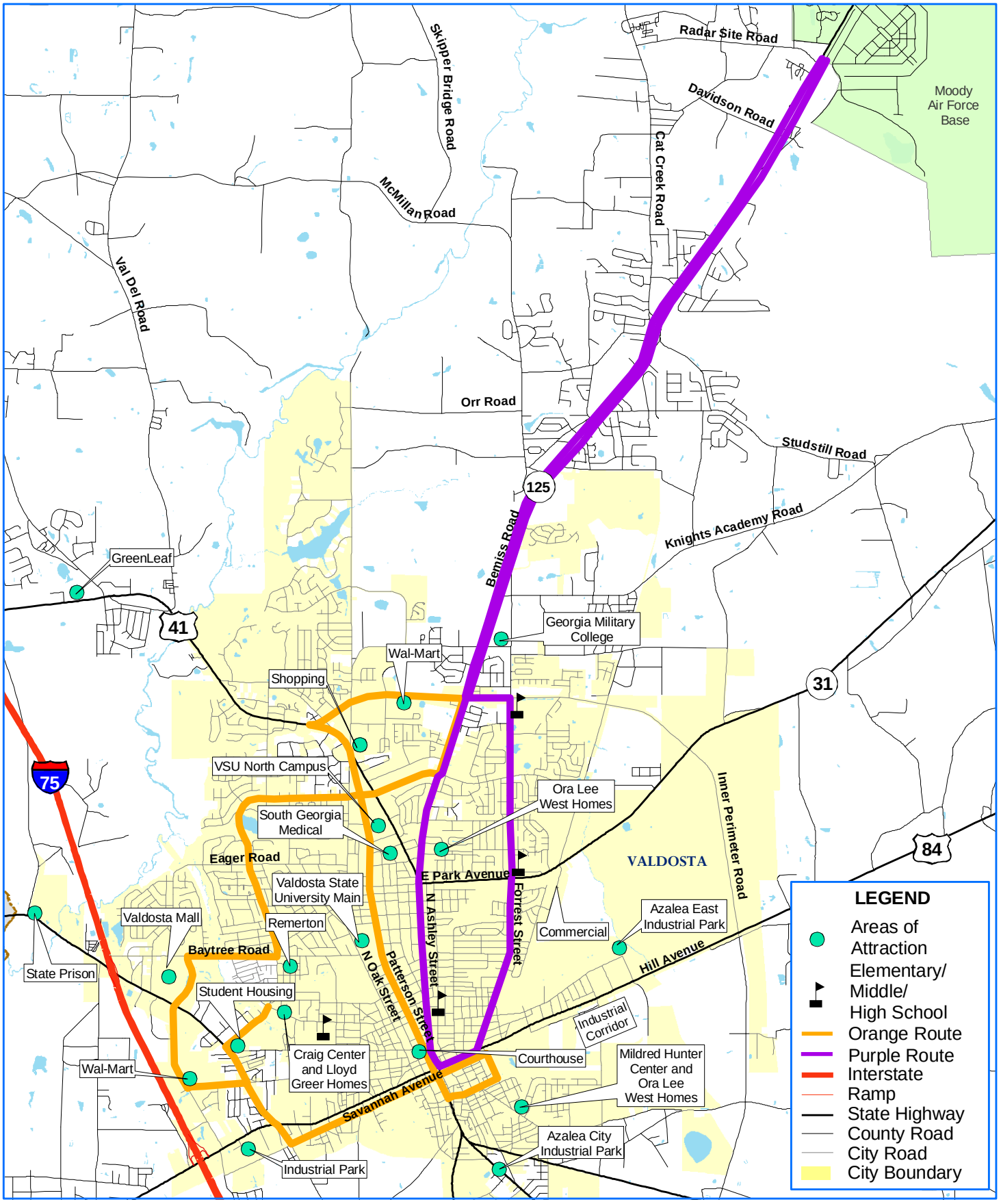
Source: VALOR-GIS
Projection: State Plane
Zone: West Datum: NAD83
Units: Feet

Figure 25

"Purple" Sample Transit Route

0 0.9 1.8 2.7 3.6 Miles

N



URS

Source: VALOR-GIS
Projection: State Plane
Zone: West Datum: NAD83
Units: Feet

Figure 26
"Orange" and "Purple" Sample Transit Routes With Areas of Attraction

0 0.9 1.8 2.7 3.6 Miles

N

Table 8 shows what each of the scenario routes would likely cost based on the average costs from the peer cities identified in the peer cities review section of this report. The cost matrix shows costs for five day a week service for 12 hours a day and the incremental cost for adding Saturday service to both routes. Costs are not calculated for Sunday or holiday services.

Table 8
Cost Matrix for Valdosta Transit Service

Options		Number of Vehicles	Hours of Operation Per Day	Days Per Week	Cost Per Vehicle Hour	Days of Operation Per Year	Yearly Cost
Orange Route (1)	Bus-1 Hour Headway	2	13	5	$53.50	303	$421,473.00
	Demand Response	1	13	5	$34.14	303	$134,477.46
	Total Cost						**$555,950.46**
	Add Sat. Service (Bus)	2	13	1	$53.50	52	$72,332.00
	Add Sat. Service (D/R)	1	13	1	$34.14	52	$23,078.64
	Total Cost with Saturday						**$651,361.10**
Purple Route (2)	Bus-1 Hour Headway	1	13	5	$53.50	303	$210,736.50
	Demand Response	1	13	5	$34.14	303	$134,477.46
	Total Cost						**$345,213.96**
	Add Sat. Service (Bus)	1	13	1	$53.50	52	$36,166.00
	Add Sat. Service (D/R)	1	13	1	$34.14	52	$23,078.64
	Total Cost with Saturday						**$404,458.60**

The annual cost to operate the two route scenarios outline above will cost approximately $1 million per year. Operational cost for each bus in service 6 days per week is estimated to cost $230,000 annually. Complimentary ADA demand response service costs approximately $160,000 to operate six days per week annually per vehicle. Half of the annually operating cost is eligible for federal funding from FTA. The annual allocation for Valdosta from Sections 5307 and 5340 is approximately $600,000. Application for these funds, as detailed in the funding section of this report, is made through the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT).

To provide a perspective of initial and on going costs, a sample cost estimate is provided below using the operating scenarios outline previously.

Capital Costs

The capital cost estimate includes the following items. Additional or less capital costs may be incurred if the operating scenarios are adjusted. The maintenance and transfer facilities costs assumption is calculated without land costs.

Maintenance/Administrative Facility	$2,000,000
Transfer Facility ($500,000-$750,000)	$ 750,000
Vehicles	
4 Buses @ $200,000	$ 800,000
3 Demand Response @ $70,000	$ 150,000
Total Cost	$ 3,700,000
Funding	
Federal (80%)	$2,960,000
State (10%)	$ 370,000
Local (10%)	$ 370,000
Total Cost	$ 3,700,000

Annual Operating Cost

		Week Days	**With Saturdays**
Route 1		$555,950	$ 651,361
Route 2		$345,214	$ 404,459
Total Cost		$901,164	$1,055,820
Funding			
Federal	(40%)	$360,466	$ 422,328
Local	(40%)	$360,466	$ 422,328
Fare Box	(20%)	$180,232	$ 211,164
Total Cost		$901,164	$1,055,820

Based on these scenarios, local contribution to initiate transit service in Valdosta should cost in the range of $800,000 to $850,000 for the first year. For the second year without the capital cost, the cost should be approximately $430,000. Even without fare box revenue, the first year local contribution should not exceed $950,000 and $530,000 for the second year.

Again this is only an estimate scenario based on the information provided in the report and can range significantly if initial capital and operating scenarios are changed.

11.0 FUNDING SOURCES

There are various funding sources that can be examined for use in developing a new transit system at the federal, state and local levels. Below are a list of the programs that may be considered for use.

Federal programs are administrated by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). These programs can cover operating and capital expenditures related to providing transit services. Some of the programs are very focused for specific uses such as rural transportation, jobs access and transportation for persons with disabilities. For the most part, grants are restricted to public entities. The Federal program information provided below was obtained from the FTA. They have noted that due to the passage of SAFETEA-LU, many of these references are being revised and updated to reflect changes in legislation. Until such time that revisions are published, these documents provide the most current information or guidance. It is not anticipated that the revisions to these program descriptions will substantially change the present program structure.

State programs are administrated by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT). In some cases GDOT provides up to 50 percent of the matching funds needed for federal grants. The administration of some of the federal grants for which Valdosta/Lowdnes would be eligible is passed down to the state level and handled by GDOT. Application for funding in these cases would be made through GDOT.

Potential sources of local funds range from the general fund, to taxes and fees.

11.1 FEDERAL FUNDING

Section 5303 - Transit Planning

Program Description

This program provides funding to support cooperative, continuous, and comprehensive planning for making transportation investment decisions in metropolitan areas.

Eligible Recipients

Metropolitan planning organizations (MPO).

Eligible Purposes

For planning activities that (A) support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency; (B) increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and nonmotorized users; (C) increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and nonmotorized users; (D) increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight; (E) 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; (F) enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes,

for people and freight; (G) promote efficient system management and operation; and (H) emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

Funding Allocation

Funds are apportioned by a complex formula to states that includes consideration of each state's urbanized area population in proportion to the urbanized area population for the entire nation, as well as other factors. States can receive no less than 0.5 percent of the amount apportioned. These funds, in turn, are sub-allocated by states to MPOs by a formula that considers each MPO's urbanized area population, their individual planning needs, and a minimum distribution.

Federal/Local Share

The federal share is 80 percent and the local share is 20 percent.

Section 5307 – Urban Area Formula Program

Program Description

This program (49 U.S.C. 5307) makes Federal resources available to urbanized areas and to Governors for transit capital and operating assistance in urbanized areas and for transportation related planning. An urbanized area is an incorporated area with a population of 50,000 or more that is designated as such by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

Eligible purposes include planning, engineering design and evaluation of transit projects and other technical transportation-related studies; capital investments in bus and bus-related activities such as replacement of buses, overhaul of buses, rebuilding of buses, crime prevention and security equipment and construction of maintenance and passenger facilities; and capital investments in new and existing fixed guideway systems including rolling stock, overhaul and rebuilding of vehicles, track, signals, communications, and computer hardware and software. All preventive maintenance and some Americans with Disabilities Act complementary paratransit service costs are considered capital costs.

For urbanized areas with 200,000 populations and over, funds are apportioned and flow directly to a designated recipient selected locally to apply for and receive Federal funds. For urbanized areas under 200,000 in population, the funds are apportioned to the Governor of each state for distribution. A few areas under 200,000 in population have been designated as transportation management areas and receive apportionments directly.

For urbanized areas with populations of 200,000 or more, operating assistance is not an eligible expense. In these areas, at least 1 percent of the funding apportioned to each area must be used for transit enhancement activities such as historic preservation, landscaping, public art, pedestrian access, bicycle access, and enhanced access for persons with disabilities.

Program Summary Fact Sheet

Appropriation: Funded under Formula Grants

Description: Grants to urbanized areas and states for transit-related purposes

Statutory Reference: 49USC5307

Eligible Recipients: Funding is made available to designated recipients that must be public bodies with the legal authority to receive and dispense Federal funds. Governors, responsible local officials and publicly owned operators of transit services are to designate a recipient to apply for, receive, and dispense funds for transportation management areas pursuant to 49USCA5307(a)(2). Generally, a transportation management area is an urbanized area with a population of 200,000 or over. The Governor or Governor's designee is the designated recipient for urbanized areas between 50,000 and 200,000.

Eligible Purposes: Planning, engineering design and evaluation of transit projects and other technical transportation-related studies; capital investments in bus and bus-related activities such as replacement of buses, overhaul of buses, rebuilding of buses, crime prevention and security equipment and construction of maintenance and passenger facilities; and capital investments in new and existing fixed guideway systems including rolling stock, overhaul and rebuilding of vehicles, track, signals, communications, and computer hardware and software. All preventive maintenance and some Americans with Disabilities Act complementary paratransit service are considered capital costs.

Allocation of Funding: Funding is apportioned on the basis of legislative formulas. For areas of 50,000 to 199,999 in population, the formula is based on population and population density. For areas with populations of 200,000 and more, the formula is based on a combination of bus revenue vehicle miles, bus passenger miles, fixed guideway revenue vehicle miles, and fixed guideway route miles as well as population and population density.

Match: The Federal share is not to exceed 80 percent of the net project cost. The Federal share may be 90 percent for the cost of vehicle-related equipment attributable to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Clean Air Act. The Federal share may also be 90 percent for projects or portions of projects related to bicycles. The Federal share may not exceed 50 percent of the net project cost of operating assistance.

Funding Availability: Year appropriated plus three years (total of four years)

Section 5309 – Bus and Bus Related Facilities Program

Program Description

The transit capital investment program (49 U.S.C. 5309) provides capital assistance for three primary activities:

- new and replacement buses and facilities
- modernization of existing rail systems
- new fixed guideway systems.

Eligible recipients for capital investment funds are public bodies and agencies (transit authorities and other state and local public bodies and agencies thereof) including states, municipalities, other political subdivisions of states; public agencies and instrumentalities of one or more states; and certain public corporations, boards, and commissions established under state law. Funds are allocated on a discretionary basis.

Bus and Bus-Related Projects

Eligible purposes are acquisition of buses for fleet and service expansion, bus maintenance and administrative facilities, transfer facilities, bus malls, transportation centers, intermodal terminals, park-and-ride stations, acquisition of replacement vehicles, bus rebuilds, bus preventive maintenance, passenger amenities such as passenger shelters and bus stop signs, accessory and miscellaneous equipment such as mobile radio units, supervisory vehicles, fareboxes, computers, shop and garage equipment, and costs incurred in arranging innovative financing for eligible projects. Funds are allocated on a discretionary basis.

Program Summary Fact Sheet

Appropriation: Is funded under Capital Investment Grants

Description: Grants may be made to assist in financing bus and bus-related capital projects that will benefit the country's transit systems.

Statutory Reference: 49USC5309

Eligible Recipients: Public bodies and agencies (transit authorities and other state and local public bodies and agencies thereof) including states, municipalities, other political subdivisions of states; public agencies and instrumentalities of one or more states; and certain public corporations, boards, and commissions established under state law.

Eligible Purposes: Acquisition of buses for fleet and service expansion, bus maintenance and administrative facilities, transfer facilities, bus malls, transportation centers, intermodal terminals, park-and-ride stations, acquisition of replacement vehicles, bus rebuilds, bus preventive maintenance, passenger amenities such as passenger shelters and bus stop signs, accessory and miscellaneous equipment such as mobile radio units, supervisory vehicles, fareboxes, computers, shop and garage equipment, and costs incurred in arranging innovative financing for eligible projects.

Allocation of Funding: Allocated at the discretion of the Secretary although Congress fully earmarks all available funding.

Match: 80 percent Federal, 20 percent local

Funding Availability: Year appropriated plus two years (total of three years)

Section 5310 - Transportation for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities Program

Program Description

This program (49 U.S.C. 5310) provides formula funding to States for the purpose of assisting private nonprofit groups in meeting the transportation needs of the elderly and persons with disabilities when the transportation service provided is unavailable, insufficient, or inappropriate to meeting these needs. Funds are apportioned based on each State's share of population for these groups of people.

Funds are obligated based on the annual program of projects included in a statewide grant application. The State agency ensures that local applicants and project activities are eligible and in compliance with Federal requirements, that private not-for-profit transportation providers have an opportunity to participate as feasible, and that the program provides for as much coordination of Federally assisted transportation services, assisted by other Federal sources. Once FTA approves the application, funds are available for state administration of its program and for allocation to individual subrecipients within the state.

Program Summary Fact Sheet

Appropriation: Funded under Formula Grants

Description: Funds are used to provide transportation services to meet the special needs of the elderly and persons with disabilities.

Statutory Reference: 49USC5310

Eligible Recipients: States apply for funds on behalf of local private non-profit agencies and certain public bodies.

Eligible Purposes: Capital projects are eligible for funding. Most funds are used to purchase vehicles, but acquisition of transportation services under contract, lease or other arrangements and state program administration are also eligible expenses.

Allocation of Funding: Funds are allocated by a formula that considers the number of elderly individuals and individuals with disabilities in each State.

Match: 80 percent Federal and 20 percent local

Funding Availability: Year of appropriation (one year).

Section 5311 - Rural and Small Urban Areas Transportation Program

Program Description

This program (49 U.S.C. 5311) provides formula funding to states for the purpose of supporting public transportation in areas of less than 50,000 population. It is apportioned in proportion to each State's non-urbanized population. Funding may be used for capital, operating, State administration, and project administration expenses. Each state prepares an annual program of projects, which must provide for fair and equitable distribution of funds within the states,

including Indian reservations, and must provide for maximum feasible coordination with transportation services assisted by other Federal sources.

Funds may be used for capital, operating, and administrative assistance to state agencies, local public bodies, and nonprofit organizations (including Indian tribes and groups), and operators of public transportation services. The state must use 15 percent of its annual apportionment to support intercity bus service, unless the Governor certifies that these needs of the state are adequately met. Projects to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Clean Air Act, or bicycle access projects, may be funded at 90 percent Federal match. The maximum FTA share for operating assistance is 50 percent of the net operating costs.

Program Summary Fact Sheet

Appropriation: Funded under Formula Grants

Description: The goals of the nonurbanized formula program are: 1) to enhance the access of people in nonurbanized areas to health care, shopping, education, employment, pubic services, and recreation; 2) to assist in the maintenance, development, improvement, and use of public transportation systems in rural and small urban areas; 3) to encourage and facilitate the most efficient use of all Federal funds used to provide passenger transportation in nonurbanized areas through the coordination of programs and services; 4) to assist in the development and support of intercity bus transportation; and 5) to provide for the participation of private transportation providers in nonurbanized transportation to the maximum extent feasible.

Statutory Reference: 49USC5311

Eligible Recipients: State and local governments, non-profit organizations (including Indian tribes and groups), and public transit operators.

Eligible Purposes: Funds may be used for capital, operating, and administrative purposes.

Allocation of Funding: Funding is apportioned by a statutory formula that is based on the latest U.S. Census figures of areas with a population less than 50,000. The amount that the state may use for state administration, planning, and technical assistance activities is limited to 15 percent of the annual apportionment. States must spend 15 percent of the apportionment to support rural intercity bus service unless the Governor certifies that the intercity bus needs of the state are adequately met.

Match: The maximum Federal share for capital and project administration is 80 percent (except for projects to meet the requirement of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Clean Air Act, or bicycle access projects, which may be funded at 90 percent.). The maximum Federal share for operating assistance is 50 percent of the net operating costs. The local share is 50 percent, which shall come from an undistributed cash surplus, a replacement or depreciation cash fund or reserve, or new capital.

Funding Availability: Year appropriated plus two years (total of three years).

Section 5316 – Job Access and Reverse Commute Program

Program Description

The purpose of this grant program (TEA-21, Section 3037, authorized through FY 2003) is to develop transportation services designed to transport welfare recipients and low income individuals to and from jobs and to develop transportation services for residents of urban centers and rural and suburban areas to suburban employment opportunities. Emphasis is placed on projects that use mass transportation services.

Grants may finance capital projects and operating costs of equipment, facilities, and associated capital maintenance items related to providing access to jobs; promote use of transit by workers with nontraditional work schedules; promote use by appropriate agencies of transit vouchers for welfare recipients and eligible low income individuals; and promote use of employer-provided transportation including the transit pass benefit program.

Funds are allocated on a discretionary basis as follows: 60 percent to areas over 200,000 population; 20 percent to areas of under 200,000 population; and 20 percent to nonurbanized areas. The Federal/local share is 50/50.

Program Summary Fact Sheet

Appropriation: Has a separate appropriation entitled Job Access and Reverse Commute

***Description*:** Job Access grants are intended to provide new transit service to assist welfare recipients and other low-income individuals in getting to jobs, training, and child care. Reverse Commute grants are designed to develop transit services to transport workers to suburban job sites.

Statutory Reference: TEA-21, Section 3037

Eligible Recipients: Local governmental authorities and agencies and non-profit entities.

Eligible Purposes: Eligible activities for Job Access grants include capital and operating costs of equipment, facilities, and associated capital maintenance items related to providing access to jobs. Also included are the costs of promoting the use of transit by workers with nontraditional work schedules, promoting the use of transit vouchers, and promoting the use of employer-provided transportation including the transit benefits. For Reverse Commute grants, the following activities are eligible—operating costs, capital costs and other costs associated with reverse commute by bus, train, carpool, vans or other transit service.

Allocation of Funding: Funding is to be allocated by the Secretary based on legislative criteria identified in Section 3037. Not more than $10 million per year may be made available for reverse commute projects.

Match: Not to exceed 50 percent in Department of Transportation funding. Other 50 percent may be derived from other Federal programs where eligible, states, and localities. The share of funding not derived from Section 3037 shall be provided in cash from sources other than revenues from providing mass transportation service, but may include amounts received under a service agreement.

Funding Availability: Year appropriated plus two years (total of three years)

Section 5317 – New Freedom Program

Program Description

The purpose of this program is to encourage services and facility improvements to address the transportation needs of persons with disabilities that go beyond those required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. This provides a new formula grant program for associated capital and operating costs.

Program Summary Fact Sheet

Appropriation: Funds allocated through a formula based upon population of persons with disabilities.

Description: Funds are to be used to provide transportation services to persons with disabilities beyond what is required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. The projects selected are to be derived from a locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan. The plan must have been developed through a process that included representatives of the public, private and nonprofit transportation and human services providers and participation by the public. Projects must be included in a locally-developed human service transportation coordinated plan beginning in FY 2007.

Statutory Reference: 49 U.S.C. Section 5317

Eligible Recipients: States and designated recipients must select grantees competitively.

Eligible Purposes: Eligible activities for New Freedom grants include capital and operating costs of equipment, facilities, and associated capital maintenance items related to addressing the transportation needs of persons with disabilities**.** 10 percent of funds may be used for planning, administration and technical assistance.

Allocation of Funding: Allocations to designated recipients in areas over 200,000 (60 percent), to States for areas under 200,000 (20 percent) and non-urbanized areas (20 percent); States may transfer funds to urbanized or non-urbanized area programs as long as funds are used for New Freedom Program purposes.

Match: The maximum Federal share for capital and project administration is 80 percent. The maximum Federal share for operating assistance is 50 percent of the net operating costs. Matching share requirements are flexible to encourage coordination with other federal programs that may provide transportation, such as Health and Human Services or Agriculture.

Funding Availability: Year appropriated plus two years (total of three years)

Section 5340 - Growing States and High Density States Program

Funds for this program are based on growth and density factors in each state. Under the 5340 formula, half of the funds are made available under the Growing States factors and are apportioned based on State population forecasts for 15 years beyond the most recent Census. Amounts apportioned for each State are then allocated to urbanized and rural areas based on the State's urban/rural population ratio. The High Density States factors distribute the other half of the funds to States with population densities greater than 370 people per square mile. These funds are apportioned only to urbanized areas within those States.

The SAFETEA-LU Conference Report instructs FTA to merge the urbanized area amounts for the 5307 and 5340 formulas into a single apportionment when it publishes program apportionments. Funding under 5340 can be used for any of the eligible expenses allowable under 5307.

Flexible Funding for Transit and Highway Improvements

Program Summary

Flexible funds are certain legislatively specified funds that may be used either for transit or highway purposes. This provision was first included in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1999 (ISTEA) and was continued with the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). The idea of flexible funds is that a local area can choose to use certain Federal surface transportation funds based on local planning priorities, not on a restrictive definition of program eligibility. Flexible funds include Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Urban Formula Funds.

Since the enactment of ISTEA, FHWA funds transferred to the FTA have provided a substantial new source of funds for transit projects. When FHWA funds are transferred to FTA, they can be used for a variety of transit improvements such as new fixed guideway projects, bus purchases, construction and rehabilitation of rail stations, maintenance facility construction and renovations, alternatively-fueled bus purchases, bus transfer facilities, multimodal transportation centers, and advanced technology fare collection systems.

When FHWA funds are transferred to FTA they are transferred to one of the following three programs:

- Urbanized Area Formula Program (5307),
- Nonurbanized Area Formula Program (Section 5311 program);
- Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Program (Section 5310 program).

Once they are transferred to FTA for a transit project, the funds are administered as FTA funds and take on all the requirements of the FTA program. Transferred funds may use the same non-Federal matching share that the funds would have if they were used for highway purposes and administered by FHWA.

In urbanized areas over 200,000 population, the decision on the transfer of flexible funds is made by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). In areas under 200,000 population the decision is made by the MPO in cooperation with the State DOT. In rural areas, the transfer decision is made by the State DOT. The decision to transfer funds should flow from the transportation planning process and the priorities established for an area as part of the planning process.

11.2 SURFACE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

The Surface Transportation Program (STP) (23 U.S.C. 133) provides the greatest flexibility in the use of funds. These funds may be used (as capital funding) for public transportation capital improvements, car and vanpool projects, fringe and corridor parking facilities, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and intercity or intracity bus terminals and bus facilities. As funding for planning, these funds can be used for surface transportation planning activities, wetland mitigation, transit research and development, and environmental analysis. Other eligible projects under STP include transit safety improvements and most transportation control measures.

STP funds are distributed among various population and programmatic categories within a State. Some program funds are made available to metropolitan planning areas containing urbanized areas over 200,000 population; STP funds are also set aside to areas under 200,000 and 50,000 population. The largest portion of STP funds may be used anywhere within the State to which they are apportioned.

11.3 CONGESTION MITIGATION AND AIR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) (23 U.S.C. 149) has the objective of improving the Nation's air quality and managing traffic congestion. CMAQ projects and programs are often innovative solutions to common mobility problems and are driven by Clean Air Act mandates to attain national ambient air quality standards. Eligible activities under CMAQ include transit system capital expansion and improvements that are projected to realize an increase in ridership; travel demand management strategies and shared ride services; pedestrian and bicycle facilities and promotional activities that encourage bicycle commuting. Programs and projects are funded in air quality nonattainment and maintenance areas for ozone, carbon monoxide (CO), and small particulate matter (PM-10) that reduce transportation-related emissions.

Funds are apportioned to States based on a formula that considers the severity of their air quality problems.

National Highway System

The National Highway System (NHS), established in 1995, provides funding for a wide range of transportation activities (23 U.S.C. 103(b)). Eligible transit projects under the NHS program include fringe and corridor parking facilities, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, carpool and vanpool projects, and public transportation facilities in NHS corridors, where they would be cost effective and improve the level of service on a particular NHS limited access facility.

11.4 STATE FUNDING

The state of Georgia, under the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), has administrative responsibility four of the Federal program related to transit operating and capital for cities under 200,000 population. Below is a list of the programs with eligibility and program application requirements from the GDOT website. Section 5307, 5309 and 5311 programs have administrative guides developed by GDOT that can be access from the GDOT website. Contact with GDOT should be made along with reviewing the program administrative guides to determining the availability and timing for funding. Typically, the application process begins in April of each year with funds being available in July. The state does provide matching shares for capital grants for the Section 5307, 5309 and 5311. The state provides no state funding for operating.

Urbanized Area Formula Grants (Section 5307)

Purpose

To assist in financing the acquisition , construction, cost-effective leasing, maintenance, planning, and improvement of facilities and equipment for use by operation, lease, contract, or otherwise in mass transportation service, and for urbanized areas with populations under 200,000, to assist with the payment of operating expenses to improve or to continue such service by operation, lease, contract or otherwise.

Eligibility

Funds will be made available to urbanized (as defined by the Census) areas through designated recipients which must be public entities and legally capable of receiving and dispensing Federal funds. Urbanized areas with populations 200,000 or greater receive funds directly from FTA. Areas with populations of 50,000 - 200,000 receive FTA funds through the Georgia Department of Transportation.

Requirements:

A resolution must be passed by the public body approving the filing for an application; projects must be included in an urbanized area's transportation improvement program (TIP), and in the State transportation improvement program (STIP) approved by the FTA and FHWA. Other federal requirements must also be met.

Section 5307 Administrative guide

This guide is available from the GDOT website under Transit Programs

GDOT Contact Person:

Mr. Steve Kish

Discretionary Capital (Section 5309)

Purpose:

To assist in financing the acquisition, construction, reconstruction, and improvement of facilities, rolling stock and equipment for use, by operation, lease, or otherwise, in mass public transportation service and in coordinating service with highway and other transportation in such areas.

Eligibility:

Public agencies, including State; municipalities and other subdivisions of States; public agencies and instrumentalities of one or more States; and public corporations, boards, and commissions established under State law.

Requirements:

Applicants must have legal, financial, and technical capacity to carry out proposed project and maintain facilities and equipment purchased with Federal assistance. A resolution must be passed by an authorized public body approving the filing for an application and projects must also be included in the urbanized area's transportation improvement program (TIP) and in the state transportation improvement program (STIP).

Section 5309 Administrative guide

This guide is available from the GDOT website under Transit Programs

GDOT Contact Person:

Mr. Tony Sack

Job Access Reverse Commute Program (Section 3037)

Purpose:

To provide competitive grants to local governments, nonprofit organizations, and designated recipients of Federal Transit funding to develop transportation services to connect welfare recipients and low-income persons to employment and support services. Job Access grants are for capital projects, to finance operating costs of equipment, facilities and associated support costs related to providing access to jobs. The Reverse Commute grants are to assist in funding the costs associated with adding reverse commute bus, train, carpool or service from urban areas, urbanized area and other than urbanized areas to suburban work places.

Eligibility:

State and local governmental agencies, nonprofit agencies, and transit providers.

Requirements:

Applications submitted must contain a description of the applicant's organizational capacity to perform the project, documentation of matching funds, a regional job access and reverse commute plan, transit operator concurrence, and State concurrence to amend the State Transportation Improvement Program (for areas below 50,000 population).

GDOT Contact Person:

Mr. Steve Kish

Rural Public Transportation Program (Section 5311)

Purpose:

To improve, initiate, or continue public transportation service in nonurbanized areas by providing financial assistance for operating and administrative expenses and for the acquisition, construction, and improvement of facilities and equipment. Also to provide technical assistance for rural transportation providers.

Eligibility:

Eligible recipient may include state agencies, local public bodies and agencies thereof, nonprofit organizations, Indian tribes, and operators of public transportation services, including intercity bus service, in rural and small urban areas. Private for-profit operators of transit or paratransit services may participate in the program only through contracts with eligible recipients. .

Requirements:

Applicants must submit an application to the Georgia Department of Transportation. Applications will be evaluated and a program of projects will be submitted to the Federal Transit Administration. The program of projects will reflect a fair and equitable distribution of funds.

Section 5311 Administrative guide

This guide is available from the GDOT website under Transit Programs

GDOT Contact Person:

Mr. Tony Sack

11.5 LOCAL FUNDING

The local share for funding transit capital and operating can come from a variety of sources provided that they did not come originally from a federal source. Local share is normally made in the form of cash; however, in some cases the local share can be made in the form of in-kind services or contributions. In-kind services are those services which may be used by the transit operation but paid for from another local source and not directly by the transit operation. For example, shared use of a garage facility may be counted as in-kind contribution because the value of the service provided by the use of the garage could be paid from another source such as the Public Works Department.

Typically, local share comes from three main sources, general fund, ad valorem taxes (property taxes) or sales taxes, dedicated specifically to transit. For capital, general revenue or capital improvement bonds may be considered as a local share source.

Local funding can come in the form of public-private partnerships, SPLOST funding, local taxes, and advertising revenues.

Public-Private Partnerships

There is the potential for public-private partnerships in the Greater Lowndes County area. The survey has shown the Wild Adventures theme park to be a potential transit attraction. The theme park with local hotels and other tourist attractions may offer some creative financing partnerships for the transit entity. Large local employers such as Moody AFB could also have a financial interest in the creation of transit in the area.

Any implementation plan should include these potential partners in formulating strategies to create a successful transit system. This system may include more than a fixed route component. Service to Wild Adventures may only be attractive on weekends or during special events. Demand service may be the best option to serve the airport at its current level of activity.

Creative financing may include Wild Adventure discounts for showing a validated bus receipt. This strategy could free up parking and roadway congestion on peak days. VSU could include unlimited bus service for students by including the cost in the transportation fee with their tuition. A creative and flexible implantation plan will be critical to achieve success with a start-up transit system.

SPLOST Funding

Georgia law allows local jurisdictions as of July 1, 1985 to use Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) proceeds for capital improvement projects that would otherwise be paid for with General Fund and property tax revenues. Athens, Georgia is currently utilizing SPLOST funding to help fund a bus shelter program, their Multi-Modal Transportation Center (MMTC), and the expansion and replacement of transit vehicles.

Local Taxes

A dedicated property tax designated specifically for transit operations and capital improvements could be assessed. A dedicated millage levy could offset local funding costs and deficits in fare box revenues.

Special Benefit Assessment Districts

To capture benefits associated with enhanced real estate development partially attributable to improvements in transportation corridors, many jurisdictions create special assessment districts. Often called a Municipal Services Taxing Unit (MSTU) or a Municipal Services Benefit Unit (MSBU), a special assessment is charged upon real estate deriving a special benefit from a nearby capital improvement that is used to cover debt service for the improvement.

Advertising Revenues

While advertising revenues are not a large revenue generator, they can still be used to help with operating and maintenance cost. Advertising revenues can be generated from signage applied to buses exterior or interior and bus shelters.

12.0 FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to determine the feasibility of implementing transit service in the Valdosta/Lowndes County area. The study efforts included the following work efforts:

- Identification of service needs by market segment.
- Identification of potential high use corridors.
- Obtain public input about transit service and destinations desired.
- Cost analysis of potential transit service scenarios
- Identification of funding sources

Finding 1: **The introduction of transit service in selected areas of Valdosta would have a fairly high probability of success.**

The service need was accomplished by identifying employment clusters, education clusters, commercial cluster, and existing and future land use. In addition, an analysis was conducted to determine if and where the potential for transit service may exist. It was determined that there are areas in Lowndes County that show a high potential for transit service. The high to medium-high potential transit zones were found to be concentrated primarily in the City of Valdosta. The service needs information was overlaid on maps to provide an indication where service and service markets were likely to occur. The service corridors appear to coincide with the potential high use corridors for the future.

Finding 2: **Market analysis and public input show a desire for transit to serve work, shopping and medical trips.**

Nearly 80 percent of the respondents to the survey conducted were over the age of 36. The primary destinations indicated from the survey show that work, shopping and medical would make up over 80 percent of the desired transit trips. The top 6 destinations from the survey were as follows:

- Valdosta Mall
- Wal-Mart
- Downtown Valdosta
- Shopping Center
- South Georgia Medical Center
- Valdosta State University

The service level desire for transit is for weekday service (63 percent) with an added desire to provide Saturday service as well. While the trip purpose showed a strong desire for work related trips, the destination results showed mostly shopping related trips. If the demand for work trips is high for destinations that would not benefit from being served by fixed route transit at regular intervals during the day, alternative services may better serve these destinations. Any plan for transit in the area should include alternative services such as ridesharing, van pooling, or tripper bus service.

Finding 3: **Fixed route transit service using a hub and spoke service model appears to be the most feasible service to begin with.**

Based on the destinations desired from the survey and the identification of the high potential transit zone and corridors, it appears that several routes could be developed to meet desired service levels. Preliminary analysis shows that the beginning and ending of scenario routes identified for this study are in downtown Valdosta. By establishing a hub and spoke system with downtown Valdosta being the hub, transit patron would only have to made a maximum of one transfer to go anywhere on the system. This would remain true with the addition of future routes. Land owned by the City in downtown Valdosta has also been identified for possible transfer station and maintenance facility location.

Finding 4: **An initial transit system could be implemented that maximizes available federal and state funding with the lowest local contribution.**

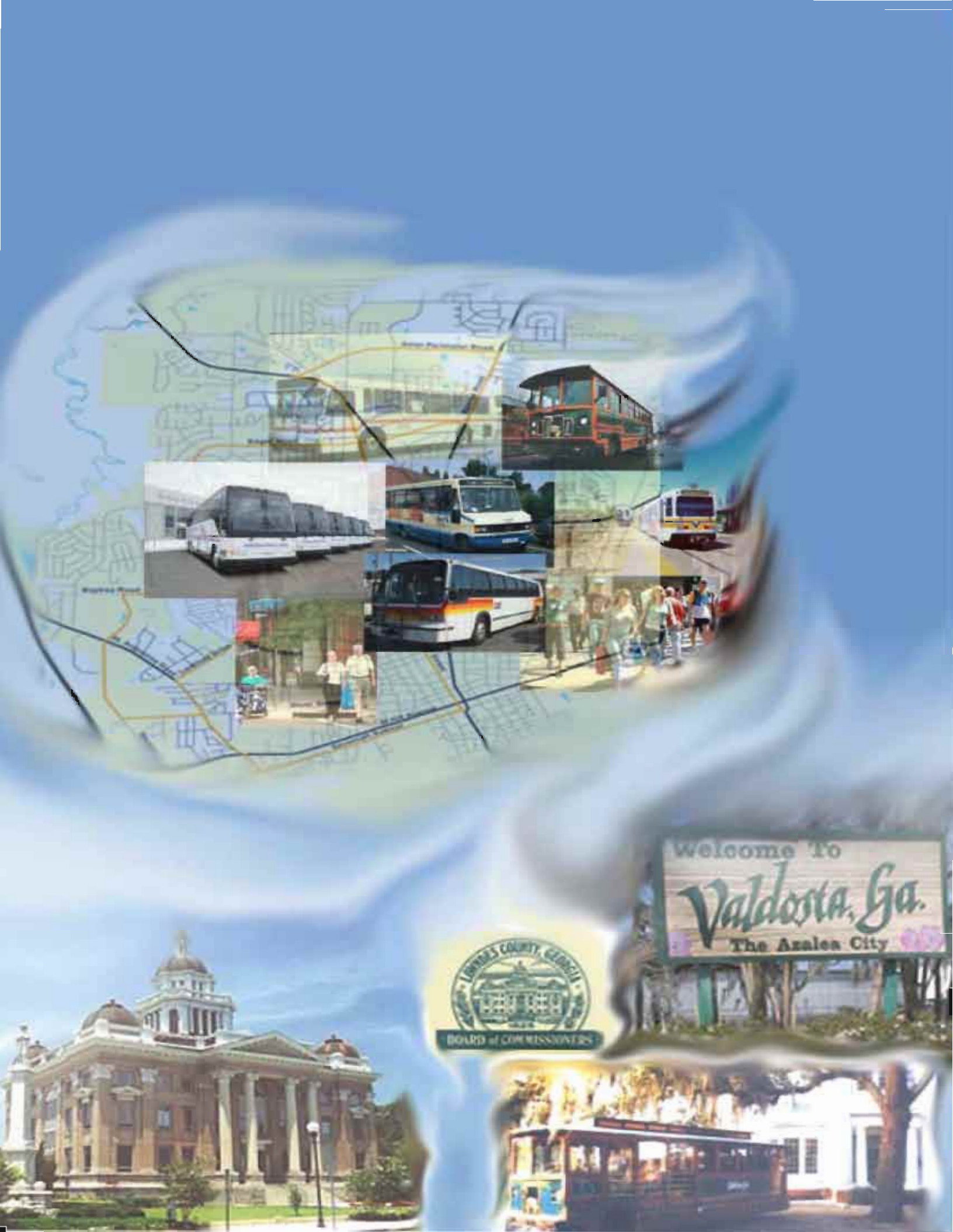
Using the identified funding sources and the cost scenarios for initial transit service the city would be able to maximize its local share contribution for the implementation of transit services should the city chose to do so. The federal allocation to Valdosta would cover half the projected cost for two initial routes at the service levels shown in the scenarios. Local contribution for capital costs should only be about 10 percent of the total cost. This would be contingent on the availability of funding from both federal and state sources. The local funding and match dollars for GDOT funding could be generated from a SPLOST type funding strategy. Public-Private partnerships should also be explored for finance opportunities.

12.1 NEXT STEPS

Should the decision be made to move forward with the implementation of transit service for Valdosta, there are several steps that will be need to be taken to bring the implementation to fruition. Some of the major steps are as follows:

- **Determine an organizational structure to operate the transit service.**
  - Will the service operate under an existing governmental structure or will a new one be created?
  - Should contracting with a private operator be considered?
  - What are the advantages and disadvantages of each structure and/or operating scenario?
- **Develop service and financial plans.**
  - Determine who, what and where the initial transit system will serve.
  - Determine what funding will be needed for the initial service and where it will come from.
  - Consider future service and financial needs while developing the initial services.

- **Develop an implementation plan.**
  - Prepare a plan that shows the timelines for implementing the various stages of the initial start up system.
  - Work with private entities to form public-private partnerships.
- **Contact GDOT**
  - Contact GDOT as an initial step to determine the timing and availability of funding. The information from this contact will provide critical components for the completion of the steps identified above.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