

Echols County Transit Development Plan



Prepared by



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This publication does not constitute a standard, specification or regulation. This document is prepared in cooperation with the Georgia Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, and Federal Transit Administration.

Introduction

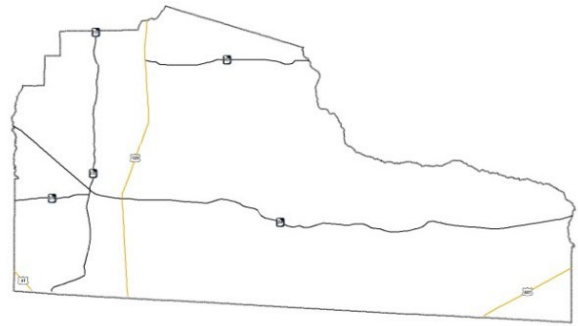
The Echols County Transit Development Plan (TDP) was developed by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission to be used as an informational guidebook for potential future public transit options in Echols County. Currently, Echols County does not have a public transit system, but this TDP can be used as a source for Echols County's elected officials and staff when discussing and answering basic questions concerning rural public transit in Echols County. This TDP is also shared with the Georgia Department of Transportation to keep them current on rural public transit characteristics in the community. Echols County should use this report to develop and guide rural public transit investments and to enhance mobility options for the residents of the community, if feasible. This TDP will explain possible funding sources, such as the 5311 program, that can help with the implementation of a rural transit system. A regional public transit system would cover all 18 counties in the Southern Georgia region and put public transit services under one or two providers. Opting into a regional rural transit system may be more beneficial to rural counties than a single-county public transit system.

This TDP analyzes multiple demographic characteristics of the area, transit-related goals and objectives and provides a demand estimation and needs assessment and a 5-year Capital and Operating Plan, specifically for Echols County. This information will give officials a better understanding of the opportunities that a regional transit system may create for Echols County. Demographic information as well as other Census information in this report was pulled from the US Census Bureau 2017-2021 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates and provides the current statistics for each county unless otherwise noted.

Socioeconomic Characteristics

Many community factors contribute to the planning process or incorporation of public transit services into a community. Socioeconomic and demographic data provides an overall view of the community and is analyzed to understand the potential need for public transportation services. Based on the data provided, other pertinent information and professional opinions of those in the transportation field, an informed decision can be made concerning the need and potential use of public transit in Echols County.

Figure 1. Map of Echols County



Population

Echols County, Georgia is a moderately-sized rural county in Southern Georgia. The 2021 ACS estimated population for Echols County is 3,691 persons. Below is a table representing the population demographics for Echols County and comparable peer counties.

Table 1. Population Demographics

Population	3,691
Median Age	40.3
Population Over 65	15.7%
Race/Ethnicity	
White	66.2%
Black	3.1%
American Native	0.3%
Asian	1.5%
Hispanic or Latino (any race)	29.4%
Some other race	17.1%

Income

Income is one aspect of demographic information that plays a major role in the need and/or use of public transit services. Whether the community is urban or rural, income is often used as an indication of the need for public transit in a community. When comparing Echols County to the state of Georgia, it is noted that Echols County has a lower median income at \$45,151 which is \$19,879 less.

Table 2. Economic Characteristics

Median household income	\$45,151	\$65,030
Persons below the poverty level (%)	25.4%	17.5%

Poverty status is often an indication that many residents are in need of public transportation services and are more likely to have a greater reliance on public transit services. In Echols County, an estimated 249 households or 939 persons are below the poverty level. This means that about 25.4% of the county’s population is in poverty under the federal definition. Even though there is a distinctive number of citizens below the poverty level, they are still finding ways to pay for and maintain transportation, and although there is no direct connection between transit ridership and access to vehicles in Echols County, it may be inferred that if a public transit system is affordable and accessible to all residents it may offset some of the costs of transportation for individuals at or below the federal poverty level.

Modes of Transportation

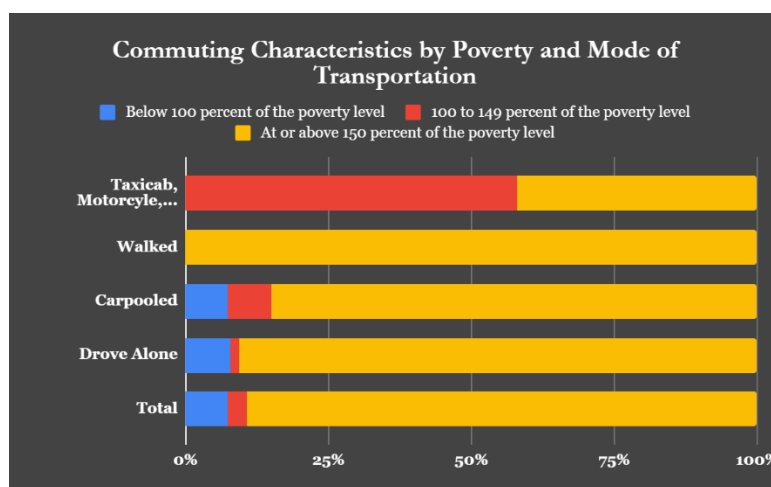
Transportation typically tends to be a large part of any families' budget due to monthly payments on a vehicle, insurance, maintenance, fuel, and other factors. While many families do not feel a burden with the expense this mode of transportation can have, it has a significant impact on those families that are living in poverty. Of the approximately 1,520 workers 16 years of age and over in Echols County commuting to work, about 741 occupied housing units have 1 or 2 vehicles available for use. Approximately 491 occupied housing units have 3 vehicles or more available for use. In Echols County, 81.1% of workers commute to work via a single-occupancy car, truck, or van and about 2.6% commute in a carpool of at least two persons. 16.3% of workers in Echols County used other modes of transportation, which include walking, motorcycles, bicycles, and/or taxicabs (5 persons used a bus or public transit, 164 persons walked, and 79 persons traveled by other means).

This indicates that while transportation is likely a higher portion of a household's outlays, many are

continuing to find a way to pay for a car, gasoline, and maintenance costs, or asking friends for transportation to work, appointments, and other trips which require a vehicle. From asking friends and family for transportation to just walking to one’s destination, citizens are using various modes of transportation to get where they need to go.

The number of persons carpooling, walking, busing, and using other modes to commute to work is an indication that this percentage of the population is more likely to use or need public transit services.

Figure 2. Commuting Characteristics by Poverty and Mode of Transportation.



Livability Impact

Many factors make a community more livable, such as the overall cost of living, accessibility, and quality of healthcare, grocery stores, and other amenities. Many of these amenities, especially in rural areas, require a vehicle because they are not within a reasonable distance or lack the infrastructure for residents to walk or bike. For this reason, public transit services can be very

important in increasing the livability of a community. Public transit along with bike and pedestrian infrastructure offers optimum results for a livable community. As livability increases so will the quality of life, and this will also create an atmosphere for growth and economic development because residents will have available transportation options. Public transportation services will also give those who do not own vehicles or have been asking friends and family for transportation more freedom and flexibility to reach their destination.

Commuting Patterns

In Echols County, over 1,490 citizens commute to work daily. Of the 1,520 workers in the county, more than 907 or about 60.9% commute out of the county for work (of these, 5.9% work outside of the state) every day as shown in statistics from the US Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 2017-2021. This is an indication that Echols County is contributing workers to jobs in surrounding counties and states. 42.9 percent have a one to nineteen-minute commute, while the remaining percentage of commuters have between a 20 to 60+ minute commute. This number of commuters suggests that this particular segment of the population has access to a vehicle whether driving alone or carpooling.

Age

Age can be a significant determining factor in rural public transit systems. Older residents are more likely to need transportation to and from medical appointments, shopping, and other daily activities. Approximately, 15.7% of the population of Echols County is over the age of 65. This is almost equal to the state average. Due to the percentage of residents that are over the age of 65, there should be a discussion concerning mobility options for senior residents. Seniors often forgo driving or their vehicle altogether, this can also increase the need of older residents to rely on local public transportation services.

Evaluation for Potential Transit Service

	<i>Echols</i>
<i>Householder 65+</i>	285
<i>No Vehicle Available</i>	0
<i>1 + Vehicle Available</i>	69

Table 3. Householders 65 Years and Over & Vehicles, (Census Table B25045)

To better understand the possibility of a transit system in Echols County, not only is it necessary to know what funding options are available for rural areas, but it is also important to have knowledge of the potential ridership base. This section will discuss the federal 5311 program, characteristics of potential riders, an overview of existing services, transit need and demand analysis, and 5-year budget estimates.

¹ The ACS is a 5-year sampled survey of American households, the data may include large margins of error that may or may not be presented in this

Understanding 5311 Programs

Sometimes the decision to implement a rural transit system in a county is stalled due to financial questions, such as: How can we pay for a rural transit system? Any rural public transportation system in Echols County would likely require funding from the Federal Transit Administration’s Section 5311 Rural Public Transportation Program. The 5311 Program offers local areas an opportunity to provide transit services, which in turn improves access to jobs, healthcare, recreational activities and other services that residents often use. The program is administered by the Georgia Department of Transportation in partnership with local communities to assist with rural mobility needs. Federal funds are allocated to the states on a formula basis and can be used for capital assistance, operating assistance, planning, and program administration. GDOT is the recipient of these funds, and it, in turn, provides Federal funding (and a limited amount of state capital funding) to local sub-recipients (counties) in Georgia.

Due to the administering of these funds by GDOT, the State of Georgia has established the following statewide goals for the Section 5311 program:

Goal: Basic Mobility to Serve All Georgians:

- Serving those persons with the most critical needs for access and mobility, especially those without alternatives.
- Providing service without any trip purpose restrictions or eligibility requirements including medical, social services, personal shopping, business, and employment trips.
- Serving all areas with appropriate levels of service, subject to the necessary local or regional participation.
- Addressing economic development—through employment trips, services to support local employment sites, etc.

Goal: Program Implementation:

- Partnering with the FTA in the administration of the Section 5311 program, meeting all FTA program requirements.
- Managing a program of excellence that provides timely management direction, guidance, and reimbursement to allow local entities to provide quality service.

report. For detailed information, a detailed review of the ACS data is encouraged.

- Partnering with local or regional entities to plan services to meet locally identified needs.
- Partnering with local or regional entities to operate the services.
- Providing technical assistance to help local providers improve the effectiveness, efficiency, safety, and quality of service.
- Providing technical information, policy analyses, and program management data to support transit program development.

Goal: Efficiency and Effectiveness:

- While maximizing ridership, recognizing that there are significant differences in population density, trip characteristics, and client needs (accessibility, assistance, etc.) which will affect usage.
- Subject to performance requirements appropriate to the area and type of service.
- With the appropriate type of service—demand-responsive, subscription route, route deviation, or fixed-route.
- Using the appropriate vehicle type—accessible if needed, sedan, van, small bus, large bus.

Goal: Safe, Secure Quality Service:

- Operating equipment that is within its design life, inspected for safety and overall condition
- Operated by staff meeting the highest qualifications—appropriate license (Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) if required), safe driving and criminal records checked, drug and alcohol testing, etc.
- Operated by a staff that is trained to proficiency in all necessary skills: Defensive Driving, Passenger Assistance, First Aid and CPR.
- Providing a safe and secure service to the riders.

Goal: Accessible Service—Usable by Persons with Disabilities:

- Providing service that is accessible (adequate number of accessible lift- or ramp-equipped vehicles.
- Using operators trained to proficiency in passenger assistance, lift use, restraints, mobility devices (folding, storage, etc.).
- User information and outreach to ensure that persons needing the service are aware of it and can obtain information.

Goal: Coordinated Provision of Transportation in Rural Areas:

- Coordinated policies at the state level through interagency coordination.
- Coordinated at regional/local level—shared vehicles, shared rides, coordinated management—where it will result in more cost-effective, quality service that meets client and general public transit rider needs.

If implemented, a rural transit system in Echols County should promote these established goals by the State of Georgia and meeting the above goals would not be difficult. Echols County should carry out varying forms of public outreach to garner support and notify residents of the service. The Southern Georgia Regional Commission is also available to help with achieving certain goals, such as the coordinated provision of transportation in rural areas and the effectiveness and efficiency of the system.

Likewise, GDOT has established minimum criteria for transit programs in GDOT’s Rural Public Transportation Service Policy. These include:

- Services should not be duplicative of other transportation services;
- Vehicles should be utilized to reach a goal of 500 one-way passenger trips per vehicle month **or** be operated 120 hours per month **or** 1,000 vehicle miles per month;
- Vehicles should be available for public transportation service on a daily basis;
- Vehicle trips for contract, charter or subscription service should recover fully allocated costs;
- The total of all purchase of service agreements should recover the fully allocated operating costs.

Additionally, GDOT recommends that service should be funded to the maximum extent possible by the generation of farebox revenue.

Section 5311 funds can be used for capital and operational costs. These are two different types of costs incurred for developing and continuing a rural transit system. Local funding for the capital acquisition will at a minimum be ten percent of the costs. Capital expenses under Section 5311 can include:

1. Vehicles

2. Communication equipment
3. Wheelchair lifts
4. Equipment installation costs
5. Computer equipment and purchase of software (laptops are not an eligible expense and monthly software maintenance or lease fees are an operating expense)
6. Office equipment
7. Smart Card Reader
8. Fare boxes

Federal funding may be provided for up to 50 percent of the net operating deficit; the remaining 50 percent (or more) must be provided from local funds. Operating costs include, but are not limited to, driver, mechanic, and dispatcher salaries, licenses, vehicle insurance, drug and alcohol testing, uniforms, maintenance and repairs (includes oil, tire, and parts) and fuel. Monthly service fees for cell phones and/or two-way radio services are eligible operating expenses. Many local rural transit systems cover the 50% local share of the costs with contract and subscription contracts, which are discussed later.

In the Southern Georgia region, many counties that have a rural transit system contract with a third party operator. Third party operators are experienced, professional transit operators that can provide transit service effectively and efficiently. These counties use the Section 5311 funds to purchase capital equipment and contract with the third-party operator for operation of the system. Local governments generally only pay for vehicle insurance and operational expenses. Operational expenses do not include capital costs. All other operational expenses are handled by the third-party operator. It should be noted that local governments are generally responsible for any monitoring, reporting, and submittal of documents that may be required by GDOT for compliance.

Currently, peer county Glascock transit charges \$2 for trips that are in the county, \$5 for trips to neighboring cities, and \$10.00 to Augusta, which is the economic epicenter for their region.

When considering rural transit for Echols County, the following types of service are appropriate for rural public transportation programs and the funding provided for them, 5311 funds, will potentially offset or completely cover the local match required by Echols County:

Demand-response or route deviation service:

Demand-response is a type of service where individual passengers can request door-to-door or curb-to-curb transportation from a specific location to another specific location at a certain time. A technology-based ordering service similar to the one that Uber uses would help incorporate technology into ordering service possibly making it more efficient.

Route deviation service operates along a public way on a fixed-route, but which may deviate from the route occasionally in response to take a passenger to a destination or pick one up from an origin, after which it returns to the regular route, however, due to the large size of Echols County and its' rural nature this service would not recommend.

Contract and subscription service:

Subscription service is a type of demand response service in which routes and schedules are pre-arranged to meet the travel needs of riders who sign up for the service in advance. Often these riders are clients of human service agencies, who contract with the transportation operator to provide the service on behalf of the agency. This type of service may be provided by a Section 5311 program only to the extent that it does not violate FTA Charter Bus restrictions.

Evaluation of Existing Services

Currently, there are no public transportation systems in place in Echols County. However, some other services within the county provide public transit for clients. They include the Department of Human Services and Medicaid which currently provide approximately 400 trips per year. Although this is a form of public transit, the services are limited to pre-qualified clients receiving specific public assistance. Based on the data previously mentioned Echols County could benefit from a demand-response style public transit system because current services are not wide-ranging and are specific for the clients of the Human Service Providers. This form of transportation system excludes much-needed transportation services for the citizens of Echols County for general needs.

Demand Estimation/Needs Assessment

This section provides data and analysis of certain

characteristics of Echols County. Echols County is a county with a growing population, a high number of commuters (many who find/use other modes of transportation), a low median income and relatively low household income in comparison to other peer counties. Echols County also has a significant poverty percentage. All of these factors suggest that the demand and the need for public transit may increase as these characteristics increase. These traits also suggest that Echols County could potentially benefit from a rural transit system and should give full consideration to one.

Title VI and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Analysis

Although there is no current public transit system in Echols County, there is a need to know the federal laws and regulations for an entity receiving federal funds, should a public transit service be implemented. All federal laws and regulations regarding the delivery of public transit services must be adhered to, and this means that any public transit service may not discriminate against a rider on the basis of race, color, sex or limited ability to speak the English language, among other traits. This information along with other factors can be helpful when estimating the demand for a public transit system.

Four factors are used to determine the county’s need to provide services for persons with Limited English Proficiency. The four factors are outlined here:

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

The second most common language spoken at home in Echols County is Spanish. It is estimated that there are a total of 745 persons or 21.8% of the total population that speaks Spanish. This percentage is moderately higher than the national percentage of people that speak Spanish at home. The US Census Bureau estimates that of the persons 5 years and older in Echols County, 92 or 12.3% of persons who speak Spanish are linguistically isolated, meaning that they do not speak English very well.

Table 4. Percentage of Persons that Speak Spanish

Estimate	745
Margin of Error	+/- 7.5%
Echols County	21.8%
United States %	13%

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

Echols County has a high percentage of LEP individuals. Should Echols County implement a rural transit system, it is recommended Echols County utilize the website of the Southern Georgia Regional Commission where a Google Translator is available for potential riders to learn more about the system.

The Southern Georgia Regional Commission has also put together a Regional Transit Brochure that can be accessed on the SGRC website as well as in print format various locations throughout the region.

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

A future transit system in Echols County, would be provided as a service to riders in the county to access basic, non-emergency public transit services.

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

Echols County would provide materials in other languages for the potential riders should an Echols County Transit System be implemented; however, based on the information provided here, there does not appear to be a great need at this time that would justify the overall costs of providing these services to residents. As noted previously, it is recommended that potential riders utilize the SGRC website at www.sgrc.us, where a Google Translator can provide for basic information on the service to LEP individuals as well as a transit brochure that includes Spanish translation. (See Figure 3).

ADA Analysis

In Echols County, 353 persons have an ambulatory difficulty, meaning they have difficulty moving about under their own power. The population 65 years and older accounts for 42.5% of those individuals with an ambulatory difficulty, however, this is just one type of the disability, and all disabilities should be considered so that the public transit system is accessible for everyone. Residents that have disabilities are more likely to need public transportation to get to doctor's appointments, or just go shopping, but this can prove difficult without ADA accessible vehicles to transport them. Oftentimes residents with disabilities have a greater reliance on someone else providing transportation for them. The table below shows data for Echols County residents that have a disability of any sort.

Table 5. Echols County Disability Characteristics

AGE	Total Population	Disabled Residents	Disabled Residents (%)
Under 5 years	277	0	0%
5 to 17 years	567	0	0%
18 to 34 years	827	14	1.7%
35 to 64 years	1,439	189	13.1%
65 to 74 years	356	60	16.9%
75 years and over	225	90	40%

sgirc REGIONAL TRANSIT

Regional Public Transit Available in Southern Georgia

The opportunity for ridership is available to the general public!

You can schedule a trip for any purpose within the participating regional counties: Atkinson, Bacon, Ben Hill, Berrien, Brantley, Brooks, Charlton, Coffee, Cook, Irwin, Lowndes, Pierce, Tift, Turner and Ware.

Cost to Ride for Each One Way Trip

\$3.00 (0-10 miles)

\$3.00 plus 50 cents per mile (10+ miles)

Trips must be booked at least 24-hours in advance.

Call 1-855-360-7475

or download the Let's Ride App
(QR Code Below)

To learn more visit our website at:
www.letsridesouthga.com



Figure 3. SGRC Transit Brochure

Figure 5. Output Screen from Rural Transit Demand Tool

RURAL TRANSIT NEED/DEMAND ESTIMATION - OUTPUT TABLE			
Service Area:	Echols County, Georgia		
Analysis Description:	Echols County FY23 TDP		
Additional Description:			
Estimation of Transit Need			
Total need for passenger transportation service:	600	Persons	
Total households without access to a vehicle:	13	Households	
State Mobility Gap:	1.3	Daily 1-Way Psgr.-Trips per Household	
Total need based on mobility gap:	20	Daily 1-Way Passenger-Trips	
	4,100	Annual 1-Way Passenger-Trips	
General Public Rural Non-Program Demand			
<i>Estimate of demand for general public rural transportation</i>			
Rural transit trips:	1,700	Annual 1-Way Passenger-Trips	
General Public Rural Passenger Transportation			
<i>Estimate of demand for rural transportation</i>			
Total Rural Non-Program Demand		Annual 1-Way Passenger-Trips	
Small City Fixed Route			
Annual Ridership:		Annual 1-Way Passenger-Trips	
Demand - Commuter by Transit to an Urban Center			
Proportion of Commuters using Transit:			
Commuter trips by transit between counties:		Daily 1-Way Passenger Trips	
		Annual 1-Way Passenger-Trips	
Rural Program Demand			
<i>Annual Program Trip Estimation</i>			
Senior Center	100	Annual 1-Way Passenger-Trips	
		Annual 1-Way Passenger-Trips	
		Annual 1-Way Passenger-Trips	
		Annual 1-Way Passenger-Trips	
		Annual 1-Way Passenger-Trips	
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		Annual 1-Way Passenger-Trips	
		Annual 1-Way Passenger-Trips	
Total Rural Program Demand	100	Annual 1-Way Passenger-Trips	

Capital Equipment Cost and 5-Year Budget Estimates

A rural transit system includes capital expenses and operating expenses. Given the growth of Echols County’s population and the above Transit Need/Demand Analysis, one vehicle may be enough to operate a public transit system. However, if demand significantly increased in a short period, two vehicles may need to be considered to improve efficiency. Echols County would also need to consider purchasing a mobile radio, a computer, a printer, and essential software as well.

The following Capital and Operating Budget estimates were created using the GDOT TDP Guidebook Financial Toolkit and are based on current costs of services for Glascock County with an inflation rate of 3% per year for operating costs and 4% per year for capital costs to give an approximate value of what public transit services may cost in the next few years. Echols County does not currently have public transit, so the estimates provided are based on the Transit Need/Demand Analysis for Echols County as well as operating information from Glascock County. Further the Southern Georgia Regional Commission has implemented Regional Transit which may also have an impact on the overall cost to Echols County should they implement transit service through joining the current regional transit system that is in place.

The first table represents public transit service assumptions of costs in. The second table represents the capital cost summary to implement transit services in Echols County. The final table shows the final revenue, operating and capital summary. The table shows that local contribution, depending on implementation year, could range from \$68,000 to \$70,000. Once again, these assumptions are based on data from a peer county and does not include potential local cost savings through the SGRC regional transit system.

Figure 5. GDOT TDP Guidebook Financial Toolkit Assumptions for Echols County Transit Services

Transit Service	
Key Variables	
Attributes	Costs in 2023
Fixed Route Cost per Revenue Hour	\$0.00
Fixed Route Cost per Revenue Mile	\$0.00
ADA Paratransit/Demand Response Cost per Revenue Hour	\$46.89
ADA Paratransit/ Demand Response Cost per Revenue Mile	\$2.57
Vanpool Cost per Revenue Hour	\$0
Inflation Rate for Operating Costs	3%
Inflation Rate for Capital Costs	4%
Total Fixed Route Fleet Size	0
Total Demand Response Fleet Size	2

TDP Years	
Enter Current Year	2023
Enter First Year of TDP Financial Plan	2022

Figure 8. GDOT TDP Guidebook Financial Toolkit Capital Cost Summary for Transit Services

CAPITAL COST SUMMARY

Example Capital Costs - Update to Reflect Local Context

Capital Description	Units	Estimated Unit Cost (FY 2020)
Vehicles		
New Heavy Duty Buses Required for Expanded Service Plan - Fixed Route	0	\$0
Demand Response and Paratransit Vehicles	1	\$108,974
Passenger Amenities		
Shelters	0	\$0
Benches	0	\$0
Bus Stop Signs	0	\$0
Placeholder	0	\$0
Technology Upgrades		
GFI Fareboxes	1	\$4,880
Automated Passenger Counters	1	\$1,450
Automated Vehicle Locators	1	\$1,370

CAPITAL VEHICLE ESTIMATION

Fixed Route Vehicles	2023	2022	2023	2024	2025
Service Plan Vehicle Requirements	0	0	0	0	0
Spare Requirements	0	0	0	0	0
Total Vehicle Requirements	0	0	0	0	0
Additional Vehicles Needed (Includes Replacements)	0	0	0	0	0
FR TOTAL CAPITAL COST (with inflation)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Demand Response Vehicles					
Total Vehicle Requirements	1	0	0	1	1
Additional Vehicles Needed (Includes Replacements)	1	0	0	1	1
DR TOTAL CAPITAL COST (with inflation)	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 122,581	\$ 127,484	\$ 127,484
TOTAL CAPITAL COSTS	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 122,581	\$ 127,484	\$ 127,484

Figure ... GDOT TDP Guidebook Financial Toolkit Final Revenue, Operating and Capital Summary for Echols County Transit Services

FINAL REVENUE, OPERATING AND CAPITAL SUMMARY

Service Plan Year	Program Element	Total Costs	Federal Sources					State Sources	Local Sources
			FTA Section 5307	FTA Section 5311	FTA Section 5339	FHWA Flex	CARES Funding	Add Federal Source	Add State Source
2022	Operating Costs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -					
	Capital Costs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -					
	Total	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -					
2023	Operating Costs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -					
	Capital Costs	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -					
	Total	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -					
2024	Operating Costs	\$ 111,841	\$ -	\$ 55,920.50			\$ -	\$ 55,920.50	
	Capital Costs	\$ 122,581	\$ -	\$ 98,064.80			\$ 12,258.10	\$ 12,258.10	
	Total	\$ 234,422	\$ -	\$ 153,985.30			\$ 12,258.10	\$ 68,178.60	
2025	Operating Costs	\$ 115,196	\$ -	\$ 57,536			\$ -	\$ 57,536	
	Capital Costs	\$ 127,484	\$ -	\$ 101,987.20			\$ 12,748.40	\$ 12,748.40	
	Total	\$ 242,680	\$ -	\$ 159,523.20			\$ 12,748.40	\$ 70,284.40	

Conclusion

Echols County has many residents that would benefit from a public transportation system especially disabled and senior residents who are more likely to need assistance with mobility. Based on the research and data collected and analyzed within this Transportation Development Plan, the staff of the Southern Georgia Regional Commission recommends that Echols County participate in the regional transit system to help provide transportation for Echols County residents. This option may be more beneficial and financially feasible than a single county public transportation system. Opting in would oblige the county to potentially pay a portion of a cash match for capital and operating costs. This cash match would likely be based on a formula that all parties would agree to before service began.

Given the daily outflow of workers to neighboring counties, opting into the regional system may provide an affordable commuting option for residents with no vehicle access or limited mobility. Moreover, if Echols County were to opt into a regional transit system, some of its POS trips could be used to benefit the surrounding counties. Providing transit service would greatly impact the quality of life for Echols County residents by creating access to employment, healthcare services, shopping, and other general needs, beyond county boundaries. Implementing a public transit system may also help with economic outcomes by increasing the number of trips made daily to healthcare services, grocery stores, retail outlets, etc. It would also provide these benefits at a lower investment compared to a single county system, in addition to reducing the time and expense incurred by staff for annual training, daily monitoring, and monthly invoicing.

If Echols County would like more information about implementing a demand response rural public transit system, please contact the Southern Georgia Regional Commission at (229) 333-5277.