

Atkinson County Transit Development Plan

Prepared by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission



327 West Savannah Avenue
Valdosta, Georgia 31601
<http://www.sgrc.us>

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Introduction

The Atkinson County Transit Development Plan (TDP) was developed by the Southern Georgia Regional Commission to be used as an informational guidebook. Currently, Atkinson County does not have a public transit system, but this TDP can be used as a resource for Atkinson County’s elected officials and staff when discussing and answering basic questions about rural public transit and Atkinson County. This TDP is also shared with the Georgia Department of Transportation to keep them current on rural public transit characteristics in the community. Atkinson County should use this report to guide the development of rural public transit and to enhance service delivery for the residents of the community, if feasible. This TDP will explain the 5311 program, and other possible funding sources for Atkinson County should they implement a rural transit program. This TDP will also compare and contrast the characteristics of Atkinson County and three of its peer counties: Turner, Wilkes and Wilkinson, all of which have rural public transit systems.

The TDP covers an analysis of demographic characteristics of the area, transit related goals and objectives, a demand estimation and needs assessment, and a 5-year Capital and Operating Plan. This information will give officials a better understanding of the opportunities that a public transit system, whether single-county or regional, may create for Atkinson County. 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. When comparing demographic information as well as other Census information in this report, the US Census Bureau 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-year estimates will be utilized to show the current statistics for each county involved unless otherwise noted.

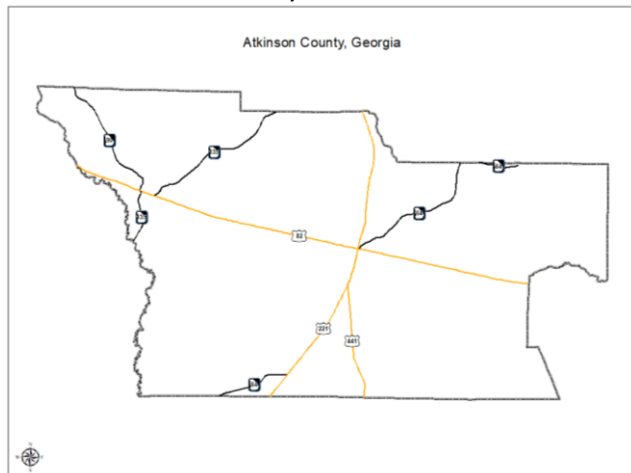


Figure 1 Map of Atkinson County

Socioeconomic Characteristics

Many community factors contribute to the planning process or incorporation of public transit services into a community. Socioeconomic and demographic data supplies an overall view of the community and is broken down 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 Atkinson County.

Population

Atkinson County, Georgia is a largely rural county in Southern Georgia. The 2017 Census lists the population for Atkinson County to be about 8,342 persons. Below you will find a table representing the population demographics for Atkinson County and its peer counties.

	<i>Atkinson</i>	<i>Wilkes</i>	<i>Turner</i>	<i>Wilkinson</i>
Total Population	8,342	9,805	8,030	9,104
Male	50.5%	50.3%	48.8%	50.4%
Female	49.5%	49.7%	51.2%	49.6%
Median Age	35.3	37.9	37.1	35.1
Population Over 60	14.7%	27%	23%	19%
Race (%)				
White	77.7%	54.6%	58.3%	58.8%
Black	17.2%	42.6%	39.3%	38.7%
American Indian/ Alaska Native	1.5%	0.3%	0.5%	0.4%
Asian	0.9%	0.9%	0.7%	0.6%
Hispanic or Latino	24.8%	4.3%	4.7%	2.8%

Table 1 Demographic comparison of Atkinson, Wilkes, Turner, and Wilkinson Counties

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 Atkinson County to Wilkes, Turner, and Wilkinson Counties, it is noted that Atkinson County has a very similar median income to comparative counties.

	Atkinson	Wilkes	Turner	Wilkinson
Median household income	\$31,296	\$32,727	\$31,806	\$38,485
Persons below the poverty level (%)	27.6%	22.9%	28.4%	20.9%

Table 2 Economic Characteristics

Poverty status is often an indication that a number of residents are in need of public transportation services and are more likely to have a greater reliance on public transit services. In Atkinson County, an estimated 748 households are below the poverty level. This means that about 27.6% of the county’s population is in poverty under the federal definition. Even though there are a distinctive number of citizens below the poverty level, they are still finding ways to pay for and maintain transportation. Although there is no direct connection between transit ridership and access to vehicles in Atkinson 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.

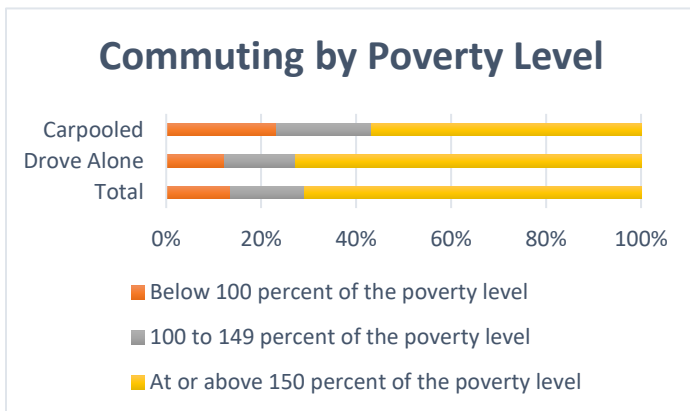


Figure 2 Commuting Characteristics by Poverty Level and Modes of Transportation

Modes of Transportation

Transportation typically tends to be a large part of a person’s budget due to monthly payments on a vehicle, insurance, maintenance, fuel and other factors. While many do not feel a burden with the expense this mode of transportation can have, it has a significant impact on those living in poverty. Of the approximately 2,391 workers in Atkinson County 16 years of age and over commuting to work, 1,529 persons have 1 or 2 vehicles available for use. Approximately 669 workers 16 years and older have 3 vehicles available for use. To further break down this number, of the approximately 382 workers below the poverty line in Atkinson County, 167 persons do not have a vehicle available to use. This indicates that while transportation is likely a higher portion of people’s expenses, 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 simply walking to one’s destination, citizens are using various modes of transportation to get where they need to go. In Atkinson County, 82.2% of workers commute to work via single-occupancy car, truck, or van and about 14.2% commute in a carpool of at least two persons. 48 persons walked, and 29 persons used other modes of transportation, which include motorcycles, bicycles, taxicabs, and/or worked from home.

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

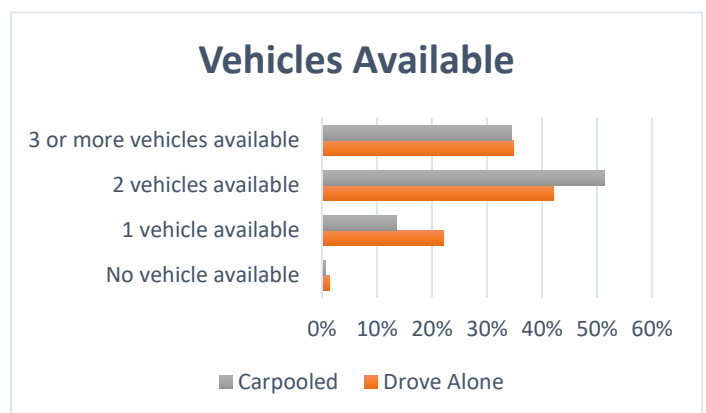


Figure 3 Number of Vehicles Available

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. A little over 14.2% of the population of Atkinson County is over the age of 65. This is slightly higher than the state average of 13.5%. Older residents often forgo driving their vehicle altogether, if they have one available, which can also increase the need of older residents to have a need for local public transportation services.

	Atkinson	Wilkes	Turner	Wilkinson
Total	1,955	2,078	1,546	1,623
No Vehicle Available	13	193	44	75
1 + Vehicle Available	437	1,177	983	909

Table 3 Residents 65 Years and Over & Vehicle Access

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

Although there is no current public transit system in Atkinson County, there is a need to know the laws 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; this means 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 is a requirement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Executive Orders covering Environmental Justice and Limited English-proficiency, among others. This information along with other factors can be helpful when considering the demand for a public transit system.

ADA Analysis

In Atkinson County, 739 persons have an ambulatory difficulty, meaning they have difficulty moving about under their own power. The population 65 years and older accounts for 43.4% of those individuals with an ambulatory difficulty, however, this is just one type of disability and different disabilities should be considered so that the public transit system is accessible for everyone. Residents with disabilities are more likely to need public transportation to travel to doctor’s appointments, or go

shopping, but this can prove difficult without ADA accessible vehicles.

AGE	Total Population	Ambulatory Difficulty	Ambulatory Residents (%)
Under 18 years	1,733	7	0.4%
18 to 34 years	1,717	43	2.5%
35 to 64 years	3,210	368	11.5%
65 to 74 years	559	143	25.6%
75 years and over	389	178	45.8%

Table 4 Ambulatory Difficulty by Age Group

Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Analysis

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 Atkinson County is Spanish. It is estimated that there are almost 1660 persons, or 1.7% of the total population that speaks Spanish. This percentage is substantially 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 Atkinson County, 885 people or 56% of persons who speak Spanish are linguistically isolated, meaning that they do not speak English very well.

Estimate	100
Margin of Error	+/- 1.6
Atkinson County %	21.7%
United States %	13.4%

Table 5 Percentage of Persons that Speak Spanish

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

It is recommended that if needed, Atkinson County utilize the website of the Southern Georgia Regional Commission where Google Translate is available for potential riders to learn more about the system. Due to the high concentration of LEP persons in Atkinson County, there is a strong possibility that such resources will be needed.

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

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

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

Atkinson County could provide materials in other languages for the potential riders should an Atkinson County Transit system be implemented. As noted previously, it is recommended that potential riders utilize the SGRC website at www.sgrc.us, where Google Translator can be used to provide basic information on service to LEP individuals.

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 form at various locations throughout the region.

Transportation Options in Southern Georgia

TRANSPORTE EN SOUTHERN GEORGIA

TRANSPORTE EN EL SUR DE GEORGIA

County	Provider	Phone	Cash Rate	Hours
Bacon	MDR	912-432-4300	\$3 up to 10 mi. + \$0.50/mi	M-F 7:30a-5:30p
Berrien	MDR	229-326-7433	\$3 each way	Sat 8:00a-5:00p
Brantley	MDR	229-686-7433	\$3 up to 10 mi. + \$0.50/mi	M-F 7:30a-5:30p
Clinch	MDR	912-442-8726	\$3 up to 10 mi. + \$0.50/mi	M-F 7:30a-5:30p
Coffee	MDR	229-19-2183	\$3 up to 10 mi. + \$0.50/mi	Sat 7:30a-5:00p
Ware	MDR	229-896-8726	\$3 up to 10 mi. + \$0.50/mi	M-F 7:30a-5:30p
Lowndes	MDR	229-316-2183	\$3 up to 10 mi. + \$0.50/mi	M-F 7:30a-5:30p
Pierce	MDR	912-448-1826	\$3 up to 10 mi. + \$0.50/mi	M-F 7:30a-5:30p
Tift	TIF Co	229-382-8438	\$2.00 mi. \$3.50 mi. \$4.50 mi.	M-F 8:00a-5:00p
Turner	MDR	229-67-3400	\$3 up to 10 mi. + \$0.50/mi	M-F 7:30a-5:30p
Ware	MDR	912-283-7800	\$3 up to 10 mi. + \$0.50/mi	M-F 7:30a-5:30p

Commuting Patterns

In Atkinson County, over 3,147 citizens commute to work daily. Of these workers, 50% of them, or nearly 1,579 commute to work outside Atkinson County every day. This is an indication that Atkinson County is contributing workers to jobs in surrounding counties. A majority of citizens, 56%, have a 20 to 60 minute commute, while 44% of them have between a 1 to 19 minute commute, and 6% commute more than 60 minutes to work. The mean commute time is 23.3 minutes from home to work. This moderate number of commuters could also suggest this particular segment of the population is less likely to need public transit services as a primary means of transportation.

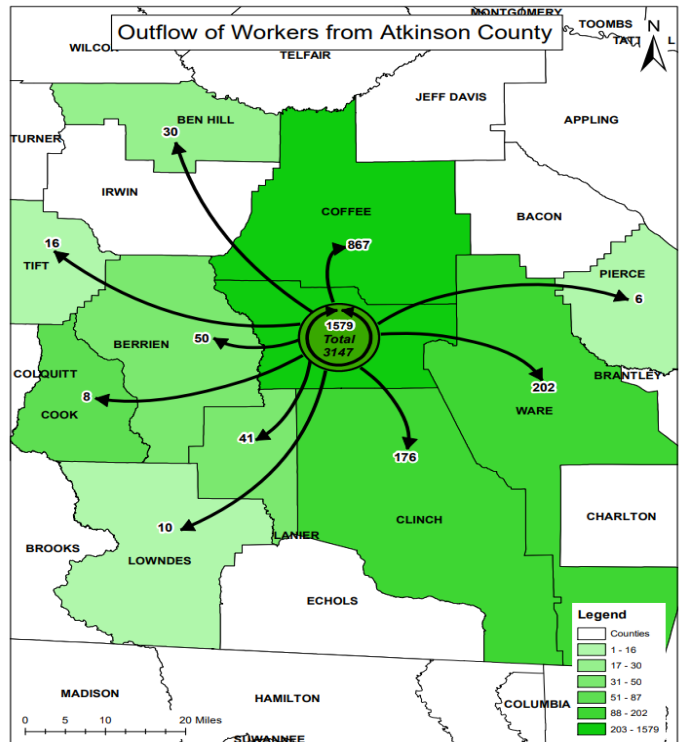


Figure 4 Commuting Outflow Patterns to surrounding Counties

Livability Impact

There are many factors that 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 does quality of life which creates an atmosphere for growth and economic development due to residents having more transportation options. Public transportation services 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.

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? This is where the 5311 Rural Public Transportation Program comes in. Any rural public transportation system in Atkinson County would likely require funding from the Federal Transit Administration's Section 5311 Rural Public Transportation Program. The Section 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 provide assistance for rural public transportation. 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 required local or regional participation.
- Addressing economic development—through employment trips, services to support local employment sites, new ones, 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.
- 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 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 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, or 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 tested, 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, stowage, 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 ride, coordinated management—where it will result in more cost-effective, quality service that meets client and general public transit rider needs.

A rural transit system in Atkinson County should promote these established goals by the State of Georgia. Should Atkinson County implement a public transit system, meeting the above goals would not be difficult. Atkinson 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 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 be funded to the maximum extent possible by the generation of fare box 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 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), or
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.

In the Southern Georgia region, many counties that have a rural transit system contract with a third party operator. Third party operators are experienced transit providers that are able to 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. According to MIDS Transportation, Inc., the most utilized third party operator in the Southern Georgia region, local governments, generally, only pay for vehicle insurance and operational expenses. It should be noted that operational expenses do not include capital costs. All other

operational expenses are handled by the third party operator.

Currently, peer counties charge between \$1 and \$3 per trip, sometimes with distance limitations, while others give discounts to seniors and children.

Evaluation of Existing Services

Currently, there are no public transportation systems in place in Atkinson County. However, there are some other services within the county that provide public transit for clients; they include the Department of Human Services and Medicaid which currently provide approximately 8,000 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, Atkinson 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 Atkinson County for general needs.

When considering rural transit for Atkinson 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 Atkinson County:

Demand-response/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 ones that transportation network companies like Uber and Lyft use 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 Atkinson County and its rural nature this service would not be the best choice.

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.

Transit Need and Demand Analysis

For many families, it can be a tough challenge for them to meet their transportation needs even if they have one or even two vehicles. These families face the challenge of long trips to work and to businesses that put many miles on vehicles that may or may not be pre-owned and already worn down. Likewise, a family that only has one mode of transportation faces just the challenge of meeting the transportation needs for the whole family. This analysis consists of these factors and others to estimate the possible demand for rural public transit trips within Atkinson County. The information is based on the use of transit systems information from peer counties that are similar in size and population.

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

Overall, there is an estimated need for 70,200 trips annually in Atkinson County based on the communities' mobility gap. This number is high because it factors in the many potential riders that find alternative means of transportation, like getting a ride with friends or family, walking, riding a bicycle, etc. Further analysis shows that there is an estimated demand for 6,500 trips annually for the general rural public transit (not including POS trips). Once POS trips are inserted into the equation, there is a total demand of nearly 9,000 trips annually for the general public. Currently Atkinson County provides about 2,000 Human Service Provider (Senior) trips annually.

Table 2 Output Screen from Rural Transit Demand Tool

RURAL TRANSIT NEED/DEMAND ESTIMATION - OUTPUT TABLE		
Service Area:	Atkinson County	
Analysis Description:		
Additional Description:		
Estimation of Transit Need		
Total need for passenger transportation service:	2,700	Persons
Total households without access to a vehicle:	225	Households
State Mobility Gap:	1.3	Daily 1-Way Psgr.-Trips per Household
Total need based on mobility gap:	290	Daily 1-Way Passenger-Trips
	70,200	Annual 1-Way Passenger-Trips
General Public Rural Non-Program Demand		
<i>Estimate of demand for general public rural transportation</i>		
Rural transit trips:	5,700	Annual 1-Way Passenger-Trips
General Public Rural Passenger Transportation		
<i>Estimate of demand for rural transportation</i>		
Total Rural Non-Program Demand	17,800	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>		
Atkinson Senior	2,800	Annual 1-Way Passenger-Trips
		Annual 1-Way Passenger-Trips
		Annual 1-Way Passenger-Trips
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Total Rural Program Demand	2,800	Annual 1-Way Passenger-Trips

Table 3 Peer Transit Systems Comparison Worksheet

The input data in the yellow cells are averages for a potential Public Transit System in Atkinson Count., The data is based on peer county data.

Peer Data Worksheet

Input Data from Peer Transit Systems or Existing Transit Service					
Name of Peer System		Wilkes	Turner	Wilkinson	
Population of Area		9,805	8,030	9,104	
Size of Area Served (Square Miles)		474	290	452	
Annual Vehicle-Miles of Service Provided		106,729	84,638	99,625	
Annual Vehicle-Hours of Service Provided		5,529	6,813	6,663	
Route-Deviation, Demand-Response)		Demand-Response	Demand-Response	Demand-Response	
Number of One-Way Trips Served per Year		15,271	12,700	9,401	
Other Carriers (Low, Medium, High)		Low	Low	Low	

Results of Peer Data Comparison		Population	Annual Vehicle-miles	Annual vehicles-hours
Input Data for My System:		9,422	96,997	6,335
Observed Trip Rates		Demand Estimate Based On:		
Peer Values		Population	Annual Vehicle-miles	Annual vehicles-hours
Trips per Capita				
Maximum	1.6	15,075		
Average	1.4	13,191		
Median	1.6	15,075		
Minimum	1.0	9,422		
Trips per Vehicle-Mile				
Maximum	0.2		19,399	
Average	0.1		9,700	
Median	0.1		9,700	
Minimum	0.1		9,700	
Trips per Vehicle-Hour				
Maximum	2.8			17,738
Average	2.0			12,670
Median	1.9			12,037
Minimum	1.4			8,869
Values expected for my system				
Maximum		15,075	19,399	17,738.0
Average		13,191	9,700	12,670.0
Median		15,075	9,700	12,037.0
Minimum		9,422	9,700	8,869.0

Capital Equipment Cost and 5-Year Budget Estimates

A rural transit system includes capital expenses and operating expenses. Table 8 shows the estimated expenses for several vehicles that would be included in capital expenses. Given the growth of Atkinson County's population and the above Transit Need/Demand Analysis, 2 vehicles should be sufficient to operate a public transit system. At this time, it is not expected that the demand for public transit will increase significantly. Atkinson County also needs to consider purchasing a mobile radio or phone, a computer, a printer, and essential software as well.

Necessary capital equipment is eligible for funding under the Section 5311 grant program. There is a 10% local funding minimum required for qualified capital equipment. However, this amount may be higher depending on the availability of state and federal funds. The chart below provides the average cost of Demand Response Vehicles based on the GDOT FY17 Rural Transit Budget worksheet.

Table 4 Capital Equipment Cost Estimates

Capital Equipment	2017
Shuttle Van	\$41,066.92
Shuttle Van w/ Lift	\$44,712.92
Shuttle Bus	\$46,528.92
Shuttle Bus w/ Lift	\$48,947.92
Mobile Radio	\$2,000.00
Computer, Printer and Software	\$3,200.00

The following 5-Year Capital and Operating Budget estimates are based on current costs of services with an inflation rate of 2.32% per year in order to give an approximate value of what public transit services may cost in the next few years. Atkinson County does not currently have public transit so the estimates provided are based on the Transit Need/Demand Analysis for Turner County, as well as, Wilkes and Wilkinson County data, which is comparable to Atkinson County in population and other demographic areas.

There are two different budget options presented in the figures below, the first represents public transit service operated with Purchase of Service (POS) funds and the second, represents public transit service without POS funds. Both options begin with 2. The budget summary shows that the local contribution can range from \$70,000 per year (with POS contracts) in the 2020 fiscal year to \$91,000 per year without POS contracts in the 2025 fiscal year.

Table 5 Current Capital and Operating Cost w/POS and without POS Estimates

Operator: Atkinson County/TPO
Date: 9/21/2018

With POS
2.32% Inflation Rate

FY2020-2021						
Net Operating Summary						
Administrative Total / Ratio	\$ 31,263.55	23%				
Operating Total / Ratio	\$ 135,286.60	77%				
Total Operating Budget	\$ 166,550.14					
LESS: POS Revenue	\$ -					
LESS: Non-5311 Expenses	\$ -					
Public Transportation Budget	\$ 166,550.14					
Net Operating Total	\$ 166,550.14					
Budget Summary			Totals	Federal	State	Local
Operating Budget Total	\$ 166,550.14	\$ 83,275.07	\$ -	\$ 83,275.07		
POS Local Funds	\$ 17,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 17,000.00		
Excess POS Local Funds	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		
Capital Budget Total	\$ 90,600.00	\$ 72,480.00	\$ 13,590.00	\$ 4,530.00		
Budget Grand Total	\$ 240,150.14	\$ 155,755.07	\$ 13,590.00	\$ 70,805.07		

Vehicles	2
Average Trips Per Vehicle	4,500
Total Trips Projected	9,000
Percentage of Public Trips	72.22%
POS Trips	2,500
POS Amount	\$ 17,000.00
Rate Per Trip	\$ 6.80
POS Fully Allocated Costs	\$ 66.62
Total Public Trips	6,500
Subsidized Revenue Per Public Trip	\$ 23.96
Expected Farebox Per Trip	\$ -

Operator: Atkinson County/TPO
Date: 9/21/2018

Without POS
2.32% Inflation Rate

FY2020-2021						
Net Operating Summary						
Administrative Total / Ratio	\$ 31,263.55	23%				
Operating Total / Ratio	\$ 135,286.60	77%				
Total Operating Budget	\$ 166,550.14					
LESS: POS Revenue	\$ -					
LESS: Non-5311 Expenses	\$ -					
Public Transportation Budget	\$ 166,550.14					
Net Operating Total	\$ 166,550.14					
Budget Summary			Totals	Federal	State	Local
Operating Budget Total	\$ 166,550.14	\$ 82,148.50	\$ -	\$ 82,148.50		
POS Local Funds	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		
Excess POS Local Funds	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		
Capital Budget Total	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		
Budget Grand Total	\$ 166,550.14	\$ 82,148.50	\$ -	\$ 82,148.50		

Vehicles	2
Average Trips Per Vehicle	3,250.00
Total Trips Projected	6,500
Percentage of Public Trips	100.00%
POS Trips	-
POS Amount	
Rate Per Trip	#DIV/0!
POS Fully Allocated Costs	#DIV/0!
Total Public Trips	6,500
Subsidized Revenue Per Public Trip	\$ 12.64
Expected Farebox Per Trip	\$ -

Table 10 A 5-Year Capital and Operating Cost w/POS and without POS

Operator: Atkinson County/TPO With POS
 Date: 9/21/2018 2.32% Inflation Rate

FY2025-2026				
Net Operating Summary				
Administrative Total / Ratio	\$ 34,267.34		23%	
Operating Total / Ratio	\$ 148,284.89		77%	
Total Operating Budget	\$ 182,552.23			
LESS: POS Revenue	\$ -			
LESS: Non-5311 Expenses	\$ -			
Public Transportation Budget	\$ 182,552.23			
Net Operating Total	\$ 182,552.23			
Budget Summary				
	Totals	Federal	State	Local
Operating Budget Total	\$ 182,552.23	\$ 91,276.11	\$ -	\$ 91,276.11
POS Local Funds	\$ 18,906.97	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 18,906.97
Excess POS Local Funds	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Capital Budget Total	\$ 90,600.00	\$ 72,480.00	\$ 13,590.00	\$ 4,530.00
Budget Grand Total	\$ 254,245.26	\$ 163,756.11	\$ 13,590.00	\$ 76,899.14

Vehicles	2
Average Trips Per Vehicle	5,041.86
Total Trips Projected	10,084
Percentage of Public Trips	72.22%
POS Trips	2,801
POS Amount	\$ 18,906.97
Rate Per Trip	\$ 6.75
POS Fully Allocated Costs	\$ 65.17
Total Public Trips	7,283
Subsidized Revenue Per Public Trip	\$ 22.49
Expected Farebox Per Trip	\$ -

Operator: Atkinson County/TPO Without POS
 Date: 9/21/2018 2.32% Inflation Rate

FY2025-2026				
Net Operating Summary				
Administrative Total / Ratio	\$ 34,267.34		23%	
Operating Total / Ratio	\$ 148,284.89		77%	
Total Operating Budget	\$ 182,552.23			
LESS: POS Revenue	\$ -			
LESS: Non-5311 Expenses	\$ -			
Public Transportation Budget	\$ 182,552.23			
Net Operating Total	\$ 182,552.23			
Budget Summary				
	Totals	Federal	State	Local
Operating Budget Total	\$ 182,552.23	\$ 91,276.11	\$ -	\$ 91,276.11
POS Local Funds	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Excess POS Local Funds	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Capital Budget Total	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Budget Grand Total	\$ 182,552.23	\$ 91,276.11	\$ -	\$ 91,276.11

Vehicles	2
Average Trips Per Vehicle	3,641.50
Total Trips Projected	7,283
Percentage of Public Trips	100.00%
POS Trips	
POS Amount	
Rate Per Trip	#DIV/0!
POS Fully Allocated Costs	#DIV/0!
Total Public Trips	7,283
Subsidized Revenue Per Public Trip	\$ 12.53
Expected Farebox Per Trip	\$ -

Conclusions

Atkinson County has many residents who 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 Atkinson County give consideration to implementing a rural public transit system. Although the current data does not warrant the need for a fully implemented demand response rural public transportation system, officials should consider collaboration with local groups or neighboring counties that have a public transportation system in place to help provide transportation for Atkinson County residents. This option may be more beneficial and financially feasible than a single county public transportation system. Below are a few service delivery options for demand response rural transit.

Single County Public Transit System

There are two service delivery options for a demand response rural transit system, and choosing what works best for Atkinson County (by evaluating the options) will ensure the success of the system. The first option is having the system managed by the county. This service delivery option would allow Atkinson County to manage the public transit service and everything related to the transit system, including rate and hours of service. Tift County uses this option for public transit services. The second service delivery option would allow Atkinson County to contract with a third party transit operator, a private company that administers the operation of the transit system. Many of the counties with public transit systems have chosen this option and contracted with the company MIDS Transportation Inc. In counties where the transit system is operated by MIDS, one must call 24 hours in advance to schedule a ride; the rate is \$3.00 for local area (0-10 miles) per stop. If a local trip exceeds 10 miles, riders will be charged the base rate of (\$3.00) + 0.50 per additional mile. MIDS also offers a 50% discount to Seniors 65 and over and to children 5 and younger.

Regional Public Transit System

A third option or hybrid option for Atkinson County to consider would be to join an 18 county regional system or mini-regional system. The SGRC has been approached by GDOT to consider administering and operating this type of system. Should a regional system be implemented, each county would have to decide to opt in or out of the system, opting in would then obligate that 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 nearby counties, a regional system may provide an affordable commuting option for residents with no vehicle access or limited mobility. Moreover, if Atkinson County were to opt into a regional transit system, some of its POS trips could be used to benefit the surrounding counties. A demand response rural public transit system or collaboration to create/support a regional public transportation system with local entities and/or neighboring communities would greatly impact the quality of life for Atkinson County residents by creating access to employment, healthcare services, shopping, and other general needs. 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 Atkinson 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.