

# *Interim Progress Report*

on

## Coordination of Transportation Services



**SCDOT**  
South Carolina Department of Transportation

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# INTERIM PROGRESS REPORT ON COORDINATION OF TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

JANUARY 2002

- ▶ SCDOT's mass transit programs have included coordination in various forms; SCDOT is committed to increasing the coordination aspects of its programs
- ▶ SCDOT is partnering with state, regional, and local agencies and organizations to enhance transportation efforts
- ▶ SCDOT is placing more emphasis on coordination of transportation through committees and partnering meetings
- ▶ SCDOT has implemented recommendations as a follow-up to HR 4960 Joint Resolution to study the feasibility of creating a mass transportation system for the state
- ▶ SCDOT is committed to the safety and security of transit properties, employees and passengers

### INTRODUCTION

For years, transit systems in South Carolina have sought to improve efficiency and effectiveness of transportation services. Concerns over funding availability have made these efforts even more important in recent years. Coordination among service providers is essential to enhance service efficiency and effectiveness, as well as increase service availability to different ridership groups.

### MAJOR OBJECTIVES

- Secure an increase in dedicated state funding for transit
- Establish ongoing Inter-agency Transportation Committee
- Obtain support from local, regional, and state levels
- Develop and utilize new technologies
- Enhance responsiveness to the needs of the public

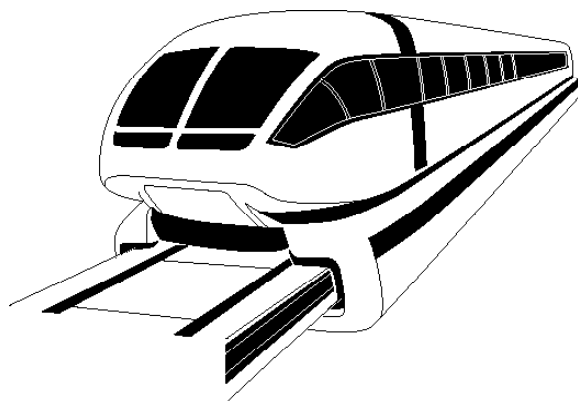
### The South Carolina Department of Transportation has taken many initiatives regarding coordination:

- Agency Head Meetings
- Job Access and Reverse Commute Program
- Meetings with Providers
- Partnering Meetings with Planning Organizations
- Long-Range Planning Committee
- Coordination of Statewide Technology
- Vehicle Acquisition Program
- HR 4960 / Joint Resolution
- Safety and Security Seminars
- Transportation Summit

### SCDOT INITIATIVES

#### 1) STATE AGENCY MEETINGS

The SCDOT will continue to schedule planning meetings through FY 2002 with State Agency representatives to outline the importance of complying with the current proviso to report transportation information to SCDOT. The last meeting with State Agency Directors was held on March 19, 2001, to discuss coordination of transportation. Even though most of the Directors were not able to attend, Director representatives were in attendance. The SCDOT sent letters to each Agency Director expressing the importance of their attendance at future meetings in an effort to plan a course of action and discuss important decisions that impact transportation in South Carolina.



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## **2) JOB ACCESS AND REVERSE COMMUTE PROGRAM**

The Job Access and Reverse Commute Program (JA&RC) is a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Competitive Grant Program, authorized under Section 3037 of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century. Job Access projects are designed to assist in transporting welfare recipients and low-income individuals to and from jobs and activities related to their employment.

On July 13, 2000, the FTA released \$1,789,794 in funding for the first round of South Carolina's JA&RC Program. The South Carolina Department of Social Services provided the required match, thus making the funding available for South Carolina's JA&RC Program at \$3,579,588. During this reporting period, all SCDOT/Transit Provider contracts were extended to December 31, 2001.

A committee of current JA&RC recipients was formed to look into strategies and possible avenues to seek matching funds for Round Two of the program. The preliminary meeting convened at the Mass Transit Fall Workshop in October 2001.

Further contact was made with each JA&RC recipient regarding any Community & Economic Block Grant and to request interaction with various county offices to determine if any funding was available which could be used as match for JA&RC. Spartanburg County Transportation Service Bureau was previously successful in this endeavor.

A federal earmark of \$2,000,000 is available to South Carolina for 2nd round funding of the Job Access & Reverse Commute Program. The required match for this program, however, has not been secured. SCDSS has indicated they were unable to commit to providing the 2nd round match due to prior budget commitments. SCDOT has inquired as to which participating agencies can provide match for their individual Job Access & Reverse Commute activities for the 2nd round.

## **3) MEETINGS WITH PROVIDERS**

The SCDOT will continue to meet regularly with public transit providers and human service organizations to seek input on key issues that affect South Carolina's transit industry. These meetings will provide a forum in which local staff members can share information to enhance the quality of transportation services. The last meeting with all

providers occurred at the Fall Workshop in October 2001.

## **4) PARTNERING MEETING WITH PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS**

The SCDOT will partner with the ten Councils of Government (COGs) and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in addressing local and regional coordination. During the past six months, the SCDOT has worked closely with the Lower Savannah Council of Government. This agency embarked on a major project to form a Regional Transit Management Agency (RTMA) to address the multitude of transit issues faced by the six counties of the region. A Memorandum of Understanding was developed to define how the RTMA would be administered between the participating parties, the Lower Savannah COG and six counties – Aiken, Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Calhoun, and Orangeburg. One of the goals of the RTMA is to submit a combined application for funding of transportation for the Lower Savannah Region. A recent meeting of service providers from throughout the region emphasized that the time is right to focus strong attention on coordination, not only in the region, but statewide.

## **5) LONG-RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Over the next two years, the SCDOT will be developing a long-range plan for intermodal transportation. The plan will focus on movement of people and goods within South Carolina, and among neighboring states. Coordination of transportation services will be addressed in the comprehensive long-range plan.

The partnership between the SCDOT and the COGs has proven to be very beneficial in developing the new Long-Range Multi-Modal Plan for the State. Joint meetings have been held to identify goals, develop performance and evaluations measures, and establish formatting standards for the new plan. The committee is in the final stages of completing the plan. A completed draft of the entire plan has undergone a revision that is aimed primarily at reducing the size of the document to a single volume reference that is user-friendly. The final version will be presented to the individual COG governing boards and the SCDOT Commission late spring or early summer of 2002.

## **6) COORDINATION OF STATEWIDE TECHNOLOGY**

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SCDOT is pursuing a statewide technology initiative in conjunction with the USDOT and the Federal Transit Administration. The purpose of this project is to enhance mass transit in South Carolina with the goal of making the state's Mass Transit Providers more effective in providing their services. In addition to resource and information sharing, focus will be on rural transit problems, utilization of computer technology to provide solutions, and supporting Public Transit Providers in the implementation of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) architecture and components. A secondary focus of this project is the establishment of shareable Information Technology (IT) and transit systems. This is intended to provide more cost effective ways to purchase, maintain, and use the latest computer technology building on the "strength in numbers" concept. The following tasks are currently in progress or have been completed:

- Deployment of "Hardware Upgrade" -- This upgrade consisted of new personal computers and printers for all public providers. All scheduled hardware upgrades have been completed as of this date.
- Scheduling and Dispatching Software -- SCDOT is currently reviewing the proposals submitted in response to the Request for Proposal (RFP).
- Electronic Reporting -- Currently SCDOT is developing a short-term solution for the public providers to electronically submit information and data to the Department. The next step will be to finalize the electronic invoicing phase of the project. Software is installed and training classes for all public providers are currently being conducted statewide. The target date for full implementation is April 2002.

## 7) VEHICLE ACQUISITION PROGRAM

The SCDOT is exploring options to furnish transit vehicles to all public transportation providers. The condition of the fleet used to transport riders affects service effectiveness and efficiency, the impact of marketing efforts, and other potential community and environmental impacts.

The transit operators in South Carolina have been very resourceful in extending the functional lives of their aging fleet of transit vehicles and facilities. Preliminary data from FY 99 reveal approximately 1,200 road calls generated by some form of mechanical failure. The number of road calls due to mechanical failure of transit vehicles stems primarily from aging vehicles that have experienced extended and intense periods of use.

The committee is currently reviewing vehicle inventories of all public providers to determine the needs of each agency. The committee will also develop a mechanism or identify a vendor who will provide a purchase and vehicle replacement plan.

To assist with the this program, SCDOT will receive a congressional earmark of \$16.6 million.

## 8) HR 4960 / JOINT RESOLUTION TO PROVIDE THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE CREATED TO STUDY THE FEASIBILITY OF CREATING A MASS TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM FOR THE STATE.

### Committee Recommendation (1):

Compliance with existing performance reporting requirements for all transportation providers receiving funds administered by the SCDOT should be enforced.

The SCDOT will continue to enforce existing and new requirements outlined in the Mass Transit Terms and Conditions requiring reports on operation and performance of activities.

### Committee Recommendation (2):

The SCDOT should explore the advantages and disadvantages of transferring Title XIX, Non-Emergency Medicaid Transportation to the SCDOT.

The SCDOT in partnership with the SCDHHS pursued the feasibility of SCDOT assuming future management of Medicaid transportation. A study by PCG, Inc. was completed in August 2000 and results of the study were released during September 2000.

Based on the findings, PCG has determined that it would not be advantageous for the SCDOT to assume responsibility of the Title XIX, Non-Emergency Medicaid Transportation Program. (CLOSED)

### Committee Recommendation (3):

The SCDOT should encourage and promote more efficient and modern passenger vehicles for current transportation demand and facilitate air quality improvement strategies.

Refer to Item #7 (Vehicle Acquisition Program)



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#### **Committee Recommendation (4):**

The SCDOT should update the inventory portion of the report, "South Carolina Specialized Needs Assessment and Statewide Coordination Plan", completed by Carter Goble and Associates Consulting Services in 1992.

The SCDOT is currently reviewing the information contained in the vehicle accountability survey distributed to all state agencies that provide transportation to their clients. Estimated completion is April 2002.

#### **Committee Recommendation (5):**

All agencies involved in transportation should support an Executive Order by Governor Hodges for the creation of a Transportation Council composed of the heads of agencies providing passenger-transportation resources or services with the oversight and direction to be provided by the SCDOT.

The SCDOT will continue to schedule planning meetings through FY 2002 with State Agency representatives to outline the importance of complying with the current proviso to report transportation information to SCDOT.

#### **Committee Recommendation (6):**

All agencies involved in transportation should support the proposal to include transportation providers as active participants with the county First Steps offices.

The Deputy Director for Mass Transit conducted a workshop at the First Steps Annual Conference during April 2001. The workshop provided an opportunity for the SCDOT to share information about transportation issues relevant to First Steps. The Deputy Director facilitated a panel discussion along with four transit providers to discuss the following topics:

- Community Involvement
- Building Bridges Between Education and Transit
- Coordination Activities
- Existing Types of Services
- Serving on First Steps Boards

#### **Committee Recommendation (7):**

All agencies involved in transportation should support a proposed study by the Legislative Audit Council (LAC) of the allocation of resources by state agencies for passenger-transportation services.

In January 2001, the LAC issued a report to the General Assembly addressing coordination efforts.

Steps are underway to improve upon findings identified by the LAC. Future meetings with the State Agency representatives and the Coordination Summit will lay the groundwork for statewide coordinated transportation.

#### **Committee Recommendation (8):**

All agencies involved in transportation should promote mass transportation services that demonstrate cooperation and creativity in addressing the transportation needs of residents and visitors.

The SCDOT completed work on a marketing video that introduces and promotes transportation services within the State of South Carolina. The draft video was previewed during the October 2001 Mass Transit Fall Workshop. The initial response from the providers was very positive.

#### **Committee Recommendation (9):**

All agencies involved in transportation should support a legislative initiative to protect the use of state gas tax revenues for highway purposes.

The SCDOT is reviewing this recommendation.

#### **Committee Recommendation (10):**

The SCDOT should emphasize multimodal transportation alternatives in the participating to the fullest with the LACs transportation planning process.

A committee consisting of the state's COGs, FHWA and SCDOT has been formed to study long-range multimodal and intermodal planning and transportation alternatives.

Refer to Item #5 (Long-Range Planning Committee)

#### **Committee Recommendation (11):**

The SCDOT should identify opportunities for new or improved passenger intermodal facilities and services, or both.

The SCDOT will engage in dialogue with South Carolina's public providers to determine to what extent their agencies are exploring intermodal opportunities. Efforts identified by the SCDOT will be considered as extensions of the department's Long-Range Multimodal Plan.

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#### **Committee Recommendation (12):**

The SCDOT should partner with transportation providers, mass transportation users, and community leaders in exploring practical options for developing a statewide mass transportation system.

This initiative involves not only the SCDOT but also the MPOs, COGs, public transit agencies and human service agencies to determine practical options in developing a statewide mass transportation system. The primary approach to enhancing transportation coordination is partnership at all levels.

The SCDOT convened a Transportation Summit in July 2001 to focus on ways to develop such a system. Eight separate topics were featured during individual breakout group discussions. The summit was very successful. Each session identified problems and recommended solutions to current transit problems. Separate committees will convene to explore these recommendations and work toward the goal of a statewide transportation system.

#### **Committee Recommendation (13):**

The South Carolina Code of Laws should be amended to provide the authority to public mass transit providers to collect user fees and other sources of revenue as provided in House Bill 3993 of 1999 to support mass transit operations.

Public transit providers are pursuing this recommendation.

#### **Committee Recommendation (14):**

The SCDOT should require, where appropriate, future transportation planning studies to include considerations of all options in addressing transportation needs.

A committee consisting of the COGs, FHWA and SCDOT has been formed to study long-range multimodal and intermodal planning and transportation alternatives. (Refer to recommendation 10)

#### **Committee Recommendation (15):**

The SCDOT should evaluate operational policies, facility, and vehicle designs, and other related factors that would address the image, security, and convenience issues associated with mass transportation.

The SCDOT conducts site visits with all public providers annually and human service providers every two years. During these visits the staff uses a checklist to evaluate all aspects of the transit operation. The SCDOT is also researching the feasibility of a bus lease program to solicit new bus designs and enhance the image of the entire transit fleet. The SCDOT entered into a contract with the consulting firm of Deloitte and Touche to review and evaluate transit operations and recommend corrective actions as necessary.

Out of a total of 18 public transportation providers, over half have been evaluated by the consultants. Based on the initial findings, SCDOT expanded the site visit teams to include other SCDOT offices, such as the procurement and audit offices. Transit providers receive on-the-spot assistance during each visit.

#### **Committee Recommendations (16):**

The SCDOT should establish procedures by which transit system complaints brought to its attention could be examined for substance, evaluated for reasonable remedies, and addressed as needed.

A transit complaint program was developed and approved in November 2000 to examine, evaluate and address all complaints concerning transportation services and transportation related activities in a professional manner. The goal is to provide timely comprehensive responses to customers. (CLOSED)

#### **Committee Recommendation (17):**

The SCDOT should develop a statewide system for locating and tracking mass transportation vehicles, including identification of desired routes, fare management, and the most efficient location of stops.

The SCDOT is involved in a statewide information technology program. This program will link all public providers through computer systems and allow for additions in software that will enable each provider to enhance their operation. This is an ever-evolving program, which should be completed by 2002.

#### **Committee Recommendation (18):**

The SCDOT should encourage a more equitable disbursement of federal gas tax funds in order to ensure that South Carolina does not continue to be a "donor" state.

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The SCDOT is pursuing the necessary channels to address this recommendation.

### **9) SAFETY AND SECURITY SEMINAR**

In light of the recent events that have occurred in the New York and Washington D.C. metropolitan areas, the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) was compelled to develop a security awareness seminar for all public transportation providers statewide. The seminar is designed to inform transportation providers of their roles and responsibilities in the safety and security of transit passengers, employees and facilities.

The seminar was scheduled on November 30, 2001. Transit providers were introduced to crime statistics from the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division annual crime report as well as statistics covering crime and terrorism as it pertains to transit operations. Each participant was given a Transit Security Toolkit to assist them in developing a Safety and Security Plan for their agency. The SCDOT will also be available to conduct security assessments of each property upon request.

While it would be comforting to think that the incidents that have occurred in the New York and Washington D.C. areas will be isolated events, we all know that everyone must prepare for the worst. The goal of the seminar was to inform the transit agencies of their role in the safety and security of their facilities, employees, and passengers.

### **10) TRANSPORTATION SUMMIT**

The inaugural Summit on the Future of Mass Transportation in South Carolina was convened to bring together key leaders, government officials, transportation experts, and private citizens to create a shared vision for mass transit. Also, the group focused on the development of short-term and long-term goals for making a statewide transportation system a reality.

Individual breakout sessions were formed to brainstorm and discuss problems associated with mass transportation and to recommend possible solutions to the problems transit providers and citizens are experiencing now.

The following topics were discussed in detail and recorded for future study and discussion:

- **Rail Service in South Carolina**
- **Urban Transportation**
- **Rural Transportation**
- **Coordination of Resources**
- **Connectivity Modes of Transportation**
- **Resources Available and Resources Needed**
- **Public Awareness and Education**
- **Funding for Mass Transit**

A comprehensive report was published and distributed to each participant and members of the House Education and Public Works Committee, Senate Finance Committee, Senate Transportation Committee, and the House Ways and Means Committee.

## **GOALS FOR THE FUTURE**

- ▶ **Continue to emphasize coordination efforts and stress "Partnering" during Councils of Government and Metropolitan Planning Organization meetings statewide**
- ▶ **Provide an efficient and effective transit system that maximizes the use of technology**
- ▶ **Develop "Partnership" between the SCDOT and state agencies**
- ▶ **Acquire new and efficient transit vehicles statewide**
- ▶ **Promote transportation coordination through an intense marketing campaign**