October 14, 2019 Amendment

2019 SCDOT’s FAST Act Safety 2016-20 Performance Targets

At their October 14, 2019 meeting, the Pee Dee Regional Council of Governments (PDCOG) Executive Committee voted unanimously to adopt and support SCDOT’s FAST Act Safety 2016-20 Performance Targets and approved revising the 2008 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRP) for the Pee Dee Region to include those targets.

For the 2019 performance period, the PDCOG has elected to concur with the State of South Carolina DOT targets described below:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Measure 2016-2020 Statewide Targets</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total Number of Fatalities</td>
<td>1011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fatality Rate per 100 Million Vehicle Miles Traveled</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Number of Serious Injuries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Serious Injury Rate per 100 Million Vehicle Miles Traveled</td>
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<td>Total Number of Non-motorized Fatalities and Serious Injuries</td>
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INTRODUCTION
LONG-RANGE RURAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN
PEE DEE REGION

This rural regional transportation Plan is an update of a regional plan prepared in 2001 as part of a statewide multi-modal transportation planning process for 2001 - 2006. It is a broad review of all of the major means of transportation that exist in the Region, with particular emphasis on roadway and public transit needs. This Plan is not intended to supersede detailed planning that has been completed or is underway for ports, rail or air facilities; rather, it summarizes these existing systems.

The regional Plan is organized as follows:

- A Brief Perspective on the Pee Dee Region
- Transportation Performance Measures (overall transportation goals for the Region)
- Regional Development Conditions That Impact Transportation Facilities (physical development patterns, population trends, activity generators, etc.)
- Transportation Infrastructure, including:
  - The roadway system
  - Public Transportation
  - Air Facilities
  - The rail system
  - Seaports
  - Bicycle and pedestrian facilities
- Other Transportation-Related Issues (community planning compatibility, environmental issues and public safety)
THE REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

In planning for the Pee Dee Region, it is important to understand how the Region functions. The Great Pee Dee Region dominates the northeastern corner of South Carolina and is comprised of six Counties and 33 municipalities that share a common heritage and have an interdependent economy. Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Marion and Marlboro Counties comprise the Pee Dee, one of ten designated planning regions in the State.

None of these communities is an island... Pee Dee communities support each other culturally and socially, and have economies and labor forces linked not merely by geographic convenience or necessity, but by choice.

Although rural in overall character, the Region is not uniformly so. Diversity is evident, with each community having a role to play in the complex social and economic fabric of the Region:

- One community serves as a complex metropolitan area, with major retail, medical and educational centers within it that have regional impact;
- Other communities serve as sub-regional retail, medical and education centers;
- Others serve as diverse and scattered employment centers with a heavy manufacturing base;
- Some are quiet bedroom communities, while others are fully developed and almost self-supporting;
- Some communities are ever changing, but still others are living museums dedicated to the rich heritage of the area; and,
- Some areas are nature preserves, while others are far more developed.

Like much of rural America, the Region is home to persons who can trace successive generations on the same property; but it is also the adopted home to many newcomers as well as those who have returned home after leaving the Region for better opportunities.

All of these diverse people and all of these diverse communities serve to create and support a Region of interconnected neighborhoods that together meet the needs of business and industry, a strong agricultural base and an ethnically- and economically-diverse society. As the communities have interconnected economies that depend on other areas for services, labor, recreation outlets, social interaction, educational attainment and other aspects of life, an adequate transportation system that serves the needs of all segments of the population and all communities is critical to sustaining growth, development and prosperity for all geographic and social segments of those who call the Pee Dee home.
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PERFORMANCE MEASURES – BROAD GOALS

This regional Plan is intended to provide guidance in the future needs of the various transportation systems that operate in the Region and surrounding areas as well as begin to resolve the disconnect between highways, public transit, bike and pedestrian, rail and air movement of people and goods. It integrates the planning for each of these modes to the extent feasible.

The Plan has been developed, in part, to address certain minimum performance measures defined early in the process in 2001. These measures have been used as guiding principles in looking at the various transportation networks examined in this Plan, and are stated below:

1. **Improved and alternative transportation service to growth areas of the Region.** This recognizes that areas of the Region with accelerated growth (primarily Florence and other urban areas) will see the most pressure on roadways and public transit, and may provide opportunities for the planning of alternative transportation systems, including bike and pedestrian systems. Service between these urban areas is critically important.

2. **Improved and alternative transportation service to activity and employment centers.** This recognizes that major employers, commercial and medical centers, service providers and other activity generators must have reliable transportation access if they are to function well.

3. **Improved transportation services and facilities in support of tourism.** The Region’s economy is partially fueled by the tourist dollar and is also heavily impacted because it provides access routes to the Grand Strand. Accessibility to these internal and external tourist attractions or historic areas is an essential goal of the transportation system.

4. **Emphasis on transportation corridors that provide an efficient and complete system of links between communities and activity generators in the Region as well as externally.** This encourages the completion of a series of improved surface highway corridors that provide free flow of traffic between major activity centers in the Region. While secondary routes may also feel congestion, focus of attention and resources should remain in a series of regional and statewide priority corridors which best facilitate people and goods movement and serve the regional economy. These priority corridors should provide linkage to other regions of the State in order to better accommodate inter-regional travel. The Region does not live in a vacuum. Its economy depends on access to regional markets, dictating an emphasis on corridors that serve both inter and intra-regional needs.
5. **Better coordinated and quality fixed-route transit services to meet the needs of the Region and to access job markets in all areas.** This goal recognizes the importance of transit services in meeting the needs of several key population groups and/or areas: high volume travel corridors; dense development areas; government and service centers; and, low income residents. Air quality benefits of transit services are also recognized here.

6. **Better coordinated and efficient, high quality demand-responsive transit services to meet the needs of the Region when feasible and justified.** Especially in the provision of human services, fixed route transit cannot do it all. A more versatile system can provide the flexibility needed by the public. Demand-responsive service may not be universally cost-effective, but coordination among providers may help make it so.

7. **Safe and interconnected facilities and routes for bicycle and pedestrian usage, including preservation of rights-of-way (highway, abandoned rail, etc.).** Such facilities serve a more limited portion of the population and are usually more localized; nonetheless, they can provide a healthy, efficient and increasingly popular means of travel for short trips. Consideration of stand-alone trails and bike/pedestrian additions to highways are both valuable.

8. **Improved access to commercial airport facilities to serve the business and personal travel needs of the Region.** While only one commercial airport exists in the Region, four-lane access is critical to this Florence facility as well as to facilities in Charlotte, Columbia, Myrtle Beach and Charleston (and even Wilmington).

9. **Improved access to port facilities in the State to service business and industrial needs of the Region.** Port facilities at Charleston, Georgetown and even Port Royal, as well as Wilmington, NC, are essential links to international markets and other ports in the United States. A quality system of highway and rail routes serving these external facilities is essential to the economic health of the Region’s industrial base that either import or export.

10. **Rail corridors that connect regions within South Carolina and provide external connectivity.** Passenger and freight service to other markets and the ports, as well as future high-speed rail issues in several Pee Dee communities, are part of ensuring the rail system works and that Pee Dee residents and businesses have access to it. A related issue is the status of existing rail corridors that may be abandoned, including their usefulness in other means of transportation and their preservation for high-speed service, etc.

11. **Use of inter-modal solutions when possible.** For travel and cost efficiency, connections between modes of transportation are important, including a system of inter-modal centers.

12. **Transportation systems designed and constructed in a manner compatible with local plans and conditions.** Many communities in the Region have addressed transportation issues in the context of local planning and environmental conditions. While these assessments may not necessarily look at the big picture (inter-regional connectivity, ports, rail, etc.), these local views are nonetheless critical in defining regional transportation needs.
13. **Transportation systems that serve to promote and support state, regional and local economic development initiatives.** As noted several times in these principles, the transportation system serves the business and tourism base of the Region as well as its population. Industrial corridors, industrial parks and other key economic development areas must have proper access if they are to succeed.

14. **Provide transportation facilities and systems that are planned, constructed and maintained in a manner that promotes environmental quality and preserves natural resources.** The broad floodplains of the Great Pee Dee and other rivers in the Region, as well as large public land holdings in Chesterfield County, are a few major examples of environmental constraints that affect transportation improvements just like other development. But, there are also more localized issues that are critical to some communities.

15. **Provide transportation systems that maximize efficiency and value of return for transportation investments.** This is not an easy issue, as the cost-effectiveness of transportation improvements relates to means of travel, which, in turn, involves the habits of hundreds of thousands of Pee Dee residents and those who use the Region’s transportation systems.

16. **Provide transportation systems that emphasize safety in their construction, maintenance and operation.** Aside from highway safety issues and the conditions of bridges in the Region, there are specialized public safety issues in the Pee Dee, including evacuation routes for hurricanes and a nuclear power station.

Most of these broad principles will be a factor in the recommendations of this regional Plan.
REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONDITIONS

Geographic Setting

The Pee Dee Region encompasses 3,528 square miles (2,257,811 acres) and consists of six counties (Chesterfield, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Marion and Marlboro) and 33 municipalities that dominate northeastern South Carolina. It borders North Carolina, with significant economic ties to communities above the border. It is bisected by the broad floodplains of the Great Pee Dee River as well as by Interstate 95, which serves as a regional “Main Street”. The Region is centrally located to a number of major urban centers and/or destination areas which, to various degrees, are critical to the Region economically and/or otherwise benefit the Region, including: the Charlotte metroplex, 45 miles Northwest; Columbia, 45 miles West; Charleston and the Port of Charleston, 70 miles South; and, the SC Grand Strand, 45 miles East.

The Region’s diverse group of communities range from as few as 69 persons (Tatum) to Bennettsville (9,425 persons) and Florence (30,248 persons). Each county has urban concentrations that serve as home to more dense development but also offer critical shopping, medical, and social services for the population:

- **Chesterfield County**: Eight municipalities reside in the Region’s physically largest county, with most population concentrated in a band of moderately-sized communities along SC 9 in the northern portion of the County - Pageland, Chesterfield and Cheraw. This County also has large public land holdings - Sandhills State Forest and the Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge.
- **Darlington County**: As a growing small metropolitan County, the County has two large urban areas in the SC 151 and US 52 corridor - Hartsville and Darlington.
- **Dillon County**: A rural County, there is one major urban concentration at Interstate 95 and US 301/SC 9 - Dillon.
- **Florence County**: The Region’s largest County (from a population standpoint) and a metropolitan area, the County is dominated by the Region’s largest urban area - Florence and surroundings. In addition, Lake City anchors the southern end of the County, also on US 52.
- **Marion County**: This rural County has two major urban areas - Marion and Mullins. The County is also a primary access to the Grand Strand.
- **Marlboro County**: This is a rural County with one primary urban area - Bennettsville - served by SC 9, US 15/401 and SC 38.

In addition, the Florence urban area serves as a regional center of population, retail trade, medical services, legal services and major educational facilities.

Physical Development Patterns

Much of the Region’s 2.1 million acres is rural and agricultural in character, with only scattered urban areas. The accompanying satellite imagery (Map 1) highlights major land use patterns. Urban uses comprise only four percent of all land, but clearly stand out. Most evident is the expansive metropolitan area of Florence, but development corridors are evident. Commercial and industrial uses are also evident in several location, including West Cheraw, portions of Bennettsville, Dillon, Hartsville, Darlington, the Florence urban area and along the western edge of the Great Pee Dee River. The dominance of agricultural land uses can also be seen, particularly in Darlington, Marlboro, Dillon and Marion Counties. About 40 percent of the land is under cultivation, nearly 800,000 acres. Prime farmland abounds, particularly in broad bands on either side of the Pee Dee River floodplain. Again, the digital imagery is not detailed, but reflects the general nature of land use patterns in the Region.
Forested uses also dominate the regional landscape, concentrated in the forest preserves in southern Chesterfield County (Sandhills State Forest and Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge) and along the major rivers that traverse the Region. In total, forested lands comprise 48 percent of the Region's land area, just over 1 million acres. These expanses of forest areas, particularly federal and state forests and massive floodplains associated with the Pee Dee River, have historically served as major barriers to development and transportation linkage.

The Region has extensive wetland areas associated with the broad Pee Dee River floodplain and other tributaries, totaling some 225,000 acres. Aside from serving as physical barriers, these wetlands are also sensitive natural resources, essential for certain wildlife.

In general, urban development has grown mostly in the Hartsville - Darlington - Florence corridor. Fortunately, this band of urban development has an existing system of four-lane highways that can partially support new development. The pattern of scattered development in the surrounding Region, however, tends to place demand on a system of two-lane regional routes and farm-to-market roadways, some of which are showing the strain of additional traffic, delayed maintenance, etc. Scattered development in 33 small and large urban centers also complicates the provision of public transit service in such disparate locations.

**Population Trends**

Year 2000 Census data indicate the Region is seeing modest growth, slower than the State but faster than the Region in recent decades. Despite reservations concerning the 1990 and 2000 Census counts, these counts are nonetheless one of the better gauges available of growth trends.

**Past Population Change:** Past and current population trends in the Region illustrate a mixed set of growth conditions over the years. The accompanying table illustrates population data from 1960 to 2000 and Map 2 illustrates growth by Census Tracts for the 1990's, illustrating which portions of the Region have seen recent growth. Comments on these trends follow.

**Table 1. Population Trends from 1960 - 2000 – Pee Dee Region and Counties**

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chesterfield</td>
<td>33,717</td>
<td>33,667</td>
<td>38,161</td>
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<td>42,768</td>
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<td>52,928</td>
<td>53,442</td>
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<td>61,851</td>
<td>67,394</td>
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<td>Dillon</td>
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<td>28,838</td>
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<td>29,114</td>
<td>30,722</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>&lt; 1</td>
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<td>Florence</td>
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<td>114,344</td>
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<td>332,929</td>
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<td>4,012,012</td>
<td>688</td>
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Source: US Bureau of the Census, 1960 – 2000; Compiled by PDRCOG

Observations from past populations trends and growth within the Region for the past decade are several:

- Prior to the period displayed in the Table, the Region experienced substantial growth, especially between 1930 and 1950.
- The next 20 years saw stagnation, followed by another growth spurt in the 70's, when 40,000 persons were added to the Pee Dee, particularly Florence and Darlington Counties. These two Counties have maintained healthy growth over the years and remain the region's growth center.
- Census data indicate the 80's saw a dramatic slowdown in regional and statewide growth, with virtually no growth at all in the Region.
- Official population counts show a regional total of 307,146 persons in 1990, about the same total as a decade earlier. The data indicate only Chesterfield and Florence Counties saw increases over the prior decade and that all counties saw less growth than the State as a whole. Dillon and Marlboro Counties are thought to have had the greatest loss in the decade, on top of relatively poor performance in prior years. While the 1990 Census data is somewhat suspect, it is felt that even accurate data would still show lackluster growth for the Region in the ‘80s, reflecting poor underlying economic conditions for most of the decade.

- Population counts for 2000 show 332,929 persons in the Region, somewhat ahead of official growth estimates by the Census. This level of growth could reflect a correction of counts in 1990 or represent a true growth spurt. Regardless, moderate growth is indicated over the past decade in all but Marlboro County. Total growth for the decade was about 26,000, just over eight percent (half the State’s 15 percent growth rate). Put in perspective, these 26,000 new Pee Dee residents added in the nineties are equal to the addition of a community almost as large as Florence. While overall growth lags behind the State as a whole, this recent increase is nonetheless impressive for a rural region and paints a more positive picture of future growth prospects.

- Finally, the distribution of population growth among the sub-county census tracts is a critical gauge of where growth is taking place and the burden this growth may be placing on the transportation system. Map 2 shows areas of growth in the Region over the past decade, with several “hot spots” that stand out:
  - Chesterfield County: Cheraw and Pageland
  - Dillon County: Dillon and West Dillon
  - Darlington County: Between Darlington and Hartsville; North Darlington; North Hartsville
  - Florence County: The Florence metro area; West Lake City
  - Marion County: West of Marion

**Future Population Trends:** Forecasting population growth for the Region is difficult due to erratic past trends and Census anomalies. However, the table below provides data from 1990 and 2000, plus Census and COG estimates for 2006 and 2030. Observations on current population estimates and future growth include:

- Census estimates for 2006 show little confidence in the Region’s growth prospects, with only a 4,000-person increase over the past six years (virtually all in Florence County).
- The table below provides two order-of-magnitude forecasts of population for the year 2030, from both the Census and the COG. The Census forecast illustrates a continuing erosion of population in Marlboro County as well as lackluster performance in all counties except Chesterfield, Darlington and Florence. The COG estimates reflecting more reasonable prospects for regional growth that consider the possible addition of Interstate 73 and other factors.

**Table 2  Population Forecasts to 2030 - Pee Dee Region and Counties**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2006 (Estimated)</th>
<th>2030 Forecasts</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Census</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chesterfield</td>
<td>38,577</td>
<td>42,768</td>
<td>43,191</td>
<td>49,330</td>
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<td>Darlington</td>
<td>61,851</td>
<td>67,394</td>
<td>67,551</td>
<td>73,840</td>
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<td>Dillon</td>
<td>29,114</td>
<td>30,722</td>
<td>30,984</td>
<td>31,310</td>
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<td>Florence</td>
<td>114,344</td>
<td>125,761</td>
<td>131,297</td>
<td>153,120</td>
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<td>Marion</td>
<td>33,899</td>
<td>35,466</td>
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<td>Marlboro</td>
<td>29,361</td>
<td>28,818</td>
<td>29,152</td>
<td>24,800</td>
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<td>307,146</td>
<td>332,929</td>
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<td>STATE</td>
<td>3,486,703</td>
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<td>4,321,249</td>
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Still, it should be noted that regional growth is expected to be only about half that of the State as a whole over the next 25 years, growing by about 56,000 persons to 393,000 in the year 2030 (by COG estimates). Not surprisingly, Florence, Chesterfield and Darlington Counties lead the Region. Even so, each of these higher growth counties is still forecast to have less growth than the State.

Similar to the past trends previously discussed, the dispersion of growth is as important as the countywide totals, with resulting impacts on traffic demand in various corridors. General growth trends for the future are thought to include:

Highest growth:
- The Florence – Darlington – Hartsville growth corridor, centered about the US 52 and SC 151 routes, including US 52 North of Darlington. Much of this growth is expected outside current corporate limits. New infrastructure improvements in this urban band and the continued dominance of retail and service centers in the area will fuel additional growth for particularly the Florence urban area. “Smart growth” initiatives, including infill development and urban redevelopment, may shift some of the growth into the more central areas of these growth communities.
- In addition to the traditional growth areas to the southwest of Florence, growth is also expected in the Southeast and along the SC 327 / I-95 corridor to the Northeast of Florence. The latter area is the site of infrastructure improvements and additional economic initiatives.
- The Pageland area is forecasted to growth at an above-average rate due to its proximity to the Charlotte metroplex and its SC 151, SC 9 and US 601 corridors.
- Above average growth is forecast in a crescent from North Dillon to Marion and in the improved SC 38 and US 501 beach corridor. Despite economic hard times in this area, Interstate 95 and Myrtle Beach accessibility will likely have a sustained growth influence in these two counties over the next twenty years. Border areas of Dillon and Marion Counties could see better than average growth from Grand Strand “spillover” development. The extensive rural water systems in Dillon and Marion Counties make them targets for private development.
- Finally, the possible development of I-73 could affect growth and development in the proposed interstate corridor. The preferred alignment for the roadway has been set, but funding is still unsure. If developed, it could provide an additional impetus for growth in the Bennettsville to Marion corridor.

More moderate growth:
- The SC 151 corridor between Pageland and Hartsville is expected to see moderate growth, reflecting new sewer systems and expanded water service in this area.
- The Pageland - Chesterfield - Cheraw - Bennettsville crescent is expected to see moderate-to-high growth. Cheraw and Bennettsville are among the largest cities in the Region and are certainly considered among the larger industrial concentrations in the Pee Dee. Despite the persistent economic hardship in Marlboro County, the completion of SC 38 widening will likely boost population growth in portions of Marlboro County. The expected growth in Pageland, a new industrial park along SC 9 and forecasted retirement development in the Cheraw area are all positive prospects.
- Likewise, portions of Marion County are expected to see slightly above-average growth despite severe economic conditions. As noted earlier, proximity to the Grand Strand and countywide rural water service will help virtually all portions of Marion County. The potential for retirement development in the County is thought significant.
- Western Dillon County will also see better than average growth due to interstate highway accessibility, a new multi-county industrial park, etc.
- Portions of lower Florence County will continue to see above-average growth, due to economic successes in the Lake City area and improved utility systems.

It should be stressed again that these broad forecasts of growth areas are based on erratic past performance by most of the rural areas and a few of the urban communities. Nonetheless, these general development trends are considered sound for transportation planning purposes and have been used by the COG and SCDOT to develop transportation forecasts for the Region’s roadways.
Impacts of Population Growth on Transportation: As noted in previous commentary, most growth is occurring within a few major highway corridors, including SC 151 and US 52 (especially in the Darlington / Florence growth corridor), all “Beach” routes (particularly in Dillon and Marion Counties), and portions of SC 9 from Pageland to Bennettsville. In addition, the vicinity of the Interstate 95 and Interstate 20 corridors are forecast for heavy growth, with seven of the I-95 interchanges and both interchanges on I-20 being in the fastest growing areas over the next 20 years. These growth areas also include virtually all of the FLATS area and all of the major population centers in the Region.

The broad implications of the forecasted growth patterns on the transportation system are several:

- Much of the growth is occurring on major four- and two-lane highway corridors rather than in isolated rural areas. This ensures that many of the planned roadway improvements will serve a good portion of the forecasted population. It also means, however, than those areas which are currently feeling congestion will likely feel it worse, thus putting pressure on the Region to complete several other critical highway corridor improvements beyond current funding. And, development that occurs directly along major routes can increase potential accidents and ultimately reduce the carrying capacity of the highway.

- Growth anticipated in the Hartsville – Darlington – Florence corridor increases pressure on the Florence Area Transportation (FLATS) roadway network, a fact that has been considered in FLATS area planning. This concentrated growth band also exerts pressure on not just the four-lane US 52, SC 151 and US 76/301 routes, but also the two-lane segments of US 76 toward Sumter, US 52 North of Darlington and SC 51 Southeast of Florence.

- The growth occurring in more dense urban portions of the Region also increases the likelihood that transit alternatives will be viable to an expanding portion of the population. In particular, the Hartsville – Darlington – Florence corridor is a magnet for growth and may generate enough activity and population to justify additional fixed route and demand responsive transit service on a consistent and expanded basis. PDRTA is moving toward such routes.

- Growth in the tourism corridors of Dillon and Marion Counties also will have an impact on congestion along those routes, as local and tourism traffic combines.

- The fact that much of the Interstate 95 and 20 corridors are among the highest growth areas in the Region is expected to place additional burdens on especially I-95. The recent widening of I-95 from I-20 northward to SC 327 is timely, but other portions of I-95 and its interchanges will be seeing additional pressure from local growth as well as through traffic.

- Finally, the moderate to high growth forecast in the SC 9 corridor between Cheraw and Bennettsville, coupled with the high growth at the Pageland and Dillon ends of this corridor, indicate SC 9 will be under additional traffic pressure in the foreseeable future.

Population Density: Because the Pee Dee is rural, population densities are important in the provision of services, particularly transit. To display the disparity in densities among portions of the Region, a county-by-county tabulation of densities by Census tracts is provided below and in Map 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTY</th>
<th>LAND AREA</th>
<th>PERSONS PER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SQ. MILES</td>
<td>SQ. MILE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chesterfield</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darlington</td>
<td>563</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dillon</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florence</td>
<td>804</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marion</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marlboro</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REGION</td>
<td>3,551</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STATE</td>
<td>32,100</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: PDRCOG, based on SC DNR and Census data

As can be seen, Chesterfield County is the least dense and Florence County the greatest (even though they have roughly the same area). The overall density of the Region is about 75 percent of the State. The more developed areas of the Region stand out. Development corridors discussed earlier are evident.
Poverty Concentrations: A brief note is offered here on income levels, a particularly relevant gauge of public transportation dependency. Map 4 illustrates poverty ratios for Census tracts. Significant portions of Marion, Dillon and Marlboro Counties have high poverty rates, coinciding with persistently high unemployment and related distress factors. Again, these areas of high poverty have lower auto availability and other characteristics that make a larger portion of the population transit dependent.

Activity Generators

Preceding narratives have offered insights into broad areas of the Region where transportation demand may rise over the next 25 years. A critically important complement to these growth areas are the locations that may generate significant demands on the transportation system. Such “activity generators” include business and industrial sites, governmental and institutional sites, and tourism and recreation centers, briefly reviewed and generalized on Map 5. This Map groups different activity concentrations, so not every shopping center or major industrial site is specifically identified. As noted in the discussion of existing land use in the Region, the key concern with activity generators are the patterns… Where are major groupings of activities that may generate demand for vehicles and/or transit service? The generators identified on Map 5 include the following:

Business and Industrial Sites: Industrial areas, industrial sites, commercial centers and office centers are found in or near major population centers as well as some scattered rural locations:
- **Industrial Concentrations:** Principle among industrial/distribution center concentration are Pageland, Chesterfield, Cheraw, McBee, Bennettsville, Dillon, Latta, the Marion / Mullins corridor, Hartsville, Darlington, Society Hill, the Florence urban area, Timmonsville, Lake City, Pamplico, Johnsonville, and along the Great Pee Dee River between Florence and Marion Counties. Industrial activity accounts for approximately 40 percent of jobs and depends on trucks for delivery of raw materials and finished goods; thus, good highway access is critical.
- **Industrial Parks and sites:** The inventory of full-service industrial sites and parks has increased in recent years as communities have developed a range of sites with which to attract industry. Most major sites have been located to take advantage of interstate accessibility and other major travel corridors. Several examples include the Touchstone Energy Park in the Florence area on I-95, the Gateway Park on I-95 at Dillon and the Chesterfield County Industrial Park on 4-lane SC 9 between Cheraw and Chesterfield. While these are not the only locations where additional economic development might occur, they are nonetheless prime locations.
- **Large-scale shopping centers:** These large-scale “big-box” malls and centers are located in most of the major population centers of the Region, including Cheraw, Hartsville, Lake City, Dillon, East Marion and in several locations in the Florence urban area. In addition, Bennettsville has significant commercial concentrations.
- **Larger private office complexes:** These exist only in the Florence urban area, with concentrations in downtown, the Florence Mall area and other scattered locations.

Government and Institutional Sites: Government offices, social service and employment centers, hospitals, and colleges serve the general population and especially disadvantaged persons and/or those seeking better opportunities through higher education… the more transit-dependent segments of the population. The functions of government are provided in a variety of locations, ranging from most town offices to service centers operated by State agencies, including:
- **Town offices:** There are 33 municipalities in the Region. All but a few have a municipal office, though most municipal operations don’t generate significant traffic. Certainly, Florence, Bennettsville and several other city complexes are more substantial activity generators.
- **County offices and courthouses:** County courthouses and administrative annexes are often significant activity generators, housing a court system, administrative and tax offices and other government services. Such service centers are located in Chesterfield, Darlington, Hartsville, Dillon, Florence, Lake City, Marion and Bennettsville. These locations serve the legal, tax and related needs of the residents, including those of low income. In addition, county health clinics and libraries are located in the county seats and some branch locations.
• **Social service and employment service centers:** Local offices of State agencies also tend to be significant activity generators, in large part because they serve economically disadvantaged and/or unemployed segments of the population. The largest centers include the Department of Social Services and the Employment Security Commission offices, usually in the same communities as county offices and courts. In addition to unemployment offices, One Stop Job Centers exist in most major population centers. Finally, two community action agencies provide services to the disadvantaged, Chesterfield-Marlboro EOC and Pee Dee CAA.

• **Hospitals:** The primary health centers in the Region include regional and community hospitals:
  - Cheraw – a community hospital on SC 9 on the eastern edge of the community
  - Hartsville – a regional medical facility on SC 151
  - Dillon – a community hospital on US 301
  - Florence – McLeod regional medical center and Carolina’s Hospital
  - Lake City – a community hospital on US 52
  - Marion County – a community medical center East of Marion on US 76
  - Bennettsville – a community hospital in North Bennettsville at SC 9.

• **Colleges and universities:** Technical Colleges / Schools exist in Cheraw (Northeastern TEC), Florence (Florence-Darlington TEC) and Marion (Marion County Vocational Center), with satellite facilities in Hartsville, Lake City, Mullins, downtown Florence, Pageland, Bennettsville and Dillon. Colleges and universities include Coker College in Hartsville and Francis Marion University in Florence.

**Tourism, Recreation and Cultural Facilities** Few of these facilities are major traffic generators on a routine basis, but several have periodically high rates of attraction. These facilities include:

- The Florence City-County Civic Center (I-95 & I-20) is a major attraction on a periodic basis, attracting as many as 10,000 persons for special events.
- The Amphitheatre Southeast of Marion is also a periodic entertainment venue.
- Several performing arts theatres exist in the Region.
- Museums in Florence, Lake City, Hartsville, Latta, Darlington and Mullins.
- State Parks include Little Pee Dee State Park in Dillon County, Woods Bay State Park adjacent to southwestern Florence County and Cheraw State Park in Chesterfield County.
- The largest local park in the Region is the former Lynches River State Park in Florence County.
- One additional periodic activity generator is the Freedom Florence recreational complex.
- The Region also has two heritage corridors that have been officially designated. They are being promoted as tourism routes, providing an interpretive tour through two aspects of local history:
  - The **S. C. Cotton Trail** extends from Interstate 20 at Bishopville through the Pee Dee Region to Interstate 95, using US 15, US 52 and SC 9 corridors. The route is signed.
  - The **S. C. Tobacco Trail** is a second tourism corridor, extending from Interstate 95 at SC 38 in Dillon County through the Eastern portion of the Pee Dee to Conway. It has recently been expanded to include Florence and Lake City areas, with new “trail” routes yet to be defined.

From a transportation standpoint, the implications of these cultural, tourism and recreational facilities can be periodically significant. Few are routine generators of large-scale traffic, but at certain times they do have short-term impacts.

Finally, there are two major public land holdings in the Region, the Sandhills State Forest and the Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge. Neither is a major activity generator, but such large undeveloped areas tend to serve as transportation barriers.
TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE & NEEDS

The various means of transportation that serve the movement of people and goods to and within the Region are reviewed here, including the following primary systems. While the roadway and transit systems are the most extensive, each of these means of transportation plays a role in movement and each will be addressed:

- Roadways
- Transit
- Airports
- Rail
- Bicycle and pedestrian

The Regional Roadway System

The Pee Dee Region is served by an extensive system of US and State highways, some of which are four-lane facilities. The Region is also fortunate to have two interstate highway routes, I-95 and I-20. Interstate 95 serves as a “Main Street” for the Pee Dee and the East coast of the United States, with 56 miles of freeway and 11 interchanges directly serving Florence and Dillon Counties and in close proximity to all but Chesterfield County. Interstate 20 originates at I-95 and extends westward, with two interchanges providing direct access to Darlington County and western portions of the Florence urban area. These thirteen interchanges have been, and will continue to be, critical access points for industrial shipping and the traveling public as well as magnets for economic development activity. In addition to the two interstate highways, other U.S. and State routes are part of the essential inventory of roadways serving the Region, including:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U. S. Highway Routes</th>
<th>Major SC Routes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. 1 - Chesterfield County</td>
<td>SC 9 – Chesterfield, Marlboro and Dillon Counties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. 15 - Darlington &amp; Marlboro Counties</td>
<td>SC 34 – Darlington and Marlboro Counties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. 52 - Florence, Darlington &amp; Chesterfield Co.</td>
<td>SC 38 – Marlboro and Dillon Counties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. 76 – Florence &amp; Marion Counties</td>
<td>SC 51 – Florence County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. 301 – Florence, Marion &amp; Dillon Counties</td>
<td>SC 151 – Chesterfield and Darlington Counties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. 378 – Florence &amp; Marion Counties</td>
<td>SC 327 – Florence County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. 401 – Darlington &amp; Marlboro Counties</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. 601 – Chesterfield County</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Region’s overall highway network is illustrated in Map 6. This figure also outlines the service boundaries of the Florence Area Transportation Study (FLATS) area, where more detailed roadway planning is undertaken by the City of Florence on behalf of the Florence urban area, similar to this rural regional plan.

In addition to these routes that form the basis of a regional roadway network, some provide critical linkages to surrounding regions as well. Important linkages will be reviewed below.
Existing and Committed Regional Four-Lane Highway Accessibility:

In addition to highlighting the basic roadway network, Map 6 illustrates a series of critical routes that provide four-lane highway accessibility to the Region. Depicted are existing four-lane routes as well as those routes currently programmed and funded for widening. In addition to I-95 and I-20, existing four lane corridors in the Region include:

- A North-South corridor through the western portion of the Region, consisting of SC 151 and US 52. This corridor serves intra-regional travel and connects the Charlotte, Florence and Charleston metropolitan areas. It is also part of a primary beach access corridor from North Carolina;
- A North-South corridor through the eastern half of the Region, consisting of SC 9, SC 38 and US 501. This corridor serves intra-regional travel, serves as a feeder to I-95, and is also a primary beach access route;
- An East-West corridor that includes portions of US 76 through the center of the Region. This corridor is part of beach access to the beaches;
- An East-West corridor in the lower reaches of the Region consisting of a portion of US 378. This corridor is part of a lower beach access route; and,
- Four-lane corridors between Florence and Timmonsville, between Dillon and Latta, and South of US 378 toward Williamsburg County on SC 41 also assist with intra-regional travel.

This four-lane highway network serves the major intra-regional travel needs of the Pee Dee and also connects to nearby regions and major metro areas and tourist destinations, including Charlotte, Columbia, Santee Lakes, Charleston, the Grand Strand and Fayetteville.

As noted above, the four-lane network includes long-standing four-lane highways, roadways improved in an accelerated building program over the past ten years, as well as several roadways currently programmed and funded for widening. Recent construction programs and the programmed roadways are described more fully below.

Improvements Over the Past Ten Years: Four-lane widening projects and selected other routes have been completed over the past ten years by use of regional “Guideshare” funds, a highway bonding program and State investment. Routes completed since 1998 include:

1. Cheraw Truck Route
2. US 15 / 15 Business – Hartsville
3. US 15 / 401 By-Pass widening in Bennettsville
4. US 601 – Pageland to the NC line
5. SC 151 – Section 4 between Jefferson and McBee
6. SC 38 – Northwest of I-95 to US 501 at Marion

The first three routes include local improvements in Cheraw, Hartsville and Bennettsville, but the remaining three projects (some built in multiple stages) include portions of regional corridors --- US 601 above Pageland, the last two-lane segment of SC 151, and SC 38. When roadway priorities were set in 1998, the overriding policy was completion of critical regional four-lane corridors that had been begun but never finished. Obviously, the SC 151 and US 601 segments helped complete the four-lane strategic highway corridor from Florence to Charlotte and assists with four-lane access to Charleston and the beaches. Likewise, the completion of the last segments of SC 38 from I-95 to US 501 at Marion established another regional beach access corridor.

At the time these regional corridor decisions were made, the only means of completing the projects in such a short time-frame was for the Pee Dee to participate in a statewide highway bonding program. Debt service for the bonds is paid from the $7.8 million regional “Guideshare” funds allocated to the Pee Dee from federal and State transportation funds and will be paid out by 2022. Debt service payments vary slightly from year to year, but average $2.35 million, approximately one third of the funds received by the Region on an annual basis. While participation in the bonding program and commitment of these annual resources has and will significantly reduce funds availability for other roadway projects in the intervening years, completion of two regional strategic corridors was determined to be critically important and worth the investment.
Programmed Improvements: As mentioned, programmed improvements are also illustrated in Map 6 as a part of a regional four-lane highway network, highlighted in green and blue. These assumed four- and five-lane improvements consist of two types of projects whose funding and schedule is known at this time and which can somewhat safely be assumed as part of the four-lane road network for the Region:

- **Regional Guideshare Projects in the current STIP:** Those highway segments that are currently funded for four- or five-lane widening (as described in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) for the Pee Dee) are illustrated in green in Map 6. These routes are programmed for improvement in the STIP and are to be funded by regional “Guideshare” allocations. These projects include:
  1. SC 9 By-Pass - Widening of Cottingham Blvd. around Bennettsville from US 15 Business Northward to SC intersection.
  2. SC 41 at Kingsburg – Widening of SC 41 from the widened bridges over the Lynches River northward to the US 378 intersection at Kingsburg.
  3. US 52 – Widening of approximately five miles from the Darlington By-Pass northward to Dovesville.

It should be noted that the third project is committed but full funding is still pending. Right-of-way acquisition will be proceeding for this five-mile segment of US 52 in late 2008, but construction funding is not included in the current approved STIP. For that reason, that proposed four-lane widening is marked as pending, tentatively included in the assumed four-lane highway network.

- **Florence County Capital Projects:** Also illustrated (in blue) as programmed are those widening projects that will utilize a One-Cent Capital Projects Sales Tax adopted by Florence County residents in 2007 (with the assistance of the State Infrastructure Bank). The Florence County sales tax is projected to generate $148 million over the seven years, which, when combined with a grant from the State Infrastructure Bank of $250 million, will yield $398 million for the road projects. Portions of the Florence County local-option routes are within the FLATS area, but others are outside. The regional map cannot reasonably illustrate urban segments such as Pine Needles Rd., but those that function as part of the greater regional road network are illustrated to the extent feasible.

It should be noted that the completion of these local option routes depends on the final costs and the total funds to be derived from the sales tax initiative over the seven-year life of the funding program. The Florence County projects will be completed in priority order and it is hoped that all routes will be widened with the funds available, but that is not certain. The One-Cent Capital Project Tax in Florence County include (in priority order) the following routes:

  1. Pine Needles Road project - Widening of Pine Needles Road from Southborough Road to South Ebenezer Road
  2. US 378 Project - Widening of US 378 from US 52 near Lake City to SC 41 in Kingsburg
  3. US 76 Project - Widening US 76 from I-95 to Main Street in Timmonsville
  4. TV Road Project - Widening of TV Road to four lanes from Wilson Road to I-95
  5. Pamplico Highway Project - Widening SC 51 from Claussen Road to US 378 in Kingsburg
  6. US 301 By Pass (West) - Completion of the 301 ByPass from US 76 near Timmonsville to the intersection of US 52/301 and Howe Springs Road

While the Pee Dee is well-served by this partially-complete four-lane highway network, it should be noted that the efficient movement of people and goods, and thus the logistical support of the regional and statewide economy, depends on a safe and dependable roadway network with sufficient capacity to meet not just current but long-term needs of the area. That is where future roadway planning issues come into play.
Future Roadway Needs

In the following discussions, several assessments will be made of the regional roadway system in order to determine which roads or corridors are in need of improvement. The goal here is not just to identify widening projects, but also identify other routes that may need more limited improvements by virtue of that corridor’s role in the regional highway system and/or future roadway deficiencies. These assessments include:

- **Identification of a Strategic Regional and Statewide Highway Network:** A network of critical regional routes is a goal of this analysis. Routes that could function as part of a regional strategic network could build on connectivity between the activity generators discussed earlier, the existing system of four-lane highways that now serve the Region, and routes with significant traffic volumes (to be discussed below). This assessment will examine a logical network of future four-lane strategic corridors and other improved routes that could serve four primary functions:
  - support the regional economy,
  - serve as emergency evacuation routes
  - connect with surrounding regions, and
  - provide overall connectivity to the State strategic highway system.

- **Traffic Volumes and Growth:** As part of the regional corridors analysis, past and current traffic growth on major roadways is considered in determining which routes currently function as a strategic route.

- **Forecasted Travel Demand and Future Level-of-Service:** Finally, and perhaps most definitively, results of regional and statewide travel demand models will be reviewed in general terms for guidance in identifying routes that may carry increased traffic and/or routes that may have future roadway conditions and deficiencies that will require improvement.

**Regional Four-Lane Strategic Highway Network:** As can be seen in Map 6, even with the programmed addition of several funded widening projects over the next five to seven years, there are gaps in the regional network of four-lane routes. Principle gaps include:

- The US 52 corridor North of Darlington, with missing links to the industrial communities of Cheraw and Bennettsville;
- A second intra-regional access gap is the western portion of SC 9 between Chesterfield and Pageland. The relative importance of this segment is seen in the analysis of traffic growth, below;
- US 378 in the lower portion of the Region from the Great Pee Dee River to Horry County and the Grand Strand. Although assisted by Florence County roadway funding, this strategic corridor is missing a critical link through Marion County; and,
- Other corridors, to include:
  - SC 9 East of Bennettsville to I-95
  - SC 9 East of I-95 to North Beach Areas (a designated hurricane evacuation route).
  - US 76 West of I-95 to Timmonsville and toward Sumter
  - US 76 East of Mullins to Nichols

Not all of these routes necessarily deserve widening, but they and other routes could function better with intersection improvements, selective passing lanes or other operational improvements.

**State Strategic Corridor System:** As an important adjunct to the above discussion of regional corridors, the 2008 State Multimodal Transportation Plan identifies a series of critical statewide corridors. As explained in that Draft Plan, the system of statewide corridors is intended to provide a connected, continuous network of highways that serve both the traveling public and facilitate the movement of freight. In order to maximize limited resources, maintain the State’s position in the global marketplace and efficiently move both people and goods, a strategic system of corridors forming the backbone of the state’s transportation system has been identified. This system reinforces the regional corridors identified above. They were developed by emphasizing connectivity of activity centers, not just focusing on route numbers. That guiding principle is similar to the definition of regional corridors. The statewide corridors also focus on those routes that have certain minimum traffic volumes, routes that serve major truck traffic, those with safety issues, those serving economic corridors, those that are evacuation routes and tourism routes.
The three statewide strategic corridors that affect the Pee Dee Region include:

1. **Mid-Carolina Corridor:** Essentially, this statewide corridor encompasses US 378 for its entire length from McCormick County to Horry County, including its portion through lower Florence and Marion Counties. Its critical importance, especially through the Pee Dee, is its value as a beach route, a significant hurricane evacuation route, its traffic volumes and its value as a truck route.

2. **Trans-Carolina Corridor:** This statewide corridor runs on SC 9, SC 38 and US 501 from Spartanburg County to Horry County. It’s critical importance through the Pee Dee is its value as a beach access route, a hurricane evacuation route, its traffic volumes and its value as a truck route. This route doesn’t follow the route of eastern SC 9.

3. **Pee Dee Corridor:** This namesake corridor follows US 52 from the North Carolina line to Charleston. Its critical importance through the Pee Dee is its value as a major truck route, a route for port access, and partially as a beach route.

Each of these statewide corridors are included in the list of regional corridors discussed in the previous assessment.

**Regional Traffic Volumes:** A visual expression of traffic volumes in the Region in 2005 and the increases in volumes over the past fifteen years are provided in Maps 7 and 8, respectively. Illustrated are Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) counts for Interstate, US and SC routes, as explained below.

**Year 2005 Volumes:** While some other State and local routes carry up to several thousand vehicles per day, the Interstate, US and SC-designated routes shown on Map 6 comprise the primary roadway network in the Pee Dee. These traffic counts are the latest available from SCDOT and do not reflect peak season beach traffic. Likewise, later discussions of forecasted traffic volumes don’t reflect summertime or peak-hour traffic and congestion problems.

While specific volumes are not given for each roadway on the Map, the width of the bands along roadways are proportionate to the daily volume on the roadways; thus, key regional travel routes are clearly evident by wider colored bands. (Specific traffic volumes at selected locations in the Pee Dee and statewide can be found at [http://www.dot.state.sc.us/getting/aadt.shtml](http://www.dot.state.sc.us/getting/aadt.shtml)).

The most significant volumes are found along I-95 and I-20, US 52, US 76, portions of SC 151, US 501 and portions of SC 9. Several broad observations are in order from this figure:

- Volumes on portions of US 52 in the Florence and Darlington corridor rival volumes on portions of I-20, attesting to the value of US 52 as a regional artery.
- The value of SC 151 and US 52 as a link between the urban areas of Hartsville, Darlington and Florence is clearly evident by the heavy volumes.
- Beach corridors stand out, including US 76 / 301, US 501 and portions of US 378.
- SC 9 and SC 38 through Chesterfield and Marlboro County (see discussion of increases in traffic to follow for additional insights into this route).
- Commuting patterns in corridors between larger urban areas are obvious, particularly:
  - Florence / Darlington / Hartsville,
  - Pageland / Chesterfield / Cheraw / Bennettsville
  - Florence / Marion / Mullins
  - Florence / Lake City

**Increases In Regional Traffic Volumes:** Equally important as the 2005 volumes is the change in traffic over the past fifteen years. Map 8 illustrates the change in traffic for the same Interstate, US and SC highways in the Region during this period. As with the previous Traffic Volume Map, the width of the shaded bands along routes indicates the relative growth in traffic volumes, giving a sense as to which routes are showing increased stress.
Generally, the same network of key routes stand out as in the 2005 volume map, with portions of Interstate 95 having grown by about 16,000 vehicles per day over the period and portions of I-20 increasing by over 10,000 vehicles a day. With these increases in volume and deteriorating road conditions, the widening and re-surfacing of I-95 in the Florence urban area that was completed in 2006 was certainly in order.

Other than the Interstate system, other regional routes that stand out due to significant increases in traffic volumes include:

- **SC 38 and US 501** in Marlboro, Dillon and Marion County. (With the completion of four-lane widening in this corridor, traffic has boomed.)
- **US 378** through Florence and Marion Counties, particularly at the Pee Dee River bridge, where traffic merges from three directions.
- Portions of **US 76** East of Florence to Mullins have seen significant growth (particularly at the Pee Dee River – an increase of over 7,000 cars per day).
- Most segments of **US 52** from Darlington thru Florence and the Lake City area have seen growth.
- After the widening of **SC 151**, that route has also seen increases, particularly in the McBee and Hartsville areas.
- **SC 9** East of Pageland and US 601 North of that community have shown dramatic increases (nearly 50 percent each).
- **US 1** in Chesterfield County.
- Most major routes in the Hartsville area have grown significantly.

Other localized increases are worthy of note:

- SC 340, access between Darlington and I-20.
- SC 9 and SC 391 at Clio (likely due to new industrial development during the period).
- The US 301 corridor between SC 38 and I-95 North of Dillon.
- SC 301 North of Olanta.
- SC 102 in Chesterfield County North of Patrick.
- SC 912 in Marlboro County.

**Future Traffic Forecasts**: Through a joint SCDOT / COG effort, travel demand forecasts have been made. Forecasts of future population, future at-place retail jobs and other employment and future at-place school enrollment were estimated by the COG for 2025 and subsequently extrapolated to the year 2030 by SCDOT and a consultant team. The results are a reasonable estimation of traffic volumes (future trips based on where people live, work and travel to and where businesses are located). When these trips future trips are applied (or "loaded") on the regional roadway system, the results can give order-of-magnitude indications of future problem areas… roadways whose capacity may be exceeded or which may otherwise be stressed.

A critical factor in this traffic forecasting is the assumed roadway network onto which future trips are assigned. For the Region, this is the existing road system, including those assumed roadway improvements discussed earlier (the "committed" roads). For the Pee Dee, the picture is complicated somewhat by the potential addition of a new interstate highway and the addition of the road improvements funded by Florence County Capital Projects Sales Tax initiative. If the Florence County improvements are assumed, some areas of future congestion will be eliminated. However, the impacts of I-73 are more complex, as will be discussed below.
Traffic Volumes 2005
Map 7

Legend
- Municipalities
- Major Highways
- Interstates
- County Boundary
- FLATS Boundary 2000

Major Highways
- 275 - 5000
- 3001 - 7000
- 7001 - 12400
- 12401 - 18300
- 18301 - 23700

Interstates
- 65000 - 130000
- 13001 - 30200
- 30201 - 38300
- 38301 - 49400

Reasonable efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy of these maps. The Pee Dee Regional Council of Governments expressly disclaims responsibility for damages or liability that may arise from the use of these maps.
Percent Change in Traffic Volumes
1990 - 2005
Map 8

Legend
- Municipalities
- Major Highways
- Interstates
- County Boundary
- FLATS_boundary_2000

Major Highways
- 0% - 17%
- 18% - 35%
- 36% - 50%
- 51% - 70%
- 71% - 99%
- 100% - 121%

Interstates
- 0% - 35%
- 36% - 50%
- 51% - 70%
- 71% - 99%
- 100% - 121%

Reasonable efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy of these maps. The Pee Dee Regional Council of Governments expressly disclaims responsibility for damages or liability that may arise from the use of these maps.
**Forecasted Roadway Conditions:** The key step in drawing conclusions from future traffic forecasts is comparing these forecasts to the capacity of the roadway to absorb the traffic. That is, will the forecasted traffic exceed the ability of the roadway to carry these vehicles at some reasonable level of service to the traveling public? To address this issue, “volume to capacity” ratios are calculated by the traffic model, with this V/C ratio providing a critical indication of how congested the roadway will be in future years. One gauge of the acceptability of certain V/C ratios to the public is the concept of “level of service”, or LOS. Two- and four-lane roadways have varying vehicular capacities at varying “levels of service”; that is, as more vehicles crowd a particular section of roadway, its capacity increases, but so does the level of congestion. LOS is a gauge of how acceptable the congestion might be.

To make LOS understandable, it is characterized by a series of letter “grades”, from A to F, similar to the grading system in educational institutions. Specifically, the following brief descriptions of LOS A through F will provide guidance in interpreting these standards:

- **LOS A and B** generally describe free flowing traffic conditions. While such conditions may be ideal to people and goods movement, it may not be fiscally prudent to plan for all roadway segments to have such free-flowing conditions, as extensive widening would be costly and physical disruption. Thus, transportation planning cannot plan for all roadways to function so well. V/C ratios don’t exceed 75% with LOS A and B.
- **LOS “C”** is generally considered a reasonable target, as roadways will be very busy but delays will be tolerable. Minor disruptions in traffic flow (accidents, construction, etc.) may still produce significant delays, however. V/C ratios would not exceed 100%.
- **LOS “D”,** by comparison, has conditions that border on being unstable. There is considerable congestion, with restrictions in speeds and maneuverability. Most disruptions cause substantial delays and long lines. Again, some roadways will likely have to function at such poor levels, but planning should strive for better service by means of roadway widening, intersection improvements, etc. V/C ratios would be up to 115%.
- **LOS “E”** is when the roadway is well over capacity. Even minor disruptions cause long lines and substantial delays. Congestion is such that access to the roadway from driveways and minor streets is difficult. These conditions are almost intolerable, and roadway planning attempts to avoid such conditions. V/C ratios would be up to 135%.
- **LOS “F”** represents forced movement of vehicles along a roadway, a breakdown of traffic flow. The congestion is intolerable, with only short spurts of movement. Obviously, this represents roadway failure and is to be avoided. Volumes would be over 135% of capacity.

Obviously, LOS “E” and “F” conditions are very critical, but LOS “D” are serious problem areas in the making. With this primer as background, Map 9 illustrates the level of service results of traffic modeling for 2030. The problem areas identified are a general estimation of conditions, and other factors could make roadway conditions worse or better, including the impacts of building I-73 (to be discussed later). The impact of roadway conditions also depends on what development activity is taking place in the vicinity of congestion. For example, congestion in areas of major commercial or industrial activity may threaten the economic lifeblood of a community, not just cause inconvenience.

It should be noted that several future problem areas are reflected on this graphic as “other” potential congestion. These routes are forecasted to see severe congestion but are assumed to be solved by pending improvements funded by other than State or regional funds. These areas include:

- **SC 51 from the FLATS urban area to Pamplico:** This route is forecast at LOS F, a disastrous situation in the making. However, congestion is to be alleviated by widening planned as part of the Florence County Capital Projects tax.
- **US 378 East of Lake City:** Again, without the proposed improvements by Florence County, the eastern extent of US 378 from East of Lake City into Marion County is forecasted to be over capacity, though not as severe as Pamplico Highway.
With those two important pending solutions being assumed, other key problem areas identified from the traffic models (those routes showing LOS “D”, “E” and “F”) that are not being solved are illustrated on Map 9 and include the following areas or routes, in no priority order:

- **SC 9 from Pageland to West of Chesterfield and West of Pageland**: Portions of this two-lane route are forecast to experience moderate-to-severe congestion over the next 20 years, with the most severe problems on the Pageland end. Important considerations include:
  - Several miles of SC 9 East of Pageland are anticipated to be 160% of capacity by 2030, a serious problem. This road segment is already seeing traffic congestion.
  - Some level of congestion extends through both Ruby and Mt. Croghan.
  - Light to moderate congestion is forecast for SC 9 West of Pageland.
  - It should be remembered that SC 9 is part of the Trans-Carolina Strategic Highway Corridor discussed earlier.
  - No anticipated roadway improvements in the Region are expected to make the forecasted congestion any worse or better than that projected.

- **US 1 corridor North of Wallace**: Moderate congestion is anticipated on this route North of Wallace to the State Line. I–73 may impact this congestion, as discussed later.

- **US 52 Corridor From Dovesville North to US 1 at Cheraw**: Most segments of this regional route are forecasted to see moderate congestion by 2030:
  - Society Hill will likely see the worst congestion, as routes merge at either end of the Town. Of course, this is the most difficult area to improve due to historic preservation considerations and proximity to the Pee Dee River.
  - Overall, this US highway has considerable truck traffic, adding to congestion.
  - All segments of this highway North and South of Society Hill will see congestion. There are considerably more hills and curves along the route than in most other portions of the Region, which also exacerbates congestion.
  - It should be remembered that this route is a major portion of the Pee Dee Strategic Highway Corridor discussed earlier.
  - No anticipated roadway improvements in the Region are expected to make the forecasted congestion any worse or better than that projected.

- **US 52 Into Darlington**: This access to downtown Darlington is forecasted to be heavily overloaded by 2030. No scheduled improvements would alleviate any of the congestion.

- **Various Routes In the Hartsville Vicinity**: Several major access arteries are forecasted to be over-capacity by 2030, including:
  - SC 151 Business, both West and East of downtown leading to SC 151 By-Pass will see considerable more congestion as the community grows.
  - Route 21 Northwest of Prestwood Lake, an area of significant residential growth and an alternate route into rural portions of Chesterfield County, will see volumes between 140% and 200% of capacity, a very serious problem.
  - No anticipated roadway improvements in the Region are expected to make the forecasted congestion any worse or better than that projected.

- **US 1 West of McBee**: By 2030, congestion will be developing on US 1 West of McBee, though it is not forecasted to be severe.

- **Various Routes in the Bennettsville Vicinity**: In addition to downtown Bennettsville, three primary feeder routes for this community are forecast to see congestion by 2030:
  - US 15 West of the By-Pass to at least SC 912 will see some congestion, perhaps extending to Society Hill.
  - SC 38 North of Bennettsville to the State Line will see some congestion, and
  - US 15 East of Bennettsville to McColl will see congestion, with the easternmost segment promising to be the more severe.
  - Some of this forecasted congestion could be affected by the proposed development of I-73, as will be discussed later.
• **Dillon Vicinity:** In addition to SC 9 East from downtown (a short, presumed segment of the Trans-Carolina Strategic Highway Corridor), most congestion is anticipated on US 301 North along with a short segment of SC 9 East of downtown. It should be noted that the proposed development of I-73 could impact lower segments of US 301, as will be discussed later. In addition, the role that SC 34 plays in providing access into Dillon from I-95 makes that segment deserving of long-range attention. That two-lane route is a major access corridor for the business community and social services and government.

• **Marion Vicinity:** A portion of US 76 / US 576 / US 501 South of Marion, currently a four-lane facility, will see varying levels of congestion by 2030, with some segments being 150% of capacity. It should be remembered that this is currently the primary beach access route and the Grand Strand has developed into a year-round destination area that is loading the regional roadway network during all portions of the year, not just the summer months. Although some of this forecasted congestion could be affected by the proposed development of I-73 (to be discussed later), this beach access corridor is also fed by traffic from the West (I-20, etc.), which might not be affected significantly by the new interstate.

• **US 378 From the Pee Dee River Through Marion County:** As noted above, this corridor sees significant year-round beach access traffic. Considerations include:
  o West of the Pee Dee River Bridge, the route is already four-lane or is programmed to be widened by Florence County.
  o The bridge and the first segment of US 378 East (to SC 41) will likely see the most congestion, but the full corridor through Marion County will eventually be a priority route.
  o It should be noted that this is a part of the Mid-Carolinas Strategic Highway Corridor discussed earlier.
  o The proposed continuation of widening along this route through Florence County will probably exacerbate congestion on the remaining two-lane portions of the highway, since a four-lane route from I-95 to the Pee Dee River will likely encourage I-95 traffic from the South and Columbia traffic to continue to use this route. (It should be noted that current traffic modeling did not include the Florence County proposed widening project as an assumed improvement.)

• **US 52 Through Lower Florence County:** South of the FLATS planning jurisdiction, US 52 is four-lane but is forecast to see significantly more congestion by 2030. Selected intersection improvements, turn lanes and shoulder improvements may alleviate some of the problem without need to widen.

• **301 Near Olanta:** One area of isolated congestion is forecast along this rural segment of US 301. There is little explanation for the forecasted congestion other than the overall lack of alternatives to the US 301 bridge crossing and other rural connectivity issues. No anticipated roadway improvements in the Region are expected to make the forecasted congestion any worse or better than that projected.

• **Other Potential Congestion:** As noted earlier, without the proposed widening of SC 51 from the FLATS planning jurisdiction to the Pamplico area and US 378, that route is forecasted to see somewhat severe congestion. In a similar manner, US 378 East of Lake City is forecasted for congestion as well, just not as severe as SC 51. These routes are listed as “Potential” congestion areas since they are not under construction.
**Impacts of I-73 On Traffic Conditions:** Thus far, I-73 has been only briefly mentioned, mostly in the above discussions of future congestion and potential I-73 impacts on congestion. The proposed interstate is illustrated on Map 6 and subsequent maps as a presumed part of the highway network in the Pee Dee. Its overall status in 2008 is a proposed interstate highway whose route has been selected. While interstate planning is a separate process from other roadway planning (especially at the regional perspective), the nature of I-73 and its potential impact on local and regional travel must be addressed here.

Initial planning of the new interstate began in 1991, when Congress established several “high priority” highway corridors in various portions of the country that were considered of national significance. I-73 corridor was envisioned as extending from Detroit, Michigan to Charleston, South Carolina, but that vision was later amended to establish a more specific route through North Carolina, a point of entry into South Carolina and a new highway ending point in South Carolina (SC 22 in Horry County). In 2006 and 2007, considerable progress was made in planning for the new interstate. Critical steps taken and current thinking on the highway are summarized below:

- Detailed corridor planning was completed in record time by SCDOT and a consultant team in partnership with numerous federal, state and other resource agencies involved in the ultimate decision-making process. After considerable “stakeholder” and public review, a recommended alignment and environmental assessments were completed.
- The final alignment ties to Interstate 73/74 in the Rockingham/Hamlet, North Carolina region and runs South across the state line through Marlboro and Dillon Counties to a connection with Interstate 95. The proposed route continues from Interstate 95 and run to State Route 22 (Conway Bypass, or Veteran's Highway) in the Myrtle Beach / Conway area.
- Interchanges have been proposed at seven locations along the new interstate as well as at its crossing of I-95. All of these locations are still tentative, subject to change. Of course, no local access would be provided at the interchange of two interstates, but the interchanges that would have local access include the following (other interchanges are proposed in North Carolina and Horry County):
  - Marlboro County Interchanges:
    - SC 79 above Bennettsville, the first interchange in South Carolina;
    - US 15 / 401 East of Bennettsville;
    - SC 381 in mid Marlboro County;
  - Dillon County Interchanges:
    - SC 34, just North of I-95;
    - US 501 at Latta;
  - Marion County Interchanges:
    - SC 41 Alt between Marion and Lake View;
    - US 76 at Mullins
- A Record of Decision was signed in February, 2008, representing final approval of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and completing the environmental review process.
- Environmental field work continues (delineating wetlands, etc.) and ROW acquisition has been authorized, possibly beginning in late 2008.
- Cost estimates for I-73 in South Carolina are variously estimated at several billion dollars, with estimates highly dependent on oil prices and other variables.
- Funding for the highway is unsure, as is the schedule. Currently, neither federal nor State funds are available for completion of design or construction. The SC Legislature is now on record as supporting the tolling of much of the new interstate and highway planners believe the interstate could be constructed in as little as ten years after funding is identified. Some efforts are underway to identify private-sector partners and approaches to the tolling of the facility.
- Finally, priorities may dictate a phased implementation of the interstate. It is presumed that the most critical traffic segment is from I-95 to the coast.
With the above assumptions in mind regarding I-73, prudent regional highway planning needs to consider the potential impacts of this new roadway since the route could have positive and negative impacts on future traffic volumes for many routes in the region, especially those that lead to proposed interchanges.

The following general conclusions have been drawn from traffic demand assessments conducted during the I-73 corridor studies. These impacts are intended to illustrate broad judgments of impacts on future traffic volumes if the interstate is built, but without any assumption as to whether it is a toll facility.

SC 9 Corridor: Forecasted traffic volumes should slightly lower from the Pee Dee River @ Cheraw to East of Dillon. It should be noted that the new interstate would not have an interchange with SC 9. There would be very limited or no impact on future traffic volumes on the western end of SC 9 near Pageland, currently a busy two-lane route and a route forecasted to become quite congested.

SC 38 Corridor: The SC 38 corridor parallels the new interstate; thus, forecasted traffic volumes are significantly lower for the entire length of this four-lane highway, with the most substantial impacts at the North Carolina state line and South of Bennettsville. North of Bennettsville, traffic congestion along SC 38 would become less problematic with the development of the Interstate, as some of the beach traffic would use both I-73 and I-74 in North Carolina. Since SC 38 is already four-lane, it would likely still serve resident needs and could become an industrial corridor. If the new interstate is built as a toll facility, traffic on SC 38 would likely still be lower, but not as dramatically.

US 1 Corridor: Forecasted traffic volumes could be somewhat lower for this corridor, but the route is somewhat removed from the interstate corridor. If the interstate is tolled, forecasted traffic would likely still be with the only significant impacts in the route North of Wallace to the State line, where volumes would likely be substantially lower. Apparently, the existence of I-73 in North Carolina would divert traffic from US 1 coming into South Carolina.

US 52 Corridor: Forecasted traffic volumes in the US 52 corridor would not likely be significantly impacted except North of Cheraw, where they would be slightly less if the interstate is built. The industrial corridor just North of Darlington to Dovesville and the County Airport would likely still be accessed from I-95 and would not see much traffic relief from development of I-73, but northern segments could see some bleed-off of traffic to SC 9 and I-73. No impacts are likely South of Florence along US 52, as I-73 would not directly access Charleston or the ports.

US 15 / 401 Corridor: Forecasted traffic volumes are somewhat lower for the western portion of the corridor, but somewhat higher for that portion East of Bennettsville. Increased traffic volumes East of Bennettsville are due to the interchange location with I-73. Minor congestion West of Bennettsville would not be reduced considerably.

US 76 (East) Corridor: Between Nichols and Marion, forecasted traffic volumes in this corridor with the new interstate are somewhat greater due to interstate access at US 76.
Conclusions Regarding Long-Range Highway Needs:

As can be seen in the preceding discussions, there are a number of routes within the Region that are forecasted to become more congested or are otherwise critically important because of their status as a regional or statewide corridor of significance. The needs in these corridors or along other more limited routes are summarized as follows and are illustrated in Map 10. In essence, these routes include:

- the existing four-lane highway network (including assumed regional and Florence County projects),
- definitive four-lane needs, and
- other routes or corridors needing more limited improvements to increase capacity and safety.

The following improvements form the long-range highway needs of the Region. As will be noted later, the timing of current STIP commitments and further assessments needed of I-73 issues and overall transportation funding availability suggests delay in prioritizing these roadways.

1. **US 378 (Mid-Carolina Corridor):** This statewide corridor encompasses US 378 for its entire length through the Region. The critical importance of this route is as a beach route, as a hurricane evacuation route, and as a truck route. The western portion of this corridor is four-lane, but the eastern extent (from Lake City across the Pee Dee River and through Marion County) is critical enough to warrant four-lane improvements.

2. **SC 9, SC 38 & US 501 (Trans-Carolina Corridor):** This statewide corridor runs on SC 9, SC 38 and US 501 through the Pee Dee. It’s critical importance is as a beach access route, as a hurricane evacuation route, and as a truck route. The eastern portion of this corridor from Chesterfield to Marion and further to the Beach is four-lane, but portions of both the two-lane and four-lane sections need improvement:

   a. The western portion from Chesterfield to Pageland is a critical regional route and is forecasted to have severe congestion by 2030. This segment warrants four-lane improvement.
   b. West of Pageland, forecasts indicate increased congestion on SC 9 but not likely requiring widening. However, there is at least some need for selective traffic operations and capacity improvements at the intersection with US 601 West.
   c. US 501 (and SC 576 around Marion) is the major beach access route and are forecast to have more severe congestion problems by 2030. At a minimum, at least some selective traffic operations and capacity improvements are needed, perhaps even selective widening.

3. **US 52 (Pee Dee Corridor):** This statewide corridor follows US 52 from the North Carolina line through the Region to Charleston. Its critical importance is as a major truck route, as a route for port access, and partially as a beach route. The southern portion of this corridor is currently four-lane and a segment just above Darlington is scheduled for widening. Portions of this corridor need improvement, including:

   a. Most of the corridor above Dovesville will see at least moderate congestion by 2030. Widening of the route from Dovesville to Cheraw might prove to be difficult because of historic preservation issues at Society Hill and other environmental issues, and long-term impacts of I-73 could alleviate some forecasted congestion. Nonetheless, there is at least some need for selective traffic operations and capacity improvements in this corridor, including intersection improvements and perhaps even selected passing lanes.
   b. South of the Florence urban area, forecasted congestion along four-lane US 52 will require at least selective traffic operations and capacity improvements, including intersection improvements, shoulders and similar improvements.

4. **SC 9 Corridor (East of Bennettsville):** Although this portion of SC 9 is not a part of the statewide Trans-Carolina Corridor, it remains an important regional link and has historically been an alternate beach route. Especially with the proposed construction of I-73, this eastern extent of SC 9 is not currently forecasted to become overly congested. However, there is some need for selective traffic operations and capacity improvements in this corridor at key intersections.
5. **US 76 Corridor**: This East-West Corridor through the Region is mostly four-lane and is an important beach route and urban corridor serving the Florence urban area. Both the western- and eastern-most portions of this corridor need improvements, as follows:
   a. From Timmonsville westward, there is need for at least selective traffic operations and capacity improvements, including intersection improvements and perhaps even selected passing lanes.
   b. East of Mullins, similar improvements, or even widening, are needed when I-73 is developed.
   c. At Marion, intersection improvements may be needed in a portion of the corridor that will be seeing increased congestion. Depending on future traffic analysis, other portions of US 76 in Marion County may need similar traffic operations and capacity improvements.

6. **SC 151 Corridor**: This regional corridor is currently four-lanes and is a critical connection between Charlotte and the Florence urban area and points East and South. Although this corridor is not forecast for future capacity problems, there may be some need for improvements at selected intersections.

7. **US 15 / 401 Corridor**: This regional corridor is two lanes but serves several major urban areas. Segments of this corridor are forecasted to have moderate congestion by 2030, with improvements needed:
   a. At selected intersection locations along this route from Lee County to Bennettsville, there is at least some need for traffic operations and capacity improvements. Key intersections should have priority, based on accident data and other factors.
   b. East of Bennettsville, the route is anticipated to have additional congestion and likely needs widening from Bennettsville to McColl and the state line due to the proposed I-73 interchange.

**Other Routes With Needs**: In addition to the above regional and statewide corridors in need of improvement, other areas have been identified because of forecasted congestion, including the following:
   a. **US 1 North of Wallace** to the state line shows evidence of increased congestion but will not likely require more than minimal traffic operations improvements.
   b. **SC 38 North of Bennettsville** is forecasted to become more congested, but the development of I-73 should keep the route from becoming a major problem. However, even with I-73, there is at least some need for selective traffic operations and capacity improvements at intersections.
   c. **US 301 North of Dillon** is expected to have moderate-to-heavy congestion by 2030. At a minimum, selective traffic operations and capacity improvements will be needed along this route, or even widening to four lanes.
   d. **SC 34 into Dillon** from I-95 is a major gateway into the community and community activity centers; thus, it is likely to become increasingly congested and should be considered for widening to four lanes.
   e. **SC 151 (Bus.) through Hartsville**, both West and East of downtown leading to SC 151 By-Pass, will see considerably more congestion as the community grows. At a minimum, selective traffic operations and capacity improvements will be needed along both routes, or even widening to four lanes for the eastern route from SC 151 to US 15 By-Pass.
   f. **Route 21 Northwest of Hartsville** is expected to see severe congestion by 2030, with at least traffic operations and capacity improvements needed. Widening for a portion of the route may be needed although ROW will make this difficult.
   g. **US 52 Business** into Darlington is forecasted to become critically congested as downtown is redeveloped and other development occurs. These problems may also extend to the US 52 By-Pass. Both routes will likely need at least some selective traffic operations and capacity improvements at intersections, or similar improvements.
   h. **US 401 from I-20 to Darlington**, though not forecasted to see additional congestion, is a major access route to Darlington from I-20. To assist with maintaining safe and efficient traffic flow on this route, some selective traffic operations and capacity improvements at intersections along the route would be wise.
Differences With Prior Plans:

It should be noted that this plan varies significantly from prior long-range needs and plans in several important ways:

- **The highway needs identified are different:**
  - The current listing of regional needs still emphasizes improving regional (and now statewide) corridors rather than just small road segments. However, fewer corridors are suggested for widening due to new traffic modeling results that include the new I-73, as well as alternative improvement solutions that are suggested. The proposed construction of I-73 and the location of interchanges have the potential to alter traffic patterns in the Region and thus reduce or increase future congestion on certain routes. Some corridors historically thought to deserve major widening may be at least partially eclipsed by the new interstate and its ability to attract the traveling public and reduce expected congestion on some local and regional routes. Although these routes could still be important feeder routes for the Grand Strand or otherwise be key regional travel corridors for local residents, through traffic might use the new interstate, thus freeing up capacity and reducing widening needs. Further study is required of these impacts, as only preliminary information is available at this writing. The toll status of the new interstate could make a significant difference as well, as could the phasing of construction.
  - Secondly, there is increasing emphasis on environmental issues and community planning. Some routes that have historically been targeted for widening are now thought to face significant environmental obstacles and/or community opposition. The Region’s environmental and community resources are critically important to the quality of life in these six counties; thus, greater sensitivity to these issues has suggested alternate solutions to several corridors (such as US 52).

- **The suggested solutions:** The potential project needs previously highlighted include numerous instances where traffic operational improvements are suggested as a means of increasing traffic capacity and safety along routes that are expected to see modest congestion levels in the planning period. This may not preclude the ultimate widening of some routes, but as has been seen in recent years, much can change (new interstates, fuel prices, travel pattern changes, etc.). Among suggestions are turn lanes at key intersections, limited signalization and other intersection improvements and even paved shoulders on a few of the busiest corridors. These improvements could delay or eliminate costly widening projects while providing a reasonable level of traffic relief and increased safety.

- **The ability of the Region to address the needs:** Current and forecasted funding limitations (to be discussed below) affect what is possible without the wholesale infusion of significant new resources, which have thus far not materialized. That is the primary reason some solutions are proposed... more cost-effective solutions to modest traffic congestion rather than more complete solutions.

Finally, although the previous list of needs has not been rated and ranked in priority order because of short- and min-term funding constraints, the fact is that evaluation criteria for road improvements have changed. Proposed roadway improvement criteria are also discussed below and will be the basis for more detailed rating and ranking discussions as funding resources permit the consideration of new construction projects.

Regional Highway Funding:

Currently, highway funding at the regional, State and federal level is unpredictable and somewhat dismal. The funding picture is clouded by the following issues:

1. **Regional Funding:** Currently, the six-county Pee Dee is allocated $7.8 million per year as its share of rural highway funds in South Carolina, which includes federal funds and State matching monies. These are called “Guideshare” funds. This allocation is based on regional population and growth, with the possibility that vehicle miles traveled (VMT) on regional roads could be a part of the allocation formula in the future. In any event, funds allocated to the region in the foreseeable future are not expected to increase dramatically. Complicating the regional funding picture, the Region has participated in the statewide bonding initiative. As noted earlier, this
accelerated several priority projects, but also has limited the monies available for additional construction. Debt service averages $2.3 million per year until paid out in 2022. Thus, until 2022, the Region has only $5.5 million available each year.

2. **Federal Funding Dilemmas:** A large portion of highway funding available in South Carolina comes from federal funds derived from federal gasoline taxes and the federal Highway Trust Fund. The Trust Fund has been depleted over the years, with a resulting funds crisis in the making. At this writing, no solution to federal transportation funding is a surety.

3. **State Funding Dilemmas:** Even with stable federal funding, State funds must match those federal dollars. Depending on the State budget, that is sometimes difficult. The attending problem is State funding priorities. With a large highway system and limited funds over the years, South Carolina has a critical number of maintenance needs, including bridges. From a safety standpoint, State priorities may favor these maintenance and bridge needs instead of increasing funds for highway widening and other such improvements.

4. **Increasing Costs:** Quite simply, highway costs have risen at seven percent or greater per year in the past decade, and more in recent months due to oil prices. The vagaries of oil prices have cast a shadow over future highway construction pricing.

5. **Local Option Funding Possibilities:** There are few possibilities for funding State and regional road improvements other than the "Guideshare" funds discussed above. One of the few options for significant monies to address highway needs are the local option sales tax funds being used by Florence County and several other communities across the State. Such local initiatives can meet a portion of the highway needs in specific jurisdictions, but require imposition of a local tax by means of a referendum.

The above funding considerations suggest that funding the identified roadway improvement needs will be extremely difficult. Current SCDOT policy prohibits start of future projects until all funding is in place, and policy also dictates projects cannot be programmed in the STIP unless there is a programmatic and financial game plan for completing the project within six years. These policies will likely dictate some of the corridor improvements identified earlier will need to be completed as smaller projects in a logical progression.

### Roadway Priorities for the Short- and Long-Term

For purposes of the coming 2007 – 2012 STIP, the short-range transportation planning period, current projects already programmed will require anticipated funds. Regional "Guideshare" Projects in the current STIP include the following improvements to be funded from regional "Guideshare" allocations:

1. **SC 9 By-Pass - Widening of Cottingham Blvd. around Bennettsville from US 15 Business Northward to SC intersection.**
2. **SC 41 at Kingsburg – Widening of SC 41 from the widened bridges over the Lynches River northward to the US 378 intersection at Kingsburg.**
3. **US 52 – Widening of approximately five miles from the Darlington By-Pass northward to Dovesville.**

Each of these projects is programmed in the current STIP, with construction anticipated during the STIP period for the first two and completion of ROW acquisition for the third. Considering estimated cost increases, funds for construction of the third project, US 52 widening, may not be fully available until after the STIP period, perhaps 2015.

Beyond these three projects, the only priorities set for the Region are those tentative priorities established in 1998, including the remaining portions of the US 52 corridor. Much has changed since those tentative priorities were set, including the anticipated completion of several key routes in Florence County (SC 51 and US 378), new traffic forecasts for 2030, and more clarity regarding the pending construction of I-73 and its impacts on road congestion in the Region. Of course, the aforementioned funding situation in the Region is also a constraining factor regarding priorities as well.

### Future Roadway Rating and Ranking

It is anticipated that the next Long-Range Plan will involve a full rating and ranking of highways, as US 52 construction will be programmed. Since the above three projects are all the projects whose funding is anticipated in the immediate future, a late-2007 analysis of statewide priorities undertaken by SCDOT and the Pee Dee COG viewed ONLY a financially-constrained list of
projects using a new set of evaluation criteria that will be used for future regional and statewide assessment of roadway projects. It is presumed that the newly-established criteria could be adjusted in the future, but the evaluation criteria and rating system described below has been established by the Pee Dee COG and approved by SCDOT. It should be noted that the Pee Dee agreed with the basic approach and overall criterion recommended by SCDOT for project prioritization, but added emphasis to several issues, including:

- **Regional “Connectivity” issues**… Emphasis added for extending, completing or filling gaps in a four-lane highway corridor system so as to enhance travel between economic centers.
- **Emergency evacuation routes**… Coastal hurricane and nuclear station evacuation is an important consideration in this region.
- **Tourism access and development routes**… Although the region is not a significant destination area, it is part of the “funnel” for tourists to the coast.
- **Local assessment of project impacts on existing industrial or other economic development sites**… A local view of economic impacts to supplement the valuable statewide view provided by the SC Department of Commerce in the rating system.
- **Forecasted V/C ratios**… In addition to the assessment of current congestion, an indicator of anticipated congestion and impacts (or lack thereof) of highway projects has been included.
- **Environmental impacts in a different perspective**… For a regional project evaluation system, the Region will use a streamlined environmental scan to evaluate ALL regional projects at a preliminary level, not just the few projects that are determined most critical.

### TRANSPORTATION WIDENING PROJECT RATING AND RANKING CRITERIA

**Pee Dee Region - August, 2007**

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<td>Truck Traffic</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>• % Truck Traffic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pavement Quality Index</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>• Current pavement condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Impact</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>• Overall environmental conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connectivity</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>• Up to 10 pts if impr. fills gap or ext. of 4-lane net</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transit Potential</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>• No score… Basically, Yes or No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency With Local Land Use Plans</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>• No score… Yes or No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Pts:</strong></td>
<td>110</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

That rating process at the State level of the STIP-constrained projects gauged SC 9 segments as the most highly rated in the Region. The current STIP program has not been adjusted because the projects set for ROW and construction are too far advanced.
Public Transit:

As in most rural areas of the country, public transit service in the Pee Dee is a complex business/service. Public attitudes, rural road conditions, low population densities, low incomes and other factors complicate the provision of such services in predominantly rural areas such as the Pee Dee. Although virtually every resident of the Region drives or rides over roadways, only a very small portion use transit services of any type. To put the ensuing discussion of transit in perspective, a few broad comments are appropriate regarding the above-mentioned complications of providing such services:

- **Public perceptions of transit:** Transit service is often perceived as a “poor people” service; as such, it is avoided by a large portion of the population. It will therefore be difficult to broaden ridership and increase general public support (and funding) unless such attitudes are changed.

- **Population density:** Low population densities in rural areas and the distances between activity centers complicate the delivery of services. As noted elsewhere, large public land holdings in Chesterfield County exacerbate the problem even further.

- **Destination Areas:** In the Pee Dee Region and in the Grand Strand, there are activity generators (mostly job destinations) that produce concentrations of transit need. That is, at least one end of a trip is concentrated enough that public transit may be attractive, such as the transportation of service workers from scattered locations to hotels at the Beach. The difficulty then becomes establishing feasible routes and scheduling service such that the trip is acceptable to the workers. It is not simple. There are such job concentrations in Florence as well, including the two major hospital systems.

- **Economic distress:** The Pee Dee, in particular, is a poor Region by any standard. Low per capita incomes, persistently high unemployment rates, lower auto ownership rates and other distress characterize the Region; these factors create a greater than average need for transit.

- **Funding:** Since transit is used by a relatively small portion of the population, federal, state and especially local funding is very limited. This limits the level of service that can be provided. The “fare box” of transit systems covers only a small portion of operating costs for transit services, even on heavily-traveled routes. Rural transit fare box performance is even more dismal.

With this background, the following commentary is offered on public transit providers and services in the Pee Dee Region.

Types of Service:

In the following discussions, two broad types of service will be referenced on a routine basis, including “fixed-route” transit and “demand-responsive” service. While variations on these two basic types of service exist, they constitute the vast majority of public transit service in the State; as such, it is helpful to define these terms:

**Fixed-Route Service:** This is public transit in which revenue-generating vehicles follow a set schedule over a designated route. In general:
- The schedule and route are normally illustrated in a timetable and/or Map that are distributed to the general public.
- The schedule is “fixed”, but may vary by day of the week.
- The general public has access to the vehicles at scheduled stops, either for a fare or on a free basis.

**Demand-Responsive Service:** This is a transit service provided based on a pre-arrangement or an agreement between a passenger (or group of passengers or an agency representing passengers) and a transportation provider for those needing “door-to-door” transportation. In general:
- The pre-arranged service is for transportation between a specific origin and destination at a specified time. (Service is usually door-to-door or curb-to-curb to specific destinations, not to general pickup points.)
- The pre-arrangement may be scheduled well in advance or, if available, on short notice.
- The pre-arrangement may be for a single trip or for repetitive trips over an extended period (called “subscription service”). In the latter case, individuals are not usually required to call in.
Drivers often travel the same general routes each day in the provision of service. Based on the types of clients being transported and the ownership of the vehicle, demand-responsive service can be offered to the general public or only to agency clients.

Transit Providers and Services:

The Pee Dee is served by four basic categories of public transit:

- The Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority (PDRTA) operates fixed-route and demand-responsive para-transit service in the six Pee Dee counties and several outlying counties as well as provides commuter service to several other destinations (the Grand Strand, for example).
- Social-service and other organizations operate para-transit service by means of vans or buses… essentially as one of their services for their client groups.
- Greyhound Bus Lines provides limited commercial inter-city bus service along several routes in the Region.
- Taxis, which meet predominantly local transit needs.

Of course, a number of commercial companies offer charter bus service. However, these specialized transit services are not a part of the day-to-day transit operations that serve the general needs of Pee Dee residents.

Social-service providers: Residents of the Region are served by a myriad of state and local agencies and organizations that provide specialized and on-call transit services for their special client groups. Among these special client groups are the elderly, persons with disabilities and special needs, etc. These agencies and organizations are too numerous to mention, but consist of the following types:

- Councils on Aging, State DSS, Disabilities and Special Needs, Community Action Agencies and other specialized organizations are prime examples of the social service entities which provide transportation as an ancillary service, not their primary mission.
- Of course, the largest transit provider in the Region is the public school system, which operates a wholly autonomous system of buses and vans. (School transportation will not be discussed here, even though some efforts to coordinate school bus and public transit needs have been initiated in the Region.)

The PDRTA also services social-service clients with its demand-responsive and fixed-route system.

Commercial bus service – Greyhound: Greyhound operates a commercial bus system that serves portions of the Region with fixed routes and limited stops. Bus terminals or limited bus stops are located in the following locations only: Dillon, Florence, Lake City, Marion, Society Hill and Scranton.

Taxi service: Of course, local taxi service operates in larger communities and is almost exclusively a demand-responsive service. Of the transit alternatives available, it is the most costly.

Pee Dee RTA: As noted above, the Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority is the largest transit provider in the Region and is the largest rural system in the State. It provides fixed-route city buses, commuting routes and curb-to-curb, demand-responsive service in the six counties and beyond. PDRTA can accommodate the daily travel needs of almost any resident to virtually any destination in the Region through these regular and contracted services; however, fixed routes are limited and demand-responsive service is often cost-prohibitive unless provided through state and federal transit programs.

Fixed-route and commuting transit routes are a means of moving clients in high-volume corridors or between high-demand destinations at a lower cost than possible through a demand-response system. The success of scheduled routes depends on consistent ridership, which often takes some time to build; thus, these routes change from time-to-time. PDRTA fixed routes include in-town routes or local “trolley” service in selected communities, inter-city routes within the Region, and specialty commuting routes to employers along the Grand Strand. In some cases, routes serve both in-town and inter-city needs, and some are just commuter routes, not day-long service.
Ideally, most communities should have transit service, but there are voids. Major service voids in fixed-route transit service include:

- Chesterfield County: – no local access, either to SC 9 communities or to Hartsville.
  -- no regional connections for any of the County.
- Most of Marlboro County: – no local access to Bennettsville.
  -- no regional connections for any of the County.
- Rural Florence County: -- no local access to Florence or Lake City
  -- no regional connections.
- Darlington County: -- Lamar and Society Hill have no local access and no regional connections.
- Marion County: -- Lower County (Centenary & Brittons Neck)
  -- no regional accessibility.

The above deficiencies are significant voids in transit service that affect several hundred thousand Pee Dee residents. Some of these areas have had at least partial service in the past, but the service was evidently not cost-effective or the service was in-effective. In contrast to the limited coverage of fixed-route and commuter service, PDRTA’s demand-responsive system can serve virtually any trip need of residents. The trade-off, of course, is cost. Longer trips that are not on a PDRTA fixed route are routinely provided, but are at a far greater cost than commuter routes, for example.

**Transit Services Coordination**

A major emphasis has been placed on regional transit coordination in recent years... providing services in a more efficient and cooperative manner. In that regard, two statewide transit planning efforts have been undertaken in 2007, dealing with transit service planning and public transit coordination. The first is addressed as part of the upcoming State Multi-Modal Transportation Plan and the second is addressed in a series of regional transit coordination plans. The second will be summarized here.

In 2006 and 2007, consultants working with the Pee Dee COG and SCDOT developed a series of regional transit coordination plans that supplement past transit planning efforts in the Region. In the Pee Dee Region, the consulting team of TranSystems / URS and in partnership with the Pee Dee COG and interested stakeholders met these federal requirements through the Coordinated Plan. The Plan addressed available transit services, transit funding restrictions, gaps in transit service, short- and long-range strategies to eliminate such gaps (including mobility management strategies), technological resources available for coordination, and overall implementation strategies.

This regional coordination plan also benefits from a parallel statewide planning effort undertaken by SCDOT. The statewide transportation plan’s transit element involves a significant public outreach, including key stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and general public attitudinal surveys. In addition, socio-economic and demographic data as well as provider statistics were compiled. These results will also be briefly summarized here. The final coordination plan is available from the COG.

**Funding Barriers to Coordination** - There has been considerable discussion over the years among federal and state agencies as well as transit providers regarding the extent to which federal agencies inhibit coordination. Included in this discussion has been key transportation funding programs and associated regulations that could affect coordinated transit. The general conclusion is that these programs do not restrict coordination through regulations; however, there are practical issues that make coordination challenging. Relevant conclusions on this issue include:

- **Regulatory Issues**: Several issues related to regulatory constraints on services delivery were examined:
  - A 2003 US GAO study on federal transportation funding and coordination reported 62 federal programs that fund transportation, including Transitional Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Vocational Rehab, Medicaid, Head Start, Older Americans Act, various programs of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), and various US DOT programs (Capital Grants, Area Formula Programs, Job Access and Reverse Commute, Over-the-Road Bus Program and Transportation for Elderly and Persons with Disabilities).
• Since the study, the “New Freedom Program” was initiated as well. It should be pointed out that some of these programs are targeted to specific populations while others (such as many of the USDOT programs) are open to the general public. Those programs that are intended for specific populations must only serve those populations. As can be surmised, mixing trips with various population groups and various funding sources with various restrictions can be intimidating.

• In 2004, a federal coordination initiative was undertaken that directed Federal agencies funding human services transportation services to undertake efforts to reduce transportation service duplication, increase efficient transportation delivery, and expand transportation access for seniors, persons with disabilities, children, low-income persons and others. This order reinforced the principle that federal programs do not prohibit coordination and the sharing of resources by regulatory means.

• While funds at the federal level would appear to offer no regulatory barriers to coordination, the administration of those funds at the state and local levels were also reviewed to determine if those entities created any barriers to coordination. Overall, none of the non-DOT transportation programs, as administered, imposed any restrictions that would prevent coordination. However, because each program has an intended targeted population, transportation services provided under the given program must honor the regulatory intent. While this presents a challenge, it does not, per se, prohibit coordination.

Non-Regulatory Issues - While regulatory factors do not prevent different social programs from sharing resources, there are practical, service delivery issues as well as administrative considerations that can make coordination challenging:

• Service delivery related issues include special requirements imposed by certain funding streams that are unique and not common to other funding streams, including on-vehicle monitors, safety restraints and similar measures, requirements that are not typical (and perhaps not tolerable or too expensive) for riders from the general public.

• Administrative-related issues refer to the documentation of the use of a funding stream’s dollars. A service provider who transports the general public as well as special population groups such as a Medicaid traveler would need to document the incremental cost of the trip so a funding source knows it is paying for only its share of the service. While a cost allocation formula can overcome this, this still presents an administrative hurdle in providing shared services.

Conclusion - Solely on a regulatory basis, federal transportation funding does not, per se, prohibit or restrict coordination. However, some programs present service delivery and administrative issues that require creative thinking and tenacity to overcome practical and programmatic challenges to sharing resources.

Transit-Related Demographic Issues In earlier demographic discussions of the Region, population growth and distribution as well as density issues were reviewed in some detail, as they affect both highway and transit needs of the Region. Several other characteristics of the population affect the provision of transit services in particular, reiterated briefly here:

• The Elderly: Persons age 65 years and comprise 12.1 percent of South Carolina’s population, with the Pee Dee just slightly lower. The elderly are a significant and sometimes more transit dependent segment of the population.

• The Disabled: According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 810,857 persons age five and over were identified with a disability in South Carolina, representing approximately 22.2 percent of total population in this cohort. The greatest proportion of persons identified with a disability is found in persons age 65 and over, 48.5 percent in 2000. The Pee Dee region had a greater proportion of disabilities than statewide, nearly 77,000 persons. By far the largest number of disabled was in Florence County. Clearly, the disabled are a needy segment and are sometimes transit dependent.

• The Poor: Poverty areas were discussed briefly in the earlier demographic profile of the Region, but it is important to again point out that approximately 22 percent of Pee Dee residents are living in poverty, higher than the State. Poverty-level families have far less access to autos and are thus much more transit dependent.
**Public Transit Services In The Pee Dee:** The Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority (PDRTA) is the lone public transit provider in the region, serving the entire six-county Pee Dee region and a small portion of Lee County. PDRTA provides a limited fixed route service in the Florence urbanized area, and a substantial number of commuter-oriented routes within the region as well as routes connecting points in the region to employment opportunities in Myrtle Beach. PDRTA also offers demand response services through contractual arrangements with a number of human service agencies in the region.

An assessment of PDRTA operations indicates the following:

- PDRTA had 79 vehicles actively providing service in FY 2005, about half the 170 vehicles in 2002. Fleet size shrank in both fixed-route and demand-responsive service.
- Operating expenses have remained approximately the same in recent years, at about $5.4 million.
- Transit ridership has in recent years despite the reduction in hours and miles of service provided, indicating that PDRTA is making better use of its fleet and increasing the efficiency of its existing services. Data indicate that fixed route service declined over the period and that the overall growth of the system occurred primarily in the rural areas on demand response and other service vehicles.
- PDRTA’s productivity has fluctuated significantly over the past four years. Data suggest that demand response services are very efficient. Operating cost per vehicle hour has increased, likely due to fuel prices and longer vehicle trips.

**Identified Transportation Coordination Issues:** In surveys and discussions resulting from regional meetings, several issues were raised by transit providers, including:

- The full inventory of vehicles in the region among all the agencies and PDRTA exceeds 250, but many vehicles have high mileage or are in poor condition.
- The region is comprised of relatively large counties with expansive rural areas that are very difficult to serve, whether by RTA or the social service agencies.
- PDRTA currently hold contracts with a number of human service agencies, including some services outside of the Pee Dee region. Many agencies currently operating transportation expressed the desire to contract their services to RTA or others IF the cost was reasonable.
- When asked about coordination among providers, most saw the following benefits as representing the greatest opportunities:
  - Using staff more efficiently
  - Serving a larger geographic area and more patrons
  - Scheduling rides
  - Assisting with maintenance
  - Coordinating different types of service
- Use of technology was relatively limited in the Pee Dee except for PDRTA, but represented an opportunity.
- Wait times for social service patrons were deemed a significant problem, especially with contracted service. In addition, late afternoon and return trips seems difficult to schedule and/or are unreliable.
- Rural areas are generally under-served, particularly Chesterfield, Dillon, Marion and Marlboro Counties.
- The addition of weekend and evening service by PDRTA was identified as a significant need to help alleviate pressure on social service vehicle fleets.
- Special needs populations such as the poor and elderly were considered underserved, especially for basic needs (rather than medical trips).
- DSNs were especially concerned about access to employment for clients after training.
- There is need for vehicle replacement
- Jacob’s Law creates a service gap due to vehicle capabilities.
- Agency waiting lists for new clients are often due to transportation access issues.
- Mixing of clients from different programs for transportation on the same vehicles is a problem due to safety concerns, program confidentiality, and potential conflicts between passengers.
- There is difficulty in retaining qualified drivers, with pay differences also a problem.
Opportunities to Coordinate: Many opportunities for coordination were identified across the State and discussed in the Pee Dee meetings, including but not limited to:

- Conduct planning studies in the region to determine where the demand is for transportation services and level of support for expansions/improvements.
- Obtaining information on available transportation capacity. Some mention of setting up something similar to a 211 phone number.
- Mobility manager who can be a clearinghouse for centralized information availability as well as scheduling and dispatching of services in an identified area.
- General marketing to the riding public about services.
- Regional vehicle maintenance to share that expense.
- Coordinated driver training and common standards for driver training and qualifications as well as for maintenance and insurance coverage.
- Establishment of a uniform fare structure for non-program riders.
- Insurance pooling programs.
- Development of cost allocation formulae to encourage cooperation and coordination among transportation providers.
- Use of real-time scheduling among operators in an area to utilize available capacity, especially for return trips which tend to be on an "on-call" basis.
- Continuation and expansion of statewide vehicle leasing and fuel program.
- Take advantage of new matching regulations by pooling the funding from multiple federal programs to enhance services.

At a regional meeting in April, 2007, coordination strategies were identified that could address the most pressing goals in the Region:

- More service (more days, hours, geography
- Centralized scheduling
- Regional application for §5309 funds
- Insurance coverage
- Exploration of the mobility manager concept
- Address cost allocation among operators

Recommended Actions: With the preceding needs and opportunities in mind, specific coordination strategies were identified for the Pee Dee, separated into:

- **Administrative strategies** intended to reduce procedural and similar paper barriers (both perceived and actual) that inhibit coordination
- **Information sharing/capacity management strategies** to facilitate the sharing of resources (such as vehicles)
- **Future operations planning**, which targets emerging needs which creates efficiencies by better resource sharing.

Administrative Actions: There are three action items to address coordination issues:

1. Raise public awareness of service through marketing programs.
2. Voucher programs and other fare subsidies to accommodate clients during difficult times of day to provide reliable service.
3. Take advantage of opportunities to pool expenses among agencies, such as fuel, insurance, vehicle maintenance, driver training and drug testing and employee insurance.

Information and Capacity Management Actions: Three action items are recommended:

1. Establishing a real-time schedule sharing system to help organize on-call return trips (identifying the closest vehicle among agencies to provide a trip). This would promote the pooling of trips within households by scheduling trips to services for some individuals at the same time work trips are scheduled.
2. Establish a mobility manager and one stop call center that provides informed answers to client’s questions conveniently and efficiently. SCDOT will be exploring this possibility. The real-time scheduling could allow entities to better share resources by attempting to create an information resource where providers will know what each has available in the way of capacity.

3. Launch a vehicle sharing program among organizations. Several of the agencies cited down time for their fleets as a problem.

**Future Operations Planning Actions:** Action items recommended include:

1. A regional, coordinated application for Section 5309 funds.
2. The introduction of general public demand responsive services into new areas on a limited basis until demand warrants increased services.
3. Improved wages for drivers to help with retention.
4. Continue State contract and leasing programs for vehicles.
5. Increase local funding support of transit.
6. Identify activity centers that need services, including key areas needing service.
7. Expand PDRTA into rural areas and partner with other stakeholders such as faith-based entities, neighborhoods and social service organizations.

In addition to the preceding issues and action strategies, the regional plan has recommendations for establishing working groups in the Region, the development of transit projects and criteria for evaluating transit proposals. Those are not reviewed here but are contained in the full plan.
Air Facilities

It should be noted that air facility planning, including expansion needs at various facilities, is a local and State responsibility, with master plans approved by State and federal agencies and governed by FAA guidelines. Thus, this plan will focus only on an inventory of facilities.

Commercial Aviation: The Florence Regional Airport serves the Region from a facility located on the eastern edge of Florence. The facility is one of six commercial airports in the State and has:
- Two runways: 6500’ x 150’; 6000’ x 150’
- Facilities: Air traffic control tower; Precision Instrument Approach; Approach Lighting; High intensity runway lighting; Tie down and hangar storage.
- Services: Jet fuel; Major and minor repair facilities; Charter service; Aircraft rental; Instruction

Two commercial air carriers serve the airport, each with multiple flights from the facility and direct connections to Atlanta and Charlotte. Residents also use Charlotte, Columbia, Charleston and Myrtle Beach for their air needs. Enplanements at Florence have grown steadily over the past decade, but not nearly at the rate of major airports in the State. With the completion of the planned US 301 By-Pass, the airport now has even better highway access. An ongoing consultant study of regional air facilities is analyzing the feasibility of a new commercial facility in eastern South Carolina, but no conclusions have yet been reached.

General Aviation Facilities: The eight general aviation airports (among 53 in the State) are summarized in the accompanying table and illustrated in Map 11 along with dirt strips. Each facility has a fixed base operator but the airports offer somewhat different levels of service. Runway length varies, with all but Darlington County having just one runway. Each of these facilities provides essential service to local flying enthusiasts as well as some corporate aircraft. Not all facilities are suitable for corporate use, but most are used by at least some business aircraft. The airports serve their community well. Some are able to make improvements using State funds on a matching basis, but all have a list of needed improvements. Several of the facilities have four-lane accessibility, particularly Cheraw, Marion, Lake City and Dillon.

### Non-Commercial Airport Facilities
**Pee Dee Region**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Airport</th>
<th>Runway(s)</th>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Lighting</th>
<th>Beacon</th>
<th>Tie</th>
<th>Hngr</th>
<th>Fuel</th>
<th>Other</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cheraw Municipal</td>
<td>4400 X 75’</td>
<td>VOR / NDB</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Jet</td>
<td>Repair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darlington Co. Airport</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4995 X 150’</td>
<td>PAPI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5000 X 75’</td>
<td>PAPI</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Instr.</td>
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<td>Repair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PAPI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Rental</td>
</tr>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Instr.</td>
</tr>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Jet</td>
<td>Instr.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rental</td>
</tr>
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<td>Marlboro Co. Airport</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Jet</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pageland Airport</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: SC Department of Commerce, Division of Aeronautics, 2006
Compiled by the PDRCOG
Notes: Instr = Flight instruction avail.; Rental = Aircraft rental avail.; Repair = Major/minor repairs avail.
The Rail System

As with air facilities, there is statewide planning underway on a periodic basis for rail service in the Pee Dee and elsewhere. This discussion will be limited current services and commentary.

The Pee Dee Region is served well by both passenger and freight rail service. Although the Region has experienced rail line abandonment like other portions of the State, an excellent series of carriers and tracks still provide basic service to the Region. In limited instances, abandoned segments of rail line have been purchased by local providers or local governments in order to continue service to local customers. In such cases, short-line operators are usually involved. There are, of course, portions of abandoned rail that have been dismantled and properties sold. In some instances, these abandoned corridors provide an opportunity for bicycle / hiking trails if appropriate right-of-way agreements can be reached.

**Passenger Rail Service:** Amtrak stations in Florence and Dillon serve passenger train routes through the Region (New York / Washington to Tampa or Miami). Lake City is also a routine Amtrak service stop for passengers.

**Freight Rail Service:** Also illustrated in Map 12 are a series of active freight lines operated by CSX and other carriers. As can be readily seen, each county in the Region has access to CSX and/or short-line freight service.

Key considerations regarding these freight routes include:

- By far the largest freight volume in the Region is carried over CSX routes, particularly the route through Dillon, Florence and Lake City. Significantly less freight moves over the Bennettsville / Marion route and the route paralleling US 1 through Chesterfield County.
- The primary CSX freight route through Dillon, Florence and Lake City is the same rail corridor that carries Amtrak passenger service. Long term, potential conflicts could occur between the freight and passenger trains.
- Short-line freight routes exist in several counties, usually with relatively low freight volumes.

**Future High Speed Rail and Other Inter-City Rail Corridors:** The Region could be impacted by several passenger rail proposals in the tentative planning stages at the national and statewide level, though these are long-term prospects:

**High Speed Rail Corridor:** High Speed passenger rail corridors are being planned in several regions of the United States. On the East Coast, part of the high-speed corridor is currently being implemented in the northeast.

Tentative plans are to extend this high-speed train service through the Carolinas, with preliminary routing through Cheraw and Chesterfield County along the US 1 corridor. There is considerable interest in Cheraw for a scheduled stop, the only one being considered in the Pee Dee; however, additional planning would be necessary to determine whether such a stop is feasible.

**Inter-City Passenger Line:** Conceptual planning at the State level has identified the potential need for inter-city passenger rail service between six metropolitan areas in the State, including a corridor through Sumter, Florence and Conway, then ending at Myrtle Beach. Again, this routing is conceptual at the present time and the funding does not yet exist. Also, for a number of years a rail connection from the Marion / Mullins area to the Grand Strand has been discussed, but the condition of track and other problems have effectively blocked such service from becoming a reality.
Seaports

The Region is fortunate to be located within reasonable access of both South Carolina and North Carolina seaports. While specific tonnage is not available by County for each of the seaports, usage of the ports by industries and other businesses in the Region is significant. Data from 2003 indicate that about one-third of industries with greater than 25 workers in the Pee Dee import and about 50 percent export, with most of that trade using the ports.

Of course, since the Region doesn’t have a seaport, the critical issue here is accessibility by these industries to the various seaports. Wilmington is accessible from much of the Pee Dee, although much of the access is by two-lane routes. Access to South Carolina ports is more direct; these South Carolina ports, their current status and their accessibility are as follows:

**Port of Charleston:** The Port of Charleston is one of the busiest seaport in the nation and is the largest container port in the Southeast and Gulf Coasts. The Port also handles considerable bulk shipments as well. Top bulk commodities include foodstuffs, forest products, consumer goods, machinery, metals, vehicles, chemicals and clay products. Although highway access is the primary shipping means to and from the Port, it is also served by CSX rail.

Access to the Port of Charleston from most of the Pee Dee is excellent. I-95 and I-26 as well as US 52 are all four-lane routes. With SC 151 and SC 38 four-lane routes, even Chesterfield County has good access to the Port at Charleston.

**Port of Georgetown:** This dedicated breakbulk and bulk cargo facility handles steel, salt, cement, aggregates and forest products. The Port is 13.5 miles from the ocean and has three births totaling 1600 feet. Cranes, transit warehouses and open storage augment the Port facilities. The Port is served by CSX rail. Four-lane access to this smaller port is less direct, but is still relatively good from Florence and Marion County.

**Port Royal:** This breakbulk cargo facility handles kaolin, cement and feldspar and other commodities, with nearly 337,000 tons in 1999, down somewhat from the prior year. The Port is 14 miles from the sea buoy and, along with a wharf, has warehouse and open storage. A short-line rail operation connects the Port to CSX rail service. Highway access to Port Royal terminal is more indirect than other SC ports.
**Bicycle And Pedestrian Facilities**

To date, bicycle and pedestrian facilities have been primarily a local issue, usually within communities. Most communities have at least a partial system of sidewalks to aid pedestrians, particularly in the vicinity of schools. In addition, several communities (Florence, Marion and Cheraw, among others) have partial greenway or bike/pedestrian systems in place. Florence, in particular, has made excellent progress with a trails program expansion over the past five years, with several new links completed. Unfortunately, bike paths are usually a low public service priority in most communities. Sidewalks generate more attention, but such improvements are still slow to be implemented.

In addition to these local efforts, several hiking trails and/or horseback trails either exist or have been proposed near large public landholdings, including Sandhills State Forest and the Carolina Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge in Chesterfield County.

**Summary of Current and Past Planning**

In recent years, SC DHEC and others have begun a regional trails planning effort, inventorying existing trails and identifying potential corridors, including abandoned rail lines, public landholdings, parks, and other natural areas. These efforts are incomplete; thus, specific discussion of those trails identified to date would be premature.

From a broader planning perspective, several statewide trails have been promoted over the years, including a system of trails termed the S.C. Bicycle Tour Route. This system has identified lower-volume primary and secondary highway routes across the State that connect key natural areas, scenic routes, state parks and other destinations... all as potential corridors for designated bicycle routes.

Two of these statewide routes traverse the Pee Dee, both shown in the accompanying Map 10.18. They include:

- **Northern Crescent Bicycle Trail** – This proposed bike corridor traverses the northern edge of the State from the Appalachians to the Grand Strand. In the Pee Dee, the route utilizes major portions of SC Highway 9 through Chesterfield, Marlboro and Dillon Counties, with deviations near Cheraw State Park and Little Pee Dee State Park. It is certainly debatable whether portions of SC Highway 9 qualify as a “low-volume” route; nonetheless, divided highway segments in portions of this corridor as well some lower volume segments are still suitable for bike routes.

- **Carolina Connector** – This trail route is a two-state route entering the Pee Dee and South Carolina above Bennettsville and passing through Darlington County before exiting the Region near Lee State Park. The route passes through Sumter and points South on its way to Georgia.

Again, although these routes have not been implemented, the proposed corridors should be a consideration in the preliminary engineering of any roadway or bridge improvements in the area.

Considerations of particular note in bicycle and pedestrian planning during the preliminary engineering phase of highway improvement projects would include:

- In new or replacement bridge work, these proposed bicycle corridors should be considered such that expensive widening costs are reduced when and if the bicycle corridor is fully implemented.
- In roadway widening projects, right-of-way needs and the roadway cross-section planned should consider bicycle needs in these key corridors. As with bridges, the small incremental costs necessary to accommodate bicycle needs along these routes are best addressed now rather than later.
- For many years abandoned rail line segments have been known as a potential trails resources; yet, little effort has been put into the purchase of such segments for future use. Certainly, the acquisition of significant sections would be costly, but local governments should carefully review such resources and the trails possibilities they represent whenever these corridors come available. It should be noted that both the cities of Marion and Florence have made good use of rail-to-trail projects.
Finally, it should be pointed out again that most pedestrian and bicycle routes are local issues. Fortunately, ISTEA and TEA21 enhancement funds have increasingly been used by local communities to build sidewalks and bike trails in local areas. The planning and implementation of such trails projects should be encouraged, even to the extent of providing bonus considerations in rating criteria for funding.
OTHER TRANSPORTATION-RELATED ISSUES

When reviewing the various modes of transportation that exist in or support the Pee Dee Region, several overriding issues emerge. These other issues can be grouped in five categories:

- Compatibility of transportation improvements and systems with local community plans, including neighborhood preservation issues
- Significant natural environmental factors or characteristics that could affect transportation systems and improvements
- Historic and archaeological resources
- Public safety issues
- Regional connectivity

Planning Compatibility

Of the six counties in the Region, each has completed or is in the midst of a comprehensive planning process that addresses transportation issues. In addition, approximately 28 of the 33 municipalities have completed or are preparing comprehensive plans. Usually, these plans address transportation issues on a broad level, acknowledging the critical local highway network, over-crowded roads, and noting any planned improvements in the area.

It is impossible to address the issues raised in each of these plans; however, those transportation and related land use issues most often addressed in these local plans include:

- **Dirt roads and paving requirements**: Different counties have varied sub-division requirements, including roadway standards for new roads. Every county maintains an extensive network of dirt roads and each sees additional public pressure for paving of these roads. Limited local and State funding means few roads are paved each year. If local standards permit dirt road sub-divisions to be built, the number of roads needing to be paved will continue to grow; however, paved roads in each new sub-division may not always be financially feasible.

- **Overcrowded roads**: This is a broad congestion issue, and has several aspects. First, there is a general concern for increased traffic and overall congestion. Previous discussions of growth in traffic on major routes is evidence of this public concern. A second part of this congestion concern involves increasing curb cuts on major roadways (including by-passes) and the traffic and accident implications of more dense development along major roadways. Several communities and counties have addressed this issue by limiting the number of curb cuts or by requiring minimum spacing of such access points. Finally, the Region is affected by tourist traffic, with local concern in selected communities about this traffic.

- **By-Pass facilities**: Several communities in the Region are facing major decisions regarding highway by-passes. The issues related to by-pass facilities are numerous, including the viability of downtown businesses if the area is by-passed, physical impacts of construction on existing business if existing roads are widened, residential neighborhood impacts, historic district impacts and similar issues. Often, there is no clear cut answer. Design and impact compromises are required, as is extensive public review.

- **Neighborhood protection**: One of the major reasons for comprehensive planning is the protection of residential neighborhoods. As transportation improvements can dramatically affect the pattern of development and can also be physically disruptive, short-term impacts on neighborhood quality and longer-term shifts in development patterns are of major concern to communities.
• **“Smart Growth”**: Several plans at least indirectly address this broad issue. While there are various definitions of smart growth (depending on the public or private perspective from which growth is viewed), there are common threads to the discussion:
  o Should a community place limits on its outward expansion, and how does it do so equitably (equitable to landowners, developers and existing businesses and neighborhoods)?
  o What are the impacts on existing downtown areas, shopping centers and other developed areas if the expansion of the urban area grows uncontrolled?
  o How does the community pay for the additional roadways, water, sewer and other infrastructure and services to serve suburban development farther from the core community and existing services?
  o Are higher densities associate with “in-fill” or close-in development always better than low-density development in suburban areas... what are the impacts of high density development on existing streets (congestion, etc.) and existing lower density neighborhoods?
  o How does the community preserve open space while growing?

• **Interstate accessibility**: Because communities want to prosper, four-lane accessibility to the interstate system is seen as a critical economic development strategy for those communities that lack direct access. It would be virtually impossible to have every municipality directly connected by four-lane highway to the interstate system. However, accessibility by communities of over 2,500 persons and all multi-county industrial parks may be reasonable public policy that could eventually be implemented. In addition, access to the proposed I-73 is yet another series of issues to be addressed in the future.

Aside from these broad issues, specific roadway recommendations have been mentioned in the preceding narratives, including the following major corridors:

- Widening of the SC 9 corridor through Chesterfield County. Obstacles abound in this corridor, including close-in development in small towns, etc.
- Widening of the US 52 corridor through Darlington County. The urban and historic resource constraints in the Society Hill area are obvious issues.
- Widening of the US 378 corridor in lower Marion Counties (and eastward in adjacent counties), recognizing the river and floodplain constraints in much of the corridor.
- Widening of the US 301 and SC 34 corridors in Dillon County.
- Widening of the US 15 corridor between Bennettsville and McColl.
- Widening of the urban portion of SC 151 Business into Hartsville.

**Significant Environmental Factors**

There are critical natural areas in the Region that pose practical obstacles for major highway improvements. Although there are man-made environmental conditions such as CERCLIS listed environmental hazard sites, these normally do not pose widespread or insurmountable problems. Environmental factors that need to be routinely considered when planning roadways include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Sensitive public land resources
- State parks
- Rivers of special quality
- Floodplains & wetlands
- Historic and Archeological resources

Certainly, soil conditions and other factors have an impact on development and related transportation systems, but these relatively minor factors will not be assessed here. The following factors can sometimes serve as major constraints to improving highway corridors and need to be considered early in the process.

**Sensitive public land resources**: Previous narratives have mentioned several public land holdings, including the Sandhills State Forest and Carolina Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge. The Refuge, in particular, is seen as a sensitive area not because of natural features but because it is a habitat for endangered species (the red-cockaded woodpecker, for one).
State parks: Also previously described are three State Parks, environmentally sensitive because of unique habitats (Woods Bay and Little Pee Dee State Parks) and/or their recreation facilities (such as Cheraw State park).

Rivers: The Pee Dee is fortunate to have several major river resources, including the Great Pee Dee River, Little Pee Dee River, Lynches River and Black Creek, among others. Each of these rivers provides a practical obstacle, in that the river and its floodplain (particularly the broad expanse of the Great Pee Dee) must be crossed by structures or earthen fill sections that are often environmentally intrusive and expensive. Each of these rivers is considered a major water body and a sensitive environmental feature. The Pee Dee River and upper portions of the Lynches River also provide public water supply, making these tributaries even more sensitive.

In addition to being major physical barriers and overall sensitive resources, special note is made of portions of the Little Pee Dee River and the Lynches River that have been designated as Scenic Rivers.

Floodplains and wetlands: Because of the above-mentioned major river resources that flow through the Region and the flat topography, large sections of the Region are affected by floodplains and their associated wetlands. Wetland areas from satellite imagery are presented in Map 10.19.

Historic and Archaeological Resources: Along with natural constraints in the Region, certain man-made resources can have environmental implications in the planning of new and improved highway corridors. Historic and archaeological sites and districts abound in the Pee Dee. And, because the road network has generally followed historical trails and travelways from hundreds of years previous, the widening or other improvement of existing routes may have impacts on such historic resources.

In limited instances, improvement of corridors (such as US 52) cannot help but come near historic resources. In such instances, early planning of alternative routes or methods of improvement is necessary. The South Carolina Department of Archives and History as well as regional historic surveys can be accessed for more detailed information.

As several communities in the Pee Dee function as living museums to the rich heritage of the area, Cheraw, Society Hill, Marion and others included, sensitivity to these historic resources and local attitudes should be of paramount importance in preliminary planning.

Public Safety Issues

Transportation safety issues encompass a wide variety of characteristics, most of which cannot be addressed by transportation system planning and this Inter-modal Plan. For example, it isn't possible to deal directly with roadway surface conditions or roadway geometry problems (both of which can affect the safety of roadways) as the volume of data and the number of roadways is prohibitive.

However, two characteristics of the transportation system for which safety issues can be quantified include accident frequency and deficient roadway bridges, both addressed below. In addition to accident data and bridge conditions, another broad safety issue involves overall public safety related to evacuation during natural or man-made catastrophes.

High Accident Locations: Public safety records can pinpoint high accident locations for each County. Not surprisingly, these locations are mostly intersections, the main points of conflict for vehicles. SCDOT ranks such locations based on total collisions, fatalities and injuries. The list is constantly changing, but can and will be used for future intersection improvements. In prior discussions, a number of two-lane routes have been identified as potential routes for intersection and related capacity and safety improvements. While not all high-accident locations are on these designated routes, many are.
Deficient Bridges: A number of bridges in the Region and across the State are currently listed as “structurally deficient” by SCDOT. This designation is earned when periodic SCDOT inspections determine that conditions of the bridge structure or the adjacent waterway fall below prescribed minimum standards set by the Federal Highway Administration. Such a “deficiency” designation does not necessarily imply that the bridge must be “load restricted” or is unsafe to the point of being impassable. Such structures are, however, placed on a schedule for repair or replacement by the SCDOT. In recent years, maintenance monies for bridge and roadway upgrading has been lagging behind the overall need of such structures.

It is also important to understand that this listing does not include other structures which may be “functionally” deficient; that is, those structures which are too narrow or which have poor roadway geometry at the bridge approaches (i.e., a curve in the roadway at one or both ends of the bridge). Such conditions can be a safety issue, particularly with careless and/or impaired drivers.

Emergency Routes: Not every natural or man-made emergency can be planned for, and not all require anything out of the ordinary from the Region’s transportation system. Experience has shown, however, that hurricane and similar natural events can require evacuation of low-lying and coastal areas. Likewise, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and local public safety officials have determined that overall public safety requires the planning of evacuation routes from the vicinity of nuclear power facilities such as the H. B. Robinson Nuclear power generation facility Northwest of Hartsville.

The SCDOT and State emergency management officials have designated hurricane evacuation routes that affect the Pee Dee Region, including primary routes from North Myrtle Beach, Myrtle Beach and Georgetown. All or portions of SC 9, US 501, US 378, US 76/301 and SC 41/51 are critical links in a voluntary or mandatory evacuation of the identified coastal communities.

There are also primary and secondary routes that serve as means of evacuation from the vicinity of the H.B. Robinson Nuclear facility at Hartsville. SC 151 plays a pivotal role in evacuation of that area, as well as US 52. It should be noted that the selection of evacuation routes has been based at least in part on assigned shelter locations in Chesterfield, Florence, Timmonsville and other locations.

Regional and Statewide Connectivity

Much of this Plan has dealt with intra-regional issues. However, initial discussions reviewed four-lane accessibility within the Region and the connection to statewide and multi-state markets, particularly key regional and statewide corridors. US 52, SC 9 and SC 38, and US 378 are such critical corridors.

From a broader perspective, adjacent COG regions (Santee-Lynches and Waccamaw) have addressed similar issues to those in the Pee Dee and have identified key corridors within these respective regions that also affect the Pee Dee. These key corridors and issues include:

- The US 521 corridor from Manning to I-20 at Camden is a critical route for regional development. While this route does not directly impact the Pee Dee, it provides a four lane western boundary to a triangle formed with I-20 on the North and I-95 on the Southeast. The increased development potential of this highly accessed triangle could have development spillover effects in Darlington and Florence Counties.
- The US 521 corridor from I-95 to Georgetown is a consideration in both Santee and Waccamaw transportation plans. Again, while this corridor is outside the Pee Dee, improvements in this corridor would provide increased accessibility from the Pee Dee to the Port of Georgetown and this portion of the South Carolina coast.
- The US 378 corridor from I-95 eastward to Conway is cited by both COGs as a critical corridor, both from an emergency evacuation route and general beach access. As noted earlier in this plan, that portion of US 378 from Turbeville to Lake City has been widened and the corridor through Florence County is tentatively funded.
RECOMMENDATIONS AND TRANSPORTATION SUMMARY CONCEPTS

As a result of the previous examination of issues related to growth, activity generators, the transportation system and other such issues, a series of policy recommendations and specific improvement projects have been formulated.

These recommendations hopefully address the key issues raised earlier in the Plan and provide a broad framework for meeting transportation needs in the near future. These recommendations are multi-modal and inter-modal in scope, as will be noted.

Recommendations of a General Nature:
- In planning and implementing transportation improvements, ensure that the appropriate performance measures outlined in the beginning of the Plan are followed.
- Ensure that, when feasible, any transportation improvements consider multi-modal issues during planning and design phases, including bicycle and pedestrian improvements, multi-modal connections, etc.

Recommendations for Highway Corridors:
- Aggressively pursue final design and construction of those improvements contained in the regional highway bonding program and those being funded under other funds as a means to complete all elements of the STIP.
- As has been emphasized in prior transportation planning and priority-setting, the Pee Dee Region places priority in improving corridors, completing major connections between markets, etc. To implement such a regional concept, the following recommendations focus near-term highway planning and mid-term construction on a series of major gaps in the regional system of four-lane highway corridors. These corridors include (not necessarily in priority order):
  - US 52 corridor from Darlington to the North Carolina line (completing a mid-region North-South connector and providing additional four-lane access to the Cheraw industrial base).
  - US 76 corridor East of Mullins to SC 9 (to improve this North Myrtle Beach corridor access corridor) and West of I-95 to Timmonsville and to the Sumter metropolitan market area (for inter-regional connectivity).
  - US 301 from Latta to SC 38/US 501, providing access to a major Beach corridor.
  - US 378 corridor East of Lake City to Conway (providing access to a major Beach corridor).
  - SC 9 corridor West of Chesterfield to Pageland (providing better access to the Grand Strand).
  - SC 9 corridor around and East of Dillon (improving the alternate Beach route and emergency evacuation route). The corridor is already in the STIP, but is currently unfunded.
  - SC 51 corridor from Florence to US 378 (providing improved commuter routes and an alternate beach corridor from the Florence Metropolitan area).
  - Pursue planning and implementation of Interstate 73, using US 1, SC 9, SC 38 and US 501 four-lane corridors as the designated route through the Pee Dee.
  - Implement current plans to design and construct additional lanes on Interstate 95 through the Florence urban area from US 76 to SC 327 (in phases, as necessary).
  - Widen and otherwise improve the bridge / interchange at SC 327 and I-95 (currently two-lane bridge) if not accomplished as part of Interstate widening.
  - Identify opportunities for frontage roads, local collector streets and other roadway elements that can relieve traffic demand on Interstate and primary roadway segments, thus helping to preserve the traffic-carrying capacity of these regional roadways.
  - Implement a system of early environmental review on highway corridor projects in order to expedite project approval and construction.
  - Devote resources to the maintenance and repaving of secondary highway routes to combat severe safety / fatality problems on that system of roadways in the Region.
  - Pursue intersection improvements at high-volume roadway crossings and/or those with the more severe accident history so as to improve traffic safety.
• Pursue bridge replacement based on engineering assessment of deficiencies and the regional significance of the roadway.

Recommendations for Public Transit:
• Expand the system of fixed route transit in the Region to provide better local transit access to major urban communities from outlying areas, particularly:
  - Connecting outlying communities in Chesterfield County to Cheraw or Hartsville
  - Connecting outlying areas in Marlboro County to Bennettsville
  - Connecting outlying communities in Florence County to Florence
  - Connecting Lamar and Society Hill to Hartsville and/or Darlington
  - Connecting Brittons Neck and Centennary areas of Marion County to Marion and/or Mullins
• Expand the system of fixed route transit in the Region to provide better access from Chesterfield and Marlboro Counties (especially the Bennettsville and Cheraw areas) to the balance of the Pee Dee Region and neighboring North Carolina urban areas.
• Assess new demographic data (when available) to identify the most distressed areas of the Region (economic distress, low auto availability, etc.) and target transit programs to these areas on a priority basis.
• Maintain and expand the demand-responsive transit services in the Region and provide for better coordination between various providers.
• Insure that appropriate transit linkage is maintained with nearby Regions of the State, with coordinated schedules between PDRTA and systems in adjacent areas.
• As Grand Strand labor requirements grow, increase commuter transit services between major urban areas in the Region and key locations along the Grand Strand.
• Implement the system of inter-modal centers planned for the Region (and the related transfer centers) in order to better coordinate bus, rail, taxi and other transit services.
• As future planning of the High-Speed Rail corridor progresses, ensure appropriate feeder service is provided to any feasible stops.
• Encourage increased local, state and federal funding for transit operations and the most wise use of these resources in providing better and more extensive transit service.

Recommendations for Historic, Environmental and Neighborhood Protection:
• Protect those major sensitive resources that exist in the Region through every available means (natural areas, scenic rivers, state parks, wildlife areas, etc.).
• Using the proposed early environmental review process, evaluate broad highway corridor needs in light of critical environmental, historic/cultural and neighborhood constraints and identify alternatives early such that key agencies and the public can be informed and valued participants in decision-making prior to projects proceeding to engineering.
• Minimize negative neighborhood impacts by limiting new roadway access to neighborhoods, avoiding the division of neighborhoods and other means of protecting residential areas. Consider the impacts of roadway and transit routes on suburban development (i.e., "smart growth" issues) and strive to have these public improvements support orderly, efficient growth.

Recommendations for Pedestrian And Bicycle Facilities
• Pursue additional planning of regional trail routes in cooperation with SC DHEC and others, identifying abandoned or nearly abandoned rail lines that are suitable for "rails to trails" conversion, public land holdings that present suitable routes, and other opportunities.
• Encourage public acquisition of abandoned rights-o-way, to permit multi-modal use of these properties.
• Encourage local government planning and implementation of bicycle and pedestrian routes within communities, thus creating local systems that could be connected at a later date.
• Encourage public education and awareness of routes, including increased use of signage, bicycle route Maps, etc.
• Provide for sidewalks in local communities through more aggressive requirements in subdivision regulations, increased used of SCDOT Enhancement funds for sidewalk development in corridors through communities, etc.
• Pursue implementation of specific segments of the State Trail Plan in the Pee Dee Region, including both the Northern Crescent and the Carolina Connector, through multi-regional planning and in monitoring road repaving or widening opportunities that could assist in implementing portions of the trails system.

**Recommendations for Air Service:**

• Maintain and expand facilities and services at the Florence Regional Airport, including:
  - Improving support services and taxiways, re-alignment of entrance following the completion of the US 301 By-pass and enforcing land use and height regulations in the Florence urban area so as to maintain air safety.
  - Maintain local and State support for the series of general aviation airports that serve flying enthusiasts in the Region, including adoption and enforcement of such land use and height regulations as may be necessary to maintain air safety.
  - Encourage and assist regional and general aviation airports in seeking federal and state funding and technical support in maintaining and improving their operations.

**Recommendations for Rail:**

• Encourage public acquisition of abandoned rights-o-way, to permit multi-modal use of these properties.
• Encourage multi-modal use of rail corridors, particularly abandoned lines and short-line routes with lower freight volumes.
• Planning and implementation of rail service between Marion / Mullins and Horry County, thus permitting tourist excursion travel such as has been envisioned a numerous occasions in the past dozen years.

**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT:**

The process for developing transportation needs and priorities has been open to public comment. While much of the analysis has been analytical in nature, some needs have been obvious and are apparent to even the most casual observer.

The manner in which public comment or input has been received for the overall process is illustrated below and is supplemented by a Public Participation Plan for the region: