

Growing Smart: Transportation in Houston County Communities

Local Transportation Planning Process

WRATS (Warner Robins Area Transportation Study)

- Formed in 1983; currently involves the Cities of Warner Robins, Perry, and Centerville and Houston County. It also includes Byron and Peach County, Robins Air Force Base, and the Georgia Department of Transportation.
- WRATS was established to: (1) Maintain a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process; (2) Update and revise the 20-year intermodal transportation plan; (3) Create a functional relationships between transportation planning and city-county development; (4) Maintain an updated transportation database; and (5) Produce all documents and studies that are necessary to maintain a Certified Transportation Planning Process.
- Consists of three committees: Technical, Citizens Advisory, and Policy.

Local Transportation System

Road and Bridge Network

- In 2005 the WRATS staff, along with the project consultant from Post, Buckley, Shuh and Jernigan, updated the Long-Range Transportation Plan. The Plan identified: (1) Existing base year (2002) road network level of service; (2) Future (2030) road network level of service using a transportation model that takes into consideration projected population, housing, employment statistics, and other factors and includes existing planned and programmed improvements that are in the WRATS Transportation Improvement Program and State Construction Work Program; (3) A list of short, mid-range and long-range improvements; and (4) Future road network level of service with the proposed improvements included. See Maps and list of projects in the Appendix.

- Voters in Houston County recently approved a SPLOST for road improvements that will be initiated in the next six years. A list of those projects is presented in the Appendix.

Alternative Modes

Transit:

- Feasibility study conducted in July 2003; study recommended implementing a future public transit system in phases: First phase - “demand-responsive” service available to Warner Robins and Centerville residents by calling ahead and requesting service; Second phase - flexible bus route service with four potential routes throughout the service area.
- Funding has not been secured as outlined in study; initial steps have not been taken to begin service.
- DHR Coordinated Transportation service provided to DHR program clients and those from the Department of Labor Vocational Rehabilitation Program by Middle Georgia Community Action Agency, Inc. through a contract with the Middle Georgia RDC.

Bicycle/Pedestrian:

- Two statewide bicycle routes serve Houston County: (1) Central Route Corridor (#15) - Begins in Cobb County and ends in Echols County at the Florida Border. Enters Houston County for US 41 in Bibb County and crosses through Houston County and the City of Perry. It leaves Perry south of Ag Center and enters a rural stretch until it reaches the Dooly County Line. (2) TransGeorgia Corridor (#40) - Begins in Harris County and passes through Muscogee, Talbot, Crawford, and Peach Counties and enters Houston County on SR 96, then continues on SR 96 into Crawford County until the SR 96/358 intersection. It follows SR 358 until it intersects with US 80. Once on US 80, it travels through southeastern Twiggs County, Wilkinson County, and into Laurens County. It terminates at Bull Street in Savannah. See attached map.
- The Middle Georgia RDC recently completed a comprehensive Regional Bicycle/ Pedestrian Plan under contract with GDOT. The Plan recommends a series of 2” and 4”

bike lanes and shared-use trails through the Middle Georgia region. Working with the staffs from WRATS, Houston County, and the Cities of Perry and Centerville, the Regional Plan included separate bicycle/pedestrian components for Houston County and the City of Perry. See Maps _____ in the Appendix.

Parking

- Areas with insufficient parking include: (1) Warner Robins near Commercial Circle; and (2) Near the Houston County Medical Center.
- Other parking concerns that have been voiced include parking in the fire lanes of shopping centers and along roads in residential neighborhoods near schools.

Railroads, Trucking, and Airports

- Norfolk Southern line parallels SR 247. Currently all roads that cross the railroads do so with at-grade crossings; they present safety and time-delay issues.
- No major trucking facilities are currently located in Houston County.
- Several major industries in the area use many trucks to carry goods to and from the plants, including Frito-Lay and Perdue chicken plant.
- Warehousing and distribution centers will be an important target industry in the future for Houston County. This type industry utilizes an enormous number of trucks for their operations, thus local transportation planners will need to take this into account in order to insure adequate roads exist for these new facilities.
- The Perry-Houston County Airport located in northwest Perry is owned and operated by the Perry-Houston County Airport Authority.
- The airport has a variety of aviation-related activities, including recreational flying, agricultural spraying, corporate/business jets, police/law enforcement and experimental aircraft.
- Its facilities include: a 5,002 feet long and 100 feet wide runway, a full-service Flight Base Operation with limited maintenance services, a terminal/administration building; 32 apron parking spaces and 59 hanger spaces.

- The airport has approximately 18,000 annual aircraft takeoffs and landings with projections to 20,000 by year 2021.
- Classified as a Level II airport in the State Airport System Plan. The Plan recommends several improvements over the next 20 years in three phases, and also recommends additional actions to meet Level II performance objectives.

Transportation and Land Use Connection

- In 2005 WRATS, with assistance from the Middle Georgia RDC, prepared a study entitled, “*Year 2030 Land Use Plan for the Warner Robins Area Transportation Study.*”
- The purpose of the study was twofold: (1) To provide local planning and zoning and policy officials direction as to the type and density of development that is expected to occur over the 25-year planning period (to year 2030), so land development policy decisions are **coordinated** with future community facility improvements with specific attention to roads and highways; and (2) Establish an initial point of discussion for the comprehensive planning process. It is designed to become an excellent first step in achieving an effective and usable Community Agenda.
- The final three sections of the report focused on land use development. The report concluded with a thorough review of existing land use policies that will guide future land use development in the WRATS Study Area, and a 2030 Future Land Use Plan for the entire study area and for 15 high-priority corridors.