

Introduction

Appalachian Council of Governments (ACOG) is responsible for transportation planning activities within the rural portion of our six-county region while the urbanized areas are addressed by three Metropolitan Organizations (MPO's): the Anderson Area Transportation Study (ANATS), Greenville-Pickens Area Transportation Study (GPATS), and the Spartanburg Area Transportation Study (SPATS)—see map. This arrangement is managed and funded by the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) and the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) through its components including the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA). This layered approach provides financial and technical resources to ensure compliance with federal and state laws and policies regarding the transportation system. ACOG's 44-Member Board of Directors sets policy for the Council of Governments. Two-thirds of the members are local elected officials, including state legislators, county council members, and mayors or city council members. County councils appoint the remaining citizen and minority members, some of whom may also be elected officials. The ACOG Board appoints a Regional Transportation Committee that meets regularly to coordinate transportation projects and update various plans, including this Rural Long Range Transportation Plan (RLRTP). ACOG staff also participates on study and technical committees for ACOG region MPO's to promote cooperation, consistency and communication between the varied transportation planning agencies in the area. Public participation is accomplished in various ways as outlined the ACOG Public Participation Plan found in **Appendix B**. We also coordinate closely with our member jurisdictions and use public comments made during their respective planning efforts to inform the rural transportation program.

This is the third comprehensive RLRTP for the rural area of the Appalachian Region which consists of the following six counties: Anderson, Cherokee, Greenville, Oconee, Pickens and Spartanburg. According to the 2010 Census, the total population for the six-county region is 1.17 million people of which 28 percent or approximately 330,000 are located in the rural areas.

Planning Process

Federal Guidance

On December 4, 2015, President Obama signed into law the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act, or "FAST Act." It is the first law enacted in over ten years that provides long-term funding certainty for surface transportation, meaning States and local governments can move forward with critical transportation projects, like new highways and transit lines, with the confidence that they will have a Federal partner over the long term.

Overall, the FAST Act largely maintains current program structures and funding shares between highways and transit. It is a down-payment for building a 21st century transportation system. The law also makes changes and reforms to many Federal transportation programs, including streamlining the approval processes for new transportation projects, providing new safety tools, and establishing new

programs to advance critical freight projects. (See more at: <https://www.transportation.gov/fastact#sthash.uDfDo5ck.dpuf>).

The FAST Act will continue MAP-21’s emphasis on a performance-based approach to transportation decision-making to support the seven national goals of the federal-aid highway program. These seven national performance goals include:

Goal area	National goal
Safety	To achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads
Infrastructure condition	To maintain the highway infrastructure asset system in a state of good repair
Congestion reduction	To achieve a significant reduction in congestion on the National Highway System
System reliability	To improve the efficiency of the surface transportation system
Freight movement and economic vitality	To improve the national freight network, strengthen the ability of rural communities to access national and international trade markets, and support regional economic development
Environmental sustainability	To enhance the performance of the transportation system while protecting and enhancing the natural environment
Reduced project delivery delays	To reduce project costs, promote jobs and the economy, and expedite the movement of people and goods by accelerating project completion through eliminating delays in the project development and delivery process, including reducing regulatory burdens and improving agencies’ work practices

The previous transportation authorization, MAP-21, describes Federal Planning Factors issued by Congress to emphasize a national perspective. Under the FAST Act these existing planning factors remain unchanged. However, the FAST Act does add two additional factors to consider. The eight existing planning factors and two newly added factors (in **BOLD** and *italics*) are as follows:

1. Support the economic vitality of the United States, the States, nonmetropolitan areas, and metropolitan areas, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
2. Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and nonmotorized users;
3. Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and nonmotorized users;
4. Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and freight;

5. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns;
6. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes throughout the State, for people and freight;
7. Promote efficient system management and operation;
8. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system;
9. ***Improve the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system and reduce or mitigate stormwater impacts of surface transportation; and***
10. ***Enhance travel and tourism.***

State Guidance

ACOG adheres to the SCDOT Statewide Transportation Planning Process found in **Appendix A**.

South Carolina Act 114

Each project must be financially constrained in order to be identified in the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). Moreover, each road widening, functional intersection and new-location roadway improvement projects must be rated and ranked in accordance with South Carolina Act 114. SCDOT performs the ranking; however each COG may add regional specific ranking criteria if approved by SCDOT.

State C-Fund Law

The law stipulates that counties spend at least 25% of their apportionment of C-funds based on a biennial averaging of expenditures, on the state highway system for construction, improvements and maintenance. Furthermore, counties are to spend no more than 75% of their apportionment each year on their local system. Also, the balance of uncommitted funds carried forward from one year into the next cannot exceed 300% of the county's total apportionment for the most recent year.

Each COG, in partnership with SCDOT, is responsible for implementing a transportation planning process that fully complies with the federal planning requirements established by the FAST Act. Through this process, each COG establishes regional goals and objectives, identifies the current condition of the transportation system, provides research and data analysis, identifies and prioritizes transportation needs for input to the Statewide Multi-Modal Transportation Plan and STIP. The rural planning process is based on the development and maintenance of regional long range transportation plans, which is the foundation for this document.

The vision of a safe, multi-modal, and inter connected transportation system for the Appalachian Region can become a reality. This plan is intended to serve as a tool and guide for the future success in the implementation of the region's transportation system.

ACOG Transportation Goals

As established by the Advisory and Policy committees, the long-range transportation goals for the ACOG region are listed below:

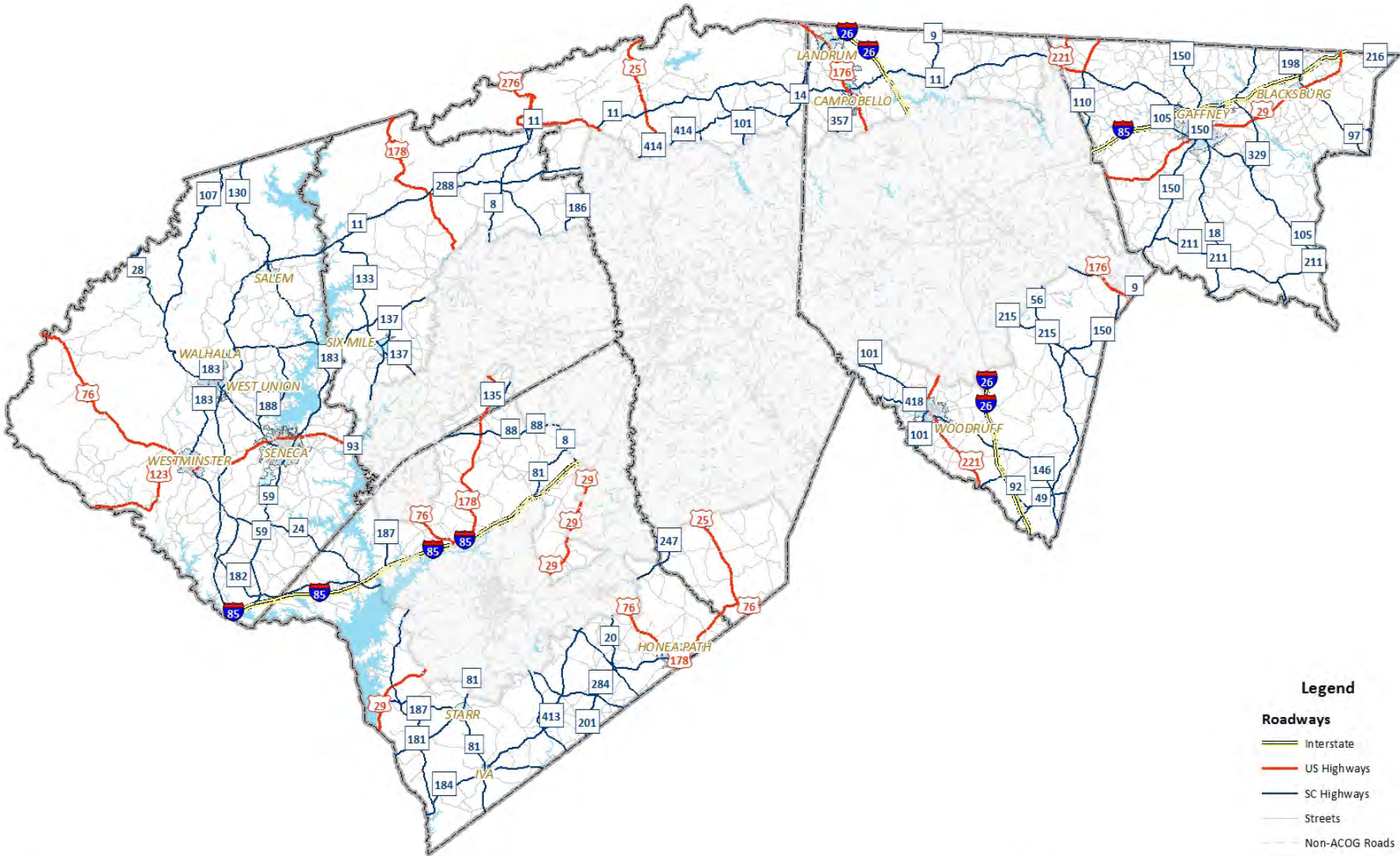
1. Identify the current condition of the transportation system.
2. Provide research and data analysis to state and local governments.
3. Assist local governments with transportation and land use planning.
4. Coordinate transit efforts with regional transit authorities and human service providers.
5. Identify and prioritize transportation needs for input to the Statewide Multi-Modal Transportation Plan and STIP.
6. Implement a transportation planning process that fully complies with the federal planning requirements established by the FAST Act.
7. Develop a Rural Planning Work Program (RPWP).

In accordance with the aforementioned goals, The ACOG Rural Long Range Transportation Plan will focus on the following key elements:

- Demographic Trends and Projections
- Roadway Network
- Intersections and Safety
- Bridge Replacement
- Maintenance and Resurfacing
- Signalization
- Mass Transit
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities
- Environmental Screening

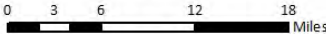
By focusing on these elements there will be a comprehensive plan in place that be built upon in the future and that addresses the needs for the next 25 years.

Map 1. ACOG Region



Legend

- Roadways**
- Interstate
 - US Highways
 - SC Highways
 - Streets
 - Non-ACOG Roads
- Municipalities
 - County
 - MPO Jurisdiction
 - Lakes



This map is a product of the SC Appalachian Council of Governments. Reasonable efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy of this map. The SC Appalachian Council of Governments expressly disclaims any responsibility or liability with regard to the use of this map.