2010 Comprehensive Plan
City of Greer, SC

Section 7: Transportation

The Transportation element considers transportation network facilities. This element must be developed in coordination with the Land Use element to insure transportation efficiency for existing and planned development. It covers the existing and future transportation facilities for vehicles, rail/freight, transit, bicyclists and pedestrians. Prior to the 2004 update to the 1999 Comprehensive Plan it was included as part of the Community Facilities element.

The South Carolina Local Government Comprehensive Planning Enabling Act of 1994 provides the following guidelines of the vital characteristics for the Transportation element:

- Major road improvements
- New road construction
- Transit projects, and
- Pedestrian and bicycle projects

Introduction

The City of Greer and its citizens have a wonderful history and promising future that can be articulated through this comprehensive planning process. The plan aims to be the fundamental framework to achieve set goals, direct policy and ultimately provide future generations with a vision that creates sustainability, managed growth, and a greater quality of life. The process used serves as the foundation to the development of a successful plan which identifies not only what should be done but how it can be accomplished. The process involved citizen and stakeholder meetings to develop issues, opportunities and goals; fact-finding, surveying, inventory of existing/future conditions; and development of objectives and implementation strategies to carry out the plan. With citizen participation, the plan will encourage consensus, improve efficacy, and forge a cooperative, collaborative and responsive community.
Past Planning Studies

In the development of this plan, a number of prior documents and planning studies were examined to better understand the context and current relevance of the issues, recommendations, and implementation strategies. Elected officials and planners need accurate information to make informed decisions and learn from past experience. The following planning studies were reviewed:

Imagine Greenville: Greenville County Comprehensive Plan
Plan-It Greenville: City of Greenville Comprehensive Plan
Greenways Master Plan
GreenLink Transit Vision Plan
Greer Railroad Relocation Study
GPATS Long Range Transportation Plan
Greer Station: Downtown Redevelopment Plan
Greer Thoroughfare Plan
Highway 290 Area Plan
Greenville County Low Impact Development Roundtable

Over the past several decades many communities throughout the United States have realized the need to integrate and improve the link between land use and transportation planning. The design of transportation facilities such as roads, driveway access points, sidewalks, bike lanes, trails, and greenways has a major impact on a community’s character and quality of life. Since the adoption of the Greer Comprehensive Plan in 1999, the City of Greer has grown in both population and its geographic area. In 2004, the Land Use Element was updated to ensure smart development and identify land use strategies that would be developed through a committee to encourage walkability and pedestrian friendliness sufficient to support the future residential, commercial, and industrial needs of the community.

Issues raised by the public included the need for responsible growth management, providing for neighborhood stability, reducing traffic congestion, improving the community’s appearance, and maintaining the small-town atmosphere. Additionally, the need to connect bicycle riders with multipurpose pathways, trails and greenways was expressed in the community visioning
workshops. The lack of mass transit and the need for traffic calming to improve safety and efficiency of the transportation system were also cited as concerns.

As a result, the following Land Use Goals were established in 2004:

- Ensure that sufficient and varied housing opportunities exist for all citizens in the future with the least possible impact on roads, sewer, or community facilities.
- Encourage commercial and office development where it is compatible with surrounding land uses and supports revitalization of the center city.
- Identify potential industrial development areas and ways to protect them as well as features such as GSP Airport.
- Provide the most effective and efficient multimodal transportation choices for the Greer community.
- Identify possible alternatives to preserve environmentally sensitive areas.

How we use our land affects our transportation facilities and modes (choices) of travel. As we increase access to parcels, land values rise. As development occurs along adjacent roadways, traffic increases resulting in more conflict points, greater potential for crashes, and overall deterioration of Level of Service (LOS) where the volume of vehicles is greater than a roadway’s designed capacity. Figure 7-1 depicts the future Level of Service for the transportation network. In general terms, the Level of Service is much like a grading scale from A to F. In most urban environments a Level of Service of C or D is considered acceptable for traffic conditions during the peak travel times (morning and afternoon commutes).

The reduced efficiency of the road eventually necessitates roadway widening that may encourage even more development, and the cycle continues. Therefore, adopting strategies in a master plan that implement transportation policies and standards through the zoning ordinance as part the site plan review process has the potential to significantly improve the Greer community. The following sections will address the current and future roadway system, pedestrian and bicycle network, transit, freight, and rail network. The Transportation element will conclude with implementation strategies.
Figure 7-1
Future Level of Service Map

2030 Level of Service

Legend
- GPATS_Boundary
- Municipal Boundaries
- 2030 Level of Service

Greenville-Pickens Area Transportation Study
Highway and Transportation Plans

Greenville County is one of the most urbanized areas of the state and the largest in South Carolina. The City of Greer is located along the I-85 corridor between Greenville and Spartanburg in the “Upstate” region. Greer’s population is projected to increase by 12.1% over the next five years and 65,500 people are expected to live within a 10-minute drive of the historic Greer downtown area. The population of the City of Greer increased from 10,322 in 1990 to 16,843 in 2000. Greer has proven to be an important economic crossroad. In 2008 the leading employers included BMW Manufacturing, Cryovac Division-Sealed Air Corporation, Michelin North America, and Mitsubishi Polyester Film, LLC. Currently, during the design phase, all interstate widening projects are evaluated in terms of mass transit alternatives (high occupancy or rail service). Furthermore, as part of the planning and environmental studies, air quality impacts will be considered, especially in non-attainment areas (as declared by EPA). The Greenville-Spartanburg area of the Upstate is pending non-attainment status.

Interstate 385 connects to I-85 just before downtown Greenville and continues to I-26 in Laurens County. Along with I-85, it serves as the Greer community’s primary commercial traffic highways. Based on forecasts, the I-85 corridor will have capacity deficiencies that will require widening from three to four lanes (northbound-southbound). The Statewide Interstate Plan completed by the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) outlines the needs for the interstate system. The SCDOT is currently developing a study of I-85 from US 25 to SC 129 to evaluate interstate needs and to explore High Occupancy Lanes (HOV) and designated truck lanes.

The four-lane divided portion of I-385 in Greenville County is currently experiencing capacity deficiencies and structural and surface deterioration and will be widened to six lanes from just south of the Woodruff Road exit to just south of I-185. The interchange at I-85 also will be reconstructed to improve safety and congestion. In addition The SCDOT is set to begin reconstruction of the I-385 corridor from I-26, replacing or raising existing bridges and widening the 15-mile section within Laurens County to accommodate interstate design features typical for such facilities. These would include two 12-foot travel lanes, a 4-foot inside shoulder, and a 10-foot outside shoulder.

The Interstate 85 corridor (from the Georgia state line to Cherokee County at the North Carolina border) carries about 100,000 vehicles each day (Annual Average Daily Traffic/AADT), of which 28 to 30 percent is truck traffic. The global nature of our economy relies on efficient intermodal connectivity, and in South Carolina, trucks are estimated to move about 80 percent of total freight. Figure 7-2 includes the major routes along the I-85 Corridor in the Upstate region.
Prior to the formation of the interstate system in 1956, U.S. Highways served as connections between states and major cities. U.S. Route 29 (Wade Hampton Boulevard) was constructed in the 1920s and has grown from a rural two-lane road to a six- to seven-lane highway. This corridor has an average daily traffic count of nearly 30,000 vehicles. Strip development along this route has continued to increase traffic, leading to more accidents. Other major routes serving Greer include SC 14, SC 290, SC 101 and SC 357. Figure 7-3 shows traffic volumes along these roadways.
Greenville-Pickens Area Transportation Study

The Greenville-Pickens Area Transportation Study (GPATS) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for this region of the Upstate and provides transportation planning, project development, and grant assistance to the municipalities in the urbanized area. The MPO is responsible for carrying out the transportation planning process and developing the transportation plans for the urbanized area. The Long Range Transportation Plan was adopted in November 2007 by GPATS Policy Committee. The projects selected from this plan are ranked
or prioritized based on a methodology that factors in safety, congestion (Level of Service), connectivity, design needs, environmental and cultural impacts, economic development, and cost. Projects selected were identified and ranked (high, medium, or low) and then programmed in the short-term Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP is an annual document that identifies any projects being implemented during the following five years. These documents and information about other programs carried out by the MPO can be found at http://www.greenvillecounty.org/gcpc/transportation_planning/gpats.asp

The Greenville County Planning Commission is responsible for the administration of land use ordinances, rezoning, and development review. Due to the numerous commercial rezoning requests for an area along SC 290 and the concern over traffic congestion and safety, the Planning Department has developed the Highway 290 Area Plan. This plan addresses growth management, infrastructure needs, preservation of open spaces, and developing tools such as design overlay standards to keep developments at a scale that will not diminish the neighborhood character of this study area.

There are a number of projects that are being implemented or developed through the MPO, SCDOT, or Greenville CTC (Legislative Delegation). Below are some projects identified in the LRTP and TIP that are immediately relevant to the Greer area.

**Roadway Projects**
- N. Buncombe St./SC 101 – widen Wade Hampton (US 29) to Locust Hill (SC 290) to five lanes from with bike lanes

**Intersection Projects**
- Wade Hampton at Suber Road
- Wade Hampton at SC 101
- Brushy Creek at Strange Road (Taylors)
- Locust Hill at N. Rutherford Road
- Main Street at Brushy Creek Road
- Wade Hampton at Gap Creek Road
- SC 101 at Fews Chapel Road
- SC 101 at Taylor Street
- Sandy Flat at Jackson Grove Road

**Transportation Enhancement Projects**
- Downtown Beautification Phase III
- Wade Hampton Corridor Enhancement
- US 29 Gateway Landscaping Project
Greenways, Bicycle Paths, and Sidewalks

As discussed earlier, the development cycle and separation of land uses over time have perpetuated “sprawl” that has increased the distance between places we work, the places we shop, and the places we live. The roadways are designed to carry more traffic and encourage higher speeds, but do not encourage walking or biking. The traditional zoning approach has resulted in sprawl and deterioration of historic neighborhoods and has not focused sufficiently on pedestrian safety and walkability.

Many communities are interested in the use of form-based code, which addresses the relationship between building facades and the public realm (means of regulating development to achieve a specific urban form). The new buzz words are “new urbanism” or “smart growth” and “traditional neighborhood development,” which have become tools for planners and elected officials in response to impacts related to urban growth and creating more livable communities.

In 2006, the City of Greer hosted a charrette with the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and the South Carolina Design Arts Partnership to assess the connectivity and accessibility needs of four neighborhoods. The immediate steps outlined in this plan focused on: extending streetscape, sidewalks, and lighting throughout the community; developing community gateways; traffic calming and pedestrian safety; creating new or improving existing park spaces; encouraging infill or redevelopment (through transitional overlay zoning); and burying as many utility lines as possible.

The city has worked to promote connectivity within the downtown, public facilities, parks, schools, etc. through the use of transportation enhancement funds to redesign and accommodate wider sidewalks (as shown here along Victoria Street) and has some unique opportunities to encourage walkability in alleys and other downtown areas (such as the Greer Station area). The newly-constructed City Hall and City Park have paved the way for future redevelopment of this area of the city and includes wide sidewalks that can easily connect surrounding neighborhoods with the downtown corridor. Figure 7-4 depicts the existing sidewalks in the City of Greer showing a pattern that provides accessibility to businesses and civic facilities into the downtown area from the core neighborhoods around it.
The Greenville County Recreation District (GCRD) in cooperation with local municipalities and the Greenville Hospital System has recently completed a Greenville County Comprehensive Greenway Plan to develop a countywide system connecting parks and people through a network of bicycle and pedestrian trails. The proposed Greenways Network map is depicted in Figure 7-5. The planning process used a regional approach to examine corridors along the Enoree, Saluda, and Reedy rivers. The use of rail right-of-way and utility easements also presents opportunities for future trails and greenways. Benefits of this plan include creating value generating economic development; transportation choices for pedestrian and bicycle modes; improving health through active living; cleaner air and water; protection from flood damage; enhancing cultural awareness and community identity.
Figure 7-5
Proposed Greenways Network

Legend
- Proposed Countywide Greenway Network
- Major Greenway Corridors
- Water Trail Access Points
- Water Trails
- Swamp Rabbit Trail
- Palmetto Trail
- Pisgah Trail
- City of Greenville Existing Greenways
- City of Greenville Proposed Greenways
- City of Hanahan Proposed Trails
- Major Road
- Major Street
- Lake/Pond
- School Property
- Park/Conservation Land
- Fountain Inn
- Greenville
- Greer
- Mauldin
- Simpsonville
- Traveler Rest
- Greenville County
- Surrounding Counties

http://www.greenways.com/greenville_download
Greenville County Comprehensive Greenway Plan
Rail Transportation

Greer began as a train stop along the Richmond and Danville Air Line Railway and was incorporated in 1875. Greer quickly thrived as a textile and agricultural center and grew from a small rail depot to a town of 3,000 residents. The downtown area remained a thriving part of the community into the 1960s, but gradually declined with urbanization and growth outside the central business district. Currently, the CSX Transportation railroad line traverses downtown Greer, as does the Norfolk Southern railroad that parallels the CSX railroad for seven miles through downtown Greer. The lines are less than one block apart at their closest point and almost a mile apart at their widest.

The CSX Transportation railroad primarily serves rail traffic coming from Spartanburg en route to Greenville, but also serves the electric power plant in Pelzer. The rail traffic moves through downtown Greer, navigating 19 at-grade intersections (road crossings) and generally operating at speeds of 25 mph. The Norfolk Southern railroad that transects downtown Greer primarily serves rail traffic from Charlotte en route to Atlanta. The rail navigates numerous at-grade intersections and operates at speeds ranging from 25 to 50 mph.

The CSX Transportation railroad and the Norfolk Southern railroad are vital assets to the City of Greer, as well as Greenville and Spartanburg counties. The City of Greer, in cooperation with The Partnership for Tomorrow and the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) is proposing to combine the two rail lines to open up the 15 acres of land bifurcated by the railroads to provide for potential commercial and mixed use development. This project involves elimination of 7.1 miles of railroad track, elimination of 26 railway/roadway crossings, and double tracking of 7.4 miles of railroad with associated upgrades to the train control system and safety devices. Project costs are estimated at $41.7 million in the year 2015.

High-Speed Rail

High-speed rail refers to long-distance passenger transport, typically along very populated corridors. The Federal Railroad Administration, an agency within the U.S. Department of Transportation, has outlined a plan that proposes numerous potential high-speed railroad corridors in the United States as shown in Figure 7-6. The Southeast Corridor, as outlined, would extend through Greenville County, pass through both Charlotte and Atlanta, and eventually link with other major corridors.
Public Transportation

The City of Greer has not initiated any public transportation or transit service. The Greenlink transit system, which is operated by the City of Greenville for the Greenville Transit Authority (GTA), operates primarily within the city of Greenville. This modest fixed-route system operates 11 buses, and the route that operates nearest Greer is along Wade Hampton Boulevard in the Taylors area is Route 11 (Wade Hampton – Taylors as shown in Figure 7-7).
Greenville is also served by Amtrak, which provides passenger rail service on the Crescent Line (New York-Atlanta-New Orleans) with stations located in downtown Greenville and Spartanburg. Greenville and Spartanburg counties have private cab service provided by Budget Cab, Golden Strip Taxi, Yellow Cab, Greenville Metro Cab, Eastside Transportation services, and within the Greer community, the Greer Cab Company.
The GPATS Long Range Transportation Plan has a chapter dedicated to public transit and provides an overview of a regional bus rapid transit (BRT) system connecting the various municipalities. The City of Greenville has initiated a Transit Vision Master Plan that will provide short-term, mid-term, and long-term recommendations to improve ridership or choice riders, headways and travel speeds, and overall service performance. This will require identifying implementation strategies, costs, and means of financing a regional transit operation.

Air Transportation

The Greenville-Spartanburg Airport (GSP) serves the Upstate of South Carolina, including the Greer area. This airport facility provides commercial passenger service for most of the Upstate region. In 2008, the GSP Airport accommodated approximately 1.4 million passengers and handled 26,000 tons of cargo. Current airline tenants include Allegiant Air, American Eagle, Continental, Delta, Northwest, Northwest Airlink, United Express, US Air, and US Air Express. As shown in Table 7-1, passenger traffic, since the last comprehensive plan, has fluctuated annually but has a decadal average (approximately 1.5 million passengers) close to the annual total in 1999.

Table 7-1  
Total Passengers 1999-2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Enplaned</th>
<th>Deplaned</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Inc/Dec %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>712,156</td>
<td>703,532</td>
<td>1,415,688</td>
<td>-8.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>782,675</td>
<td>772,402</td>
<td>1,555,077</td>
<td>1.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>769,839</td>
<td>759,140</td>
<td>1,528,979</td>
<td>-14.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>904,282</td>
<td>888,315</td>
<td>1,792,597</td>
<td>13.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>791,370</td>
<td>783,747</td>
<td>1,575,117</td>
<td>16.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>678,216</td>
<td>672,432</td>
<td>1,350,648</td>
<td>-2.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>698,092</td>
<td>688,736</td>
<td>1,386,828</td>
<td>-1.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>712,310</td>
<td>700,257</td>
<td>1,412,567</td>
<td>-11.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>801,609</td>
<td>789,177</td>
<td>1,590,786</td>
<td>4.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>762,575</td>
<td>755,986</td>
<td>1,518,561</td>
<td>6.59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to commercial passenger service, Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport provides general aviation services and does have tenant facilities operated by a fixed-base operation. In 2007, these facilities accommodated as many as 15 based aircraft. Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport also has a 25 dock cargo facility which serves operations for the United Parcel Service (UPS). The newest edition for cargo is the FedEx air freight facility that was constructed in 2001. At 120,000-square-feet, this facility has the capability to sort as many as 3,000 packages per hour, making it incredibly important in fostering the growth of
commerce in the region. As shown in Table 7-2, cargo traffic has fluctuated annually while the decadal average has actually dropped when compared to the last annual comprehensive plan report of more than 28,000 tons of air cargo in 1997.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Mail</th>
<th>Freight</th>
<th>Express</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Inc/Dec %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>26,252</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>26514</td>
<td>-6.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>28,014</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>28283</td>
<td>5.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>26,503</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>26853</td>
<td>12.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>23,362</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>23797</td>
<td>-0.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>23,310</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>23995</td>
<td>9.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>21,327</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>21950</td>
<td>-0.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>21,517</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21997</td>
<td>-8.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1,858</td>
<td>22,182</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>24077</td>
<td>-10.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2,557</td>
<td>24,276</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>26919</td>
<td>-6.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>2,574</td>
<td>25,999</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>28645</td>
<td>6.19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 2003, the Greenville-Spartanburg Airport Commission updated its Master Development Plan to address new policy changes that were made after September 11, 2001. The major changes made in this plan update are primarily related to security protocol, but they also address the continuing need for the Greenville-Spartanburg International Airport to meet future aviation related needs and continue to promote economic development in the Upstate. A copy of this plan can be found at http://www.gspairport.com/master_plan.html.

The GSP Development Plan addresses land uses of the airport. Future development plans were evaluated based on the Appalachian Council of Governments (ACOG) Future Land Use Plan 2015. The land use plan was developed based on internal and external land use issues. This plan is shown superimposed on the existing airport layout in Figure 7-8. The Midfield Zone is shown with passenger, general aviation, cargo, and other support services. Areas for the existing and future runways flank this Midfield Development. The outer areas of airport property are reserved for commercial and industrial uses.

To the north of the GSP Airport, 680 acres have been purchased for the GSP Technology Park. This land has been acquired for both functional and commercial purposes. The functional purpose is to provide a buffer against encroachment of future incompatible development under the flight path.
Greenville-Spartanburg Airport Layout Plan

Figure 7-8

Greenville-Spartanburg Airport Layout Plan
Goals

These goals seek to promote sustainable transportation development through innovative planning and management. Transportation planning affects the natural and built environments, social systems, land uses, and the character of communities. Sustainable transportation growth management policies and programs aid in promoting a better quality of life.

Strengthen long-term transportation planning.

- Insure compatibility between local and county comprehensive plans and the GPATS Long Range Transportation Plan.
- Encourage public participation and attendance at transportation meetings.
- Assess current representation on the GPATS Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC).
- Work toward a greater degree of collaboration among agencies in and around Greenville County on transportation issues.
- Emphasize the importance of coordinating transportation and land use decisions.

Improve bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

- Encourage residents to offer suggestions and feedback regarding proposed and future bicycle/pedestrian facilities.
- Increase methods of distribution of meeting notices and other public events.
- Facilitate collaboration among jurisdictions to encourage more connectivity of bicycle and pedestrian features.

Improve overall traffic conditions.

- Incorporate the use of traffic-calming designs and devices.
- Improve arterial road signal timing to streamline traffic flow.
- Promote mixed land uses and neighborhoods with sidewalks and connectivity to other pedestrian features.
- Provide multimodal transportation options for the residents of Greer.

Expand bus services.

- Work with Greenlink and provide necessary information and assistance to identify the most appropriate potential bus routes and/or expansions.
- Seek input from the public regarding transit needs and potential for improvements.