



INTEGRATING TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE FOR THE MISSISSIPPI GULF COAST

Transportation and land use go hand in hand along the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Currently, the disconnect between residential and commercial development in the region forces residents to rely on their automobiles in order to get to their jobs or other destinations. Increased vehicle travel places a greater economic burden on residents and results in increased emissions of pollutants that are harmful to human health and the environment. It also contributes to a sedentary lifestyle, which can lead to a number of health problems. Individuals who do not own vehicles must rely on a less convenient transit service to get to their destinations.

Supporting infill development within already established activity centers will allow for better transit service at a lower cost. Creating a sustainable transportation system by providing more mobility options may lead to lower transportation costs, increased public health, lower unemployment, decreased pollution, and increased connectivity.



KEY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES



The combination of low housing costs and insurance rates for homes located away from the coast and the location of employment centers along the coast has contributed to increased daily vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in the region. The region-wide daily per capita VMT is 22 miles. The national average daily VMT per capita is 23 miles.



The average annual transportation cost per household in the three coastal counties is \$15,000. The national average for household transportation costs over the last five years has been between \$2,500 and \$4,200.



A commitment to improve walking, bicycling, and transit options will enhance the region's quality of life by improving access to employment and services, decreasing costs to residents, increasing attractiveness as a prime tourist destination, and supporting a healthier population.

28.7 min

Average commute time for Hancock County residents. Compared to 23.4 minutes for the Pensacola-Mobile area.

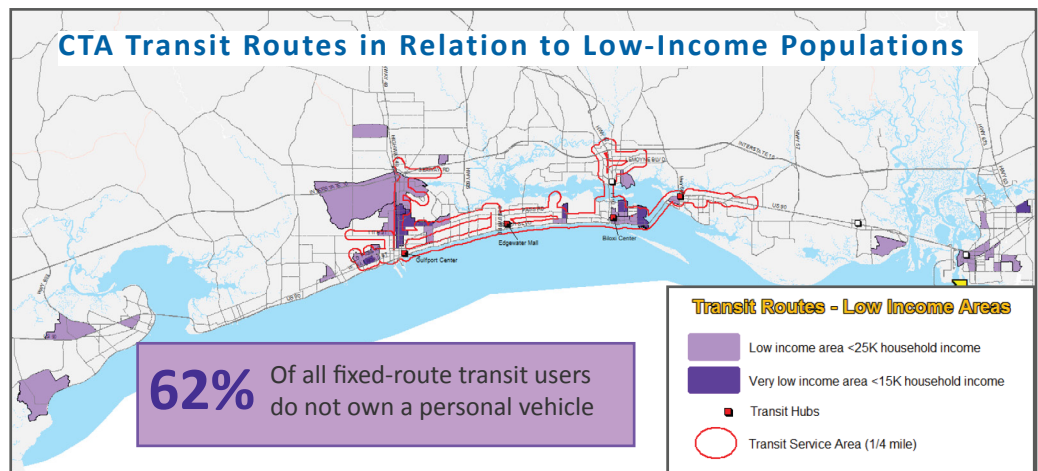
16%

Of the region's dwelling units are located within a 1/4 mile of transit routes

42%

Of all employment in the region are located within a 1/4 mile of transit routes

Total system ridership has doubled on the Coast Transit Authority (CTA) fixed-route network since 2005. The annual ridership in 2012 reached 1,089,596 riders.





STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES



Gulf Coast residents who were surveyed on their commuting perspectives identified inaccessible and inconvenient transit service as the main reasons why they do not utilize public transportation. Having more bus routes in neighborhoods would encourage more use of this mode.

Cyclists who were surveyed by the Gulf Regional Planning Commission believed US 90 was the most dangerous roadway for bicycle travel and cited that in general, safety concerns were the main factor influencing their decision to ride a bike. In addition, the majority of those surveyed believed that increasing the visibility of biking through community events was the strongest motivator in increasing cycling travel.

Regional staffing agencies within Hancock, Harrison, and Jackson Counties reported that not owning a vehicle was the most common barrier preventing individuals from obtaining employment. Residents who do not own an automobile often must turn down job opportunities unless they live within walking distance or carpool.

PROPOSED REGIONAL GOALS AND STRATEGIES



Increase Mobility Options

- Decrease transit wait times
- Create express transit service on key commuter corridors
- Connect key low income and minority without transit service to the fixed route system by utilizing demand response services
- Consider alternative projects to make transit more attractive to commuters such as park and ride, bus lanes, and comfortable waiting areas



Strengthen Connections between Transportation and Land Use

- Close gaps and provide linkages for streets and sidewalks to increase connectivity
- Encourage the development of areas with a mix of uses and a mix of transportation choices
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle mobility by improving facilities



Support Healthy Living Options

- Reduce motor vehicle speeds in key areas to improve safety
- Encourage local leaders to establish a stable funding base to support transit system development that will meet demand



Maintain a Mobile Region and Mobile Economy

- Present transportation cost savings data to commuters to encourage alternative transportation usage
- Expand marketing of alternative transportation options
- Update travel forecasting models to include transit when measuring traffic congestion

NEXT STEPS

The Plan for Opportunity partnership will engage residents and communities along the Mississippi Gulf Coast in dialogue about the role land use and transportation and other elements play in a more vibrant, healthy and prosperous region. You can share your ideas and perspectives by visiting the gulfcoastplan.org to provide your opinion on the proposed goals and strategies and by taking part at festivals and community forums.

"We need to bridge the gap between housing and employment."

*-Latisha Price,
Board Vice President,
Mercy Housing*

"Transportation is the unifying issue."

*-Ed Daniels,
COAACC*

The draft plan – to be completed in the fall – will outline specific actions steps, strategies and responsibilities to address the region's needs. Making the plan a reality will take a continuing commitment of the public, private and non-profit organizations working on the Gulf Coast. Every small part contributes to a more successful and livable Gulf Coast region.

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The **Plan for Opportunity** is a collaborative planning project led by the Gulf Coast Regional Planning Commission that is intended to guide the economic growth and development of the Mississippi Gulf Coast and to improve housing, employment and transportation opportunities throughout the region. The Plan for Opportunity is key to strengthening the economy, improving quality of life for residents, and creating a more sustainable future for the region.

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