WARNER ROBINS AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY (WRATS)

TRANSIT FEASIBILITY STUDY
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
11/20/12

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Introduction

The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Warner Robins Urbanized Area is the Warner Robins Area Transportation Study (WRATS). WRATS plans and coordinates transportation improvements for the Warner Robins metropolitan planning area consistent with federal surface transportation legislation.

The Warner Robins metropolitan planning area consists of all of Houston County and the northeastern portion of Peach County, Georgia. It includes the incorporated cities of Warner Robins, Byron, Centerville and Perry, as shown in Figure 1. The metropolitan planning area of Warner Robins consists of 417 square miles and approximately 149,000 people.

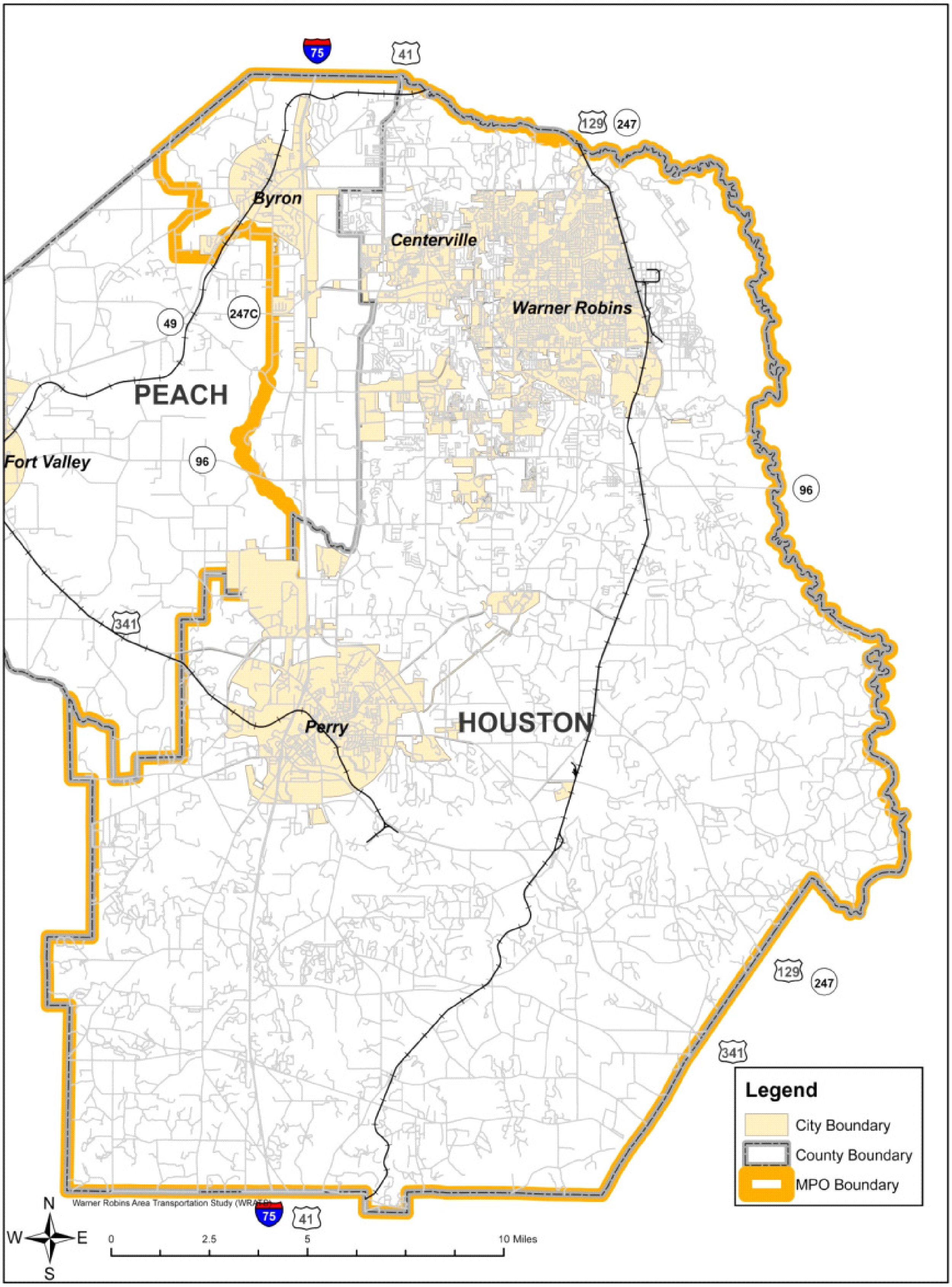
The Transit Feasibility Study (TFS) examines the need for transit services in the Warner Robins metropolitan planning area. As the area continues to grow and develop there is increasing interest in the potential for transit service. Recent success of the BiRD commuter bus service between Macon and Robins Air Force Base (RAFB) underscores the potential for similar service within the Warner Robins metropolitan area. In addition, numerous human service agencies and not for profits have stated that there is a need for transit service in Warner Robins among the populations that they serve. RAFB has been a strong supporter of transit and vanpool service, on base shuttle service, and commute alternatives as a means of reducing the number of vehicles entering and exiting the base and the amount of parking necessary on the base.

A transit feasibility study conducted by WRATS in 2003 recommended possible phased transit service options and assessed probable ridership and costs. However no action was taken as a result of the 2003 TFS, in part due to concern about who would pay for transit operations and operate the service, and in part due to concerns about the effectiveness of transit service in Warner Robins. A 2001 transit route feasibility study for service between Macon and RAFB resulted in the successful BiRD commuter service.

The 2012 WRATS TFS will update the study conducted in 2003 to reassess the market for transit taking into account demographic and development changes since 2003, and collecting new information from the public and stakeholder agencies on their views about the need for transit service in the Warner Robins metropolitan area. The TFS will provide a Transit Master Plan that identifies costs and funding associated with any recommended transit service options and an Implementation Plan that addresses phasing, marketing and operations for any recommended transit services.

This document presents the implementation plan for the preferred public transit service plan for the Warner Robins metropolitan planning area. It includes an assessment of potential funding sources, implementation planning tasks and a five-year financial plan.

Figure 1 – WRATS Study Area



Potential Funding Sources Assessment

This section outlines potential federal, state, and local sources of revenue that could be used to fund the capital and operating costs of the preferred public transit plan. A feasible public transit service proposal depends upon the identification of secure funding sources with sufficient revenue capacity to support its implementation and operation.

Federal Funding Sources

The Warner Robins Area Transportation Study (WRATS) is eligible to receive both formula and discretionary (competitive) grants from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). These grants are funded through federal transportation authorizations. Congress establishes the legal authority to commence and continue FTA programs through authorizing legislation covering several years. Each reauthorization amends the Federal Transit Laws codified in 49 USC Chapter 53.

On July 6, 2012, President Obama signed the newest transportation authorization into law. The new law, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), took effect on October 1, 2012. MAP-21 authorizes programs for a two year period, through September 30, 2014. The law will provide $105.0 billion in transportation funding, with $21.3 billion of this dedicated to transit. MAP-21 increases overall transit investments from the previous transportation authorization, the Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act: a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), to $10.6 billion in FY 2013 and $10.7 billion in FY 2014.

MAP-21 places an increased emphasis on safety, state of good repair, performance and program efficiency. It gives FTA significant authority to strengthen the safety of public transportation systems and places new emphasis on restoring and replacing the country's aging public transportation infrastructure. MAP-21 establishes performance-based planning requirements that align federal funding with key goals and tracks progress towards these goals. Finally, the law improves the efficiency of grant program administration by consolidating several programs and streamlining the major capital investment program (known as "New Starts").

The primary FTA programs that would provide planning, operational and capital funding under MAP-21 include Metropolitan Transportation Planning Program (Section 5303), Urbanized Area Formula Program (Section 5307), Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310), Non-urbanized Area Formula Program (Section 5311), and Bus and Bus Facilities Program (Section 5339). MAP-21 consolidates and repeals certain programs that were targeted to specific purposes, such as the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) and New Freedom programs, making these activities eligible under various MAP-21 programs. The law avoids discretionary programs, favoring formula-based programs which supply more predictable funding streams, enable grantees to identify and plan projects to meet priority needs, and provide a broader and more equitable distribution of funds.

Because the Warner Robins urbanized area has between 50,000 and 199,999 persons, many of these federal formula grants are first apportioned among states by the FTA and then distributed among small transit providers by the state. As Warner Robins does not currently have public transit service, it is not yet eligible for some of the FTA's formula grant programs, and would need to work with the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) to meet its requirements for agencies receiving FTA formula funds as one of GDOT's grant sub-recipients.

FTA funds are generally available for 3 years after the fiscal year in which the amount is apportioned, and the Governor of a state has flexibility to transfer funds within the State after consulting with local officials and public transportation operators in each area for which the amount originally was apportioned.

Another federal funding consideration is that most federal grants require non-federal matching funds. The non-federal matching funding requirements vary by program and by purpose (i.e., capital vs. operating). These non-federal funds can be state or local, and vary by grant. More detailed information about Georgia's state and local transit funding is presented in later sections.

The primary sources of federal funds for which the Warner Robins area is eligible under MAP-21 are discussed below.

FTA Section 5307 Urbanized Area Formula Program

The FTA's Section 5307 Urbanized Area Formula program is one of the most applicable to Warner Robins' considerations and provides formula funding on an annual basis. This program provided grants to urbanized areas for public transit capital, planning, job access and reverse commute (which is focused on providing service to low income individuals to access jobs), as well as operating assistance in certain circumstances. All preventive maintenance and some ADA complementary paratransit service are considered capital costs.

Although the initial source of this funding is the FTA, dollars from Section 5307 grants would be funneled to the Warner Robins area through GDOT, the direct recipient of these funds for areas with populations less than 200,000. In order to receive these funds to support the capital and operating costs of transit service, Warner Robins would need to submit a feasibility study of the proposed service and a financial plan to GDOT that demonstrates the capability to provide a local match to federal funds.

For urbanized areas under 200,000 in population, the Section 5307 apportionments are distributed by a formula which is based on population and population density, and, for the first time, the number of low-income individuals. Therefore, the level of funding that Warner Robins (and the other 10 small Georgia urbanized areas) is apportioned will only vary annually by the level of the national appropriation.

The FY 2013 Section 5307 Urbanized Area Formula Illustrative Apportionments for Georgia urbanized areas with fewer than 200,000 in population are summarized in Figure 2. The population, population density per square mile, and population rankings are from the List of Census 2010 Urbanized Areas (total number of urbanized areas is 497).

Figure 2 – FY 2013 Illustrative Small Urbanized Area Section 5307 Apportionments

Urbanized Area	Population	Density	Pop. Rank	Apportionment
Albany	95,779	1,352	309	$1,485,908
Athens-Clarke County	128,754	1,309	249	$2,345,050
Brunswick	51,024	1,176	491	$617,897
Cartersville	52,477	1,037	481	$585,665
Dalton	85,239	1,055	338	$986,767
Gainesville	130,846	1,036	245	$1,473,206
Hinesville	51,456	1,652	486	$693,821
Macon	137,570	1,404	234	$1,804,978
Rome	60,851	1,277	444	$1,208,530
Valdosta	77,085	1,384	367	$996,043
Warner Robins	**133,109**	**1,323**	**242**	**$1,601,957**

As the Warner Robins urbanized area grew by almost 50% and its population density grew by almost 18%, the area stands to see significant increases in Section 5307 funding over the next two years under MAP-21. The FY 2012 apportionment of Section 5307 funds for the Warner Robins urbanized area is $980,488. While official apportionments under MAP-21 have not been published, FTA has issued illustrative apportionments, which indicate the area can anticipate $1,601,957 in FY 2013. This estimate takes into account the 2010 Census data for population and population density. It does not yet take into account American Community Survey (ACS) data on low-income individuals, as it is not yet aligned with the 2010 urbanized area boundaries. Once the ACS publishes data that matches the 2010 Urbanized Area boundaries, FTA will use the newer data in place of the existing ACS data sets. As a result, this estimate is not final and is likely to change to some degree. Assuming the illustrative apportionment is reasonably accurate, the Warner Robins area would see a 63% increase in FY 2013 funding compared to FY 2012.

Figure 3 presents the actual FY 2012 apportionment and preliminary annual estimates of Section 5307 funds for the Warner Robins urbanized area for FY 2013 and FY 2014. The estimates are calculated by computing the percent change for the MAP-21 total Section 5307 funding levels from FY 2013 to FY 2014 and then using the percent change (1.38%) to calculate Warner Robin's apportionment for FY 2014.

Figure 3 – Warner Robins Urbanized Area
Section 5307 Funding Estimates

Fiscal Year	Section 5307 Funds
2012	$990,488
2013	$1,601,957
2014	$1,624,100

The federal share for planning and capital assistance projects is generally 80% of the net project cost. Net project cost is that portion of the cost of a project that cannot be reasonably financed from revenues. There are some exceptions to the 80% federal share for capital projects. For example, an 85% federal share is allowed for the cost of vehicles to comply with the ADA or the Clean Air Act, and a 90% federal share is allowed for the cost of vehicle-related equipment and facilities to comply with the ADA or the Clean Air Act.

It should also be noted that the MAP-21 definition of a capital project continues to include preventive maintenance and the provision of ADA non-fixed route paratransit transportation. However, the amount that may be used to pay for ADA paratransit operating costs continues to be limited to 10% of the apportioned Section 5307 funds.

GDOT generally provides one-half of the 20% non-federal share for capital projects (10%). That is, most capital projects would be funded 80/10/10 with Section 5307 Federal funds/State funds/ local funds, respectively.

In urbanized areas with less than 200,000 persons like Warner Robins, the federal share may not exceed 50% of the net project cost of operating costs. For the first time, transit systems in areas with over 200,000 persons that operate no more than 100 buses can also use their Section 5307 funding for bus and demand response operating costs, up to certain limits.

For operating projects, the State currently does not provide operating assistance. Therefore, after farebox and other revenues were applied to the system's operating costs, a maximum of 50% of the net operating project costs could be covered by 5307 funds; local funds would be required to cover the remaining costs.

FTA Section 5339 Bus and Bus Facilities

Under MAP-21, the Section 5339 formula program replaces the previous Section 5309 discretionary Bus and Bus Facilities Program. This program provides capital assistance to purchase, rehabilitate, and replace buses, vans and related equipment and to construct bus-related facilities. The funding from this program is not eligible to be used to cover any operating expenses.

The FY 2013 Section 5339 Urbanized Area Formula Illustrative Apportionments for Georgia urbanized areas with fewer than 200,000 in population are summarized in Figure 4. Figure 5 presents the preliminary annual estimates of Section 5339 funds for the Warner Robins urbanized area for FY 2013 and FY 2014. The estimates are calculated by using the percent change in MAP-21 total Section 5339 funding levels from FY 2013 to FY 2014 (1.37%) to calculate Warner Robin's apportionment for FY 2014.

Figure 4 – FY 2013 Illustrative Small Urbanized Area Section 5339 Apportionments

Urbanized Area	Apportionment
Albany	$124,396
Athens-Clarke County	$165,031
Brunswick	$62,758
Cartersville	$61,687
Dalton	$100,783
Gainesville	$303,093
Hinesville	$72,879
Macon	$181,453
Rome	$77,236
Valdosta	$101,070
Warner Robins	**$171,369**

Figure 5 – Warner Robins Urbanized Area Section 5339 Funding Estimates

Fiscal Year	Section 5339 Funds
2013	$171,369
2014	$173,700

The federal share of the net project cost is a maximum of 80% with non-federal sources providing the balance. As with other capital programs and the previous Section 5309 Bus and Bus Facilities Program, it is assumed that GDOT will continue to provide one-half of the 20% non-federal share for Section 5339 projects.

State Administered FTA Formula Programs

As part of MAP-21, the States will administer other FTA federal formula programs including the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Program (Section 5303), Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program (Section 5310), and Non-urbanized Area Formula Program (Section 5311), A summary of these programs follows.

Section 5303 Metropolitan Transportation Planning Program

This program provides funding to support metropolitan area multimodal transportation planning that is cooperative, continuous, and comprehensive and results in long-range plans and short-range programs of transportation investment priorities. The program is jointly administered by FTA and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). New aspects of the Section 5303 program under MAP-21 include the establishment of a performance-based planning process, support for optional scenario development, a requirement for transit representation on MPO policy boards in large urbanized areas, allowance for designation of regional transportation planning organizations, and the authorization of a pilot program for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) around new fixed guideway or core capacity projects. While this program does not provide any capital or operating funds, it could provide additional funds for the initial system analysis or aid in funding future studies.

Each state is apportioned funds using a ratio that compares each state's urbanized population against the nation's urbanized population. Using this formula, Georgia's FY 2013 MAP-21 Illustrative Appropriation is approximately $2.9 million. The Federal share for this program is 80%. GDOT generally provides one-half of the 20% non-federal share for capital projects (10%).

Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program

This FTA program is intended to enhance mobility for seniors and persons with disabilities by providing funds for programs to serve the special needs of transit dependent populations beyond traditional public transportation services and ADA paratransit services. Activities eligible under the prior New Freedom Program are now eligible under Section 5310. Funds may now be used for both capital and operating expenses. Using Section 5310 funds for capital expenses (which includes the purchase of transportation services) requires a 20% non-federal match. Using these funds for operating expenses requires a 50% non-federal match.

Section 5310 program recipients must certify that the projects selected are included in a locally developed, coordinated public transit/human services transportation plan. Recipients of Section 5310 appropriations sub-allocate funds primarily to private non-profit organizations. Funds can only be sub-allocated to state or local government authorities if the state or local authority coordinates service and no non-profit organizations are readily available to provide service.

In the State of Georgia, the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) is the designated state recipient for Section 5310 funds. The DHS has instituted a policy that all federal and state funds used in this program be applied in the purchase of transportation services, rather than in capital expenditures for vehicles or related equipment.

Funds are apportioned based on each state's share of the targeted populations, and funds are now apportioned to both States (for all areas under 200,000 persons) and large urbanized areas (over 200,000 persons). Using this formula, the FY 2013 MAP-21 Illustrative Appropriation to Georgia for urbanized areas with less than 200,000 persons is approximately $1.4 million.

Section 5311 Non-Urbanized Area Formula Program

This FTA program provides planning, capital and operating assistance to states to support public transit in rural areas, defined as areas with populations less than 50,000. Eligible Section 5311 activities under MAP-21 have been expanded to include planning and job access and reverse commute service. Funds are apportioned primarily to rural areas, though there are smaller programs for Tribal programs and set-asides for the Appalachian Region and the Rural Transit Assistance Program.

Under MAP-21, this program's rural area funds are apportioned to states using a formula that is based primarily on rural land area and population and secondarily on land area, revenue-vehicle miles and low-income individuals in rural areas. Eligible sub-recipients include state or local government authorities, non-profit organizations and operators of public transit or intercity bus service that receive funds indirectly through a recipient.

The non-federal matching ratios for Section 5311 are the same as Section 5307. That is, the federal share is 80% for capital projects, 50% for operating assistance, and 80% for ADA paratransit up to 10% of a recipient's apportionment.

As discussed in the Initial Public Transit Service Options report, Peach County Transit's rural public transit service is currently funded through the Section 5311 program. This program's funds could also be used for public transit services in rural Houston County. Section 5311 funding should be supportive of local economic activity by facilitating access to local markets, industries, and commerce. As such, vehicles operating may access the urbanized area of Warner Robins but only to the extent that passengers may be picked up or dropped off in a certain location such as a transfer stop. Rural transit services should not be duplicative of other transportation services within the Warner Robins urbanized area.

The FY 2013 MAP-21 Illustrative Appropriation to Georgia for rural areas is approximately $20.7 million. Figure 6 presents the preliminary annual estimates of Section 5311 funds for the State of Georgia for FY 2013 and FY 2014. The estimates are calculated by using the percent change for the MAP-21 total Section 5311 funding levels from FY 2013 to FY 2014 (1.38%) to calculate Georgia's for FY 2014.

Figure 6 – State of Georgia
Section 5311 Funding Estimates

Fiscal Year	Section 5311 Funds
2013	$20,658,096
2014	$20,943,200

These funds will be sub-allocated to each of GDOT's districts (District 3 in the case of the Warner Robins area). Based on the Section 5311 allocations in FY 2012 of the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), District 3 may expect to receive approximately 11% of the Georgia Section 5311 funds. These funds would then be distributed among the rural programs operating in GDOT District 3 (currently 16).

FHWA Flexible Highway Fund Programs

A key feature of recent transportation authorizations has been the flexibility provision that provides the option to state and local governments of transferring some categories of FHWA funds to one of FTA funding programs for transit projects. The flexible funds feature is continued under MAP-21.

For supporting proposed transit services in the Warner Robins area, FHWA Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds would currently be the only reasonably available flexible fund program. The STP funding is at the 80 percent federal share and may be used for all capital projects eligible for funds under current FTA programs. However, in Warner Robins like most areas, the number of identified transportation needs far exceed available federal assistance from STP and other programs. Therefore, project prioritization and funding decisions must be developed cooperatively by the area's local governments, transit operators, and GDOT acting through the WRATS transportation planning process.

State Funds

The Georgia Public Transportation Code authorizes GDOT to participate in providing public transportation services in Georgia. However, the State of Georgia does not have any funds specifically designated for transit purposes. GDOT has provided some funding for transit capital projects, such as park & ride lots, and for assistance with the non-federal matching share of capital and preventive maintenance projects. GDOT provides this funding through State General Fund budget requests. Typically, the GDOT is able to request State General Funds for one-half of the non-federal match or 10% of the total project cost of the 80/20, federal/non-federal share capital projects.

The State funds are administered by the GDOT Office of Intermodal Programs. In May of each year, the Office requests the transit providers to submit their state assistance needs for two years in advance. The WRATS would need to work closely with GDOT to include the transit projects in the WRATS TIP, as well as work with GDOT and the local legislative delegation during upcoming sessions of the Georgia General Assembly to secure the State funding.

Farebox Revenues

Some farebox revenue will be generated by the preferred public transit system plan, assuming a fare is charged. However, even the nation's highest ridership transit systems have operating subsidies of well over 50%. As discussed in the Peer Analysis report, the selected Warner Robins urbanized area peers achieved an average farebox recovery ratio of 15%. Ridership estimates for the preferred transit service plan and an assumed fare structure were used in the Preferred Public Transit Service Plan and Potential Service Improvements report to estimate farebox revenues. Farebox revenues will cover some operating costs, but other mechanisms will need to be enacted in concordance with it to fund the operating costs of the system and assist in matching federal funds.

Local Funds

Local funds will be necessary to provide the local match share of the federal capital grants and the operating costs not covered by the passenger farebox revenue and federal operating assistance. Besides passenger farebox revenues, local general funds are the primary local funding source for Georgia transit agencies except MARTA, which receives all of its local funding from a special 1% sales tax levied in Fulton and DeKalb counties.

There are a number of different mechanisms to raise local funding for transit service. While general fund appropriations, property taxes or sales taxes are the most common sources to fund transit systems, the possibilities are virtually endless. Below is a summary of some of the more common local transit funding sources.

General Fund Appropriations

The additional costs of the public transit service are often covered by reallocating funds within local general funds. Historically, the use of the general funds for transit service reduces the long-term reliability of transit funding, especially when down economies result in fewer available funds.

Property Taxes

Property tax revenues are one of the most common sources for funding transit operations and capital investments. Local governments in the Warner Robins area could elect to increase property taxes and dedicate the additional revenue to public transit services.

Special Purpose Local Option Sales Taxes (SPLOST)

Georgia law allows local jurisdictions to use SPLOST proceeds for capital improvement projects that would otherwise be paid for with general funds and property tax revenues. For example, Athens-Clarke County has utilized SPLOST funding to finance a bus shelter program, construct a Multi-Modal Transportation Center, and purchase and replace transit vehicles. Warner Robins' SPLOST program could include funds that could be used as match for capital transit projects should a system be established.

Other Local Taxes

Other common sources of local taxes that could be used for transit include:

- A dedicated tax or fee on the sale or registration of vehicles,
- Several fuel tax options (above and beyond the current federal, state, and local taxes) on motor fuels purchased in the Warner Robins area,
- Occupational taxes
- Selective taxes applied to specific items such as tobacco, alcohol, and tourism related activities such as hotels or rental cars,

Advertising Revenues

While usually a very small component of operating costs, most transit agencies do gain some revenue from advertising. Transit systems now sell the rights for companies to advertise on buses, benches, shelters, transfer facilities, kiosks, schedules, transfers, passes, system maps, etc. The transit system can realize cash revenue, or be compensated in trade (e.g., getting “free” advertising on radio stations that are advertising on the bus).

Public-Private Partnerships

Transit systems can leverage their limited resources by forging new partnerships that can bring non-traditional sources of support (including cash, facilities and equipment, in-kind services, and financing mechanisms) that pay partially or fully for new services or facilities where they would not otherwise be feasible. Local governments and transit agencies are expanding their list of partners to include developers, major employers, universities, public school systems, utilities, property managers and various other entities.

Value Capture Mechanisms

Value capture mechanisms use the expected future value created by projects as capital to fund the projects. Common value capture mechanisms include tax increment financing, special assessment districts, and development impact fees. Tax increment financing (TIF) uses the expected increase in revenue from increased property value to pay for current improvements to generate the value increase. Special assessment districts levy an additional increment on property taxes for properties located near the transit service. Development impact fees charge fees to new residential or commercial development and use the revenues to help fund transportation expenses.

Implementation Plan for the Preferred Transit Service Plan

Based on the estimated capital and operating and maintenance (O&M) costs presented in the Preferred Public Transit Service Plan and Potential Service Improvements report and the potential funding assessment presented in the previous section, a five-year implementation plan was developed for the preferred transit service plan.

This section includes a description of major implementation planning tasks and a general schedule that will have to be undertaken to implement the preferred public transit service plan, as well as a five-year financial plan for the service.

The range of management and ownership options was addressed in the “Initial Public Transit Service Options” report. For discussion purposes, the consultant team has assumed that an interagency funding agreement between the local governments along with "Option C – City Owned / Operations Contracted Out" would be the preferred way to move forward with the preferred public transit service plan. However, regardless of the organizational and management structure ultimately selected by the public partners, most of the same major activities described here still would be applicable.

Implementation Planning Tasks and Schedule

The first 12 months will involve activities to secure the necessary capital and operating funding (including interagency funding agreement, Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), FTA grants, and State funding commitment and contract, and local funding commitments) for the project. The creation and filling of a dedicated staff position to plan, coordinate, and oversee the transit program is also critical. The person selected for this transit coordinator position would immediately initiate start-up activities for the transit program. During year 1, it is also recommended that the City establish a Transit Advisory Committee to provide guidance to assist with the transit implementation process and policy issues. Other key tasks in the near-term include ADA paratransit application and procedures, adoption of fare structure, and development of a marketing/ promotion/ informational campaign.

Adequate lead times would be particularly critical for 1) procurement of the buses, 2) procurement of the service provider, and 3) construction/renovation of facilities, such as transfer centers and an operations & maintenance (O&M) facility. A period of 12-18 months could be required for procurement, manufacture, and delivery of the buses. This schedule is based on current market conditions for new bus orders that would be built to the City's specifications for buses appropriate to the express, local, and ADA paratransit services. Lead time for procurement of ADA compliant shuttle buses for the complementary ADA paratransit services would likely be much shorter, particularly if they are purchased from a statewide contract. As applicable, a Request for Proposals (RFP) to contract with a service provider would be developed and issued. Procurement of a service contractor generally requires a minimum of 6 months. From the signing of the service contract to the first day of operations could take as little as 3 additional months.

The development of major transit facilities will likely require the longest lead times. Perhaps the most critical facility need will be the O&M facility. Facility functions typically include vehicle maintenance and fueling, parts storage, overnight vehicle storage, and administration and transportation areas (such as drivers' room and lockers). Generally, transit agencies prefer to develop and own their O&M facility so that over the long-term, operations costs can be minimized and effective preventive maintenance can be maximized. However, facility implementation time lines often require three to five years. In the short-term, it is assumed that maintenance, storage, and fueling functions could be accommodated at an existing fleet maintenance facility owned by the local government, or, if service is contracted out, at a facility provided by the contractor.

Establishment of transfer center locations at Galleria Mall and South Warner Robins Walmart and the park & ride lots at Galleria Mall, Paradise Shoppes Publix, and Houston Lakes Stadium Cinemas will, at a minimum, require site-access and use agreements with property owners. Lease agreements could also be required. Sites must be identified and agreements negotiated with property owners well in advance of the start of transit service.

Considering the above discussion, the implementation schedule for the first day of revenue service primarily will be driven by the 24 to 30 month time period required to secure funding, procure, manufacture, and receive delivery of the buses and procure a service contractor. Assuming a decision within the three to four months by local governments to move forward, the consultant team believes that activities could be undertaken by the public partners to have funding in place by July 1, 2014 (beginning FY 2015). After the 12 to 18 months required to procure, manufacture, and accept the buses, it is estimated that the initial start-up of revenue service could be as early as Fall 2015 or Spring 2016.

Typically, the start-up of new transit service requires several months to reach a stable period of operation. During the transitional period, the City and the other public partners will need to monitor sufficiency of the service, customer response, operations & maintenance performance, and vehicle performance and will make adjustments as required.

Five-Year Financial Plan

The financial plan projections presented in Figures 7 through 9 balance estimated capital and operating expenses against projected revenues. Figure 7 presents the financial plan for capital expenditures and Figure 8 presents the financial plan for operating and maintenance expenditures. Figure 9 presents a summary of all expenditures.

The financial plan assumes that the initial five years would allow implementation of all proposed services and facilities in the preferred transit start-up plan. Consistent with the general implementation schedule outlined in the previous section, the buses would be accepted in FY 2016. Transit service would start-up in FY 2017.

The capital and operating costs are inflated by 3% per year to represent year of expenditure dollars. As transit service takes 12 to 24 months before its full ridership potential is realized, the financial plan assumes somewhat lower farebox revenues in the first year of service.

Federal FTA Section 5307 funding estimates within the MAP-21 funding projections were presented earlier in this report. We assumed that the WRATS FY 2013-2016 TIP would be amended to allow Warner Robins to begin using its Section 5307 funding beginning in FY 2014. Section 5307 funds prior to FY 2013 were assumed to be no longer available. It is important to note that the federal funding amounts are subject to change.

The capital expenses are assumed to be funded primarily with 80 percent FTA Section 5307 formula funds. The non-federal share is assumed to be 10 percent State funds and 10 percent local funds. For the operating expenses, the route farebox revenues are applied against the operating costs, then the remaining operating deficit is funded with 50 percent FTA Section 5307 formula funds and 50 percent local funds. We made no assumptions on how the local funding costs would be allocated among the public partners. This allocation would be determined by the interagency funding agreement.

Figure 7 – Five-Year Financial Plan for Capital Expenditures

Financial Plan for Capital Expenditures	Year 1 FY 2014	Year 2 FY 2015	Year 3 FY 2016	Year 4 FY 2017	Year 5 FY 2018
Projected Capital Expenses					
Buses for Express and Local Service	$0	$0	$1,604,100	$0	$0
Small Buses for ADA Paratransit and Flex Service	$0	$0	$397,800	$0	$0
Bus Related Equipment (Fareboxes, Destination Signs, Radios)	$0	$0	$222,800	$0	$0
Bus Stop Signs	$0	$0	$212,200	$0	$0
Passenger Waiting Shelters with Benches	$0	$0	$169,700	$0	$0
Computer Hardware/Software	$0	$42,400	$0	$0	$0
Start-up Marketing Program	$0	$53,000	$0	$0	$0
Total Expenses	***$0***	***$95,400***	***$2,606,600***	***$0***	***$0***
Anticipated Capital Funding Sources					
Federal (80%)	$0	$76,320	$2,085,280	$0	$0
State Match (10%)	$0	$9,540	$260,660	$0	$0
Local Match (10%)	$0	$9,540	$260,660	$0	$0
Total Revenues	***$0***	***$95,400***	***$2,606,600***	***$0***	***$0***

Figure 8 – Five-Year Financial Plan for Operating & Maintenance Expenditures

Financial Plan for Operating & Maintenance (O&M) Service Expenditures	Year 1 FY 2014	Year 2 FY 2015	Year 3 FY 2016	Year 4 FY 2017	Year 5 FY 2018
Projected O&M Expenses					
Administration	$60,000	$61,800	$63,700	$65,600	$67,600
Express/Local/Flex Routes	$0	$0	$0	$2,433,000	$2,506,000
ADA Paratransit	$0	$0	$0	$91,000	$94,000
Total Expenses	***$60,000***	***$61,800***	***$63,700***	***$2,589,600***	***$2,667,600***
Anticipated O&M Funding Sources					
Farebox Revenues	$0	$0	$0	$264,784	$395,200
Federal (50%)	$30,000	$30,900	$31,850	$1,162,408	$1,136,200
Local Match (50%)	$30,000	$30,900	$31,850	$1,162,408	$1,136,200
Total Revenues	***$60,000***	***$61,800***	***$63,700***	***$2,589,600***	***$2,667,600***

The capital and operating costs are within the financial capacity of the FTA Section 5307 formula funds available to Warner Robins for the implementation of the preferred public transit service plan. The total State funding need over the five year period is estimated at $270,200. Annual local funding needs would range from $30,000 to over $1.1 million over the five-year period.

Figure 9 – Five-Year Summary Financial Plan

Summary Financial Plan for All Expenditures	Year 1 FY 2014	Year 2 FY 2015	Year 3 FY 2016	Year 4 FY 2017	Year 5 FY 2018
Total Projected Expenses					
Capital	$0	$95,400	$2,606,600	$0	$0
Operations & Maintenance	$60,000	$61,800	$63,700	$2,589,600	$2,667,600
Total Expenses	***$60,000***	***$157,200***	***$2,670,300***	***$2,589,600***	***$2,667,600***
Total Anticipated Revenues					
Farebox Revenues	$0	$0	$0	$264,784	$395,200
Federal FTA Section 5307 Funds	$30,000	$107,220	$2,117,130	$1,162,408	$1,136,200
State Match Funds	$0	$9,540	$260,660	$0	$0
Local Match Funds	$30,000	$40,440	$292,510	$1,162,408	$1,136,200
Total Revenues	***$60,000***	***$157,200***	***$2,670,300***	***$2,589,600***	***$2,667,600***

Next Steps

The preferred public transit service plan proposed in this study's reports provides a solid framework for implementation consideration by the governmental jurisdictions in the Warner Robins metropolitan planning area and Robins Air Force Base. There are a number of key issues that the area's public partners will need to wrestle with in order to advance the preferred public transit service plan towards implementation, as discussed below.

Establish Jurisdictional Participation

The first issue to be resolved is local support for and participation in a start-up transit system. As defined, the preferred transit service plan includes express, local, and flex routes and paratransit service extending into each local governmental jurisdiction in the MPO area and Robins Air Force Base.

It is imperative that each governmental jurisdiction, as well as Robins Air Force Base, give careful consideration to the needs and desires of their constituents and reach a decision on whether their jurisdiction will participate in a start-up of transit service. An assessment of local financial capacity, in concert with anticipated levels of FTA and State funding, will be an important part of the decision-making process.

It may also be very important for local jurisdiction leaders to build support for a transit start-up by meeting with and gaining the support of key individuals and groups in the community. In turn, these key community leaders would then build support for the system in the larger community. This step would be especially critical if a local referendum may be required to support the system.

Develop Implementation Strategy

Once the local jurisdictions have weighed in on their commitment to participating as a partner in the proposed transit system, the public partners will then need to cooperatively agree on service parameters, phasing, organizational and management structure, and schedule. More specifically, questions to be resolved include how much transit service should be provided (initially and longer-term), what areas and transit markets should have the highest priority for service, and what type of service should be operated (particularly in regard to meeting ADA requirements). Elements of the preferred transit service plan selected for implementation, such as routing, span of service, frequency and other operating characteristics would be refined as necessary based on input from local staff and leaders, and system performance would be projected for each phase of the implementation strategy. Decisions should also be made at this point regarding the organizational and management structure for the new system.

As recognized in the peer analysis report, performance varies significantly from system to system. Once an initial implementation strategy has been identified, local staff should consider identifying and visiting two or three of the best performing transit systems operating similar service. By meeting with key staff at these agencies and seeing their systems firsthand, local staff can gain insight into what has worked well, what to emulate, and what to avoid. These visits could result in refinements to the implementation strategy or simply affirm and build confidence for the start-up.

Initiate Implementation Planning Program

Implementation of a start-up transit system is a complex endeavor, which typically requires close coordination with multiple agencies and private businesses, adherence to a detailed project schedule, maximizing and securing funding commitments, procuring multiple capital items and services, and hiring transit staff. For that reason, it is anticipated that the next step in moving forward with a transit system start-up would be to initiate an implementation planning program.

That process should begin with the development of an Implementation Work Plan. The Implementation Work Plan would further detail and define implementation tasks and subtasks, assign responsibilities, and develop detailed schedules, milestones, and a financial plan.

Depending on the organizational and management structure selected, the following list summarizes major tasks that may be required for the initial year rollout of public transit service.

Organization and Funding

- Establish Committee for Guiding Service Start-Up
- Include Project Funding in TIP
- Execute Interagency Funding Agreement
- Continue Processes to Maximize Federal and State Funding
- Execute Funding Grants and Contracts

Policy Making and Operations

- Establish Fare Policies
- Coordinate with Other Agencies
- Establish Final Operations Plan
- Hire City Staff for System Administration
- Develop ADA Paratransit Service Policies, Plan, and Procedure

Vehicles and Equipment Procurements

- Prepare Vehicle & Related Equipment Specifications
- Select Vehicle Procurement Option
- Develop Procurement Process
- Receive and Evaluate Proposals from Vendors
- Negotiate and Award Contract(s)
- Oversight and Inspection of Manufacture
- Receive and Test Vehicles and Equipment

Service Contractor Procurement

- Prepare Service Contract Request for Proposals
- Develop Procurement Process
- Receive and Evaluate Proposals from Vendors
- Negotiate and Award Contract
- Monitor Contractor Start-up Activities

Facilities and Passenger Amenities Development

- Identify and Evaluate Options for O&M Facility
- Identify and Evaluate Potential Sites for Transfer Centers and Park& Rides
- Negotiate Site-Access and Use Agreements/Leases with Property Owners
- Design and Construct Required Site/Facility Improvements
- Prepare Bus Shelter and Bus Stop Specifications
- Receive and Evaluate Proposals from Vendors
- Procure and Install Bus Shelters and Bus Stops

Marketing

- Develop Marketing Concept, Scope of Work, and Schedule
- Prepare Marketing Messages and Materials
- Initiate Public Awareness & Education Campaigns