

January 27, 2025

Honorable Lawrence "Larry" Grooms, Chairman
Senate Transportation Committee
203 Gressette Building
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Honorable, Shannon S. Erickson, Chairman
House Education & Public Works Committee
429 Blatt Building
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Re: 2024 Public Transit Annual Report

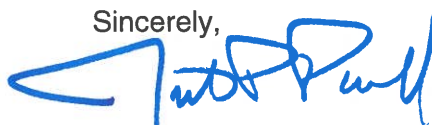
Dear Chairmen:

On behalf of the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) please accept the Agency's submittal for the "Office of Public Transit Annual Report" for 2024. Pursuant to SC Code of Law, Sections 57-3-40 (C) and 57-3-210 (B) (2), the Office of Public Transit is required to provide this report to the Committee Chairmen of House Education & Public Works and Senate Transportation.

Through Proviso 117.72, prior to 2014, SCDOT was granted the opportunity to combine the statute-required Annual Report and the Mass Transit Report into the Annual Accountability Report. In 2014, the Annual Accountability Report was streamlined and could no longer contain the "Annual Report" or the "Mass Transit Report." The Annual Report was previously submitted and the Office of Public Transit Report is attached, which fulfills this reporting requirement.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Justin P. Powell
Secretary of Transportation

JPP:dml

Enclosure





South Carolina Department of Transportation

OFFICE OF PUBLIC
TRANSIT

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

SUBMITTED
JANUARY 2025

SCDOT OFFICE OF PUBLIC TRANSIT

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key transportation strategies identified in South Carolina Department of Transportation's (SCDOT) Strategic Plan focus on asset management while developing multimodal options for all residents and visitors, including public transportation. SCDOT's Office of Public Transit (OPT), in coordination with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and local and regional partners throughout the state, plans, programs, and administers the statewide delivery of rural and urban general public transit services and transit services for seniors and individuals with disabilities.

Pursuant to SC Code of Law, Sections 57-3-40 and 57-3-210, the OPT is required to develop and submit the annual Office of Public Transit Report to the General Assembly. Included within the Report is an analysis of (1) annual accomplishments and progress, (2) a funding plan and (3) a five-year transit plan.

SECTION 1: ANNUAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Public transit is a core component of South Carolina's multimodal transportation network. Most counties in South Carolina have public transit service in at least a portion of their county. In 2024, South Carolina's human service and general public transit service providers operated approximately 718 vehicles, providing **8,695,055 one-way general public passenger trips and 2,942,234 one-way specialized human service trips for elderly and persons with disabilities.**

Establishing, financing, and sustaining effective, statewide, publicly operated transit service in urban and rural areas continues to be a major challenge, while at the same time one of our biggest accomplishments.

Below are a few highlights from 2024:

- In April 2020, SCDOT made available to the rural transit providers the first round of CARES Act funding, which was roughly equivalent to their total annual federal allocation. A second round of funding was released in October 2020, with the final round released in October 2021. As of December 2024, **97.61% of the fully allocated CARES Act funding** for rural transit agencies had been invoiced and paid out. SCDOT continues to work with the State's Executive Budget Office and Office of the State Auditor to ensure compliance with the evolving processes of documentation and proper oversight of the Federal CARES Act funding. OPT intends to close out CARES Act funding during the 2025 calendar year. The federal **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)** was signed into law on November 15, 2021. The act included provisions related to federal-aid highway, transit, highway safety, motor carrier, and rail programs of the U.S. Department of Transportation, and provided an **additional 25.6 percent** in federal transit funding to South Carolina.
- In October 2023, OPT was reorganized adapting more efficient processes in the administration of FTA programs and funding. During 2024, **OPT continued integrating processes within the guidelines of SCDOT policies and procedures.** The new organizational structure utilizes a regional approach that also allows for collaboration with other SCDOT divisional subject matter experts to support OPT's **mission to implement and administer transit programs effectively and efficiently.**
- SCDOT OPT continues to manage **the day-to-day engineering** of South Carolina's largest transit project, the **Lowcountry Bus Rapid Transit (LCRT)**. The LCRT is a modern bus rapid transit system that will

connect the Charleston region, its communities, key destinations and employment centers. This project will transform the region by improving transportation through providing by bus, while expanding bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout the corridor. The foundation of the LCRT will serve Charleston, North Charleston and Ladson, and spark upward mobility and economic growth through the area. Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments (BCDCOG) is the project sponsor for the LCRT with funding provided by the FTA's Capital Investment Grants (CIG) program, a discretionary and competitive federal grant program and Charleston County sales tax. The LCRT is currently in the engineering phase. Right of way acquisition began in 2024 and construction is due to begin in 2027.

- SCDOT continued to facilitate interagency and public-private transportation coordination efforts, with the ultimate goals to **enhance economic development efforts, reduce overall public and human services transportation costs, and maintain or enhance the delivery of transit services** across the state in a fiscally sustainable manner.
- In February 2024, SCDOT awarded almost **\$500,000 of American Rescue Plan (ARP) *Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program* funds** to twenty-five (25) rural and small-urbanized area human service agencies to support operations as agencies continue to recover from COVID-19 impacts.
- During 2024, OPT resumed a State Mass Transit Fund (SMTF) study that is seeking to identify where transit services and increased transit funding can **support healthy communities and economic development** throughout the state of South Carolina.
- In December 2024, Greenville Transit Authority (GTA) opened a state-of-the-art operations and maintenance facility in Greenville, SC. **Aligning with the SCDOT priorities of safety, mobility and in support of growing demand for bus service** in the area, SCDOT provided \$1.8 million of state funds and \$8.6 million of FTA capital funds in support of the project.

SECTION II: FUNDING PLAN

South Carolina was apportioned \$83,473,675 in FTA funds Federal Fiscal Year 2024. These federal funds are matched with \$6.0 million in state transit funding (SMTF). The SCDOT Commission approves the Transit Funding Plan on an annual basis. Transit funding allocations are included in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Transit funding is referenced in Section III of this report and is located at <https://www.scdot.org/inside/planning-stip.aspx>.

SECTION III: FIVE-YEAR PLAN

SCDOT recognizes that South Carolina's transportation system is essential to the economic health of our State. SCDOT uses two plans to address transit across the state - STIP and the 2040 Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan (SMTTP).

The STIP is SCDOT's six-year transportation improvement program for all projects or program areas receiving federal funding. The STIP covers all federally funded improvements with approved funding. SCDOT expects to

begin these projects in the next six-year period, and is revised on a continual basis to reflect the latest program and project information. The SCDOT Commission, as well as the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and FTA, approve the STIP. The STIP is a fiscally constrained plan based on financial budgets phased over the life of a project. This document is located at <https://www.scdot.org/inside/planning-stip.aspx>.

The 2040 SMTP is the state's twenty-five year Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan. The SMTP, including the Statewide Transit Plan, is updated every five years with intermittent annual reviews. It focuses on maximizing South Carolina's limited funding resources, maintaining the state's position in the global marketplace, and efficiently moving both people and goods. This plan was developed in conjunction with SCDOT management, staff, and transportation partners and stakeholders. The process included several major components that encompass public transportation, including:

- **Statewide Public Transportation Plan Update** – overall public transportation plan for the state of South Carolina, summarizing existing services, needs and future funding programs.
- **Multimodal Transportation Plan** – overall plan inclusive of all modes of transportation.

The current 2040 MTP Update was approved in July 2020 and is located at:
<https://www.scdot.org/Multimodal/default.aspx>.

Every five years SCDOT updates the SMTP assessing the future of the state's multimodal transportation network. The document is a statewide plan for all users, all modes and any area that has a role in South Carolina's transportation system. It evaluates the status of the transportation system, what's changing, and how we're going to move forward over the next twenty-five years. This plan does not choose specific projects or decide what will be built where, but it develops the vision and goals for the future of transportation in South Carolina. The **Momentum 2050 SMTP** is currently under development by SCDOT.